UNESCO Convention against Discrimination in Education (1960)/Recommendation against Discrimination in Education (1960)

International Covenant for Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) – 2000-2005

Primary, secondary and tertiary education

School education in Australia

1. The schooling system in Australia comprises thirteen years with some variations in Queensland and WA and is compulsory between the ages of six and 15 (or 16 in some States).[1] School education is divided into a preparatory year, primary schooling and secondary schooling. The final two years of secondary schooling are necessary for those wishing to proceed to higher education (mainly university).

2. The major responsibility for funding government schools lies with State and Territory governments, which provide about 90 per cent of schools' running costs. The Australian Government contributes approximately 10 per cent of government school running costs. Education for compulsory aged students in all government primary and secondary schools is free. Voluntary contributions are sought in some case for certain materials, services and facilities. Private school education exists in parallel with the State system.

3. Consultation and collaboration between the different levels of government in relation to school education occurs through the Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs. Membership of the Council comprises State, Territory, Australian Government and New Zealand Ministers with responsibility for the portfolios of education, employment, training and youth affairs, with Papua New Guinea and Norfolk Island having observer status. The Council meets at least once a year.

4. The Australian Government acknowledges the right of Australian parents to choose the most appropriate schooling for their children.

5. The Committee on Economic, Cultural and Social Rights has expressed interest in the difference in quality of schooling available to students in public and private schools.[2] NSW has conducted a review of non-government schools in NSW, and as a consequence amendments were made in June 2004 to the Education Act 1990 which promote greater parity between public and private schools, ensure all students undertake courses of study that are in accordance with NSW Board of Studies syllabuses, and ensure greater accountability of non-government schools with regard to student welfare, child protection, teacher standards, improved governance and annual

[1] The WA Government intends to amend its legislation to raise the leaving age in 2006 to the end of the year in which young people turn 16 and in 2008 to the end of the year in which they turn 17.
[2] Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, Concluding Observations, Australia 08/09/2000, E/C.12/1/Add.50, paragraph 22.

reporting mechanisms. Other States and Territories, such as the NT, have monitored quality of schooling system-wide (public and private) through annual national numeracy, reading, writing and spelling benchmark assessment activities, but do not compare, or have not compared, achievement of students in public and private schools.

Reform agenda for schools

6. The Australian Government has announced its reform agenda for Australian schools. The objectives of the reforms across all educational sectors are to promote quality (especially in terms of consistency and relevance), accessibility, choice, flexibility and sustainability. Issues covered include introducing national consistency in schooling and measures for improving schools; accountability and performance and the development of a National Safe Schools Framework.

7. The Australian Government also recognises that there are some students with particular needs who require additional help and resources to reach their full potential. The Australian Government provides funding for students with disabilities who attend schools and non-government centres. All States and Territories offer a range of programmes to address the special education needs of all students. Programmes available include those for students with intellectual and physical disabilities, behaviour disorders, special learning needs, for gifted students, and for migrant students particularly those with low numeracy and literacy skills or without fluency in English.

8. The Australian Government supports the right of students with disabilities to have the same educational opportunities as other students through the Australian Government Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (the DDA) and the Disability Standards for Education 2005. The Standards clarify and make more explicit the obligations of education and training service providers under the Act. The Standards seek to ensure that students with disabilities can access and participate in education on the same basis as other students. All education and training providers, both government and non-government, must comply with the Australian Government legislation and any relevant discrimination legislation of their State and Territory.

National Goals for Schooling

Literacy and Numeracy

9. The National Literacy and Numeracy Plan is a coordinated approach by the Australian Government and States and Territories to improve literacy and numeracy standards, involving national benchmarks in literacy and numeracy to facilitate early identification of problems and intervention strategies, and professional development for teachers.

10. The Australian Government has developed a range of specific programs to improve the literacy and numeracy skills of Australian children. They include:

- the *Literacy, Numeracy and Special Learning Needs Programme* - introduced in 2005, aims to improve the literacy, numeracy and other learning outcomes of

educationally disadvantaged students including students with disabilities.

- the pilot Tutorial Voucher Initiative (TVI) - announced in May 2004, was an innovative pilot programme introduced to provide assistance to children who were below the Year 3 national reading benchmark in 2003. Under the pilot, parents of eligible students received a tutorial voucher for their child of $700. The pilot TVI assisted some 6200 students nationally. An independent evaluation of the pilot TVI and the report is available on the Department of Education, Science and Training website at www.dest.gov.au/tutorialvoucher/

- National Literacy and Numeracy Week - an annual event since 1999, highlights the importance of literacy and numeracy skills, The week showcases excellence in literacy and numeracy practice and celebrates achievements in this area.

11. The English as a Second Language – New Arrivals Program is ongoing and continued throughout 2000-2005. It remains an important part of addressing the special educational needs of migrant students in primary or secondary school. The programme aims to improve the educational opportunities and outcomes for students who have recently arrived in Australia, whose first language is not English, and whose proficiency in the English language is determined, at the local level, to require intensive assistance to enable them to participate fully in mainstream classroom activities.

Information and communication technology (ICT) in school education

12. In recent years a major instrument of change in the way schools operate has been the increased use of ICT. The Australian Government recognises the importance of ICT in improving the quality of teaching and learning throughout all Australian schools and has implemented strategies to ensure that young people have the school education that is needed for the knowledge society and the knowledge economy.

Higher education

13. The higher education sector comprises 37 public and two private universities, one branch of an overseas university; four other self-accrediting institutions and over 150 other institutions, such as TAFES, theological colleges and other providers specialising in professional, business or artistic courses of studies.

14. The majority of Australian undergraduate students are enrolled in a Commonwealth supported place (previously called a HECS place) and contribute towards the cost of their education by paying a student contribution amount. From 2005, higher education providers are able to set student contributions within a range from $0 to a maximum set by the Australian Government, which is no more than 25 per cent higher than the 2004 HECS rates (indexed). The Australian Government contributes to the cost of educating Commonwealth supported students through Commonwealth Grant Scheme funding.

15. Eligible student can access a HELP loan to defer payment of their tuition costs. HELP debts are required to be paid back only after an annual income threshold

has been reached, $38,149 in 2006-07. HELP debts are indexed by the Consumer Price Index to maintain their real value but are otherwise interest free.

16. A review of the higher education sector was carried out in 2002. As a result of the review, in 2003 the Government introduced the Our Universities: Backing Australia's Future package of higher education reforms. The reforms give universities access to the funding they need to deliver world-class higher education, with a focus on quality learning outcomes.

17. In higher education, the following groups have been identified as targets for equity planning, on the basis of their history of relative disadvantage in accessing higher education: Indigenous Australians, people from low socio-economic backgrounds, people from rural and isolated areas, people with disabilities, and people from non-English-speaking backgrounds.

18. The progress that these groups have made in recent years has varied. Between 2001 and 2005, the proportion of all domestic higher education students who have a disability has increased. The proportion of students participating from a language background other than English has remained relatively stable. The proportion of indigenous students has also remained relatively stable, while those from rural and isolated areas and low socio-economic backgrounds has fallen slightly.

Vocational Education and Training

19. Vocational education and training is an area of shared responsibility between the Australian Government and the state and territory governments.

20. The Australian Government takes a national leadership role in education and training. It works with the states and territories to ensure high quality outcomes for vocational education and training students, and to achieve national consistency and coherence.

