



Australia

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Principles and general objectives of education

The Commonwealth of Australia is a federation of six States—New South Wales, Queensland, South Australia, Tasmania, Victoria and Western Australia—and includes two internal territories, the Australian Capital Territory and the Northern Territory. The Australian Constitution vests control of education in the states and territories. Education legislation and practice in Australia are essentially based on the principle of equality of access to all levels of education.

The Federal government's main objectives for schooling remain firstly, to see "a strengthening in the educational foundations of Australia's democratic society", and secondly, to "ensure that school education does all it can to prepare young Australians for a satisfying life and for careers in a challenging and competitive world environment." These overall objectives underpin an ongoing commitment by all governments to improved literacy and numeracy outcomes for all students and to improved pathways at the senior secondary level to ensure all young people have access to relevant and appropriate accredited education and vocational training in the post-compulsory years.

In April 1999 the State, Territory and Federal Ministers of Education, meeting in Adelaide, endorsed new National Goals for Schooling in the Twenty-first Century. The Adelaide Declaration reflects a commitment by governments at all levels to set 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. (Commonwealth Department of Education, 2001).

Current educational priorities and concerns

The demands of a technological society are for a highly educated and trained workforce, capable of continued learning throughout their working lives. Quite separate and different demands arise from the requirement for a participative society, capable of reaching consensus among the complex claims of economic productivity, environmental sustainability, national and world security and individual and group demands for rights and social justice. Australia recognizes the need for emphasis in education on social responsibility, on individual development, on the development of



a more flexible workforce and on enhancement of the concept of life-long learning. A significant issue throughout the country in recent years has been the concept of preparation for citizenship and for knowledgeable participation in civic affairs.

Since the early 1990s, there has been increased concern with the links between employment and education. Government policies at all levels have been concerned with meeting the changing employment needs and the requirement for a “productive work-force”. These requirements include the need for schools to provide a strong education foundation for all, plus the capacity and the desire to continue learning. Changes include curriculum reform, new approaches in pedagogy and the introduction of new information technology.

Clients of education and training now seek work-based or work-related learning rather than classroom-based approaches. For this to work with maximum effectiveness there must be pathways between schools, vocational education and training and higher education. This will require a much more flexible association between these areas which now operate as separate sectors.

Lifelong learning is particularly relevant to vocational education and training (VET) where there is a recognition that past distinctions between education, training and work are becoming irrelevant. VET now increasingly adopts approaches which integrate work, skill development and learning, with the focus being on competency-based training and learning which is under the control of the client rather than the education and training provider. Lifelong learning has also had an impact on institutional change in the higher education sector.

Key elements of the training reforms have been the implementation of a competency-based approach to training, the re-organization of entry-level training arrangements and the provision of structured training in the workplace. The competency-based approach to training focuses on the outcomes of what a person can do in the work situation as a result of training.

States and Territories have collaborated with the Federal government to endorse a number of national policies which have implications for the role of schools in relation to humanistic, ethical, cultural and international dimensions of education. These include:

- the National Policy for the Education of Girls in Australian Schools and its National Action Plan 1993-97;
- the National Strategy on Violence Against Women;
- the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Policy;
- the National Policy on Languages in Australian Society;
- the National Ecologically Sustainable Development Strategy;
- the National Agenda for Multicultural Australia;



- Civics and Citizenship Education Programme;
- National School English Literacy Survey;
- Quality Schooling Programme;
- National Equity Programme for Schools;
- National Professional Development Programme;
- National School English Literacy Survey.

As mentioned, in April 1999 agreement was reached on a new set of National Goals for Schooling in the Twenty-first Century (the “Adelaide Declaration”). The new goals focus on improving the educational outcomes of all students, reflecting the right of all young Australians to aspire to success in learning, and to have the knowledge, skills and understanding essential to their effective participation in Australian civic life. The focus on learning outcomes means that progress towards the national goals is able to be measured, providing the potential for improved public accountability and reporting on educational outcomes at all levels.

Over recent years, and within the context of the National Goals, the Federal government has promoted and supported policies and programmes of national significance aimed at addressing key aspects of school education, which have implications for the achievement of the nation’s broader social and economic goals. The Federal government has also played a strategic role in promoting national consistency and coherence in the provision of schooling across Australia, including in the area of national reporting.

The Federal government’s highest priority in school education is to improve the literacy and numeracy skills of all young Australians, in the belief that the attainment of appropriate literacy and numeracy skills is a prerequisite for achievement in all subsequent education and training and is critical to successful participation in the labour market. Other Federal government priorities in school education include:

- Assisting young people’s transition from school to work by ensuring an increased focus on VET in the senior secondary curriculum, and supporting the provision of options to accommodate the interests and abilities of all students, particularly those who do not wish to proceed to higher education studies. Nearly 40% of all senior secondary students now participate in some form of VET programmes as part of their senior secondary studies.
- Supporting improved learning outcomes across the whole of schooling, including through the enhancement of teacher and principal development and professionalism.



- Helping ensure that educationally disadvantaged students have access to and participate in school education with a view to maximising their educational outcomes.
- Accelerating the improvement of the educational outcomes of Indigenous school students, so that the level of outcomes of these students is similar to the levels achieved by other Australian students.
- Supporting the right of parents to choose the educational environment which best suits the needs of their children.
- Supporting programs to promote other national priorities, notably information technology, civics and citizenship education, the teaching and learning of Asian languages, and drug education.

The Federal government has made improving literacy and numeracy standards an important national priority. The government has pursued this agenda through working with States and Territories to establish national standards (benchmarks) and insisting student performance against these standards be publicly reported. To achieve the National Goals, all Education Ministers have agreed to the National Literacy and Numeracy Plan, which seeks to ensure that all students attain at least the essential literacy and numeracy skills they require to make progress in their schooling. In April 2000, the Federal government announced a Numeracy Research and Development Initiative. This initiative provides A\$7million nationally under the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies and Projects Programme to boost research and development that will lead to improved numeracy outcomes. The initiative will ensure that key priority areas for numeracy education receive focus. Projects at the national level will provide support for effective numeracy teaching and learning. Education authorities will also be invited to undertake projects in the key priority areas.

Both the Federal government and the State and Territory governments have had in place a range of policies and strategies with the primary objectives of improving educational outcomes for Indigenous Australians. The National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Policy (AEP) was agreed to by the Federal government and the States and Territories in 1989 and reaffirmed in 1995. Most recently, in July 2000, the MCEETYA issued a National Statement of principles and standards and an action framework for more culturally inclusive and educationally effective schooling for Australia's Indigenous peoples in the Twenty-first Century. The Principles acknowledge the capacity of all young Indigenous people to reach their full potential in school and the role of Indigenous parents as the first educators of their children. The Standards are described in terms of the rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and their teachers and education workers to access the same level of government services as other Australians and to achieve equitable and appropriate educational outcomes.

Despite some progress over recent years, Indigenous Australians show markedly lower levels of literacy and numeracy at primary school, have far higher rates of absenteeism and truancy, are much less likely to continue their education beyond compulsory years and are less likely to achieve a meaningful post-school qualification. The results of the 1999 national literacy benchmark exercise show that



across Australia, 66.1% of Indigenous students attained the national benchmark in reading. This was some 20 percentage points below the figure for all Australians. To improve educational outcomes for Indigenous students, the Prime Minister launched the Indigenous Literacy and Numeracy Strategy in March 2000.

A more recent initiative has been the Australian Government's Agenda for Schools – *Achievement Through Choice and Opportunity* which focuses on a range of school education issues including national consistency, managing poorly performing schools, improving feedback to parents, teaching issues, and values and safety. There have also been a range of other recent initiatives in schools including measures to improve the physical fitness of school students, inclusion of Catholic schools in a uniform system of funding of private schools (based on the socioeconomic characteristics of the school community) and a number of youth transition initiatives and pilots.

In November 2003 Ministers responsible for Training across Australia endorsed *Australia's National Strategy for Vocational Education and Training 2004-2010-Shaping our Future*. This national strategy is a commitment by the Australian, State and Territory Governments to continue to work in partnership with industry, providers and other stakeholders to develop the national VET system. A *National Skills Shortages Strategy* was launched in April 2004, to address skills shortages in critical industries throughout Australia. The strategy was developed since skill shortages, particularly in the traditional trade areas, are an ongoing concern for industry and governments.

In recent times, the focus for higher education has been reform of the system, to improve funding arrangements and to ensure Australia's universities maintain their high standards and remain responsive. There have also been reforms to address teaching in universities, as well as a strengthening of commitment to research. *Backing Australia's Ability: An Innovation Action Plan for the Future* is an integrated five-year package (released in January 2001) designed to support the essential ingredients of the science and innovation system, including the uptake of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) in the education and training sector.

Overall, the main objectives of current and forthcoming reforms across all educational sectors are to promote quality (especially in terms of consistency and relevance), accessibility, choice, flexibility and sustainability. Principal characteristics include adopting a more holistic approach, for example in terms of a whole-of-government strategy or cross-agency collaboration, in recognition of the fact that education cuts across many facets of life. At the same time there has also been an emphasis on promoting control and choice for the individual. Both of these characteristics have been especially apparent in reforms aimed at improving educational outcomes for Indigenous students. (DEST, 2004).

Laws and other basic regulations concerning education

State governments have their own **Education Acts** to make provision for education. These were mostly initiated in the 1870-80 period, the commencement of compulsory education. The Federal government has some constitutional capacity to influence



education policy through specific sections in legislation relating to tied grants and benefits to students, as well as through the external affairs power which enables the Federal government to enter into agreements with other countries.

The Federal government, in co-operation with State and Territory governments, has played an increasing role in promoting equity and an education that reflects the government's social justice commitments. Some value perspectives within schooling, including the curriculum, are supported by legislation. In particular, the **Racial Discrimination Act** (1975), the **Sex Discrimination Act** (1984), the **Affirmative Action Act** (1986) and the **Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Act** (1986) protect the rights of all Australians against unfair treatment on the basis of sex, race, marital status, pregnancy and family and career responsibilities. Recent amendments to the Sex Discrimination Act extend the sexual harassment provisions to outlaw sexual harassment of students and staff by adult students in education institutions. Provisions against sexual harassment by staff already existed under the Act.

In December 2003, the Australian Parliament passed the **Higher Education Support Act 2003** (HESA), designed to give effect to a higher education reform package, *Our Universities: Backing Australia's Universities Future*. The reform package is based on an integrated policy framework incorporating four foundation principles of sustainability, quality, equity and diversity.

Legislation requires that all children between the prescribed ages of 6 and 15 years (in Tasmania until 16 years) must attend either a government school or some other educational programme approved by the government. In recent years, there has been significant growth in the home education movement, permitting parents to apply for approval to educate their children at home.

Administration and management of the education system

The key national body is the **Ministerial Council for Education, Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs** (MCEETYA). Commonwealth, state and territory ministers meet biannually to consider issues of mutual interest and to co-ordinate collaborative activity.

The MCEETYA represents the forum of national co-operation in schooling. This new amalgamated council replaced the former Australian Education Council at the beginning of 1994. It is the ministerial forum for national collaboration in policy development and implementation relating to schooling. In its new form, its purview covers the contexts of tertiary education, training, employment and youth culture. Ministers whose portfolios include school education represent both government and non-government schooling in their jurisdiction.

