

# National Standards for Student Attendance Data Reporting

## Table of Contents

1	Purpose .....	3
2	Scope.....	3
3	Governance .....	3
4	Background.....	4
5	Overview.....	5
6	Reporting requirements .....	5
6.1	Attendance rate calculation formula .....	5
6.2	Actual days in attendance (numerator).....	5
6.3	Number of possible school days (denominator) .....	6
6.4	Level of disaggregation .....	7
6.5	Data collection period.....	7
6.6	School types.....	7
6.7	Student enrolment types .....	8
6.8	Movement during collection period.....	8
6.9	Part-day absences .....	9
6.10	Ungraded students .....	9
7	Treatment of incidents/absences.....	10
8	Student Attendance Subgroup membership.....	13
9	Acronyms used in this publication .....	14

## 1 Purpose

The purpose of this document is to outline the key components of the National Standards for Student Attendance Data Reporting (National Standards), on which government and non-government providers of attendance data are requested to draw when providing data for national reporting purposes, including, but not limited to, the following outputs:

- National Education Agreement (NEA) performance report(s)
- National Report on Schooling in Australia
- National Indigenous Reform Agreement (NIRA)
- Report on Government Services (ROGS)
- school-level attendance data on the *My School* website.

This will enable consistent and comparable reporting of attendance rates for students in Years 1 to 10 (including ungraded students where applicable) for government, Catholic and independent schools in Australia. The student attendance data collection will complement the data collected through the National Schools Statistics Collection (NSSC).

## 2 Scope

The National Standards are applicable:

- to students in Years 1 to 10 for all government, Catholic and independent schools in Australia.
- for the 2014 collection period and onwards.

Note the 2014 collection period is dependent on IT system enhancements in some jurisdictions and sectors. It is anticipated that, due to the implementation of new system infrastructure, NSW implementation of the standards will be deferred until 2015. It is expected that all other jurisdictions and sectors will be able to conform by the required timeframe.

## 3 Governance

These National Standards have been prepared in collaboration with the Student Attendance Data Subgroup (see Section 8: Student Attendance Subgroup membership, for details of membership), with representation from all jurisdictions and sectors. This Sub-group was established to provide ACARA with advice on the development and implementation of the National Standards to collect and report consistent student attendance data across jurisdictional Education Authorities, and the Catholic and independent sectors.

Reviews and updates of the National Standards will be undertaken by ACARA as required.

## 4 Background

Students' attendance is recorded by schools for various purposes, such as meeting legislative requirements to determine the whereabouts of each student each school day. While there is a legal obligation for schools to record attendance and absences, there is also a parental obligation for students to attend school.

As an administrative by-product, student attendance data recorded and stored by schools are collected and reported by the appropriate jurisdictional authorities for government schools and the Australian Government Department of Education for non-government schools. Student attendance data can be and are used and reported for a variety of purposes, one of which is to report student attendance rates at school and jurisdiction/sector levels.

Student attendance data can be and are used for a range of operational, accountability and strategic purposes by government and non-government schools, jurisdictional authorities and other government agencies. However, there have been limitations for national research projects due to the differences in methodologies in jurisdictions / sectors. The adoption of these National Standards will provide a nationally comparable dataset for future research and analysis nationally.

### Reporting requirements

The first agreed outcome of the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) National Education Agreement (NEA) is that all children are engaged in and benefiting from schooling. One of the two measures of engagement is the rate at which children attend school (student attendance rate). The national student attendance rate is also a performance indicator / measure in the National Education Reform Agreement (NERA), the National Indigenous Reform Agreement (NIRA), the Report on Government Services (ROGS) and the *Measurement Framework for Schooling in Australia*.

Student attendance rates are reported in the *National Report on Schooling in Australia*, the ROGS and the COAG Reform Council's reports on the NEA and NIRA. To date, however, it has not been possible to report a national attendance rate, as the reported figures have not been comparable across sectors and jurisdictions. There have historically been a number of known issues with the consistency of student attendance data, primarily in relation to differences in the data collection and calculation practices between jurisdictions and sectors. These data quality issues were raised by the COAG Reform Council and the Steering Committee for the Review of Government Service Provision (SCRGSP) in their NEA and NIRA reports. Those concerns provided the rationale for the collaborative work which enabled the preparation of this document.

