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## 2 School education

The focus of this chapter is on the performance of government funded school education in Australia. Performance — which encapsulates both efficiency and effectiveness — is reported at two levels:

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

Major changes in this year's Report include:

- recent policy developments in schools education, including the new set of national goals for schooling;
- discussion on the progress made in developing nationally comparable learning outcomes;
- a more detailed examination of what jurisdictions collect on learning outcomes for the mainstream and the special needs groups;
- new data on completion rates by gender, by locality and by socioeconomic status from the Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs; and
- improvements on reporting unit cost measures.

A profile of school education in Australia is presented in section 2.1, followed by a brief discussion of recent policy developments in section 2.2. Together these provide a context for assessing the performance indicators presented later in the chapter. Section 2.3 presents an overview of the current framework of performance indicators. Information suitable for assessing the relative performance of school education (particularly in relation to learning outcomes) is limited. However, all jurisdictions have agreed to develop and report comparable indicators. The performance indicator information currently available is presented in section 2.4. Section 2.5 discusses future directions and changes to the reporting framework. The Steering Committee is working with the National Education Performance

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Monitoring Taskforce<sup>1</sup> — under the auspices of the Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs — to improve future reporting on the performance of school education. The chapter concludes with jurisdictions' comments (see section 2.6).

## 2.1 Profile of school education

Schools are the institutions within which formal school education takes place. The formal statistical definition of schools used for this chapter is:

- ... an establishment which satisfies all of the following criteria:
- its major activity is the provision of full time day primary, secondary or special school education or correspondence/distance education; and
  - it is headed by a principal (or equivalent) responsible for its internal operation; and
  - it is possible for students to enrol and be active in a course of study for a minimum of four weeks (excluding breaks for school vacations). (ABS 1999b, p. 6).

Schools are differentiated by the type and level of education they provide, their ownership and management, and the characteristics of their student body.

School education performance can reflect many factors that may be partly or totally outside the influence of the system, including location, family demographics and student commitment. It is beyond the scope of this Report to encompass all such links, but this section provides some contextual background for the performance information presented later in the Report. Further information is provided in appendix A.

### Roles and responsibilities

The roles and responsibilities of administering, funding and determining the objectives of school education encompass different levels of government and non-government school authorities. Both government and non-government institutions provide school education, but the State and Territory governments have constitutional responsibility to ensure the provision of schooling to all children of school age. They determine curricula, regulate school activities and provide the majority of funding. State and Territory governments are directly responsible for the

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<sup>1</sup> See 'Nationally comparable learning outcomes' in section 2.5 for more details on the National Education Performance Monitoring Taskforce.

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administration of government schools and they provide the majority of government expenditure in this area.

Non-government schools operate under conditions determined by State and Territory government registration authorities and they receive significant Commonwealth, State and Territory government funding.

Commonwealth specific-purpose payments to government and non-government schools support agreed priorities and strategies. The Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs — comprising Commonwealth, State and Territory education ministers — is the principal forum for developing national priorities and strategies for schooling.

## **Funding**

School education is the second largest area of State and Territory government expenditure (\$14.7 billion), after health (\$16.2 billion) (ABS 1999c). Government schools account for most of this expenditure, but State and Territory governments also contribute to the funding of non-government schools and provide services that both government and non-government schools use.

The Commonwealth Government also provides funding to both government schools and non-government schools. The conditions under which non-government schools could receive federal funding were relaxed in 1997 when the government abolished limitations on minimum and maximum enrolments, and removed restrictions that locked new non-government schools into particular funding categories. Enrolment Benchmark adjustments are made to Commonwealth recurrent grants to the government schools in each jurisdiction if the proportion of students in non-government schools rises above the proportion in 1996. Government schools in each jurisdiction may lose Commonwealth funding even while absolute enrolments are increasing, if non-government enrolments are increasing at a faster rate (Commonwealth Programs for Schools 1999).

Commonwealth, State and Territory governments spent a total of \$13.5 billion on government schools in 1997-98, with Commonwealth funding to government schools totalling \$1.5 billion. In the same year, the Commonwealth Government spent \$2.2 billion on non-government schools, while expenditure by States and Territories was estimated at \$1.0 billion.

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Total government expenditure per full time student in government schools ranged from approximately \$5640 in Victoria to \$9800 in the NT in 1997-98, while estimated government expenditure per full time student in all schools ranged from approximately \$4780 in Victoria to \$8780 in the NT (table 2A.9). Commonwealth government expenditure per full time student in non-government schools ranged from approximately \$2270 in Tasmania to \$2550 in WA (tables 2A.6).

Many factors may influence expenditure per full time student (box 2.3), including the varying composition of students across jurisdictions (that is, the proportion of students from non-English speaking backgrounds and the proportion of Indigenous students — see figures 2.3, 2.4 and 2.5).

## **Structure**

The structure of school education varies among States and Territories. These differences can influence the interpretation of data presented under common classifications (for example, all jurisdictions have a proportion of students from a language background other than English, but the definition of this classification may differ across jurisdictions). Formal schooling begins with six to seven years of primary school education followed by five to six years of secondary school education, depending on the State or Territory (figure 2.1).

All States and Territories divide school education into compulsory and non-compulsory components based on age not grade. School education is compulsory in all States and Territories between 6 and 15 years of age (and to 16 years of age in Tasmania).

## **Student body**

There were 3.2 million full time students enrolled in primary and secondary schools in August 1998. The proportion of students enrolled in government schools is greater in primary (73 per cent) than in secondary schools (65 per cent) (table 2A.4).

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**Figure 2.1 Structure of primary and secondary schooling, 1998**

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<i>Level</i>	<i>NSW, Vic, Tas, ACT</i>	<i>SA, NT</i>	<i>WA, Qld</i>
Year 12	SECONDARY	SECONDARY	SECONDARY
Year 11			
Year 10			
Year 9			
Year 8			
Year 7			
Year 6		PRIMARY	PRIMARY
Year 5			
Year 4			
Year 3			
Year 2			
Year 1			
Pre-year 1 <sup>a</sup>			

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<sup>a</sup> Pre-year 1 is referred to as kindergarten in NSW and the ACT, preparatory in Victoria and Tasmania, reception in SA and transition in the NT. Pre-year 1 is not included in the pattern of study in Queensland and in WA. For WA Pre-year 1, is called pre-primary.

Source: ABS, *National Schools Statistics Collection (Government School Sector: Notes, Instructions and Tabulations, 1998)* (1999b).

Differences in the structure of schooling influence the interpretation of these enrolment patterns. Primary school education in SA and the NT, for example, includes an additional year of schooling. As a result, these jurisdictions would be expected to have a higher proportion of students enrolled in primary school education than in other States and Territories (table 2.1). The proportion of students in non-government schools was highest in Victoria and the ACT (table 2.1).

**Table 2.1 Full time student enrolments, August 1998**

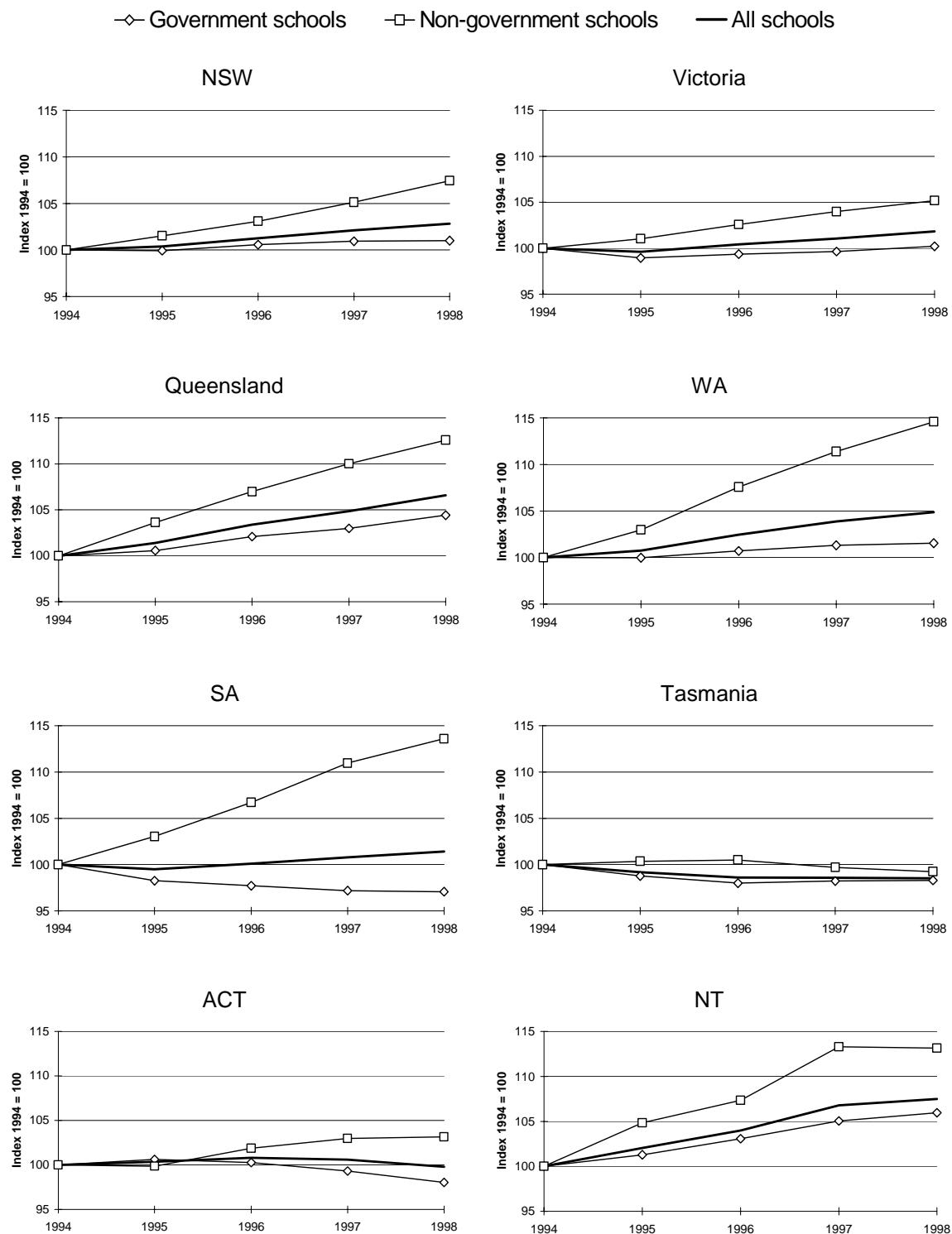
	NSW	Vic	Qld	WA	SA	Tas	ACT	NT	Aust
Total full time student enrolments at level of education ('000)									
Primary	618.9	442.2	353.2	190.8	160.4	46.3	32.4	25.6	1 869.9
Secondary	462.7	345.2	231.4	123.2	89.1	37.8	28.4	11.1	1 328.8
All schools	1 081.6	787.4	584.6	314.0	249.5	84.1	60.8	36.7	3 198.7
Proportion of full time students who were enrolled in government schools (%)									
Primary	73.4	69.5	76.6	76.0	73.4	77.0	67.2	80.7	73.4
Secondary	66.9	62.1	65.1	66.3	65.8	72.3	61.1	71.0	65.2
All schools	70.6	66.2	72.0	72.2	70.7	74.9	64.3	77.8	70.0
Proportion of full time students who were males (%)									
Primary	51.3	51.4	51.3	51.3	51.4	51.2	51.3	51.4	51.3
Secondary	50.2	50.0	50.4	50.5	50.1	49.7	51.1	50.1	50.2
All schools	50.8	50.8	50.9	51.0	51.0	50.5	51.2	51.0	50.9
Proportion of full time students who were enrolled in primary education (%)									
Government schools	59.5	58.9	64.2	64.0	66.8	56.6	55.6	72.5	61.3
Non-government schools	51.8	50.8	50.6	52.5	58.4	50.4	48.9	60.7	51.9
All schools	57.2	56.2	60.4	60.8	64.3	55.1	53.2	69.9	58.5

Source: ABS, *Schools Australia, 1998* (cat. no. 4221.0, 1999a).

Total full time student enrolments at schooling level has been relatively stable over time. Nationally enrolments grew by about 0.8 per cent each year between August 1994 and August 1998. Enrolments in individual jurisdictions have grown at different rates, with enrolments in Tasmania and the ACT declining in absolute terms. Relative growth in non-government school enrolments was greatest in WA and SA (figure 2.2).

The proportion of students enrolled in non-government schools has increased in all States and Territories. Total non-government enrolments expanded annually by about 2.1 per cent between August 1994 and August 1998 — more than seven times greater than the average growth rate in government schools. However, the expansion of enrolment in non-government schools is from a lower base than for government schools. Between August 1994 and August 1998, total enrolments increased by 99 000 students, of whom 75 000 were in non-government schools. In all jurisdictions, the proportion of all students in government schools is higher in primary than secondary schools.

**Figure 2.2 Full time student enrolments in schools by State<sup>a</sup>**



<sup>a</sup> Full time student enrolments for 1994 have been indexed to equal 100 for all jurisdictions.  
Source: ABS, *Schools Australia, 1998* (cat no. 4221.0, 1999): refer to table 2A.4.

The Australian Bureau of Statistics only collects data on part time students at the secondary level. Part time courses are available to secondary students, including mature age students attending colleges and also studying year 11 or 12 short courses (duration of 5–22 weeks). The proportion of secondary school students who are part time also varies among jurisdictions. SA, Tasmania and the NT had the highest proportion of part time students among government secondary school students in 1998 (table 2.2).

**Table 2.2 Number and share of part time secondary school students in government schools, by jurisdiction<sup>a, b, c</sup>**

		NSW	Vic	Qld	WA	SA	Tas	ACT	NT	Aust
1994	Number	675	1 622	5 593	4 541	5 361	2 418	28	1 496	21 734
	Share (%)	0.2	0.7	3.8	5.5	8.5	8.2	0.2	17.3	2.5
1995	Number	1 207	1 708	5 499	5 007	6 094	2 485	33	1 339	23 372
	Share (%)	0.4	0.8	3.8	6.5	9.8	8.4	0.2	15.4	2.7
1996	Number	1 776	1 758	5 280	4 518	5 698	2 475	13	869	22 387
	Share (%)	0.6	0.8	3.5	5.4	9.1	8.5	0.1	10.3	2.6
1997	Number	2 204	2 185	6 911	4 447	6 054	2 824	3.0	663	25 291
	Share (%)	0.7	1.0	4.5	5.2	9.5	9.4	0.0	7.7	2.8
1998	Number	3 029	2 044	4 276	4 157	5 909	2 607	10	961	22 993
	Share (%)	1.0	0.9	2.8	4.8	9.2	8.7	0.1	10.9	2.6

<sup>a</sup> Number refers to absolute number of part time secondary students (not full time equivalent). <sup>b</sup> The share is part time students as a proportion of all full time and part time secondary students (absolute numbers) in government schools. <sup>c</sup> Part time figures vary considerably among jurisdictions because each education authority has different policy and organisational arrangements. The number of part time courses available also varies considerably among jurisdictions.

Source: ABS, *Schools Australia*, 1998 (cat. no. 4221.0, 1999a).

### *Special needs groups*

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

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

It is difficult to compare the proportions and the absolute numbers of students having special needs in education because some definitions differ across States and

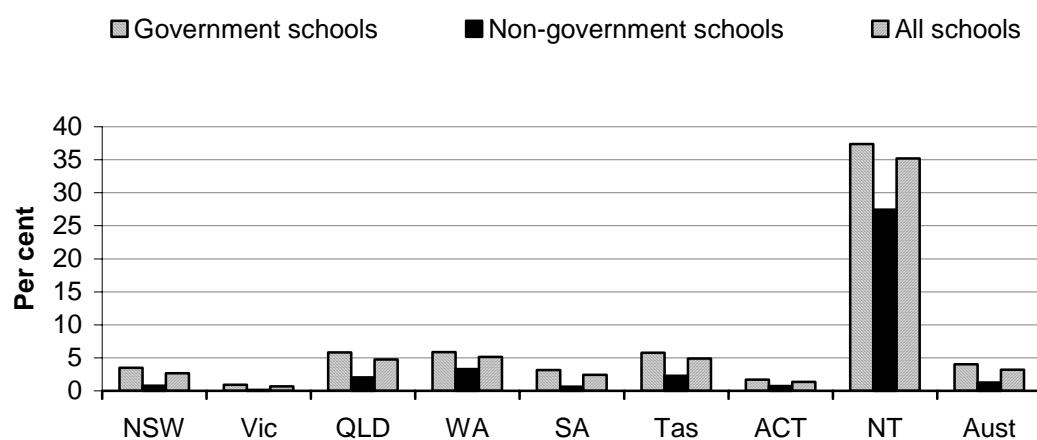
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Territories (see section 2A.3 in the attachment for examples of definitions across some jurisdictions). This chapter reports on the proportion (and the absolute numbers) of Indigenous students, the proportion of students from a language background other than English, and gender breakdown.