The MCEETYA is highly consultative in its operation. It works closely with the **National Catholic Education Commission** (NCEC) and the **National Council of Independent Schools Associations** (NCISA), and regularly consults with: parents through their peak organizations - the **Australian Council of State School Organizations** (ACSSO) and the **Australian Parents Council** (APC); teachers



through the **Australia Education Union (AEU)**; the **Independent Teachers Federation of Australia (ITFA)**; and the business sector.

Related to the Ministerial Council, although separately constituted, are two national research and development companies receiving a measure of funding from Commonwealth and state/territory ministers for education. Both facilitate and manage co-operative initiatives in school education: the **Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER)**, founded in 1930; and the **Curriculum Corporation**, which commenced operation in 1990 in terms of the AEC agreement of April 1989 to work co-operatively in curriculum development.

State and territory governments have the constitutional and major financial responsibility for school education. Each state and territory determines policies and practices through its Minister, the **Department of Education** and the delegated responsibility given to individual schools on matters such as curriculum, student assessment, teacher employment and professional development, as well as resource allocation and guidelines for its use.

The Federal government has no direct role in the administration of school education. It does, however, have an important role in co-operation with both state/territory and non-government school authorities, in identifying national priorities, and developing strategies that will enable successful implementation of agreed programmes. The **Commonwealth Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST)** supports the government's commitment to shaping a better future for all Australians through learning, science and innovation.

In addition, the Commonwealth has responsibilities for the provision of financial assistance to students and for Australia's international relations in education, and has a shared responsibility for schooling in external territories. A summary of the respective roles and responsibilities of the Australian and State/Territory governments is shown below:

Sector	Policy	Government funding	Administration & delivery
Schools			
Government	Shared	Mainly States/Territories (85–90%)	States/Territories
Non-government	Shared	Mainly Commonwealth (70–75%)	Non-government school authorities
Vocational education and training	Shared	Mainly States/Territories	Mainly States/Territories
Higher education	Shared	Commonwealth	Autonomous universities (within agreed policy framework)

Source: DEST, 2004.

Generally, states and territories announce their priorities for schooling each year in the context of a strategic plan or similar documents. These priorities become



the key elements in system-wide planning, and guide schools, district or regional offices and the central office of the Department directorates in their annual planning, application of budgets and in the monitoring of programmes. This direction is usually paralleled and given a special flavour by the authorities administering non-government schooling. Common themes of change management, accountability, quality improvement, and learning outcomes infuse all educational priority statements. However, as with many aspects of schooling and its administration, states and territories vary in the emphasis given to particular expressions of priorities.

At the national level, the **Australian National Training Authority** (ANTA) was established in 1992 by the Commonwealth, State and Territory Heads of Government as a national planning, funding and coordination body to consolidate a national vocational education and training (VET) system. The establishment of ANTA was a significant development in the progress towards a national VET system which would bring together State and Territory VET systems to develop cooperative national strategies. Recently the Prime Minister announced that, from 1 July 2005, the responsibilities and functions of the ANTA would be transferred to the DEST. In signing the new *2005–08 Commonwealth-State Agreement for Skilling Australia's Workforce*, the Australian Government and all States and Territories have also committed their support for the new 'Framework for a new National Training System' which was developed after consultations with business, industry, providers and governments.

In late 1993, the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) established a review of Commonwealth/State service provision. Amongst the objectives there was one concerned with "the collection and publication of data to allow benchmarking of comparisons of efficiency." The scope of the review was expected to cover a number of areas of provision including school education, health and community services. An immediate priority was awarded to the development of outputs and outcomes for government school education. A COAG Schools Working Group was set up comprising representatives from all state school education systems and the Commonwealth, its key task being to develop nationally agreed performance indicators and detailed definitions of these indicators for the government school sector.

The sub-programme for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples is a part of the total framework of the **National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Policy** (AEP), agreed to by all State and Territory governments in 1989 and reaffirmed in 1995. The AEP has twenty-one agreed national goals to achieve equity in education by: (i) involving Indigenous community members in educational decision-making; (ii) providing equality of access to educational services; (iii) raising the rates of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's educational participation to those of all Australians; and (iv) achieving equitable and appropriate educational outcomes.

The **National Institute for Quality Teaching and School Leadership** was established in 2004 and will complement arrangements to support and strengthen teaching and school leadership already in place in various State and Territory government and non-government education authorities. The National Institute will have the following functions: professional standards development and ensuring



accreditation of leaders and teachers; professional learning for school leaders and classroom teachers, through quality assessed and accredited teacher preparation and professional learning; research and communication; and promotion of the profession.

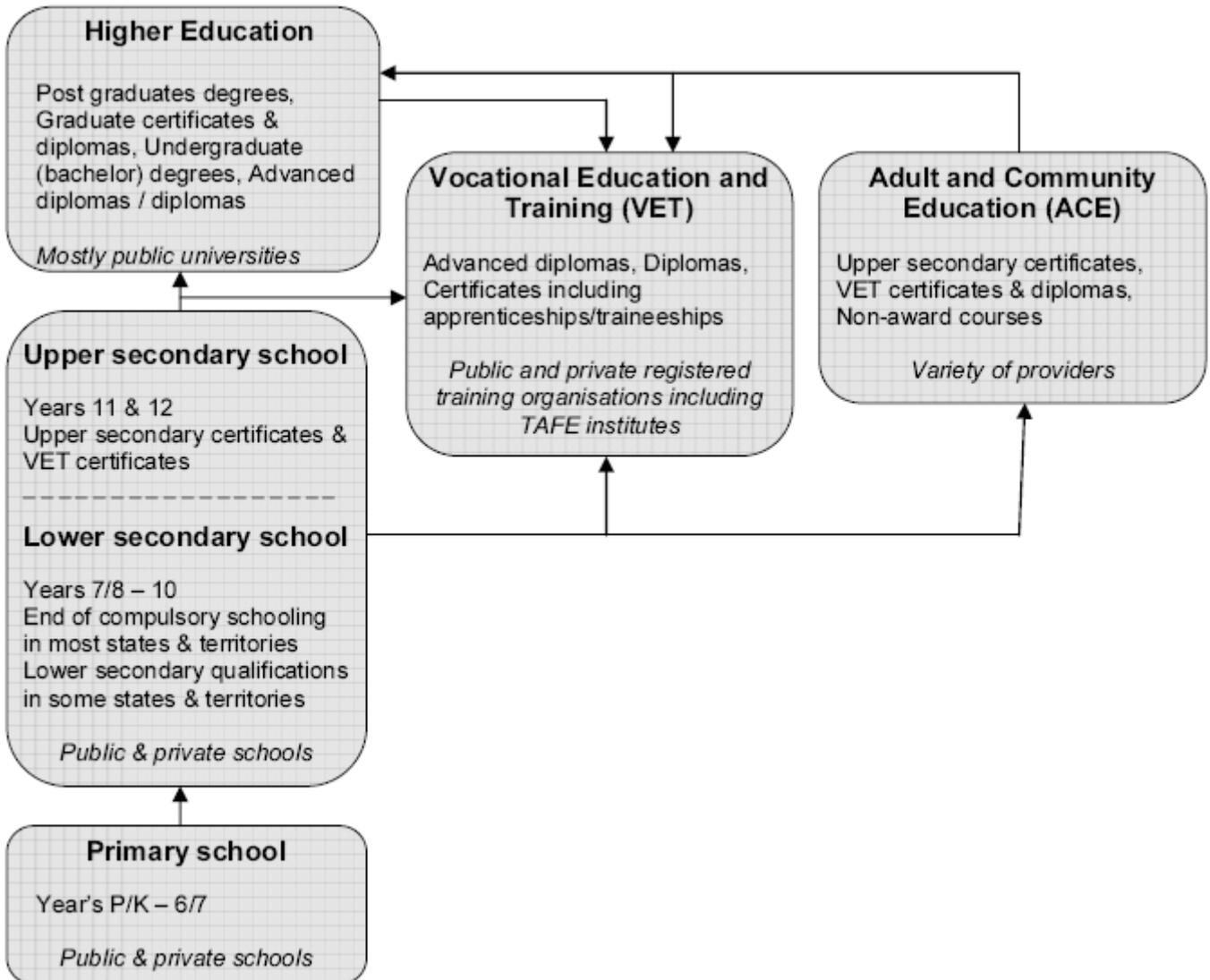
In all Australian states, there has been a significant devolution of responsibilities to the individual schools from the central department. Schools generally now have more scope for initiative in many significant areas: internal and class organization; student admission; teaching approaches; methods of assessment; discipline; community relations; etc. Many of the previous mechanisms adopted at the state level for the control and supervision of schools have been dismantled, to be replaced by much less intrusive quality control measures. Professional teacher associations and parent associations have direct influence in the implementation and administration of learning and teaching in schools.

Structure and organization of the education system

Three basic patterns characterize the structure of primary and secondary schooling in Australia, as shown in the tables below. They have evolved historically and the inherent organizational differences can cause problems of adjustment and continuity for an increasingly mobile school population.



Australia: structure of the education system



Australia: structure of primary and secondary schooling by state

School Year Level	State		
	NSW, VIC, TAS, ACT	SA, NT	QLD, WA
12*	Secondary	Secondary	Secondary
11*			
10			
9			
8			
7			
6	Primary	Primary	Primary
5			
4			
3			
2			
1			
Pre-year 1*	Kindergarten (NSW, ACT) Preparatory (VIC, TAS)	Reception (SA) Transition (NT)	Pre-primary (WA)

Note: (*) Non compulsory, excluding Tasmania for pre-year 1. NSW: New South Wales; Vic: Victoria; Tas: Tasmania; ACT: Australian Capital Territory; SA: South Australia; NT: Northern Territory; Qld: Queensland; WA: Western Australia.

Pre-school education

In most states and territories, children start primary school at around the age of 5 by enrolling in a preparatory or kindergarten year.

Primary education

Children continue in primary school for six or seven years, depending upon the state in which they live, and then move to secondary school, generally around the age of 12. All government primary schools and the great majority of non-government primary schools are co-educational.

Secondary education

The length of secondary education varies, being either five or six years depending upon the state or territory concerned. Most government secondary schools are co-educational, but within the private sector there are a significant number of single-sex schools and colleges. A Senior Certificate of Education is awarded after completion of the final two years of secondary school. Depending on their chosen career path, senior secondary students can also study vocational subjects towards Certificates I-IV (see



below), and go on to a vocational and training institution to gain further specific industry skills and knowledge. Some schools also issue or give credit towards Certificates I-IV.

The articulation of secondary schooling with Technical and Further Education (TAFE) and higher education is increasingly a matter being addressed by government and educational authorities. Recent developments aimed at providing multiple pathways through education, training and employment include greater attention to vocational education at the secondary school level, the provision of courses jointly delivered by secondary schools and TAFE, and some trialling of credit transfer arrangements. Vocational education and training (VET) institutions award certificates (Levels I-IV), diplomas and advanced diplomas. Diplomas/advanced diplomas are also awarded by universities; most of them, however, are issued in the vocational education and training sector. Some VET institutions have agreements with certain universities that give students with diplomas and advanced diplomas credit towards bachelor's degrees. The number of credits received depends on the subjects covered in the course and the agreements in force.

Generally speaking, Certificate I takes four to six months to complete; Certificate II takes six to eight months; Certificate III takes one year or longer, depending on the industry; and Certificate IV takes one year to eighteen months. A diploma takes eighteen months to two years to complete, and an advanced diploma takes two to three years.

The most common qualification awarded by universities and other higher education institutions is the bachelor's degree (a minimum of three years of study). A bachelor's degree with honours takes an additional year. Honours may also be granted where outstanding achievement is recorded in a bachelor's degree course of four or more years. Graduate certificates (six months of study) or graduate diplomas (one year of study) are also available in many subjects providing vocational skills in a specific area. Students may also enter both these post-graduate courses after completing an advanced diploma. A master's degree takes either one year after a bachelor's degree with honours or two years after a bachelor's degree. The length of a doctoral degree may vary considerably, but typically requires three years of study.

Schooling is compulsory from 6 to 15 years of age (16 in Tasmania), and all states and territories working with the Commonwealth engage in strategies to encourage young people to stay at school.

All states and territories other than Tasmania provide a four-term school year. The first term commences at the end of January and the year generally ends between 13 and 20 December. Tasmania has a three-term arrangement with a later starting date, often up to mid-February, and an end date of around 20 December.

The number of school days can vary from year to year and varies from state to state, with the general range being 200 to 209 days per year.

TAFEs and universities operate on a semester system, with opening times determined by their governing authorities, the general view being that a set of reasonably common dates across Australia is advantageous.

The financing of education

The major responsibility for funding government schools lies with the State and Territory governments, which provide about 90% of schools' running costs. The Federal government contributes approximately 10% of government school running costs and almost 35% of non-government school funding.

The Federal government contributes to the funding of almost all higher education institutions, and public institutions receive a significant proportion of their funding from this source. The majority of students at publicly funded institutions contribute partially to the cost of their studies through the Higher Education Contribution Scheme (HECS). Increasingly, however, public higher education institutions are financing operations through various commercial activities and by attracting full-fee paying students, primarily from overseas.

Federal government funding for VET is provided to State and Territory training authorities through the Australian National Training Authority (ANTA). The States and Territories have primary responsibility for VET: they provide two-thirds of the funding and have all of the regulatory responsibility for the sector. They are also the 'owners' of the network of public Technical and Further Education (TAFE) institutes. Through the provision of funding, the Federal government is able to influence the VET sector and it does so with particular regard to its broader responsibilities for the national economy. Apart from this financial role, the Federal government plays a central role in VET policy and programmes. In recent years, that role has focused increasingly on promoting national consistency and coherence in the provision of VET and the development of a more demand driven and responsive system.

Since 1973, Federal support for non-government schools has been provided on a needs basis. The Education Resources Index (ERI), a measure of a school's resources, is the mechanism which was used to assess the relative needs of non-government schools since 1985. It measured need by comparing the income a school generates on its own behalf with a standard level of resources (based on government school per student costs). A Review of the ERI commenced in February 1997 following criticisms from the non-government schools sector that it was complex, inequitable and discouraged private investment in education. The Review, which concluded at the end of 1998, found that the ERI was no longer sustainable as a basis for assessing need for Federal funding of non-government schools.

In 2001, the Federal government introduced a new approach to assessing the need of non-government schools for Federal recurrent funding based on the relative socio-economic status (SES) of the school community. The SES approach is a simple, transparent and objective measure, based on independent data that are consistent for all schools and which provide a better reflection of the capacity of communities to provide financial support for their schools. The new SES funding arrangements will give low income families even greater access to the schools of their choice, encourage greater private investment in education and provide higher levels of funding for the neediest schools.



New accountability arrangements for Federal government schools funding, linked to national performance measures and targets, focus strongly on improving student learning outcomes in the most important areas of schooling. Under the States Grants (Primary and Secondary Education Assistance) Act 2000, passed by Parliament at the end of 2000, all education authorities are required, as a condition of receiving Federal schools funding from 2001, to make a commitment to the National Goals for Schooling in the Twenty-first Century. Authorities are also called on as a condition of funding to make a commitment to achieve any performance measures, including targets, incorporated in the legislation. These commitments form part of the funding agreements between the Federal government and each authority, and apply to both government and non-government systems and schools.

Reflecting increased rates of participation, real total expenditure (public and private) on education in Australia has risen considerably since the early 1980s. In 1997/98, total expenditure on education was A\$25.313 billion (in 1989-90 prices), some 1.5 times higher than in 1980/81 (A\$16.253 billion) (measured on a cash basis). In 1999/2000, total expenditure on education (measured on an accruals basis and hence not directly comparable) was A\$32.407 billion (in 1989-90 prices).

The composition of expenditure on education has shifted since the 1980s. The share of private expenditure fell until the late 1980s from which point it rose. The increase in the share of private expenditure since the late 1980s reflects the introduction of the HECS in 1988 under which students in public higher education institutions were required to pay a contribution to the costs of their study, and changes to HECS in 1996 to increase student contributions. In addition, there has been a continuing slow drift of students from the government to non-government school sector.

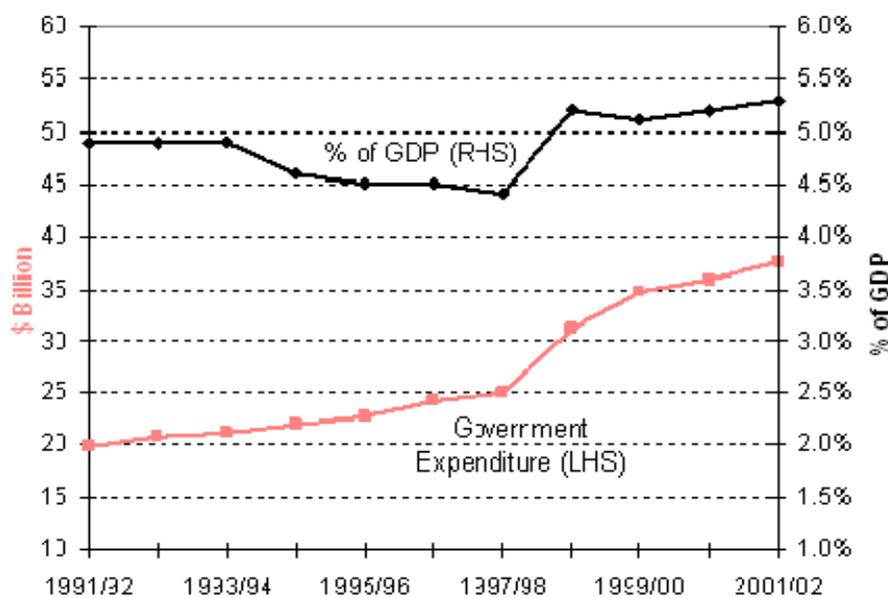
In 1999-2000, public expenditure on education was 5.4% of GDP, with private education spending was estimated at 1.5% of GDP. An estimated 612,100 persons were employed in the education sector, representing 6.9% of the civilian workforce. Primary and secondary education comprised 54% of total operating expenses on education, university education 28%, and technical and further education 10%. Total operating expenses include depreciation of fixed assets, but do not include cash payments for expenditure on non-financial assets, a component of the broader financial statements. The major beneficiary of Commonwealth grants (both current and capital) was primary and secondary education, receiving 59% of the total granted (both current and capital) for education. Another 27% of Commonwealth grants for education was directed to universities. Pre-school, primary, secondary, and other special education expenses were largely met by State, Territory and local governments.

All States and Territories charge most students some form of administration fee for VET courses. This varies according to the type of course and its duration. Nationally, in 2000 around 4% of recurrent revenue for VET institutions was provided by student fees and charges. Another 11% was received as fee-for-service revenue from full-fee paying overseas clients, employers and other individuals or organizations.

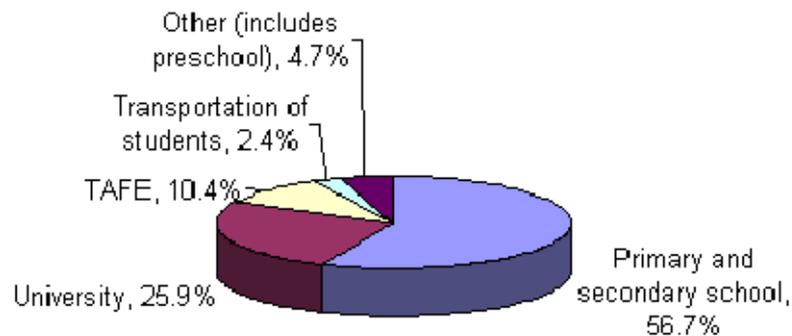
In addition to government funding, higher education institutions receive payments from students who are required to contribute to the cost of their education through the HECS, and from other fee paying students. Higher education fees and charges have increased in importance in recent years. In 1999, 19% of operating revenue was raised from HECS, while other fees and charges accounted for a further 18% of income. These fees and charges included A\$79 million (representing just over half of the fee income) from fee-paying overseas students. Some institutions rely more heavily than others on fees paid by overseas students. For example, the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology University and the Curtin University of Technology in Western Australia received some 22% and 21%, respectively, of their revenue from fee-paying overseas students. This is above the overall national average of 7.3%.

Education expenditure has risen as a proportion of Gross Domestic Product (GDP), from 4.9% in the early 1990s to 5.3% of GDP in 2001-02. In 2001-02, total expenditure on education totalled A\$37.5 billion.

Government expenditure on education: total and as a proportion of GDP, 1991-92 to 2001-02



Total government expenditure on education, 2001-02



Source: DEST, 2004.

The educational process

Constitutional responsibility for curriculum matters rests solely with individual State and Territory governments. Decision-making is influenced, however, by nationally agreed policies and directions as well as by government legislation in relation to equity matters and Federal government funding policy in relation to strategic initiatives such as indigenous education, literacy and numeracy, civics and citizenship, and drugs education.

At the national level Ministers with responsibility for education, employment, training, and youth affairs meet annually to review current issues, trends and initiatives and to formulate new policy in relation to curriculum and other educational matters. The Ministers, through the MCEETYA, commission work on a range of initiatives, which in most cases, is jointly funded by individual governments according to an agreed formula. Task forces and working groups undertake this work on behalf of Ministers and report to them formally at Council or out-of-session. Additional work is also undertaken through regular meetings of State and Territory education system chief executive officers. Ministerial responsibility extends to both government and non-government schools and, in accordance with this, the MCEETYA has established a range of consultative mechanisms and extended membership of its working parties and committees to include the major national bodies representing the non-government sector through the National Catholic Education Commission and the National Council of Independent Schools Associations. Regular consultation also takes place with peak national bodies representing parents, teachers, business, industry and other key community stakeholders.

Within each State and Territory, Ministers, departments, statutory authorities and individual schools determine policies and practices about curriculum. In some States and Territories decision-making in relation to curriculum matters is the direct responsibility of the Chief Executive of the Education Department, while in others that responsibility resides with the Minister through a statutory body such as a Board of Studies or Curriculum Council. In the compulsory years of schooling, the curriculum is based upon the eight key learning areas set out in the National Goals for



Schooling in the Twenty-first Century, namely: the arts; English; health and physical education; languages other than English; mathematics; science; studies of society and environment; and technology.

The freedom to select, interpret and devise the day-to-day curriculum varies from State to State within certain mandated requirements relating to learning outcomes and the needs of particular groups of learners. While all States and Territories have adopted an outcomes-based framework approach to curriculum planning and delivery, approaches to choice of content vary. In some States teachers select content using illustrative support material as a guide, while in others the process is more prescriptive, selection being based on broad syllabi that set out descriptions of content for teachers to follow.

At post-compulsory level, the senior secondary curriculum leading up to the Year 12 certificate is highly centralized under boards of studies responsible for curriculum and assessment. In most cases, a mixture of central and school-based assessments is required based on prescribed courses. The training sector uses a competency-based curriculum, some of which is being taken up in senior secondary schooling.

All States and Territories have authorities whose responsibilities include course accreditation, course advice and student assessment. Some of these authorities focus on the senior secondary years only, while others are responsible for syllabus and course advice from primary through to senior secondary. In general, school education is very much based on a learner-centred approach to curriculum development and pedagogy. One of the key principles underpinning the frameworks that have been developed in recent years is a commitment to ensure that teaching and learning programmes reflect the diversity of students' needs and interests, while at the same time ensuring that common and agreed learning outcomes are able to be achieved. Some schools may choose to take on a specific curriculum focus such as aquaculture, environmental education, languages other than English, learning technologies, music, sport, or visual and performing arts, acting as a model of professional practice at either a local network or State level. In such cases, schools would typically be required to undergo a selection process to achieve this status. In terms of co-curricular or extra curriculum offerings, activities ranging from various sports to music, debating or chess are available at most schools. At all levels, including senior secondary, camps and excursions based on aspects of the curriculum are also offered as optional extras. Parental permission is required for student involvement in such activities. Many non-governmental schools are denominational and, as such, provide religious education as part of their curricular programme.

At the national level, decision-making in relation to curriculum matters is supported by research undertaken on behalf of Ministers through agencies such as the Australian Research Council, universities and associated research centres. Federal, State and Territory governments responsible for education also commission research that is undertaken within their own jurisdictions either collectively or on an individual basis. As part of an ongoing commitment to quality improvement and accountability, education systems conduct regular reviews of their curriculum and assessment processes. These may occur either as formal exercises involving major system-wide consultation or informally through school-based quality improvement mechanisms.



For example, most states and territories are in the process of revising, or have recently completed revising their curriculum frameworks, within their own set timelines. A key feature of curriculum development and renewal in the Australian context is the support given to classroom-based research and associated teacher professional development. As part of professional development programmes, schools and teachers are supported to undertake research based on the specific needs and interests of their students and the local school community. The outcomes of such research are typically disseminated to other schools through professional networks and may be used to inform system-wide curriculum development. Often such programmes are run in conjunction with, or contracted out to, teacher professional associations.

The National Goals provide a common and agreed framework for the development of outcomes-based curriculum in the compulsory years of schooling. Following on from the development of national statements and profiles in the early 1990s, as mentioned most States and Territories have revised or are in the process of revising their curriculum frameworks. Western Australia released its new K-12 Curriculum Framework in 1998 along with Student Outcome Statements as part of an overall Outcomes and Standards Framework. Victoria released its revised Curriculum and Standards Framework (CSF II) in 2000, following a review of the original 1995 framework which was based on the national Statements and Profiles work of the early 1990s. South Australia was implementing in 2001 its new South Australian Curriculum, Standards and Accountability (SACSA) Framework, which describes the mandated requirements for learning from birth to Year 12. The development and implementation of a birth to Year 12 curriculum is unique in Australia, although the concept is now also being explored in Tasmania as part of its curriculum review.

New South Wales has reworked many of its primary syllabi and has published in March 2002 a K-10 Curriculum Framework as part of an overall review of the K-10 curriculum. The Northern Territory also has a new curriculum framework (NTCF) identifying learning outcomes from Transition to Year 10. Queensland is working on the redevelopment of its Years 1 to 10 curricula and has released a number of new syllabi. Tasmania launched the process of redefining its curriculum from birth to the end of the compulsory years of schooling through a five-year Curriculum Consultation (2002-2005).

While each State and Territory framework is different, there are a number of common underlying principles and assumptions, stemming from the joint commitment to the National Goals. Expressed in a variety of ways, these revolve around concepts of connectedness, inclusivity, resilience, adaptability, individual empowerment and civic responsibility, partnership and development of communities of learning, as well as futures-oriented skills and abilities such as critical thinking, creativity, enterprise and innovation. All framework statements strive to make clear the notion that learning is a lifelong process, which should be seen as a continuum of development from the very early years. The frameworks provide a structure within which schools and teachers can build educational programmes to achieve agreed learning outcomes for all students within a broad and balanced set of curriculum offerings that can be adapted to respond to local needs and priorities.

By way of summary, curriculum initiatives and reforms are typically driven by a combination of factors including overall government social and economic policy,



regional development plans and programmes, and the need to respond to various political pressure groups and local community interests. Increasingly governments are working in close partnership with business, industry and community groups to deliver relevant and cost-effective education programmes and services. The overall picture in terms of innovation and development in response to strategic issues is one of cooperation and collaboration on the part of governments nationally. Planning and coordination at ministerial level, including joint funding arrangements for development and implementation, ensure a coherent framework for action at State and Territory level with adaptations made as necessary to meet local needs. In many cases, innovations developed by individual jurisdictions are picked up and implemented or adapted more broadly at the national level. Alternatively individual jurisdictions and/or schools, may receive special funding to develop pilot programmes in areas of particular interest or expertise. Extensive community consultation is a typical feature of curriculum reform in the Australian environment, along with involvement of teachers in all stages of the development process. Projects also typically provide professional development opportunities as part of the development brief along with clearly specified review and evaluation mechanisms. (Commonwealth Department of Education, 2001).

At present (2004), agreed priority curriculum areas include literacy, numeracy, values education, civics and citizenship education, environmental education, science, mathematics, information and communication technologies and the development of online curriculum materials. For a number of these, nationally agreed benchmarks are being developed. In some, collaborative approaches are being developed to assess student achievement while, for others, development projects are under way to assist schools and teachers in improving the quality of teaching and curriculum resources, and in raising levels of student achievement. In addition, an agreed national priority is the achievement of greater national consistency among the curricula of the States and Territories in four domains: English, science, civics and citizenship, and mathematics. (DEST, 2004).

Pre-primary education

As mentioned, schooling in Australia is compulsory for children between the ages 6 and 15 (16 in Tasmania). However, the majority of children start school when they are younger than 6 and remain at school beyond the age of 15. In most States and Territories, children start full-time schooling at around the age of 5, when they enrol in a kindergarten or preparatory year. Commonly, the majority of these pupils will already have had some part-time school or preschool experience.

Early childhood education is important as it is widely understood that an investment in the early years supports positive outcomes at school and later in life. In Australia's federal system, responsibility for early childhood education and care is split between the Australian Government and the eight States and Territories. Since 2001, the Australian Government has worked to further strengthen the relationship between social policy and education policy in the early years. A key initiative which adopts a whole-of-government approach in the area of early childhood development is the establishment of the Australian Government Inter-Departmental Taskforce on Child Development, Health and Well-being. The Taskforce is leading the development of a National Agenda for Early Childhood which has Early Learning and



Care as a key focus area. There is also considerable work underway to improve data on early childhood education and care, including national preschool data. One avenue to pursue this, for example, is the Longitudinal Study of Australian Children which will involve the study of two cohorts of children (aged 0 and 4 years) over seven years. (DEST, 2004).

Primary and secondary education

While each State/Territory has sole constitutional responsibility for the curriculum of its government schools, there has been strong support for national collaboration in curriculum since 1986. In 1991, the Australian Education Council (now the MCEETYA) resolved to develop national statements and profiles in eight key learning areas, in order to provide a common framework for reporting student progress. Collaborative approaches involved a nationally appointed Curriculum and Assessment Committee (CURASS), Curriculum Corporation development Statements for Australian Schools, and Companion Profiles.

As mentioned, in the compulsory years of schooling the curriculum is based upon the eight key learning areas set out in the National Goals for Schooling in the Twenty-first Century. The National Goals are grouped into three strands covering student outcomes, the curriculum and social justice. The full statement reads as follows:

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

- 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;
- 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;
- have the capacity to exercise judgement and responsibility in matters of morality, ethics and social justice, and the capacity to make sense of their world, to think about how things got to be the way they are, to make rational and informed decisions about their own lives and to accept responsibility for their own actions;
- be active and informed citizens with an understanding and appreciation of Australia's system of government and civic life;
- 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;



- be confident, creative and productive users of new technologies, particularly information and communication technologies, and understand the impact of those technologies on society;
- have an understanding of, and concern for, stewardship of the natural environment, and the knowledge and skills to contribute to ecologically sustainable development;
- have the knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary to establish and maintain a healthy lifestyle, and for the creative and satisfying use of leisure time.

In terms of curriculum, students should have:

- 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;
- 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;
- participated in programs of vocational learning during the compulsory years and have had access to VET programs as part of their senior secondary studies;
- participated in programs and activities which foster and develop enterprise skills, including those skills which will allow them maximum flexibility and adaptability in the future.

Schooling should be socially just, so that:

- 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' socio-economic background or geographic location;
- the learning outcomes of educationally disadvantaged students improve and, over time, match those of other students;
- 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;
- 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;

- 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;
- 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.

The adoption of an outcomes-based framework approach is, first and foremost, a reaffirmation that learners are at the heart of the educational process. The various curriculum framework documents contain very powerful statements about the need to prepare students to “shape and participate in new and complex social, cultural and economic futures”. Through cohesive curriculum frameworks, rather than isolated segments of content, it is intended that students will be able to actively engage in a continuum of learning activities and processes that reflect the commitments made through the National Goals. Many systems have stipulated overarching or core learnings that are embedded throughout the key learning areas. The development of these essential or core learnings is typically seen as an ongoing process that takes place both in the context of formal learning and in everyday life.

For example, the South Australian Curriculum, Standards and Accountability (SACSA) Framework sets out five essential learnings that describe the values, dispositions, skills and understandings considered crucial to the education and development of all learners from birth to Year 12. These are:

- Futures: whereby learners develop the flexibility to respond to change, recognize connections with the past and conceive solutions for preferred futures.
- Identities: whereby learners develop a positive sense of self and group, accept individual and group responsibilities and respect individual and group differences.
- Interdependence: whereby learners develop the ability to work in harmony with others and for common purposes, within and across cultures.
- Thinking: whereby learners become independent and critical thinkers with the ability to appraise information, make decisions, be innovative and devise creative solutions.
- Communication: whereby learners develop their abilities to communicate powerfully using literacy, numeracy and information and communication technologies.



The essential learnings are embedded within the curriculum from birth to Year 12 and, in many instances, change the way the curriculum is described. They make the SACSA Framework a curriculum for learning rather than a curriculum for just knowing and provide students with an ethical base from which they can become critical and discerning users, creators and designers of knowledge.

All of the frameworks make a strong commitment to equipping students with the skills, understandings and dispositions to become lifelong learners, reflecting the priorities outlined in the National Goals. While there are clearly strong economic imperatives behind this commitment in terms of ensuring learners' future employability and meeting industry development needs, there is a much deeper commitment to national capacity building through supporting learners to become fully engaged in the civic life of their communities and equipping them with the knowledge, skills and abilities to actively shape a new civil society for the future.

A framework approach allows for differentiation within an overall mindset of high expectations for all. There is a clear message in all of the frameworks about the importance of providing creative and flexible responses to meet the needs of all students. This is not only an issue of equity; it is seen to be important in terms of building the social and economic capital of local and regional communities. Several frameworks address issues of equity and inclusivity quite explicitly by embedding them as cross-curriculum perspectives. The ACT Curriculum Frameworks, for example, contain: across curriculum perspective statements for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education; gender equity; multicultural education and special education; as well as Australian education, environment education, information access, language understanding across the curriculum, and work education.

Through the flexibility that frameworks offer, teachers are able to select the most appropriate learning experiences for particular learners to ensure that key learning outcomes can be achieved while at the same time allowing room for students to pursue their own particular strengths and interests. By describing broad requirements rather than specifying detailed content, frameworks enable teachers to tailor the curriculum to individual student's learning needs. The frameworks are, therefore, very much about empowering teachers through school-based decision-making in terms of curriculum planning and assessment as well as ongoing professional development through formal and informal learning opportunities and networks.

An outcomes-based framework approach is a means of ensuring that all learners are able to reach a common set of system-wide, pre-determined standards or expectations for all learners. The standards described in the various frameworks provide a common reference point for educators to use in monitoring, judging and reporting on learners' achievement over time. They describe what all learners in a particular system should know and be able to do at progressive levels of schooling. In contrast to the way standards are conceptualised in some other countries, in Australia standards are about learners' progress on a developmental continuum and performance at a particular point in time, rather than about notions of 'pass' or 'fail'. Clearly articulated standards assist teachers to plan more effectively so that teaching, learning and assessment become concurrent and integrated classroom activities. They also establish a clear basis for accountability to parents and the wider community.



In the revision that has occurred since the development of statements and profiles in the early 1990s, there has been a significant effort made to reduce the number of outcomes, particularly for the primary years. This has been done not only to ensure manageability in terms of teaching and learning but more importantly to provide greater flexibility in course design and ensure teachers focus on the key or big picture outcomes that learners need to achieve.

The number of levels or stages of the curriculum varies across the nation. Victoria and Queensland have six levels, while Western Australia, Tasmania and the ACT have remained with the eight levels first established in the Statements and Profiles of the 1990s. New South Wales and Northern Territory have five stages or bands in the compulsory years and South Australia has developed learning outcomes for birth to age 5 learners, five curriculum standards from Reception to Year 10, and Year 12 standards for the senior years (11 and 12). There has also been a move towards linking framework levels to year levels in some States. Victoria specifically states that level 4, for example, is what students can be expected to achieve by the end of Year 6. South Australia also links framework standards to year levels but acknowledges in a more formal way than Victoria does, that students at a particular year level can be expected to be working across a number of framework standards. Western Australia and Queensland, on the other hand, do not link the levels or stages of their frameworks to year levels.

Most States and Territories have retained the eight key learning areas agreed to in the National Goals, although with some modification. New South Wales, for example, now has six key learning areas in the primary years and there have been minor name changes and other re-arrangements in some of the other States and Territories. In the Northern Territory and South Australia the key learning area of technology is called "design and technology" while in Western Australia it is called "technology and enterprise."

The strands themselves are also very similar. Where they are named differently, the names tend to be synonyms for the same ideas or concepts rather than representing different groupings of concepts or ideas. There is also a degree of consistency across the States and Territories in terms of overall learning outcomes for a particular strand although it is not possible to say, for example, that a particular outcome at level 4 in Studies of Society and Environment in Queensland is identical to one from stage 3 in New South Wales.

A framework approach supports the integration of subjects and design of interdisciplinary learning activities. It can also provide students with opportunities to develop their understanding of the interrelationships between different fields of learning and other world views and allow them to engage in relevant, futures-oriented, problem-focused real-life learning activities. This potential is exemplified in the Queensland Year 1-10 Studies of Society and Environment syllabus which sets out core learning outcomes drawn from a range of disciplines and studies including history, geography, civics, environmental education, cultural studies, legal studies, business education and futures. The key values of the syllabus are democratic processes, social justice, ecological and economic sustainability, and peace and principles of equity are evident in the way in which the document meets the needs of students from all cultural, social and linguistic groups and in all locations.

The table below shows the indicative time allocations for use by syllabus developers endorsed by the Queensland School Curriculum Council in 1997, e.g. before the Adelaide Declaration:

Queensland. Compulsory education: indicative time allocations for use by syllabus developers

Key learning areas	Total number of hours per subject		
	Years 1–3	Years 4–7	Years 8–10
English language	780	640	240
Mathematics	600	640	240
Science	180	240	180
Health and physical education	180	240	180
Studies of society and environment	240	240	180
The Arts	300	400	180
Technology	180	240	180
Languages other than English	–	240	180
System/school designated time	120	320	840
Total number of hours	2,580	3,200	2,400

Source: Queensland School Curriculum Council, 1997. 'The indicative time allocations endorsed by the Council are made with the understanding that the notional amount of available time (as distinct from programmed time) in all schools in Queensland is approximately 20 hours per week (400 hours per semester or 800 hours per year). In Years 1–3 there is an additional one and a half hour per week available (or 180 hours over three years) as students in these years are not involved in sport and recreational studies as are students in Years 4–10' (p. 2).

At all levels of schooling, teaching and learning activities involve a range of strategies which may include group work, peer tutoring and assessment, hands-on experiential learning and opportunities for learners to negotiate the process as well as the content of learning activities. Ongoing assessment and feedback to learners and their parents is, of course, an integral part of the teaching and learning cycle; the intention being that both formal and informal assessments are fed back into the planning process in a systematic way to ensure continuous progress is able to be made. Where students are considered to be 'at risk', e.g. students with disabilities, students with special learning needs, or students with particular medical or behavioural problems, schools will usually undertake to offer flexible learning programmes to ensure that individual needs can be met and students can experience success in their learning.

In terms of resources to support teaching and learning, it has already been noted that some States and Territories provide broad syllabuses within the overall context of a framework approach while others provide illustrative support material to guide choice of content, teaching and learning activities and assessment. Following a long tradition of 'grass-roots' curriculum development, both types of material are developed in collaboration with teachers. This approach ensures relevance and useability in terms of what is produced and acknowledges the professionalism of teachers in the process. It also affords teachers around the nation excellent opportunities for focused professional development on current and emerging issues related to teaching and learning.

Exemplary materials and best practice teaching and learning ideas are provided by all systems in a range of ways, including dissemination of the outcomes



of pilot projects, networks of interest, exhibitions and, of course, publication of texts and resource materials. Increasingly resource materials and ideas are shared through the Internet on department websites as well as through specific discussion forums and chat lines, online curriculum exchanges and *EdNA Online*, a service that provides access to quality national and international educational resources, services and Internet tools.

At the senior secondary level each State and Territory has its own external accreditation process, which serves the double purpose of certifying school completion at Year 12 and ranking students for entry into tertiary institutions. Several States also provide certification at Year 10 level through a State-based or school-moderated assessment process. The only national system of accreditation at the senior secondary level is that provided through the Australian Quality Training Framework (AQTF), which is designed for people entering an occupation, industry or an enterprise. This involves integration of industry specific and vocational education delivery in Years 11 and 12 and a mix of off the job and on-the-job training as part of the senior secondary curriculum.

Australia has for some time recognized the need for an effective vocational education and training (VET) and has taken steps for its reform. Over recent years it has adopted policies aimed at ensuring that the VET system is able to provide the skills needed to continue economic growth into the twenty-first century, deliver training efficiently, and ensure that the principles of equity are applied visibly. In undertaking these reforms, a national system with the flexibility to meet the different needs of local regions and enterprises has been created.

The key reforms are: the adoption of a competency-based training system, where qualifications are awarded according to what individuals can actually do rather than how long they have spent in training; the move from a supply driven system to a demand driven system; the establishment of a national planning and administrative system substantially directed by industry; the development of a national qualifications framework that links the qualifications that are awarded in the senior years of secondary school, the VET sector and the higher education sector. This creates a set of articulated education and training that enables people to go on achieving higher skill levels, and allows them to maximize their own potential over a working life.

VET enrolments in Technical and Further Education (TAFE) colleges and institutes have increased since 1990 to reach a figure estimated currently to be over 1.2 million in courses providing basic education and employment skills, middle and advanced level skill development. Overall participation in VET has increased over the past decade, rising from 7.5% of the 15-64 year old population to 8.7% between 1985 and 1994. Within this wide age-group a key national goal has been set to improve the outcomes for certain groups, i.e.: women; people without social and functional skills in English language literacy and numeracy; people with disabilities; Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, the unemployed; and people in rural and remote areas. In terms of population share, indigenous students are generally well represented within TAFE colleges, although largely at the lower training levels and with a completion rate lower than that for all students.



Number of students enrolled in VET in schools programmes in Australia

	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000
Government	N/A	53,258	66,366	81,933	97,982
Catholic	N/A	12,165	17,783	20,274	25,778
Independent	N/A	5,043	8,757	11,738	14,252
TAFE	N/A	23,600	24,500	22,765	15,604
Total	60,000	94,066	117,406	136,710	153,616

Source: Commonwealth Department of Education, 2001.

The VET sector includes a variety of recognized providers: publicly funded institutes of TAFE, including combined TAFE and University bodies in some States and Territories, adult and community education organizations and increasingly, individual enterprises and schools. There are over 4,000 registered training organizations operating in the sector. Many of these providers also offer programmes in addition to recognized VET such as adult and community education and fully commercial non-accredited training.

Historically an important form of VET, particularly for young males, has been the apprenticeship system. Apprenticeships (and more recently traineeships) provide a vocational education pathway combining employment and formal training. Apprenticeships last up to four years and generally involve a written contract of training (an indenture) between an employer and an apprentice. Apprentices receive structured training usually through off-the-job courses in approved educational institutions, and are subject to monitored practical work with their employer. Upon completion, apprentices become qualified tradespersons in a recognized trade. Shorter duration traineeships offering a similar combination of employment and vocational study were introduced in 1985. Until 1994, the numbers of traineeships remained relatively low. However, the numbers of traineeships grew rapidly from then to the point that commencements in traineeships exceeded those in apprenticeships in 1997.

In 1998, a major reform of the apprenticeship/traineeship arrangements occurred with the introduction of New Apprenticeships. New Apprenticeships subsumed the former apprenticeship and traineeship arrangements under a single more flexible system of contracts of training. The number of New Apprentices in training reached some 275,000 in June 2000 (or 2.9% of the labour force; 417,000 in March 2004 or 4.1% of the labour force), an historic high for contracts of training. Over the 1980s and 1990s, contracts of training have varied in line with the economic cycle. The recent increase has also more than reversed the decline in apprenticeship and trainee numbers associated with the impact of the recession of the early 1990s. The introduction of New Apprenticeships has led to considerable change in the nature of contracts of training. Shorter duration programmes now dominate provision. Part-time training opportunities are available as is the possibility of undertaking New Apprenticeships in school. The range of industries and occupations covered by contracts has widened and such training has ceased to be solely the domain of young people, with some 70% of New Apprentices in training aged over 20 as at March 2001.



The most marked development in schooling in Australia has been the rise in the proportion of young people undertaking a full secondary education. The most commonly used indicator in Australia of continuation to the end of secondary schooling is the apparent Year 12 retention rate, which provides a measure of the proportion of a cohort commencing secondary education which enrolls in the final year of secondary school. The apparent retention rate rose steeply over the 1980s and early 1990s, peaking in 1992 at 77.1%. It subsequently fell to around 72% by 1995 and has since remained at this level. As mentioned, participation in the VET sector has increased steadily over the 1980s and 1990s. In 1999, some 12% of the 15-64 year old population enrolled in a VET institution. Since 1996, VET programmes have also been made available to senior secondary students. Students who successfully undertake these studies receive credit towards their senior secondary certificate and gain recognition under the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF). The growth in this area has been dramatic: the number of students participating in some form of VET in schools programmes has risen from 16% of all senior secondary students in 1996 to 38% in 2000. In 2002, public VET training providers included: 85 TAFE institutes delivering VET at more than 1,460 campuses; in some states and territories, agricultural colleges and university VET divisions; over 890 community education providers; and over 3,400 private providers in receipt of public funds. (DEST, 2004).

The States and Territories are responsible for the network of public TAFE institutes. In 2003, there were 79 TAFE institutes and other Government providers operating out of more than 5,461 locations across the country, and there were 1.72 million students enrolled in vocational education and training (excluding VET in school students), representing a 35% increase since 1995. Out of the total enrolments, 75.6% were enrolled in TAFE institutes and other Government providers, 14.2% were enrolled with community-based providers and the remaining 9.8% undertook training with other registered providers. The Australian Government provides about 27% of the public expenditure on VET while the remaining 73% is provided by the States and Territories. (DEST, 2004).

In schooling, the highest priority in recent years has been the improvement of literacy and numeracy skills for all young Australians, given that appropriate literacy and numeracy skills are a prerequisite for achievement in all subsequent education and training and are critical to successful participation in the labour market. Securing comparable data on the literacy and numeracy achievement of all school students is a priority, and the Federal government has been a key player in developing and gaining national agreement on literacy and numeracy benchmarks. The data shows that the retention rate to the end of secondary school has been higher for females than for males for at least the last decade. Retention to Year 12 remains lower than average for Indigenous students, students from lower socio-economic backgrounds and rural and remote students. However, retention rates for Indigenous students increased by six percentage points for Years 10 and 12 and by nine percentage points for Year 11 over the 1995-1999 period. In addition, the gap between students from high and low socio-economic backgrounds has narrowed to 14 percentage points from 19 percentage points in 1989. Remote students showed a greater increase in retention than either urban or rural students over the decade. They rose from 47% in 1989 to 56% in 1999.

In the year 2000, there were 9,595 schools in Australia, which represented a decline of 4.1% since 1990. In the same period, the number of government schools



fell by 529, while the number of non-government schools rose by 117. The number of special schools was 369, which represented a fall of almost 17% from the 444 operating in 1990. There were 3.25 million full-time students in schools. The proportion of students enrolled in non-government schools continued to rise in all States and Territories other than Tasmania. In 2000, 30.8% of students were enrolled in non-government schools compared to 30.3% in 1999. The total number of full-time equivalent teaching and non-teaching staff employed in Australian schools was 284,479, which represented an increase of 2.97% on 1999. There were 218,050 full-time equivalent teaching staff in schools. This represented an average of 14.9 students per teacher in government schools, 16.1 in Catholic schools and 13.0 in independent schools. Females comprised 78.3% of the teaching staff in primary schools and 54.4% in secondary schools. This compares with 78% and 54.1%, respectively, in 1999. (MCEETYA, 2000).

In 2003, there were 9,607 schools in Australia of which 6,930 were government schools and 2,677 were non-government schools. Primary schools comprised 69.1% of schools while 15.2% were secondary schools. A further 11.5% were combined primary and secondary schools and 4.1% were special schools. In 2003 there were 3,318,620 full-time students attending school, 67.9% of whom attended government schools. Of the 1,929,170 primary school students, 71.7% attended government schools, while 62.7% per cent of 1,389,450 secondary students attended government schools. (DEST, 2004).

Assessing learning achievement nationwide

In reaching broad agreement on the value of nationally defining some common outcomes in literacy and numeracy, states and territories are clearly signalling the importance of assessment and reporting. An outcomes framework in operation requires teachers to use a range of assessment methods and instruments to ensure a fair, balanced and rounded judgement of a student's achievements over time. Consequently, the intersection between ongoing evaluation and assessment is strengthened, and public confidence in what is being taught and learned is increased.

With outcomes-based education being seen as the way of tackling many of the challenges facing schooling, there is an understandable focus on both classroom and school planning and performance, and the place of system-wide assessment in providing an indication of overall success in key learning areas.

This interest in using student outcomes in assessing efficiency and effectiveness of school systems is not new. During 1989, as part of a broader OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) project, Australia co-operated with 18 countries in identifying possible indicators of student outcomes. As the *Report on Government Service Provision* (1995) notes, "assessing the performance of school systems is a complex and difficult task. The difficulties are threefold. First, reaching consensus on the specific objectives of school education; second, selecting and precisely defining indicators that address these objectives; and third, allowing for differences in the environment within which school services are delivered."



Nearly all States and Territories have implemented, or are in the process of implementing, system-wide assessments to capture a snapshot of overall achievement in key learning areas. Given this coalition of interest, the July 1996 MCEETYA decision to commence the development of a small number of common indicator outcomes in literacy and numeracy, is set in context and bears testimony to the advantages of collaboration and the value of working towards nationally comparable data.

When State and Federal education ministers promulgated the new National Goals for Schooling in the Twenty-first Century in 1999, they also initiated work on measuring and reporting educational outcomes nationally in six key areas of schooling: literacy, numeracy, science, information technology, VET, and student participation and retention in and completion of schooling. The Federal government has played a key role in the work of the MCEETYA task force, the National Education Performance Monitoring (NEPM) task force established to develop the appropriate performance measures. In the longer term, performance measures and targets are expected to be extended to other key curriculum areas, such as civics and citizenship and enterprise education.

The MCEETYA has already agreed to recommendations on measuring and reporting student participation and attainment; access to, participation in and completion of VET in schools; and student performance in science at the end of compulsory schooling. The Federal, State and Territory and non-government school authorities report on developments in school education in Australia each year through the *Annual national report on schooling in Australia* (ANR), published by the MCEETYA. The ANR is a joint, co-operative effort between the Federal government, State and Territory education systems and the non-government school sector. It is not only a means of reporting to the public and the educational community on developments in school education during the year, but is also the vehicle for educational accountability by States and non-government schools for the tied funding they get from the Federal government.

The ANR reports progress towards the National Goals, concentrating on the priority areas agreed by Ministers. It includes statistical data on students and schools and expenditure on schooling. It provides information on access and participation, retention, attendance, completion and transition and available student attainment data, including national data on the literacy and numeracy achievement of students.

The Federal government has been a key partner in developing and gaining national agreement on literacy and numeracy benchmarks. Benchmarking in Australia does not involve national testing. Benchmarks are nationally agreed minimum acceptable standards for literacy and numeracy at Years 3, 5 and 7. States and Territories assess students using their own State-based test instruments and report through the ANR against national benchmarks.

National literacy and numeracy standards have already been set in place. In 1998, students in all States and Territories were assessed in Years 3 and 5 against the literacy standard for the first time.

The majority of students from each of Years 3 and 5 achieved the reading benchmark in 2000. As the benchmark represents the minimum level of competence deemed necessary to allow meaningful participation in the school learning programme, this result is not surprising. However, it remains of concern that approximately 7% of Year 3 students and 13% of Year 5 students were unable to achieve the benchmark and their successful progress through schooling is, therefore, seriously compromised. The year 2000 is only the second year for which reading benchmark data have been available, so there is insufficient evidence to indicate any clear trend.

The majority of students in each of years 3 and 5 attained the appropriate numeracy benchmark in 2000. As the benchmarks represent the minimum level required for a student to progress through schooling, this result is much as expected. Since 2000 was the first year in which student performance was measured against numeracy benchmarks, it is not possible to make comparisons with previous years. There is no measurable difference between the relative performances of boys and girls. This contrasts with the situation in reading, where girls' performance is marginally better than boys. On the other hand, there are substantial differences between the achievement of numeracy benchmarks by Indigenous students and all students. (MCEETYA, 2000).

National benchmark results, 2001

2001	All Students	Male	Female	Indigenous	LBOTE
Reading					
% of yr 3 students achieving the benchmark	90.3 (± 2.0)	89.4 (± 2.6)	92.3 (± 1.9)	72.0 (± 4.8)	89.8 (± 2.3)
% of yr 5 students achieving the benchmark	89.8 (± 1.3)	87.8 (± 1.6)	92.0 (± 1.2)	86.9 (± 3.6)	87.7 (± 1.8)
Writing					
% of yr 3 students achieving the benchmark	89.5 (± 2.3)	86.4 (± 3.0)	92.7 (± 1.9)	67.8 (± 4.9)	88.5 (± 2.7)
% of yr 5 students achieving the benchmark	94.0 (± 1.0)	91.9 (± 1.4)	96.2 (± 0.7)	79.9 (± 3.3)	92.2 (± 1.2)
Numeracy					
% of yr 3 students achieving the benchmark	93.8 (± 1.2)	93.7 (± 1.3)	94.3 (± 1.3)	80.2 (± 3.9)	92.5 (± 1.5)
% of yr 5 students achieving the benchmark	89.8 (± 1.3)	89.5 (± 1.4)	89.8 (± 1.5)	83.2 (± 3.7)	87.9 (± 1.6)

Source: DEST, 2004.

Higher education

The higher education sector in Australia comprises 37 public and three private universities which are autonomous and self-accrediting. There are also four other self-accrediting higher education institutions and around 85 other institutions such as theological colleges and providers specializing in vocational or artistic studies. Universities offer undergraduate diplomas, advanced diplomas and bachelor degrees and post-graduate awards including graduate certificates and diplomas, master's degrees and doctoral degrees. In 2003, some 929,952 students were enrolled in undergraduate and postgraduate university courses. Almost all universities were



established by State or Territory law and as a consequence, they remain under State or Territory jurisdiction, with members of their governing councils appointed by State or Territory governments. State and Territory governments are responsible for the monitoring and accreditation of universities and their awards. The Australian Government provides funding for public higher education institutions and a number of Acts regulate the higher education sector and provide the basis for the Government's funding programmes for higher education.

As mentioned, the most common qualification awarded by universities and other higher education institutions is the bachelor's degree (a minimum of three years of study). A bachelor's degree with honours takes an additional year. Honours may also be granted where outstanding achievement is recorded in a bachelor's degree course of four or more years. Graduate certificates (six months of study) or graduate diplomas (one year of study) are also available in many subjects providing vocational skills in a specific area. Students may also enter both these post-graduate courses after completing an advanced diploma. A master's degree takes either one year after a bachelor's degree with honours or two years after a bachelor's degree. The length of a doctoral degree may vary considerably, but typically requires three years of study.

Participation in higher education increased rapidly over the 1980s and 1990s, with the period of most rapid expansion occurring over the decade to 1994. For example, participation among 20-24-year-olds rose from around 9% in the early 1980s to some 16% at the end of the 1990s. Higher education has become a truly mass form of education in Australia. Participation rates probably do not adequately illustrate this point. The probability that an individual will enter higher education by a given age provides a better measure of just how broad access has become. A young person today has a probability of the order of 45% of entering higher education at some point in her life and a 35% chance of entering higher education by the age of 25.

The Federal government monitors higher education participation by particular equity groups including Indigenous people, people with disabilities, people from rural and isolated backgrounds, people from non-English speaking background (who have arrived within the previous ten years) and people from socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds. The table below shows that the number of Indigenous students and students from socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds has increased significantly through the 1990s. The number of students with disabilities has increased between 1996 (when this information was first collected) and 1999. The number of students from non-English speaking backgrounds rose between 1991 and 1996 but has since declined, mainly as a result of changes in migration patterns.



Number of domestic students in higher education by equity group

	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999
Rural and isolated students	102,017	107,388	108,345	108,246	109,055	116,874	119,314	120,041	121,027
Indigenous students	4,757	5,059	5,520	6,225	6,778	6,956	7,461	7,789	8,001
Students with a disability	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	10,976	15,019	17,574	18,084
Students from non English speaking background	20,769	23,912	26,327	28,554	31,224	32,179	31,448	29,275	26,168
Students from low SES background	74,231	76,813	77,611	80,359	83,399	86,932	90,155	91,557	92,779
Total domestic student population	504,880	525,305	538,464	544,941	557,989	580,906	595,853	599,670	603,156

Source: Commonwealth Department of Education, 2001.

Note: Indigenous students, students with a disability and students from non-English speaking background are self-identifying groups.

In 1999, the Federal government endorsed the introduction of new quality assurance processes in relation to all higher education institutions seeking federal financial support. These processes include the establishment of a national quality agency, the Australian Universities Quality Agency (AUQA), in 2001 in cooperation with the States and Territories and in consultation with the higher education sector. The AUQA will audit teaching, learning, research and administration in Australian universities on a five-year cycle. The AUQA also has the power to audit the processes of State and Territory accreditation authorities.

The most noticeable change in Australia's student body is the increase in the number of overseas students. Overseas student enrolments, which are fee-paying or funded through aid programmes, have increased from 34,076 in 1992 to 95,607 in 2000. One of the most significant changes in the sector has been the increase in the number of fee-paying students. Putting overseas students to one side, the proportion of non-overseas students who are fee-payers has risen from less than 3% in 1992 to over 10% in 2000.

The changing nature of student demand has impacted on the relative strength of fields of study. The high growth areas during the period 1991 to 2000 were Law, Legal Studies (up 123%); Business, Administration, Economics (up 60%); Science (up 52%); Arts, Humanities, Social Sciences (up 40%); and Architecture, Building



(up 38%). All other fields of study experienced growth rates which were less than the sector wide average of 30%. One of the implications of the trends in the number of students and number of staff is that there has been a significant change in the student-staff ratio: the ratio has increased from around 15 in 1995 to around 18.5 in 1999. (DEST, 2001).

Special education

All States and Territories have, in recent years, developed guidelines for educational provision for students with disabilities. Hence, during the 1990s relevant legislation was enacted concerning issues of equal opportunity, social justice, occupational health and welfare. The programmes that were implemented have been augmented by Commonwealth funded targeted programmes designed to assist schools and students with special needs.

The main thrust of these policies and practices has been towards educational provision for students in the least restrictive environment. Consequently, there has been a discernible strengthening of inclusive and integrated approaches, although for some students it is recognized that enrolment in a special facility is the preferred way of making available the appropriate learning experiences. In all States and Territories, a range of provisions is available for children with special needs including: special schools, special units and classes attached to primary schools, as well as enrolment in primary and secondary schools.

Special schools provide instruction for physically and/or intellectually disabled or impaired students, or those with social and emotional problems. In general, students would exhibit one or more of the following characteristics to entitle them to enrolment: intellectual or physical disability or impairment; slow learning ability; social and emotional development and adjustment histories; a situational disadvantage, such as being in custody, on remand or hospitalized.

The move towards integration has been generally accompanied by resourcing shifts, including decentralization of special services, adaptation of staffing formula and adjustment of curriculum. Consequently, states and territories are almost constantly introducing and refining programmes and initiating new activities and programmes, all with the general purpose of providing best quality learning experiences and enabling successful transition from schooling to adult life.

It should be noted that, while the shift to integration of students with disabilities into primary and secondary schooling is having profound effects on both attitudes and outcomes, the case remains for the maintenance by the authority/system of a range of special services and provisions.

Private education

In 1995, 29% of Australian students attended non-government schools, an almost 2% increase in numbers over 1994 figures.

Full-time students in non-government schools, by affiliation (%)

	NSW	VIC	QLD	SA	WA	TAS	NT	ACT	AUST
NON-GOVERNMENT (CATHOLIC)									
Primary	3.9	3.2	1.7	0.8	1.0	0.2	0.1	0.3	11.2
Secondary	3.1	2.4	1.3	0.5	0.7	0.2	-	0.2	8.4
NON-GOVERNMENT (ANGLICAN)									
Primary	0.3	0.2	0.2	0.1	0.1	-	-	-	0.9
Secondary	0.5	0.6	0.3	0.1	0.2	0.1	-	0.1	1.9
NON-GOVERNMENT (OTHER)									
Primary	0.9	0.7	0.6	0.4	0.3	0.1	-	-	3.1
Secondary	0.9	1.1	0.8	0.3	0.3	0.1	-	-	3.5
Total	9.6	8.2	4.9	2.2	2.6	0.7	0.1	0.7	29.0

Source: ABS Catalogue No. 4221.0, Schools Australia, 1995.

It is usual to differentiate between “independent schools,” in which governance is directed through a board, and the system of schools of the Catholic religion. For the latter, a state- or territory-based Catholic Education Commission provides a range of centrally resourced, though frequently locally available, support services. Independent schools, though sometimes operating in loose coalitions, invariably present and operate as individual self-governing entities.

Curriculum in non-government schools parallels that of government schools, while reflecting the religious affiliation and other shaping features of the school and its community.

Self-management of independent schools has, over recent years, been subject to some quite intensive strategic planning inputs. In 1996, the National Council of Independent Schools Association published a *Strategic Planning Guide*. The report was sponsored by the Council and funded under the Commonwealth Government’s Good Schools and Quality Schooling programmes. It reports on planning and change management strategies and practices. Such a developmental move mirrors the devolution and self-management impetus evident in a number of government school systems, and for which formerly centrally held resources and personnel are being increasingly applied.

Means of instruction, equipment and infrastructure

The Federal government has been taking a leadership role in the information economy by providing an environment that both supports and encourages local decision-makers to take advantage of the opportunities being presented by information and communication technologies (ICT). The Federal government has also been providing direct support for a range of strategic initiatives to enhance the education and training sector’s ability to capitalise on the benefits of the online revolution.



The release of *Backing Australia's abilities: an innovation action plan for the future* (January 2001) provides a comprehensive and integrated package of support for the national innovation system including several initiatives which will assist in supporting the education and training sector's uptake of ICT. The innovations package represents a commitment by the Australian Federal government to pursue excellence in research, science and technologies and to build a more highly skilled workforce to meet the challenges of the global information economy.

Learning for the Knowledge Society is a joint Federal, State and Territory government education and training action plan for the information economy. It identifies five action areas where the education and training sector can carry out its pivotal role in supporting Australia's involvement in the information economy. These action areas are: people, infrastructure, online content, policy and organizational framework, and regulatory framework. A number of Federal and joint Federal/State/Territory strategic initiatives in schools are underway, which have been categorized under these action areas.

Each State and Territory government has made a commitment to increased access to computers, Internet access for all schools, professional development for teachers and increased networking opportunities for schools. From information provided by school systems around the country, in the year 2000: 71% of schools had a student-computer ratio of 15:1 or less and this ratio is decreasing each year; 37% of the computers in schools were in laboratories and 31% in classrooms; laptop computers comprised 16% of all computers used for educational purposes in schools—most of these in the non-government school sector; secondary schools generally had lower student-computer ratios than primary schools; and secondary schools were more likely to place computers in laboratory settings and offer specific ICT courses rather than integrating their use in classrooms across the curriculum. (MCEETYA, 2000).

Adult and non-formal education

In 1991, the Commonwealth Parliament published a report of the Senate Standing Committee on Employment, Education and Training, entitled *Come in Cinderella: The Emergence of Adult and Community Education (ACE)*. In response to the report, a National Policy was formulated and endorsed by Commonwealth, State and Territory ministers in 1993. The policy recognizes that ACE is an education provision that exists in its own right; that it complements the core provision of the school, TAFE and higher education systems, and may provide alternative access to these systems.

The National Policy is based on the following principles:

- adults have diverse and changing learning needs throughout their lives and require a correspondingly diverse range of responses with a variety of provisions and plurality of choice and educational pathways;
- adults learn effectively when they are actively involved in decisions about the management, content, style and delivery of their learning;



- adult learning is fostered through a curriculum and methodology which involves collaboration between teacher and learner;
- adult learning should be accessible, appropriate, stimulating and affordable in recognition of differing circumstances and constraints;
- local community organizations can readily identify and respond to the needs of their local community;
- services should support and strengthen existing community networks and help create new ones; and
- community provision is more responsive and comprehensive when collaboration occurs between the sectors of educating and training.

An ACE Taskforce was established in 1994 to advise the Commonwealth, State/Territory Ministerial Council on Education, Employment Training and Youth Affairs on ACE matters. In June 1996, the Senate established a further inquiry into ACE to explore structural and policy changes since *Come in Cinderella* and future trends for the ACE sector. This sector comprises a group of participants who elect to return to the educational structure at a point of their own choosing. Having previously left formal education they now wish to return to learning, to a particular learning environment they believe will best meet their learning needs, provide the required outcomes and be attuned to their situation and expectations. Characteristically then, adult and community education exhibits the following features: it is predominantly a user-pays operation; it is voluntary; it sits in the lifelong learning continuum; it provides second chance and compensatory opportunities; it is not part of a formal structure, thereby enabling entry and exit on personal grounds and is not rigid; it is provided by tutors and teaching staff who bring a combination of formal instructional skills, on-the-job experience and real life expertise and enthusiasm.

Over the past decade, the pattern of course provision has been reasonably stable, with the most noticeable change being the increase in the number of participants taking 'in-house courses (around 30% of those taking one or more courses). These workplace courses would appear to have taken the place of courses provided by Business Colleges some ten years or so ago. Formal education courses (i.e. those undertaken in universities, TAFE colleges or schools) comprise around 28%; Adult Education Centres, 10%; and private providers about 12% of all courses.

With regard to the type of courses undertaken, there has been a significant trend towards job-related courses with an emphasis on skill growth and upgrading. At the same time, the percentage taking courses in personal development, crafts and liberal arts has remained reasonably constant. This emphasizes both a change in direction and the intensive growth trend.

Educational background, particularly level of attainment in formal education, shows up in participation rates in courses classified as professional, foreign language and computer, where those with higher education backgrounds dominate. Participation in ACE courses serves to increase an individual's opportunity to rejoin formal education and to acquire a higher qualification.



In April 1999 the State, Territory and Commonwealth Ministers responsible for Adult Community Education endorsed four goals and a range of strategies to guide the future development of Adult Community Education in Australia. The strategies will be implemented flexibly, depending on circumstances and needs in each State and Territory, through new and revised Adult Community Education policies and plans at a State and Territory level. The goals are to: expand and sustain innovative community based learning models; raise awareness and understanding of the role and importance of adult community education; improve the quality of adult community education learning experiences and outcomes; and extend participation in community-based learning.

Vocational programmes in the ACE sector are often delivered by community organizations (e.g. local churches and other community groups), who also provide a range of non-vocational courses. Some non-vocational education is provided by formal education institutions, but separate from their mainstream academic and vocational courses of study (e.g. personal interest courses conducted by universities and TAFE colleges). Some ACE organizations receive funding from the Australian and State/Territory governments, including specific-purpose allocations for vocational education and training. Others provide training on a fee-for-service basis. Volunteers also deliver some ACE programmes. It is estimated that in 2000 approximately 1.1 million to 1.3 million people, or 7.5 to 8.5% of Australia's adult population, were enrolled in some form of ACE. This ACE activity amounted to an estimated 25 to 30 million hours of learning. (DEST, 2004).

Teaching staff

Within each State and Territory, ministers, departments and individual schools determine policies and practices on teacher utilization and professional development within established employment guidelines.

A national overview of Australia's teaching force reflects the following characteristics:

- nearly two-thirds of the teaching staff are female—in primary schools females account for three out of four teachers;
- the mean age of teachers is over 42, compared with around 40 years in 1989, and less than 30 in the 1960s;
- the teaching force is not representative of the wider population in terms of cultural and linguistic background;
- nearly 50% of all teachers have four or more years training, another third have a minimum of three years training;
- changes in school enrolments, teacher employment policies and broader economic factors continue to affect teaching staff numbers and composition.



The field of initial teacher education has been in a state of continuing change in recent decades, and is subject to further review by the Australian Council of Deans of Education under commission from the Commonwealth Government.

Two broad groups of courses operate for initial teacher education: *concurrent* and *sequential* courses. In the concurrent courses, students take a combination of academic and professional studies, and are involved in teaching practice, throughout the entire period, of three years leading to a Diploma of Teaching or four years leading to a Bachelor of Education. In the sequential course, the students complete a bachelor's degree with appropriate academic majors, usually in three years, and then complete a one-year professional course including teaching practice, leading to a graduate diploma of education. Some universities are extending the period of studies in the sequential course. Concurrent and sequential courses are available for early childhood, primary and secondary preparation.

The requirements for employment are a matter for decision by the States and Territories, with some states having formal requirements for registration. The Australian Capital Territory, Tasmania and Victoria all require four years of approved preparation, with Queensland moving to a four-year requirement in 1997. All other States and Territories have a three-year minimum requirement, but in practice the pattern is moving towards a four-year minimum.

Substantial as the changes have been in initial teacher education, the field of continuing professional education has developed even more dramatically. It is a change in conception, as much as in structure. The concept of an initial preparation which could provide for a life-time of teaching service (adequate, given a stable school situation and a fixed curriculum) has given way to the realities of changing external requirements, greatly expanded school populations and an ever-developing curriculum. The old concept of in-service training as a combination of one-session courses, designed for teacher up-dating, has been replaced by a complex combination of post-graduate courses and in-service education, seeking to meet the diverse needs of the teaching profession.

The total number of students enrolled in 1995 in all education courses was 70,635. A broad range of post-graduate courses is being taken by teachers as part of their continuing professional education. These include the traditional Ph.D and M.Ed. courses with a research base, and extend to master's degrees by course-work and professional doctorate, specifically designed to cover teachers professional development needs. There are in addition the post-graduate diploma and post-graduate certificate courses designed for specific purposes, such as multicultural education, Aboriginal studies, civics and citizenship education, language teaching, women's studies, health education and environmental education. These courses may be taken full-time, and study leave may be available for such purposes. More often, they are studied part-time, in conjunction with a teaching position. There has been a considerable development in the format of such courses to make them more widely available. They now play an important part in the continuous professional education of teachers.



As is the case with post-graduate education, there has been a dramatic increase in the extent and complexity of in-service education, which may now be initiated at a number of different levels.

The Commonwealth Government has seen the area of professional development as a significant means of further strengthening the quality of teaching in schools. In this context, the National Professional Development Programme (NPDP) was funded over the period from 1994 to 1996 to the extent of A\$60 million. The objective was to improve educational outcomes by providing professional development activities which:

- encourage the use of the agreed curriculum statements and profiles for Australian schools, the development of the key generic competencies and the teaching of accredited vocational education in schools;
- assist in the renewal of discipline knowledge and pedagogic skills for teachers and help them to improve work organization practices and teaching competencies within schools;
- enhance the professional culture of teachers and encourage teacher organizations to maintain a higher profile in promoting professional development;
- promote partnerships to provide professional development opportunities.

Commonwealth funding has been provided for activities additional to those already undertaken by states and territories. The Commonwealth provides support to 22 education centres, which aim to improve the quality of school education through curriculum and professional development support. These centres are managed on a non-profit basis by governing bodies, with a membership including a majority of teachers. The Commonwealth also supports the National Equity Programme for Schools (NEPS), directed to assist students who are educationally disadvantaged because of poverty, disability, geographic location, socio-economic circumstances, or a non-English speaking and/or an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander background. The National Priorities Elements of NEPS includes five components: Early Literacy, Literacy and Learning, Students at Risk, Gifted and Talented and Transition Support. The Asia Education Foundation and the National Languages and Literacy Institute of Australia are also supported by Commonwealth funds.

States and Territories operate substantial professional development programmes separately from the Commonwealth initiatives. In many instances, a significant part of these initiatives is now located at the school level, through the policy of devolution of responsibility to the local school. However, all States and Territories operate professional development programmes to support declared priorities.

A Federal government quality teaching initiative, *Teachers for the Twenty-first Century*, was launched in September 2000. This initiative is aimed at improving teacher quality and increasing the number of highly effective schools in order to maximize student-learning outcomes by: (i) lifting the quality of teaching through



targeted professional development and enhancing professional standards; (ii) developing the skills of school leaders; (iii) supporting quality school management; and (iv) recognizing and rewarding quality schools, school leaders and teachers.

Recent State and Territory initiatives to improve teacher quality include: (i) a competency framework for teachers in Western Australia; (ii) the establishment of generic professional standards for teachers in Queensland; (iii) the establishment of the Ministerial Advisory Committee for the Victorian Institute of Teaching; (iv) recommendations in the New South Wales Quality Matters report; (v) professional development programmes in the Northern Territory; and (vi) considerations regarding teachers' registration in Australian Capital Territory, South Australia and Tasmania.

Educational research and information

A significant change has occurred in the support of educational research in recent years. For a substantial period the Commonwealth and most State Departments of Education had staff specifically working on research issues, often in a branch of the department specifically allocated to that function. The predominant means for the sponsoring of such research is now through 'out-sourcing', i.e. contracting out research projects to outside providers, either in universities or with private consultants. The Commonwealth uses the Evaluations and Investigations Programme which funds studies and research projects to evaluate performance and investigate issues of national importance in higher education. Allocations in both 1995 and 1996 amounted to A\$1.3 million.

The Commonwealth has also a substantial programme of outsourced activities. Thus, in 1993/94, the Department reported 211 consultancies at A\$7.6 million, and in 1994/95 a further 135 consultancies at A\$7.56 million. Only some of these consultancies would be classified as research. The 1994/95 Annual Report of the Department noted 16 consultancies for that financial year for market research and polling groups, totalling approximately A\$2.6 million.

For the States also the net amount of educational research is still very substantial, but occurs in much more varied ways than in the past. Thus, for example, the Victorian and the New South Wales Departments of Education report substantial programmes of research. The projects cover a wide range of topics, from evaluation of particular initiatives such as in health education, to complex linguistic studies and cultural analysis.

A major player in the field is the Australian Council for Education Research (ACER), an independent, national agency established in 1930. ACER receives government support, from both the Commonwealth and State governments. This support amounted to A\$1.6 million for 1995/96, but this represented only 11% of its total budget of A\$13.9 million, of which A\$8 million went to research and development contracts and services. The ACER research programmes operate through two divisions (Measurement and Policy Research) on a thematic basis, planned triennially. In the current triennium, the themes for the two divisions are, respectively: Development Assessment; Equity and Validity; and, Psychometric and Statistical Research for the Measurement Division; Education Training and Work; Quality of



Education in Schools and Classrooms, for the Policy Research Division. In addition, there are a number of contracted research topics.

In addition to these two divisions, there is a division of International Development to co-ordinate the substantial and growing programme of international work for ACER. ACER has grown substantially in recent years, particularly in relation to the provision of services and the carrying out of contracts. In 1996 dollars, its total income rose from A\$7.4 million in 1976/77 to A\$13.9 million in 1995/96. Service income rose from A\$560,000 to A\$1.93 million, and contracts from A\$980,000 to A\$5.57 million in this period. ACER maintains a substantial publishing programme, with their own staff and other researchers as authors. The publications include a number of research journals and also a special series sponsored jointly with the New Zealand Council for Education Research (the set: Research Information for Teachers).

The National Centre for Vocation Education Research Ltd. (NCVER), is the national vocational training research organization with the functions of analytical research and knowledge communication. NCVER was set up in 1981 and has a substantial programme of research, with some projects supported from the core funding of the Centre and others externally funded. It operates research training sessions, an international data base and national clearinghouse, a national conference and publishes the Australian and New Zealand Journal of Vocational Education Research. Its research strength has been enhanced by forming a new national research centre with Flinders University's National Institute for Labour Studies (NSL), called the National Training Markets Research Centre. During the 1995/96 financial year, NCVER undertook 36 core-funded projects and 48 outside-funded projects; held a variety of workshops and conferences; published a number of reports and a journal; and sold 8,600 titles for the value of A\$198,000.

The Australian National Training Authority Research Advisory Council was set up in 1994 as the major funding body for vocational education and training (VET) research. In 1994, it distributed A\$1 million, and in its second year A\$2.5 million. Major themes included: the need for and use of data in VET research, including longitudinal studies; skill development and training needs, especially in small businesses; evaluation which leads to changes in practices; the costs and benefits of vocational education; and research processes including networks and consortia.



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National Training Information Service: <http://www.ntis.gov.au/> [In English. Last checked: October 2007.]

Teaching Australia. Australia Institute for Teaching and School Leadership:

<http://www.teachingaustralia.edu.au/> [In English. Last checked: October 2007.]

For updated links, consult the Web page of the International Bureau of Education of UNESCO: <http://www.ibe.unesco.org/links.htm>