Reporting of nationally comparable student attendance data is crucial for public accountability in general, and specifically to provide additional essential contextual information, as part of a broader evidence base to inform research, analysis and evaluation necessary to support continuous improvement of schooling outcomes. The development and implementation of these National Standards will enable consistent data collection and reporting across jurisdictions and sectors.

## 5 Overview

Student attendance rates are specified as performance indicators within the NEA and NERA agreements, within the *Schools Assistance Act 2008* and the Australian Education Regulation 2013 as a Key Performance Measure (KPM) in the *Measurement Framework for Schooling in Australia*. In the *Measurement Framework for Schooling in Australia 2012*, the KPM for student attendance is defined as:

*The number of actual full-time equivalent student-days attended by full-time students in Years 1 to 10 as a percentage of the total number of possible student-days attended over the period.*

The following reporting requirement tables have been developed to describe each key component of the National Standards for Student Attendance Data Reporting.

<b>Definition</b>	Description of the key component of the National Standards for Student Attendance Data Reporting
<b>Reporting standard</b>	Outlines the reporting standard(s) that are applicable to each key component.
<b>Additional notes/ examples</b>	Additional information about the business rule or key component, including caveats if applicable, and any relevant examples of how the reporting standard can be applied.

## 6 Reporting requirements

### 6.1 Attendance rate calculation formula

The formula for calculating the attendance rate (%) is as follows:

$$100 \times \frac{\text{Actual days in attendance (see 6.2)}}{\text{Possible school days (see 6.3)}}$$

### 6.2 Actual days in attendance (numerator)

<b>Definition</b>	Actual days (or part-day of) in attendance are defined as the number of days that a student actually attends school over the collection period, on a possible school day (see Section 6.3).
<b>Reporting standard(s)</b>	There are two possible calculation methods as listed below. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Sum of possible school days minus sum of absent days</li> <li>2. Sum of days that a full-time student is present at school on each possible school day. This number cannot exceed the number of possible school days.</li> </ol>
<b>Additional notes/ examples</b>	Refer to Section 6.7: Student enrolment types for the definition of students, Section 6.9: Part-day absences for details regarding the reporting of part-days and Section 7: Treatment of incidents/absences for details regarding the treatment of absences.