The NT, reflecting its population profile, had the highest proportion of Indigenous students in 1998 (35.2 per cent). Other jurisdictions with relatively high proportions of Indigenous students were WA, Queensland and Tasmania (figure 2.3). In absolute terms, NSW had the largest number of Indigenous students (29 083), and 28.5 per cent of all Indigenous students were enrolled in NSW schools. Other jurisdictions with a high number of Indigenous students included Queensland (27.3 per cent of all Indigenous enrolments in Australia), WA (15.8 per cent) and the NT (12.6 per cent) (table 2A.10).

**Figure 2.3 Indigenous full time students, 1998**

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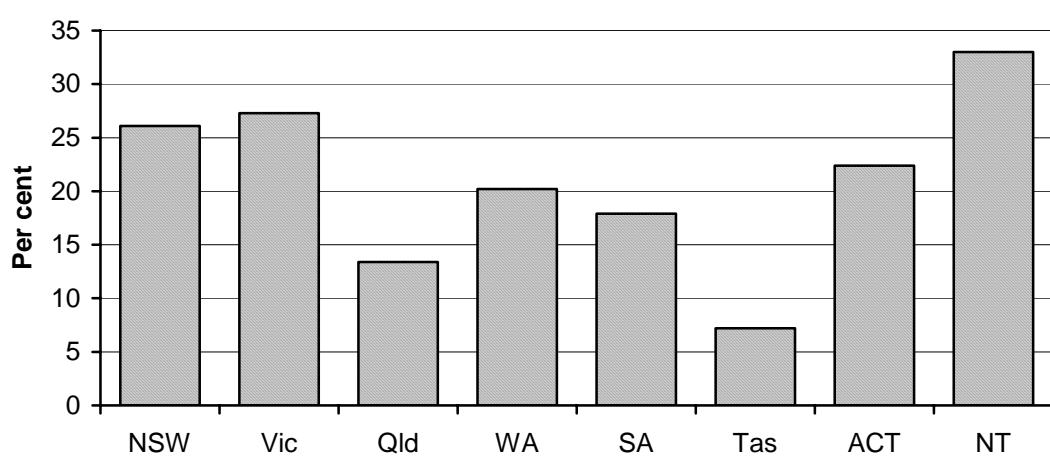


Source: table 2A.10.

Using data drawn from the Australian Bureau of Statistics 1991 and 1996 population Censuses, the Commonwealth Government calculated the proportion of students from language backgrounds other than English (LBOTE) in each jurisdiction as part of the process of determining Commonwealth Literacy and Numeracy Program funding allocations. Being based on the five yearly population Census, the data have not been updated since the 1999 Report. The data reported in this section are based on the Commonwealth's definition of LBOTE students, which includes Indigenous non-English speakers (see section 2A.3 in the attachment for possible variations to this definition).

In all schools (government and non-government combined) the NT had the highest proportion of students from a language background other than English (33.0 per cent) in 1996 (which may reflect the inclusion of Indigenous students whose home language is not English in the Commonwealth's definition of LBOTE students). NSW and Victoria also had relatively high proportions of students from these backgrounds (26.1 per cent and 27.3 per cent respectively) while Tasmania had the lowest proportion (7.2 per cent) (figure 2.4).

**Figure 2.4 Students from a language background other than English — all schools, 1996**



Source: table 2A.11.

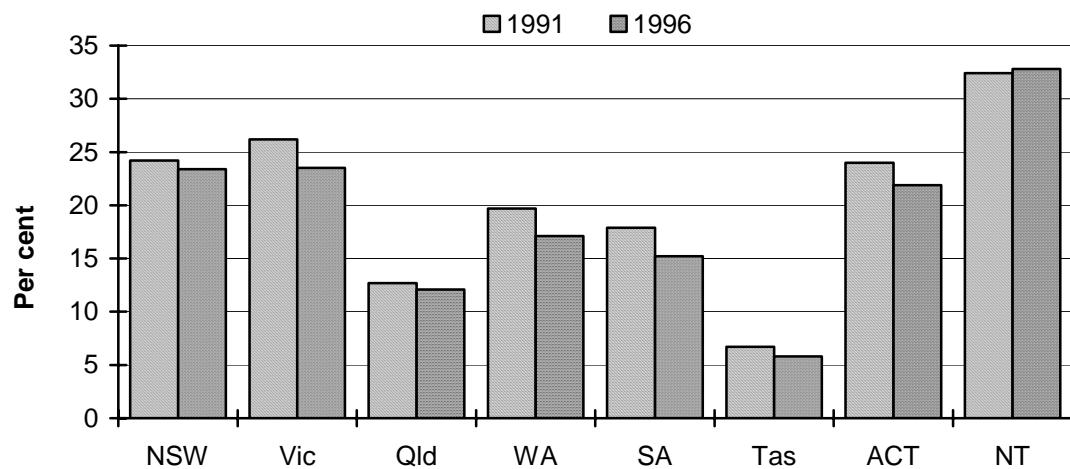
The proportion of students from a language background other than English was slightly lower in government schools than in non-government schools in all jurisdictions in 1996. The NT had the highest proportion of students from these backgrounds in government schools (32.8 per cent) and Tasmania had the lowest (5.8 per cent). The proportion of students from a language background other than English in government schools declined between 1991 and 1996 in all jurisdictions except the NT; the most notable falls occurred in Victoria (down from 26.2 per cent to 23.5 per cent) and SA (down from 17.9 per cent to 15.2 per cent) (figure 2.5).

## Schools

There were 9587 schools in Australia at the beginning of August 1998. Nationally, the majority of schools were:

- exclusively primary education providers— 70 per cent; and
- government owned and managed — 73 per cent (table 2.3).

**Figure 2.5 Students from a language background other than English — government schools**



Source: table 2A.12.

**Table 2.3 Summary of school characteristics, August 1998**

	NSW	Vic	Qld	WA	SA	Tas	ACT	NT	Aust
All schools (no.)									
Primary	2 187	1 696	1 236	664	584	176	93	110	6 746
Combined <sup>a</sup>	233	164	174	165	117	52	11	47	963
Secondary	538	374	263	135	102	47	29	17	1 505
Special <sup>b</sup>	117	95	53	64	24	11	4	5	373
Total	3 075	2 329	1 726	1 028	827	286	137	179	9 587
Proportion of total government schools (%)									
Primary	75.4	73.8	80.5	77.0	79.6	81.3	73.1	86.4	76.7
Combined <sup>a</sup>	27.9	26.2	41.4	57.0	58.1	50.0	18.2	80.9	42.4
Secondary <sup>b</sup>	72.5	71.9	71.9	71.9	75.5	87.2	79.3	64.7	72.9
Special	70.9	85.3	96.2	96.9	83.3	90.9	100.0	100.0	84.7
Total	71.1	70.6	75.7	74.3	76.2	76.9	70.8	83.2	73.0
Proportion of total primary schools <sup>c</sup> (%)									
Government	75.4	76.1	76.1	66.9	73.8	65.0	70.1	63.8	74.0
Non-government	60.6	65.0	57.5	58.0	60.4	50.0	62.5	50.0	60.6
All schools	71.1	72.8	71.6	64.6	70.6	61.5	67.9	61.5	70.4

<sup>a</sup> Combined primary and secondary schools. <sup>b</sup> Special schools provide special instruction for physically and/or mentally disabled or impaired students or for those with social problems. <sup>c</sup> Excludes combined primary and secondary schools.

Source: ABS, *Schools Australia, 1998* (cat. no. 4221.0, 1999a).

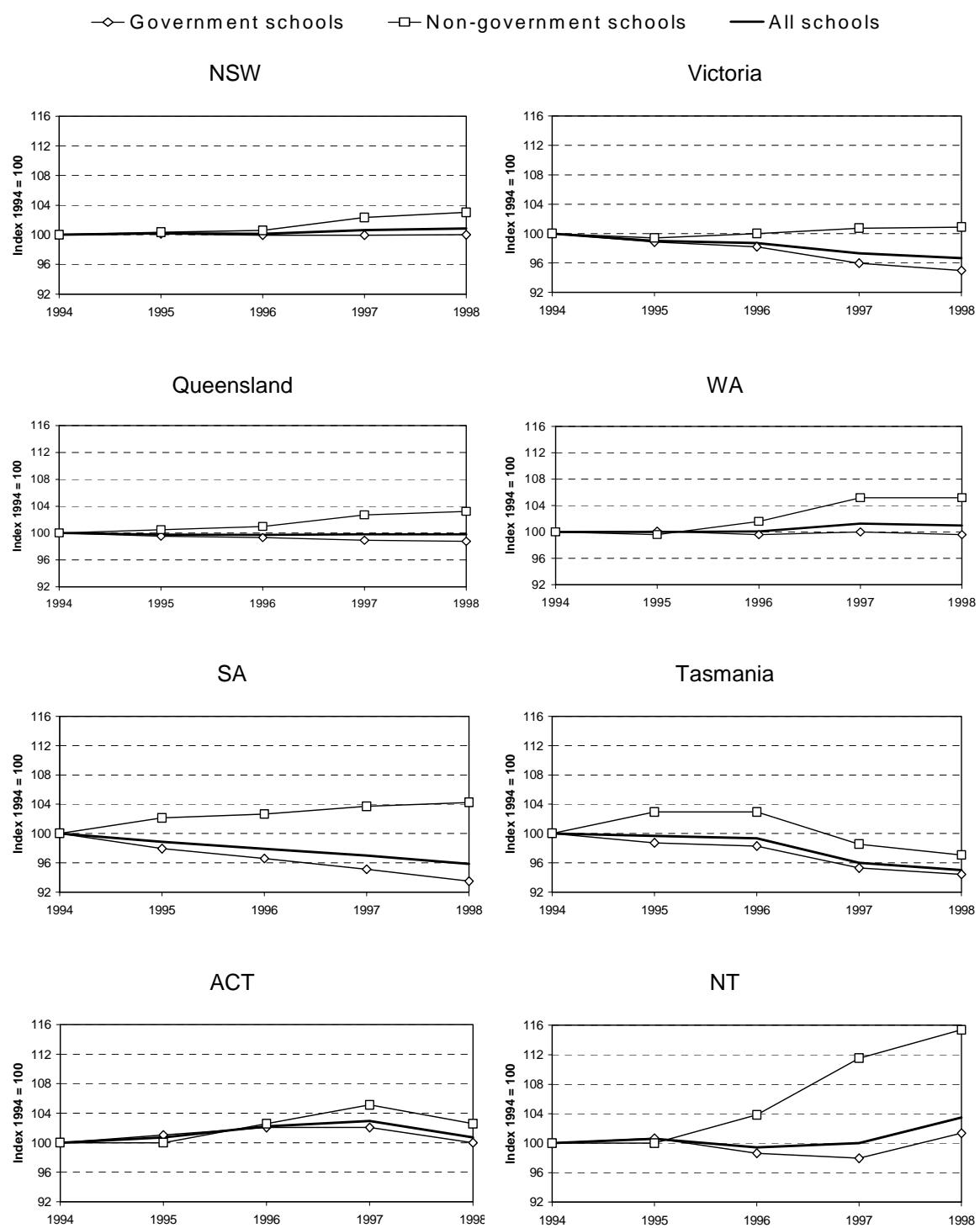
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Growth in the number of non-government schools between 1994 to 1998 was greater than that in government schools in all jurisdictions except Tasmania (figure 2.6). However, non-government schools had a lower starting base, which tends to overemphasise the change that occurred. A fall in the number of schools does not necessarily mean a reduction in student places, and it partly reflects the amalgamation of schools into multi-campus and multi-school level institutions.

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. The NT and Queensland had the highest proportions of very small schools, with 12 per cent and 8 per cent respectively of all schools having 20 or fewer students. The NT had the highest proportion of small schools overall, with 18 per cent of schools having 35 or fewer students and 43 per cent having 100 or fewer students (compared with national averages of 9 per cent and 23 per cent respectively). All the small schools in the NT were primary schools, and there were no secondary schools with 100 or fewer students. The ACT had the highest proportion of larger schools, with 26 per cent of schools enrolling over 600 students.

Government schools had a similar size distribution. Nine per cent of Queensland government schools and 13 per cent of the NT government schools enrolled 20 or fewer students. In the NT, 47 per cent of government schools had 100 or fewer students, compared with a national average of 25 per cent (table 2.4). A breakdown of primary and secondary schools by size is reported in tables 2A.14 and 2A.15.

**Figure 2.6 Change in number of schools by jurisdiction<sup>a</sup>**



<sup>a</sup> Reductions in the number of schools often result from the amalgamation of schools in different locations under a single management entity. Refer to table 2A.16.

Source: ABS, *Schools Australia*, 1998 (cat no. 4221.0, 1999a).

**Table 2.4 Distribution of school sizes, 1998 (per cent)<sup>a, b</sup>**

No. of students	NSW	Vic	Qld	SA	WA	Tas	NT	ACT	Aust
<b>Government schools</b>									
1–20	5.1	3.1	9.4	1.1	3.1	1.4	13.2	1.1	4.9
21–35	6.4	5.2	6.8	3.9	5.1	1.4	7.6	1.1	5.6
36–100	13.5	14.1	16.9	16.7	13.8	12.4	25.7	3.2	14.7
101–200	10.6	15.9	9.1	18.4	15.1	21.9	10.4	8.6	13.0
201–300	13.3	19.1	11.1	21.0	21.4	21.9	15.3	21.5	16.2
301–600	30.8	28.7	23.5	30.0	27.4	29.5	25.0	40.9	28.5
601–1000	16.1	9.1	16.1	6.7	10.3	8.6	2.8	20.4	12.5
1001+	4.2	4.8	7.2	2.1	3.8	2.9	0.0	3.2	4.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>								
<b>All schools</b>									
1–20	4.5	2.7	7.6	1.2	3.1	1.8	11.5	0.8	4.2
21–35	5.4	4.6	6.0	3.4	4.8	1.8	6.9	1.5	4.9
36–100	13.6	13.1	15.5	15.1	15.5	13.1	24.7	3.8	14.2
101–200	12.5	17.0	10.8	18.8	15.0	22.9	13.2	13.5	14.4
201–300	13.3	19.2	12.0	20.9	20.2	18.9	14.4	17.3	16.1
301–600	30.5	27.4	25.2	28.5	25.6	27.6	25.9	36.8	28.0
601–1000	15.6	10.2	15.7	8.7	11.0	10.5	3.4	18.8	12.9
1001+	4.7	5.9	7.4	3.4	4.8	3.3	0.0	7.5	5.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>								

<sup>a</sup> Includes combined schools. <sup>b</sup> Combined schools include both primary and secondary students. The numbers of students in combined schools were estimated as the sums of the midpoints of their respective primary and secondary categories. Based on the way the data is collected in the National Schools Statistics Collection, this method produces an estimate of the number of combined primary/secondary schools in each jurisdiction. Jurisdictions however do collect actual numbers of combined schools in each category. Taking actual numbers of combined schools into account, SA's distribution of school size is as follows. For government schools: 1.3 in the 1-20 group; 5.2 in the 21-35 group; 17.8 in the 36-100 group; 21.9 in the 101-200 group; 23.4 in the 201-300 group; 29.7 in the 301-600 group; 0.6 in the 601-1000 group; and 0.0 in the 1000+ group. For all schools: 0.0 in the 1-20 group; 0.0 in the 21-35 group; 0.0 in the 36-100 group; 9.1 in the 101-200 group; 3.9 in the 201-300 group; 32.5 in the 301-600 group; 44.2 in the 601-1000 group; and 10.4 in the 1000+ group

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

## 2.2 Policy developments in school education

### National goals for schooling in the twenty-first century

State, Territory and Commonwealth ministers for education, meeting in Adelaide in April 1999 as the tenth Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs, endorsed new national goals for schooling in the twenty-first century — the Adelaide Declaration (MCEETYA 1999c). The new goals (box 2.1

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on page 63) replace the common and agreed national goals for schooling in Australia, which were endorsed as the Hobart Declaration in 1989.

