4 School education

CONTENTS

Attachment tables

Attachment tables are identified in references throughout this chapter by an 'A' suffix (for example, table 4A.3). A full list of attachment tables is provided at the end of this chapter, and the attachment tables themselves are available on the CD-ROM enclosed with the Report or from the Review website at <www.pc.gov.au/gsp>.

This chapter focuses on performance information — equity, effectiveness and efficiency — for government funded school education in Australia. Reporting relates to government funding only, not to the full cost to the community of providing school education. Descriptive information and performance indicators are variously reported for:

- government primary and secondary schools
- non-government primary and secondary schools
- school education as a whole (government plus non-government primary and secondary schools).

Schooling aims to provide education for all young people. The main purposes of school education are to assist students in:

- attaining knowledge, skills and understanding in key learning areas
- developing their talents, capacities, self-confidence, self-esteem and respect for others
- developing their capacity to contribute to Australia's social, cultural and economic development.

This year, the chapter has been enhanced by including nationally comparable learning outcomes data for:

- student attendance data on year 1 to year 10 students, 2007
- national assessment data on year 6 students achieving at or above the proficiency standard for scientific literacy, 2006
- 15 year old students achieving at or above level 3 on the international scientific literacy assessment, 2006
- year 4 and year 8 students achieving at or above the intermediate international level in mathematics achievement, 2006-07
- year 4 and year 8 students achieving at or above the intermediate international level in science achievement, 2006-07
- national assessment data on year 6 and year 10 students achieving at or above the proficiency standards for information and communication technologies literacy, 2005.

The scope of the measure on school participation has been expanded to include data on part time students and students aged 14 years (previous scope was full time students aged 15 years to 19 years).

Data have also been provided for the first time for Indigenous learning outcomes by geolocation by state and territory (for 2006 and 2007). (National level data for 2005 were included in the 2008 Report.)

4.1 Profile of school education

Service overview

Schools are the institutions within which organised school education takes place. They are differentiated by the type and level of education they provide, their

ownership and management, and the characteristics of their student body. The formal statistical definition of schools used for this chapter is:

> an establishment (other than a special school) that satisfies all of the following criteria:
>
> - its major activity is the provision of full time day primary or secondary education or the provision of primary or secondary distance education
> - it is headed by a principal (or equivalent) responsible for its internal operation
> - it is possible for students to enrol for a minimum of four continuous weeks, excluding breaks for school vacations (ABS 2008).

Student performance can be affected by factors that may be partly or totally outside the influence of the school system, such as student commitment, family environment (including socioeconomic status, parents' educational attainment and support for the child) and the proximity of the school to other educational facilities. It is beyond the scope of this Report to consider the effect of all such factors, but this section provides some context for the performance information presented later in the chapter. Further contextual information is provided in appendix A.

Roles and responsibilities

Under constitutional arrangements, the State and Territory governments have responsibility to ensure the delivery of schooling to all children of school age. They determine curricula, regulate school activities and provide most of the funding. State and Territory governments are directly responsible for the administration of government schools, for which they provide the majority of government expenditure. Non-government schools operate under conditions determined by State and Territory government registration authorities and also receive State and Territory government funding.

The Australian Government provides supplementary funding for government and non-government schools through Specific Purpose Payments (SPPs) provided directly to State and Territory governments, and other payments made directly to school communities, students, and other organisations to support schooling. The Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA) — comprising Australian, State and Territory, and New Zealand education ministers — is the principal forum for developing national priorities and strategies for schooling.

Funding

Australian, State and Territory government recurrent expenditure on school education was $34.2 billion in 2006-07 (table 4.1). Expenditure on government schools was $26.9 billion, or 78.6 per cent of the total. Government schools account for most of the expenditure by State and Territory governments. These governments also contribute to the funding of non-government schools and provide services used by both government and non-government schools. More information, including Australian Government spending on Indigenous specific programs, can be found in tables 4A.7, 4A.11 and 4A.12.

Nationally, State and Territory governments provided 91.2 per cent of total government recurrent expenditure on government schools in 2006-07, and the Australian Government provided 8.8 per cent. In contrast, government expenditure on non-government schools in that year was mainly provided by the Australian Government (72.5 per cent), with State and Territory governments providing 27.5 per cent (table 4.1).

Table 4.1 **Government recurrent expenditure on school education, 2006-07 ($ million)[a, b, c, d]**

	NSW	*Vic*	*Qld*	*WA*	*SA*	*Tas*	*ACT*	*NT*	*Aust*
Government schools									
Australian Government	790	529	480	244	177	62	34	57	2 373
State and territory governments	7 904	5 230	5 090	2 995	1 792	653	450	437	24 551
Total	**8 694**	**5 759**	**5 570**	**3 240**	**1 969**	**715**	**483**	**494**	**26 924**
Non-government schools									
Australian Government	1 720	1 359	1 028	518	418	109	105	43	5 300
State and territory governments	736	364	435	231	122	40	38	48	2 014
Total	**2 455**	**1 722**	**1 463**	**749**	**540**	**149**	**143**	**91**	**7 314**
All schools									
Australian Government	2 510	1 888	1 508	762	596	171	138	101	7 673
State and territory government	8 640	5 593	5 525	3 227	1 914	694	488	484	26 564
Total	**11 149**	**7 481**	**7 032**	**3 989**	**2 510**	**864**	**627**	**585**	**34 237**

a See notes to table 4A.7 for definitions and other data caveats. Data presented here are expenditure, including notional User Cost of Capital (UCC) and excluding capital grants (which equates to recurrent expenditure). **b** Based on accrual accounting. **c** Totals may not add due to rounding. **d** Depreciation and user cost of capital expenses relating to government schools have been attributed to States/Territories based on ownership of the underlying assets. A portion of these assets will have been acquired through Australian Government capital contributions, with states and territories responsible for maintenance costs. Australian Government expenditure data in this table include only Australian Government specific purpose payments. Other Australian Government funding for schools and students is not included.

Source: MCEETYA National Schools Statistics Collection (NSSC) (unpublished); Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) (unpublished); Australian, State and Territory governments (unpublished); table 4A.7.

Some data are presented on government funding of non-government schools. Caution needs to be taken when comparing data on the relative efficiency of government and non-government schools, because governments provide only part of the funding for non-government schools. Governments provided 57.1 per cent of non-government school funding in 2007, with the remaining 42.9 per cent sourced from private fees and fundraising (DEEWR unpublished, preliminary data). Section 4.3 contains additional information on government expenditure per student.

Size and scope

Descriptive information on the numbers of students, staff and schools can be found in tables 4A.1–6.

Structure

The structure of school education varies across states and territories. These differences can influence the interpretation of data presented under common classifications. Formal schooling consists of six to eight years of primary school education followed by five to six years of secondary school education, depending on the state or territory (figure 4.1). All states and territories divide school education into compulsory and non-compulsory components based primarily on age.

In 2007, the compulsory starting age for school education in states and territories was:

- 5 years of age (Tasmania)
- 6 years of age (NSW, Victoria, Queensland, SA, ACT and NT)
- from the beginning of the year in which the child reaches 6 years and 6 months (WA).

Although some students may undertake other/alternative approved courses/programs/activities (including approved employment) in some states, in general students were required to stay at school until:

- reaching 15 years of age (NSW, Victoria, ACT and NT)
- reaching 16 years of age (SA and Tasmania)
- reaching 16 years of age or completing year 10 (Queensland)
- the end of the year in which students turn 16 years of age (WA).

Schools

At the beginning of August 2007, there were 9579 schools in Australia (6517 primary schools, 1486 secondary schools and 1576 combined and special schools). The majority of schools were government owned and managed (71.5 per cent) (table 4.2). Settlement patterns (population dispersion), the age distribution of the population, and educational policy influence the distribution of schools by size and level in different jurisdictions. Nationally, 62.5 per cent of all secondary schools enrolled over 600 students (table 4A.19). A breakdown of primary and secondary schools by size for government, non-government and all schools is reported in tables 4A.17–19 respectively.

Figure 4.1 **Structure of primary and secondary schooling, 2007**

<table>
<tr><th>Level</th><th>NSW, Vic, Tas, ACT</th><th>WA, SA, NT[a] Qld</th></tr>
<tr><td>Year 12</td><td rowspan="6">SECONDARY</td><td rowspan="6">SECONDARY</td></tr>
<tr><td>Year 11</td></tr>
<tr><td>Year 10</td></tr>
<tr><td>Year 9</td></tr>
<tr><td>Year 8</td></tr>
<tr><td>Year 7</td></tr>
<tr><td>Year 6</td><td rowspan="6">PRIMARY</td><td rowspan="6">PRIMARY</td></tr>
<tr><td>Year 5</td></tr>
<tr><td>Year 4</td></tr>
<tr><td>Year 3</td></tr>
<tr><td>Year 2</td></tr>
<tr><td>Year 1</td></tr>
<tr><td>Pre-year 1</td><td>Kindergarten (NSW, ACT)
Preparatory (Vic, Tas)</td><td>Preparatory (Qld)[b]
Pre- primary (WA)
Reception (SA)[c]
Transition (NT)[d]</td></tr>
</table>

[a] In some places in the NT, secondary schooling begins at year 7. With the introduction of Middle Schools in 2008, secondary schooling will begin at year 7 throughout the NT. [b] In QLD a non-compulsory preparatory year of schooling (prep) in the year before year 1 (replacing a part time preschool program) commenced in 2007 and was universally offered to all students aged five at 30 June 2008. The implementation of the preparatory year was via a phase-in of a half cohort of students aged 5 to 5.5 years in 2007, with the first full cohort of students (aged 4.5 to 5.5 years) to be enrolled in 2008. [c] SA has an intake for each term. [d] The NT has an intake for terms 1–3 of its 4 terms.

Source: Adapted from ABS (2008) *Schools Australia 2007*, Cat. No. 4221.0.

Student body

There were 3.4 million full time equivalent (FTE) student enrolments in primary and secondary schools in August 2007 (see section 4.6 for a definition of FTE student). Nationally, 49.1 per cent of FTE students in all schools were female (table 4.3).

A higher proportion of FTE students was enrolled in primary schools (57.5 per cent) than in secondary schools (42.5 per cent) (table 4.3). Differences in schooling structures influence enrolment patterns. Primary school education in Queensland, WA, SA and the NT, for example, includes year 7 whereas all other jurisdictions include year 7 in secondary school (figure 4.1). The proportion of students enrolled in primary school education would be expected to be higher in jurisdictions that include year 7 in primary school (table 4.3).

Nationally, the proportion of FTE students enrolled in government schools was 66.5 per cent. A higher proportion of FTE students were enrolled in government schools at primary level (70.1 per cent) than at secondary level (61.5 per cent) (table 4.3).

Table 4.2 **Summary of school characteristics, August 2007**

	NSW	*Vic*	*Qld*	*WA*	*SA*	*Tas*	*ACT*	*NT*	*Aust*
Government schools (no.)									
Primary	1 643	1 204	936	510	433	140	59	84	5 009
Secondary	369	258	176	98	72	39	20	11	1 043
Combined[a]	66	55	91	92	77	26	5	49	461
Special schools[b]	112	76	47	69	20	5	4	5	338
Combined and special schools	178	131	138	161	97	31	9	54	799
Total	**2 190**	**1 593**	**1 250**	**769**	**602**	**210**	**88**	**149**	**6 851**
Non-government schools (no.)									
Primary	507	433	237	153	109	29	26	14	1 508
Secondary	162	112	84	42	23	7	6	7	443
Combined[a]	221	149	142	103	66	30	12	15	738
Special schools[b]	27	5	2	1	3	1	–	–	39
Combined and special schools	248	154	144	104	69	31	12	15	777
Total	**917**	**699**	**465**	**299**	**201**	**67**	**44**	**36**	**2 728**
All schools (no.)									
Primary	2 150	1 637	1 173	663	542	169	85	98	6 517
Secondary	531	370	260	140	95	46	26	18	1 486
Combined[a]	287	204	233	195	143	56	17	64	1 199
Special schools[b]	139	81	49	70	23	6	4	5	377
Combined and special schools	426	285	282	265	166	62	21	69	1 576
Total	**3 107**	**2 292**	**1 715**	**1 068**	**803**	**277**	**132**	**185**	**9 579**
Proportion of schools that are government schools (%)									
Primary	76.4	73.5	79.8	76.9	79.9	82.8	69.4	85.7	76.9
Secondary	69.5	69.7	67.7	70.0	75.8	84.8	76.9	61.1	70.2
Combined[a]	23.0	27.0	39.1	47.2	53.8	46.4	29.4	76.6	38.4
Special schools[b]	80.6	93.8	95.9	98.6	87.0	83.3	100.0	100.0	89.7
Combined and special schools	41.8	46.0	48.9	60.8	58.4	50.0	42.9	78.3	50.7
All schools	**70.5**	**69.5**	**72.9**	**72.0**	**75.0**	**75.8**	**66.7**	**80.5**	**71.5**
Proportion of primary schools (%)									
Government	75.0	75.6	74.9	66.3	71.9	66.7	67.0	56.4	73.1
Non-government	55.3	61.9	51.0	51.2	54.2	43.3	59.1	38.9	55.3
All schools	69.2	71.4	68.4	62.1	67.5	61.0	64.4	53.0	68.0

a Combined primary and secondary schools. **b** Special schools provide special instruction for students with a physical and/or mental disability/impairment, or with social problems. Students must exhibit one or more of the following characteristics before enrolment is allowed: mental or physical disability or impairment, slow learning ability, social or emotional problems, and in custody, on remand or in hospital. **–** Nil or rounded to zero.

Source: ABS (2008 and unpublished) *Schools Australia 2007,* Cat. No. 4221.0; tables 4A.1–3.

Table 4.3 **FTE student enrolments, August 2007[a, b]**

	NSW	*Vic*	*Qld*	*WA*	*SA*	*Tas*	*ACT*	*NT*	*Aust*
Total FTE student enrolments at level of education ('000)									
Primary schools	618	454	429	211	157	45	31	26	1971
Secondary schools	492	382	271	135	98	38	29	13	1456
All schools	**1110**	**835**	**700**	**345**	**255**	**83**	**59**	**39**	**3427**
Proportion of FTE students who were enrolled in government schools (%)									
Primary schools	69.8	68.7	72.1	71.3	67.7	75.3	61.1	79.0	70.1
Secondary schools	62.4	59.1	63.2	59.4	62.0	68.7	55.1	69.1	61.5
All schools	**66.5**	**64.3**	**68.7**	**66.6**	**65.5**	**72.3**	**58.2**	**75.7**	**66.5**
Proportion of FTE students who were female (all schools) (%)									
Primary schools	48.7	48.7	48.6	48.4	48.7	48.6	49.2	48.3	48.6
Secondary schools	49.6	49.8	49.7	49.7	49.8	50.1	49.1	49.6	49.7
All schools	**49.1**	**49.2**	**49.0**	**48.9**	**49.1**	**49.3**	**49.1**	**48.7**	**49.1**
Proportion of FTE students who were enrolled in primary education (%)									
Government schools	58.4	58.0	64.4	65.3	63.7	56.6	54.5	69.9	60.7
Non-government schools	50.3	47.7	54.5	52.6	57.8	48.5	48.3	57.9	51.2
All schools	**55.7**	**54.3**	**61.3**	**61.0**	**61.7**	**54.4**	**51.9**	**67.0**	**57.5**

a Students enrolled in special schools are included, with special school students of primary school age and/or year level included in the primary figures and those of secondary school age and/or year level included in the secondary figures. **b** Results of calculations may vary from the table due to rounding differences.

Source: ABS (2008 and unpublished) *Schools Australia 2007*, Cat. No. 4221.0; tables 4A.1–4.

Total full time student enrolments in schools in Australia were relatively stable over the five years to 2007, increasing by approximately 0.7 per cent each year between August 2003 and August 2007 (table 4A.21).

The proportion of full time students enrolled in non-government schools increased between 2003 and 2007 in all states and territories. Total non-government school enrolments expanded by 1.9 per cent per year, while full time government school enrolments increased by an average of 0.2 per cent per year (table 4A.21). The expansion of full time enrolments in non-government schools was from a lower base than that for government schools. In absolute terms, full time students in government schools increased from 2 254 632 in 2003 to 2 268 377 in 2007. Full time students in non-government schools increased from 1 063 988 in 2003 to 1 148 146 in 2007 (table 4A.20).

Part time secondary students form a significant proportion of enrolments in some jurisdictions (table 4.4). Part time courses are available to secondary students, including mature age students attending colleges and those studying years 11 or 12 or short courses (lasting five to 22 weeks). The proportion of secondary school students who were enrolled part time in 2007 varied considerably across jurisdictions, partly because jurisdictions' education authorities have different policy and organisational arrangements for part time study, as well as different

definitions of what constitutes part time study. The number of part time courses available also varied considerably across jurisdictions.

Table 4.4 **Part time secondary school students in government schools**

	NSW	*Vic*	*Qld*	*WA*	*SA*	*Tas*	*ACT*	*NT*	*Aust*
Part time secondary school students in government schools (no.)[a]									
2003	2 647	3 093	3 786	2 583	6 623	2 578	48	888	22 246
2004	2 441	3 106	3 764	2 925	6 818	2 260	25	1 043	22 382
2005	2 404	2 898	3 836	2 824	6 435	1 870	36	1 084	21 387
2006	2 425	2 802	3 635	2 492	6 630	1 762	8	1 109	20 863
2007	2 243	2 292	3 226	2 315	6 716	1 620	3	743	19 158
Proportion of secondary school students in government schools who were part time students (%)[b]									
2003	0.9	1.4	2.3	3.1	10.3	9.3	0.3	9.6	2.5
2004	0.8	1.4	2.3	3.5	10.7	8.3	0.2	10.9	2.5
2005	0.8	1.3	2.3	3.4	10.1	6.9	0.2	11.2	2.4
2006	0.8	1.2	2.1	3.0	10.4	6.5	0.1	11.4	2.3
2007	0.7	1.0	1.9	2.8	10.5	6.1	–	8.0	2.1

a Absolute number of part time secondary students. **b** Absolute number of part time secondary students divided by absolute number of full time and part time secondary students. – Nil or rounded to zero.

Source: ABS (2004, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008 and unpublished) *Schools Australia* (various years and unpublished) Cat. No. 4221.0; table 4A.1.

Special needs groups

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

- Indigenous students
- students from language backgrounds other than English (LBOTE)
- students with disabilities
- geographically remote students
- students from families of low socioeconomic status.

Government schools provide education for a high proportion of students from special needs groups. In 2007, 86.5 per cent of Indigenous students and 80.0 per cent of students with disabilities, for example, attended government schools (tables 4A.22 and 4A.24). This chapter reports on the proportions of Indigenous students, LBOTE students, students with disabilities and students who are geographically remote. Further information on student body mix in government, non-government and all schools is in tables 4A.25–27. Care needs to be taken in interpreting this information because some definitions of special needs students differ across states and territories.

Indigenous students

The proportion of full time Indigenous students in schools varies greatly across jurisdictions (table 4.5). Table 4A.22 provides additional information on Indigenous enrolments.

In all jurisdictions, the proportion of full time Indigenous students was higher in government schools than in non-government schools. Nationally, the proportion of full time Indigenous students was 5.6 per cent for government schools and 1.7 per cent for non-government schools in 2007 (table 4.5).

Table 4.5 **Indigenous students as a proportion of all students, 2007[a]**

	NSW	*Vic*	*Qld*	*WA*	*SA*	*Tas*	*ACT*	*NT*	*Aust*
Government schools	5.1	1.4	7.8	8.2	4.6	7.6	2.6	43.4	5.6
Non-government schools	1.3	0.3	2.6	3.1	1.0	3.0	1.1	29.6	1.7
All schools	**3.9**	**1.0**	**6.2**	**6.5**	**3.3**	**6.3**	**2.0**	**40.0**	**4.3**

a Absolute numbers of Indigenous and all full time students.

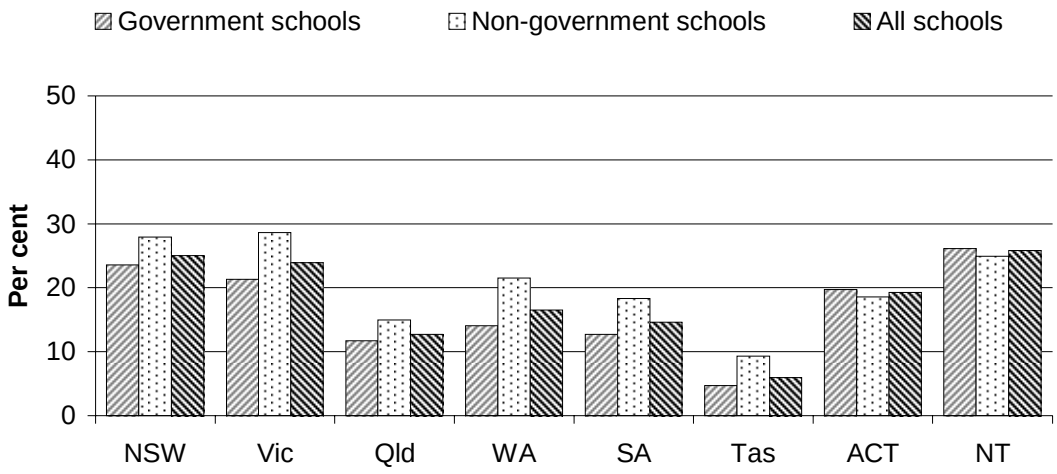
Source: ABS (2008) *Schools Australia 2007*, Cat. No. 4221.0; table 4A.22.

LBOTE students

The proportion of LBOTE students is based on data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) 2006 Census of Population and Housing. Students are counted as having a language background other than English if their home language is not English or if they (or at least one parent) were born in a non-English speaking country.

The proportion of LBOTE students in government and non-government schools varied across jurisdictions in 2006 (figure 4.2).

Figure 4.2 **Students from a language background other than English as a proportion of all students, 2006[a, b]**



a Absolute numbers of LBOTE students are sourced from the 2006 Census of Population and Housing, whilst data on all full time students are sourced from the ABS Schools Australia collection. **b** See table 4A.23 for details of LBOTE definitions.

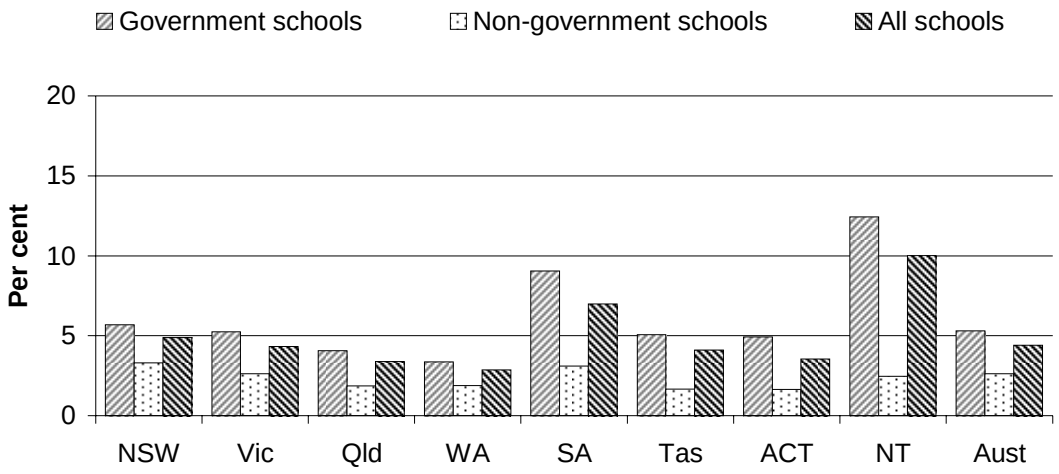
Source: DEEWR (unpublished) based on the ABS 2006 Census of Population and Housing; table 4A.23.

Students with disabilities

Students with disabilities are educated in both mainstream and special schools. Students with disabilities are those students who satisfy the criteria for enrolment in special education services or programs provided in the State or Territory in which they are enrolled. These criteria vary across jurisdictions.

Nationally, the proportion of students with disabilities for all schools was 4.4 per cent and more than twice as high in government schools (5.3 per cent), compared with non-government schools (2.6 per cent) in 2007 (figure 4.3).

Figure 4.3 **Funded students with disabilities as a proportion of all students, 2007[a, b, c]**



a The ABS total student data refer to the absolute number of full time students (not FTE students). **b** To be an eligible student with disabilities, the student (among other things) must satisfy the criteria for enrolment in special education services or special education programs provided by the government of the State or Territory in which the student resides. Data should be used with caution as these criteria vary across jurisdictions; for example, SA data include a large number of students in the communication and language impairment category. This subset of students is not counted by other states/territories under funded students with disabilities. Other states/territories fund these students with other specific programs. **c** The 'funded' student data used by DEEWR refer to the FTE number of students that qualify for DEEWR recurrent funding. This excludes Full Fee Paying Overseas students from both the government and non-government sectors as well as a number of schools in the NT (these are funded through the Grants Commission process), and on Christmas and Cocos Islands (funded through the Department of Transport and Regional Services). The DEEWR funded figures also include pre year 1 students in part time programmes in Queensland schools.

Source: ABS (2008) *Schools Australia 2007*, Cat. No. 4221.0; DEEWR (unpublished); table 4A.24.

Geographically remote students

Identification of geographically remote students is based on the school location according to the metropolitan zone, provincial zone, remote areas and very remote areas as defined in the MCEETYA agreed classification.[1] The proportion of students attending schools in remote areas varies greatly across jurisdictions (table 4.6).

Nationally, the proportion of students enrolled in schools in remote areas was 1.5 per cent and more than twice as high in government schools (1.8 per cent),

[1] To investigate the possibility that these data may understate the proportion of students in remote areas as a result of relying on school location rather than students' home location, the 2001 MCEETYA data were compared with data derived from the 2001 Census. The two data sets were found to be similar, except that Tasmania had about one third more remote area students in the Census data. This result may be indicative for the data in this Report.

compared with non-government schools (0.8 per cent) in 2007. Nationally, the proportion of students enrolled in schools in very remote areas was 0.9 per cent and four times as high in government schools (1.2 per cent), compared with non-government schools (0.3 per cent) in 2007 (table 4.6).

Table 4A.28 includes data relating to students attending primary and secondary schools located in metropolitan and provincial zones, as well as remote and very remote areas (see section 4.6 for a definition of the geographic classification used).

Table 4.6 **Students attending schools in remote and very remote areas as a proportion of all students, 2007[a, b]**

	NSW	*Vic*	*Qld*	*WA*	*SA*	*Tas*	*ACT*	*NT*	*Aust*
Remote areas									
Government schools	0.5	0.1	2.2	5.9	3.9	1.0	..	17.5	1.8
Non-government schools	0.2	–	0.8	2.0	1.2	0.5	..	30.3	0.8
All schools	**0.4**	**0.1**	**1.8**	**4.6**	**3.0**	**0.9**	**..**	**20.6**	**1.5**
Very remote areas									
Government schools	0.1	..	1.7	3.4	1.1	0.5	..	29.2	1.2
Non-government schools	–	..	0.3	1.4	0.2	–	..	12.0	0.3
All schools	**0.1**	**..**	**1.3**	**2.7**	**0.8**	**0.4**	**..**	**25.0**	**0.9**

a Proportions are based on school sector (for example, students in government schools in remote areas as a proportion of all government school students). **b** Victoria has no very remote areas. The ACT has no remote or very remote areas. .. Not applicable. – Nil or rounded to zero.