### 6.3 Number of possible school days (denominator)

<b>Definition</b>	Possible school days are defined as the number of days that a student is <u>expected</u> to attend school over the collection period, as defined in Section 7: Treatment of incidents/absences.																																																																																																																														
<b>Reporting standard(s)</b>	Sum of possible school days per full-time student (see Section 6.7: Student enrolment types, for the definition of full-time student to be included) that meets the standards as documented in the remainder of the document.																																																																																																																														
<b>Additional notes/examples</b>	<p><b>Example 1</b> shows a scenario of when a student has moved schools during the collection period: Student A, a full-time student, was enrolled for 40% at school X and 60% at school Y of semester 1. If there were 99 possible school days in semester 1. School X records 40 possible days (40%) and 59 possible days (60%) for school Y.</p> <p><b>Example 2</b> shows a scenario of when a non-school day (See Section 7: Treatment of incidents/absences) occurs: there are 20 full-time students enrolled in school X for weeks 1 and 2.</p> <p><b>Sum of possible school days for 20 full-time students</b></p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th></th> <th>Mon</th> <th>Tue</th> <th>Wed</th> <th>Thurs</th> <th>Fri</th> <th>TOTAL</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Week 1</td> <td>20</td> <td>20</td> <td>20</td> <td>20</td> <td>20</td> <td>100</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Week 2</td> <td>20</td> <td>20</td> <td>Public holiday</td> <td>20</td> <td>20</td> <td>80</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p><b>Sum of actual days in attendance for 20 full-time students</b></p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th></th> <th>Mon</th> <th>Tue</th> <th>Wed</th> <th>Thurs</th> <th>Fri</th> <th>TOTAL</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Week 1</td> <td>18</td> <td>20</td> <td>20</td> <td>17</td> <td>17</td> <td>92</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Week 2</td> <td>20</td> <td>20</td> <td>Public holiday</td> <td>20</td> <td>20</td> <td>80</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p><b>Attendance rates</b></p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th></th> <th>Mon</th> <th>Tue</th> <th>Wed</th> <th>Thurs</th> <th>Fri</th> <th>TOTAL</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Week 1</td> <td>90%</td> <td>100%</td> <td>100%</td> <td>85%</td> <td>85%</td> <td>92%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Week 2</td> <td>100%</td> <td>100%</td> <td>Public holiday</td> <td>100%</td> <td>100%</td> <td>100%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>The overall attendance rate for this school for these two weeks would be 96% (172 actual days in attendance divided by 180 possible school days).</p> <p><b>Example 3</b> shows a scenario with 20 full-time students and one part-time student (0.6 FTE) who only attends school X on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday. Note the part-time student is <u>full-time</u> at state level (See Section 6.7 Student enrolment types) and attends another school for the remainder of the week.</p> <p><b>Sum of possible school days for 20.6 students</b></p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th></th> <th>Mon</th> <th>Tue</th> <th>Wed</th> <th>Thurs</th> <th>Fri</th> <th>TOTAL</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Week 1</td> <td>21</td> <td>21</td> <td>21</td> <td>20</td> <td>20</td> <td>103</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Week 2</td> <td>21</td> <td>21</td> <td>Public holiday</td> <td>20</td> <td>20</td> <td>82</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p><b>Sum of actual days in attendance for 20.6 students</b></p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th></th> <th>Mon</th> <th>Tue</th> <th>Wed</th> <th>Thurs</th> <th>Fri</th> <th>TOTAL</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Week 1</td> <td>18</td> <td>17</td> <td>20</td> <td>19</td> <td>17</td> <td>92</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Week 2</td> <td>17</td> <td>21</td> <td>Public holiday</td> <td>19</td> <td>20</td> <td>77</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p><b>Attendance rates</b></p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th></th> <th>Mon</th> <th>Tue</th> <th>Wed</th> <th>Thurs</th> <th>Fri</th> <th>TOTAL</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Week 1</td> <td>86%</td> <td>81%</td> <td>95%</td> <td>95%</td> <td>85%</td> <td>88%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Week 2</td> <td>81%</td> <td>100%</td> <td>Public holiday</td> <td>95%</td> <td>100%</td> <td>94%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>Overall attendance rate for this school for these two weeks would be 91% (168 actual days in attendance divided by 185 possible school days)</p>		Mon	Tue	Wed	Thurs	Fri	TOTAL	Week 1	20	20	20	20	20	100	Week 2	20	20	Public holiday	20	20	80		Mon	Tue	Wed	Thurs	Fri	TOTAL	Week 1	18	20	20	17	17	92	Week 2	20	20	Public holiday	20	20	80		Mon	Tue	Wed	Thurs	Fri	TOTAL	Week 1	90%	100%	100%	85%	85%	92%	Week 2	100%	100%	Public holiday	100%	100%	100%		Mon	Tue	Wed	Thurs	Fri	TOTAL	Week 1	21	21	21	20	20	103	Week 2	21	21	Public holiday	20	20	82		Mon	Tue	Wed	Thurs	Fri	TOTAL	Week 1	18	17	20	19	17	92	Week 2	17	21	Public holiday	19	20	77		Mon	Tue	Wed	Thurs	Fri	TOTAL	Week 1	86%	81%	95%	95%	85%	88%	Week 2	81%	100%	Public holiday	95%	100%	94%
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## 6.4 Level of disaggregation

<b>Definition</b>	Outlines the minimum disaggregation requirements for national reporting.
<b>Reporting standard(s)</b>	Attendance data are required to be disaggregated by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• school level: geolocation and sector</li> <li>• student level: sex, grade/year level, indigenous status.</li> </ul>
<b>Additional notes/examples</b>	Refer to Section 6.10 Ungraded students for further detail on the reporting of ungraded students if applicable. These disaggregations are regarded as the minimum for national reporting and additional disaggregations may be required for future reporting.

## 6.5 Data collection period

<b>Definition</b>	Collection period for which the student attendance data must be reported.
<b>Reporting standard(s)</b>	Student attendance data are required to be reported for <u>Semester 1, annually</u> .
<b>Additional notes/examples</b>	The actual start and end dates of Semester 1 will vary slightly; these are dependent on student year level, jurisdictions and sector operational requirements.