21. The Australian Government works directly with industry, including the peak industry associations of employer and employee groups, to ensure that the vocational and technical education system is responsive to industry needs.

22. The key features of Australia's national training system are:

- Competency-based training. The system is based on industry defined competencies that make up the skills and knowledge required to participate in a chosen industry field/career. Qualifications are made of combinations of competencies that can be accumulated to reach exit point qualifications ranging from certificate to Advanced Diploma.
- Strong industry focus. The vocational education and training system sets out formal mechanisms for industry engagement through active participation in industry advisory arrangements at all levels of decision making, and in the development of industry endorsed training packages. Training Packages ensure relevance for industry.

- Training packages are sets of nationally endorsed standards and qualifications for recognising and assessing people's skills. A training package describes the skills and knowledge needed to perform effectively in the workplace. They cover a full range of industries in Australian for example aviation to community services, electrical, engineering, music, maritime, manufacturing, tourism, and business.

- A diverse provider market. Training is provided by public , private and community education training organisations.

23. The Skilling Australia's Workforce Act 2005 is the vehicle for the new national training arrangements for the funding period 1 July 2005 – 31 December 2008. A key feature of the Skilling Australia's Workforce Act is the strengthening of the funding framework, which links funding for the states and territories to a range of conditions and targets for training outcomes. These targets include for example increasing the number of training places for people with a disability, Indigenous Australians in regional and remote locations, and increasing the overall participation of Indigenous Australians at higher qualification levels specifically at Certificate III and above. These will drive quality improvement and increased and increased flexibility in the vocational education and training sector.

Australian Apprenticeships

24. Since the 1998 introduction of the Australian Apprenticeships (formerly New Apprenticeships), system major trends include a broadening of the range of national industry and occupational qualifications covered to more than 1,500, increased take-up of Australian Apprenticeships by both new and existing (including mature aged) workers and a greater use of flexible training/employment arrangements including full-time, part-time and Australian School-based Apprenticeships. There are currently 404,200 Australian Apprentices in training as at September 2006; this is a 161 per cent increase from the 154,800 Australian Apprentices in training in March 1996.

Skills for the Future

24. In 2006 the Prime Minister announced new investments worth $837 million over five years by the Australian Government towards a more skilled and dynamic workforce.

25. The 'Skills for the Future' package is a coherent new approach to workforce development and targets mainly existing workers and particularly aims to improve the basic skills of the workforce.

26. The key features of the Skills for the Future package are:

- Work skills vouchers – 30,000 vouchers per year valued at up to $3,000 to adults aged 25 and over without Year 12 or equivalent to help them improve their qualifications.

- Support for mid-career apprentices – The Government will assist workers aged 30 and over who wish to upgrade their skills in mid-career by taking up a trade apprenticeship at the Certificate III or IV level.

- Business skills vouchers for apprentices – 6,300 vouchers valued up to $500 will be available to apprentices each year to contribute towards the costs of accredited small business skills training.

- Incentives for higher technical skills - Australian workers will be supported to undertake Diploma and Advanced Diploma qualifications through the extension of the Australian Apprenticeships Incentives Programme.

International education

Women and men in education

25. Women have overtaken men in several key aspects of education performance. In general terms, girls out-perform boys during the school years in terms of levels of literacy and numeracy, retention to the end of secondary school (Year 12) and achievement in Year 12 (which increases the chances of entry into university). On the other hand, the post school experience of women and men in education, while different in character, is in many respects more equal.
In 2005, women represented 50.1 per cent of all government funded VTE students. Women tend to undertake higher level Certificates and have pass rates comparable to men. [3] Of all students undertaking higher education in 2005, 54.5 per cent were women and 45.5 per cent were men.

Indigenous people and education

26. There have been significant improvements in outcomes for Indigenous students, although disparities remain between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students. Indigenous Australians have a high rate of participation in the Australian training system. While 2.4 per cent of the Australian population is Indigenous, in 2005 Indigenous students comprised around 3.8 per cent of the total students participating in VET.

27. In April 2004, the Australian Government announced its funding allocations for Indigenous education for the 2005-2008 quadrennium, emphasising that Indigenous education remains one of its major priorities. Over the quadrennium $2.1 billion will be allocated to programmes to improve educational outcomes for Indigenous students.

28. A significant restructure of existing programmes has been implemented to redirect funding to initiatives that have been demonstrated to work, and to put greater weighting of funding towards Indigenous students of greatest disadvantage – those in remote areas of the country. Important conditions, including attendance benchmarks,

[3] Source: Higher Ed' statistics Table 21: All students by Level of Course, Broad Field of Education and Gender, Full Year 2005.

will be attached to the funding. The Indigenous Education Programme includes elements such as:

- Supplementary Recurrent Assistance (SRA) which provide supplementary recurrent funding on a per student basis to independent preschools, government and non-government schools and independent vocational education and training institutions;

- Whole of School Intervention (WoSI) strategy, which includes the Parent School Partnerships Initiative (PSPI) and Homework Centres. The PSPI enables creative approaches to improving the educational outcomes of Indigenous schools students by encouraging the parents of Indigenous students, Indigenous communities and schools to work together;

- Indigenous Tutorial Assistance Scheme (ITAS) which provides supplementary tuition to Indigenous students.

Other programmes include:

- ABSTUDY which provides income support and supplementary benefits to Indigenous secondary and tertiary students; and

- Indigenous Support Programme (ISP) which enables higher education institutions to invest further in initiatives designed to increase the participation and success of Indigenous students in higher education.

29. The National Indigenous English Literacy and Numeracy Strategy (NIELNS) was launched in 2000 as an element of the Indigenous Education Strategic Initiatives Programme (IESIP). The objective of NIELNS is to achieve literacy and numeracy for Indigenous students at levels comparable to those achieved by other young Australians.

30. An evaluation of NIELNS, reported in the National Report to Parliament on Indigenous Education and Training 2003, concluded that it is more a readiness for learning programme than a literacy and numeracy programme, acknowledging that the latter cannot occur without the former. NIELNS programme can be seen as achieving intermediate outcomes such as increasing the confidence of children or improving eating habits; or readiness for learning outcomes such as improved attendance, behavioural readiness for learning and better equipped teachers which others were contributing more to literacy and numeracy outcomes.

31. The evaluation concluded that NIELNS made a difference for many Indigenous students throughout Australia and that the strategies are working to achieve readiness for learning and improved literacy and numeracy outcomes.

32. The Indigenous Youth Mobility Programme (IYMP) supports the development of local economic employment opportunities for young Indigenous Australians in remote areas. The programme will support at least 600 young people from 2006 to 2009. The IYMP improves access for these young people to training and employment opportunities in major centres by providing pathways planning, mentoring, intensive support and safe

and supported accommodation in ten IYMP host locations. IYMP will help to increase the number of Indigenous people participating in accredited training and increase the number employed in occupations in particular areas of community need such as trades, nursing, accountancy, business management and teaching. Pre-vocational training and Apprenticeships contribute to the mix of opportunities available.

33. The Indigenous Youth Leadership Programme (IYLP) aims to assist young Indigenous people, generally from remote areas, to develop and fulfil roles as Indigenous leaders in their communities. The programme will provide 205 talented Indigenous students with scholarships to attend high performing schools and universities. As part of the programme, structured orientation, study tours and practical leadership experience will be offered.