The education ministers also affirmed their commitment to nationally comparable reporting of educational outcomes and agreed that the new national goals provide the appropriate framework for such reporting. As part of this commitment, the ministers agreed to initially concentrate on reporting outcomes for the following six areas of schooling:

- literacy;
- numeracy;
- student participation, retention and completion;
- vocational education and training in schools;
- science; and
- information technology,

and noted the need to develop performance indicators for:

- civics and citizenship education; and
- enterprise education.

### **Change in Commonwealth funding arrangements for non-government schools**

Commonwealth funding for non-government schools has been provided on a needs basis since 1973. The Education Resources Index was introduced in 1985 as a measure of a school's resources and has been used to assess the relative needs of non-government schools. The index measures need by comparing the self-generated income of a non-government school with a standard level of resources that is based on government school costs.

Concerns with this index included that it was:

- too complex, with schools having to tackle complex formulas to present their case for Commonwealth funding;
- inequitable, with different funding levels for schools serving the same community;
- inflexible, with schools being locked into a particular funding category, regardless of changes in their communities; and

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- a disincentive to private investment, with additional income from fundraising leading to cuts to a school's Commonwealth funding (DETya 1999b).

In May 1999, the Commonwealth Minister for Education announced that a new funding arrangement for non-government schools would be introduced in 2001. This new arrangement will assess need according to a measure of the socioeconomic status of a school community rather than a school's own resource levels.

Schools operating under the previous funding arrangement will not be financially disadvantaged by the introduction of the new funding arrangement. Schools (including the Catholic systemic schools which are mostly funded as a group) that might have received less funding under the socioeconomic status measure will have their 2000 funding levels maintained in real terms.

The lower the average socioeconomic status of a school's students, the higher the funding received from the Commonwealth Government. Funding will range from 13.7 per cent of the average government school recurrent cost to 70 per cent (which is 14 percentage points higher than the current maximum funding rate). The measure is intended to better incorporate the capacity of communities to provide financial support for their schools.

A socioeconomic status measure is viewed as being:

- a more simple and transparent method, based on publicly available, independent, reliable data that cannot be manipulated to influence funding;<sup>2</sup>
- a fairer method, because contributions required of parents relate to capacity to pay;
- a flexible method, because schools are not locked into traditional operating patterns and therefore can respond to the changes of their communities; and
- a method that encourages private investment because it removes the threat of schools losing Commonwealth funds as a result of fundraising activities (DETya 1999b).

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<sup>2</sup> Students' residential addresses are linked to Australian Bureau of Statistics Census collection districts to obtain a measure of the socioeconomic status of the school community.

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## National School Drug Education Strategy

### *Whole-of-government approach*

The Council of Australian Governments (COAG) agreed in April 1999 on the need for national action to reject the use of illicit drugs in schools and to strengthen the response to such drug use. Heads of government agreed to Commonwealth provision of resources to increase the capacity of schools and school communities to respond to illicit drug use. These resources include:

- enhanced protocols (developed with the States and Territories) to help school communities develop better ways of handling drug use in the school environment on a national basis;
- educational material for schools to build school and community awareness of and involvement in addressing drug problems; and
- resource materials for all schools to help them design their own local summits to strengthen the response of schools and communities to the challenge of drugs.

A taskforce reporting to the Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs was established to assist in developing enhanced protocols for the management of drug related issues and incidents in schools. Chaired by the Commonwealth, the Taskforce comprises of State and Territory education officials, Catholic and independent school sector representatives, parent representatives and a representative of the National Advisory Committee on School Drug Education. The enhanced protocols will be available in schools at the commencement of the 2000 school year. They will assist in providing a consistent message nationally, especially to parents, about how schools will respond to, and what help is available for, a student who becomes involved in a drug related incident at school.

### *National School Drug Education Strategy*

The National School Drug Education Strategy released on 25 May 1999 supports the delivery of drug education in Australian schools (DETya 1999a). The strategy focuses on educational outcomes. It is aimed at strengthening the provision of educational programs and supportive environments that will contribute to its goal of no illicit drugs in Australian schools.

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A priority for the strategy is to recognise, integrate and enhance existing school initiatives in the States and Territories. There will be ongoing consultation with State and Territory governments, non-government education authorities, school principals, teachers, academics, health professionals, parents, Indigenous communities, relevant non-government organisations and the broader community. The strategy will also maintain cooperation across Commonwealth portfolios (particularly education, health and law enforcement).

Total funding for the National School Drug Education Strategy is \$18 million, with a proportion of this made available in each financial year for nationally strategic projects, particularly in key areas identified by the Commonwealth (table 2.5).

**Table 2.5      Funding for the National School Drug Education Strategy (\$ million)**

1998-99	1999-00	2000-01	2001-02	2002-03	Total
2.5	4.0	4.0	3.7	3.8	18.0

Source: DETYA (1999a).

## 2.3 Framework of performance indicators

This chapter addresses the cost effectiveness of government expenditure systemwide, including government expenditure on non-government schools.<sup>3</sup>

At the government school level, the chapter focuses on the effectiveness and efficiency with which governments deliver school education. The framework of indicators relates to general government objectives for the school system (box 2.1).

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<sup>3</sup> The Commonwealth Government provides, on average, 37 per cent of the non-government school sector's funding, with the schools sourcing 45 per cent of their funds from private fundraising, with the remaining 18 per cent coming from State and Territory governments.

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### **Box 2.1 National goals for school education in Australia, 1999**

The Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs 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 Commonwealth, 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 2.1 (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**

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

- 1.1 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.
- 1.2 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.
- 1.3 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.
- 1.4 be active and informed citizens with an understanding and appreciation of Australia's system of government and civic life.
- 1.5 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.
- 1.6 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)

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**Box 2.1 (Continued)**

1.7 have an understanding of, and concern for, stewardship of the natural environment, and the knowledge and skills to contribute to ecologically sustainable development.

1.8 have the knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary to establish and maintain a healthy lifestyle, and for the creative and satisfying use of leisure time.

**2. In terms of curriculum, students should have:**

2.1 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:

- the arts
- English
- health and physical education
- languages other than English
- mathematics
- science
- studies of society and environment
- technology

and the interrelationships between them.

2.2 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.

2.3 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.

2.4 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.

**3. Schooling should be socially just, so that:**

3.1 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.

3.2 the learning outcomes of educationally disadvantaged students improve and, over time, match those of other students.

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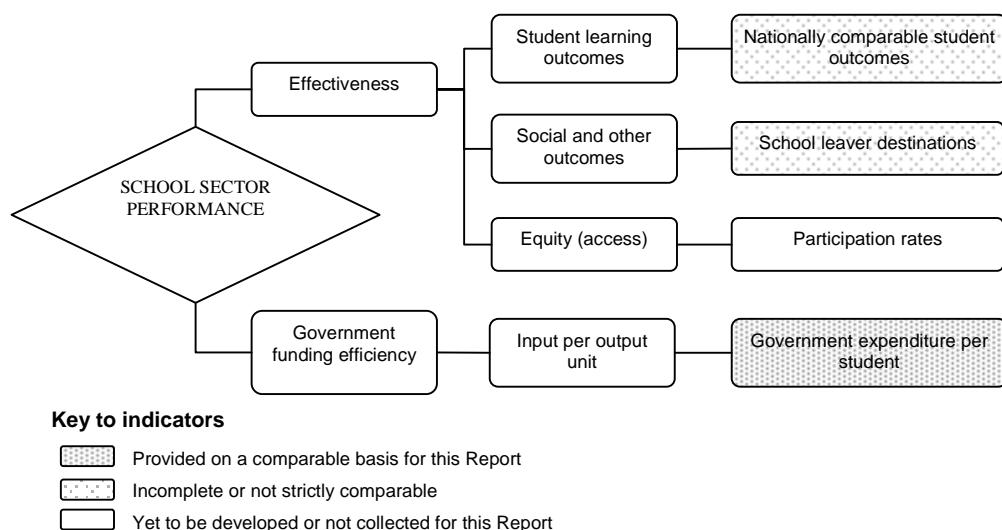
### Box 2.1 (Continued)

- 3.3 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.
- 3.4 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.
- 3.5 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.
- 3.6 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: MCEETYA (1999c).

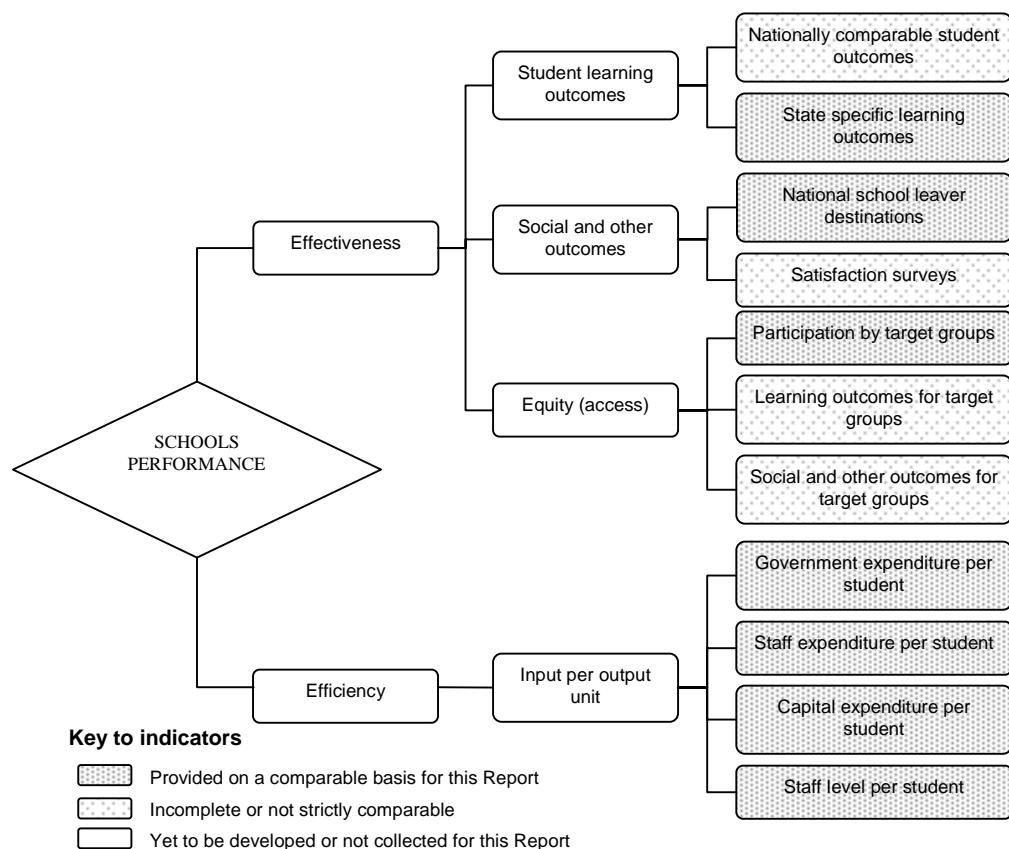
The school system as a whole and the subset of government schools share many common objectives. An indicator framework for all schools, built around these objectives, is summarised in figure 2.7.

**Figure 2.7 Performance indicators for all schools**



Governments own and operate government schools and have a direct interest in the efficiency of their operation. Governments also have an interest in access and equity issues in all schools, but these differ somewhat across schools, given the government commitment to providing access to education for all. The reporting framework for government schools is shown in figure 2.8. All indicators are defined in attachment 2A.

**Figure 2.8 Performance indicators for the government school sector**



Ongoing work to provide a more comprehensive set of key performance indicators and to improve existing indicators and the data is discussed in section 2.5.

## 2.4 Key performance indicator results

Different delivery contexts and locations affect the effectiveness and efficiency of school education services. Appendix A contains detailed statistics and short profiles on each State and Territory, which may assist in interpreting the performance

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indicators presented in this chapter. This section reports on what is currently collected and assessed by jurisdictions in terms of learning outcomes, while section 2.5 discusses future developments in reporting.

## **Nationally comparable reporting of learning outcomes**

In July 1996, Commonwealth, States and Territory education ministers agreed to develop national benchmarks for use in reporting literacy and numeracy achievement. In March 1997 the ministers agreed to the National Literacy and Numeracy Plan which included the development of national benchmarks and also agreed to nationally comparable reporting against these benchmarks.

Benchmarks in reading, writing and spelling for years 3 and 5 were approved by the ministers in April 1998 and published in October 1998. It is expected that literacy benchmarks for year 7 and numeracy benchmarks for years 3, 5 and 7 will be endorsed by ministers early in 2000. Development of years 9–10 benchmarks has been postponed subject to further information from an OECD managed project — Programme for International Student Assessment (discussed in detail in section 2.5) (DETYA 1999c).

Developing nationally comparable data raises a number of complex issues, given the differences in the curriculum and testing programs across jurisdictions. Established learning outcome tests are different in each jurisdiction (except NSW and SA who use the test developed collaboratively by these systems). The year levels and subject areas tested also vary. However, in 1999 all States and Territories adjusted their existing testing programs to incorporate some common approaches to assessing years 3 and 5 students in literacy and numeracy. This has taken place as part of an agreed equating process and endorsed by ministers to facilitate nationally comparable reporting from the results of State-based tests. The Steering Committee's 1997 consultancy examined methods for establishing equivalence among existing State and Territory tests and this report is available on [www.pc.gov.au/research/commres/maquarie/index.html](http://www.pc.gov.au/research/commres/maquarie/index.html) (Macquarie Consortium 1997).

The 1999 *Report on Government Services* noted that nationally comparable year 3 literacy data for 1998 would be released in a supplement to the 1998 *Annual National Report on Schooling in Australia* in early 1999. To date, it has not been published. The Steering Committee's approach to development of data has been to release the best available data with appropriate caveats. In some cases, not all jurisdictions have been able or willing to report imperfect data because they believe

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it will be misinterpreted. The Steering Committee understands that several jurisdictions had significant concerns about the 1998 learning outcomes results, but that others supported release of their results. Indeed, WA released its 1998 data on year 3 and year 5 performance in reading, writing and spelling against the national benchmarks, and its 1999 data on year 3 and year 5 performance in reading, writing, spelling and numeracy against the national benchmarks (WA Education Department 1999a, 1999b).

It is expected that 1999 year 3 reading data will be reported in early 2000 as a supplement to the 1999 *National Report on Schooling in Australia*.

A joint statement by education ministers from NSW, Victoria, Queensland, SA and the ACT announced that some common items for basic skills will be included in each of their 1999 tests. This is part of the agreement to finding common approaches to obtaining nationally comparable reporting against agreed standards (News Release 1999). Future directions for nationally comparable reporting of learning outcomes including the establishment of the National Education Performance Monitoring Taskforce are discussed in section 2.5.

### **State- and Territory-specific learning outcomes**

The reporting of data from jurisdiction-specific tests provides some insight into how States and Territories currently measure learning outcomes, and it may inform trends over time in particular jurisdictions. Previous Reports included graphs showing jurisdiction-specific learning outcomes (mainly in literacy and numeracy). However, the general non-comparability of data across States and Territories somewhat reduced the usefulness of this information. This Report instead includes a table showing what each jurisdiction currently collects in terms of learning outcomes in the key learning areas. It also indicates the school years for which each jurisdiction undertakes performance assessments (table 2.6). The data presented in previous years are reported again this year, but only in attachment 2A (see 2A.2: Single jurisdiction data).

This Report also includes, for the first time, the presentation of NSW and SA data in the same form (that is, the proportion of students in years 3 and 5 achieving specified bands in the Basic Skills Test — testing on literacy and numeracy). However the results should be interpreted with care because of differences between the States in curricula and other factors such as differences in the composition of the cohort. It is expected that comparisons between all jurisdictions using the national

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benchmarks for literacy and numeracy will be made in 2000 beginning with the publication of the year 3 reading data.

Throughout the Report, where possible, the Steering Committee's approach is to aid comparisons across jurisdictions even if only a subset of jurisdictions can currently provide comparable data. Further, regardless of whether a subset or all jurisdictions report performance data, careful interpretation of the results is required. Lower results in tests of learning outcomes do not necessarily mean the education system is performing worse, since other factors may be influencing these results. Such factors include differences in curricula or differences in student characteristics (for example, their demographic or socioeconomic characteristics). Consequently, comparative data (for learning outcomes and indeed for other indicators) is typically the starting point for further analysis, rather than a sufficient basis for conclusions.