## 6.6 School types

<b>Definition</b>	Schools to be included in the student attendance data reporting dataset.
<b>Reporting standard(s)</b>	Only schools that fall within the National Schools Statistics Collection (NSSC) definition below are included.
<b>Additional notes/examples</b>	A School as defined in the NSSC is: <i>an education establishment which satisfies all of the following criteria:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>its major activity is the provision of full-time day:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <i>primary education</i></li> <li>○ <i>secondary education</i></li> <li>○ <i>distance education</i></li> <li>○ <i>special education</i></li> <li>○ <i>any combination of the above.</i></li> </ul> </li> <li>• <i>it is possible for a person to enrol and be active in a course of study provided by that school's formal curriculum for a minimum of four continuous weeks (excluding breaks for school vacations).</i></li> </ul>

## 6.7 Student enrolment types

<b>Definition</b>	Students to be included in the student attendance data reporting dataset.
<b>Reporting standard(s)</b>	Full-time students, at state level by sector, enrolled anytime during collection period.
<b>Additional notes/examples</b>	<p>A full time student as defined in the NSSC:  <i>is one who undertakes a workload equivalent to, or greater than that prescribed for a full-time student of that Year. This may vary between states and territories and from Year to Year. The minimum workload for a full-time student would ensure that a student could complete a given Year in a year</i></p> <p>Includes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- students who were enrolled for part of the collection period but who may, however, no longer be enrolled in the school (see 6.8 Movement during collection period).</li> <li>- full-time students enrolled part-time at multiple schools within the same sector, where the total enrolment at the state level is 1.0 or greater. Students' attendance records in these cases may be maintained at both schools and apportioned where possible.</li> </ul> <p>Excludes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- part-time students (state level)</li> <li>- students enrolled part-time at multiple schools across multiple sectors.</li> </ul> <p>It is noted, however, that there may be informal arrangements between schools where a student may attend multiple schools, but remains enrolled full-time at one school. All absences and attendances would then be attributed back to the main school. It is estimated that the number of students in these arrangements are small and the exclusion of these students would have minimal impact on attendance rates.</p>
<b>Caveat:</b>	<b><i>Students enrolled full-time at state level but across multiple schools in the same sector are excluded from Qld government, all Catholic and independent schools. There is minimal impact to the attendance rates due to the low numbers of students with multiple / shared enrolments.</i></b>

## 6.8 Movement during collection period

<b>Definition</b>	Descriptions of how absences and attendance are treated for students who move schools during the collection period.
<b>Reporting standard(s)</b>	Absences and attendances are recorded and attributed to multiple schools, providing that student meets the definition of full time at each school.
<b>Additional notes/examples</b>	<p>Includes students who were enrolled for part of the collection period but who may, however, no longer be enrolled in the school.</p> <p><b>Example 1</b> shows a scenario of when a student moves schools during the collection period: Student A, a full-time student, was enrolled for 40% at school X and 60% at school Y of semester 1. If there were 99 possible school days in semester 1. School X records 40 possible days (40%) and 59 possible days (60%) is recorded for school Y. All absences are attributed back to the appropriate school where the absence occurred.</p>



## 6.9 Part-day absences

<b>Definition</b>	Description of part-day absences and how they are reported upon.
<b>Reporting standard(s)</b>	Part-day absences are to be reported and included in the calculated figures.  Part-day absences may be reported as 0.5 or to two decimal places e.g. 0.47.
<b>Additional notes/examples</b>	The definition and reporting of part-day absences varies depending on individual arrangements for any given school. For example Vic. and WA have policy or legislative definitions for part-day absences, where any absence of greater than two hours but less than a full day is reported as a part-day of 0.5.
<b>Caveat:</b>	<b><i>The duration and reporting of part-day absences varies dependent on individual arrangements for any given school and jurisdiction, however, there is minimal impact to the national and jurisdictional attendance rates.</i></b>

## 6.10 Ungraded students

<b>Definition</b>	Description of ungraded students will be reported if applicable.
<b>Reporting standard(s)</b>	Any ungraded students will be reported as: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Ungraded primary</li> <li>2. Ungraded secondary</li> </ol>
<b>Additional notes/examples</b>	The NSSC states: <i>Students in ungraded classes who cannot readily be allocated to a year of education should be included as either ungraded primary or ungraded secondary, according to the typical age level in each state or territory.</i> <i>Students in secondary support units, physically located in a primary school and vice versa, are to be counted as ungraded in either primary or secondary school. The schools are not to be classified as combined if they are not officially designated as combined.</i>  There will be no data for jurisdictions with no ungraded students.
<b>Note:</b>	<b><i>Government schools in Qld, Tas. and ACT assign all students to applicable grades, therefore, there are no ungraded students reported for these jurisdictions. There are only ungraded secondary students in WA and NT government schools, all primary students are assigned to applicable grades.</i></b>