34. The Indigenous Higher Education Advisory Council (IHEAC) provides policy advice to the Minister to improve outcomes in higher education for Indigenous students and staff relating to their participation, progression and retention both in study and employment.

35. Some state and territory government initiatives over recent years have included:

- A NSW Department of Education and Training review of Aboriginal education in NSW (2003-2004).
- The Victorian Government's Aboriginal education policy, Yalca: A Partnership in Education and Training for the New Millenium, which supports lifelong education.
- The introduction in SA of Yurrekaityarindi, an Aboriginal decision-making model, which was introduced to ensure that Indigenous parents and community members are included in educational decision-making.
- The WA Government's Follow the Dream strategy into selected government schools, aimed at improving secondary retention of Indigenous students.
- The NT Government's comprehensive Indigenous Education Strategic Plan (2000-2004).

Rural and remote education

36. The Australian Government directly supports rural and isolated school students through the following programmes:

- Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC) Scheme is an ongoing programme which provides financial assistance to families of students who are unable to attend an appropriate government school on a daily basis because of geographical isolation. The underlying principle of the Scheme is that all Australian children should have reasonable daily

access to an appropriate government school without regard to parents' income.

- The Country Areas Programme (CAP) is an ongoing programme that provides supplementary funding to schools to cover some of the additional costs associated with schooling that result from geographic isolation. CAP funding is allocated to the State and Northern Territory government and non-government education authorities to be distributed by them in accordance with their priorities but within Australian Government guidelines. The CAP funding aims to improve the educational outcomes and opportunities of students who are educationally disadvantaged because of their geographic isolation so that their learning outcomes match those of other students. CAP funding is used for: professional development, curriculum enhancement, information and communication technology, school support, and purchase of tangible items.

- The Non-Government School-Term Hostels Programme (NGSTHP). This four year initiative, which commenced in 2005, is targeted at not-for-profit non-government school term hostels that operate principally to accommodate primary and secondary students from rural and remote areas of Australia. The objective of this Programme is to assist hostels provide a high standard of care to rural primary and secondary school students residing at the hostels.

Statistics

School attendance – primary and secondary education

School attendance is compulsory throughout Australia between the ages of 6-15 years (16 years in South Australia, Tasmania, Queensland and Western Australia). Most children start primary school at around 5 years of age. The final two years of secondary schooling generally fall outside the compulsory stage of education. Despite this, 87% of students who entered secondary school in 2001 or 2002 (depending on the state or territory of schooling) continued on to Year 11 in 2005, and 75% of students who started in secondary school in 2000 or 2001 continued to Year 12 in 2005.

Although each state and territory has developed its own approach to schooling, moves are underway across Australia to standardise core education curriculum modules (such as mathematics, science and English) and the age of commencement of students. The expectation is that these changes will then ensure that all Australian children have access to 13 years of schooling, on a comparable basis, transferable anywhere in Australia.

Schools, students and teaching staff

There were 9,623 schools operating in Australia at the time of the August 2005 schools census, of which 72.0% were government schools. There were 156,564 teaching staff (full-time, plus full-time equivalent (FTE) of part-time), employed in government schools (66.4% of all teachers) and a further 79,231 employed in non-government schools.

Table 14: Schools, Students and Teaching Staff – August 2005

	Government schools	Non-government schools			
		Catholic	Independent	Total	All schools
	%	%	%	%	'000
Schools	72.0	17.6	10.4	28.0	9.6
Students (FTE)(a)					
Males	67.7	19.7	12.6	32.3	1,709.8
Females	66.6	20.4	13.0	33.4	1,649.2
Persons	67.2	20.0	12.8	32.8	3,359.0
Teaching staff (FTE)(b)					
Males	64.4	18.1	17.5	35.6	75.5
Females	67.4	18.9	13.8	32.6	160.3
Persons	66.4	18.6	15.0	33.6	235.8

(a) Full-time students plus full-time equivalent of part-time students.
(b) Full-time teaching staff plus full-time equivalent of part-time teaching staff.

Source: ABS data available on request, National Schools Statistics Collection, 2005.

In August 2005, 3.4 million students (FTE) were attending primary and secondary schools, comprising 2.3 million (67%) in government schools and 1.1 million (33%) in

non-government schools. Between 2000 and 2005 the number of students (FTE) attending government schools decreased by 4,700 (-0.2%), while the number of students attending non-government schools increased by 103,200 (10%)

Table 15: Students (a), By category of school – August 2005

	2000 '000	2001 '000	2002 '000	2003 '000	2004 '000	2005 '000
Government schools						
Males	1,154.8	1,156.9	1,163.4	1,161.9	1,159.7	1,157.3
Females	1,105.6	1,103.0	1,105.4	1,103.1	1,100.6	1,098.3
Persons	2,260.3	2,259.9	2,268.8	2,265.0	2,260.2	2255.6
Non-government schools						
Males	501.7	512.2	524.7	534.1	543.0	552.5
Females	498.4	508.9	521.4	531.3	540.7	550.9
Persons	1,000.1	1,021.1	1,046.2	1,065.4	1,083.6	1,103.3
All schools						
Males	1,656.5	1,669.0	1,688.1	1,696.0	1,702.6	1,709.8
Females	1,604.0	1,611.9	1,626.8	1,634.3	1,641.3	1,649.2
Persons	**3,260.5**	**3,280.9**	**3,314.9**	**3,330.3**	**3,343.9**	**3,359.0**

(a) Full-time equivalent students.

Source: ABS annual data available on request, National Schools Statistics Collection.

Retention rates

Apparent retention rates are important measures of the performance of education systems and related government policies. The apparent retention rate is an estimate of the percentage of students of a given cohort who continued to a particular level or year of education. For instance, in 2005 the apparent retention rate of full-time secondary school students from Year 7/8 to Year 12 was 75.3%. As in previous years, the 2005 apparent retention rate for female students (81.0%) was higher than the corresponding rate for male students (69.9%).

Table 16 below shows apparent retention rates from Year 10 to Year 12 rather than from the commencement of secondary schooling, where attendance due to age requirements is generally compulsory. Retention rates have been calculated for full-time students, and for all students.

Table 16: Apparent Retention Rates, From Year 10 to Year 12

	2000 %	2001 %	2002 %	2003 %	2004 %	2005 %
Full-time students						
Males	69.0	70.8	72.4	72.3	72.4	71.5
Females	80.0	80.1	81.7	81.6	82.3	81.6
Persons	74.4	75.4	77.0	76.9	77.2	76.5
Total students(a)						
Males	72.1	73.9	75.7	75.1	75.1	74.0
Females	84.7	84.9	86.9	86.4	86.9	85.7
Persons	78.3	79.4	81.3	80.7	80.9	79.8

(a) Includes part-time students.

Source: ABS data available on request, National Schools Statistics Collection.

The apparent retention rate in 2005 of all students from Year 10 to Year 12 was 1.5 percentage points higher than the 2000 rate.

Table 17 below shows Year 12 completion rates of students of high Socio-Economic Status (SES), low SES, urban, rural and remote backgrounds.

Table 17: Year 12 completion rates (per cent): 1989 – 2002 (selected years)

	1991	1993	1995	1997	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
High SES (a)	79	78	77	73	76	76	74	75	76	77
Low SES (a)	63	65	61	61	63	64	63	64	63	61
Major Cities (b)	71	71	69	67	70	70	69	70	71	71
Regional (b)	68	67	62	64	67	68	67	67	66	63
Remote (b)	57	58	52	52	55	53	52	53	54	55
All students	69	69	67	66	69	69	68	69	69	68

(a) Based on the "Index of Education and Occupation" from the Australian Bureau Statistics "Socio Economic Indexes for Areas". Data from 1997 have been revised.

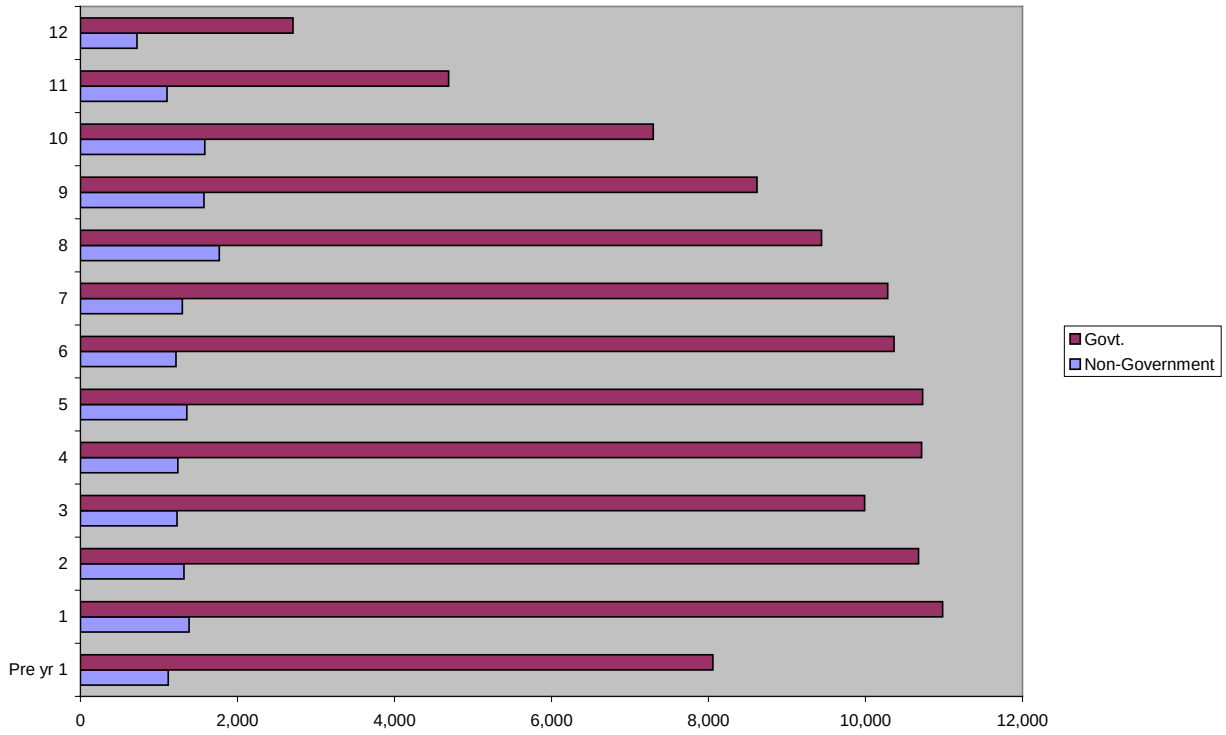
(b) Prior to 1997 based on the "Rural Remote and Metropolitan Areas Classifications" developed the Department of Primary Industry and Energy. From 1997 the geography is based on the Australian Bureau of Statistics' Australian Standard Geographical Classification's "Remoteness Structure". Source: DEST, unpublished data

Indigenous School Students

In August 2005 there were 88,592 full-time equivalent (FTE) Indigenous students attending primary schools and a further 46,505 Indigenous students (FTE) attending secondary schools. Most Indigenous students (87%) attended government schools in 2005. Of the remainder attending non-government schools, about two thirds were attending Catholic systemic schools

Graph 11 below shows a decline in the number of Indigenous school students at secondary school level, after Year 7. This decline is most marked in government schools and is due to a number of factors, such as declining retention, movement of students to non-government schools and to the difficulty in allocating a specific grade for some students. The number of Indigenous students attending non-government schools remained relatively stable across the early grades, followed by an increase in Year 8, then a moderate drop-off until Year 12.

Graph 11: Indigenous school students(a) – August 2005



(a) Full-time equivalent students

Source: ABS data available on request, National Schools Statistics Collection, 2005

The table below shows an increase in Indigenous students (FTE) attending school between 1999 and 2005, from 106,628 to 135,097 students. New South Wales and Queensland experienced the largest increases in Indigenous school student (FTE) numbers, by 9,371 and 8,559 respectively. The number of Indigenous students (FTE) attending primary and secondary schools increased in every state and territory over the period.

Between 1999 and 2005 overall growth of Indigenous school students (FTE) was 27%. With the exception of the Northern Territory, all states had growth of over 19%. The Northern Territory grew by 9.8% The number of secondary school Indigenous students (FTE) grew by 39% between 1999 and 2005, compared with 21% for primary students.

Table 18: Indigenous school students (a) by level of education – August 2005

INDIGENOUS SCHOOL STUDENTS(a), By level of education - August

	NSW	Vic.	Qld	SA	WA	Tas.	NT	ACT	Aust.
PRIMARY									
Students									
1999	20,233	3,629	20,259	4,557	11,903	2,586	9,528	513	73,208
2005	25,304	4,813	25,057	5,473	14,389	2,999	9,893	664	88,592
SECONDARY									
Students									
	10,523	1,878	9,150	1,619	4,726	1,759	3,453	312	33,420
2005	14,823	2,864	12,911	2,341	6,584	2,190	4,354	438	46,505
TOTAL									
Students									
	30,756	5,507	29,409	6,176	16,629	4,345	12,981	825	106,628
2005	40,127	7,677	37,968	7,814	20,973	5,189	14,247	1,102	135,097

(a) Full-time equivalent students.

Source: DEST, derived from the National Schools Statistics Collection.

Note for editor: - the ABS revised its figures for 1999 (and some other years) in 2006.

The retention of Indigenous students in senior secondary years has increased over the six-year period to 2005. The growth in Indigenous retention has generally been more notable than is the case for non-Indigenous students – see the table below.

The apparent retention rate for Indigenous students to Year 12 rose 4.8 percentage points from 1999 to 2005 compared with a rise of 3.4percentage points for non-Indigenous students over the same period. Nonetheless, retention of Indigenous students in secondary schools remains substantially below that for non-Indigenous students. The apparent retention rate to Year 12 was 39.5% in 2005 for Indigenous students compared with 76.6% for non-Indigenous students.

Table 19: Apparent retention rates(a), Indigenous and non-Indigenous students

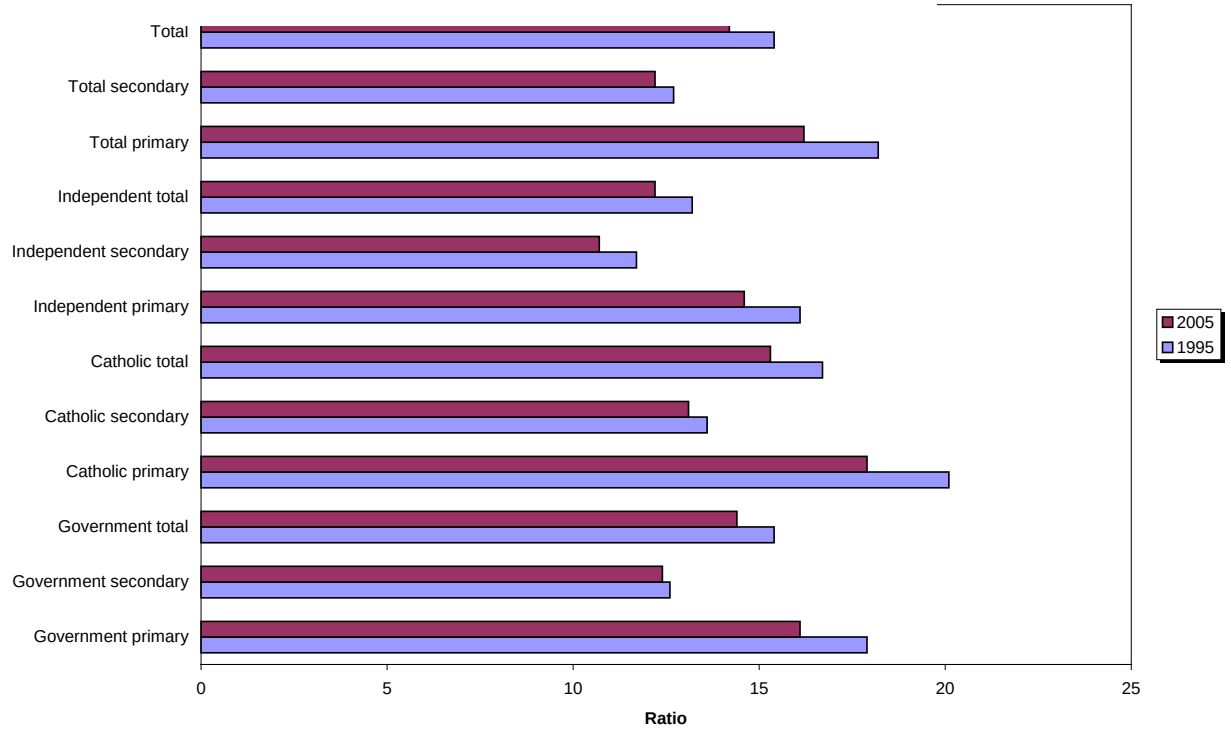
Apparent retention of students from Year 7/8(a)	1999 %	2000 %	2001 %	2002 %	2003 %	2004 %	2005 %
To Year 9							
Indigenous	93.9	95.5	96.5	97.8	96.8	97.2	98.4
Non-Indigenous	99.9	99.8	99.9	99.8	99.9	99.9	99.9
To Year 10							
Indigenous	82.0	83.0	85.7	86.4	87.2	85.8	88.3
Non-Indigenous	97.9	98.0	98.4	98.5	98.9	98.5	98.6
To Year 11							
Indigenous	56.0	53.6	56.1	58.9	61.4	61.1	62.3
Non-Indigenous	86.4	86.2	87.6	88.7	89.5	89.0	88.3
To Year 12							
Indigenous	34.7	36.4	35.7	38.0	39.1	39.8	39.5
Non-Indigenous	73.2	73.3	74.5	76.3	76.5	76.9	76.6

(a) Refers to retention from the first year of secondary school in each state..
Source: ABS data available on request, National Schools Statistics Collection.

Ratio of teachers to students

Graph 12 below shows student/teacher ratios by category of school by level in 1995 and 2005. These ratios represent the number of school students (FTE) divided by teaching staff (FTE). The most significant reduction in these ratios between 1995 and 2005 was an almost 2 percentage point decrease for primary schools - down from 18.2 students per teacher in 1995 to 16.2 in 2005. Catholic primary schools student teacher ratios fell by 2.2 percentage points, moving from 20.1 in 1995 to 17.9 in 2005. Among secondary schools, both the Catholic and Independent schools showed decreases (from 13.6 to 13.1, and 11.7 to 10.7 respectively). Government secondary schools reported a small decrease from 12.6 to 12.4 students per teacher over the same period.

Graph 12: Students to Teaching staff (a), By category of school



(a) Number of students (FTE) divided by the number of teaching staff (FTE)
Note: This graph should not be used as a measure of class size

Source: ABS data available on request, National Schools Statistics Collection

Literacy rates

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) periodically publishes average scientific, mathematical and reading literacy scores under its Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA). The 2003 PISA results for 15 year old Australian students show that Australia has performed very well, achieving a mean score in reading of 525 which is significantly above the OECD average of 494. Australia was clearly outperformed (ie the difference is statistically significant), by one country in reading literacy (Finland). Australia had the 4th highest mean score (also the same as in 2000) and the OECD has estimated that Australia ranked between 3rd and 5th among OECD countries and between 3rd and 6th among all participating countries.

Australian females achieved better reading scores than males - female 545, males 506. Both sexes achieved significantly higher than the OECD average of 494. Indigenous students in Australia achieved a score of 444, significantly below the OECD score of 494, and that of all Australian students (525)
.

Australia was also among the countries with the lowest proportions of students at the lowest level of proficiency, i.e. scoring Below Level 1, (3.6%). Of the top performing countries in reading, Finland had only 1.1%, Korea 1.4% and Canada 2.3% of their students Below Level 1.

Despite the low proportions of students (Below Level 1) in Australia relative to many other countries, it is nevertheless a concern that more than one in ten Australian students (11.8%) performed only at Level 1 or Below Level 1. For Indigenous students the proportion who achieved at these levels was almost four in ten (38%), with 15% unable to achieve even Level 1.

In reading skills, Australia had one of the lowest proportions of students, achieving at the lowest level (3.6% Below Level 1); however, it is still of concern that more than one in ten (11.8%) of students only achieved at Level 1 or below (16.5% of males, 7.1% of females and 38% of Indigenous students).[4]

Table 20: Mean Scores in Reading Literacy[5]