As agreed by education ministers, all jurisdictions currently assess year 3 and year 5 performances in literacy (mainly reading, writing, spelling and communication skills) and certain aspects of mathematics (including numeracy skills). NSW, Victoria, WA, Tasmania and the ACT also assess year 7 performance in these subject areas. The Commonwealth and States and Territories have agreed to a coordinated approach to improve literacy and numeracy standards. All jurisdictions currently collect information about the reading readiness of all students presenting to school for the first time.

All jurisdictions also collect descriptive data (not included in table 2.6) on the number of schools that provide recognised vocational education and training courses that contribute to a specific vocational certificate course or higher education certificate. Further, jurisdictions collect data on the number of students enrolled in these courses over time.

The participation of parents and other community members in decision making, as well as the responsiveness of schools to the communities they serve, is being increasingly encouraged. Thus, schools put considerable effort into assessing student performance and reporting that performance to parents.

**Table 2.6 School years (to year 10) in which student performances in the key learning areas are assessed, by State and Territory, 1999<sup>a, b</sup>**

<i>Key learning areas</i>	<i>NSW<sup>c</sup></i>	<i>Vic<sup>d</sup></i>	<i>Qld</i>	<i>WA<sup>e</sup></i>	<i>SA<sup>f</sup></i>	<i>Tas<sup>g</sup></i>	<i>ACT</i>	<i>NT</i>
English	3, 5, 7, 8, 10	1, 3, 5, 7, 9	2, 3, 5, 10	3, 5, 7, 10	1–8	3, 5, 7, 9, 10	3, 5, 7, 9	1, 3, 5
Mathematics	3, 5, 10	3, 5, 7, 9	2, 3, 5, 10	3, 5, 7, 10	1–8	3, 5, 7, 9, 10,	3, 5, 7, 9	1, 3, 5
Science	10	3, 5	10	3, 7, 10	1–8	10		
Information technology			10	10		10		
Studies of society and environment		3, 5	10	3, 7, 10,	1–8	10		
Health and physical education			10	3, 5, 7	1–8	10		
The arts			10	3, 7, 10	1–8	10		
Languages other than English			10	7, 10	1–8	10		

**a** 'Assessed' in this context means assessments based on statewide examinations or skills tests. **b** Years 11 and 12 have been excluded from this table because choices can be made on types of subjects studied, and therefore it is not mandatory to study a subject from a key learning area. **c** From 2000, NSW will assess year 7 in mathematics. In addition, the year 10 school certificate is being reviewed, with tests on history, geography and civics and citizenship being compulsory by 2002. **d** In Victoria, the Learning Assessment Project for years 3 and 5 is assessed each year for English and mathematics but only in alternative years for science and studies of society and environment. **e** In WA, a cyclical approach is used in measuring the performance of students in years 3, 5, 7 and 10. Testing was provided in English in 1990, 1992, 1995, 1997 and 1999, mathematics in 1990, 1992, 1996 and 1998, in science in 1993 and 1997, in health and physical education in 1994 and 1998, in studies of society and environment in 1994 and 1999, and in the arts in 1996. **f** In SA a cyclical approach has been used, with four learning areas being assessed and reported every two years. SA is currently developing a revised set of learning outcome indicators as part of the new SA Curriculum Standards and Accountability Framework, and these will be reported on a trial basis in 2000. **g** Testing for years 3, 5, 7 and 9 in Tasmania is undertaken on a biennial basis. Testing in years 3 and 7 was undertaken in 1998. Testing for all four year groups will commence in 2000.

Sources: English and mathematics results from various tables in section 2A.2 in single jurisdiction data; information from education departments and their annual reports; MCEETYA (1999a).

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## National school leaver destinations

The education preface discusses the destination of year 12 leavers and early school leavers in 1998, at a national level. The table examines the proportions of male and female students attending educational institutions in 1998, having left school in the previous year. The table also looks at the proportions that were not attending any educational institutions at all.

## Other effectiveness indicators

### *Social objectives of schooling*

The Commonwealth Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs, on behalf of Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs, commissioned an investigation ‘to define and describe aspects of the social objectives of schooling, to obtain baseline data on achievements against the selected social objectives and to investigate the role and influence of schools in this regard’ (Ainley *et al.* 1998, p. xiii).

The first stage of the study clarified the social or socialisation objectives of schooling through a literature review, an examination of each State and Territory’s policy documents and curricula, and visits to schools and education officials. It identified dimensions that underpin the social objectives of schooling, and these were used as the main focus of the survey (box 2.2). The second stage reported on the social attitudes of Australian school students through a survey of over 8000 students from over 350 schools. The survey examined students’ responses to questions based on the six social objectives of schooling — relating to others, community wellbeing, rules and conventions, interest in learning, self confidence, and optimism for the future.

The study identified differences across jurisdictions in the importance that students placed on various social outcomes. A summary of these results was published in the 1999 Report.

Part of the survey also invited students to rate some aspects of their school environment. High scores on this scale reflected a school environment that was seen as enjoyable, stimulating and supportive. The results indicate that generally Australian students consider that their school environments are supportive and caring. The authors of the study found a correlation between mean school

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environment scale scores and student social outcome scales — that is, where the school environment is seen as supportive, interesting and enjoyable, students are likely to score more highly on the social outcome scales. The 1999 Report included a summary of these results.

### Box 2.2 **Social objectives of schooling**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### *Equity (access)*

Equity objectives can be assessed in terms of outcomes for all students as well as comparisons between the special needs groups and the mainstream, using indicators such as completion rates, apparent retention rates, age participation rates and learning outcomes.

### *Age participation rate*

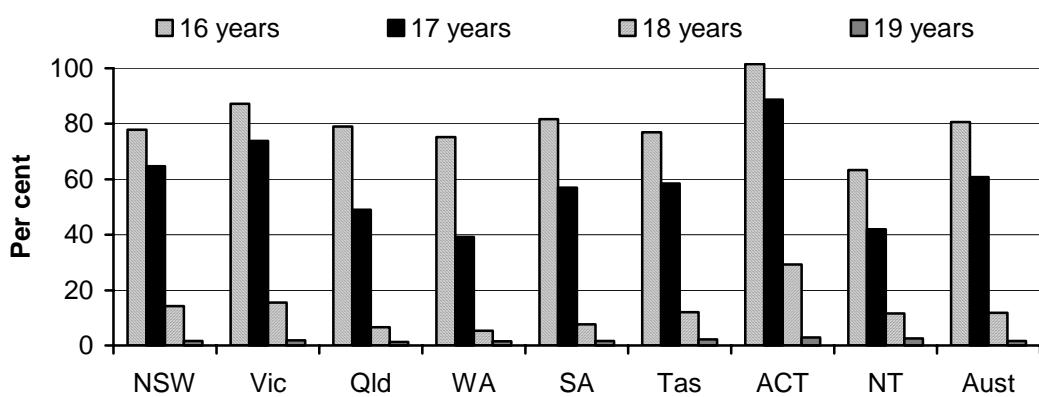
The age participation rate of those aged 15–19 (where schooling attendance is no longer compulsory) measures the number of full time school students of a particular

age, expressed as a proportion of the estimated resident population of the same age. The age participation rate is influenced by differences in the age/grade structures and the different patterns of delivery of post-compulsory education and training options across the jurisdictions. In addition, some ACT rates in 1998 exceeded 100 per cent where enrolments included secondary school students who were not ACT residents but lived in the surrounding NSW area.

Nationally about 50 per cent of 15–19 years olds were enrolled in schools in 1998. Actual participation rates varied by jurisdiction, age and gender. That is:

- the NT had the lowest overall participation rate (40.9 per cent) and Victoria (excluding the ACT) had the highest (54.0 per cent);
- participation rates for females were typically 2–3 percentage points higher than those for males for all jurisdictions; and
- participation rates declined significantly as students exceeded the maximum compulsory school age (16 years of age for Tasmania and 15 for other jurisdictions) (figure 2.9).

**Figure 2.9 School participation rates by age of students, August 1998<sup>a, b, c</sup>**



<sup>a</sup> To understand participation in schools, apparent retention and completion data, it is necessary to recognise the role played by participation in all forms of education and training. <sup>b</sup> Proportion of the population who were not of compulsory school age but were enrolled as full time students in August 1998. <sup>c</sup> School is compulsory for 16 year olds in Tasmania.

Source: table 2A.17.

Despite reflecting the recorded participation rates in school education, these figures are not adjusted for differences in year structures or for the interaction among the school, vocational education and training, and tertiary sectors.

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### *Student apparent retention rates*

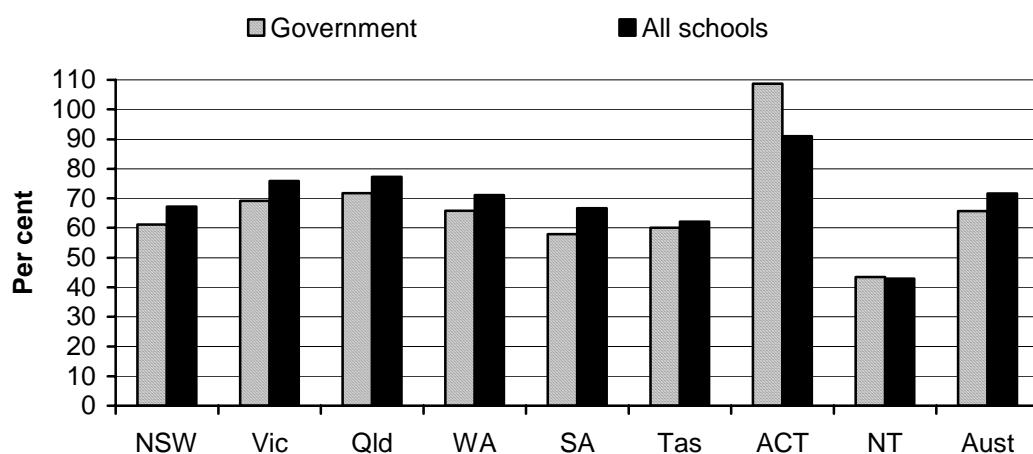
The student apparent retention rate accounts for the influence of different age/grade structures on age participation rates (see above). However, it is subject to many influences, such as student perceptions of the benefits of schooling, the availability of employment as an alternative, the availability of education opportunities, and population movements. Further, the data reported refer only to full time students, and do not account for students who are studying part time. The effect of this exclusion varies across jurisdictions (see table 2.2 for proportions of part time students).

Care should be taken in interpreting apparent retention rates, because a range of factors affects the calculation of the national rates — for example, students repeating a year of education, migration and other net changes to the school population, such as full-fee paying overseas students. No adjustments are made for these effects. At the jurisdictional level, additional factors affect apparent retention rates — for example, enrolment policies (which contribute to different age/grade structures among jurisdictions), inter-sector transfer (between government and non-government schools), interstate movements of students and varying enrolment patterns in schools/training and further education across jurisdictions. Thus, short term changes in, and variations among, apparent retention rates across jurisdictions need to be interpreted cautiously.

Systemwide, apparent retention rates to year 12 in 1998 ranged from 43 per cent in the NT to 91 per cent in the ACT. Nationally 78 per cent of females continued to year 12, compared with 66 per cent of males. The apparent retention rates for government schools ranged from 44 per cent in the NT (slightly higher than the systemwide rate) to 109 per cent in the ACT (higher than the systemwide rate) (figure 2.10).

Systemwide, apparent retention rates to year 12 from year 10, ranged from 60 per cent in the NT to 93 per cent in the ACT in 1998. Nationally 79 per cent of females continued to year 12, compared with 69 per cent of males. The apparent retention rates for government schools ranged from 62 per cent in the NT (slightly higher than the systemwide rate) to 110 per cent in the ACT (higher than the systemwide rate) (figure 2.11).

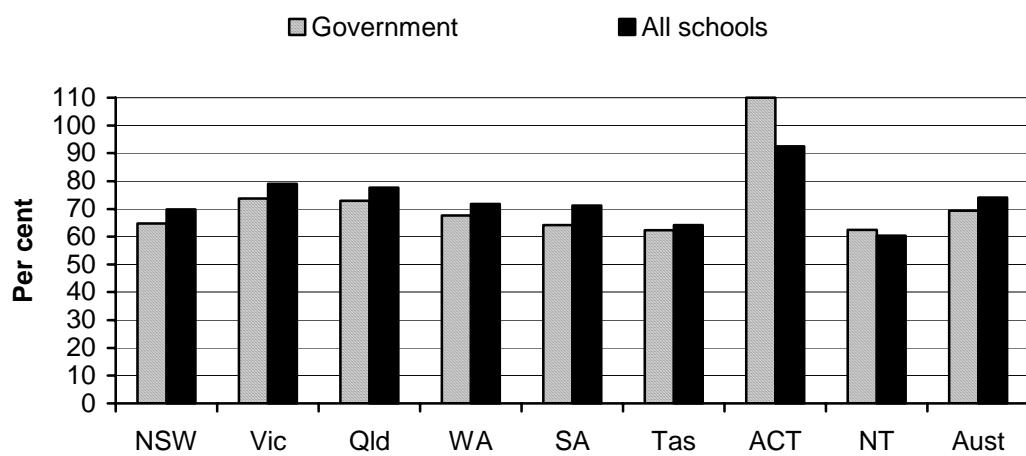
**Figure 2.10 Apparent retention rates of secondary students to year 12, 1998<sup>a, b, c, d</sup>**



**a** The apparent retention rates show the percentage of full time students who continued to year 12 in 1998 from their respective cohort groups at the commencement of their secondary schooling. Students commenced schooling at year 7 in NSW, Victoria, Tasmania and the ACT, while in Qld, SA, WA and the NT students commenced schooling at year 8. **b** To understand participation in schools, and apparent retention and completion data, it is necessary to recognise the role played by participation in all forms of education and training. **c** Retention rates can exceed 100 per cent because student transfers between government and non-government schools occurred after the base year. **d** A high proportion of ungraded students in secondary education, many of whom have been at school for 12 years, influences the NT rate.

Source: table 2A.18.

**Figure 2.11 Apparent retention rates of secondary students to year 12 from year 10, 1998<sup>a, b, c</sup>**

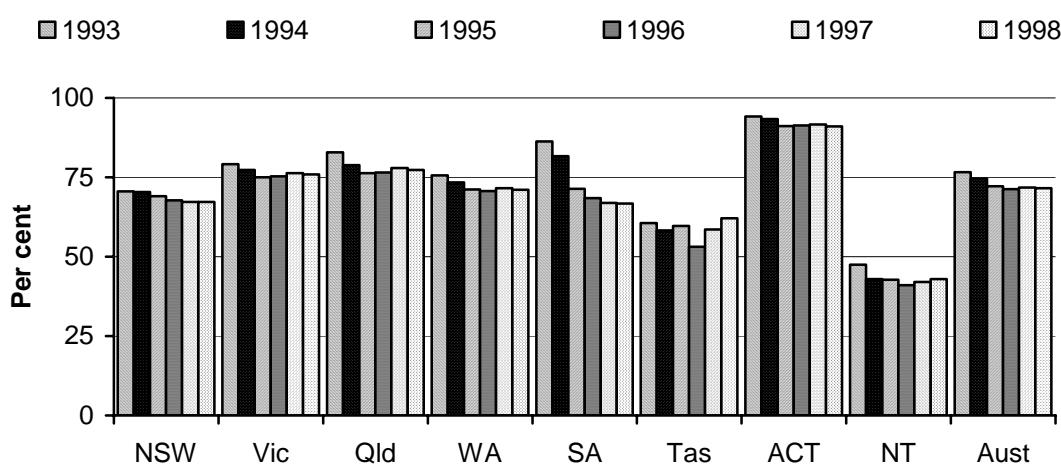


**a** Full time students only. **b** To understand participation in schools, and apparent retention and completion data, it is necessary to recognise the role played by participation in all forms of education and training. **c** Retention rates can exceed 100 per cent because student transfers between government and non-government schools occurred after the base year.

Source: table 2A.19.

Systemwide, apparent retention rates to year 12 declined in all jurisdictions (except Tasmania) during this study period of 1993 and 1998. The largest decline occurred in SA (down 20 percentage points) (figure 2.12).

**Figure 2.12 Apparent retention rates of secondary students to year 12, all schools<sup>a</sup>**



<sup>a</sup> The apparent retention rates show the percentage of full time students who continued to year 12 (in each identified year) from their respective cohort groups at the commencement of their secondary schooling. Students commenced schooling at year 7 in NSW, Victoria, Tasmania and the ACT, while in Qld, SA, WA and the NT students commenced schooling at year 8.

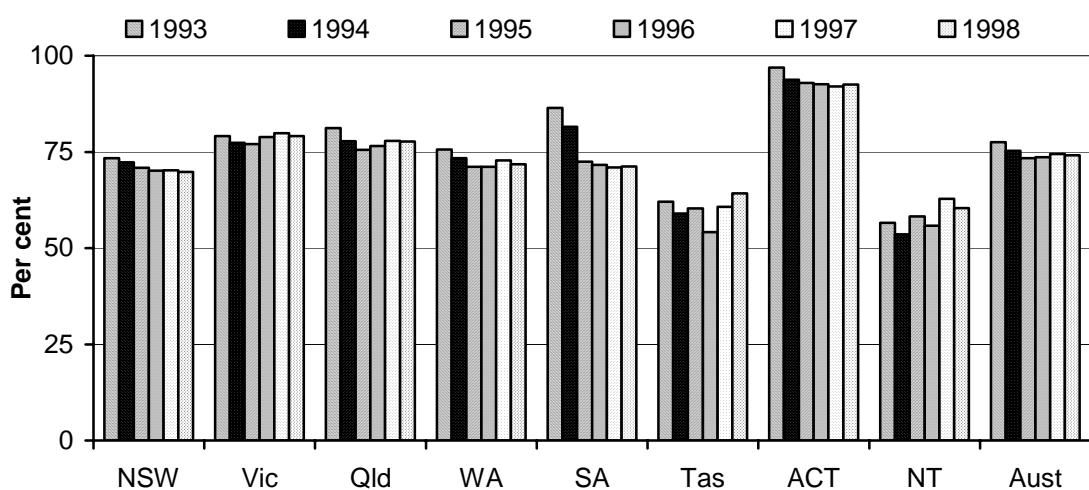
Source: ABS, *Schools Australia*, 1998 (cat. no. 4221.0, 1999a).

Systemwide, apparent retention rates to year 12 from year 10 remained fairly stable from 1993 to 1998 for most jurisdictions except SA, Tasmania and the NT. The retention rates increased in Tasmania and the NT between 1993 and 1998, but decreased considerably in SA (down 15 percentage points) (figure 2.13).

### *Completion of secondary school*

The Commonwealth Government has developed a method for estimating the proportion of Australian youth who complete year 12, disaggregated by locality, socioeconomic background and gender. Completion rates are estimated by calculating the number of students who obtain a year 12 certificate (or equivalent) in each year as a proportion of the potential year 12 population (an average of 15–19 year olds in the population). Completion rates are calculated on a different basis from that for calculating retention rates and participation rates reported elsewhere, so are not directly comparable.

**Figure 2.13 Apparent retention rates of secondary students to year 12 from year 10, all schools <sup>a</sup>**



<sup>a</sup> Full time students only.

Source: ABS, *Schools Australia*, 1998 (cat. no. 4221.0, 1999a).

Completion rates are primarily used as indicators of trends and differences among student sub-groups. Small changes in population or completions can affect rates quite significantly, particularly for smaller States and Territories. Further, there are variations in assessment, reporting and certification methods for year 12 across the States and Territories. This is the best available source of comparable data on school participation/retention for these target groups, but certain factors should be noted when interpreting the data.

Given that different jurisdictions have different minimum requirements for issuing year 12 certificates, and that some States have higher TAFE participation rates which affect their year 12 completion rates, comparisons across jurisdictions need to be made with care.

For home location, the Commonwealth Government adopted the categorising method developed by the former Department of Primary Industry and Energy. This method provides for seven categories, grouped here into four: capital city, other metropolitan, rural centres, and other rural and remote areas. Urban (that is, 'capital city' and 'other metropolitan') includes Darwin, Townsville/Thuringowa and Queanbeyan. There are no rural or remote areas in the ACT and no rural centres in the NT.

Socioeconomic status has been determined according to the Index of Relative Socioeconomic Disadvantage developed by the Australian Bureau of Statistics. ‘Low’ socioeconomic status is the average of the three lowest deciles and ‘high’ socioeconomic status is the average of the top three deciles. The aggregation of all postcode locations into three categories — high, medium and low — means there may be significant variation within the categories. ‘Low’ deciles will include, for example, locations ranging from extreme disadvantage to moderate disadvantage.

The Index of Relative Socioeconomic Disadvantage was produced from 1991 to 1995 using data from the 1991 Census, while that for 1996 was based on 1996 Census data. The index scores from the 1996 Census should not be directly compared to those based on the 1991 Census. The break in the series is highlighted by the calculation of 1996 completion rates using both 1991 and 1996 Census data (table 2.7).

**Table 2.7 Year 12 estimated completion rate by socioeconomic status and gender (per cent)<sup>a, b, c</sup>**

	Socioeconomic status								
	Low deciles			High deciles			Total		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
1994	55	66	60	74	85	79	63	74	68
1995	53	65	59	73	83	78	61	73	67
1996 <sup>d</sup>	50	62	56	71	82	76	59	71	65
1996 <sup>e</sup>	52	67	59	72	80	76	60	72	65
1997 <sup>r</sup>	51	66	58	71	80	75	58	71	64
1998 <sup>f</sup>	53	67	60	72	81	76	60	72	66

<sup>a</sup> Certain factors should be noted when interpreting the data for completion rates. Small changes in population or completions can affect rates quite significantly, particularly for smaller States and Territories. Further, given that different jurisdictions have different minimum requirements for issuing year 12 certificates and that some States have higher TAFE participation rates which affect their year 12 completion rates, comparisons across jurisdictions need to be made with care. <sup>b</sup> These figures are estimates only. They express the number of year 12 completions (year 12 certificates issued by State education authorities) as a proportion of the estimated population that could attend year 12 in that calendar year. It is important to note that there are variations in assessment, reporting and certification methods for year 12 across States and Territories. <sup>c</sup> The Index of Relative Socioeconomic Disadvantage has been used to calculate socioeconomic status on the basis of the postcode of students' home addresses. ‘Low’ socioeconomic status is the average of the lowest three deciles and ‘high’ is the average of the top three deciles. <sup>d</sup> These 1996 figures have been calculated using socioeconomic status deciles derived from the 1991 Census. <sup>e</sup> These 1996 figures have been calculated using socioeconomic status deciles derived from the 1996 Census. <sup>r</sup> Revised data. <sup>f</sup> Final data.

Source: DETYA, derived from data supplied by State secondary accreditation authorities and the ABS.

In all jurisdictions, completion rates for students from low socioeconomic status were significantly below those for students from high socioeconomic status.

Irrespective of socioeconomic status, females had a higher completion rate than that of males (table 2.8).

**Table 2.8 Year 12 estimated completion rate, by socioeconomic status, State and gender, 1998 (per cent)<sup>a, b, c</sup>**

	NSW	Vic	Qld	WA	SA	Tas	ACT	NT	Aust
Low socioeconomic status deciles									
Male	53 68	52 71	60 72	42 53	49 67	55 69	(d) (d)	15 15	53 67
Female									
Total	60	62	66	48	58	61	(d)	15	60
High socioeconomic status deciles									
Male	72 79	69 82	69 74	73 80	73 85	86 94	80 87	57 74	72 81
Female									
Total	76	75	71	76	79	90	83	65	76
Total									
Male	59 71	59 75	64 73	56 66	58 74	65 77	78 86	34 43	60 72
Female									
Total	65	67	68	61	66	71	82	39	66

<sup>a</sup> Certain factors should be noted when interpreting the data for completion rates. Small changes in population or completions can affect rates quite significantly, particularly for smaller States and Territories. Further, given that different jurisdictions have different minimum requirements for issuing year 12 certificates and that some States have higher TAFE participation rates which affect their year 12 completion rates, comparisons across jurisdictions need to be made with care. <sup>b</sup> These figures are estimates only. They express the number of year 12 completions (year 12 certificates issued by State education authorities) as a proportion of the estimated population that could attend year 12 in that calendar year. It is important to note that there are variations in assessment, reporting and certification methods for year 12 across States and Territories. <sup>c</sup> The Index of Relative Socioeconomic Disadvantage has been used to calculate socioeconomic status on the basis of the postcode of students' home addresses. 'Low' socioeconomic status is the average of the lowest three deciles and 'high' is the average of the top three deciles. <sup>d</sup> All of the ACT is defined as 'capital city'. Further, on the basis of this index, the ACT has no low socioeconomic status deciles.

Source: DETYA, derived from data supplied by State secondary accreditation authorities and the ABS.

From 1994 through to 1998, the completion rates of female students have been consistently higher than those of male students, with the differences more obvious in the rural and remote localities (table 2.9). Over time, the completion rates for male students have generally decreased across all localities, while for female students the rates have decreased in the urban and remote localities (table 2.9).

**Table 2.9 Year 12 estimated completion rates by locality and gender, Australia, 1994-1998 (per cent)<sup>a, b, c</sup>**

	Urban			Rural			Remote			Total		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
1994	66	76	71	57	71	64	51	65	58	63	74	68
1995	64	75	69	54	70	62	46	59	52	61	73	67
1996	62	72	67	54	71	62	45	64	54	60	72	65
1997 <sup>r</sup>	61	71	66	54	70	62	43	62	51	58	71	64
1998 <sup>f</sup>	62	73	67	55	71	63	48	61	54	60	72	66

<sup>a</sup> Certain factors should be noted when interpreting the data for completion rates. Small changes in population or completions can affect rates quite significantly, particularly for smaller States and Territories. Further, given that different jurisdictions have different minimum requirements for issuing year 12 certificates and that some States have higher TAFE participation rates which affect their year 12 completion rates, comparisons across jurisdictions need to be made with care. <sup>b</sup> These figures are estimates only. They express the number of year 12 completions (year 12 certificates issued by State education authorities) as a proportion of the estimated population that could attend year 12 in that calendar year. <sup>c</sup> Definitions of 'urban', 'rural' and 'remote' are based on the Department of Primary Industry and Energy classifications. 'Urban' includes Darwin, Townsville/Thuringowa and Queanbeyan. See 'Locality' in section 2A.3 for more detailed definitions. <sup>r</sup> Revised data. <sup>f</sup> Final data.

Source: DETYA, derived from data supplied by State secondary accreditation authorities and the ABS.

Completion rates for students from 'capital city' locations were higher than for students from 'other metropolitan' locations, 'rural centres' and 'other rural and remote centres' (table 2.10). It is interesting to note that the completion rate for students from 'rural' locations was higher than that for students from 'other metropolitan' locations. Australia-wide, in all locations, completion rates were higher for females than for males.

### *Learning outcomes for special needs groups*

Nationally comparable learning outcomes data for special needs groups are not available. However, most States and Territories collect learning outcomes for special needs groups as part of their jurisdiction-specific testing programs. Learning outcomes for Indigenous students and students with language background other than English are reported for NSW and Victoria in attachment 2A (2A.2: Single jurisdiction data).

**Table 2.10 Year 12 estimated completion rates, by locality, gender and State, 1998 (per cent)<sup>a, b, c</sup>**

	NSW	Vic	Qld	WA	SA	Tas	ACT	NT	Aust
Capital city									
Male	64	62	66	58	61	75	78	45	63
Female	73	77	73	67	76	85	86	60	74
Total	68	69	69	63	68	80	82	52	68
Other metropolitan									
Male	48	55	60	(d)	(d)	(d)	(e)	(f)	53
Female	62	69	69	(d)	(d)	(d)	(e)	(f)	65
Total	55	62	64	(d)	(d)	(d)	(e)	(f)	59
Rural centres									
Male	51	48	63	46	49	62	(e)	(f)	54
Female	63	67	70	56	61	72	(e)	(f)	66
Total	57	57	67	51	55	67	(e)	(f)	60
Other rural and remote areas									
Male	55	54	62	47	52	52	(e)	23	54
Female	75	78	81	64	75	70	(e)	25	74
Total	64	65	71	55	62	61	(e)	24	63
All areas									
Male	59	59	64	56	58	65	78	34	60
Female	71	75	73	66	74	77	86	43	72
Total	65	67	68	61	66	71	82	39	66

<sup>a</sup> Certain factors should be noted when interpreting the data for completion rates. Small changes in population or completions can affect rates quite significantly, particularly for smaller States and Territories. Further, given that different jurisdictions have different minimum requirements for issuing year 12 certificates and that some States have higher TAFE participation rates which affect their year 12 completion rates, comparisons across jurisdictions need to be made with care. <sup>b</sup> These figures are estimates only. They express the number of year 12 completions (year 12 certificates issued by State education authorities) as a proportion of the estimated population that could attend year 12 in that calendar year. It is important to note that there are variations in assessment, reporting and certification methods for year 12 across States and Territories.

<sup>c</sup> Definitions of 'capital city', 'other metropolitan', 'rural centres', 'other rural' and 'remote areas' are based on the Department of Primary Industry and Energy classifications. See 'Locality' in section 2A.3 for more detailed definitions. <sup>d</sup> There are no 'other metropolitan' areas in these States. <sup>e</sup> All of the ACT is defined as 'capital city'. <sup>f</sup> There are no 'other metropolitan' or 'rural centres' in the NT.

Source: DETYA, derived from data supplied by State secondary accreditation authorities and the ABS.

Table 2.11 identifies which jurisdictions monitor student performance in literacy and numeracy for five special needs groups, and the school years in which these assessments are undertaken. The table also indicates which jurisdictions collect information on year 10 and year 12 achievement levels of students in the special needs groups. At the year 10 level, information collected may include the assessment of these students in key learning areas such as mathematics and English, and the proportion of students that achieved certificates at this junior secondary level. At the year 12 level, information collected may include the proportion of students in these groups who have achieved academic results that qualify them to enter higher education.

**Table 2.11 School years in which performances for students in special needs groups are assessed, by State and Territory, 1999<sup>a</sup>**

Special needs groups	NSW <sup>b</sup>	Vic	Qld <sup>c</sup>	WA	SA	Tas <sup>d</sup>	ACT	NT <sup>e</sup>
<b>Literacy</b>								
Indigenous	3, 5, 7	3, 5	2, 5	3, 5, 7, 10	3, 5	3, 5, 7, 9	3, 5	1, 3, 5
LBOTE <sup>f</sup>	3, 5, 7	3, 5	2, 5	3, 5, 7, 10	3, 5	3, 5, 7, 9	3, 5	3, 5
Low socioeconomic status	3, 5, 7	3, 5	2, 5		3, 5	3, 5, 7, 9		
Isolated	3, 5, 7	3, 5	2, 5		3, 5	3, 5, 7, 9		3, 5
With a disability <sup>g</sup>			2, 5		3, 5	3, 5, 7, 9		
<b>Numeracy</b>								
Indigenous	3, 5	3, 5	2, 5	3, 5, 7, 10	3, 5	3, 5, 7, 9	5	1, 3, 5
LBOTE	3, 5	3, 5	2, 5	3, 5, 7, 10	3, 5	3, 5, 7, 9	5	3, 5
Low socioeconomic status	3, 5	3, 5	2, 5		3, 5	3, 5, 7, 9		
Isolated	3, 5	3, 5	2, 5		3, 5	3, 5, 7, 9		3, 5
With a disability			2, 5		3, 5	3, 5, 7, 9		
<b>Year 10 performance</b>								
Indigenous	Yes		Yes		Yes		Yes	Yes
LBOTE			Yes		Yes			
Low socioeconomic status	Yes		Yes					
Isolated	Yes		Yes					
With a disability			Yes					Yes
<b>Year 12 performance</b>								
Indigenous	Yes				Yes		Yes	Yes
LBOTE					Yes		Yes	Yes
Low socioeconomic status	Yes				Yes			
Isolated	Yes				Yes			
With a disability					Yes			Yes

<sup>a</sup> This table highlights what is currently collected (and at what year) by the jurisdictions to assess the performance in literacy and numeracy of five special needs groups. The table also denotes a 'Yes' to those jurisdictions that collect information on the performances of these students at the year 10 and/or year 12 levels. <sup>b</sup> NSW collects information on Indigenous, LBOTE and low socioeconomic student participation in its Reading Recovery Program. <sup>c</sup> Queensland collects the proportion of Indigenous students in the reading recovery program. <sup>d</sup> Testing for years 3, 5, 7 and 9 in Tasmania is undertaken on a biennial basis. Testing in years 3 and 7 was undertaken in 1998. Testing for all four year groups will commence in 2000. <sup>e</sup> In the NT, the number of students with disabilities receiving the Statement of Educational Achievement (SEA) and the SEA post-compulsory certificates are collected. <sup>f</sup> Language background other than English. <sup>g</sup> Includes students with intellectual and/or physical disabilities.