## 7 Treatment of incidents/absences

The table below provides a general description of incidents/absences that may be applicable to schools, how these incidents are to be treated and whether they should be included in the sum of possible school days. Note that actual descriptions in jurisdictions and sectors may differ. However, the general basis of the absence is the same. Also not all descriptions may be applicable to all jurisdictions/sectors.

General description of incidents/absences	Treatment of absence Absent / Present / NA	Possible school days Included / excluded
<p><b>A. Unexplained/unauthorised absences</b> Absences where the school does not receive any explanation, or where the reason for absence is <b>considered unacceptable</b>. Includes absences such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Truancy</li> <li>• Unexplained</li> <li>• Without parent/guardian approval</li> <li>• Unacceptable explanations as determined by the school</li> </ul>	Absent	Included
<p><b>B. Religious/cultural absences</b> Approved/notified absences due to recognised religious or ceremonial activity</p>	Absent	Included
<p><b>C. Parent-approved absences</b> Includes absences such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Family event</li> <li>• Extended holidays</li> </ul>	Absent	Included
<p><b>D. Medical</b> Approved/notified absences due to medical reasons. Includes absences such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Illness</li> <li>• External medical appointment with health care professionals including counselling</li> </ul>	Absent	Included
<p><b>E. Disciplinary (Out-of-school)</b> Disciplinary action that is <u>not</u> on school grounds. Includes suspensions but excludes internal suspensions (see F).</p>	Absent	Included
<p><b>F. Disciplinary (In-school)</b> Disciplinary action that is <u>on</u> school grounds. Includes internal suspensions</p>	Present	Included
<p><b>G. Behavioural reasons</b> Behavioural absences, e.g. disengagement. Excludes disciplinary action (see E or F).</p>	Absent	Included

General description of incidents/absences	Treatment of absence Absent / Present / NA	Possible school days Included / excluded
<p><b>H. Bereavement</b> Approved/notified absences due to bereavement. Includes absences such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Funeral</li> <li>• Personal bereavement</li> </ul>	Absent	Included
<p><b>I. School closed</b> School closed for religious, public or other holiday. Includes absences such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unexpected temporary school closure</li> <li>• Strike action/industrial action</li> <li>• School unavailable</li> <li>• School choice</li> <li>• Individual school calendars</li> <li>• All classes cancelled for the day</li> </ul>	NA	Excluded
<p><b>J. Natural disaster/event</b> Natural disaster/event where students are unable to travel to school <u>and</u> school is closed.</p>	NA	Excluded
<p><b>K. Approved educational absence</b> Attendance at approved/sanctioned school events where the student is not required to attend school. Includes absences such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Excursions</li> <li>• Flexible timetable</li> <li>• Attending another school</li> <li>• VET activities</li> </ul>	Present	Included
<p><b>L. Work experience programs</b> Approved participation in/attendance at work experience related programs. School is responsible for students on these programs. NSSC states that <i>students' time spent on work experience programs, as part of the school curriculum or program, should be treated as time in school.</i></p>	Present	Included
<p><b>M. Employment</b> Short-term employment. School is not responsible for students during this period; however, student remains officially enrolled.</p>	Absent	Included
<p><b>N. Explained other absent</b> Absences from school due to acceptable reasons, other than any of those listed in this table.</p>	Absent	Included