Source: DEEWR (unpublished); table 4A.28.

4.2 Framework of performance indicators

This chapter provides performance information on the equity, effectiveness and efficiency of government expenditure on all schools in Australia.

Governments own and operate government schools, and have a direct interest in the equity, efficiency and effectiveness of their operation. In addition, governments are committed to providing access to education for all students and contribute to the funding of non-government schools. However, this chapter does not report on non-government sources of funding, and so does not compare the efficiency of government and non-government schools.

Box 4.1 describes the national goals for schooling, as endorsed by the MCEETYA. Although these national goals were superseded on 5 December 2008 with the new *Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians*, the goals

outlined below are still applicable for the reference years (up to and including 2007) reported in this chapter.

Box 4.1 **National goals for schooling in the 21st century**

The MCEETYA endorsed in April 1999 the following set of national goals for school education.

Preamble

Australia's future depends upon each citizen having the necessary knowledge, understanding, skills and values for a productive and rewarding life in an educated, just and open society. High quality schooling is central to achieving this vision.

This statement of national goals for schooling provides broad directions to guide schools and education authorities in securing these outcomes for students.

It acknowledges the capacity of all young people to learn, and the role of schooling in developing that capacity. It also acknowledges the role of parents as the first educators of their children and the central role of teachers in the learning process.

Schooling provides a foundation for young Australians' intellectual, physical, social, moral, spiritual and aesthetic development. By providing a supportive and nurturing environment, schooling contributes to the development of students' sense of self-worth, enthusiasm for learning and optimism for the future.

Governments set the public policies that foster the pursuit of excellence, enable a diverse range of educational choices and aspirations, safeguard the entitlement of all young people to high quality schooling, promote the economic use of public resources, and uphold the contribution of schooling to a socially cohesive and culturally rich society.

Common and agreed goals for schooling establish a foundation for action among State and Territory governments with their constitutional responsibility for schooling, the Australian Government, non-government school authorities and all those who seek the best possible educational outcomes for young Australians, to improve the quality of schooling nationally.

The achievement of these common and agreed national goals entails a commitment to collaboration for the purposes of:

- further strengthening schools as learning communities where teachers, students and their families work in partnership with business, industry and the wider community
- enhancing the status and quality of the teaching profession
- continuing to develop curriculum and related systems of assessment, accreditation and credentialling that promote quality and are nationally recognised and valued

(Continued on next page)

Box 4.1 **(Continued)**

- increasing public confidence in school education through explicit and defensible standards that guide improvement in students' levels of educational achievement and through which the effectiveness, efficiency and equity of schooling can be measured and evaluated.

These national goals provide a basis for investment in schooling to enable all young people to engage effectively with an increasingly complex world. This world will be characterised by advances in information and communication technologies, population diversity arising from international mobility and migration, and complex environmental and social challenges.

The achievement of the national goals for schooling will assist young people to contribute to Australia's social, cultural and economic development in local and global contexts. Their achievement will also assist young people to develop a disposition towards learning throughout their lives so that they can exercise their rights and responsibilities as citizens of Australia.

Goals

Schooling should develop fully the talents and capacities of all students. In particular, when students leave schools they should:

1. have the capacity for, and skills in, analysis and problem solving and the ability to communicate ideas and information, to plan and organise activities and to collaborate with others
2. 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
3. have the capacity to exercise judgment 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 accept responsibility for their own actions
4. be active and informed citizens with an understanding and appreciation of Australia's system of government and civic life
5. have employment related skills and an understanding of the work environment, career options and pathways as a foundation for, and positive attitudes towards, vocational education and training, further education, employment and life-long learning
6. be confident, creative and productive users of new technologies, particularly information and communication technologies, and understand the impact of those technologies on society

(Continued on next page)

Box 4.1 **(Continued)**

7. have an understanding of, and concern for, stewardship of the natural environment, and the knowledge and skills to contribute to ecologically sustainable development and
8. have the knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary to establish and maintain a healthy lifestyle, and for the creative and satisfying use of leisure time.

In terms of curriculum, students should have:

1. attained high standards of knowledge, skills and understanding through a comprehensive and balanced curriculum in the compulsory years of schooling encompassing the agreed eight key learning areas
   (a) the arts
   (b) English
   (c) health and physical education
   (d) languages other than English
   (e) mathematics
   (f) science
   (g) studies of society and environment
   (h) technology
2. attained the skills of numeracy and English literacy, such that every student should be numerate, able to read, write, spell and communicate at an appropriate level
3. participated in programs of vocational learning during the compulsory years and have had access to vocational education and training programs as part of their senior secondary studies and
4. participated in programs and activities which foster and develop enterprise skills, including those skills which will allow them maximum flexibility and adaptability in the future.

Schooling should be socially just so that:

1. students' outcomes from schooling are free from the effects of negative forms of discrimination based on sex, language, culture and ethnicity, religion or disability; and of differences arising from students' socioeconomic background or geographic location
2. the learning outcomes of educationally disadvantaged students improve and, over time, match those of other students

(Continued on next page)

Box 4.1 **(Continued)**

3. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students have equitable access to, and opportunities in, schooling so that their learning outcomes improve and, over time, match those of other students
4. all students understand and acknowledge the value of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures to Australian society and possess the knowledge, skills and understanding to contribute to, and benefit from, reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians
5. all students understand and acknowledge the value of cultural and linguistic diversity, and possess the knowledge, skills and understanding to contribute to, and benefit from, such diversity in the Australian community and internationally and
6. all students have access to the high quality education necessary to enable the completion of school education to year 12 or its vocational equivalent and that provides clear and recognised pathways to employment and further education and training.

Source: Adapted from MCEETYA (1999).

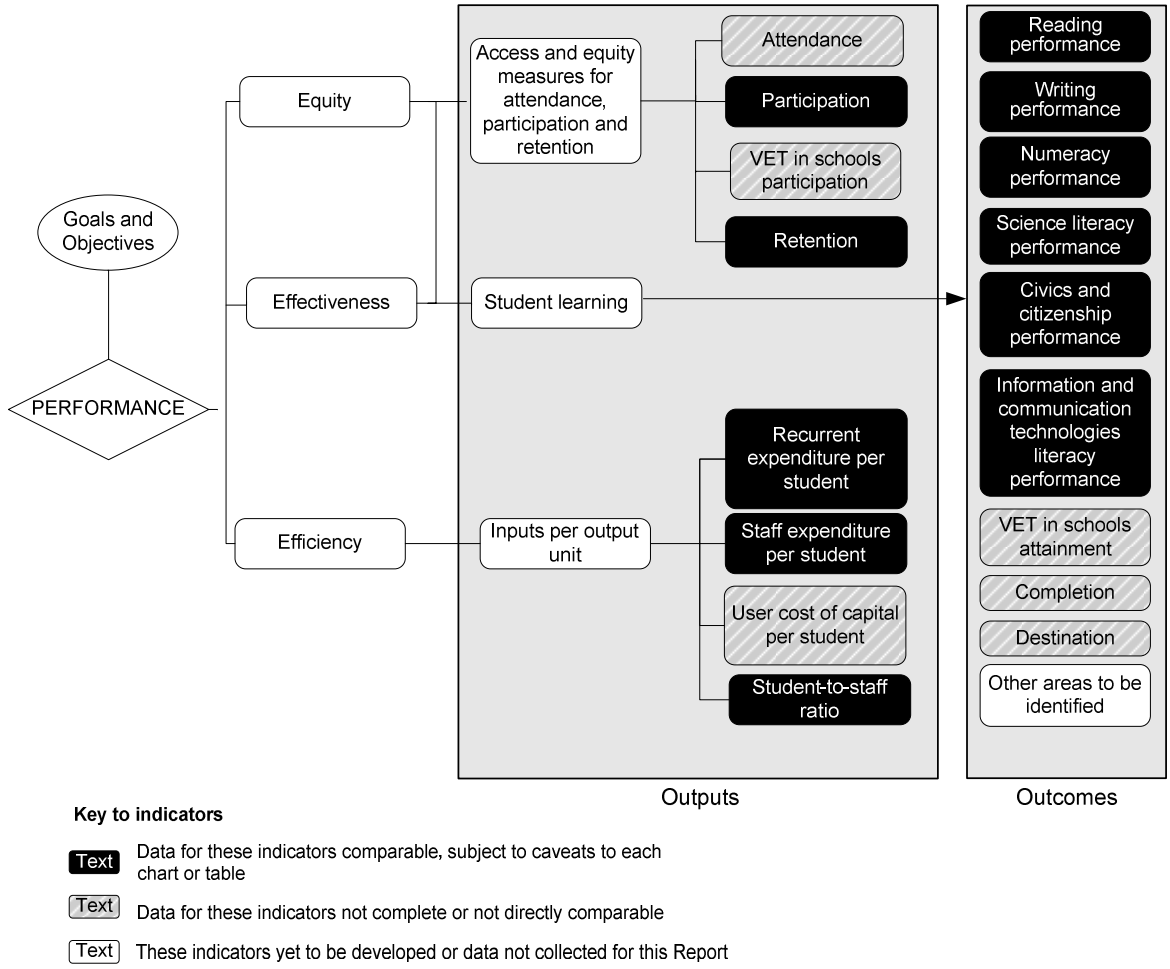
The performance of school education is reported against the indicator framework in figure 4.4. This framework is consistent with the national goals for schooling (box 4.1). The performance indicator framework shows which data are comparable in this Report. For data that are not considered directly comparable, the text includes relevant caveats and supporting commentary. Chapter 1 discusses data comparability from a Report-wide perspective (see section 1.6).

4.3 Key performance indicator results

Different delivery contexts and locations influence the equity, effectiveness and efficiency of school education services. Appendix A contains short statistical profiles on each State and Territory, which may assist in interpreting the performance indicators presented in this chapter.

The effectiveness indicators for school education in this chapter are based on achievement against the national goals for schooling. Access and equity objectives of school education can be assessed by comparing outcomes for special needs groups, such as Indigenous and LBOTE students, with those for all students. Outcomes are compared for special needs groups for indicators such as reading, writing and numeracy performance, completion rates, retention rates and participation rates, where possible.

Figure 4.4 **Performance indicators for school education**



Care should be taken in interpreting these performance indicators as there are a number of interrelated factors affecting these indicators including:

- aspects of schooling (for example, school climate, broader curricula)
- characteristics of students (for example, student engagement and connectedness, length of time spent in schooling, demographic characteristics)
- broader education environment (for example, availability of employment and further educational alternatives, population movements).

Outputs

Outputs are the actual services delivered (while outcomes are the impact of these services on the status of an individual or group) (see chapter 1, section 1.5).

Equity and effectiveness

Access and equity measures for school education attendance, participation and retention, and VET in schools participation, are reported.

Attendance

'Attendance' is an indicator of governments' objective to develop fully the talents and capacities of young people through equitable access to education and learning. National and international research confirms a link between attendance and student achievement, although the factors influencing attendance and achievement are numerous and interrelated in complex ways. Attendance rates for special needs groups are an indication of the equity of access to school education (box 4.2).

Box 4.2 **Attendance**

'Attendance' (school attendance rate) is defined as the number of actual full time equivalent 'student days attended' over the collection period as a percentage of the total number of possible student days attended over the collection period.

Holding other factors equal, a high student attendance rate is desirable.

Student attendance is to be measured over a single consistent time period (the first semester) for all schools. However, currently the measure is transitional, with most jurisdictions providing government schools data for the first semester, whereas non-government schools are providing data for the last 20 days in May.

Data on student attendance are collected for each state and territory by:

- school sector (government, Catholic and independent)
- sex
- year level (1–10)
- Indigenous status (Indigenous and non-Indigenous students).

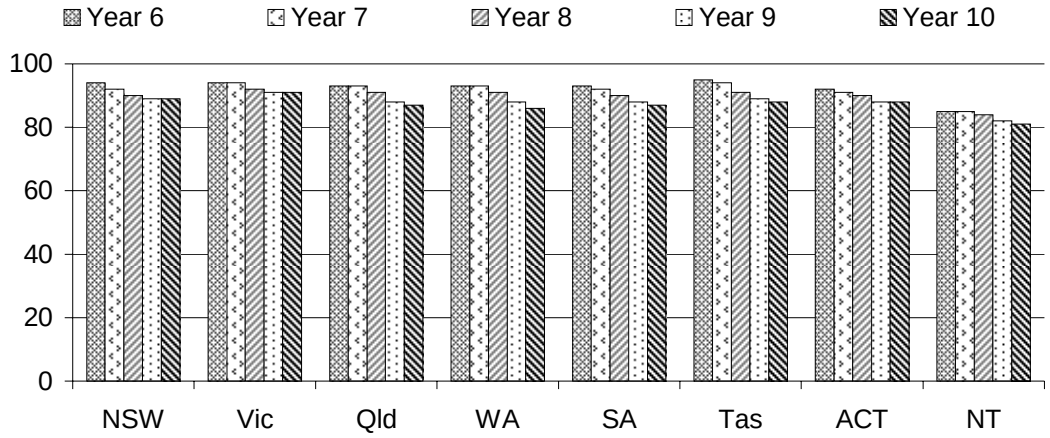
Data for this indicator are not directly comparable.

School attendance is measured in a specific collection period during the school year (see box 4.2 for details), and results may not be representative of school attendance throughout the school year.

For all students, attendance was fairly stable across years 1–5. In general, from year 6 attendance gradually declined to year 10 (typically the end of compulsory schooling) (tables 4A.134–139).

In 2007, the student attendance rate in government schools was greater than 80 per cent across all year levels and all jurisdictions (figure 4.5 and table 4A.134).

Figure 4.5 **Student attendance rate, government schools, 2007**



a See source for detailed explanatory notes regarding data.

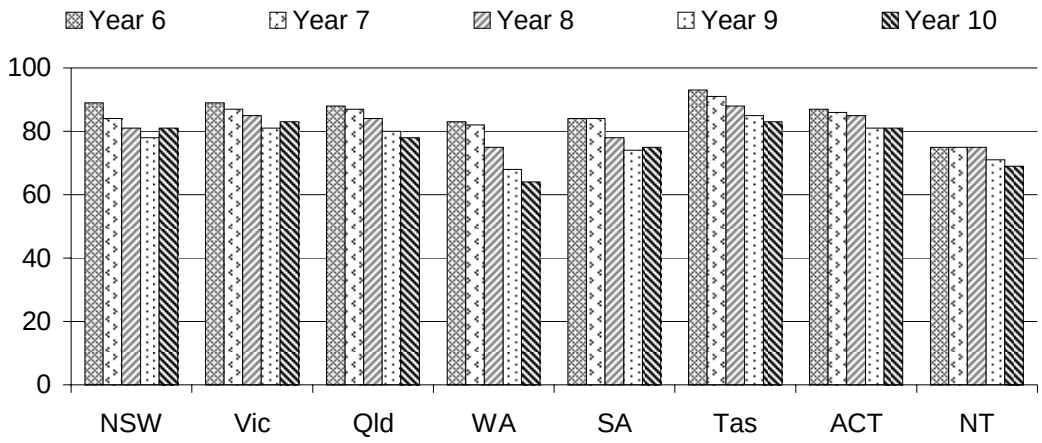
Source: MCEETYA (2009) *National Report on Schooling in Australia 2007: Participation, attainment and attendance chapter*; table 4A.134.

In government schools, non-Indigenous students had higher attendance rates than Indigenous students across all year levels in all jurisdictions (table 4A.135). However, the percentage point differences varied across states and territories. A similar pattern to the government schools was observed for non-government schools (independent and Catholic schools) in most jurisdictions (tables 4A.137 and 4A.139).

Care should be exercised in relation to the data for Indigenous students, particularly in some jurisdictions and in the non-government sectors, due to small population sizes.

Data on student attendance rates for all school sectors are also available disaggregated by sex (tables 4A.134, 4A.136 and 4A.138).

Figure 4.6 **Student attendance rate, government schools, Indigenous students, 2007[a]**



a See source for detailed explanatory notes regarding data.

Source: MCEETYA (2009) *National Report on Schooling in Australia 2007: Participation, attainment and attendance chapter*; table 4A.135.

Participation

'Participation' is an indicator of governments' objective to develop fully the talents and capacities of young people through participation in secondary schooling, to enable all students to have access to the high quality education necessary to enable completion of school education to year 12 or its equivalent (box 4.3).

Box 4.3 **Participation**

'Participation' (school education participation rate) is defined as the number of full time and part time school students of a particular age expressed as a proportion of the estimated resident population of the same age. Participation rates are reported nationally and by State/Territory for each year for 14–19 year olds.

Holding other factors constant, a higher or increasing participation rate suggests an improvement in educational outcomes through greater access to school education. Participation rates in school education need to be interpreted with care because rates are influenced by jurisdictional differences in age/grade structures, and the participation rate is an age-based rate. The rate is comparable over time within a jurisdiction, but may not be directly comparable across jurisdictions where there are differences in the age/grade structure.

(Continued on next page)

Box 4.3 **(Continued)**

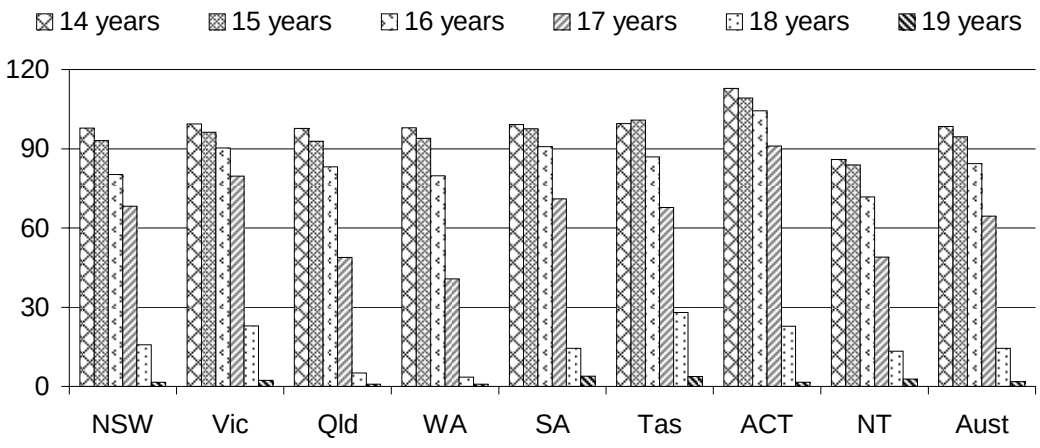
This indicator does not provide information on young people who develop their talents and capacities through other options for delivering post-compulsory education and training — for example, work-based training and enrolment in technical and further education (TAFE) delivered programs. A broader participation indicator that accounts for some of these factors is reported in the 'Early childhood, education and training preface'.

Data for this indicator are comparable.

Nationally, 58.9 per cent of 14–19 year olds were enrolled in schools in 2007 (table 4A.121). School participation rates varied by jurisdiction, age and sex. School participation rates for females (60.0 per cent) were 2.2 percentage points higher than those for males (57.8 per cent). School participation rates declined as students exceeded the maximum compulsory school age (figure 4.7).

Data on school participation rates in this Report differs to those presented in earlier Reports as the scope has been expanded to include part time students and students aged 14 years (earlier Reports included full time students aged 15–19 years only).

Figure 4.7 **School participation rate of people aged 14–19 years in school education, all schools, 2007[a, b]**



a Proportion of the population who were enrolled as full time or part time students in August 2007. **b** Participation rates in the ACT exceed 100 per cent as a result of NSW residents from surrounding areas enrolling in ACT schools.

Source: ABS (2008) *Schools Australia 2007*, Cat. No. 4221.0; table 4A.121.

Vocational education and training (VET) in schools participation

'VET in schools participation' is an indicator of governments' objective to provide vocational education and training in schools to assist all young people to secure their own futures by enhancing their transition to a broad range of post-school options and pathways (box 4.4).

This indicator was previously presented as an outcome indicator in the Report. However, the indicator has been moved to the 'equity and effectiveness' section for this Report in recognition of the shift in emphasis of VET in schools from being an outcome to being an enabler for students in accessing school education.

Box 4.4 **VET in schools participation**

'VET in schools participation' (VET in schools participation rate) is defined as the number of school students undertaking VET (with apprenticeships and traineeships disaggregated) as part of their senior secondary school certificate in a calendar year, as a proportion of all school students undertaking a senior secondary school certificate in that year.

Holding other factors constant, a higher or increasing VET in schools participation rate may suggest greater access to broader secondary schooling options than traditional school education. Greater access can promote engagement in learning and the uptake of vocational career pathways.

Care needs to be taken in interpreting this indicator as it may be influenced by a number of factors which differ across states and territories, such as:

- definition of VET in schools
- senior secondary certificate requirements
- access to VET in schools prior to year 11
- number of VET in schools options and pathways available to students, particularly those in rural and remote areas.

Data for this indicator are not directly comparable.

From 2005, the MCEETYA agreed that the Australian Vocational Education and Training Management Information Statistical Standard (AVETMISS) is the standard for reporting VET in Schools activity in Australia. The MCEETYA further agreed that these data would be collected by the senior secondary assessment authority in each State and Territory and reported through State Training Authorities to the national VET database compiled by the National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER).

Data for 2005 were included in detail in this chapter in the 2008 Report (and are contained in attachment tables 4A.131–133 for this Report). Updated data were not available for the 2009 Report.

Retention

'Retention' to the final years of schooling is an indicator of governments' objective that all students have access to high quality education and training necessary to enable the completion of school education to year 12 or its equivalent (box 4.5).

Box 4.5 **Retention**

'Retention' (apparent retention rate) is defined as the number of full time school students in a designated level/year of education as a percentage of their respective cohort group (which is either at the commencement of their secondary schooling — at year 7 or 8 — or at year 10). Data are reported for:

- the proportion of students commencing secondary school at year 7 or 8 and continuing to year 10
- the proportion of students commencing secondary school at year 7 or 8 and continuing to year 12
- the proportion of year 10 students continuing to year 12.

The term 'apparent' is used because the indicator is derived from total numbers of students in each of the relevant year levels, rather than by tracking the retention of individual students. Data are reported for all students, Indigenous and non-Indigenous students, and for students in government and non-government schools.

Holding other factors constant, a higher or increasing apparent retention rate suggests that a large number of students are continuing to participate in school education, which is likely to result in improved educational outcomes.

This indicator does not include part time students or provide information on students who pursue year 12 (or equivalent qualifications) through non-school pathways.

Care needs be taken in interpretation because the apparent retention rate does not take account of factors such as:

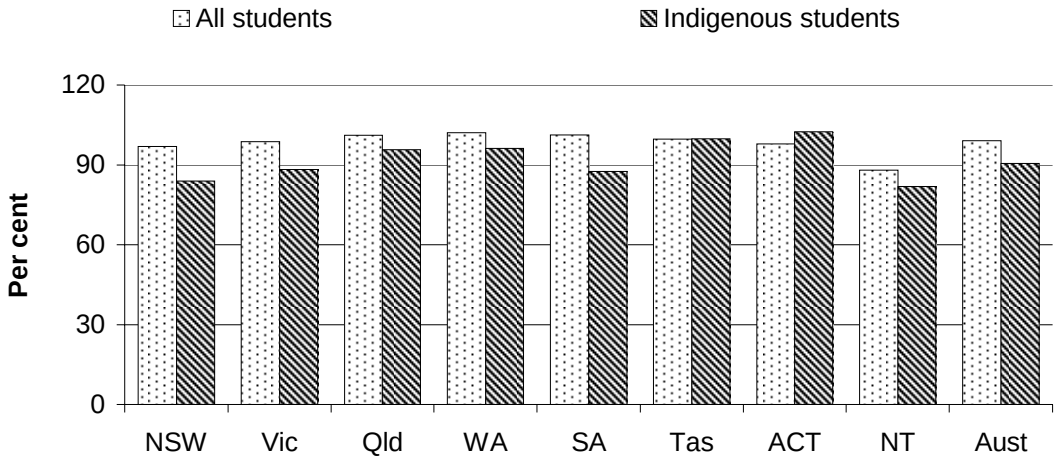
- students repeating a year of education or returning to education after a period of absence
- movement or migration of students between school sectors, between states/territories and between countries
- the impact of full fee paying overseas students.

Data for this indicator are comparable.

Apparent retention rates, from the commencement of secondary school at year 7 or 8 (figure 4.1 shows the differences across jurisdictions) to year 10, for all students in most jurisdictions were 98–100 per cent in 2007, with a national rate of 99.1 (figure 4.8). High rates are to be expected because normal year level progression means students in year 10 are generally of an age at which schooling is compulsory.

Retention rates for Indigenous students provide one measure of the equity of access to schooling. Retention rates to year 10 for Indigenous students were lower than those for all students in most jurisdictions. The national retention rate for Indigenous students was 90.5 per cent, or 8.6 percentage points lower than that for all students.

Figure 4.8 **Apparent retention rate from year 7 or 8 to year 10, full time secondary students, all schools, 2007[a, b, c, d]**



a Apparent retention rates are affected by factors that vary across jurisdictions. For this reason, variations in apparent retention rates over time within jurisdictions may be more useful than comparisons across jurisdictions. **b** Retention rates can exceed 100 per cent for a variety of reasons, including student transfers between jurisdictions. **c** The standard apparent retention rate calculation excludes part time students, which has implications for the interpretation of results for all jurisdictions, but particularly for SA, Tasmania and the NT where there are high proportions of part time students in government schools (table 4.4). **d** Ungraded students are not included in the calculation of apparent retention rates. This exclusion has particular implications for the NT, where 10.9 per cent of Indigenous secondary students were ungraded (compared with an average of 4.2 per cent for the rest of Australia), in 2007, and this should be considered when interpreting the data.

Source: ABS (2008) *Schools Australia 2007*, Cat. No. 4221.0; table 4A.127.

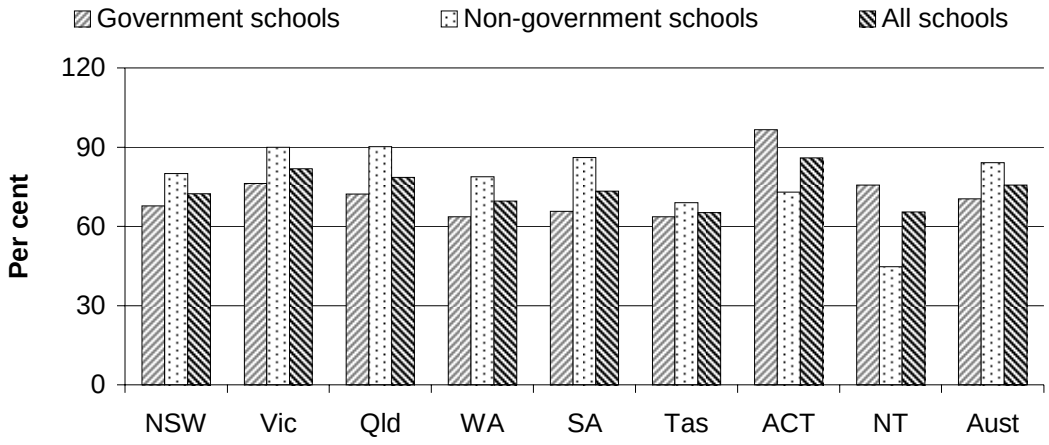
The apparent rate of retention from year 10 to year 12 has been derived by expressing the number of full time school students enrolled in year 12 in 2007 as a proportion of the number of full time school students enrolled in year 10 in 2005.

Factors affecting apparent retention can combine to result in a year 12 cohort that is substantially different in composition from the corresponding year 10 cohort — for example:

- in SA, if part time students are included in the 2007 year 12 total, then the apparent retention rate becomes 87.4 per cent, compared with 73.3 per cent for full time students only (table 4A.124)
- in some jurisdictions, young people may choose to complete their post compulsory education in the TAFE system rather than continue at school. In NSW, for example, 3534 students aged 15–19 years undertook their Higher School Certificate or other tertiary preparation studies through TAFE institutes in 2007 (NSW Government unpublished).

Nationally, the apparent retention rate from year 10 to year 12 for all schools was 75.6 per cent in 2007. The apparent retention rate from year 10 to year 12 for government schools was 70.5 per cent, and for non-government schools was 84.1 per cent. The apparent retention rates for both government schools and non-government schools varied across jurisdictions (figure 4.9).

Figure 4.9 **Apparent retention rate from year 10 to year 12, full time secondary students, by school type, 2007[a, b, c]**



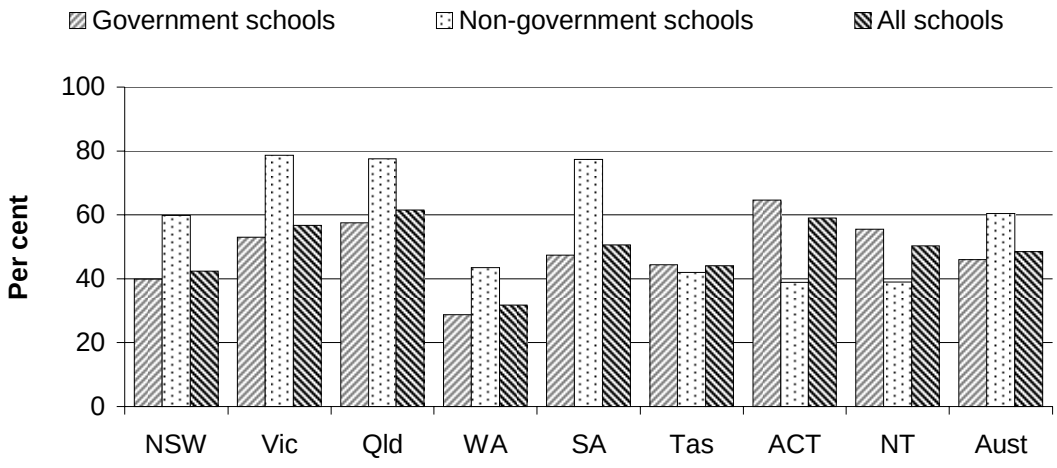
a Apparent retention rates are affected by factors that vary across jurisdictions. For this reason, variations in apparent retention rates over time within jurisdictions may be more useful than comparisons across jurisdictions. **b** Retention rates can exceed 100 per cent for a variety of reasons, including student transfers between jurisdictions and government and non-government schools after the base year. **c** The standard apparent retention rate calculation excludes part time students, which has implications for the interpretation of results for all jurisdictions, but particularly for SA, Tasmania and the NT where there are high proportions of part time students in government schools (table 4.4).

Source: ABS (2008) *Schools Australia 2007*, Cat. No. 4221.0; table 4A.124.

For government and non-government schools, apparent rates of retention from year 10 to year 12 for Indigenous students in 2007 varied across jurisdictions, but were consistently lower than rates for all students (figures 4.9 and 4.10). In interpreting this indicator, note that nationally 9.5 per cent of Indigenous students left school before year 10 (figure 4.8) — compared to 0.9 per cent of all students — so are not included in the base year for retention from year 10 to year 12. This baseline varies across jurisdictions. Further, Indigenous students as a proportion of all students was 5.6 per cent in government schools compared with 1.7 per cent in non-government schools and some jurisdictions have very low numbers of Indigenous students (table 4A.22).

Nationally, Indigenous retention from year 10 to year 12 for all schools in 2007 was 48.5 per cent (figure 4.10), compared to 75.6 per cent for all students. However, Indigenous retention from year 10 to year 12 for all schools has risen in the past five years from 45.7 per cent in 2003 to 48.5 per cent in 2007, with the gap in year 10 to year 12 retention rates between Indigenous students and all students decreasing from 31.2 percentage points in 2003 to 27.1 percentage points in 2007 (table 4A.127).

Figure 4.10 **Apparent retention rates from year 10 to year 12, Indigenous full time secondary students, 2007[a, b, c]**

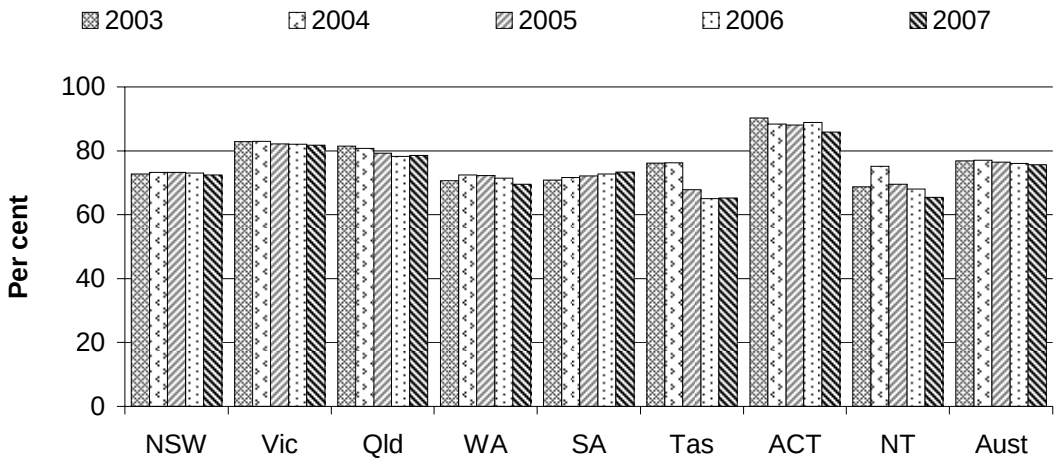


a Apparent retention rates are affected by factors that vary across jurisdictions. For this reason, variations in apparent retention rates over time within jurisdictions may be more useful than comparisons across jurisdictions. **b** The standard apparent retention rate calculation excludes part time students, which has implications for the interpretation of results for all jurisdictions, but particularly for SA, Tasmania and the NT where there are high proportions of part time students in government schools (table 4.4). **c** Ungraded students are not included in the calculation of apparent retention rates. This exclusion has particular implications for the NT, where 10.9 per cent of Indigenous secondary students are ungraded (compared with an average of 4.2 per cent for the rest of Australia), in 2007, and this should be considered when interpreting the data.

Source: ABS (2008) *Schools Australia 2007*, Cat. No. 4221.0; table 4A.124.

Nationally, apparent rates of retention for all full time students from year 7 or 8 to year 10 were steady around 97-98 per cent between 2003 and 2007, whilst the rate of retention from year 10 to year 12 has decreased each year from 77.1 per cent in 2004 to 75.6 per cent in 2007 (figure 4.11). Retention rates between years 10 and 12 for government and non-government schools are in attachment tables 4A.125-126.

Figure 4.11 **Apparent rates of retention from year 10 to year 12, full time secondary students, all schools[a, b, c]**



a Apparent retention rates are affected by factors that vary across jurisdictions. For this reason, variations in apparent retention rates over time within jurisdictions may be more useful than comparisons across jurisdictions. **b** The standard apparent retention rate calculation excludes part time students, which has implications for the interpretation of results for all jurisdictions, but particularly for SA, Tasmania and the NT where there are high proportions of part time students in government schools (table 4.4). **c** Ungraded students are not included in the calculation of apparent retention rates. This exclusion has particular implications for the NT, where 10.9 per cent of Indigenous secondary students are ungraded (compared with an average of 4.2 per cent for the rest of Australia), in 2007, and this should be considered when interpreting the data.

Source: ABS (2006, 2008) *Schools Australia*, Cat. No. 4221.0; table 4A.127.

Efficiency

Governments have an interest in achieving the best results from their expenditure on schooling, both as owners and operators of government schools, and as major providers of funds to the non-government school sector. An objective of the Steering Committee is to publish comparable estimates of costs. Ideally, such comparison should include the full range of costs to government. Where the full costs cannot be measured, estimating costs on a consistent basis is the best approach.

Table 4A.14 shows information on the comparability of the source expenditure data for government schools used for this chapter.

Recurrent expenditure per student

'Recurrent expenditure per student' is an indicator of governments' objective to fund and/or provide education in an efficient manner (box 4.6).

Box 4.6 **Recurrent expenditure per student**

'Recurrent expenditure per student' is defined as government recurrent expenditure per FTE student. It is reported for government and non-government schools by in-school primary, in-school secondary, out-of-school services and aggregations.

Holding other factors constant, a low or decreasing government recurrent expenditure per FTE student may represent better or improved efficiency.

A number of factors may influence government recurrent expenditure per student (see Commonwealth Grants Commission reference in chapter 1, section 1.5 for further details). This Report does not, however, make any cost adjustments based on these or any of the following factors. Care needs to be taken in interpretation of efficiency data because differences in the costs of educating students can be driven by:

- influences beyond the control of governments, such as a high proportion of geographically remote students and/or a dispersed population, as well as migration between states and territories
- economies of scale.

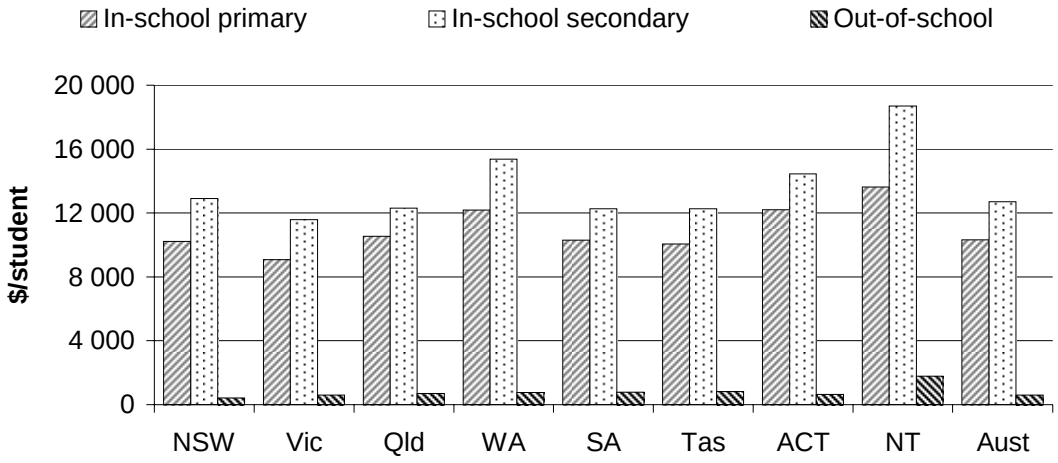
These factors may need to be considered when examining each jurisdiction's expenditure per student.

Efficiency data are difficult to interpret. While high or increasing government recurrent expenditure per student may reflect deteriorating efficiency, it may also reflect changes in aspects of schooling (increasing school leaving age, improving outcomes for Indigenous students and students from low socioeconomic backgrounds, broader curricula or enhancing teacher quality), or the characteristics of the education environment (such as population dispersion). Similarly, low or decreasing expenditure per student may reflect improving efficiency or lower quality (less effective education) or more narrowly defined curricula. Efficiency data need to be interpreted within the context of the effectiveness and equity indicators to derive an holistic view of performance.

Data for this indicator are comparable.

A proxy indicator of efficiency is the level of government inputs per unit of output (unit cost). Nationally, in-school government expenditure per FTE student in government primary schools was $10 327 and in-school government expenditure per FTE student in government secondary schools was $12 704 in 2006-07. Out-of-school government expenditure per FTE student in government schools was $611 in 2006-07 (figure 4.12).

Figure 4.12 **Government recurrent expenditure per FTE student, government schools, 2006-07[a, b]**

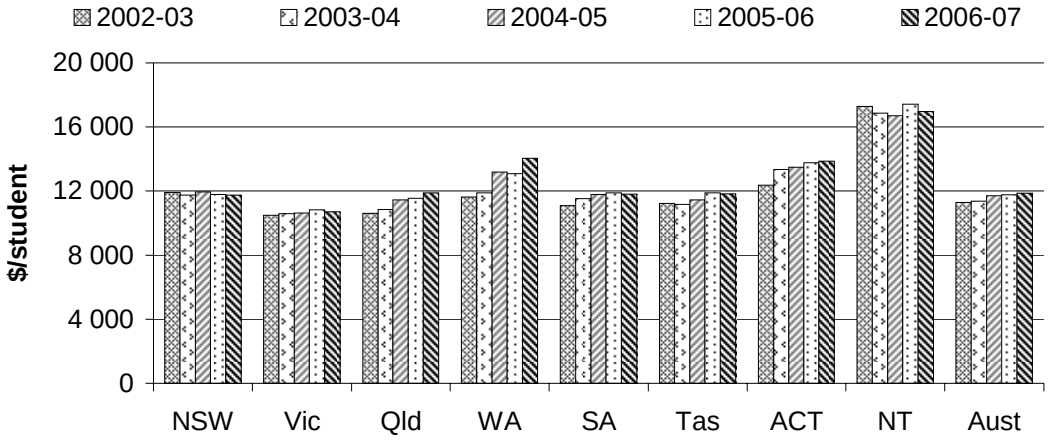


a See notes to tables 4A.12 for definitions and data caveats. **b** Payroll tax estimates have been included for WA and the ACT for comparability reasons.

Source: ABS (2008) *Schools Australia 2007*, Cat. No. 4221.0; MCEETYA (unpublished) NSSC; table 4A.12.

Nationally, government expenditure per FTE student in all government schools was $11 874 in 2006-07. It increased (in average annual real terms) between 2002-03 and 2006-07 by 1.3 per cent per year (figure 4.13).

Figure 4.13 **Government real recurrent expenditure per FTE student, government schools (2006-07 dollars)[a, b, c]**

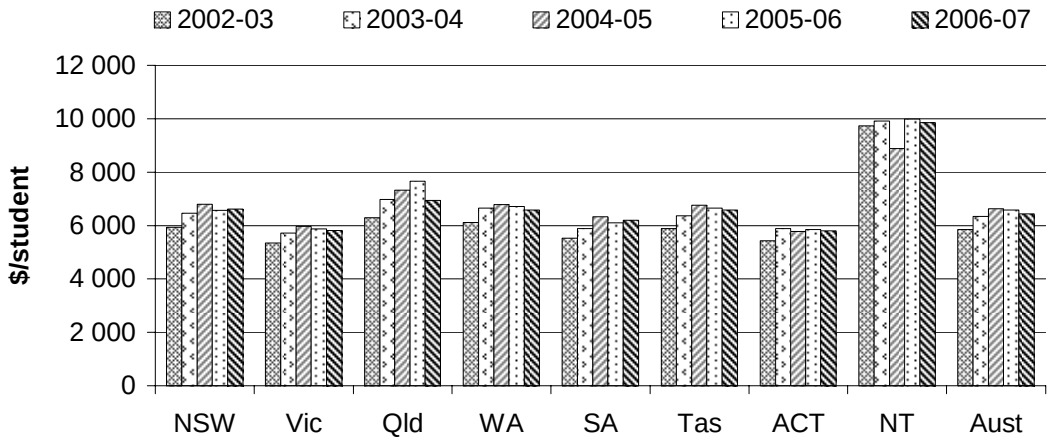


a See notes to table 4A.8 for definitions and data caveats. **b** Data for 2002-03 to 2005-06 have been adjusted to 2006-07 dollars using the gross domestic product (GDP) price deflator. **c** Payroll tax estimates have been included for WA and the ACT for comparability reasons.

Source: ABS (2004, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008) *Schools Australia*, Cat. No. 4221.0; MCEETYA (unpublished) NSSC; table 4A.8.

Nationally, government expenditure per FTE student in all non-government schools was $6442 in 2006-07. It increased (in average annual real terms) between 2002-03 and 2006-07 (figure 4.14) by 2.5 per cent per year (table 4A.9).

Figure 4.14 **Government real recurrent expenditure per FTE student, non-government schools (2006-07 dollars)[a, b, c]**



a See notes to table 4A.9 for definitions and data caveats. **b** Data for 2002-03 to 2005-06 have been adjusted to 2006-07 dollars using the gross domestic product (GDP) price deflator. **c** The sum of Australian Government specific purpose payments for non-government schools, and State and Territory government payments to non-government schools. Data on State and Territory government payments to non-government schools are not fully comparable across jurisdictions.

Source: ABS (2004, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008) *Schools Australia*, Cat. No. 4221.0; DEEWR (unpublished); State and Territory governments (unpublished); table 4A.9.

Staff expenditure per student

'Staff expenditure per student' is an indicator of governments' objective to provide education in an efficient manner (box 4.7).

Box 4.7 **Staff expenditure per student**

'Staff expenditure per student' is defined as government recurrent expenditure on staff per FTE student in government schools. Expenditure on staff is the major component of spending on schools.

Holding other factors constant, low or decreasing government expenditure on staff per FTE student may represent better or improved efficiency.

(Continued on next page)

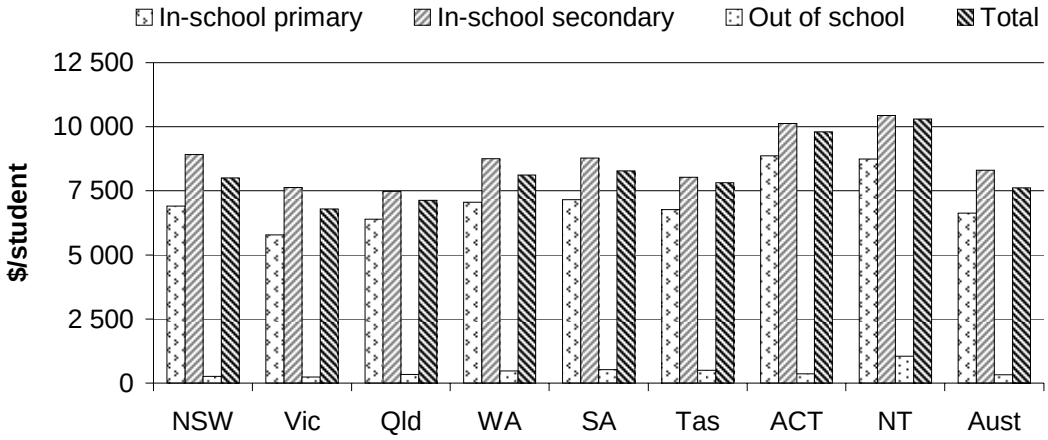
Box 4.7 **Continued**

Efficiency data are difficult to interpret and this indicator in particular is partial in nature as it does not reflect the full cost per student. While high or increasing government expenditure on staff per student may reflect deteriorating efficiency, it may also reflect improvements in schooling (through higher quality teachers), or the characteristics of the education environment (smaller class sizes, broader curricula such as information technology and the need for teachers with new skills, population dispersion and more geographically remote students). Similarly, a low or decreasing expenditure on staff per student may reflect improving efficiency or lower quality (less effective education) or more narrowly defined curricula. Efficiency data need to be interpreted within the context of the effectiveness and equity indicators to derive an holistic view of performance.

Data for this indicator are comparable.

Expenditure on staff is the major component of government recurrent expenditure on government schools ($17.3 billion), accounting for 64.2 per cent of the total expenditure in 2006-07 (table 4A.12). Nationally, expenditure on staff per FTE student ranged from $331 for out-of-school to $8304 for in-school secondary (figure 4.15).

Figure 4.15 **Government recurrent expenditure on staff in government schools, per FTE student, 2006-07[a, b]**



a See notes to table 4A.12 for definitions and data caveats. **b** Expenditure on staff includes teaching staff and other staff, and includes expenditure on redundancy payments.

Source: ABS (2004, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008) *Schools Australia*, Cat. No. 4221.0; MCEETYA (unpublished) NSSC; table 4A.12.

User cost of capital per student

'User cost of capital (UCC) per student' is an indicator of governments' objective to provide education in an efficient manner (box 4.8).

Box 4.8 **User cost of capital per student**

'UCC per student' is defined as the notional costs to governments of the funds tied up in capital used to produce services (for example, land and buildings owned by government schools) per FTE student. The notional UCC makes explicit the opportunity cost of using the funds to provide services rather than investing elsewhere or retiring debt. When comparing the costs of government services, it is important to account for the notional UCC because it is:

- often a significant component of the cost of services
- often treated inconsistently (that is, included in the costs of services delivered by most non-government service providers, but effectively costed at zero for many government service providers).

Notional UCC reflects the annual UCC per FTE student, and is set at 8 per cent of the value of non-current physical assets (for example, land, buildings, plant and equipment) which are re-valued over time.

Holding other factors constant, a low or decreasing UCC per student may represent better or improved efficiency.

Efficiency data are difficult to interpret and this indicator in particular is only partial in nature as it does not reflect the full cost per student. While high or increasing UCC per student may reflect deteriorating efficiency, it may also reflect changes in aspects of schooling (broader curricula, enhanced facilities), or the characteristics of the education environment (such as population dispersion and/or rapid growth and more geographically remote students). Similarly, low or decreasing UCC per student may reflect improving efficiency or lower quality (less effective education) or fewer facilities or reduced capital maintenance. Efficiency data need to be interpreted within the context of the effectiveness and equity indicators to derive an holistic view of performance.

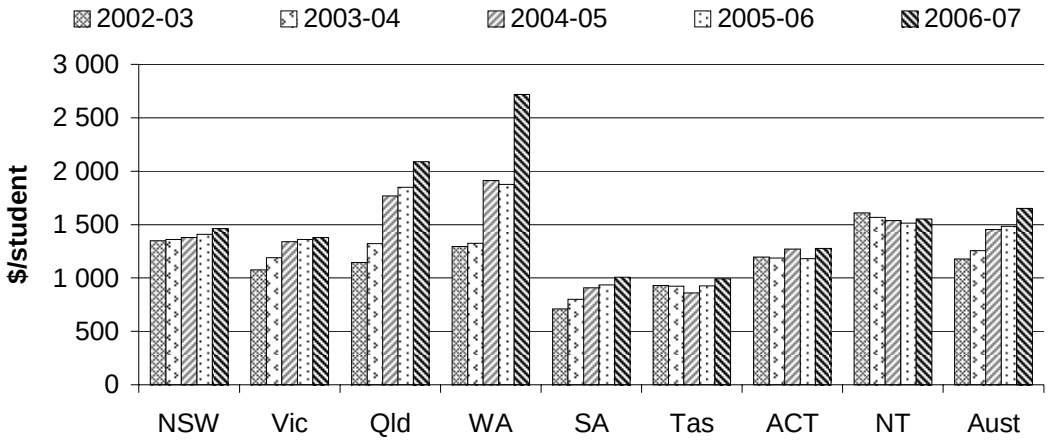
Data for this indicator are not directly comparable.

The Steering Committee accepts that the asset valuation data, from which the notional UCC has been calculated, were not fully comparable across jurisdictions until 2003-04 (table 4A.14). It also recognises that the treatment of costs in the past has not fully recognised the cost of public capital used by agencies to deliver services — that is, capital has generally been considered 'free'. This can lead to significant underestimation of costs of those services for which government capital is a major input. However, using an imperfect costing of government capital is preferable to not costing it at all, and also provides an incentive to improve data

over time. The data definitions for asset reporting and valuation methods applied from 2003-04 are nationally consistent resulting in comparable asset values data across jurisdictions which are used to calculate the notional UCC.

The notional UCC per FTE government school student in 2006-07 averaged $1652 nationally (figure 4.16).

Figure 4.16 **Notional UCC per FTE student, government schools[a, b]**



a See notes to tables 4A.6 and 4A.13 for definitions and data caveats. **b** Notional UCC per FTE student is derived by dividing the notional UCC in table 4A.13 with the FTE student numbers in table 4A.6. Notional UCC is set at 8 per cent of the value of non-current physical assets, which are re-valued over time.

Source: ABS (2004, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008) *Schools Australia*, Cat. No. 4221.0; MCEETYA (unpublished) NSSC; tables 4A.6 and 4A.13.

Student-to-staff ratio

'Student-to-staff ratio' is an indicator of governments' objective to provide education in an efficient manner (box 4.9).

Box 4.9 **Student-to-staff ratio**

The 'student-to-staff ratio' is defined as the number of FTE students per FTE staff. Data are reported for primary, secondary and all schools, and for teaching and non-teaching staff. The student-to-staff ratio presents the number of students per teacher where teachers are classified in a way that can be compared across jurisdictions. A low ratio means there are a small number of students per teacher (the ratio is not a measure of class size).

(Continued on next page)

Box 4.9 **(Continued)**

Holding other factors constant, a high or increasing student-to-teacher ratio represents better or improved efficiency, but only when output quality and outcomes are the same as (or higher than) those in the other systems being compared. A low or decreasing student-to-teacher ratio may reflect decreasing efficiency, but may also reflect a higher quality education system, if it is assumed that teachers have more time for each student and that this results in better student outcomes.

The ratio needs to be interpreted with care because it is aggregated across all subjects and year levels, so it does not reflect the fact that a lower ratio may be more important for certain subjects and/or year levels and it does not account for learning outcomes, teacher quality, experience and qualifications. Further, it can be affected by a number of factors which may differ across the states and territories, including:

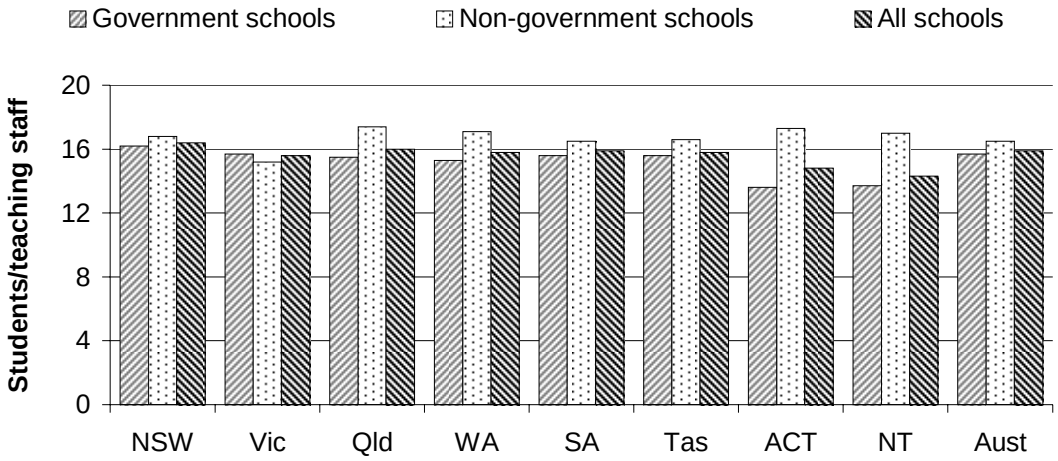
- the proportion of special needs students — for example, special schools catering for students with disabilities generally have significantly lower student-to-teacher ratios than those of mainstream schools and additional resources are also required in mainstream schools where special needs students attend
- the degree to which administrative work is undertaken by people classified as teachers (such as principals, deputy principals and senior teachers)
- other inputs to school education (for example, non-teaching staff, computers, books and laboratory equipment).

Care needs to be taken in interpreting efficiency data as differences in the costs of educating students can be driven by influences beyond the control of governments, such as a dispersed and/or geographically remote population. Efficiency data need to be interpreted within the context of the effectiveness and equity indicators to derive an holistic view of performance.

Data for this indicator are comparable.

Nationally, for government primary schools, the student-to-teacher ratio was 15.7 in 2007. For non-government primary schools, the student-to-teacher ratio was 16.5 in 2007. For all primary schools, the student-to-teacher ratio was 15.9 in 2007 (figure 4.17).

Figure 4.17 **Ratio of FTE students to FTE teaching staff, primary schools, 2007[a]**

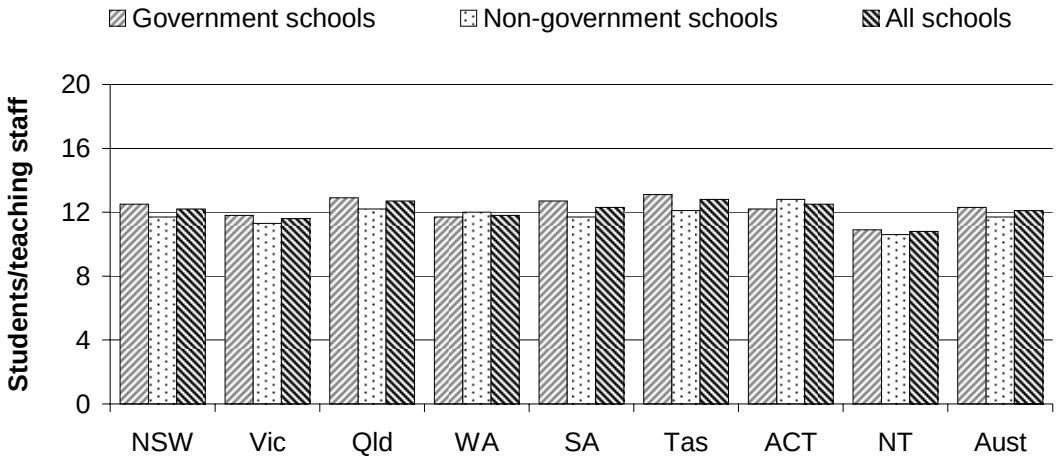


a See notes to table 4A.16 for definitions and data caveats.

Source: ABS (2008) *Schools Australia 2007*, Cat. No. 4221.0; table 4A.16.

Nationally, for government secondary schools, the student-to-teacher ratio was 12.3 in 2007. For non-government secondary schools, the student-to-teacher ratio was 11.7 in 2007. For all secondary schools, the student-to-teacher ratio was 12.1 in 2007 (figure 4.18).

Figure 4.18 **Ratio of FTE students to FTE teaching staff, secondary schools, 2007[a]**



a See notes to table 4A.16 for definitions and data caveats.

Source: ABS (2008) *Schools Australia 2007*, Cat. No. 4221.0; table 4A.16.

Nationally, for all government schools, the student-to-teacher ratio was 14.2 in 2007. For all non-government schools, the student-to-teacher ratio was 13.8 in 2007. For all schools, the student-to-teacher ratio was 14.0 in 2007 (table 4A.16).

Refer to table 4A.16 for further detail on student-to-staff ratios, including those for non-school staff and all staff, for all jurisdictions.

Outcomes

Outcomes are the impact of services on the status of an individual or group (while outputs are the actual services delivered) (see chapter 1, section 1.5).

Nationally comparable learning outcomes

'Reading performance', 'writing performance', 'numeracy performance', 'science literacy performance', 'civics and citizenship performance', and 'information and communication technology literacy performance' have been identified as indicators of learning outcomes (boxes 4.10–4.15) and are discussed in this section. The outcomes for VET in schools attainment, completion rates, and school leaver destination (boxes 4.16–4.18) are discussed in the following section.

The nationally comparable learning outcomes encompasses all of the MCEETYA endorsed tests which have been developed nationally to measure student performance across government and non-government schools in relation to the National Goals for Schooling, and also Australia's participation in two international tests: the OECD Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA); and the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS).

Years 3, 5 and 7 nationally comparable learning outcomes data for reading, writing and numeracy performance for 2007 (and earlier years) are reported. (Data from stage 1 (of two stages) of the 2008 data (released in September 2008) are not included in the 2009 Report — see the Future Directions section for further details). Details of reported learning outcomes data and accompanying information from the national collection are reported in tables 4A.29–97. State and territory data are also available for the first time by Indigenous status and geolocation for 2006 and 2007, and are included in this Report. This complements the national Indigenous learning outcomes by geolocation presented in the 2008 Report. Limitations of national learning outcomes data are detailed in the 2004 Report on Government Services (box 3.1, pages 3.36-7).

In addition to the national literacy and numeracy assessments undertaken annually, triennial national sample assessments are undertaken on a rotating basis. Triennial

year 6 science literacy performance data for 2003 and 2006 are reported in tables 4A.98–100. Triennial year 6 and year 10 civics and citizenship performance data for 2004 are reported in tables 4A.101–103. Triennial year 6 and year 10 information and communication technology literacy performance data for 2005 are reported in tables 4A.104–106.

The PISA provides learning outcomes data for 15 year olds in three core assessment domains: reading literacy, mathematical literacy and scientific literacy. In 2006, approximately 400 000 students from 57 countries participated in the PISA Assessment. From Australia this included over 14 170 students from 356 schools. Scientific literacy was the major domain tested in the PISA 2006 cycle. Detailed information about PISA 2006 is available in Thomson et al. (2007) and OECD (2007).

Data on scientific literacy from PISA 2006 have been included in this chapter (data on reading literacy and mathematical literacy were included in the 2008 Report). At this stage there is no nationally agreed standard for scientific literacy. This chapter reports the proxy standard of the proportion of students who achieve at or above proficiency level 3 for scientific literacy.

Results from PISA 2003 and PISA 2000 were included in the 2006 Report (SCRGSP 2006, pages 3.37-38, 3.44–46, 3.58-59 and 3.61-62) and 2003 Report (SCRGSP 2003, pages 3.19, 3.22-23 and 3.26–28) respectively. Information and data on PISA 2000, 2003 and 2006 are available in Lokan et al. (2001), Thomson et al. (2004a, 2004b), Thomson and De Bertoli (2007) and tables 4A.107–116.

Years 4 and 8 Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) learning outcomes data for 2006-07 are also presented in this Report. Australian students participated in the three previous TIMSS, in 1994-95, 1998-99 and 2002-03. TIMSS focuses on the mathematics and science curriculum, identifying the concepts and processes students have learned, the factors which are linked to students' opportunity to learn, and how these factors influence students' achievements.

In 2006-07, students from 59 countries participated in the TIMSS. From Australia this included 8177 students from 457 schools in the main sample. Detailed information about TIMSS is available at http://www.acer.edu.au/timss and tables 4A.117–120.

Interpreting learning outcomes data

To assist with making comparisons between jurisdictions, 95 per cent confidence intervals are presented in charts and attachment tables (tables 4A.29–120).

Confidence intervals are a standard way of expressing the degree of uncertainty associated with survey estimates or performance measurement. An estimate of 80 with a confidence interval of ± 2, for example, means that if another sample had been drawn, or if another combination of test items had been used, there is a 95 per cent chance that the result would lie between 78 and 82. The learning outcomes proportion for a jurisdiction, therefore, can be thought of in terms of a range. If one jurisdiction's rate ranges from 78–82 and another's from 77–81, then it is not possible to say with confidence that one differs from the other (because there is unlikely to be a statistically significant difference). Where ranges do not overlap, there is a high likelihood that there is a statistically significant difference. To say that there is a statistically significant difference means there is a high probability that there is an actual difference; it does not imply that the difference is necessarily large or important.

Care should be taken when making comparisons in the results across the three PISA cycles. Comparisons should only be made between a major and minor assessment domain once the domain has become the major assessment domain for the first time. For example:

- Reading literacy was the major assessment domain in PISA 2000. Therefore, PISA 2000 is able to be compared with PISA 2003 and PISA 2006 for reading literacy results.
- Mathematical literacy was the major assessment domain in PISA 2003. Therefore, PISA 2003 is able to be compared with PISA 2006 for mathematical literacy results.
- Scientific literacy was the major assessment domain in PISA 2006. Therefore, PISA 2006 is not able to be compared with previous cycles for scientific literacy.

Reading performance

'Reading performance' is an indicator of governments' objective that all students should attain the skills of English literacy, such that every student should be able to read, write, spell and communicate at an appropriate level. It is an indicator of students' achievement in a key learning area of school education (box 4.10).

Box 4.10 **Reading performance**

'Reading performance' is defined by two measures:

Percentage of students achieving at or above the national reading benchmark: The proportion of assessed years 3, 5 and 7 students who achieve at or above the national reading benchmark for a given year, reported by sex, Indigenous status, LBOTE, socioeconomic status and geolocation. The benchmarks describe nationally agreed minimum acceptable standards for reading performance at years 3, 5 and 7.

Up to and including 2007, student performance has been measured by annual State and Territory-based testing programs which were equated through a national process designed to allow comparable reporting against the benchmarks. Commencing in 2008, common national tests in literacy and numeracy were held for all students at years 3, 5, 7 and 9. These tests replaced the former State and Territory-based assessments.

Percentage of students achieving at or above the proficient standard on the OECD PISA combined reading scale in a triennial international assessment: The proportion of assessed 15 year old students who achieve at or above the proficient standard (agreed by the MCEETYA to be level 3) on the OECD PISA combined reading scale for a given year, reported by sex, Indigenous status, socioeconomic status and geolocation.

A high or increasing proportion of students achieving the reading benchmark/proficient standard is desirable.

Data for this indicator are comparable.

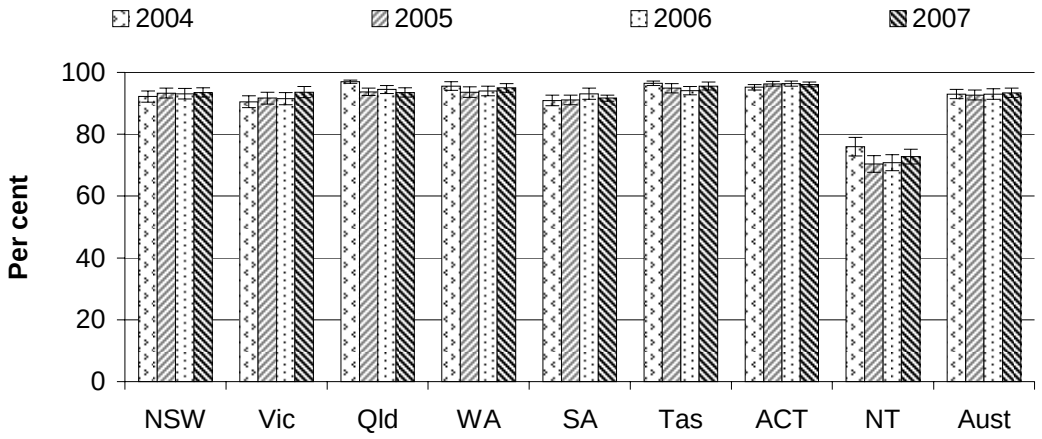
Nationally, the proportion of assessed year 3 students who achieved the reading benchmark in 2007 was 91.9–94.9 per cent (figure 4.19). The national proportion of students by equity group who achieved the year 3 reading benchmark in 2007 was:

- 93.7–96.3 per cent for female students and 90.2–93.8 per cent for male students
- 76.6–84.8 per cent for Indigenous students
- 90.0–93.2 per cent for LBOTE students (figure 4.20).

The proportion of assessed year 5 students who achieved the reading benchmark in 2007 was 87.6–90.8 per cent nationally (figure 4.21). The proportion of students by equity group who achieved the year 5 reading benchmark in 2007 was:

- 89.6–92.6 per cent for female students, higher than the proportion for male students (85.6–89.2 per cent)
- 63.4–71.8 per cent for Indigenous students
- 86.5–89.7 per cent for LBOTE students (figure 4.22).

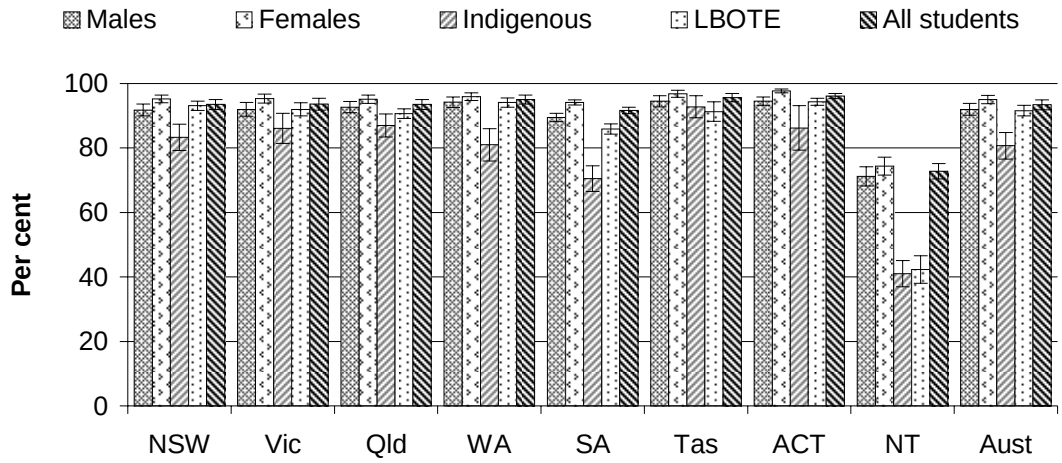
Figure 4.19 **Proportion of year 3 students achieving the reading benchmark[a, b]**



a Error bars represent the 95 per cent confidence interval associated with each point estimate. **b** For further information and caveats see tables 4A.32-33, 4A.48-49, 4A.66-67, 4A.84-85.

Source: MCEETYA (2005b, 2006a, 2007a, 2008c) *National Report on Schooling in Australia* (various years); tables 4A.29, 4A.44, 4A.62 and 4A.80.

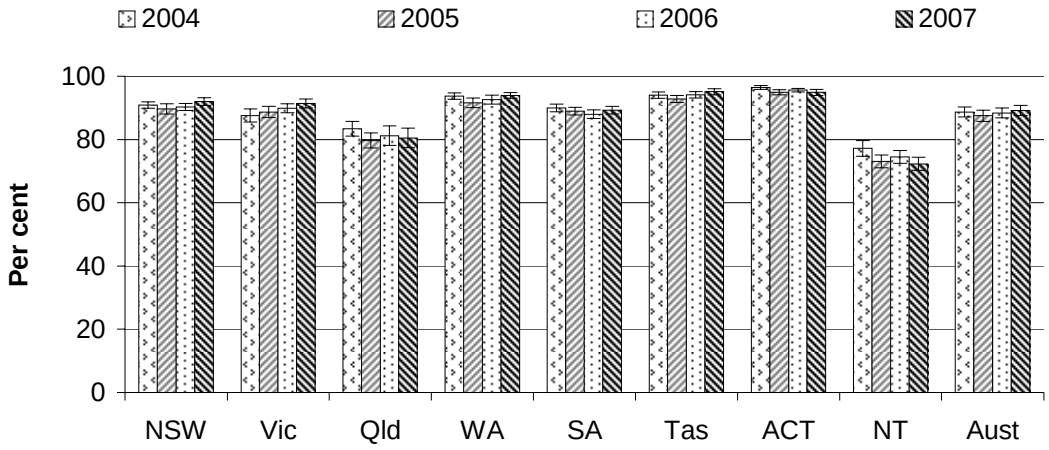
Figure 4.20 **Proportion of year 3 students achieving the reading benchmark, by equity group, 2007[a, b]**



a Error bars represent the 95 per cent confidence interval associated with each point estimate. **b** For further information and caveats see tables 4A.84-85.

Source: MCEETYA (2008c) *National Report on Schooling in Australia 2007*; table 4A.80.

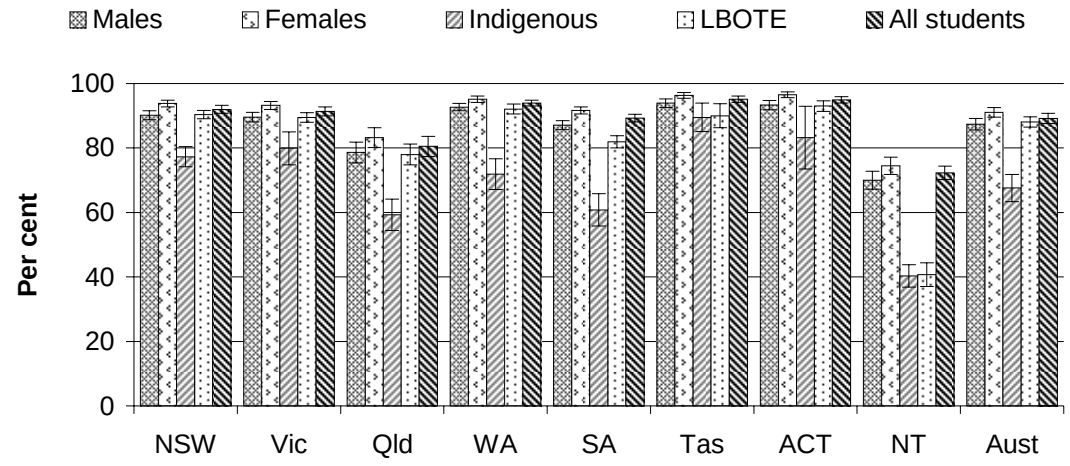
Figure 4.21 **Proportion of year 5 students achieving the reading benchmark[a, b]**



a Error bars represent the 95 per cent confidence interval associated with each point estimate. **b** For further information and caveats see tables 4A.32-33, 4A.48-49, 4A.66-67, 4A.84-85.

Source: MCEETYA (2005a, 2005b, 2006a, 2007a, 2008c) *National Report on Schooling in Australia* (various years); tables 4A.30, 4A.45, 4A.63 and 4A.81.

Figure 4.22 **Proportion of year 5 students achieving the reading benchmark, by equity group, 2007[a, b]**



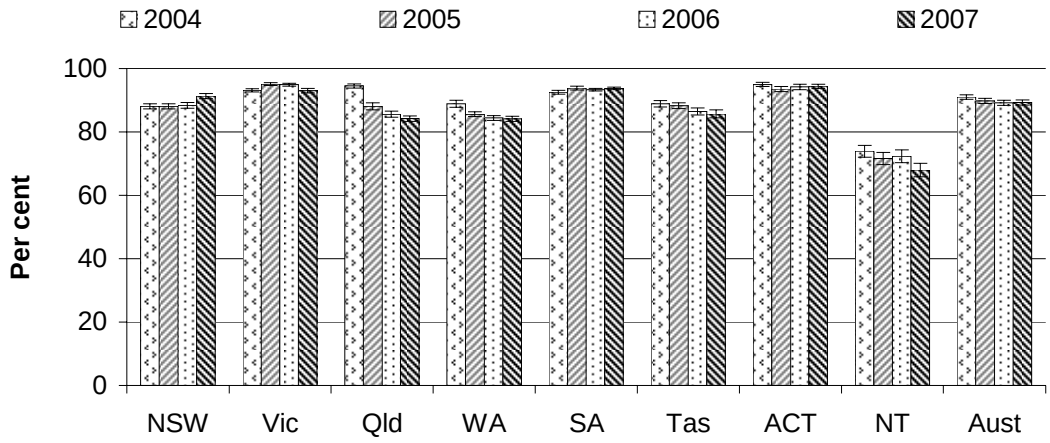
a Error bars represent the 95 per cent confidence interval associated with each point estimate. **b** For further information and caveats see tables 4A.84-85.

Source: MCEETYA (2008c) *National Report on Schooling in Australia 2007*; table 4A.81.

The proportion of assessed year 7 students who achieved the reading benchmark in 2007 was 88.5–90.1 per cent nationally (figure 4.23). The proportion of students by equity group who achieved the year 7 reading benchmark in 2007 was:

- 90.4–92.0 per cent for female students, higher than the proportion for male students (86.6–88.6 per cent)
- 61.9–67.5 per cent for Indigenous students
- 86.7–89.1 per cent for LBOTE students (figure 4.24).

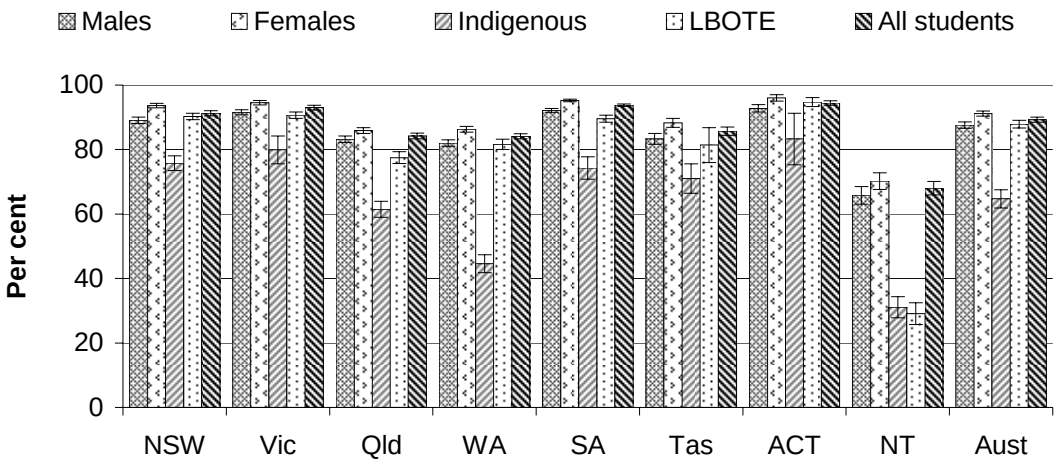
Figure 4.23 **Proportion of year 7 students achieving the reading benchmark[a, b]**



a Error bars represent the 95 per cent confidence interval associated with each point estimate. **b** For further information and caveats see tables 4A.32-33, 4A.48-49, 4A.66-67, 4A.84-85.

Source: MCEETYA (2005a, 2005b, 2006a, 2007a, 2008c) *National Report on Schooling in Australia* (various years); tables 4A.31, 4A.46, 4A.64 and 4A.82.

Figure 4.24 **Proportion of year 7 students achieving the reading benchmark, by equity group, 2007[a, b]**



a Error bars represent the 95 per cent confidence interval associated with each point estimate. **b** For further information and caveats see tables 4A.84-85.

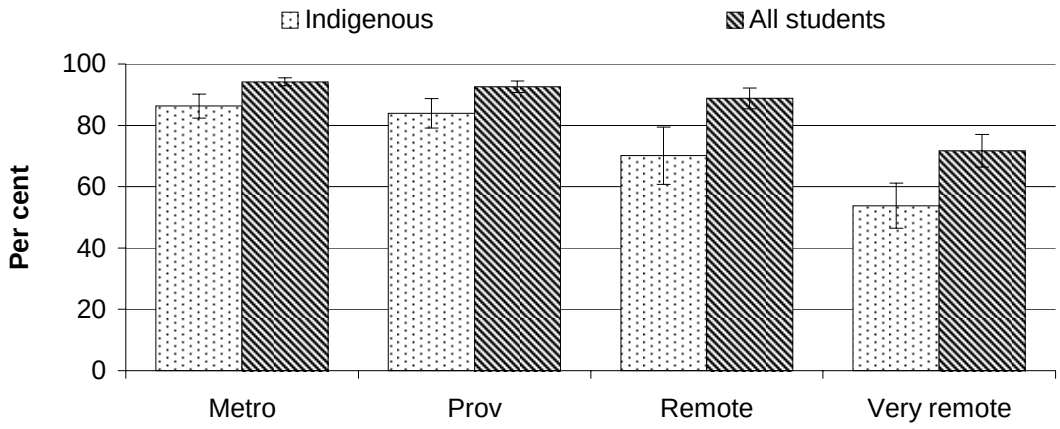
Source: MCEETYA (2008c) *National Report on Schooling in Australia 2007*; table 4A.82.

Nationally, the proportion of assessed students who achieved the reading benchmark by geolocation in 2007 was:

- 92.9–95.5 per cent for all year 3 students in metropolitan areas, no different to the proportion for provincial students (90.7–94.5 per cent), but above the proportion for remote students (85.4–92.2 per cent) and very remote students (66.4–77.0 per cent) (figure 4.25)
- 88.8–91.8 per cent for all year 5 students in metropolitan areas, no different to the proportion for provincial students (85.7–89.7 per cent), but above the proportion for remote students (75.7–83.9 per cent) and very remote students (50.6–61.8 per cent) (table 4A.83)
- 89.7–91.3 per cent for all year 7 students in metropolitan areas, above the proportion for provincial students (86.9–89.1 per cent), remote students (73.7–80.5 per cent) and very remote students (44.5–54.5 per cent) (table 4A.83).

For all categories of remoteness across years 3, 5 and 7, the reading outcomes for Indigenous students were lower than those for all students. As with all students, outcomes for Indigenous students declined as remoteness increased — furthermore the gap in learning outcomes between Indigenous students and all students increased as the degree of remoteness increased.

Figure 4.25 **National proportion of year 3 students achieving the reading benchmark, by Indigenous status and geolocation, 2007[a, b, c]**



a Error bars represent the 95 per cent confidence interval associated with each point estimate. **b** Data for year 3 students are shown and may not be representative of students in years 5 and 7 which are detailed in table 4A.83. **c** Insufficient or no students in an area of geographic classification are not included.

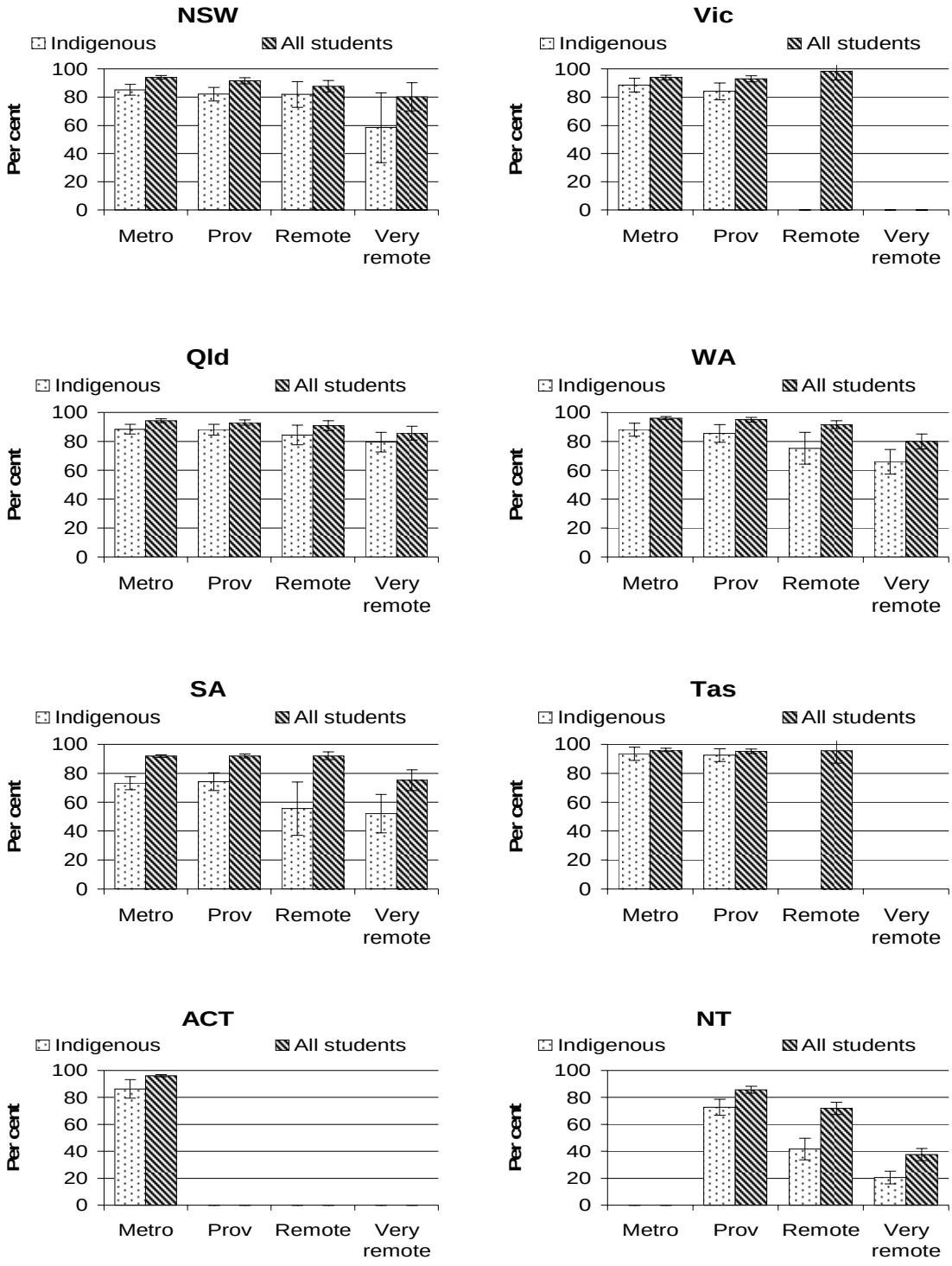
Source: MCEETYA (2008c) *National Report on Schooling in Australia 2007*; table 4A.83.

Nationally, the proportion of assessed Indigenous students who achieved the reading benchmark by geolocation in 2007 was:

- 82.4–90.2 per cent for Indigenous year 3 students in metropolitan areas, no different to the proportion for provincial students (79.1–88.7 per cent), but above the proportion for remote students (60.8–79.4 per cent) and very remote students (46.4–61.2 per cent) (figure 4.25)
- 69.4–79.6 per cent for Indigenous year 5 students in metropolitan areas, no different to the proportion for provincial students (65.6–77.0 per cent), but above the proportion for remote students (46.2.–65.0 per cent) and very remote students (25.1–40.1 per cent) (table 4A.83)
- 69.0–75.8 per cent for Indigenous year 7 students in metropolitan areas, no different to the proportion of provincial students (65.5–73.1 per cent), but above the proportion for remote students (39.0–55.0 per cent) and very remote students (19.3–31.5 per cent) (table 4A.83).

State and territory results are presented for year 3 reading literacy (by Indigenous status and geolocation) in figure 4.26 (results for years 5 and 7 reading literacy are in table 4A.83). Relatively large confidence intervals mean it is difficult to draw conclusions from these data. However, the general pattern in jurisdictions appears similar to the national results.

Figure 4.26 **Proportion of year 3 students achieving the reading benchmark, by Indigenous status and geolocation, 2007[a, b, c]**



a Error bars represent the 95 per cent confidence intervals associated with each point estimate. **b** Geolocation data are based on the MCEETYA Schools Geographic Location Classification and represent school location. **c** There are no very remote areas in Victoria. There are no provincial, remote or very remote areas in the ACT. There is no metropolitan zone in the NT.

Source: MCEETYA (2008c) *National Report on Schooling in Australia 2007*; table 4A.83.

Writing performance

'Writing performance' is an indicator of governments' objective that all students should attain the skills of English literacy; such that every student should be able to read, write, spell and communicate at an appropriate level. It is an indicator of students' achievement in a key learning area of school education (box 4.11).

Box 4.11 **Writing performance**

'Writing performance' is defined as the proportion of assessed years 3, 5 and 7 students who achieve at or above the national writing benchmark for a given year, reported by sex, Indigenous status, LBOTE, socioeconomic status and geolocation. The benchmarks describe nationally agreed minimum acceptable standards for writing performance at years 3, 5 and 7.

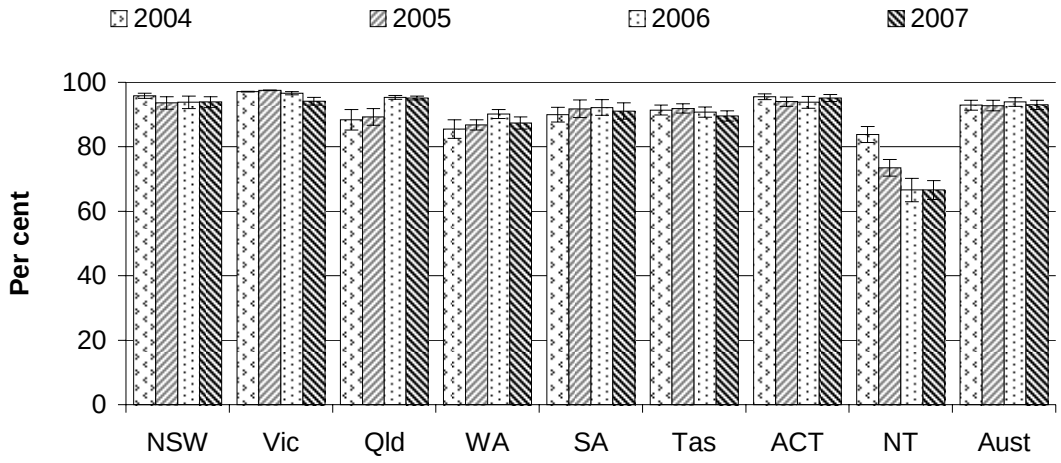
Up to and including 2007, student performance has been measured by annual State and Territory-based testing programs which were equated through a national process designed to allow comparable reporting against the benchmarks. Commencing in 2008, common national tests in literacy and numeracy were held for all students at years 3, 5, 7 and 9. These tests replaced the former State and Territory-based assessments.

A high or increasing proportion of students achieving the writing benchmark is desirable.

Data for this indicator are comparable.

Nationally, the proportion of assessed year 3 students who achieved the writing benchmark in 2007 was 91.6–94.4 per cent (figure 4.27).

Figure 4.27 **Proportion of year 3 students achieving the writing benchmark[a, b]**



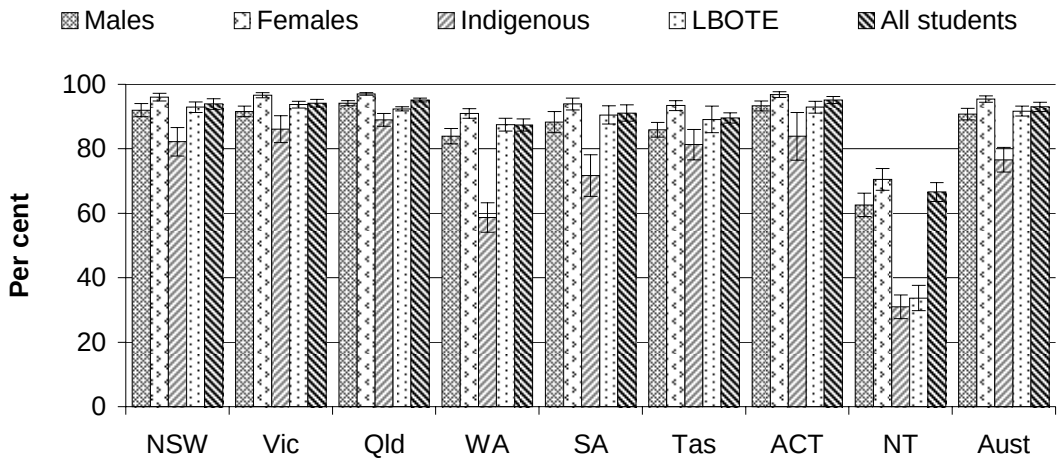
a Error bars represent the 95 per cent confidence interval associated with each point estimate. **b** For further information and caveats see tables 4A.37-38, 4A.54-55, 4A.72-73 and 4A.90-91.

Source: MCEETYA (2005b, 2006a, 2007a, 2008c) *National Report on Schooling in Australia* (various years); tables 4A.34, 4A.50, 4A.68 and 4A.86.

The national proportion of students by equity group who achieved the year 3 writing benchmark in 2007 was:

- 94.4–96.4 per cent for female students, higher than the proportion for male students (89.0–92.6 per cent)
- 72.8–80.4 per cent for Indigenous students
- 90.2–93.2 per cent for LBOTE students (figure 4.28).

Figure 4.28 **Proportion of year 3 students achieving the writing benchmark, by equity group, 2007[a, b]**

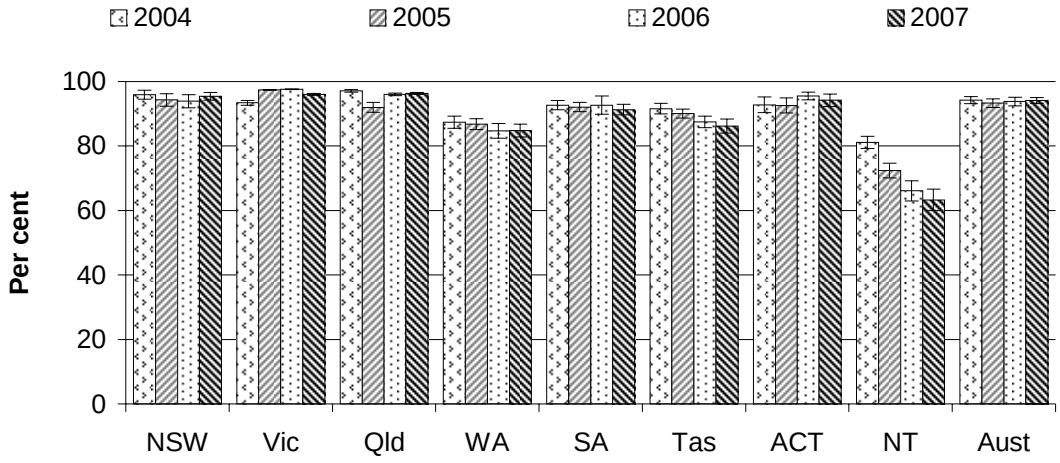


a Error bars represent the 95 per cent confidence interval associated with each point estimate. **b** For further information and caveats see tables 4A.90-91.

Source: MCEETYA (2008c) *National Report on Schooling in Australia 2007*; table 4A.86.

Nationally, the proportion of assessed year 5 students who achieved the writing benchmark by geolocation in 2007 was 93.2–95.0 per cent (figure 4.29).

Figure 4.29 **Proportion of year 5 students achieving the writing benchmark[a, b]**



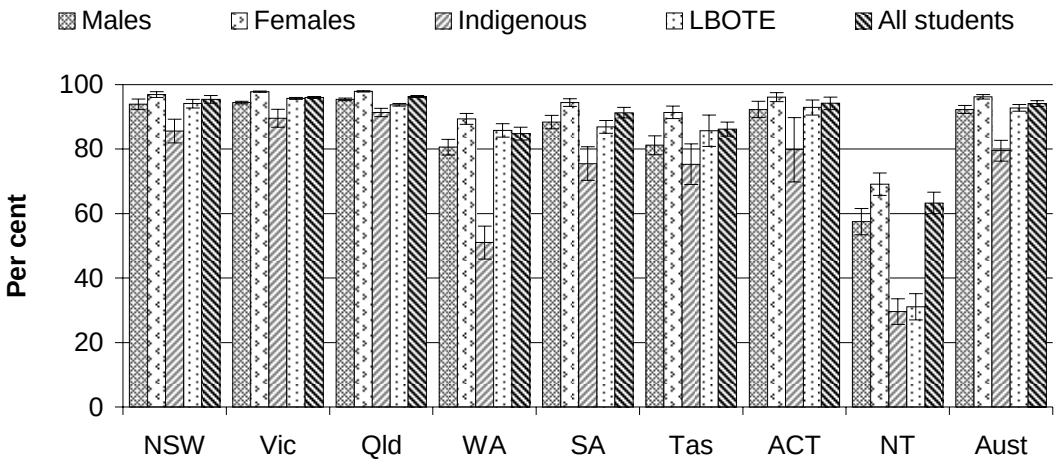
a Error bars represent the 95 per cent confidence interval associated with each point estimate. **b** For further information and caveats see tables 4A.37-38, 4A.54-55, 4A.72-73 and 4A.90-91.

Source: MCEETYA (2005b, 2006a, 2007a, 2008c) *National Report on Schooling in Australia* (various years); tables 4A.35, 4A.51, 4A.69 and 4A.87.

The national proportion of students by equity group who achieved the year 5 writing benchmark in 2007 was:

- 95.5–96.9 per cent for female students, higher than the proportion for male students (91.1–93.5 per cent)
- 76.3–82.7 per cent for Indigenous students
- 91.8–93.8 per cent for LBOTE students (figure 4.30).

Figure 4.30 **Proportion of year 5 students achieving the writing benchmark, by equity group, 2007[a, b]**



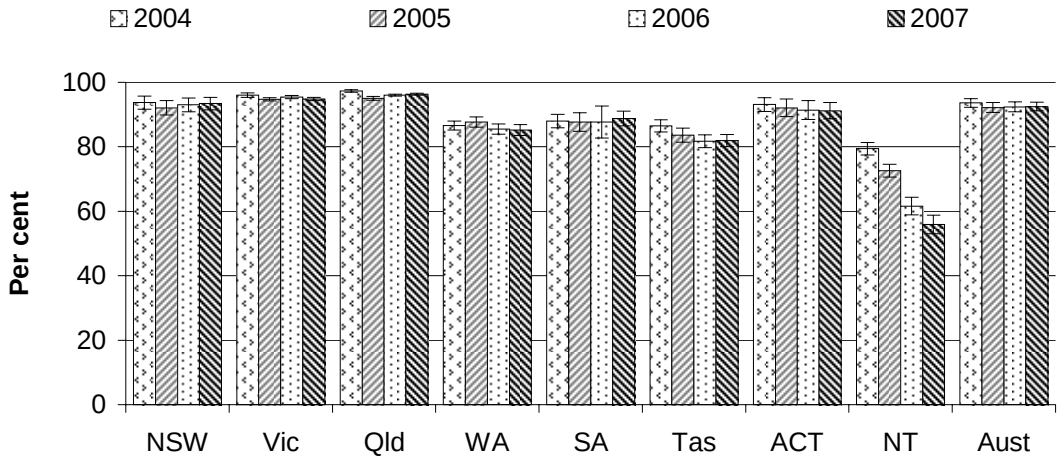
a Error bars represent the 95 per cent confidence interval associated with each point estimate. **b** For further information and caveats see tables 4A.90-91.

Source: MCEETYA (2008c) *National Report on Schooling in Australia 2007*; table 4A.87.

Nationally, the proportion of assessed year 7 students who achieved the writing benchmark in 2007 was 91.2–93.8 per cent (figure 4.31). The national proportion of students by equity group who achieved the year 7 writing benchmark in 2007 was:

- 94.4–96.2 per cent for female students, higher than the proportion for male students (88.1–91.5 per cent)
- 70.7–78.3 per cent for Indigenous students
- 89.9–93.1 per cent for LBOTE students (figure 4.32).

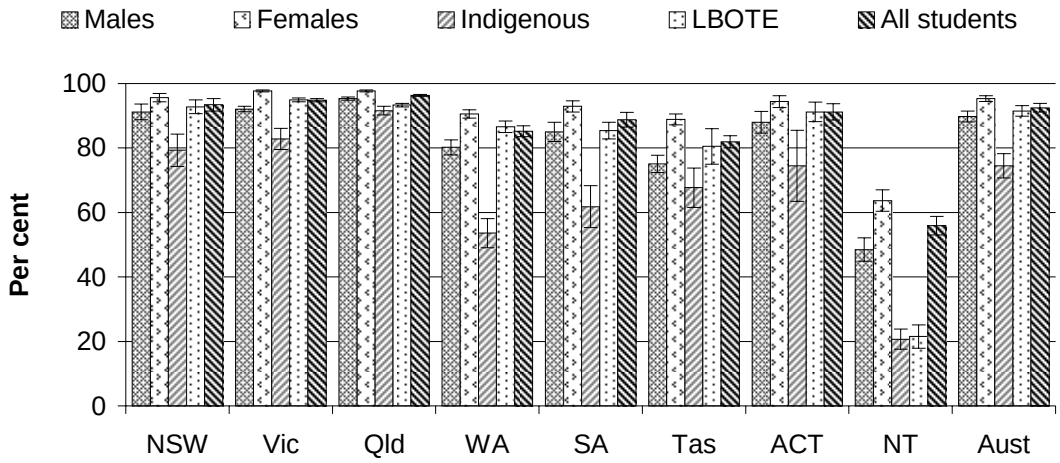
Figure 4.31 **Proportion of year 7 students achieving the writing benchmark[a, b]**



a Error bars represent the 95 per cent confidence interval associated with each point estimate. **b** For further information and caveats see tables 4A.37-38, 4A.54-55, 4A.72-73 and 4A.90-91.

Source: MCEETYA (2005b, 2006a, 2007a, 2008c) *National Report on Schooling in Australia* (various years); tables 4A.36, 4A.52, 4A.70 and 4A.88.

Figure 4.32 **Proportion of year 7 students achieving the writing benchmark, by equity group, 2007[a, b]**



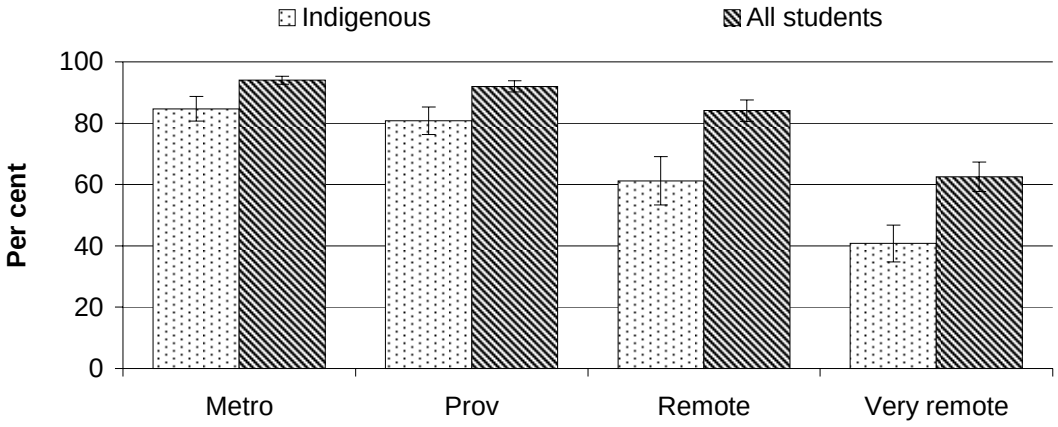
a Error bars represent the 95 per cent confidence interval associated with each point estimate. **b** For further information and caveats see tables 4A.90-91.

Source: MCEETYA (2008c) *National Report on Schooling in Australia 2007*; table 4A.88.

Nationally, the proportion of assessed students who achieved the writing benchmark by geolocation in 2007 was:

- 92.7–95.3 per cent for all year 3 students in metropolitan areas, no different to the proportion for provincial students (90.2–93.8 per cent), but above the proportion for remote students (80.6–87.6 per cent) and very remote students (57.7–67.3 per cent) (figure 4.33)
- 94.3–95.9 per cent for all year 5 students in metropolitan areas, no different to the proportion for provincial students (91.9–94.5 per cent), but above the proportion for remote students (81.1–88.1 per cent) and very remote students (56.8–66.2 per cent) (table 4A.89)
- 92.5–94.9 per cent for all year 7 students in metropolitan areas, no different to the proportion for provincial students (89.3–92.5 per cent), but above the proportion for remote students (74.9–82.9 per cent) and very remote students (54.3–63.7 per cent) (table 4A.89).

Figure 4.33 **National proportion of year 3 students achieving the writing benchmark, by Indigenous status and geolocation, 2007[a, b]**



a Error bars represent the 95 per cent confidence interval associated with each point estimate. **b** Data for year 3 students are shown and may not be representative of students in years 5 and 7 which are detailed in table 4A.86.

Source: MCEETYA (2008c) *National Report on Schooling in Australia 2007*; table 4A.89.

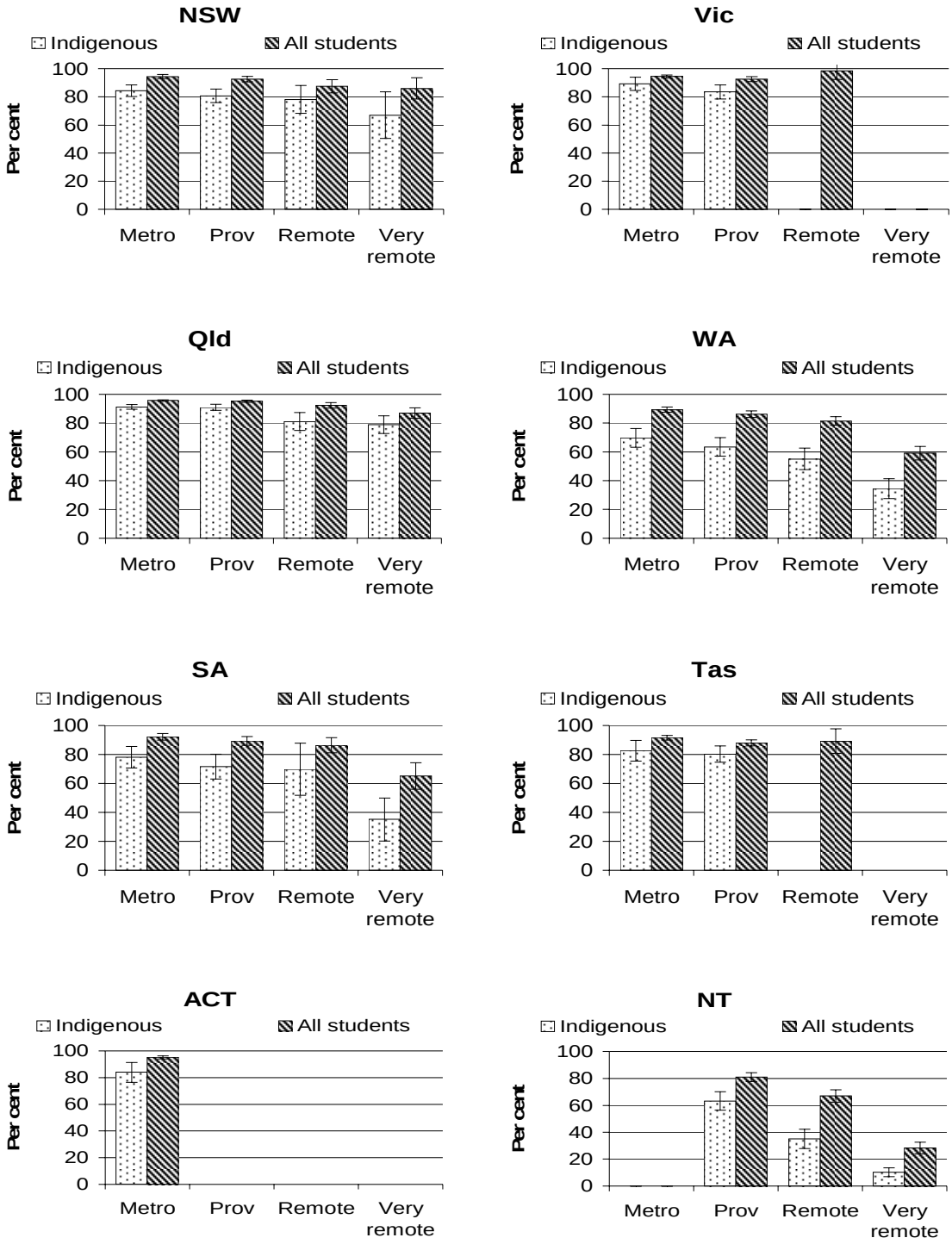
For all categories of remoteness across years 3, 5 and 7, the writing outcomes for Indigenous students were lower than those for all students. As with all students, outcomes for Indigenous students declined as remoteness increased — furthermore the gap in learning outcomes between Indigenous students and all students increased as the degree of remoteness increased.

Nationally, the proportion of assessed Indigenous students who achieved the writing benchmark by geolocation in 2007 was:

- 80.7–88.7 per cent for Indigenous year 3 students in metropolitan areas, no different to the proportion for provincial students (76.3–85.3 per cent), but above the proportion for remote students (53.3–69.1 per cent) and very remote students (34.8–46.8 per cent) (figure 4.33)
- 82.4–93.8 per cent for Indigenous year 5 students in metropolitan areas, no different to the proportion for provincial students (76.4–89.4 per cent), but above the proportion for remote students (51.0–74.6 per cent) and very remote students (34.5–46.3 per cent) (table 4A.89)
- 79.2–87.4 per cent for Indigenous year 7 students in metropolitan areas, no different to the proportion of provincial students (72.6–82.4 per cent), but above the proportion for remote students (44.5–61.1 per cent) and very remote students (33.5–43.1 per cent) (table 4A.89).

State and territory results are presented for year 3 writing literacy in figure 4.34 (results for years 5 and 7 writing literacy are in table 4A.89). Relatively large confidence intervals mean it is difficult to draw conclusions from these data. However, the general pattern in jurisdictions appears similar to the national results.

Figure 4.34 **Proportion of year 3 students achieving the writing benchmark, by Indigenous status and geolocation, 2007[a, b, c]**



a Error bars represent the 95 per cent confidence intervals associated with each point estimate. **b** Geolocation data are based on the MCEETYA Schools Geographic Location Classification and represent school location. **c** There are no very remote areas in Victoria. There are no provincial, remote or very remote areas in the ACT. There is no metropolitan zone in the NT.

Source: MCEETYA (2008c) *National Report on Schooling in Australia 2007*; table 4A.89.

Numeracy performance

'Numeracy performance' (including mathematical literacy) is an indicator of governments' objective that all students should attain the skills of numeracy. It is an indicator of students' achievement in a key learning area of school education (box 4.12).

Box 4.12 **Numeracy performance**

'Numeracy performance' (or mathematical literacy) performance is defined by three measures:

Percentage of students achieving at or above the national numeracy benchmark: The proportion of assessed years 3, 5 and 7 students who achieve at or above the national numeracy benchmark for a given year, reported by sex, Indigenous status, LBOTE, socioeconomic status and geolocation. The benchmarks describe nationally agreed minimum acceptable standards for numeracy performance at years 3, 5 and 7.

Up to and including 2007, student performance has been measured by annual State and Territory-based testing programs which were equated through a national process designed to allow comparable reporting against the benchmarks. Commencing in 2008, common national tests in literacy and numeracy were held for all students at years 3, 5, 7 and 9. These tests replaced the former State and Territory-based assessments.

Percentage of students achieving at or above the proficient standard on the OECD PISA combined mathematical literacy scale in a triennial assessment: The proportion of assessed 15 year old students who achieve at or above the proficient standard (agreed by the MCEETYA to be level 3) on the OECD PISA combined mathematical literacy scale for a given year, reported by sex, Indigenous status, socioeconomic status and geolocation.

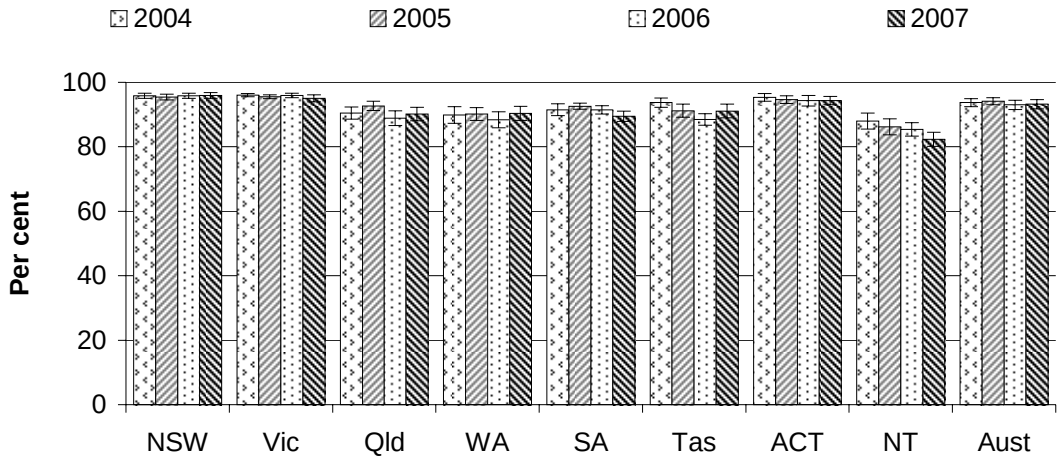
Percentage of students achieving at or above the proficient standard on the TIMSS mathematical literacy scale in a quadrennial assessment: The proportion of assessed year 4 and year 8 students who achieve at or above the proficient standard on the TIMSS mathematical literacy scale for a given year. A national standard has yet to be developed for this measure.

A high or increasing proportion of students achieving the numeracy benchmark/mathematical literacy proficient standard is desirable.

Data for this indicator are comparable.

Nationally, the proportion of assessed year 3 students who achieved the numeracy benchmark in 2007 was 91.8–94.6 per cent (figure 4.35).

Figure 4.35 **Proportion of year 3 students achieving the numeracy benchmark[a, b]**



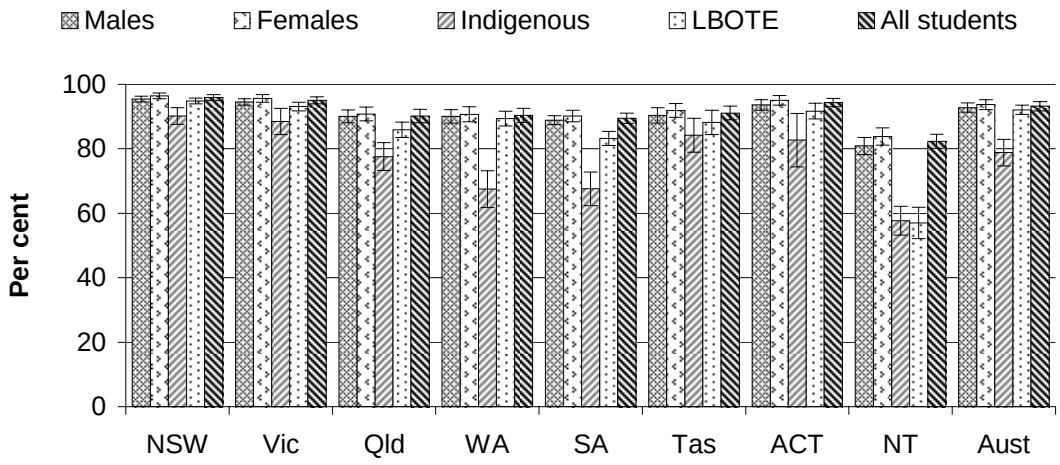
a Error bars represent the 95 per cent confidence interval associated with each point estimate. **b** For further information and caveats see tables 4A.42-43, 4A.60-61, 4A.78-79 and 4A.96-97.

Source: MCEETYA (2005b, 2006a, 2007a, 2008c) *National Report on Schooling in Australia* (various years); tables 4A.39, 4A.56, 4A.74 and 4A.92.

The national proportion of students by equity group who achieved the year 3 numeracy benchmark in 2007 was:

- 92.2–95.2 per cent for female students, no different to the proportion for male students (91.4–94.2 per cent)
- 74.7–82.9 per cent for Indigenous students
- 90.7–93.5 per cent for LBOTE students (figure 4.36).

Figure 4.36 **Proportion of year 3 students achieving the numeracy benchmark, by equity group, 2007[a, b]**



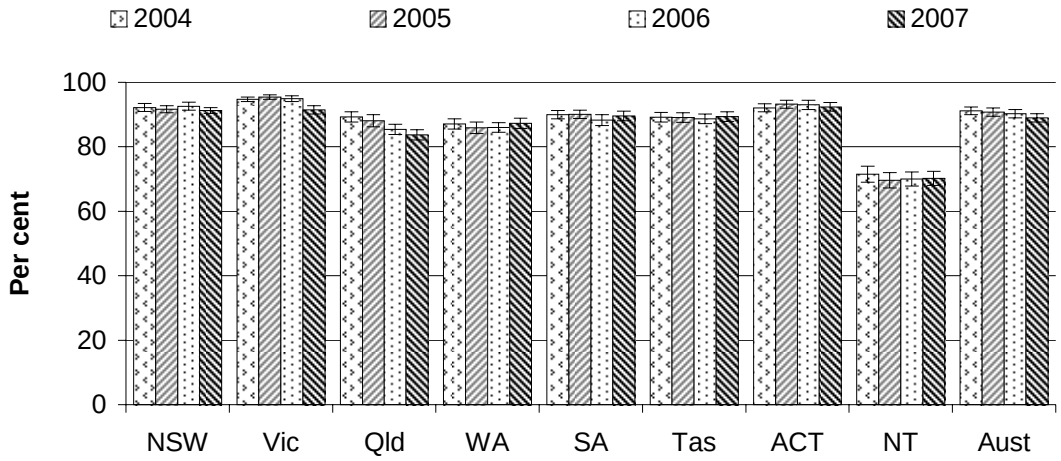
a Error bars represent the 95 per cent confidence interval associated with each point estimate. **b** For further information and caveats see tables 4A.96-97.

Source: MCEETYA (2008c) *National Report on Schooling in Australia 2007*; table 4A.92.

Nationally, the proportion of assessed year 5 students who achieved the numeracy benchmark in 2007 was 87.7–90.3 per cent (figure 4.37). The national proportion of students by equity group who achieved the year 5 numeracy benchmark in 2007 was:

- 87.7–90.5 per cent for female students, no different to the proportion for male students (87.8–90.4 per cent)
- 62.1–68.9 per cent for Indigenous students
- 86.2–89.0 per cent for LBOTE students (figure 4.38).

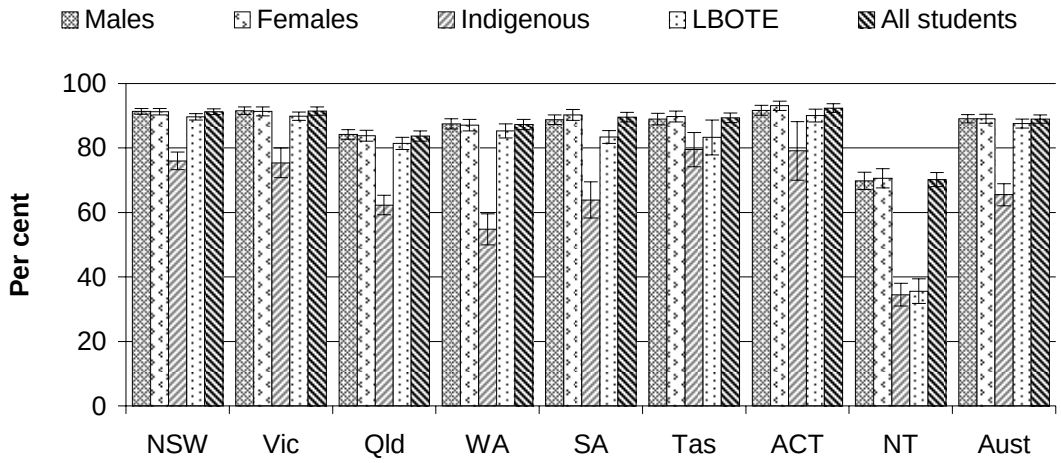
Figure 4.37 **Proportion of year 5 students achieving the numeracy benchmark[a, b]**



a Error bars represent the 95 per cent confidence interval associated with each point estimate. **b** For further information and caveats see tables 4A.42-43, 4A.60-61, 4A.78-79 and 4A.96-97.

Source: MCEETYA (2005b, 2006a, 2007a, 2008c) *National Report on Schooling in Australia* (various years); tables 4A.40, 4A.57, 4A.75 and 4A.93.

Figure 4.38 **Proportion of year 5 students achieving the numeracy benchmark, by equity group, 2007[a, b]**

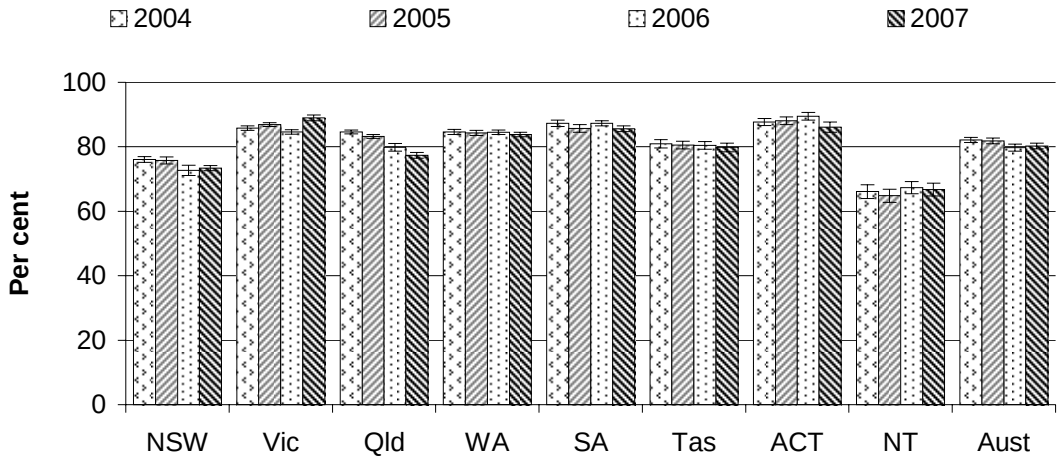


a Error bars represent the 95 per cent confidence interval associated with each point estimate. **b** For further information and caveats see tables 4A.96-97.

Source: MCEETYA (2008c) *National Report on Schooling in Australia 2007*; table 4A.93.

Nationally, the proportion of assessed year 7 students who achieved the numeracy benchmark in 2007 was 79.3–81.1 per cent (figure 4.39).

Figure 4.39 **Proportion of year 7 students achieving the numeracy benchmark[a, b]**



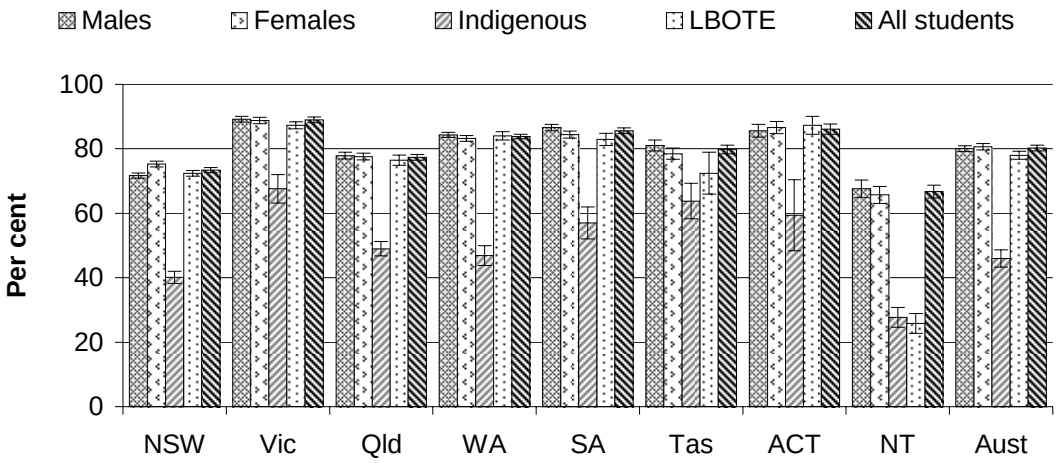
a Error bars represent the 95 per cent confidence interval associated with each point estimate. **b** For further information and caveats see tables 4A.42-43, 4A.60-61, 4A.78-79 and 4A.96-97.

Source: MCEETYA (2005b, 2006a, 2007a, 2008c) *National Report on Schooling in Australia* (various years); tables 4A.41, 4A.58, 4A.76 and 4A.94.

The proportion of students by equity group who achieved the year 7 numeracy benchmark in 2007 was:

- 79.6–81.6 per cent for female students, no different to the proportion for male students (79.1–80.9 per cent)
- 43.3–48.7 per cent for Indigenous students
- 76.8–79.2 per cent for LBOTE students (figure 4.40).

Figure 4.40 **Proportion of year 7 students achieving the numeracy benchmark, by equity group, 2007[a, b]**



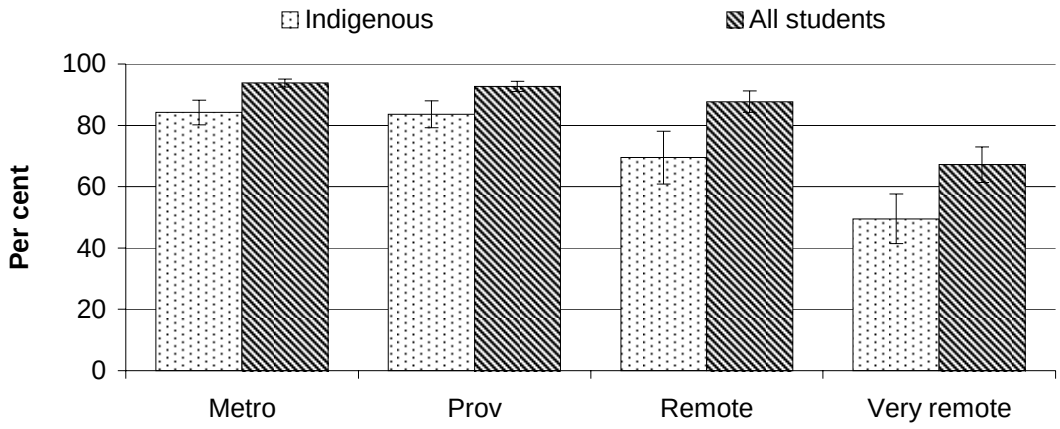
a Error bars represent the 95 per cent confidence interval associated with each point estimate. **b** For further information and caveats see tables 4A.96-97.

Source: MCEETYA (2008c) *National Report on Schooling in Australia 2007*; table 4A.94.

Nationally, the proportion of assessed students who achieved the numeracy benchmark by geolocation in 2007 was:

- 92.5–95.1 per cent for all year 3 students in metropolitan areas, no different to the proportion for provincial students (91.0–94.4 per cent), but above the proportion for remote students (84.2–91.2 per cent) and very remote students (61.4–73.0 per cent) (figure 4.41)
- 89.0–91.4 per cent for all year 5 students in metropolitan areas, no different to the proportion for provincial students (86.2–89.4 per cent), but above the proportion for remote students (74.4–82.2 per cent) and very remote students (46.9–57.7 per cent) (table 4A.95)
- 80.8–82.6 per cent for all year 7 students in metropolitan areas, above the proportion for provincial students (76.8–79.2 per cent), remote students (66.7–74.1 per cent) and very remote students (39.1–48.5 per cent) (table 4A.95).

Figure 4.41 **National proportion of year 3 students achieving the numeracy benchmark, by Indigenous status and geolocation, 2007[a, b]**



a Error bars represent the 95 per cent confidence interval associated with each point estimate. **b** Data for year 3 students are shown and may not be representative of students in years 5 and 7 which are detailed in table 4A.95.

Source: MCEETYA (2008c) *National Report on Schooling in Australia 2007*; table 4A.95.

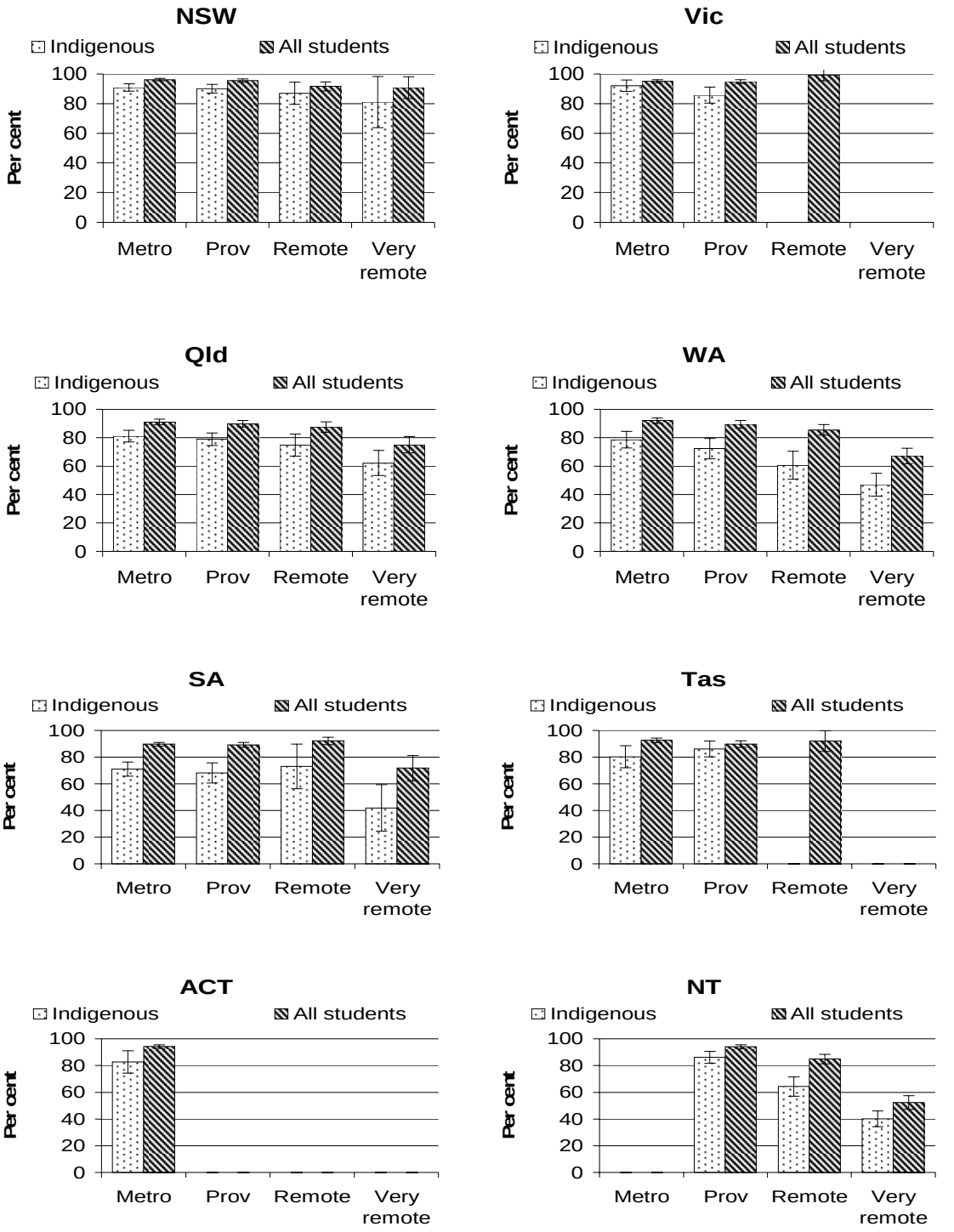
For all categories of remoteness across years 3, 5 and 7, the numeracy outcomes for Indigenous students were lower than those for all students. As with all students, outcomes for Indigenous students declined as remoteness increased — furthermore the gap in learning outcomes between Indigenous students and all students increased as the degree of remoteness increased.

Nationally, the proportion of assessed Indigenous students who achieved the numeracy benchmark in 2007 was:

- 80.2–88.2 per cent for Indigenous year 3 students in metropolitan areas, no different to the proportion for provincial students (79.2–88.0 per cent), but above the proportion for remote students (60.9–78.1 per cent) and very remote students (41.4–57.6 per cent) (figure 4.41)
- 69.6–77.6 per cent for Indigenous year 5 students in metropolitan areas, no different to the proportion for provincial students (65.6–74.6 per cent), but above the proportion for remote students (40.9–58.3 per cent) and very remote students (21.3–33.1 per cent) (table 4A.95)
- 48.2–55.2 per cent for Indigenous year 7 students in metropolitan areas, no different to the proportion of provincial students (45.0–53.0 per cent), but above the proportion for remote students (28.2–43.2 per cent) and very remote students (13.7–24.1 per cent) (table 4A.95).

State and Territory results are presented for year 3 numeracy outcomes in figure 4.42 (results for years 5 and 7 numeracy outcomes are in table 4A.95). Relatively large confidence intervals mean it is difficult to draw conclusions from these data. However, the general pattern in jurisdictions appears similar to the national results.

Figure 4.42 **Proportion of year 3 students achieving the numeracy benchmark, by Indigenous status and geolocation, 2007[a, b, c]**



a Error bars represent the 95 per cent confidence intervals associated with each point estimate. **b** Geolocation data are based on the MCEETYA Schools Geographic Location Classification and represent school location. **c** There are no very remote areas in Victoria. There are no provincial, remote or very remote areas in the ACT. There is no metropolitan zone in the NT.

Source: MCEETYA (2008c) *National Report on Schooling in Australia 2007*; table 4A.95.

Science literacy performance

'Science literacy performance' is an indicator of governments' objective that all students should attain high standards of knowledge, skill and understanding in agreed key learning areas (box 4.13).

Box 4.13 **Science literacy performance**

'Science literacy performance' is defined by three measures:

- *Percentage of students achieving at or above the proficient standard on the scientific literacy scale*: This is the proportion of assessed year 6 students who achieve at or above the proficient standard for scientific literacy, reported by sex, Indigenous status, and geolocation for 2003 and 2006 (and for LBOTE and socioeconomic status for 2003). The proficient standard for performance in scientific literacy is set at proficiency level 3.2 (of levels 1 to 4 or above) for year 6 (MCEETYA 2004, 2008e). This is a challenging but reasonable level of performance where to be regarded as having reached the proficient standard, students need to demonstrate more than the minimal or elementary skills expected of a student at that year level (MCEETYA Performance Measurement and Reporting Taskforce (PMRT) unpublished).
- *Percentage of students achieving at or above the proficient standard on the OECD PISA combined scientific literacy scale in a triennial international assessment*: This is the proportion of assessed 15 year old students who achieve at or above the proficient standard on the OECD PISA combined scientific literacy scale for a given year, reported by sex, Indigenous status, socioeconomic status and geolocation. A national standard has yet to be developed for this measure.
- *Percentage of students achieving at or above the proficient standard on the TIMSS science literacy scale in a quadrennial assessment*: This is the proportion of assessed year 4 and year 8 students who achieve at or above the proficient standard on the TIMSS science literacy scale for a given year. A national standard has yet to be developed for this measure.

A high or increasing proportion of students achieving at or above the scientific literacy benchmark/proficient standard is desirable.

Data for this indicator are comparable.

The National Assessment Program — Science Literacy, Year 6 assessment measures the scientific literacy of a sample of students and is conducted triennially. It was first conducted in 2003, and for a second time in 2006. Results from the 2003 national science literacy sample assessment were discussed in detail in the 2006 Report (SCRGSP 2006, pages 3.59–62), with available rescaled data (based on the 2006 sample) presented in tables 4A.98–100 of the 2009 Report. Results from the 2006 national science literacy sample assessment are reported below.

Approximately 5 per cent of the total Australian year 6 student population was sampled randomly and assessed. The sample was drawn from all states and territories and both government and non-government schools participated. In 2006, 12 911 students from 621 government and non-government schools participated in the national science literacy assessment (MCEETYA 2008e).

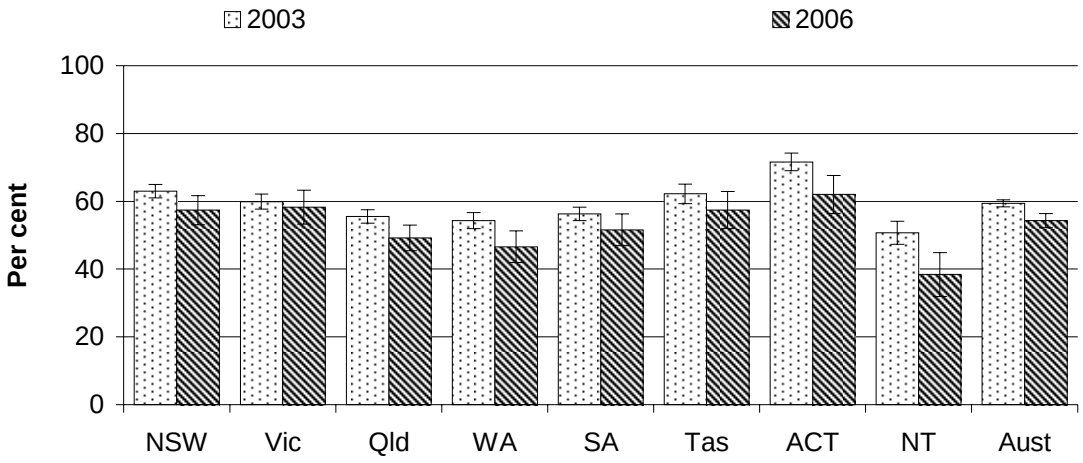
Year 6 scientific literacy 2006 results are reported as the proportion of Australian students from the sampled students (year 6 enrolled in participating schools) who achieved at the proficient standard or above. Nationally, 52.2–56.4 per cent of participating year 6 students achieved at the proficient standard or above in scientific literacy (figure 4.43) (down from 58.4–60.4 per cent in 2003). The national proportion of students by equity group who achieved at the proficient standard or above in scientific literacy was:

- 51.4–56.0 per cent for female students, no different than the proportion for male students (52.4–57.4 per cent)
- 15.5–35.5 per cent for Indigenous students (table 4A.100).

The national proportion of students by geolocation who achieved at the proficient standard or above in scientific literacy was:

- 52.1–58.5 per cent for metropolitan zone capital city students, no different to major urban statistical districts (51.1–60.9 per cent), provincial city statistical districts (45.6–57.6 per cent) or inner and outer provincial areas (50.0–58.6 per cent)
- 26.3–44.7 per cent for remote and very remote areas (table 4A.99).

Figure 4.43 **Proportion of year 6 students achieving at the proficient standard or above, scientific literacy[a, b, c]**



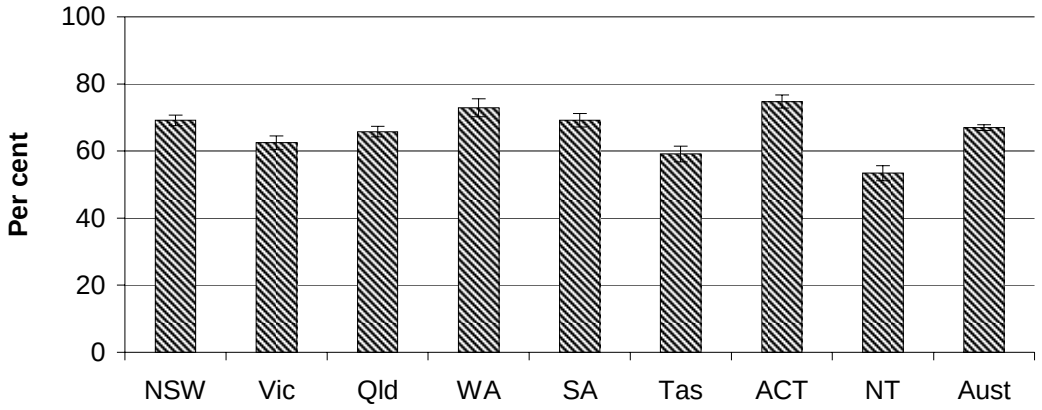
a Error bars represent the 95 per cent confidence intervals associated with each point estimate. **b** Minimum standards like the benchmarks in literacy and numeracy have not been set for scientific literacy. The standard for scientific literacy is set at proficiency level 3.2 (of levels 1 to 4 or above) — a challenging level of performance, with students needing to demonstrate more than minimal or elementary skills to be regarded as reaching it. Data represent the proportion of students at or above the proficient standard. **c** Data for 2003 have been rescaled to 2006, and are directly comparable with 2006 data.

Source: MCEETYA (2008e) *National Assessment Program — Science Literacy Year 6 Report, 2006*; table 4A.98.

Scientific literacy was a domain tested in the PISA 2006 survey. In PISA 2006 the proportion of 15 year old students who achieved at level 3 or above in scientific literacy was:

- 65.3–68.7 per cent for all Australian students (figure 4.42)
- 64.1–68.9 per cent for male students, no different to 65.5–69.5 per cent for female students
- 28.7–39.9 per cent for Indigenous students, 34.9–60.7 per cent for geographically remote students and 48.5–53.1 per cent for students from low socioeconomic status families (table 4A.114).

Figure 4.44 **Proportion of 15 year old students achieving level 3 or above, overall scientific literacy scale, 2006[a, b]**



a Error bars represent the 95 per cent confidence intervals associated with each point estimate. **b** The PISA overall scientific literacy scale has six defined proficiency levels, from level 6 (the highest) to level 1 (the lowest) with an additional level referred to as 'Below level 1' which covers those students who are unable to reach even the first threshold of the skills that PISA seeks to measure. Level 3 or above can be described as a level of achievement that is reasonably challenging and which requires students to demonstrate more than minimal or elementary skills to be regarded as reaching it.

Source: ACER (unpublished); table 4A.113.

Civics and citizenship performance

'Civics and citizenship performance' is an indicator of governments' objective that students be active and informed citizens with an understanding and appreciation of Australia's system of government and civic life (box 4.14).

Box 4.14 **Civics and citizenship performance**

'Civics and citizenship performance' is defined as the percentage of students that achieve at or above the proficient standard on the civics and citizenship scale in a triennial assessment. This is the proportion of sampled year 6 and year 10 students that achieve at or above the proficient standard in civic knowledge and understanding, reported by sex, Indigenous status, LBOTE, socioeconomic status and geolocation.

The proficient standard for performance in civics and citizenship is set at proficiency level 2 for year 6, and at level 3 for year 10 (of levels 1 to 5) (MCEETYA 2006b). This is a challenging but reasonable level of performance where to be regarded as having reached the proficient standard, students need to demonstrate more than the minimal or elementary skills expected of a student at that year level (PMRT unpublished).

A high proportion of students achieving at or above the applicable proficient standard in civics and citizenship performance is desirable.

Data for this indicator are comparable.

The National Assessment Program — Civics and Citizenship, Years 6 and 10 assessment measures the civics and citizenship performance of a sample of students and is conducted triennially (MCEETYA 2006b). It was conducted for the first time in 2004 and again in 2007. Results from the 2004 national civics and citizenship sample assessment were discussed in detail in the 2007 Report (SCRGSP 2007a, pages 3.56–59), with data reproduced in tables 4A.101–103 of the 2009 Report. Results from the 2007 national civics and citizenship sample assessment were not available in time for inclusion in this Report, and will be included in the 2010 Report.

Information and communication technologies literacy performance

'Information and communication technologies literacy performance' is an indicator of governments' objective that, when students leave school, they should be confident, creative and productive users of new technologies, particularly information and communication technologies, and understand the impact of those technologies on society (box 4.15).

Box 4.15 **Information and communication technologies literacy performance**

'Information and communication technologies (ICT) literacy performance' is defined as the percentage of students that achieve at or above the proficient standard on the ICT literacy scale in a triennial national assessment. This is the proportion of sampled year 6 and year 10 students achieving at or above the proficient standard in ICT literacy, reported by sex, Indigenous status, LBOTE, socioeconomic status and geolocation.

The proficient standard for ICT literacy performance is set at proficiency level 3 for year 6 students, and at proficiency level 4 for year 10 students (of levels 1 to 6). This is a challenging level but reasonable level of performance where students needed to demonstrate more than minimal or elementary skills expected of a student at that year level to be regarded as having reached the proficient standard (PMRT unpublished).

A high proportion of students achieving at or above the applicable proficient standard in ICT literacy performance is desirable.

Data for this indicator are comparable.

The proficient standard for ICT literacy differs from the literacy and numeracy benchmark standards where the focus is on identifying the minimum skill and knowledge requirements students would be expected to demonstrate to progress to the next level of schooling (MCEETYA 2006b).

Student performance in ICT literacy is measured by a national sample assessment program resulting in comparable reporting against the standard. Performance in ICT literacy can be affected by socioeconomic circumstances, age, length of time spent in schooling, LBOTE and Indigenous status.

The National Assessment Program—Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) Years 6 and 10 assessment measures the ICT literacy of a sample of students and was conducted for the first time in 2005, and will be conducted triennially. The sample was drawn from all states and territories and both government and non-government schools participated. In 2005, 3746 year 6 students and 3627 year 10 students from 264 primary and 253 secondary schools across states and territories, participated in the national ICT assessment (MCEETYA 2008a).

Years 6 and 10 ICT literacy performance 2005 results are reported as a proportion of Australian students from the sampled students (years 6 and 10 enrolled in participating schools) who achieved at the proficient standard or above. Nationally, the proportion of participating students who achieved at the proficient standard or above in ICT literacy performance was 45.6–51.6 per cent for year 6 students and 58.1–64.3 per cent for year 10 students (table 4A.104). National data on 2005 ICT

literacy performance by geolocation and equity group are contained in the attachment tables to this Report (tables 4A.105-106).

Other outcomes

Vocational education and training (VET) in schools attainment

'VET in schools attainment' is an indicator of governments' objective to provide vocational education and training in schools to assist all young people to secure their own futures by enhancing their transition to a broad range of post-school options and pathways. It is an indicator of students' achievement of VET competency as part of their senior secondary schools (box 4.16).

Box 4.16 VET in schools attainment

'VET in schools attainment' (VET in schools attainment rate) is defined as the number of school students enrolled in a senior secondary school certificate in a calendar year who have completed at least one VET unit of competency/module as a proportion of all school students undertaking a senior secondary school certificate in that year.

Holding other factors constant, a higher or increasing VET in schools attainment rate suggests greater access to, and/or better preparation for, a range of post-school pathways.

Care needs to be taken in interpreting this indicator as it may be influenced by a number of factors which differ across states and territories, such as:

- definition of VET in schools
- senior secondary certificate requirements
- access to VET in schools prior to year 11
- number of VET in schools options and pathways available to students, particularly those in rural and remote areas.

Data for this indicator are not directly comparable.

Data for 2005 were included in detail in this chapter in the 2008 Report (and are contained in attachment tables 4A.131–133 for the 2009 Report). Updated data were not available for the 2009 Report.

Completion

'Completion' is an indicator of governments' objectives that all students have access to high quality education and training to year 12 or equivalent, that provides

clear and recognised pathways to further education, training and employment (box 4.17).

Box 4.17 **Completion**

'Completion' (completion rate) is defined as the number of students who meet the requirements of a year 12 certificate or equivalent expressed as a percentage of the estimated potential year 12 population. The estimated potential year 12 population is an estimate of a single year age group which could have attended year 12 that year, calculated as the estimated resident population aged 15–19 divided by five. The completion rate is reported by socioeconomic status, geolocation and sex.

Holding other factors constant, a higher or increasing completion rate suggests an improvement in educational outcomes.

The criteria for obtaining a year 12 or equivalent certificate vary across jurisdictions. The aggregation of all postcode locations into three socioeconomic status categories — high, medium and low deciles — means there may be significant variation within the categories. Low deciles, for example, will include locations ranging from those of extreme disadvantage to those of moderate disadvantage.

Data reported for this indicator are not directly comparable.

Completion rates are primarily used as indicators of trends and are used, in part, because information on participation and retention rates is generally not available by socioeconomic background or geographic location. Comparisons across jurisdictions are not recommended and need to be made with care, for the following reasons:

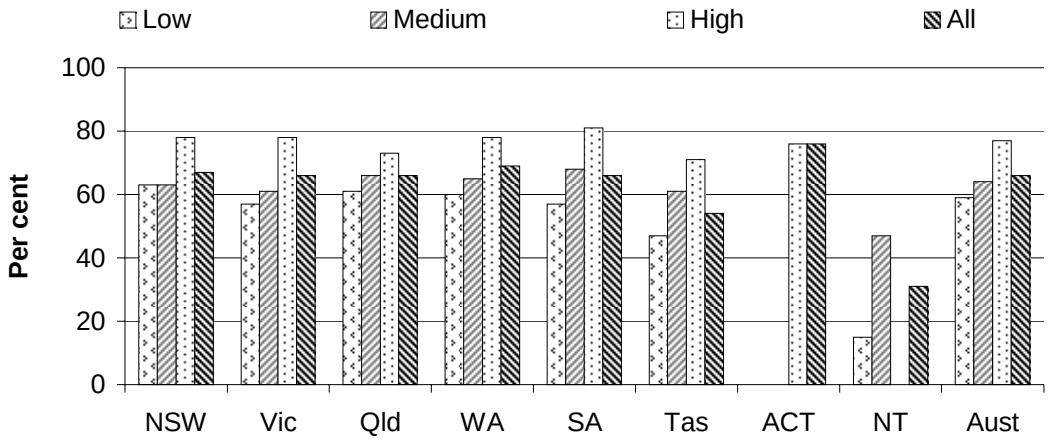
- assessment, reporting and requirements for obtaining year 12 certificates or equivalent vary across states and territories — for example, from moderated school-based assessment to a mix including external and internal assessment, and from completion of a pattern of study to a prescribed level of attainment
- inaccuracies arise from using both home postal address and school location address in compiling completion rates data
- small changes in population or completions can affect the estimates of completion rates, particularly for smaller states and territories
- students completing their secondary education in TAFE institutes are included in reporting for some jurisdictions and not in others, and the proportion of these students also varies across jurisdictions.

Nationally, the year 12 completion rate for all students was 66 per cent in 2007. The completion rate for male students was 60 per cent compared with 73 per cent for females (table 4A.128).

Socioeconomic status is determined according to the ABS Index of Disadvantage on the basis of postcode of students' home addresses. Low socioeconomic status is the average of the three lowest deciles, medium socioeconomic status is the average of the four medium deciles and high socioeconomic status is the average of the three highest deciles.

Nationally, year 12 completion rates for students from low (59 per cent) and medium socioeconomic backgrounds (64 per cent) were 18 percentage points and 13 percentage points respectively below those for students from a high (77 per cent) socioeconomic background in 2007 (figure 4.45). Completion rates were higher for female students than for male students in all socioeconomic categories (table 4A.128).

Figure 4.45 **Completion rates, year 12, by socioeconomic status, 2007 (per cent)**[a, b, c, d, e]



[a] Completion rates are estimated by calculating the number of students who meet the requirements of a year 12 certificate or equivalent expressed as a percentage of the potential year 12 population. The potential year 12 population is an estimate of a single year age group which could have attended year 12 that year, calculated as the estimated resident population aged 15–19 divided by five. [b] The ABS Index of Disadvantage has been used to calculate socioeconomic status on the basis of postcode of students' home addresses. [c] Low socioeconomic status is the average of the three lowest deciles, medium socioeconomic status is the average of the four middle deciles and high socioeconomic status is the average of the three highest deciles. [d] A common total for socioeconomic status and geolocation is selected for reporting all students' rates and this may mean totals for socioeconomic status differ slightly to those in other publications. [e] The populations for the low and medium socioeconomic status deciles in the ACT and the high socioeconomic status deciles in the NT are not published due to small numbers.

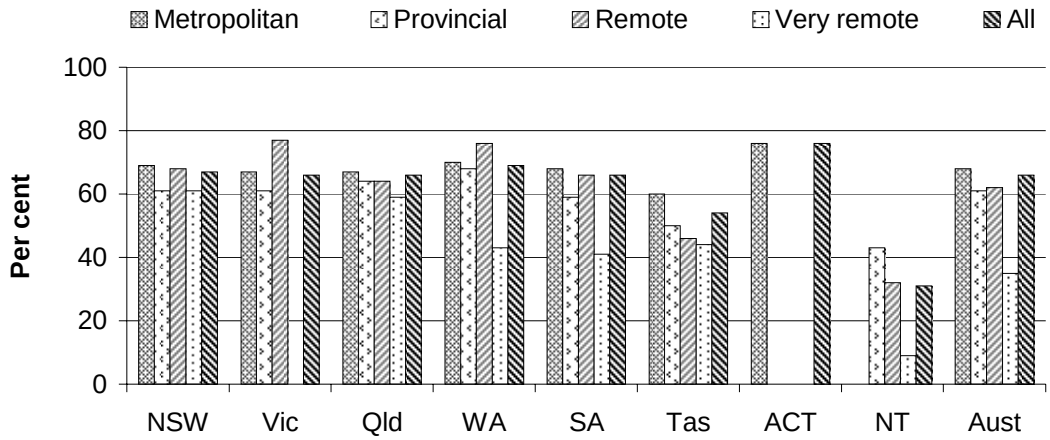
Source: DEEWR (unpublished); table 4A.128.

Geographic isolation is determined using the agreed MCEETYA Geographic Location Classification.

Nationally, the completion rate was higher in the metropolitan zone (68 per cent) than in all areas (66 per cent). The completion rate was lower in the provincial zone (61 per cent), remote areas (62 per cent) and very remote areas (35 per cent), than for all areas (figure 4.46).

Gender differences are also evident with completion rates higher for females for all localities. In the metropolitan zone, the female completion rate was 74 per cent compared with 63 per cent for males. In the remote zone, the female completion rate was 75 per cent compared with 51 per cent for males (table 4A.129). Time series data on national completion rates are shown in tables 4A.128-129.

Figure 4.46 **Completion rates, year 12, by geolocation, 2007 (per cent)[a, b, c, d, e]**



[a] Completion rates are estimated by calculating the number of students who meet the requirements of a year 12 certificate or equivalent expressed as a percentage of the potential year 12 population. The potential year 12 population is an estimate of a single year age group which could have attended year 12 that year, calculated as the estimated resident population aged 15–19 divided by five. [b] Definitions are based on the agreed MCEETYA Geographic Location Classification. [c] The ACT is included in the metropolitan zone. [d] Darwin is included in the provincial zone. [e] There are no very remote areas in Victoria and the ACT.

Source: DEEWR (unpublished); table 4A.129.

Destination

'Destination' is an indicator of governments' objective of ensuring that school leavers make successful transitions from school and continue to improve their skills through further post-school education, training and/or employment. It is an indicator of students' post-school transitions into education, training and employment (box 4.18).

Box 4.18 **Destination**

'Destination' (school leaver destination rate) is defined as the estimated number of school students who left school in a given year and who, in May the following year, were participating in post-school education, training or full time employment, as a percentage of the estimated number of all school leavers in that given year. It is reported by highest level of schooling completed (year 12 or year 11 and below).

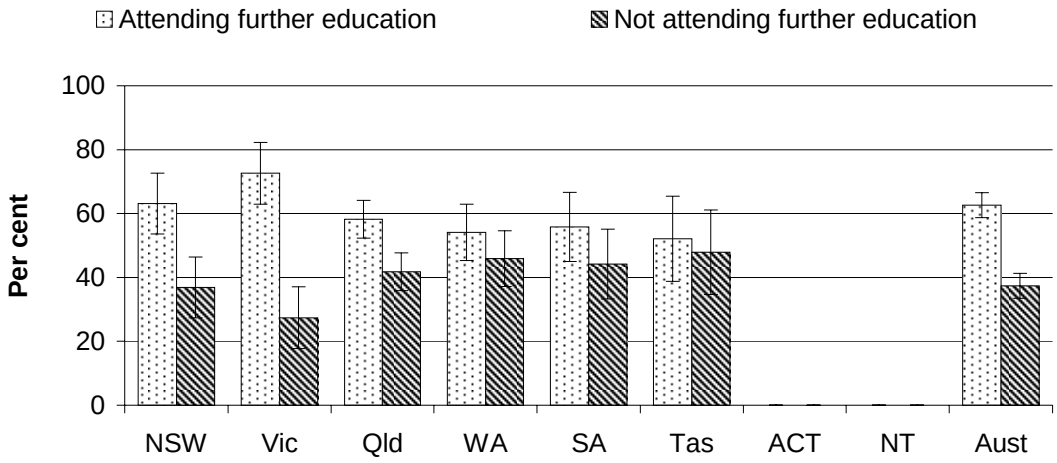
Holding other factors constant, a higher or increasing estimated proportion of school leavers participating in further education, training or full time employment is likely to result in improved educational and employment outcomes in the longer term.

The data reported for this indicator relate to the jurisdiction in which the young person was resident the year after they left school and not necessarily the jurisdiction in which they attended school. The small number of young people included in this sample survey also means that disaggregation of destination estimates by jurisdiction can be unreliable, particularly for the smaller states and territories.

Data for this indicator are not directly comparable.

School leaver destination data disaggregated by jurisdiction need to be used with caution, especially for the smaller jurisdictions, due to the large confidence intervals associated with these survey data. Nationally, in 2007, 62.6 per cent of year 12 school leavers were enrolled in further study, with 41.4 per cent attending higher education and 21.2 per cent attending TAFE courses or other study (figure 4.47, table 4A.130). For year 11 and below school leavers, 38.0 per cent were attending further education, almost all in TAFE or other study (table 4A.130). Data on the employment status of school leavers are available in table 4A.130.

Figure 4.47 **Destination of year 12 students, 2007**[a, b, c, d, e]



[a] Data are for year 12 students who left school in 2006. [b] Error bars represent the 95 per cent confidence interval associated with each point estimate. [c] The categories for employment and enrolment are not exclusive. That is, for example, people enrolled may also be employed. [d] 'Not attending' includes people in full time employment and 'other', which includes part time workers, unemployed people and people not in the labour force. [e] The NT estimates and the ACT estimate for 'Not attending further education' have relative standard errors greater than 50 per cent, therefore these jurisdictions are not included in this figure as the estimates are considered too unreliable for general use.

Source: ABS (unpublished) derived from *Education and Work, Australia, May 2007*, Cat. No. 6227.0; table 4A.130.

Of the 37.4 per cent of year 12 school leavers who were not attending further education, 17.3 per cent were employed full time and 20.2 per cent were either employed part time, unemployed or not in the labour force (table 4A.130). Detailed information relating to year 12, year 11 and below and all school leavers across jurisdictions is in table 4A.130.

The Early childhood, education and training preface of this Report includes 2007 destination data of 2006 year 12 and year 11 and below school leavers at the national level, and examines the proportions of male and female students attending other educational institutions in 2007 after leaving school in the previous year (table BA.8).

The school leaver destination survey results reported in box 4.19 are from five jurisdictions' state/territory-specific surveys, using different research methods and data collection instruments. The individual jurisdictional surveys were developed for various purposes, such as to assist with operational, strategic and planning functions, as distinct from being designed for comparative national reporting. These data are presented as supplementary information to the national ABS data, providing some context, until nationally comparable data become available (box 4.19).

Box 4.19 **School leaver destination survey results**

Victoria

In Victoria, a survey of post-school destinations (*On Track*) has been conducted annually since 2003. Consenting year 12 or equivalent completers and early leavers (from years 10, 11 and 12) from all Victorian schools participate in a telephone survey early in the year after they leave school.

The 2008 *On Track* Survey contacted 33 250 (68.0 per cent) of the eligible 2007 year 12 or equivalent cohort from both government and non-government schools as well as TAFE and ACE providers. Of these students, 71.7 per cent were in further education and training (43.9 per cent were enrolled at university, 18.0 per cent were TAFE enrolled and 9.8 per cent had taken up apprenticeships or traineeships). Of the 28.3 per cent who were not in further education and training, 14.4 per cent were in full or part time employment, 11.0 per cent had deferred a tertiary place and 2.9 per cent were looking for work.

Queensland

The annual Queensland *Next Step* destination survey, first conducted in 2005, targets all students who completed year 12 in government and non-government schools.

Responses are predominately collected by computer-assisted telephone interview, between March and May in the year after completion of year 12.

In its fourth year, the 2008 *Next Step* survey collected responses from 33 568 year 12 graduates (80.1 per cent) from 425 schools. The results showed that 60.6 per cent of respondents continued in some recognised form of education or training in the year after they left school. The most likely destination was university studies (34.4 per cent), followed by VET (26.2 per cent) which includes apprenticeships (9.5 per cent) and traineeships (5.4 per cent). Four in ten year 12 completers (39.4 per cent) did not enter post-school education or training, but were either employed (32.1 per cent), seeking work (5.8 per cent) or neither studying nor in the labour force (1.5 per cent).

WA

The WA *School Leaver Destinations* survey has been conducted annually since 1996. This telephone survey is designed to collect destinations data from public school year 12 completers. The 2008 collection resulted in destinations being obtained for 7983 (88.2 per cent) of the 9048 eligible year 12 public school students.

(Continued on next page)

Box 4.19 **(Continued)**

The majority of the 4562 students (57.1 per cent) were in either education or training, with 2461 (30.8 per cent) being enrolled in university studies, 1299 (16.3 per cent) in TAFE studies and 684 (8.6 per cent) having taken up either an apprenticeship or a traineeship. The remainder were either repeating year 12 studies or engaged in other training, with 1628 (20.4 per cent) being engaged in full time employment and 863 (10.8 per cent) in part time employment, 365 (4.6 per cent) looking for a work or a study opportunity, 330 (4.1 per cent) neither working nor seeking work and 235 (2.9 per cent) declining to participate.

ACT

In the ACT an annual telephone-based survey is conducted of government and non-government school students who successfully completed year 12 in the ACT, which identifies the destinations and satisfaction responses of these students. The survey is conducted during the middle of the year following completion of their studies.

Latest available data from the survey show that 93 per cent of all students were employed or studying in 2007, and that overall 95 per cent were satisfied with their college experience. The survey found that Language Other Than English (LOTE) students were more likely to be studying than non-LOTE students, with almost eight in 10 doing so in 2007. Students who undertook a VET course at school were more likely to be employed (87 per cent) compared to 78 per cent of students who did not undertake a VET course. Of those students that were studying, the majority (60.0 per cent) reported that they were studying at a Bachelor level or higher, 14.4 per cent at Certificate III level, 9.0 per cent at Diploma or Associate Diploma level, 6.4 per cent at Certificate IV level, 4.8 per cent at Advanced Diploma or Associate Degree level, and 4.6 per cent at other lower levels.

NT

A school destination survey was trialled in a sample of NT schools in 2006 and a full study, *Down the Track* was undertaken in 2007. No survey was conducted in 2008. Destination patterns observed in 2006 and 2007 from these studies are likely to be similar in 2008. This pattern indicates that approximately 35 percent of students enrol in VET or university courses and the majority of these are full time students. Approximately 60 per cent are in paid employment and 11 percent are in the labour market.

Source: State and Territory governments (unpublished).

4.4 Future directions in performance reporting

Reform of specific purpose payments

In December 2007, COAG agreed to reform Specific Purpose Payments (SPPs). SPPs are financial agreements between the Australian Government and State and Territory governments involving a contribution by the Australian Government to the funding of services which are considered a joint Australian and State and Territory government responsibility. The *Schools Assistance (Learning Together – Achievement Through Choice and Opportunity) Act 2004 (Cth)* for school education was such an SPP.

At its 29 November 2008 meeting, COAG agreed to six new National Agreements, five of which are associated with a National SPP. In the area of school education, there is a National Education Agreement associated with the schools SPP (COAG 2008b). Under the reforms, the National Education Agreement contains the objectives, outcomes, outputs and performance indicators for school education. The performance of governments in achieving these mutually agreed outcomes will be assessed by the COAG Reform Council (CRC). The Steering Committee has been requested by COAG to provide the SPP performance information to the CRC (COAG 2008a).

The National Agreements/SPPs will be supplemented by a range of National Partnerships (NPs): project, facilitation and reward agreements. Funding for NPs may be conditional on states and territories meeting agreed milestones and performance benchmarks.

The Steering Committee and the School Education Working Group will ensure that reporting in this chapter reflects the COAG priorities identified in the National Education Agreement, schools SPP and relevant NPs.

Participation, retention and completion rates

The year 12 completion rate included in this Report is not affected by whether or not students are part time or complete year 12 in TAFE, as these young people are included in this measure. The 14–19 year old school participation rates include part time students for the first time in this Report. However, the traditional year 7/8 to year 12 apparent retention rate, which is also reported in this Report, is based on full time school students only. This measure is under examination, and supplementary participation measures are reported in the Early childhood, education and training preface of this Report.

Nationally comparable reporting of learning outcomes

Enhanced literacy and numeracy measures

In July 2003, the MCEETYA agreed to improve the comparability and diagnostic potential of national literacy and numeracy data through the development of common national tests. A new national testing regime was successfully trialled in 2006.

Prior to 2008, students had undertaken different tests in each State and Territory. The first National Assessment Program—Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) tests were conducted in May 2008 for all years 3, 5, 7 and 9 students in government and non-government schools. For the first time, all students in the same year level were assessed on the same test items in the domains of reading, writing, language conventions (spelling, grammar and punctuation) and numeracy.

The NAPLAN reports the full range of student achievement against a common scale and uses a common set of tests to resolve the technical difficulties associated with equating previous State and Territory based tests. In addition, the concept of national minimum standards in the NAPLAN defined by particular National Achievement Bands replaces the previous concept of single-point National Benchmarks for each domain. For year 3, Band 2 is the national minimum standard, for year 5, Band 4 is the national minimum standard, for year 7, Band 5 is the national minimum standard and for year 9, Band 6 is the national minimum standard. Therefore, results from the NAPLAN are not directly comparable with national results from the tests conducted in previous years.

The *National Summary Report* was released on 12 September 2008 (MCEETYA 2008d). Results from a second report with more detailed information (including disaggregation by Indigenous status and geolocation) will be included in the 2010 Report.

VET in schools

Participation and attainment data for VET in schools were collected annually in 2005 and 2006 and were originally anticipated for publication in the 2007 Report. Although data for 2005 are included in this Report, there are still a number of issues affecting consistency and comparability that require resolution.

During the period 2006–2008 a range of persistent, complex issues around quality and national consistency and comparability of VET in schools data have been considered. These issues continue to prevent meaningful reporting against the

existing VET in schools participation and attainment performance measures, and updated data were not available in time for inclusion in the 2009 Report.

Nationally consistent definitions

Nationally consistent definitions of student background characteristics have been adopted for nationally comparable reporting on students' educational achievement and outcomes. Ministers have endorsed standard definitions of sex, Indigenous status, socioeconomic background, language background and geographic location.

Student background information collected from parents through the enrolment process using the agreed data collection specifications and methodology is linked to student assessment results from full cohort literacy and numeracy testing, and to the results of sample assessments in science literacy, civics and citizenship, and information and communication technology literacy.

A definition of students with disabilities for nationally comparable reporting on students' outcomes has not yet been developed. However, all jurisdictions have agreed to report on their policies and practices for maximising the participation of students with disabilities in the national literacy and numeracy assessments.

Other areas to be identified

Additional indicators may be added to the school education performance indicator framework as further developments occur.

4.5 Jurisdiction comments

This section provides comments from each jurisdiction on the services covered in this chapter. Appendix A contains data that may assist in interpreting the performance indicators presented in this chapter. These data cover a range of demographic and geographic characteristics, including age profile, geographic distribution of the population, income levels, education levels, tenure of dwellings and cultural heritage (such as Indigenous and ethnic status).

Australian Government comments

“ Education is key to the Australian Government’s agenda to support increasing participation and productivity and secure Australia’s prosperity into the future. The Council of Australian Governments (COAG), through its Productivity Agenda Working Group, has nominated schooling as one of the priorities for reform. As such, the Australian and State and Territory governments are working collaboratively across a number of key areas in schooling. These include the development of a world-class national curriculum and the establishment of the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority, to bring together for the first time, the functions of curriculum, assessment and reporting at the national level.

The Australian Government is committed to redressing the educational disadvantage of Indigenous Australians and is working through COAG on improving key outcomes. Its major Indigenous education initiative is the *Indigenous Education Program* which is targeted to areas of greatest need including regional and remote Australia where there are significant gaps in educational outcomes between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians.

Beginning in 2008, the Digital Education Revolution is a $1.2 billion investment over five years that aims to contribute sustainable and meaningful change to teaching and learning in Australian schools by preparing students for further education, training and work in a digital world.

The Australian Government supported the implementation of national literacy and numeracy testing in 2008 by funding approximately 75 per cent of the development costs of the national reading, writing, language conventions and numeracy tests. The Australian Government has also made a significant financial contribution to support schools and teachers in improving the literacy and numeracy skills of educationally disadvantaged students through the Literacy, Numeracy and Special Learning Needs Programme (LNSLN). An estimated $2.0 billion was provided over the four years from 2005 to 2008.

The Trade Training Centres in Schools Program will provide $2.5 billion over 10 years with the aim of increasing the proportion of students achieving year 12 or an equivalent qualification and helping to address skill shortages in traditional trades and emerging industries.

The Australian Government is committed to increasing the number of Australian students becoming proficient at learning the languages and understanding the cultures of our main Asian neighbours — China, Indonesia, Japan and Korea. The National Asian Languages and Studies in Schools Program will provide $62.4 million over 2008-09 to 2010-11 to support this commitment.

The Australian Government continues supporting initiatives to ensure children receive quality teaching at school. The Australian Government Quality Teacher Program improves the professional standing of school teachers and school leaders, through the State/Territory component of the Program and assistance to Teaching Australia - the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership. ”

New South Wales Government comments

“ The New South Wales State Plan provides the overall direction for further improvement and is a major influence on the NSW Department of Education and Training’s priorities. The NSW Education and Training budget for 2008-09 will reach $11.8 billion. Priorities include:

- increasing levels of attainment for all students, including increasing the number of students exceeding the national benchmarks in literacy and numeracy
- more students completing year 12 or recognised vocational training
- closing the performance gap between Aboriginal students and all students, at schools and at TAFE.

The results of the first national literacy and numeracy tests confirm that NSW students are among the best in Australia, achieving among the top three performing jurisdictions in reading and numeracy at every year level tested. Across all year levels, both the proportion of NSW students performing at or above the national minimum standard and the proportion of students who achieved in the top two bands were above the national average.

NSW is addressing the performance gap between Aboriginal students and all students. $65 million dollars has been allocated over four years to improve the academic achievements of Aboriginal students. Following a major review of Aboriginal Education, a number of initiatives are being implemented, including personalised learning plans for Aboriginal students, with 15 669 having been developed and implemented for Aboriginal students. Personalised Learning Plans emphasise the process to build partnerships beyond the school to support learning achievements and enhance the well being of individual students.

NSW has a number of strategies to increase year 12 attainment. One of these is the *Connected Classrooms Program* which has a total investment of $158 million over four years. It has three components:

- The *Interactive Classroom Project*, at a cost of $66.0 million, will equip every New South Wales public school with an interactive whiteboard, data projector, control computer, network device and video conferencing components.
- The *Learning Tools Project*, costing $29.0 million, will upgrade students’ email, individual online working space for all students and teachers and online access to student reports for parents.
- The *Network Bandwidth Enhancement Project*, at a cost of $63.0 million for network upgrades, will increase bandwidth speed and secure browsing and content filtering to better enable interactive learning environments. ”

Victorian Government comments

“ The Victorian Government seeks to ensure that Victoria’s education services strive to meet the needs of families and young people. The Department’s vision is that ‘every young Victorian thrives, learns and grows to enjoy a productive, rewarding and fulfilling life, while contributing to their local and global communities’.

The *Blueprint for Education and Early Childhood Development* was released in September 2008 and outlines a birth to adulthood integrated reform agenda to improve performance and promote excellence in Victoria’s schools. The Blueprint provides a framework for building the skills of the education workforce to enhance the teaching and learning relationship and the capacity of school leaders.

The Government has made a significant investment in its education workforce. During 2008, more than 1600 participants engaged in 19 statewide leadership professional learning programs, *Learning to Lead Effective Schools*, provided for principals and teachers within government schools. In 2008, the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) recognised that the Victorian government school system is positioned to become an international authority on system-wide improvement and leadership development.

During 2007-08, 400 schools engaged in self-evaluation, external review and planning to support the development of their school’s four year strategic plan. A total of 1413 schools have now been accredited as schools with a Performance and Development Culture to date.

The Victorian Government recognises the significant impact that school design has on innovative teaching and student outcomes. A total of $1.9 billion is being invested to rebuild, renovate or extend 500 schools by 2011, with 131 school building projects receiving funding in 2007-08. Every Victorian government school will be rebuilt, renovated or extended by 2016-17.

The Government’s continued investment in education is paying dividends for young Victorians. In 2008, Victorian students at years 3, 5, 7 and 9 achieved significantly higher results than the Australian average in reading, writing, grammar, punctuation, spelling and numeracy. More than 95 per cent of year 3 students were at or above the national minimum standard in reading, writing and numeracy, and more than 93 per cent of year 5 students achieved or exceeded the national minimum standard.

The Department has developed a new education strategy for Koorie students: *Wannik, Learning Together — Journey to Our Future*. The strategy aims to promote strong leadership, create a culture of high expectations and individualised learning for Koorie students. The Department provided regions with additional funding for projects targeted at improving Koorie students’ literacy and numeracy, attendance and parent engagement. ”

Queensland Government comments

“

Queensland continued reforms to schooling and early childhood education across a wide range of areas in 2008. In September, the Queensland Government announced *Toward Q2: Tomorrow's Queensland*, an ambitious plan to address key challenges by 2020. For education the 2020 targets are:

- All children will have access to a quality early childhood education so they are ready for school.
- Three out of four Queenslanders will hold trade, training or tertiary qualifications.

A range of initiatives is underway that will contribute to achieving these targets.

The first full intake of Preparatory (Prep) year students across Queensland occurred in 2008 with total Prep year enrolments at state schools estimated at 38 000. Ninety seven per cent of eligible Queensland children are now attending a full time preparatory year before school.

To build on the success of the introduction of the Prep year, $300 million was committed to a major expansion of early childhood education and care to provide 240 additional kindergarten (pre-Prep) services across Queensland by 2014. To meet the needs of Indigenous children, a further $24.4 million is being invested over two years for the pre-Prep early learning program in 35 Indigenous communities.

Queensland is continuing to expand educational facilities to meet ongoing population and enrolment growth. To meet this demand, four new state schools are being constructed in South East Queensland, and an additional $150 million was committed to deliver new and renewed state school learning facilities, resources and technologies through the *State Schools of Tomorrow* initiative.

Queensland backed its commitment to improve learning outcomes by introducing *Literacy the Key to Learning: Framework for Action* to provide up to 15 hours of intensive literacy support for upper primary students requiring extra assistance in state, Catholic and independent schools.

The *Believe Achieve Succeed* initiative was introduced to improve educational and life outcomes for the state's most disadvantaged students. The strategy will ensure education is the focal point for supporting all students; promote high standards of achievement for all students, in all schools; actively encourage and support school leaders and communities to implement solutions to local barriers affecting student learning and achievement; and facilitate flexible responses for staffing, education and family support services.

A new senior schooling qualification the Queensland Certificate of Education (QCE) will be issued to students for the first time in December 2008 recognising a wider range of learning options such as results from TAFE, university subjects and other courses to be recorded towards a student's outcome.

”

Western Australian Government comments

“ The WA Government continues to respond to challenges arising from changes in society and the education environment. Economic and population growth have resulted in increased pressure on the public school education system. The Department of Education and Training's strategies to meet these challenges are being shaped by the community's expectations of standards with respect to literacy and numeracy, pathways for senior students, and the quality and conduct of staff (particularly in relation to the care of students).

From the beginning of 2008, students must remain in full time education until the end of the year in which they turn 17 years, or participate in meaningful and flexible programs to suit their learning needs and interests. These include full time or part time schooling, vocational education and training, apprenticeships or traineeships, employment, full time home education or combinations of these. There are early indications of a marked increase in school retention rates. Overall retention in full time schooling from year 8 to 12 increased to a high of 71.6 per cent, and for Aboriginal students the rate increased to 40.4 per cent — considerably higher than the average for the previous five years of 28.5 per cent.

The focus on improving literacy and numeracy continued. In 2007, the *Getting it Right* strategy cost some $17 million to operate. It funded 200 specialist teacher full time equivalent (FTE) staff to support classroom teachers, enabling 190 literacy and 178 numeracy teachers to work in 381 primary and 34 district high schools. A further 26 FTE staff were allocated to secondary schools with 11 numeracy and 30 literacy teachers working in 37 schools.

WA is committed to improving the educational outcomes of Aboriginal students. In addition to ongoing strategies targeting literacy and numeracy, programs to support increased participation and achievement for Aboriginal students continue. In 2007, the Follow the Dream strategy supported 527 students in 58 schools across years 6 to 12 to achieve academic excellence. There was also a focus on enhancing the involvement of Aboriginal parents and caregivers, and in 2007 a trial was conducted in six schools to support the development of formal school-community partnerships, one of the priorities of the *Australian Directions in Indigenous Education 2005–2008* national policy.

In 2007, DET completed the development of an Early Childhood (K-3) Syllabus, Middle Childhood (4–7) Syllabus and syllabuses for each learning area in early adolescence (8–10). A comprehensive range of classroom-ready resources was made available on the K-10 Syllabus website to support teachers in their use of the syllabuses and provide practical support in their planning of learning, teaching and assessment programs.

Implementation of a Community Service Program for year 10 students began. Students undertake 20 hours service over year 10–12 as a requirement of the Western Australian Certificate of Education. Approximately 17 000 students were involved in the program during 2007. ”

South Australian Government comments

“ The Government of South Australia, through the work of the Department of Education and Children’s Services, is committed to making it possible for every child and student in South Australia to reach the highest possible level of their learning and well being.

South Australia has started legislation reform of education and children’s services. The aim of this reform is to support the stronger integration of services for children and families. Development of draft South Australian legislation will be undertaken in concert with the national regulatory reforms being developed under the Council of Australian Governments' (COAG) Productivity Agenda.

Also developed as part of this process was the *Education (Compulsory Education Age) Act 2007*, which will require 16 year olds to be in education or training until they turn 17 years of age or achieve a qualification. This will include young people enrolled in a Government, Catholic or Independent school. The new law reflects research which indicates that young people who leave school too early are often unemployed by their 20’s and then find it difficult to find work and careers of their choice. These changes will come into effect on 1 January 2009.

South Australia’s Strategic Plan includes a target that aims to increase yearly the proportion of 15–19 year olds who achieve the South Australian Certificate of Education or equivalent senior secondary qualification. To help meet this target, the government is investing $54.5 million to reform the current certificate, and as a first step in 2007-08 it has trained 7500 secondary school teachers in a program to prepare them for the introduction of the changes.

In addition to achieving their South Australian Certificate of Education, young people will also be able to work towards a nationally accredited and industry recognised Certificate II, III, IV, Diploma or Advanced Diploma. Across the state, 10 Trade Schools for the Future and 20 Apprenticeship Brokers are facilitating this. The initiative is part of a $98 million package that is a partnership between Government, schools, TAFE and other vocational education providers, and employers.

The State Government has implemented three schemes to reduce class sizes and to improve literacy and numeracy outcomes in the early years of schooling, from Reception to year 3. The schemes have led to the implementation of 271 additional junior primary school teacher full time equivalents (FTEs) in disadvantaged schools, and 99 additional year 3 teacher FTEs to specifically reduce year 3 class sizes by up to eight students in the most disadvantaged schools, and by a minimum of four students in other schools. ”

Tasmanian Government comments

“ The Department’s direction has centred on achieving the Tasmanian Government’s priorities for education, training and information services.

Tasmania’s future depends on information, knowledge, and connected and kind communities that embrace lifelong learning. We strive to provide quality learning opportunities for all Tasmanians at every stage of their life. To achieve this, we focus on four strategic priorities:

- ensuring all children in their early years have every opportunity to arrive at school as a learner
- improving the literacy and numeracy performance of our students
- lifting the retention of our students to year 12 or equivalent and skilling Tasmanians to meet the needs of enterprise and industry
- building a knowledge-based society and forging stronger links between information and community.

In 2007-08 we developed the *Tasmania Tomorrow* strategy, ready for implementation in 2009. Improving retention rates through this approach will have direct economic and social benefits for the state. Tasmanian industry and business have worked alongside us to ensure that employees of the future have the skills and qualification to underpin profitability and productivity.

One of the key initiatives from the 2008-09 State Budget is the *Raising the Bar and Closing the Gap* initiative to improve literacy and numeracy. This funding will enable targeted support to significantly increase the number of children finishing primary school with functional literacy and numeracy skills.

A record Capital Investment Program (CIP) totalling $162.9 million over four years has been funded in the 2008-09 State Budget. The four-year CIP now provides funding for 35 works projects for schools, as well as funding towards the establishment of four new Learning and Information Network Centres (LINCs).

The 2008-09 Budget also provides increased funding to important initiatives including:

- Launching into Learning
- early years recognition of child care qualifications
- improved resources for students with high and additional needs
- literacy and numeracy strategies
- reducing class sizes from years 2 to 7
- musical instruments initiative. ”

Australian Capital Territory Government comments

“ The ACT Government has developed and implemented new models of schooling for preschool to year 6 and preschool to year 10 that promote a seamless transition to the compulsory years of schooling. From the start of the 2008 school year, all public preschools were amalgamated with a primary school, the primary principal taking on an administrative role for the preschool. Currently, free access is provided to 12 hours per week of early childhood education for all age-eligible ACT children.

A significant program of construction occurred during 2008 including the extensive refurbishment of four existing schools to create four new early childhood schools scheduled to open in 2009, and design commenced for a new P-10 school for north Tuggeranong to open in 2011. A new secondary college in Gungahlin is planned to form a precinct with community and town centre links and will offer a comprehensive program of academic and non-academic programs.

The new ACT curriculum framework, *Every Chance to Learn* was implemented across the ACT at the start of the 2008 school year covering the compulsory years of schooling (kindergarten to year 10). A three year strategy plans to introduce the Quality Teaching Model in all ACT schools.

The ACT College Business Plan 2007–2009 was developed from the 2007 review of the public secondary college system. ACT College principals meet monthly to review progress.

The Indigenous Student Aspirations program, will link all year 11 and 12 Indigenous students with a mentor to support completion of their year 12 studies; and higher achieving year 6 and 10 Indigenous students will be supported and mentored in their transition to high school and college.

The ANU Secondary College program, launched in 2006 as a joint initiative of the Australian National University (ANU) and the ACT Government, produced its first year 12 graduates from the program at the end of 2007. Of the 70 students who completed the courses, 68 were offered an early place at the ANU. The ANU will complete its evaluation of the program in the next reporting period.

The ACT Government continued its strong commitment to vocational education and training programs in ACT public high schools and colleges and introduced new initiatives following a review undertaken by the Department in 2006. This led to improved efficiencies and processes in the administration of Australian School Based Apprenticeships (ASBA) in 2007 and ASBA programs at the Certificate III level were expanded, and targeted opportunities for Indigenous students.

The ACT Government continued several surveys initiated over the past few years, including a survey on post-school destinations and satisfaction of ACT college graduates. A review of the survey program was undertaken to identify strategic developments for forthcoming years. ”

Northern Territory Government comments

“ The Northern Territory remains committed to providing all Northern Territory students with equity of access to quality education from early childhood through to higher education and training. Improvements in literacy, numeracy and attendance continue to be a priority.

Implementation of *Closing the Gap of Indigenous Disadvantage: A Generational Plan of Action* was continued in 2008 following its release in August 2007. Aimed at improving the education outcomes for disadvantaged Indigenous Territorians over five years, 2008 initiatives included:

- commencement of the *Six Point Plan to Improve School Attendance*
- 10 additional teachers in remote schools
- 26 permanent part time and full time Indigenous assistant teachers employed in 23 remote schools
- 15 new classrooms in remote schools.

The Australian Government’s Northern Territory Emergency Response and the change of government at the federal level resulted in major policy and funding reforms in relation to education and training. Developments included the introduction of a model to support schools to train staff and implement transferable literacy programs, and 12 new classrooms in remote schools.

Final implementation of the Middle Years of schooling occurred when approximately 2100 year 7 students joined year 8 and 9 students. $48 million was spent on Middle Years infrastructure projects during 2006–2008.

The *Transforming Indigenous Education* statement was delivered in April 2008. Outlining five key measures to lift the low educational achievements of Indigenous Territorians, this will support the effort already being made under the *Closing the Gap* reforms.

Schools took part in the first round of testing under the National Assessment Program Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN). Results of this testing will inform key performance measures for the Department.

In August 2008, the department underwent a restructure and became the Department of Education and Training. This included the establishment of the Early Childhood Services Division which brought in the children’s services from the Department of Health and Community Services.

Eight remote communities have completed or are in the process of finalising Remote Learning Partnership agreements, aimed at addressing improvements in employment, education and training outcomes for Indigenous Territorians.

Implementation of the first phase of the Accountability and Performance Improvement Framework has assisted schools to evaluate the effectiveness of services and be more effective and accountable in planning and reporting. ”

4.6 Definitions of key terms and indicators

Apparent retention rates

The number of full time students in a designated year of schooling, expressed as a percentage of their respective cohort group at an earlier base year. For example, the year 12 retention rate is calculated by dividing the total number of full time students in year 12 in the target year by the total number of full time students in year 10 two years before the target year.

Full time equivalent student

The FTE of a full time student is 1.0. The method of converting part time student numbers into FTEs is based on the student's workload compared with the workload usually undertaken by a full time student.

Full time student

A person who satisfies the definition of a student and undertakes a workload equivalent to, or greater than, that usually undertaken by a student of that year level. The definition of full time student varies across jurisdictions.

Geographic classification

Geographic categorisation is based on the agreed MCEETYA Geographic Location Classification which, at the highest level, divides Australia into three zones (the metropolitan, provincial and remote zones). A further disaggregation comprises five categories: metropolitan and provincial zones each subdivided into two categories, and the remote zone. Further subdivisions of the two provincial zone categories and the remote zone category provide additional, more detailed, classification options. When data permit, a separate very remote zone can be reported along with the metropolitan, provincial and remote zones, as follows.

A. Metropolitan zone

- Mainland State capital city regions (Statistical Divisions (SDs)): Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane, Adelaide and Perth SDs.
- Major urban Statistical Districts (100 000 or more population): ACT–Queanbeyan, Cairns, Gold Coast–Tweed, Geelong, Hobart, Newcastle, Sunshine Coast, Townsville, Wollongong.

B. Provincial zone (non-remote)

- Provincial city Statistical Districts plus Darwin SD.
  - Provincial city statistical districts and Darwin statistical division (50 000–99 999 population): Albury–Wodonga, Ballarat, Bathurst–Orange, Burnie-Devonport, Bundaberg, Bendigo, Darwin, Launceston, La Trobe Valley, Mackay, Rockhampton, Toowoomba, Wagga Wagga.
  - Provincial City Statistical Districts (25 000–49 999 population): Bunbury, Coffs Harbour, Dubbo, Geraldton, Gladstone, Shepparton, Hervey Bay, Kalgoorlie–Boulder, Lismore, Mandurah, Mildura, Nowra–Bomaderry, Port Macquarie, Tamworth, Warrnambool.
- Other provincial areas (CD ARIA Plus score $\leq$ 5.92)
  - Inner provincial areas (CD ARIA Plus score $\leq$ 2.4)
  - Outer provincial areas (CD ARIA Plus score > 2.4 and $\leq$ 5.92)

C. Remote zone

- Remote zone (CD ARIA Plus score > 5.92)
  - Remote areas (CD ARIA Plus score > 5.92 and $\leq$ 10.53)
  - Very remote areas (CD ARIA Plus score > 10.53)

Government recurrent expenditure per full

Total government recurrent expenditure divided by the total number of FTE students. Expenditure is based on the National School Statistics Collection (MCEETYA unpublished), with adjustments for notional

time equivalent student	UCC charges and payroll tax. Notional UCC is included for all jurisdictions and payroll tax estimates are included for those jurisdictions not subject to it (WA and the ACT). Expenditure figures are in financial years and student numbers are in calendar years, so the total number of students is taken as the average of the two years spanned by the calendar year. When calculating the 2005-06 average expenditure per student, for example, the total expenditure figure is at 2005-06 but the total student number figure is the average of student numbers from 2005 and 2006.
Indigenous student	A student of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander origin who identifies as being an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander or from an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander background. Administrative processes for determining Indigenous status vary across jurisdictions.
In-school costs	Costs relating directly to schools. Staff, for example, are categorised as being either in-school or out-of-school. They are categorised as in-school if they usually spend more than half of their time actively engaged in duties at one or more schools or ancillary education establishments. In-school employee related expenses, for example, represent all salaries, wages awards, allowances and related on costs paid to in-school staff.
Language background other than English (LBOTE) student	A status that is determined by administrative processes that vary across jurisdictions.
Out-of-school costs	Costs relating indirectly to schools. Staff, for example, are categorised as being either in-school or out-of-school. They are categorised as out-of-school if they do not usually spend more than half of their time actively engaged in duties at one or more schools or ancillary education establishments. Out-of-school employee related expenses, for example, represent all salaries, wages awards, allowances and related on costs paid to out-of-school staff.
Part time student	A student undertaking a workload that is less than that specified as being full time in the jurisdiction
Participation rate	The number of full time and part time school students of a particular age (as at 1 July), expressed as a proportion of the estimated resident population of the same age (as at 30 June).
Potential year 12 population	An estimate of a single-year age group that could have participated in year 12 that year, defined as the estimated resident population aged 15–19 years, divided by 5.
Real expenditure	Nominal expenditure adjusted for changes in prices, using the GDP price deflator and expressed in terms of final year prices.
Science literacy	Science literacy and scientific literacy: the application of broad conceptual understandings of science to make sense of the world, understand natural phenomena, and interpret media reports about scientific issues. It also includes asking investigable questions, conducting investigations, collecting and interpreting data and making decisions.
Socioeconomic status	As per footnotes to table 4A.128, which provide definitions specific to that table. Elsewhere in the Report, socioeconomic status data are presented that are not fully comparable across jurisdictions because administrative processes for determining socioeconomic status vary across jurisdictions.
Source of income	In this chapter, income from either the Australian Government or State

	and Territory governments. Australian Government expenditure is derived from specific purpose payments (current and capital) for schools. This funding indicates the level of monies allocated, not necessarily the level of expenditure incurred in any given financial year. The data therefore provide only a broad indication of the level of Australian Government funding.
Student-to-staff ratios	The number of FTE students per FTE teaching and non-teaching staff. Students at special schools are allocated to primary and secondary (see below). The FTE of staff includes those who are generally active in schools and ancillary education establishments.
Student	A person who is formally (officially) enrolled or registered at a school, and is also active in a primary, secondary or special education program at that school. Students at special schools are allocated to primary and secondary on the basis of their actual grade (if assigned); whether or not they are receiving primary or secondary curriculum instruction; or, as a last resort, whether they are of primary or secondary school age.
Student, primary	A student in primary education, which covers pre-year 1 to year 6 in NSW, Victoria, Tasmania and the ACT, pre-year 1 to year 7 in WA, SA and the NT, and year 1 to year 7 in Queensland.
Student, secondary	A student in secondary education, which commences at year 7 in NSW, Victoria, Tasmania and the ACT, and at year 8 in Queensland, SA, WA and the NT.
Students with a disability	Students included in the annual system reports to DEEWR. The definitions of students with disabilities are based on individual State and Territory criteria, so data are not comparable across jurisdictions.
Teacher	Teaching staff have teaching duties (that is, they are engaged to impart the school curriculum) and spend the majority of their time in contact with students. They support students, either by direct class contact or on an individual basis. Teaching staff include principals, deputy principals and senior teachers mainly involved in administrative duties, but not specialist support staff (who may spend the majority of their time in contact with students but are not engaged to impart the school curriculum).
Ungraded student	A student in ungraded classes who cannot readily be allocated to a year of education. These students are included as either ungraded primary or ungraded secondary, according to the typical age level in each jurisdiction.

4.7 Attachment tables

Attachment tables are identified in references throughout this chapter by an '4A' suffix (for example, table 4A.3). Attachment tables are provided on the CD-ROM enclosed with the Report and on the Review website (www.pc.gov.au/gsp). Users without access to the CD-ROM or the website can contact the Secretariat to obtain the attachment tables (see contact details on the inside front cover of the Report).

Attachment contents

4.8 References

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