Sources: Information from education departments and their annual reports; MCEETYA (1999a).

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Queensland, SA and Tasmania all monitor literacy and numeracy outcomes for five special needs groups (Indigenous students, students with a language background other than English, students of low socioeconomic status, geographically isolated students, and students with disabilities). NSW and Victoria report performance information for all the groups except students with disabilities. For selected groups within the special needs groups, NSW, Queensland, WA, Tasmania and the NT have performance measures at the year 10 level, while NSW, SA, Tasmania, the ACT and the NT have some performance measures at the year 12 level.

## **Efficiency**

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

### *Government recurrent expenditure per student*

Expenditure per student may be influenced by a number of factors and these are discussed in box 2.3.

#### **Box 2.3 Factors that may influence the level of expenditure per student**

Differences in the costs of educating students can be driven by:

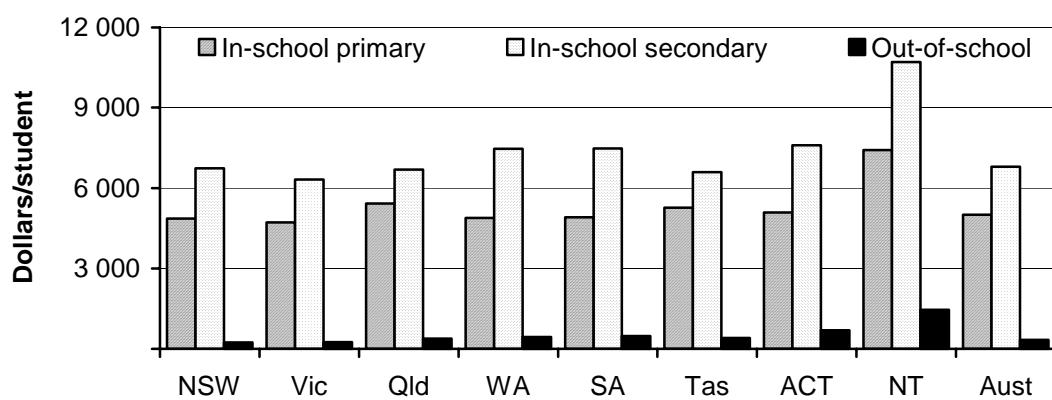
- influences beyond the control of the governments, such as a high proportion of geographically isolated population and/or a dispersed population;
- policy changes on education, such as tradeoffs between reducing costs and improving the quality of education, or between reducing costs and increasing the accessibility of education; and
- how well the education department and schools manage resources.

The Commonwealth Grants Commission, when calculating relativities of States to distribute Commonwealth grants, accounts for influences beyond the jurisdiction's control (called disabilities) that affect its cost of providing services and its capacity to raise revenue. In relation to education, the assessment includes 'service delivery scale' disability factors. These factors allow for the effects on relative cost differences among jurisdictions that have to service small and remote schools because they have a small and dispersed population. However, this Review does not make any cost adjustments based on any of the above mentioned factors. Readers should therefore consider these factors when examining each jurisdiction's expenditure per student.

A proxy indicator of efficiency is the level of government inputs per unit of output (unit cost). In-school government expenditure per primary student in government

primary schools ranged from \$4727 in Victoria to \$7427 in the NT in 1997-98. In-school government expenditure per secondary student in government secondary schools ranged from \$6330 in Victoria to \$10 710 in the NT. Out-of-school departmental overheads per student in government schools ranged from \$243 in NSW to \$1462 in the NT (figure 2.14).

**Figure 2.14 Total government expenditure per full time student, government schools, 1997-98<sup>a</sup>**

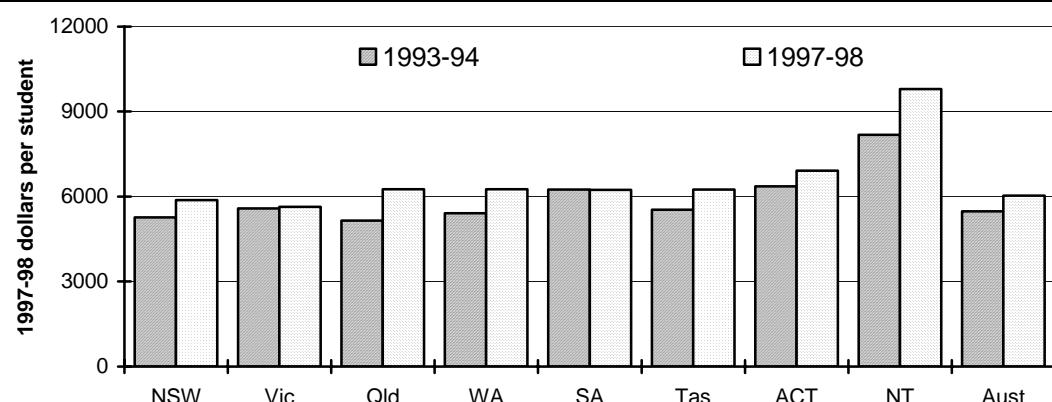


<sup>a</sup> See notes to table 2A.8 for definitions and data caveats.

Source: table 2A.8.

Total government expenditure per student in government schools increased (in real terms) between 1993-94 and 1997-98 in all jurisdictions except SA, which maintained its level of expenditure in real terms (figure 2.15).

**Figure 2.15 Total government expenditure per government school student<sup>a, b, c</sup>**

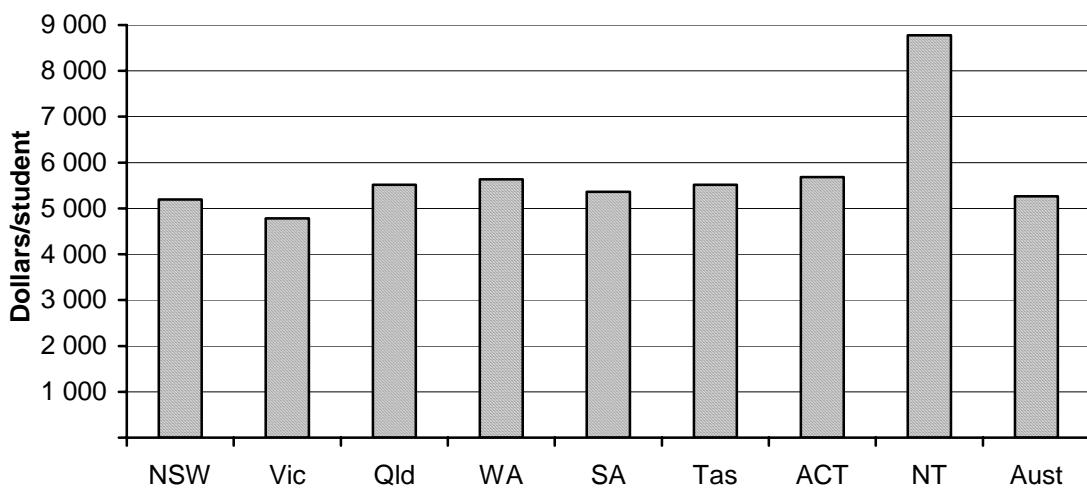


<sup>a</sup> See notes to table 2A.8 for definitions and data caveats. <sup>b</sup> 1993-94 data have been adjusted to 1997-98 dollars using the gross domestic product deflator. <sup>c</sup> Superannuation has been included in the expenditure for all jurisdictions in this figure.

Source: table 2A.9.

Government expenditure per student in all schools (government and non-government) ranged from \$4782 in Victoria to \$8779 in NT, with Australia being \$5265 (figure 2.16).

Figure 2.16 **Total government expenditure per school student, 1997-98<sup>a, b</sup>**



<sup>a</sup> This is the sum of Commonwealth, State and Territory government expenditure on government schools, Commonwealth specific purpose payments for non-government schools, and State and Territory payments to non-government schools. <sup>b</sup> 1997-98 data for State and Territory payments to non-government schools were not available for Qld, and SA. Instead, estimates were derived using financial data from DETYA based on calendar year 1997.

Source: table 2A.9.

#### *Students per full time equivalent teacher*

The ratio of students to teachers should be interpreted with care; it is only a part indicator of efficiency, and it is a poor proxy indicator of the quality of an education system (box 2.4). It should be noted that a decline in a student-to-teacher ratio implies there are fewer students per teaching member (that is, the teacher-to-student ratio will have increased).

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#### **Box 2.4 Interpreting student-to-staff<sup>4</sup> ratios**

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

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

Another interpretation of the ratio of students to teaching staff treats it as an indicator of the quality of school education, assuming that it reflects typical class sizes and that smaller class sizes result in better outcomes. This interpretation is also subject to certain caveats. First, the ratio is not a good proxy indicator of typical class sizes; class sizes vary according to the degree of administrative work undertaken by staff classified as teaching staff (such as principals, deputy principals and senior teachers). Second, while smaller class sizes may be important for certain subjects or year levels, the student-to-teaching staff ratio is calculated across all subjects and year levels. Third, the ratio reports only the number of teaching staff, not their quality, experience or qualifications. Fourth, there is no clear agreement in the international literature that smaller class sizes necessarily improve outcomes. It will not be possible to determine how changes in numbers of teaching staff influence quality in Australian schools until we have better indicators of school outcomes.

Thus, the ratio of students to teaching staff presents the number of people classified as teaching staff in a way that can be compared across jurisdictions, but any interpretation of the ratio will depend on assumptions about the relationship between the number of teaching staff and school outcomes.

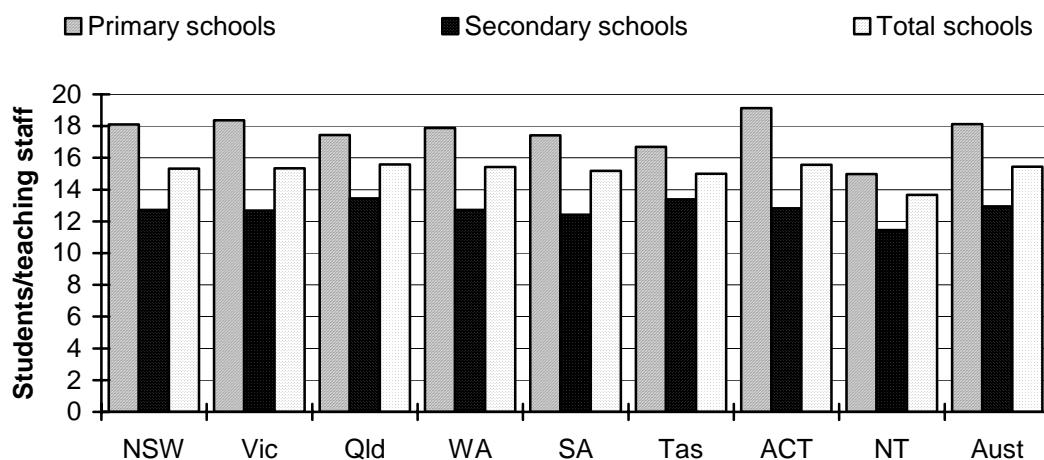
Systemwide, the ratio of full time equivalent students<sup>5</sup> to full time equivalent teaching staff in 1998 ranged from 13.7 in the NT to 15.6 in both the ACT and

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<sup>4</sup> 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 and 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 although may spend the majority of their time in contact with students, they are not employed/engaged to impart the school curriculum). Rather, the latter provide special benefits to students or teaching staff in the development of the school curriculum.

Queensland. The ACT had the most students per teacher for primary schools (19.1) and the NT had the least (15.0); for secondary schools, Queensland and Tasmania had the most students per teacher (13.4) and the NT again had the least (11.4) (figure 2.17).

**Figure 2.17 Student-to-teaching staff ratios — all schools, 1998<sup>a, b</sup>**



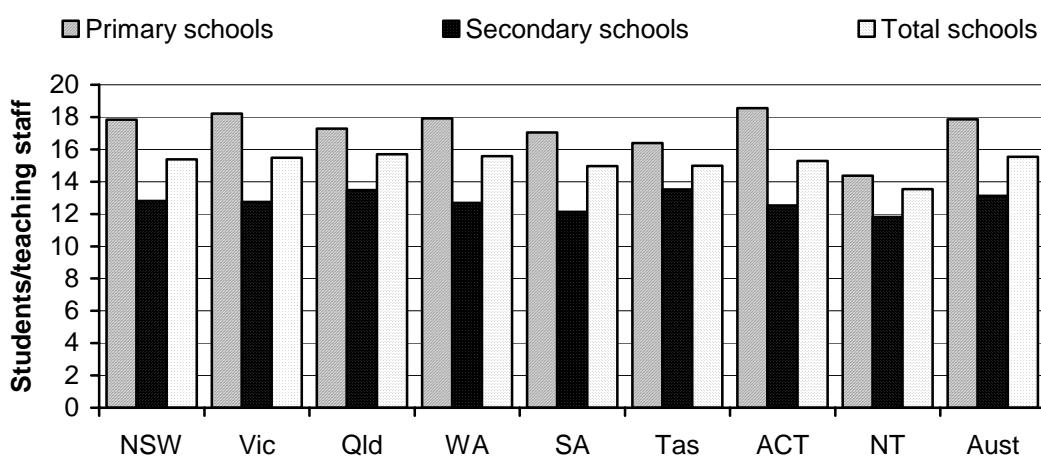
<sup>a</sup> These data are not measures of class size; they are ratios of full time equivalent students to full time equivalent teaching staff. <sup>b</sup> Teaching staff are defined as staff who spend the majority of their time in contact with students and have teaching duties. They include principals,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

Source: table 2A.5.

The overall student-to-teaching staff ratio in the government schools sector in 1998 ranged from 13.5 in the NT to 15.7 in Queensland. For primary schools, the ACT had the most students per teaching staff (18.6) and the NT had the least (14.4); for secondary schools, Queensland and Tasmania had the most students per teaching staff (13.5) and the NT again had the least (11.8) (figure 2.18).

<sup>5</sup> 'Full time equivalent students' is defined here as the sum of full time students and full time equivalent part time students.

**Figure 2.18 Student-to-teaching staff ratios — government schools, 1998<sup>a, b</sup>**



**a** This table measures the ratio of full time equivalent students to full time equivalent teaching staff.

**b** Teaching staff are defined as staff who spend the majority of their time in contact with students and have teaching duties. They include principals, deputy principals and senior teachers, who may be involved in administration, but exclude specialist support staff.

Source: table 2A.5.

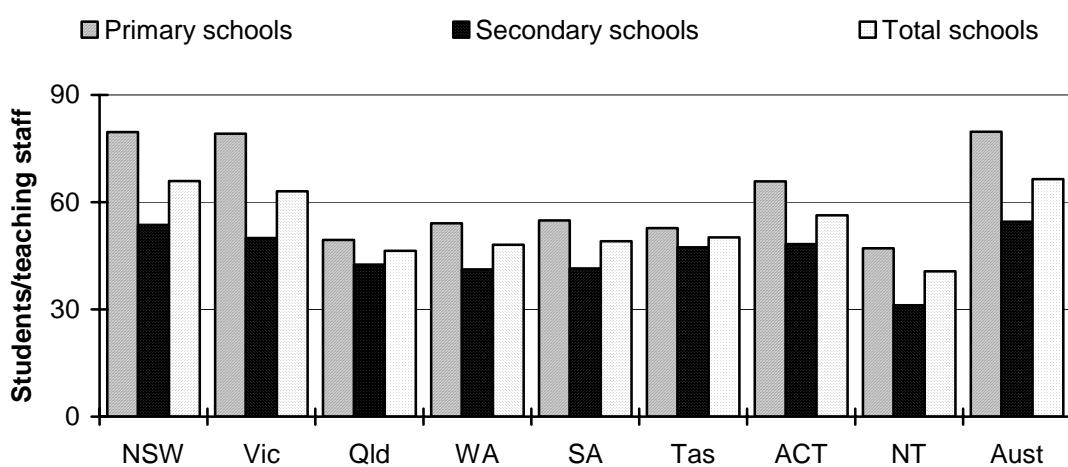
#### *Students per full time equivalent, non-teaching, in-school staff*

The ratio of full time equivalent students to full time equivalent, non-teaching, in-school staff should be interpreted with care. It can be affected by:

- the amount of administrative work undertaken by staff nominally classified as teaching staff (such as principals, assistant principals and senior teachers);
- the proportion of administrative work undertaken outside the school (because administrative tasks such as personnel management are centralised in some jurisdictions, but undertaken at the school level in others);
- the degree of application of technology to teaching and learning and school administration; and
- the degree of contracting out of services to schools.

Systemwide, the ratio of students to non-teaching, in-school staff in 1998 ranged from 40.7 in the NT to 65.9 in NSW (figure 2.19).

**Figure 2.19 Student-to-non-teaching, in-school staff ratios — all schools, 1998<sup>a</sup>**

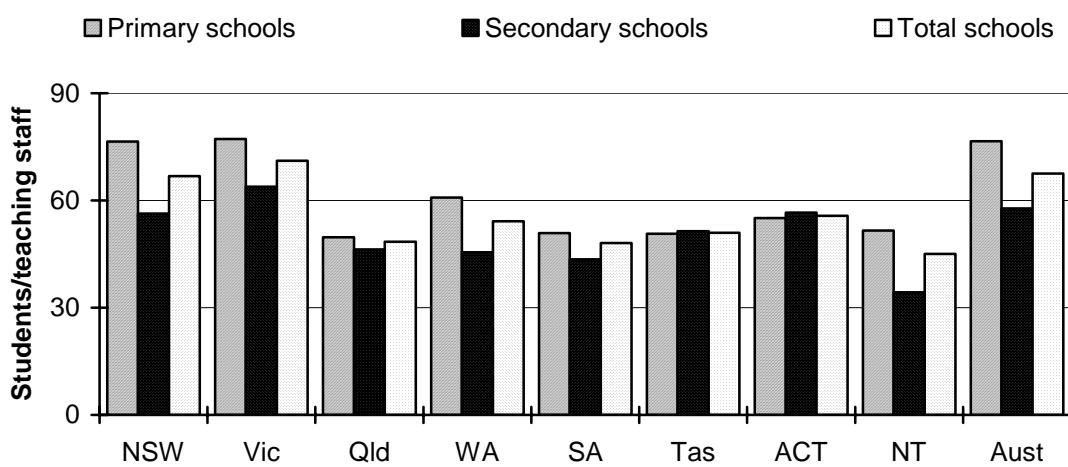


<sup>a</sup> The ratio of full time equivalent students to full time equivalent, non-teaching, in-school staff. <sup>b</sup> Non-teaching staff includes administrative and clerical staff (including teacher aides and assistants), building operations, general maintenance and other staff, and special support staff. <sup>c</sup> In-school staff include all teaching staff and those non-teaching staff who spend more than half their time actively engaged in duties in one or more schools.

Source: table 2A.5.

The ratio of students to non-teaching in-school staff in the government sector ranged from 45.1 in the NT to 71.1 in Victoria (figure 2.20).

**Figure 2.20 Students-to-non-teaching, in-school staff ratios — government schools, 1998<sup>a</sup>**



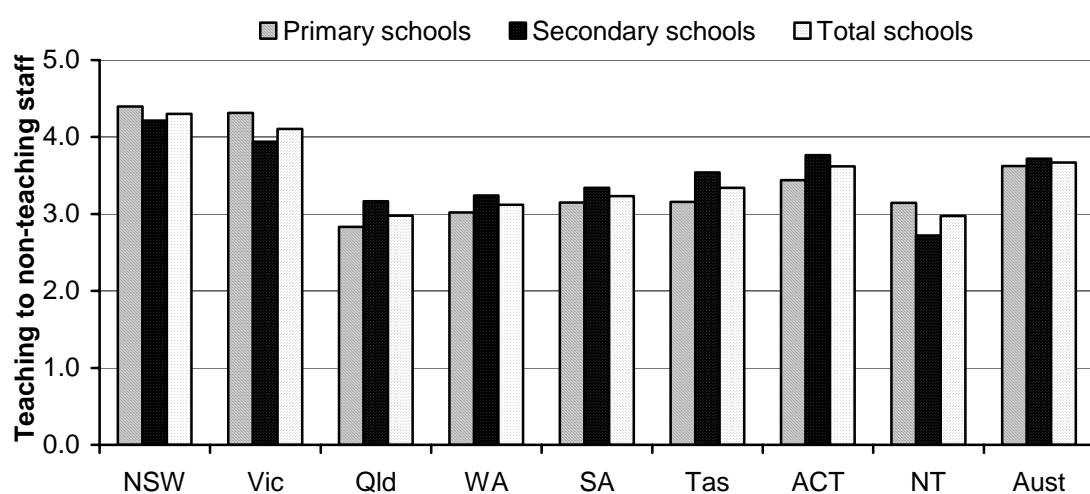
<sup>a</sup> The ratio of full time equivalent students to full time equivalent, non-teaching, in-school staff. <sup>b</sup> Non-teaching staff includes administrative and clerical staff (including teacher aides and assistants), building operations, general maintenance and other staff, and special support staff. <sup>c</sup> In-school staff includes all teaching and those non-teaching staff who spend more than half their time actively engaged in duties in one or more schools.

Source: table 2A.5.

The teaching to non-teaching staff ratio partly highlights the amount of administrative and management overheads that exist in a school. Having a lower ratio does not necessarily mean that quality education is not provided. Non-teaching staff includes specialist support staff, and teacher aides and assistants who perform functions that are of special benefit to students and teaching staff, including assisting in the development of the school curriculum.

Systemwide, the overall teaching-to-non-teaching staff in 1998 ranged from 3.0 in the NT and Queensland, to 4.3 in NSW. For primary schools, Queensland had the least number of teachers per non-teaching staff (2.8) and NSW had the most (4.4); for secondary schools, the NT had the lowest ratio (2.7) and NSW again had the highest (4.2) (figure 2.21).

**Figure 2.21 Teaching-to-non-teaching, in-school staff ratios — all schools, 1998<sup>a, b, c</sup>**

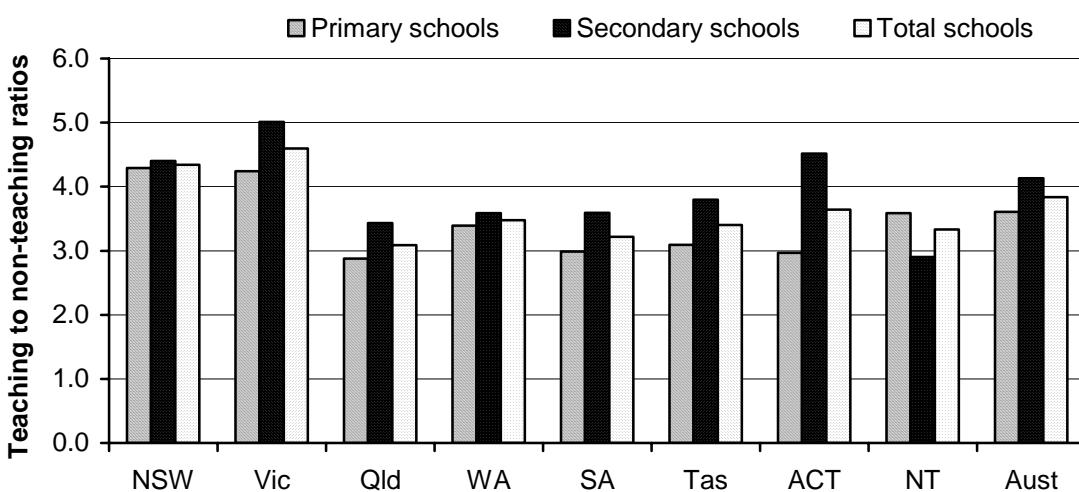


<sup>a</sup> The ratio of full time equivalent teaching to non-teaching, in-school staff. <sup>b</sup> Teaching staff are defined as staff who spend the majority of their time in contact with students and have teaching duties. They include principals, deputy principals and senior teachers, who may be involved in administration, but exclude specialist support staff. <sup>c</sup> Non-teaching staff include administrative and clerical staff (including teacher aides and assistants), building operations, general maintenance and other staff, and special support staff.

Source: table 2A.5.

In government schools, the overall teaching-to-non-teaching staff in 1998 ranged from 3.1 in Queensland to 4.6 in Victoria. For primary schools, Queensland had the least number of teachers per non-teaching staff (2.9) and NSW had the most (4.3); for secondary schools, the NT had the lowest ratio (2.9) and Victoria had the highest (5.0) (figure 2.22).

**Figure 2.22 Teaching-to-non-teaching, in-school staff ratios — government schools, 1998<sup>a, b, c</sup>**



<sup>a</sup> The ratio of full time equivalent teaching to non-teaching, in-school staff. <sup>b</sup> Teaching staff are defined as staff who spend the majority of their time in contact with students and have teaching duties. They include principals, deputy principals and senior teachers, who may be involved in administration, but exclude specialist support staff. <sup>c</sup> Non-teaching staff include administrative and clerical staff (including teacher aides and assistants), building operations, general maintenance and other staff, and special support staff. They include principals, deputy principals and senior teachers who may be involved in administration.

Source: table 2A.5.

## 2.5 Future directions in performance reporting

### Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' access to mainstream services

In May 1997, the Prime Minister requested that the Steering Committee give priority to developing indicators that assessed the performance of mainstream services in meeting the needs of Indigenous Australians. This is an important task, but large gaps remain. Information available for comparing learning outcomes is not comparable across jurisdictions. Most jurisdictions report learning outcomes of Indigenous students based on State-specific tests. While the performance data based on these tests are not comparable across jurisdictions, they are generally comparable within States and Territories. Further, trends can be reported over time on these tests, which can indicate national progress. The 1997 *Annual National Report on Schooling* (MCEETYA 1999) reported on performance outcomes (in literacy and

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numeracy) of Indigenous students in some jurisdictions. However, these reported outcomes were based on 1996 and 1997 results.

Descriptive data on the number and proportion of Indigenous students are subject to variations in self identification of Indigenous students across jurisdictions. The availability and coverage of nationally consistent data on the provision of services to Indigenous clients will increase for future Reports.

### **Nationally comparable reporting of learning outcomes**

Section 2.2 noted that the education ministers affirmed their commitment to nationally comparable reporting of educational outcomes and agreed that the new national goals should have an appropriate framework for reporting purposes. The Review will also examine how its' performance indicators framework can be refined to improve reporting against schooling's new national goals (figure 2.8).

To facilitate work in this area, education ministers have established the National Education Performance Monitoring Taskforce to:

- oversee and coordinate the work of groups concerned with the reporting of nationally comparable outcomes of schooling;
- develop key performance indicators for national reporting in agreed areas;
- identify areas where national targets or benchmarks could be established in relation to agreed key performance indicators, to assist State and school level planning and reporting for improvement; and
- recommend to ministers any additional areas for national reporting.

The taskforce has been given three years to achieve these outcomes. It is currently developing a timetable for collecting nationally comparable indicators for literacy, numeracy, science, and information and technology, as well as the schooling years covered. One option for indicators on science for students aged 15 years, is to collect data through participation in the OECD's International Programme for Student Assessment (PISA), which would provide internationally comparable indicators of student achievement. The taskforce has also commissioned a study to investigate the most appropriate approach to measurement of the changing profile of the information technology skills and aptitudes of Australian school students.

In addition, the taskforce has initiated work to develop common definitions for purposes of national reporting that will enable identification of any differences

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arising from students' socioeconomic background, geographic location or the effects of language, culture and ethnicity.

### *Literacy and numeracy*

As noted earlier, national literacy benchmarks in writing, spelling and reading for years 3 and 5 were approved at the April 1998 meeting of the Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (Ministerial Council). It is expected that education ministers will endorse numeracy benchmarks in early 2000. The Curriculum Corporation manages the development of literacy and numeracy benchmarks under the auspices of the Ministerial Council's benchmarking taskforce.

Education ministers agreed at the April 1999 Ministerial Council meeting to report nationally aggregated data on year 3 reading achievement against the national literacy benchmarks, with rigorous State-based assessment of student achievement against the year 3 and 5 benchmarks. The Ministerial Council agreed on the process to equate the results from State-based tests to permit nationally comparable reporting.

States and Territories are working collaboratively to further refine and improve the equating process to enable nationally comparable State and Territory reporting in reading, writing and spelling for years 3 and 5. Year 3 reading will be reported as a supplement to the 1999 *Annual National Report on Schooling* to be published in 2000. As agreed by the Ministerial Council, the data will be reported for the full cohort of students and student groups — including Indigenous students and students with a language background other than English — as a proportion of students achieving the benchmark in each State and Territory.

### *Measuring student knowledge and skills — Programme for International Student Assessment*

The Programme for International Student Assessment is an Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) managed project. This programme will test reading literacy, mathematical literacy and scientific literacy of 15 year old students in 32 countries (of which 28 are OECD member countries, including Australia) in 2000 (OECD 1999).

The ongoing program of assessment will gather data for each of the three domains every three years. On each occasion, one domain will be tested in detail, taking up

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approximately two-thirds of the total testing time. The ‘major’ domain will be reading literacy in 2000, mathematical literacy in 2003, and scientific literacy in 2006.

Over the years, internationally comparative surveys of student achievement have concentrated on curriculum based outcomes that are essentially common across the participating countries. With the Programme for International Student Assessment, the knowledge and skills tested are defined primarily not in terms of a common denominator of national school curricula, but in terms of what skills are deemed to be essential for future life. The programme will test curriculum based knowledge and understanding mainly in terms of acquisition of broad concepts and skills that allow knowledge to be applied. It will not be constrained by the common denominator of what has been specifically taught in the schools of participating countries.

Each country will test between 4500 and 10 000 students, providing a good sampling base from which to break down the results according to a range of student characteristics. Results from the 2000 assessments will be published in 2001. The results will be reported in terms of the level of performance on scales of achievement in each domain. At any level on each scale, it will be possible to say what students know and are able to do that those on lower levels cannot.

#### *Reporting on access and equity*

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

#### **Improving the treatment of unit costs**

The Steering Committee is working with the schools sector to improve unit costs by introducing a more consistent treatment of financial data (box 2.5). Accounting for these costs should improve the comparability and accuracy of unit cost information in future Reports.

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### **Box 2.5      Comparability of cost estimates**

It is an objective of the Review to report comparable estimates of costs. Ideally, the full range of costs to government is counted on a comparable basis. Where the full costs cannot be counted, costs should be estimated on a consistent basis.

The Steering Committee has identified four areas that could diminish the comparability of costs across government and private providers.

- In this Report, superannuation costs are included in both estimates of recurrent or total government expenditure per student. This ensures comparability across government and non-government schools. SCRCSSP (1998) recommended costing superannuation on an accrual actuarial basis.
- Depreciation costs are not included in either recurrent or total expenditure per student. Estimates of recurrent expenditure per student will underestimate the real costs to government. In contrast, estimates of total expenditure (recurrent plus capital) per student overstate the cost to government during periods of rapid capital expansion and understate the cost of government during periods of low capital growth.
- The user cost of capital is currently not included in cost estimates for government schools. The user cost of capital represents the opportunity cost to government of the funds tied up in school assets. Excluding the user cost of capital lowers the reported costs per student and diminishes cost comparability with private schools. Comparability can be improved by adding the reported user cost of capital to total expenditure if debt servicing costs and State-based capital asset charges are deducted from recurrent expenditure. Future Reports will include the user cost of capital in cost estimates for government schools.
- Payroll tax is not payable by private or government schools in most jurisdictions. SCRCSSP (1999) recommended exempting payroll tax from unit cost estimates to achieve comparability across government and private schooling providers and across jurisdictions.

Sources: SCRCSSP (1998) and SRCSSP (1999).

## **2.6      Jurisdictions' comments**

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

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## Commonwealth Government comments

The Commonwealth has been actively engaged in the development of improved reporting frameworks for student achievement and public accountability. In April 1999, all Education Ministers agreed on a new set of *National Goals for Schooling in the Twenty-First Century*. The new national goals, which replaced the 1989 *Common and Agreed National Goals for Schooling* in Australia, are very much focussed on the learning outcomes of students. With their outcomes focus, the goals will be amenable to the development of benchmarks (and targets where appropriate), thus making it possible to report on progress towards the achievement of goals on a national basis using agreed performance measures.

The new national goals will provide an improved framework for reporting which will reinforce the general framework for performance indicators developed by the Steering Committee for the Review of Commonwealth/State Service Provision. Future reporting will increasingly focus on student outcomes, including nationally comparable data, as this becomes available. Education Ministers have identified six key areas for the development of performance indicators: literacy; numeracy; student participation in schooling; vocational and educational training in schools; science; and information technology. MCEETYA has established a new body, the National Education Performance Monitoring Taskforce, which has begun its work on the development of performance measures. It is also widely expected that all performance measures will be reported by identified sub-groups of students including gender, socioeconomic levels and home locations.

In addition to the new national goals, the Commonwealth has been taking an active role in supporting the collection of nationally comparable data through international studies and national surveys. These include a study on Civics and Citizenship education; a repeat of the Third International Mathematics and Science Study in respect of 13 year old students; and an OECD study of the achievements of 15 year old students in reading literacy, mathematical literacy and scientific literacy.

There has also been a national study on the information technology skills of Australian school students commissioned by the Department. The report from the study, *Real Time – Computers, Change and Schooling*, will be released in early 2000. The report will provide baseline data on students' information technology skills, the resource levels in schools, systems and school policies, and the professional needs of teachers to better equip them to provide information technology tuition. The Commonwealth has confirmed its strong commitment to improving the educational outcomes of Indigenous students, including in the areas of literacy and numeracy as well as an accelerated effort to make the levels of educational outcomes for Indigenous students similar to the levels achieved by other Australians.

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## New South Wales Government comments

In December 1997, the Department of School Education, the NSW TAFE Commission, and the Department of Training and Education Co-ordination merged to form the NSW Department of Education and Training. The improved departmental structure provides students with a smoother transition from school to further education, training and work.

The NSW Government, over the past four years has allocated record funding to education and training with the 1999/2000 budget of \$6.929 billion representing an increase of 22 per cent since 1995. An additional 2 205 teachers have been employed in government schools since 1995, including specialists in literacy, computing, student welfare and behaviour. At the same time, the Commonwealth has introduced the Enrolment Benchmark Adjustment, which has taken over \$14 million away from NSW government schools to date, and is predicted to rise to \$18 million in 2000 and to over \$40 million a year in 2004.

NSW has Australia's most comprehensive state-wide testing program, with Years 3 and 5 Basic Skills Literacy and Numeracy tests, the Years 7 and 8 English Language and Literacy Assessment (ELLA), the School Certificate in Year 10 and the Higher School Certificate in Year 12. Tests are being developed in numeracy for Year 7 and in Australian History, Geography, Civics and Citizenship for Year 10. All test results are publicly reported.

The NSW Government's \$280 million literacy strategy is improving the literacy skills of primary and secondary school students. Results of the 1998 literacy tests show that the literacy levels of primary students in government schools are rising, particularly amongst the lowest achieving students. A complementary numeracy strategy is also being introduced.

Significant investments have also been made in technology for teaching and learning. A total of \$186 million has been provided over four years for the Computers in Schools program. The Government has provided 90 000 multi-media computers to schools, and over the next four years, 115 000 new and replacement computers will be provided.

The Government has reviewed the 30-year-old Higher School Certificate to make it better, fairer and more challenging by improving syllabuses, testing and reporting. Extensive teacher training programs have been conducted in preparation for the introduction of the New HSC for Year 11 students in 2000. To ensure NSW students are 'job-ready', there are seven new vocational education and training courses in the New HSC.

Significant steps have also been taken towards the modernisation of comprehensive secondary education through the Collegiate Education Plan. The plan involves the establishment of joint educational campuses with TAFE, University and other education and training providers. A new multi-campus "super" school has been created at Nirimba in Sydney's west, with plans for more collegiate arrangements at Dubbo, Oatley and Mt Druitt.

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### **Victorian Government comments**

Victoria's mission for school education in 1998 was the delivery of world-class education and training. Particular attention was paid to improving student learning while managing resources responsibly. Based on a rigorous research program, the Early Years Literacy Program delivered specially developed classroom programs and additional assistance for students at risk of not reaching the expected standards, training for teachers and increased parent participation in children's learning. Planning commenced for a research project to develop programs that would lift numeracy learning in government primary schools to the same high standards addressed in the literacy program.

Substantial growth in VET in schools and part-time apprenticeships and traineeships for school students has increased structured workplace learning and will contribute to the skills of the future workforce in order to meet changing demands of new technology and new industries.

Victoria's apparent retention rate for 1998 of students from years 10–12 at 79.1 per cent is above the Australian average of 74.1 per cent and the highest of any state (except ACT). This rate, however, remains below 82.8 per cent achieved in 1992 and strategies to restore retention rates to these levels are being introduced. For participation in schooling for 15 to 19 year olds, Victoria's rate of 54 per cent is higher than the national average of 49.7 per cent and the highest of any state (except ACT). This picture has not changed since 1992.

Victorian State school education in 1998 was the largest information technology user in Australia, with school computer–student ratios at 1:6.8. Notebook computers were provided to the first group of teachers and principals to improve their capacity to maximise the potential application of information and communications technology in classroom teaching. Linked professional development programs enable teachers and school leaders to enhance their skills and improve the application of learning technologies to classroom practices. Science, engineering and technology are important in determining our community's future prosperity and quality of life. Across all education sectors from primary to tertiary education, initiatives have been developed to increase student interest, equip teachers with the required level of knowledge and expertise and deliver the highest possible standards of learning. Partnerships were established with tertiary institutions, business and industry to raise the profile of science, and to encourage young people to pursue science as a career option.

Alongside foundation learning of literacy, numeracy and science, schools maintain a strong commitment to programs and activities that prepare students for future roles as active citizens and community leaders. The Civics and Citizenship program was launched in 1998. A Student Leadership project was also established, aiming to promote community service and youth leadership.

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## Queensland Government comments

Education Queensland's purpose is to achieve the best educational outcomes for every student in our schools, so that they become effective adults in their work and social lives. The State schooling system faces increasing pressure due to the growing demand to educate more children, for an increased number of school years, from more diverse backgrounds.

Student enrolments increased by 7000 to 465 000, creating demand for additional classrooms and teachers. Approximately 28 000 of the school students are Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander and 8900 are students requiring special support as they have a physical, intellectual, hearing or visual disability.

Confidence in public schools is an important indicator as to whether schools are providing what the public want. Strong and increasing public confidence is evidenced by Education Queensland's School Opinion Survey that found, for example, that parent satisfaction that their children were getting a good education at their school improved from 73 per cent in 1997 to 77 per cent in 1998.

Strategies have been implemented to maximise student learning and to support departmental goals. Achievements during 1998/1999 as a result of these strategies include: 86 per cent of students who received Reading Recovery support improved their literacy levels to that of their peers; 48 per cent of year 11 and 46 per cent of year 12 students, nearly twice the interstate average, studied at least one vocational subject; school apprenticeships and traineeships grew from 300 to 1300; \$108 million was spent on literacy and numeracy; the Education for All initiative began, providing over 150 more staff to support students with disabilities; an additional 4000 computers were placed in schools; the departmental computer network Connect-Ed, one of the biggest linked-computer networks in the southern hemisphere, extended from 597 to 1307 schools at a cost of \$45 million and the Cooler Schools program (air-conditioning classrooms) was expanded to a further 183 state schools.

In April 1999 the Minister of Education launched the *Queensland State Education 2010* project. The project will establish a ten-year future strategy for state schools. It has been initiated in response to broader economic and social changes related to globalisation and the growth of the knowledge economy impacting on schools and schooling. *Education 2010* focuses on targets for increased student completion rates accompanied by effective supporting strategies (for schools, learning, school support and school workforce) to enable the achievement of the targets. Most importantly, the strategy proposes a new model for performance measurement that is based on schools reporting to, and negotiating with, parents and their communities about school-based improvements in students' educational outcomes, attainments and participation.

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## **Western Australian Government comments**

Government schooling is delivered within the context of overall State government policy, articulated through the Education Act 1928 (to be replaced by a new School Education Act in 2000) and the Curriculum Council Act 1997.

Under the Curriculum Council Act, all schools in WA are required to use the Curriculum Framework developed by the Council to structure, deliver, assess and report on the outcomes of schooling. Government schools have until 2004 to do so.

The Framework establishes the basic principles upon which schooling is based, by outlining the broad learning outcomes that students are expected to achieve.

In government schools, a Curriculum Improvement Program involves outcomes-based learning and improvements in student assessment and reporting. General understandings about the Curriculum Framework and about the Education Department's Student Outcome Statements are developing and planning for implementation is being undertaken.

Implementation of the local area education planning process, which focuses on maximising students' access to curriculum through cooperation among groups of local schools, is continuing, and involves the construction of new schools, the amalgamation of some existing schools and the closure of others, as well as the adoption of alternative forms of schooling, including middle schooling.

Under broadened early childhood provisions, all eligible children can now access eight sessions per week of pre-primary education. Over 3000 additional places have been provided in the kindergarten program and from February 1999, all children turning four have been guaranteed access to two sessions per week in this program.

A draft literacy strategy has been developed and a P-3 "Literacy Net" has been provided to assist teachers in identifying and supporting students experiencing difficulties with literacy learning.

Internet access is available to virtually all schools, as is participation in the Department's wide-area network EdNet, while the MIDAS project provides schools with enhanced access to e-mail and other electronic facilities. Efforts are continuing to achieve very high computer-student ratios by 2002.

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## **South Australian Government comments**

The SA Department of Education Training and Employment provides services to more than a quarter of a million children and students. The department's mission is to provide high quality learning, teaching, care, employment and youth services within an integrated, responsive and supportive learning organisation, which strives for the continuous improvement in service and performance.

In 1998, three important initiatives provided more flexible pathways for senior secondary students and an increase in participation, retention, training and further education. The \$11.8 million Ready, Set, Go program has already seen an increase in students participating in VET programs while still at school, from 2417 students in 1997 to 8907 students in 1998. The establishment of the Windsor Gardens Vocational College, which will work with the Torrens Valley Institute of TAFE, will provide general and specialised programs within the SA Certificate of Education. The new \$17 million Urrbrae Education Centre will bring together a broad range of secondary and TAFE curriculum offerings.

The department has a commitment to maximising the use of technology to amplify and extend and transform learning. The five year DECStech project is providing a coordinated approach to infrastructure in hardware and local and wide area networks. The \$75 million originally allocated by the government to DECStech was supplemented in 1998 by a further \$10.6 million under the Computers Plus program.

The department has undertaken a number of measures to monitor children's and students' achievements. In 1998, 96 per cent of our state schools' year 3 and 5 students sat the Basic Skills Tests and the government provided \$2 million for programs to support students identified by the tests as experiencing learning difficulties. A trial of the School Entry Assessment program was also conducted in 1998 and teachers assessed children's early literacy and numeracy skills in the first year of school. Sample student achievement data was also collected in the four key learning areas from one third of students in 1998.

Two events will have an invigorating impact on the future of education and care in SA. Firstly, during 1998 a review of the Education Act (1972) and the Children's Services Act (1985) began. This review will involve widespread and in-depth public consultation. The government's intention is to create a modern, integrated Act for the provision and governance of children's services and education which has, as paramount, the development of all children and students. Secondly, the report on local management was released in December 1998. The prime driving force for local school management is to achieve better outcomes for students. Local school management will strengthen the high quality learning already operating in our preschools, schools and TAFE institutes. Local school management will increase the flexibility and authority of these sites to decide for themselves how their resources can best improve student learning outcomes.

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## **Tasmanian Government comments**

“ During 1998, the administration of vocational education and training (VET) was combined with school education to form a single department, rather than operate as separate agencies as had prevailed for many years. This has created potential for much stronger linkages between education and training within the State. In addition, responsibility for the administration of childcare in Tasmania was transferred from the Department of Health and Human Services to the Department of Education.

The Assisted School Self Review (ASSR) program, which commenced in 1997 with 28 schools, was continued and a further 101 schools undertook the process in 1998, leading to the formation of partnership agreements with the school community. Those 28 schools that undertook the ASSR process during 1997 produced annual reports at the end of 1998 on the outcomes achieved in the first year of activity under the Partnership Agreement. This reporting further enhances accountability to the school community.

Significant investment was made in supporting schools in establishing baseline data on student literacy and numeracy performance and in selecting and using appropriate assessment instruments to monitor, assess and report outcomes. A comprehensive literacy and numeracy plan was provided that detailed all programs designed to improve literacy and numeracy outcomes.

A review of early childhood education was initiated in 1998 and is expected to be reported on in 1999. This review explores educational services available to children up to five years of age. It will examine pre-school services, links between child care and schooling, and the arrangements for the kindergarten and preparatory years of school.

Following on from the linkage of VET and school education in one agency, a review into post-compulsory education was initiated. This will explore the links between school education, VET and other tertiary education in order to identify means to improve retention in education and training within Tasmania and improve the linkages between educational and training pathways available to students completing year 10.

A major new investment program for IT in schools was implemented in 1998, which provided almost \$3.6 million in grants for 80 schools. While there has been significant IT infrastructure spending during 1998, which will be sustained in coming years, two significant resource demands are emerging. Firstly, there is a continuing need for investment in the professional development of teachers such that the benefits of IT can be fully realised in education delivery. Secondly, there is rising demand for access to communications bandwidth to link schools to the world. The latter issue is likely to be a major point for debate on appropriate pricing of access for education and the appropriate level of funding for schools to allow schools to utilise IT as an integral part of education delivery.

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## Australian Capital Territory Government comments

The ACT Department of Education and Community Services is responsible for school and vocational education, children's, family, youth, sport and recreational services. The provision of government school education is part of the seamless provision of services to children and youth in the ACT.

In 1998-99, funding for literacy and numeracy programs in government schools increased by 4.5 per cent. Strategies that target literacy and numeracy skills across all key learning areas are being put into place and a dedicated literacy and numeracy team supports schools.

The literacy strategy provides training and development for teachers, assistance for developing schools literacy plans and encourages parents and the community to support literacy at home and at school. Work has commenced on the development of a systemwide approach to numeracy. Numeracy plans have been initiated within some schools with support from the literacy and numeracy team. In 1999, assessment of literacy and numeracy included all government school students in years 3, 5, 7 and 9. System reporting for 1999 includes student achievement in these areas.

The government is committed to keeping government schools at the forefront of Information Technology (IT) education. In 1998-99, schools received grants of \$10 000 to \$30 000 to enhance the integrated use of technology, computers and the Internet in the classroom. The government has set a target that 95 per cent of year 10 students will be IT competent by 2001. Improving teachers' IT competency has also been targeted with the provision, to all full time teachers, of a computer dedicated to their own use.

High Schools in the ACT provide education services from year 7 to year 10. Affirming the high school years is a key priority. A paper, *Affirming the High School Years*, released in 1999, addresses many issues and identifies key elements in making structural change, shaping cultures and enhancing learning and assessment.

In 1999, the ACT Board of Senior Secondary Studies developed assessment criteria for all subject areas within course frameworks documents. This will provide a basis for strengthening moderation between all senior secondary colleges. All Colleges became Registered Training Organisations in 1999. The registration provides colleges with quality procedures to improve the delivery of their courses and meet national standards.

During 1999, the government undertook to review the ACT Education Act 1937 and ACT Schools Authority Act 1976 that underpin school education. The review of school legislation provides an opportunity for the ACT community to consider the framework for education as the Territory moves into the next century. The review process explores areas applicable to both government and non government schools.

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## **Northern Territory Government comments**

In 1998, the NT recorded 28 996 full time equivalent enrolments in government schools and 8207 in non-government schools. The NT continued to have the highest proportion of government school enrolments in Australia; 78 per cent compared to the national average of 70 per cent.

The geography of the NT presents very significant distance and isolation disadvantages. Many small centres are accessible only by air or sea and are often not accessible at all during the wet season. 54.1 per cent of NT schools and 26.8 per cent of students are located in remote areas.

The NT has the highest proportion of Indigenous students of all jurisdictions at 35 per cent of the total student population. In other jurisdictions, the proportion is between 1 and 5 per cent. A high percentage of Indigenous students who reside in remote communities suffer from hearing and sight impairment and other health problems which inhibit educational participation and achievement.

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

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

Consistent with nationally agreed strategies, the NT released its Literacy and Numeracy Plan in 1998. There is a long-standing history of strong cooperation between the three education systems in the NT (government, Catholic and independent), and this is reflected in an ongoing commitment by all parties to working together and to supporting one another in the development of excellent literacy and numeracy skills in students.

In response to the Commonwealth reporting requirements, the NT Multi-level Assessment Program (NT MAP) changed in 1998 from testing students in year 4 and year 6 to year 3 and year 5.

In 1998, the NT undertook an Education Review aimed at improving education outcomes for young Territorians by streamlining the functions of the Department of Education and refocussing on core educational objectives. One of the major initiatives of this review is the introduction of a new model for leadership between schools and the department's executives. Under this new model, principals are given more authority and responsibility in managing schools. This model will create a flatter structure to keep executives closely informed and responsive to key issues affecting schools.