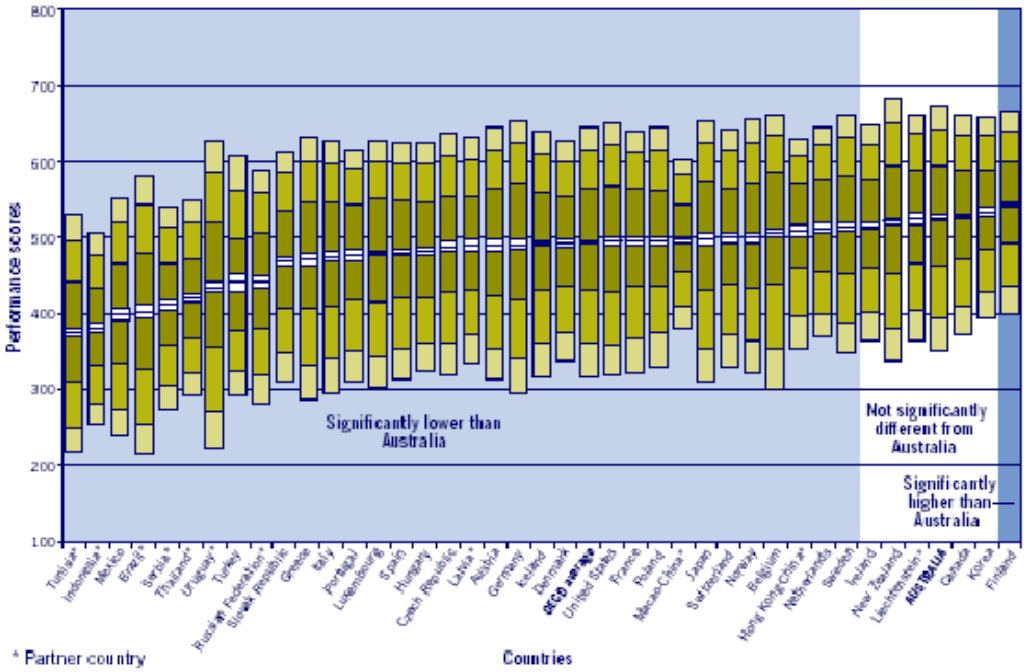
	Reading Literacy
Australia	525 (2.1)
Male	506 (2.8)
Female	545 (2.6)
Indigenous	444 (8.6)
OECD average	494 (0.6)
Top Country	543 (1.6) Finland

In Graph 13 below, each white block with the black line across it shows the best estimate of the country's mean (the middle line) and the range (the white block) within which the mean would be expected, with 95% certainty, to fall if many samples were drawn in the same way from the same population. The charts also show the distributions of results for the middle half, then; all but the highest and lowest 10 per cent; and all but the highest and lowest 5 per cent of students.

[4] Department of Education, Science and Training 2005.

[5] as above.

Graph 13: Reading Literacy- International Comparison[6]



Reports from the MCEETYA's National Report on Schooling in Australia show the vast majority of students in 2002, 2003 and 2004 met the national reading and writing benchmarks. The national literacy and numeracy benchmarks represent the minimum acceptable standards of literacy and numeracy that a student must have in order for the student to make progress at school.

However, results for Indigenous students and boys' literacy cause concern. Achievement of Indigenous students was well below that for all students, and all other sub-groups of students, in each domain and year level. In 2004 the gap between all students and Indigenous students ranged from 10 percentage points in Year 3 reading to 20 percentage points in Year 7 reading (see Table 21 below). In 2002, 2003 and 2004, boys had lower achievement than girls in reading and writing in Years 3, 5 and 7 (see Tables 21 and 22 below).

There was a significant difference between the results of students with a Language Background Other Than English (LBOTE) and all students for Year 7 reading. There were no other significant differences in reading and writing for these students.

Geolocation data, reported for the first time in 2003, shows that students in very remote regions, achieve the benchmarks at significantly lower rates than other students in other geolocations. Students in remote areas, also tended to achieve at lower rates. (see Tables 23a and 23b below). [7]

[6] Source: *PISA in **Brief** from Australia's Perspective: Highlights from the full Australian Report.* Sue Thomson, John Cresswell and Lisa De Bortoli. Camberwell: ACER.

[7] **Department of Education, Science and Training 2005.**

Table 21: Percentage of students achieving the Reading benchmark by Sub-group

READING		****Year 3***			****Year 5***			****Year 7***	
	2002	**2003**	**2004**	**2002**	**2003**	**2004**	**2002**	**2003**	**2004**
Male	90.6 ±2.2	90.8 ±2.0	91.5 ±1.8	87.2 ±1.8	86.8 ±1.8	86.6 ±1.8	86.8 ±1.0	87.1 ±1.1	89.1 ±0.9
Female	94.1 ±1.5	94.3 ±1.4	94.6 ±1.2	91.5 ±1.3	91.6 ±1.4	90.9 ±1.4	91.6 ±0.8	91.9 ±0.8	93.0 ±0.7
Indigenous	76.7 ±4.1	78.8 ±6.9	82.9 ±3.6	68.0 ±3.5	67.7 ±4.1	69.4 ±3.8	65.3 ±2.9	66.4 ±3.1	71.0 ±2.8
LBOTE	90.2 ±2.0	90.0 ±2.0	90.0 ±1.8	87.1 ±1.8	88.7 ±1.6	86.2 ±1.9	85.6 ±1.3	86.4 ±1.2	86.9 ±1.2
Australia	92.3 ± 1.7	92.4± 1.7	93.0 ±1.5	89.3 ±1.4	89.0 ±1.5	88.7 ±1.6	89.1 ±0.8	89.4 ±0.9	91.0 ±0.7

READING		****Year 3***			****Year 5***			****Year 7***	
	2002	**2003**	**2004**	**2002**	**2003**	**2004**	**2002**	**2003**	**2004**
Male	90.6 ±2.2	90.8 ±2.0	91.5 ±1.8	87.2 ±1.8	86.8 ±1.8	86.6 ±1.8	86.8 ±1.0	87.1 ±1.1	89.1 ±0.9
Female	94.1 ±1.5	94.3 ±1.4	94.6 ±1.2	91.5 ±1.3	91.6 ±1.4	90.9 ±1.4	91.6 ±0.8	91.9 ±0.8	93.0 ±0.7
Indigenous	76.7 ±4.1	78.8 ±6.9	82.9 ±3.6	68.0 ±3.5	67.7 ±4.1	69.4 ±3.8	65.3 ±2.9	66.4 ±3.1	71.0 ±2.8
LBOTE	90.2 ±2.0	90.0 ±2.0	90.0 ±1.8	87.1 ±1.8	88.7 ±1.6	86.2 ±1.9	85.6 ±1.3	86.4 ±1.2	86.9 ±1.2
Australia	92.3 ± 1.7	92.4± 1.7	93.0 ±1.5	89.3 ±1.4	89.0 ±1.5	88.7 ±1.6	89.1 ±0.8	89.4 ±0.9	91.0 ±0.7

Note: The achievement percentages reported in this table include 95% confidence intervals, for example, 80% ± 2.7%.

READING		***Year 3***			***Year 5***			***Year 7***	
	2002	**2003**	**2004**	**2002**	**2003**	**2004**	**2002**	**2003**	**2004**
Male	90.6 ±2.2	90.8 ±2.0	91.5 ±1.8	87.2 ±1.8	86.8 ±1.8	86.6 ±1.8	86.8 ±1.0	87.1 ±1.1	89.1 ±0.9
Female	94.1 ±1.5	94.3 ±1.4	94.6 ±1.2	91.5 ±1.3	91.6 ±1.4	90.9 ±1.4	91.6 ±0.8	91.9 ±0.8	93.0 ±0.7
Indigenous	76.7 ±4.1	78.8 ±6.9	82.9 ±3.6	68.0 ±3.5	67.7 ±4.1	69.4 ±3.8	65.3 ±2.9	66.4 ±3.1	71.0 ±2.8
LBOTE	90.2 ±2.0	90.0 ±2.0	90.0 ±1.8	87.1 ±1.8	88.7 ±1.6	86.2 ±1.9	85.6 ±1.3	86.4 ±1.2	86.9 ±1.2
Australia	92.3 ± 1.7	92.4± 1.7	93.0 ±1.5	89.3 ±1.4	89.0 ±1.5	88.7 ±1.6	89.1 ±0.8	89.4 ±0.9	91.0 ±0.7

Note: The achievement percentages reported in this table include 95% confidence intervals, for example, 80% ± 2.7%.

Table 22: Percentage of students achieving the Writing benchmark by Sub-group

WRITING	*Year 3*			*Year 5*			*Year 7*		
	2002	**2003**	**2004**	**2002**	**2003**	**2004**	**2002**	**2003**	**2004**
Male	91.8 ±1.8	89.9 ±2.0	90.9 ±1.8	91.5 ±1.6	92.1 +1.5	92.3 ±1.4	87.3 ±2.6	89.2 ±2.2	91.3 ±1.7
Female	95.5 ±1.1	94.7 ±1.2	95.0 ±1.2	95.7 ±0.9	96.1 ±1.1	96.2 ±0.8	94.1 ±1.4	95.2 ±1.2	95.9 ±0.9
Indigenous	77.1 ±3.5	75.2 ±4.1	76.8 ±4.3	76.4 ±3.8	79.6 ±3.8	81.7 ±3.5	71.6 ±4.8	74.4 ±4.4	78.8 ±3.8
LBOTE	95.0 ±1.3	92.3 ±1.4	92.5 ±1.2	92.1 ±1.2	92.5 ±1.2	92.6 ±1.3	89.0 ±2.4	91.0 ±2.1	92.3 ±1.8
Australia	93.6 ±1.2	92.2 ±1.5	92.9 ±1.5	93.6 ±1.1	94.1 ±1.1	94.2 ±1.1	90.7 ±1.7	92.1 ±1.7	93.6 ±1.3

Note: The achievement percentages reported in this table include 95% confidence intervals, for example, 80% ± 2.7%.

Table 23a: Percentage of students meeting the benchmarks by geolocation in 2003

	Reading			*Writing*			*Numeracy*		
	Year 3	**Year 5**	**Year 7**	**Year 3**	**Year 5**	**Year 7**	**Year 3**	**Year 5**	**Year 7**
Metro-politan	93.1 ±1.5	90.0 ±1.4	90.5 ±0.8	93.1 ±1.4	94.8 ±1.0	93.1 ±1.6	94.7 ±1.0	91.8 ±1.1	82.5 ±0.8
Provinci al	91.7 ±2.0	87.7 ±1.7	88.2 ±1.1	91.4 ±1.8	93.6 ±1.4	90.7 ±2.0	94.1 ±1.3	89.8 ±1.9	79.3 ±1.1
Remote	87.1 ±3.4	81.5 ±3.1	82.5 ±3.2	82.3 ±3.7	88.0 ±3.1	83.6 ±3.5	87.6 ±3.2	82.2 ±3.6	74.8 ±3.6
Very Remote	71.2 ±5.7	62.5 ±5.0	61.0 ±5.4	63.6 ±5.9	68.9 ±5.2	67.0 ±5.3	71.2 ±5.7	61.2 ±5.4	51.1 ±4.9

Note: The achievement percentages reported in this table include 95% confidence intervals, for example, 80% ± 2.7%.

Table 23b: Percentage of students meeting the benchmarks by geolocation in 2004

	Reading			*Writing*			*Numeracy*		
	Year 3	**Year 5**	**Year 7**	**Year 3**	**Year 5**	**Year 7**	**Year 3**	**Year 5**	**Year 7**
Metro-politan	93.6 ±1.4	89.7 ± 1.5	91.9 ±0.7	93.6 ±1.4	95.0 ±1.1	94.4 ±1.2	94.2 ±1.1	92.1 ±1.1	83.4 ±0.8
Provincial	92.2 ±1.8	87.7 ±1.8	90.1 ±0.9	92.5 ±1.8	93.9 ±1.3	92.8 ±1.5	93.7 ±1.4	90.6 ±1.5	80.2 ±1.1
Remote	90.3 ±3.2	82.9 ±3.6	83.0 ±3.0	83.4 ±4.2	87.8 ±3.1	84.4 ±3.5	87.4 ±3.7	82.0 ±3.7	73.3 ±3.4
Very Remote	78.7 ±4.6	64.2 ±5.4	63.0 ±4.9	66.9 ±5.9	70.2 ±4.6	65.8 ±5.0	71.6 ±6.2	59.1 ±4.9	50.8 ±4.9

Note: The achievement percentages reported in this table include 95% confidence intervals, for example, 80% ± 2.7%.

Table 24: Rates of literacy for Indigenous Australians under 18 years old for Years 3, 5 and 7 in 2001, 2002, 2003 and 2004.

	2001		*2002*		*2003*		*2004*	
Benchmark	**Indigenous**	**All Students**	**Indigenous**	**All Students**	**Indigenous**	**All Students**	**Indigenous**	**All Students**
Yr 3 reading	72.0 (± 4.8)	90.3 (± 2.0)	76.7 (± 4.1)	92.3 (± 1.7)	78.8 (± 6.9)	92.4 (± 1.7)	82.9 (± 3.6)	93.0 (± 1.5)
Yr 5 reading	66.9 (± 3.6)	89.8(± 1.3)	68.0 (± 3.5)	89.3 (± 1.4)	67.7 (± 4.1)	89.0 (± 1.5)	69.4 (± 3.8)	88.7 (± 1.6)
Yr 7 reading	60.1 (±3.1)	88.4 (±0.9)	65.3 (±2.9)	89.1 (±0.8)	66.4 (±3.1)	89.4 (±0.9)	71.0 (± 2.8)	91.0 (± 0.7)
Yr 3 writing	67.8 (± 4.9)	89.5 (± 2.3)	77.1 (± 3.5)	93.6 (± 1.2)	75.2 (± 4.1)	92.2 (± 1.5)	76.8 (± 4.3)	92.9 (± 1.5)
Yr 5 writing	79.9 (± 3.3)	94.0 (±1.0)	76.4 (± 3.8)	93.6 (± 1.1)	79.6 (± 3.8)	94.1 (± 1.1)	81.7 (±3.5)	94.2 (± 1.1)
Yr 7 writing	74.3 (±4.6)	92.6 (±1.5)	71.6 (±4.8)	90.7 (±1.7)	74.4 (±4.4)	92.1 (± 1.7)	78.8 (± 3.8)	93.6 (± 1.3)
Yr 3 numeracy	80.2 (±3.9)	93.9 (±1.2)	77.6 (± 3.6)	92.8 (± 1.3)	80.5 (± 3.7)	94.2 (± 1.1)	79.2 (± 4.1)	93.7 (± 1.2)
Yr 5 numeracy	63.2 (±3.7)	89.6 (± 1.3)	65.6 (± 3.7)	90.0 (± 1.3)	67.6 (± 3.9)	90.8 (± 1.2)	69.4 (± 3.9)	91.2 (± 1.2)
Yr 7 numeracy	48.6 (±2.8)	82.0 (±0.9)	51.9 (±3.0)	83.5 (±0.9)	49.3 (±2.9)	81.3 (±0.8)	51.9 (± 2.8)	82.1 (± 0.8)

Note:

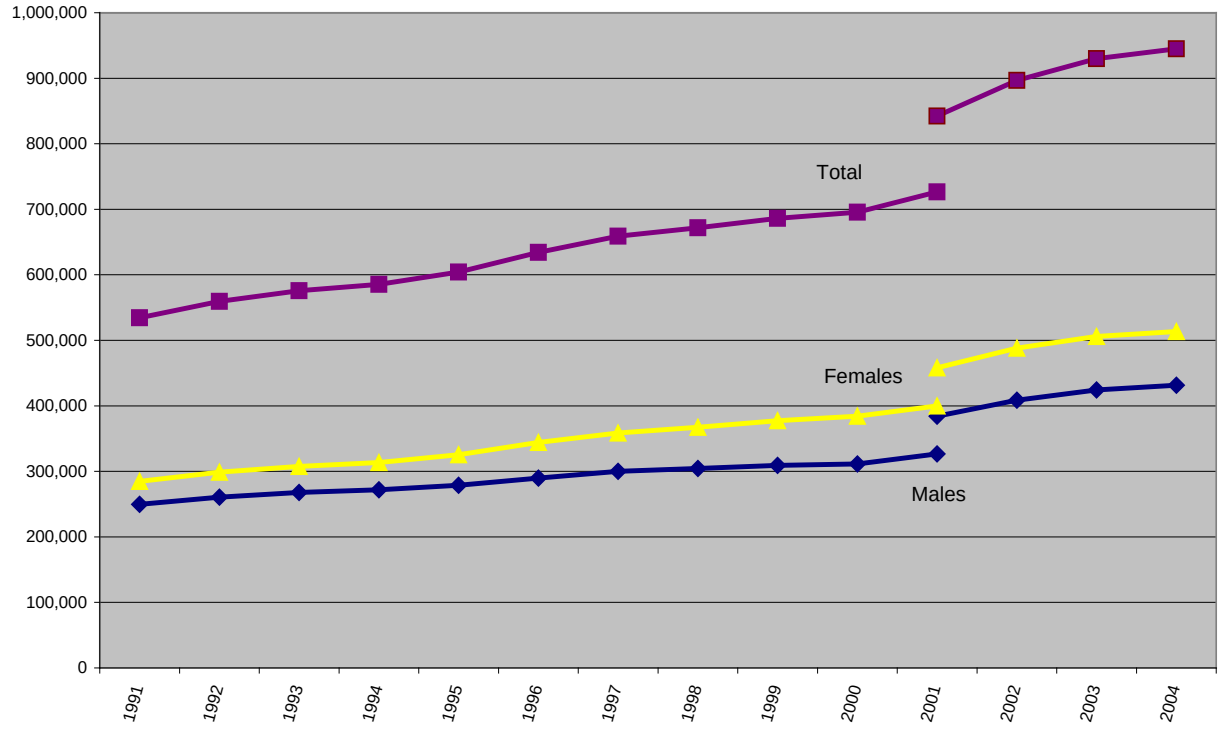
1. The achievement percentages reported in this table include 95% confidence intervals, for example, 80% ± 2.7%.
2. All Students = the total of Indigenous and non-Indigenous students who sat the test. Source: Australian National Report on Schooling 2003.

Participation in tertiary and vocational education

Graph 14 below shows the participation rates of males and females in higher education.

Graph 14: Participation in higher education by gender, 1991 – 2004[8]

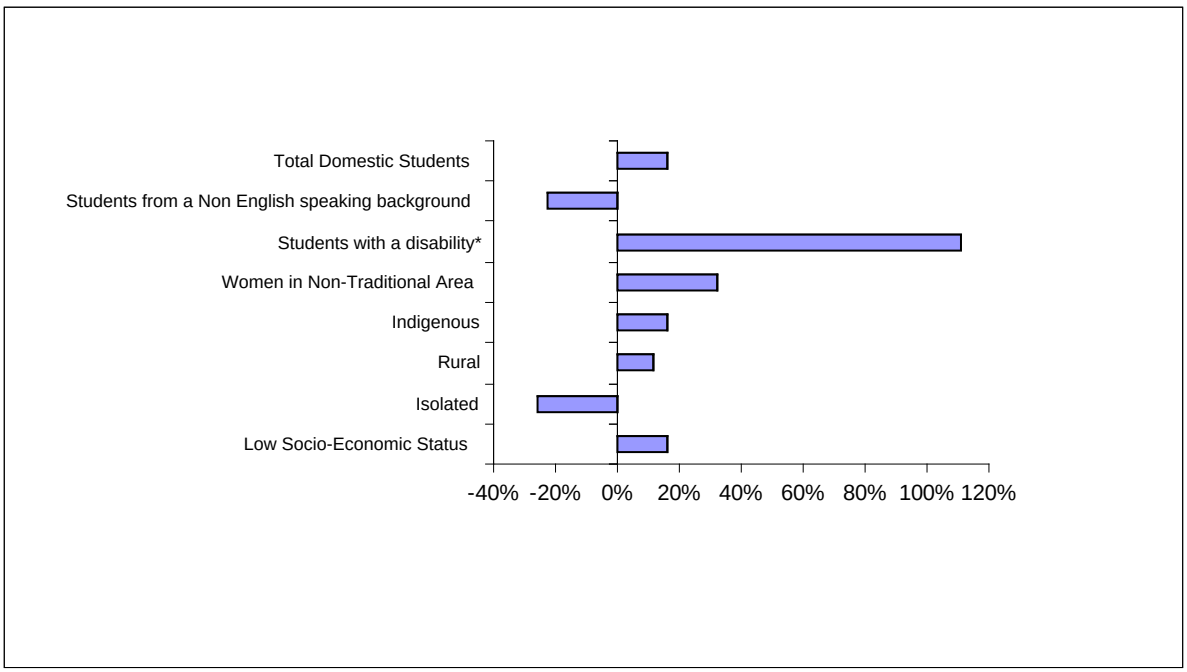
[8] There was a change in methods of data collection between 2001 and 2002 resulting in a break in series.



Source: DEST: Selected Higher Education Statistics, various years

Graph 15 below shows the growth in participation rates in higher education of women in non-traditional areas, students from low SES backgrounds, students from a LBOTE, students with a disability, Indigenous students and rural and isolated students.

Graph 15: Growth in higher education student numbers by equity group (1995 – 2004)



*1996 data is used instead of 1995 as disability status is only available from 1996 onwards

Source: DEST 2005

Table 25 below shows the participation rates in VET of male, female, urban, rural, remote, overseas, Indigenous and disabled students.

Table 25: Participation in vocational and technical education (VTE) by client groups, 2001 and 2005

	2001		2005	
	Number of students ('000)	Share of VTE	Number of students ('000)	Share of VTE
Males	857.3	51.1%	847.7	51.6%
Females	814.6	48.5%	789.5	48.1%
Major Cities*	915.0	54.5%	888.1	54.1%
Regional*	620.6	37.0%	623.1	37.9%
Remote*	47.9	2.9%	43.8	2.7%
Very Remote*	35.2	2.1%	31.1	1.9%
Indigenous	56.1	3.3%	62.7	3.8%
Students with a disability	68.5	4.1%	96.3	5.9%
TOTAL	1,679.1		1,641.3	

Source: NCVER (2006)

*Access/Remoteness Index of Australia (ARIA)

Indigenous	No. of students	Share of vet students
2003	58,087	3.37
2004	56,661	3.55
2005	62,726	3.82