General description of incidents/absences	Treatment of absence Absent / Present / NA	Possible school days Included / excluded
<p><b>O. Exemptions</b></p> <p>Approved exemptions such as certificate of exemptions, only for exceptional circumstances. Reasons for exemptions must not conflict with other descriptions in this table.</p> <p>Includes approved short-term employment for NSW and SA such as employment in the entertainment industry where approval and exemption from class has been given by the appropriate school personnel.</p> <p><i>Note: Due to the low number of absences in this category, some jurisdictions may choose to include these absences as possible school days. Although this is not recommended, this has minimal impact to the national and jurisdictional attendance rate.</i></p>	NA	Excluded
<p><b>P. P.1. Detention/Juvenile Justice/Suspension/Immigration Detention Centres – notified</b></p> <p>School is <b>notified</b> that student is at the relevant centre. See P.2 for not notified absences.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>WA: Student is enrolled in main school but is part of Immigration Detention Centre.</li> </ul>	NA	Excluded
<p><b>P.2. Detention/Juvenile Justice/Suspension/Immigration Detention Centres – not notified</b></p> <p>If school is <b>not notified</b>, then the student would be absent for 'unexplained/unauthorised' reasons.</p>	Absent	Included
<p><b>Q. Behaviour centre</b></p> <p>Absences of students who are moved to a behaviour centre, but who nevertheless remain enrolled in their main school. All data are attributed back to main school.</p>	Absent	Included
<p><b>R. Tutorial centres</b></p> <p>Absences at the main school for students who are moved to a tutorial centre, but who nevertheless remain enrolled in their main school.</p>	Present	Included
<p><b>S. Expelled</b></p> <p>Student is no longer enrolled at the school.</p>	NA	Excluded

## 8 Student Attendance Subgroup membership

This National Standards has been prepared in conjunction with the Student Attendance Subgroup.

Agency	Member/s and contact details
Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS)	Alan Herning <a href="mailto:alan.herning@abs.gov.au">alan.herning@abs.gov.au</a>
Department of Education Tasmania (Tas.)	Andrew Oakley <a href="mailto:andrew.oakley@education.tas.gov.au">andrew.oakley@education.tas.gov.au</a>
Education and Training Directorate Australian Capital Territory (ACT)	Anshu Srivastava <a href="mailto:anshu.srivastava@act.gov.au">anshu.srivastava@act.gov.au</a>
Department of Education, Training and Employment Queensland (Qld)	Boyd Paties <a href="mailto:boyd.paties@deta.qld.gov.au">boyd.paties@deta.qld.gov.au</a>
Independent Schools Council of Australia (ISCA)	Colette Colman <a href="mailto:colette.colman@isca.edu.au">colette.colman@isca.edu.au</a>
Productivity Commission	David Garner <a href="mailto:david.garner@pc.gov.au">david.garner@pc.gov.au</a>
Department for Education and Child Development South Australia (SA)	Debbie Dennis <a href="mailto:debbie.dennis@sa.gov.au">debbie.dennis@sa.gov.au</a>
Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR)	Gabrielle Phillips <a href="mailto:gabrielle.phillips@deewr.gov.au">gabrielle.phillips@deewr.gov.au</a>
Department of Education Western Australia (WA)	Gavin Morris <a href="mailto:gavin.morris@education.wa.edu.au">gavin.morris@education.wa.edu.au</a>
Department of Education and Training Northern Territory (NT)	Jeremy Howley <a href="mailto:jeremy.howley@nt.gov.au">jeremy.howley@nt.gov.au</a>
Department of Education and Communities New South Wales (NSW)	Lucy Lu <a href="mailto:lucy.lu@det.nsw.edu.au">lucy.lu@det.nsw.edu.au</a>
National Catholic Education Commission (NCEC)	Rosalie Nott <a href="mailto:rosalie.nott@cecsw.catholic.edu.au">rosalie.nott@cecsw.catholic.edu.au</a>
Department of Education and Early Childhood Development Victoria (Vic.)	Susan Dennett <a href="mailto:dennett.susan.s@edumail.vic.gov.au">dennett.susan.s@edumail.vic.gov.au</a>
Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA)	Kevin Pugh <a href="mailto:kevin.pugh@acara.edu.au">kevin.pugh@acara.edu.au</a> Sophan Chhim <a href="mailto:sophan.chhim@acara.edu.au">sophan.chhim@acara.edu.au</a>

## 9 Acronyms used in this publication

NEA	National Education Agreement
NIRA	National Indigenous Reform Agreement
COAG	Council of Australian Governments
ROGS	Report on Government Services
KPM	Key Performance Measure
NSSC	National Schools Statistics Collection
VET	Vocational Education and Training
SCSEEC	Standing Council for School Education and Early Childhood
DEEWR	Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations
SCRGSP	Steering Committee for the Review of Government Service Provision
ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
ISCA	Independent Schools Council of Australia
NCEC	National Catholic Education Commission
ACARA	Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority