



2026 ANNUAL REPORT ABORIGINAL EDUCATION OUTCOMES IN NSW CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

July 2026

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“The Church of Australia will not be fully the Church that Jesus wants her to be until [the Aboriginal people of Australia] have made [their] contribution to her life and until that contribution has been joyfully received by others.”

POPE JOHN PAUL II

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Catholic Schools NSW (CSNSW) acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as Australia's First Peoples. We honour their stories, traditions, spirituality and living cultures, acknowledging their unique contribution to the life of this country.

CSNSW acknowledges Aboriginal families and communities as the first and continuing educators of their children and young people.

In referring to Aboriginal people, this document refers inclusively to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

INTRODUCTION

Catholic schools in NSW currently educate approximately 12,740 Aboriginal students, more than at any other time in the sector's 206-year history. The sector also employs more than 570 Aboriginal teachers, teaching assistants, community engagement officers and other non-teaching staff.

This is the fifth annual report on *Aboriginal Education Outcomes in NSW Catholic Schools*. The report explores some of the trends behind the successes and challenges experienced in Catholic schools in NSW and is part of Catholic Education's broader commitment to creating educational opportunities and high-quality learning environments in inclusive, culturally safe settings for Aboriginal students and staff.

In CSNSW's Aboriginal Education Strategy document, a commitment was made to develop an annual reporting framework to monitor Aboriginal student outcomes against state and national KPIs, as well as collecting and sharing best practice case studies from across the system.

Key policy documents and reports have been referenced to guide the development of this CSNSW Aboriginal Education Outcomes Report and the metrics reported on, including:

- i. The Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration (Education Council¹)
- ii. The Measurement Framework for Schooling in Australia (Education Council and ACARA)
- iii. The Australian Education Act 2013, The National School Reform Agreement (applicable until 2024) and The Better and Fairer Schools Agreement 2025 – 2034 (Australian Government, state and territory governments)
- iv. The National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Strategy (Education Ministers Meeting)
- v. The National Report on Schooling in Australia (ACARA)
- vi. The National Agreement on Closing the Gap (the Coalition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peak Organisations and all Australian Governments)

¹ Education Council has now been replaced by the Education Ministers Meeting

vii. Building a Culturally Responsive Australian Teaching Workforce Report (Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership)

The Australian Government in partnership with the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Corporation (NATSIEC) and other First Nations peak bodies are developing a new First Nations Education Policy, expected to be finalised in 2026. Once published, this policy will also be considered in guiding the metrics for this report.

The annual report covers a range of metrics, including:

- enrolments;
- attendance and retention;
- NAPLAN;
- HSC; and
- VET and post-school destinations.

Reporting on the Australian Early Development Census (AEDC) is covered every third year, following the data release. Information on Aboriginal languages and professional learning is also included in this report. There is also a dedicated appendix covering metrics under the Better and Fairer Schools Agreement 2025 – 2034 that can be reported on with data available to the school sector.

Note that data used for reporting on Aboriginal people can have certain limitations as it requires the person to self-identify/be identified and included in reporting correctly. This may result in incomplete cohorts for certain datasets. Care must also be taken when reviewing the data as the Aboriginal cohorts are often small and easily influenced by small changes in the figures. This report will note considerations for interpretation of the data.

In referring to NSW Catholic schools in this report, this may be in reference to Catholic Systemic schools only, or to both Catholic Systemic schools and Religious Institute and Ministerial Public Juridic Person (RI/MPJP) schools. This differentiation is made clear in each section.

The most recent period available is shown for each dataset. It should be noted that the historical reporting periods include the COVID-19 pandemic (2020 – 2023), which directly impacted students and schools.



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- ▶ Catholic schools have enrolled an increasing share of Aboriginal students in NSW, up from 11.3% in 2015 to 12.5% in 2025. Over the past decade, Aboriginal student enrolments in NSW Catholic schools have grown steadily at 5.3% p.a. reaching 12,055 students in 2025.
- ▶ Since 2015, the proportion of Aboriginal students in NSW Catholic schools has increased from 2.8% to 4.4% in 2025, higher than Independent schools, but significantly lower than Government schools.
- ▶ Catholic Systemic schools remain the primary alternative to Government schools for Aboriginal students located in remote areas.
- ▶ Aboriginal language courses are available for students, and professional learning for staff to increase cultural competency and responsiveness to our students and their families.
- ▶ The Attendance Rate for Aboriginal students in Catholic schools remains higher than for Independent and Government schools. After a dip in 2024, Attendance Rates moved positively in 2025 for all sectors.
- ▶ The gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal student Attendance Rates remains smaller for Catholic schools than other school sectors.
- ▶ Catholic schools have stronger Retention Rates for Aboriginal students compared with other sectors, reaching 69.9% for Year 10 to 12 in 2025, which is above the Closing the Gap target of 67%. The Retention Rate gap in Catholic schools improved for the third year in a row in 2025.
- ▶ In the 2024 AEDC, results improved across all summary indicators, with gaps between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students in NSW Catholic schools reaching their smallest levels since the inception of the AEDC.
- ▶ Despite improvements over time in the AEDC indicators, there remains a gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal children development levels measured in their first year of schooling.
- ▶ At the last AEDC collection, 47.4% of Aboriginal children in NSW Catholic schools were on track in all five domains, compared with the Closing the Gap target of 55%.
- ▶ There is typically a shortfall in NAPLAN results between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students across each domain and grade and this gap has remained relatively consistent in Catholic Systemic schools since 2023 (the NAPLAN scale reset in 2023).
- ▶ From 2023 to 2025, the gaps between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal student NAPLAN results in Catholic Systemic schools have remained significantly smaller than those across all NSW schools.
- ▶ In 2025, the proportion of Aboriginal students in Catholic Systemic schools in the Exceeding proficiency level fell across most Year 5 NAPLAN domains, while in Year 9 the proportion rose across most domains.
- ▶ Of the 64.2% of Aboriginal students in Catholic Systemic schools awarded the HSC in 2025, 65.0% of these were eligible for ATAR. This compares favourably with the NSW all-sector rate of 50%.
- ▶ After a number of years of trending upward, the estimated median ATAR for Aboriginal students in Catholic Systemic schools decreased in 2025 from 2024.
- ▶ For Aboriginal students in Catholic Systemic schools, the combined HSC Bands 3 and 4 rate (the middle two bands) increased in 2025, while the rate for Bands 5 and 6 (highest bands) fell and the rate for Bands 1 and 2 (lowest bands) increased.
- ▶ In 2024, approximately 1 in 4 Aboriginal students in Year 11 and 12 in NSW Catholic schools participated in VET courses.
- ▶ In 2024, the VET Certificate III qualification completion rate for Aboriginal HSC students in Catholic schools is 85.5% where the full certificate is available. This is above the Closing the Gap target of 70%.
- ▶ The overall rate of Aboriginal school leavers in NSW in 2024 either in employment or education and training was 82.3% for school completers and 69.4% for early school leavers, with both rates above the Closing the Gap target of 67%.

AT A GLANCE



12,740
STUDENTS



570
SCHOOLS STAFF

ATSI* students at schools	ATSI students	% of total students in category
PRIMARY	6,924	5.1%
SECONDARY	5,816	4.1%

SYSTEMIC	11,687	4.9%
RI/MPJP	1,053	2.6%
FEMALE	6,471	4.6%
MALE	6,269	4.5%

BOARDING	219	11.7%
ESL	259	0.7%
SWD (NCCD)	4,600	7.2%

ATSI students at schools	ATSI students	Other students
CATHOLIC	49%	61%
NO RELIGION	20%	11%
UNKNOWN RELIGION	14%	5%
OTHER CHRISTIAN	13%	11%
OTHER FAITH	3%	6%
ORTHODOX	1%	5%

ATSI students at schools	ATSI students	Share of total ATSI students
MAJOR CITIES	6,239	49%
REMOTE & REGIONAL	6,501	51%

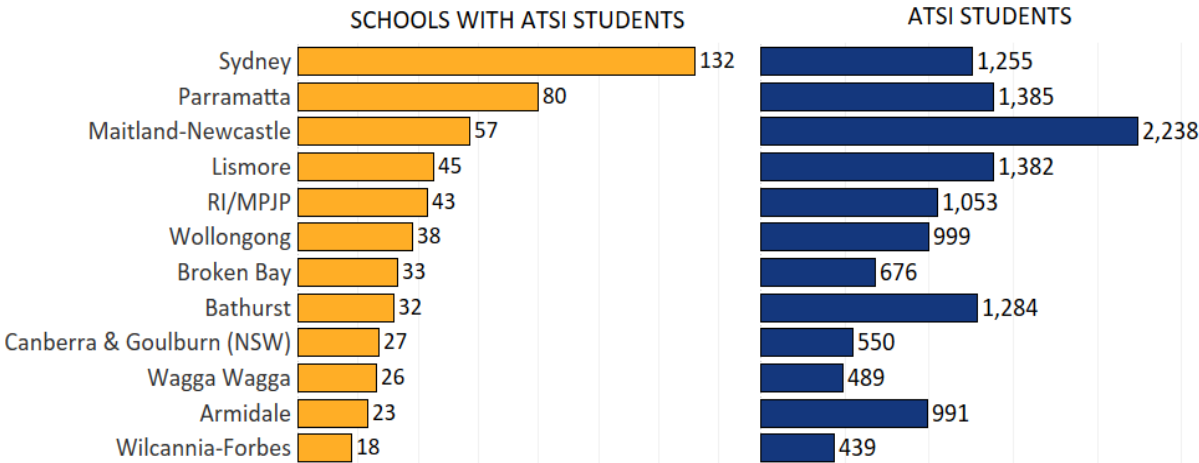


ATSI staff at schools	ATSI staff	% of total staff in category
TEACHING STAFF	206	0.9%
NON-TEACHING STAFF	364	3.4%

Staff at schools	ATSI staff	Other staff
FULL-TIME	35%	55%
PART-TIME	65%	45%
FEMALE	74%	79%
MALE	26%	21%
CATHOLIC	57%	69%
NON-CATHOLIC	28%	21%
UNKNOWN RELIGION	15%	9%

Teaching staff at schools	ATSI staff	Other staff
TEACHERS	72%	69%
COORDINATORS	21%	22%
PRINCIPALS	1%	3%
ASSISTANT PRINCIPALS	3%	3%
RE COORDINATORS	3%	2%
LIBRARIANS	0.5%	0.4%

Schools with ATSI students	Schools with ATSI students	% of total schools
MAJOR CITIES	358	92%
REMOTE & REGIONAL	196	97%



*ATSI – Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander
Sources: CSNSW Census February 2026 as of 24 April 2026 | ACARA MySchool 2025 for Geolocation | August Census 2025 for NCCD.
Notes: Full-time equivalent is used for students, and headcount is used for staff. Non-teaching staff includes specialist support staff, teacher's aides, administrative staff, building operations and other service staff. CSNSW February Census data from pre-2026 has been used for 6 RI/MPJP schools where 2026 data is not available. Effective 2026, St Laurence Flexible Learning Centre changed from a Catholic Systemic school to a Catholic RI/MPJP school. SWD refers to Students with Disability. ESL refers to English as a Second Language.

ABORIGINALITY IN CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

KEY POINTS

- ▶ Catholic schools have enrolled an increasing share of Aboriginal students in NSW, up from 11.3% in 2015 to 12.5% in 2025. Over the past decade, Aboriginal student enrolments in NSW Catholic schools have grown steadily at 5.3% p.a. reaching 12,055 students in 2025.
- ▶ Since 2015, the proportion of Aboriginal students in NSW Catholic schools has increased from 2.8% to 4.4% in 2025, higher than Independent schools, but significantly lower than Government schools.
- ▶ Catholic Systemic schools remain the primary alternative to Government schools for Aboriginal students located in remote areas.
- ▶ Aboriginal language courses are available for students, and professional learning for staff to increase cultural competency and responsiveness to our students and their families.

ENROLMENTS

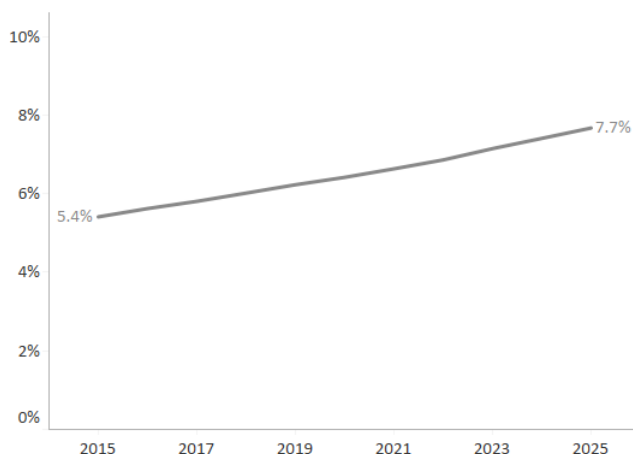
There are challenges to identifying the reasons behind movements in Aboriginal student enrolments. Firstly, it is important to note that Aboriginal students are not a homogenous group. The characteristics of these students, such as socio-economic background, location and community, can vary significantly. As such, identifying broad reasons for overall enrolment movements can oversimplify the complexities of reality.

It is noted that some Aboriginal families are more transient than non-Aboriginal families and are more likely to move children between schools and sectors, which adds to the difficulty of tracking the reasons for sectoral enrolment growth over time. The strong growth in Aboriginal student enrolments across all sectors (4.2% p.a. from 2015 to 2025) may partly be attributed to an increase in the number of students self-identifying as Aboriginal, rather than real growth in enrolments. For context, total enrolments across all NSW schools increased by only 0.6% p.a. from 2015 to 2025.

In 2025, NSW Catholic schools educated 12,055 Aboriginal students, representing a growth rate of 5.3% per annum since 2015 (2015: 7,172 students). These students make up 4.4% of the sector's cohort (4.7% for Systemic and 2.6% for RI/MPJP – see *Figure 2* below), up from 2.8% in 2015 (2.9% for Systemic and 2.2% for RI/MPJP). As shown in *Figure 1*, this upward trend in Aboriginal student enrolments is reflective of the state, where the Aboriginal proportion of students increased from 5.4% in 2015 to 7.7% in 2025. Details by diocese are provided in *Appendix 1*.

FIGURE 1

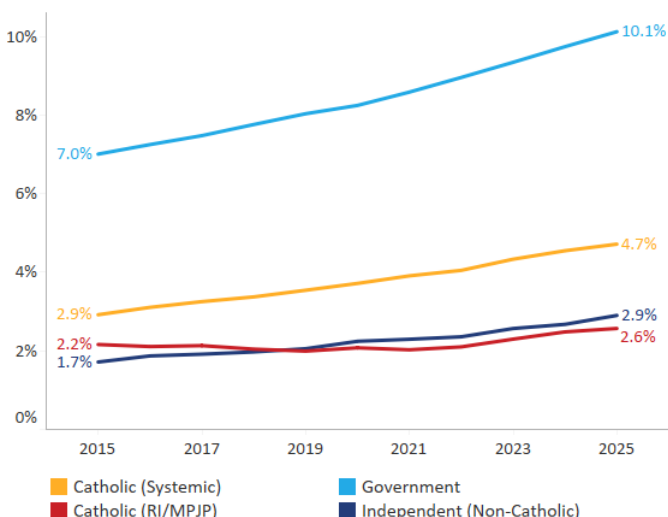
ABORIGINAL STUDENTS AS % OF COHORT IN ALL NSW SCHOOLS



Source: ACARA MySchool datasets

FIGURE 2

ABORIGINAL STUDENTS AS % OF COHORT IN NSW SCHOOLS BY SECTOR



Catholic schools have enrolled an increasing share of Aboriginal students in NSW, up from 11.3% in 2015 (10.0% for Systemic and 1.3% for RI/MPJP) to 12.5% in 2025 (11.4% for Systemic and 1.1% for RI/MPJP) (Refer to *Figure 3*).

The 11.4% share of NSW’s Aboriginal students attending Catholic Systemic schools in 2025 is the highest in the sector’s history. However, the share of Aboriginal students for RI/MPJP schools peaked at 1.3% in 2015.

The proportion of NSW Aboriginal students attending Independent schools has increased consistently from 4.1% in 2015 to 6.3% in 2025. The increases within

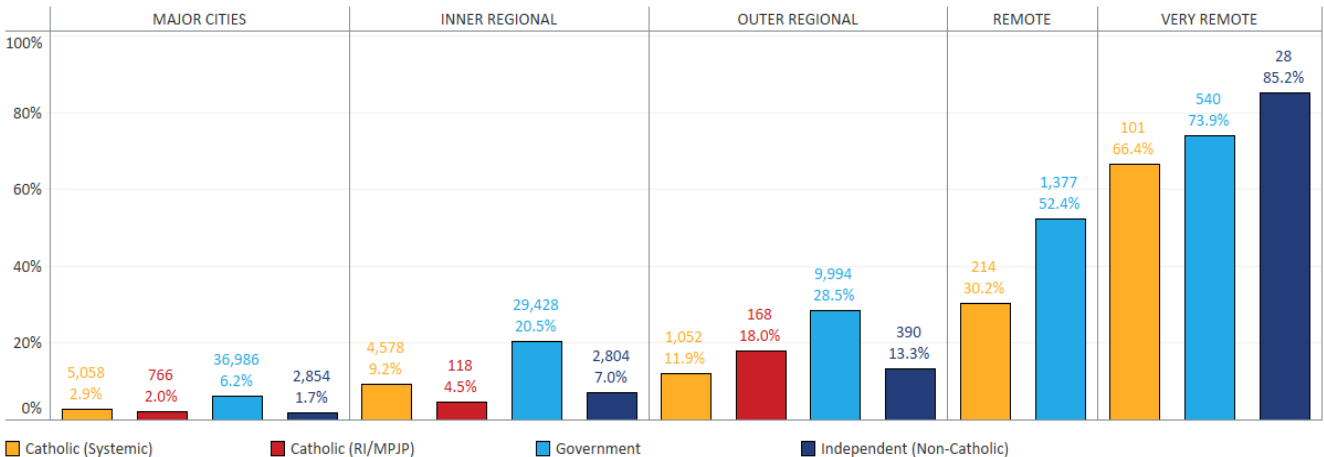
Catholic and Independent schools have been offset by a decrease in the proportion of Aboriginal students attending Government schools from 84.6% in 2015 to 81.2% in 2025. (Refer to *Appendix 1* for Catholic school details by diocese.)

GEOLOCATION

In 2025, 4.7% of students in Major City schools in NSW identified as Aboriginal, whereas the rate was almost 4x higher in Regional and Remote schools across all sectors, at 17.6% (Geolocation categories per the ABS).

Figure 4 shows Aboriginal students by geolocation of their school. In 2025, there were 45.6k Aboriginal students in Major city schools and 50.8k in Regional and Remote schools. The proportion of Aboriginal students in a school increases with the school’s remoteness, as shown below. Catholic Systemic schools remain the primary alternative to Government schools for Aboriginal students located outside of major cities.

FIGURE 4
ABORIGINAL STUDENTS BY GEOLOCATION IN NSW SCHOOLS 2025
% OF COHORT AND STUDENT NUMBERS



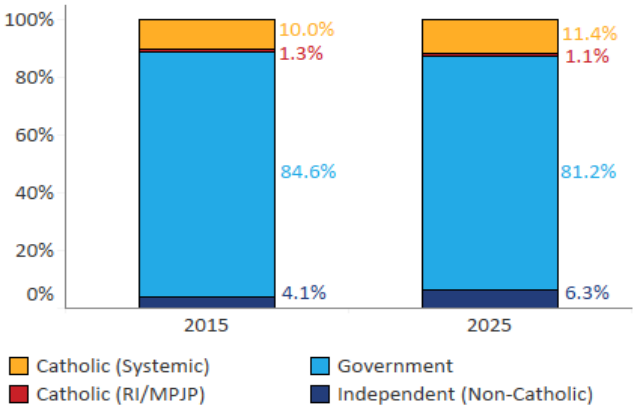
Source: ACARA MySchool datasets.

BOARDING STUDENTS

In 2025, Aboriginal students boarding in Catholic schools made up 10.4% of total boarders. There were 12 Aboriginal boarding students attending two Systemic boarding schools in the Wagga Wagga Diocese. This represents 5.7% of all Catholic Systemic school boarding students in NSW. In 2025, there were a total of 201 Aboriginal boarding students across 10 RI/MPJP boarding schools, representing 10.9% of all RI/MPJP school boarding students. Of all Aboriginal students attending an RI/MPJP school, almost 1 in 5 are boarders.

FIGURE 3

PROPORTION OF ABORIGINAL STUDENTS BY SECTOR IN NSW SCHOOLS

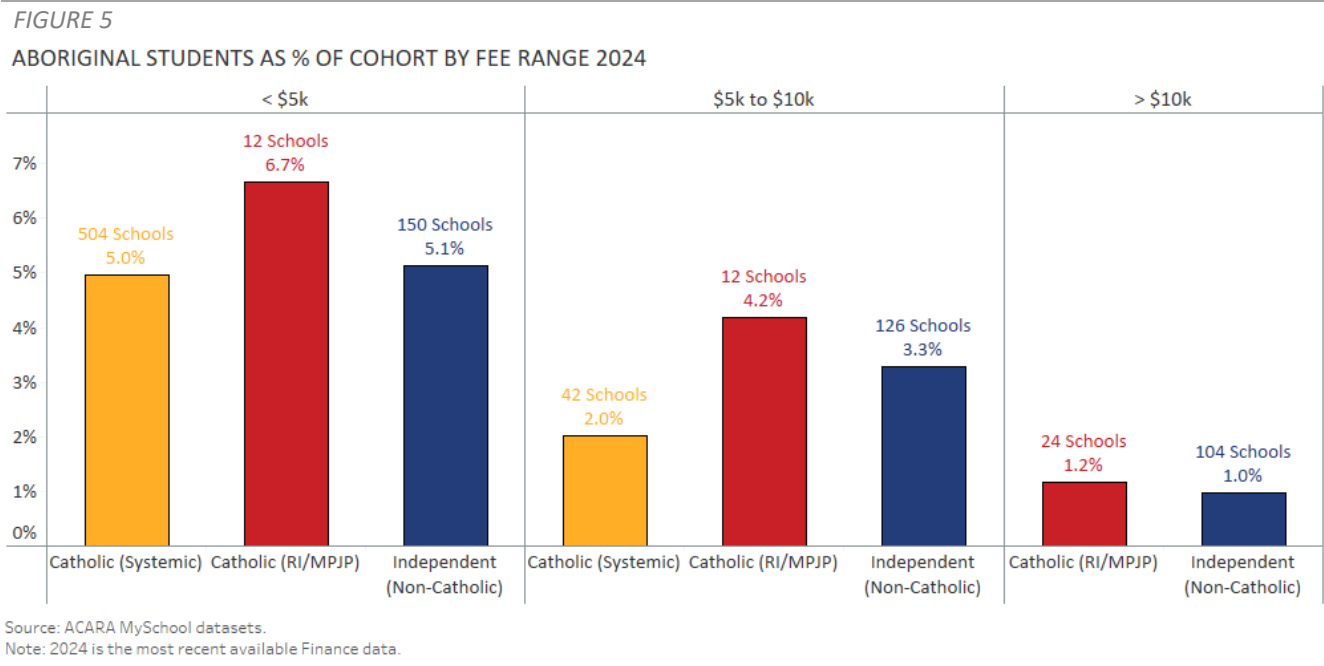


Source: ACARA MySchool datasets.

ENROLMENTS BY FEE RANGE

As shown in *Figure 5* below, there is some variation between non-government sectors in the proportion of Aboriginal students attending lower-fee schools (less than \$5k). Given that all but 42 Catholic Systemic schools fall into this fee range, this suggests the overall higher percentage of Aboriginal students in all Catholic Systemic schools (4.7% per *Figure 2*), compared to Independent and RI/MPJP schools (2.9% and 2.6% respectively per *Figure 2*), may be more to do with the level of school fees than other differentiating factors.

In 2025, although Aboriginal students as a percentage of total sector cohort was lowest in RI/MPJP schools, *Figure 5* shows that when viewed across certain fee ranges (<\$5k, \$5 to \$10k, >\$10k) a higher proportion of Aboriginal students attend RI/MPJP schools in each of the ranges.

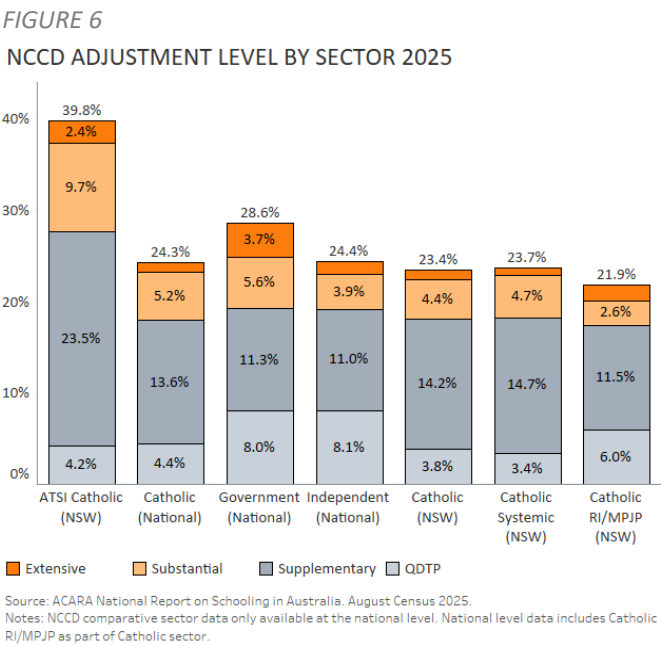


NCCD STUDENTS

The Nationally Consistent Collection of Data (NCCD) is an annual collection of information about students with disability. There are four categories of educational adjustment for students: Quality Differentiated Teaching Practice (QDTP), Supplementary, Substantial and Extensive. *Figure 6* shows that in 2025, 39.8% of Aboriginal students in NSW Catholic schools are reported as having a level of adjustment under the NCCD categorisation. This compares to rates of 23.7% and 21.9% of the total student population in NSW Catholic Systemic and RI/MPJP schools, respectively.

Comparisons to the Government and Independent sectors (all students) are only available at the national level, being 28.6% and 24.4% respectively.

The main contributors to the variance are largely driven by greater levels of Aboriginal students reported in the Supplementary (23.5%) and Substantial (9.7%) categories in NSW Catholic schools.



STAFF

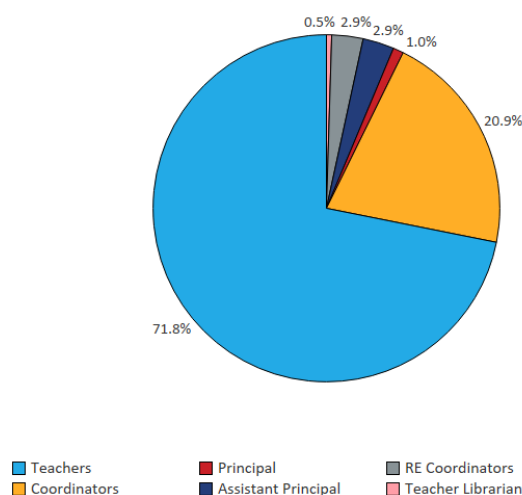
In 2026, 0.9% of Catholic school Teaching staff identified as Aboriginal (CSNSW Census February 2026). This level of representation is below the NSW state level for Aboriginal teaching staff of 2.0%¹. However, representation amongst Non-Teaching staff is much higher at 3.4%. ‘Non-Teaching staff’ includes specialist support staff, teacher’s aides, administrative staff, building operations and other service staff.

Aboriginal staff are under-represented in principal and assistant principal roles in schools. In the non-Aboriginal staff population, 2.7% of teaching staff are principals and 3.2% are assistant principals, while 1.0% of principals and 2.9% of assistant principals identify as Aboriginal in NSW Catholic schools (Refer to Figure 7).

It is important to note that data may not capture the full extent of Aboriginal staff working in and for NSW Catholic schools. This relies both on self-identification of the staff member and correct reporting. The census data may also not include casual staff and any person reported as a staff member of the diocesan school offices. As such, Aboriginal staff working in NSW Catholic schools may be higher than shown in the *At A Glance* section.

FIGURE 7

ABORIGINAL TEACHING STAFF BY ROLE 2026



Source: February Census 2026

ABORIGINAL LANGUAGES

The Closing the Gap Outcome 16 states “Cultures and languages are strong, supported and flourishing”, with a Target by 2031 that “there is a sustained increase in number and strength of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages being spoken”².

The rollout of the K-10 Aboriginal Language Syllabus in NSW in 2024 supports the Closing the Gap Target and the language aspirations of Aboriginal students and their families and communities. CSNSW commissioned a report *Let’s Talk The Language Again*³ (August 2023) to show its continued support for students being able to communicate in an Aboriginal language. Study of an Aboriginal language also gives the opportunity for students to understand the relationship between language, country and culture.

There are approximately 35 Aboriginal languages in NSW. In Catholic Systemic schools across 4 dioceses, there are 10 Primary schools that have formal Aboriginal language programs. The time allocated to Aboriginal language is commonly around 30 minutes per week, with some of that time devoted to cultural learning. There are currently 6 languages with courses or materials (e.g. dictionary) available to our students. These languages include: Wiradjuri, Gamilaraay and Wayilwan-Ngiyambaa (Bathurst Diocese), Gamilaraay and Yuwaalaraay (Armidale Diocese), Gumbaynggi (Lismore Diocese), and Gathang (Maitland-Newcastle Diocese).

The longer-established language programs were substantially initiated by the local Aboriginal communities with the local school, and have continued with strong diocesan support. The relatively new language programs come from both individual and diocesan initiatives.

¹ <<https://www.aitsl.edu.au/atwd/in-focus/aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-teachers>>

² <https://www.closingthegap.gov.au/national-agreement/targets>

³ *Let’s Talk The Language Again Report*, August 2023

PROFESSIONAL LEARNING FOR CULTURAL RESPONSIVENESS

Through CSNSW's Professional Learning platform, staff in Catholic schools across NSW are offered the opportunity to increase their Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural competency, bringing these perspectives into the curriculum and improving awareness of First Nations histories. CSNSW also offers on-country experiences, conferences and networking meetings to allow participants to further develop their understanding, build skills and learn from others.

The *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander State Education Conference* is co-hosted every three years by CSNSW and a NSW diocese. The most recent conference was themed "*Spirit on Country: Learning Together, Then, Now & Always*", held in the diocese of Armidale in 2024. Since starting in 2004, these conferences have attracted over 2,800 participants.

Training courses offered by CSNSW and dioceses have included *Building Leadership in Aboriginal Education Across Catholic Schools*, *Trauma Informed Practice* and *Foundations for Learning – Aboriginal Students*, and *Building Teachers' Cultural Intellect and First Nations Perspectives Through Literacy and Numeracy*. A key training offered is the workshop *Crossing Cultures: Hidden Histories*, which helps to expand the cultural awareness of participants, to build cultural competence and foster reconciliation. Across the dioceses in NSW, there has been over 1,000 participants to date through CSNSW or the dioceses.



ATTENDANCE AND RETENTION

KEY POINTS

- ▶ The Attendance Rate for Aboriginal students in Catholic schools remains higher than for Independent and Government schools. After a dip in 2024, Attendance Rates moved positively in 2025 for all sectors.
- ▶ The gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal student Attendance Rates remains smaller for Catholic schools than other school sectors. In 2025, the gap for the Catholic sector was 4.2% compared to 6.8% for Independent schools and 10.0% for Government schools.
- ▶ Catholic schools have stronger Retention Rates for Aboriginal students compared with other sectors, reaching 69.9% for Year 10 to 12 in 2025, which is above the Closing the Gap target of 67%. The Retention Rate gap improved for the third year in a row, declining from 15.4% in 2024 to 13.5% in 2025.

The National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Strategy 2015 identified Attendance as a priority area. Retention rates are critical to meet the National Agreement on Closing the Gap outcome: *“Students achieve their full learning potential”*, with the target *“By 2031, increase the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people (age 20-24) attaining year 12 or equivalent qualification to 96%”*.

“Youth are engaged in employment or education” is another stated outcome of the Closing the Gap agreement, with a stated target *“By 2031, increase the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth (15-24 years) who are in employment, education or training to 67%.”*¹

Overall, the gaps in attendance and retention rates between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students are much smaller for Catholic schools compared to Government and Independent schools. The smaller gaps noted for Catholic schools may be partly attributed to the structure of intentional support for Aboriginal students throughout the system. Each diocese employs Aboriginal Education Officers who have knowledge of the challenges of Aboriginal students within their local schools and community. In a number of dioceses there has been an intentional balance between more traditional support for Aboriginal students (i.e. sitting in classrooms and supporting teachers) and focusing on broader community engagement.

ATTENDANCE RATE

Attendance Rate is 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 over the period.

The *School Attendance: New Insights from AERO* report released in January 2025² by the Australian Education Research Organisation highlighted the following drivers of student absence, with additional barriers for Aboriginal students noted in their findings:

- School factors: Bullying, safety concerns, poor teacher-student relationships, lack of academic support.
- Student factors: Mental health issues, chronic illness, adverse childhood experiences.
- Family/community factors: Economic disadvantage, lower parental education, housing instability.
- Additional barriers for First Nations students: Racism, cultural disconnect, language barriers, and past negative experiences with education.

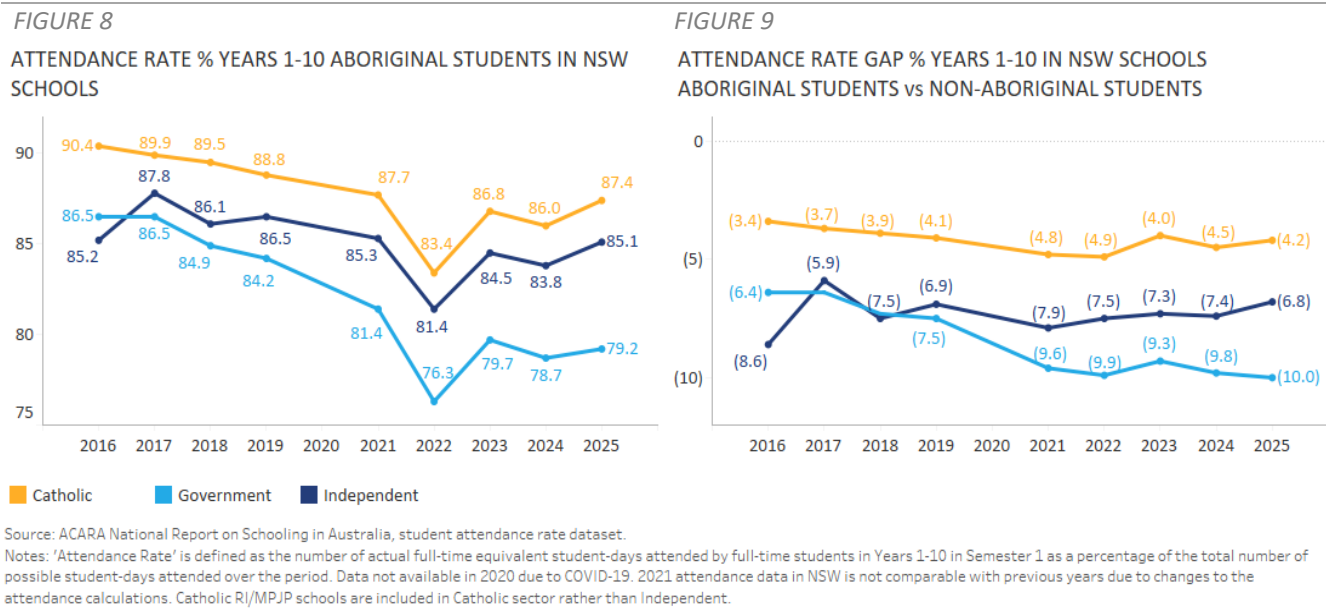
In 2022, Attendance Rates reached a historical low for all students, being severely impacted by health advice related to COVID-19, families removing children from school for international travel, flooding disasters in NSW and exacerbated school attendance issues in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. Following a healthy rebound in Attendance Rates in 2023, there was a dip in 2024, before returning to a positive movement again in 2025 across all school sectors in NSW.

¹ <https://www.closingthegap.gov.au/national-agreement/targets>

² <https://www.edresearch.edu.au/summaries-explainers/explainers/school-attendance-new-insights-aero>

In 2025, the Attendance Rate for Aboriginal students in all sectors has increased, returning to above or close to 2023 rates. In Catholic schools the Attendance Rate for Aboriginal students was 87.4%, which is higher level than for Independent (85.1%) and Government schools (79.2%). (Refer to *Figure 8*.)

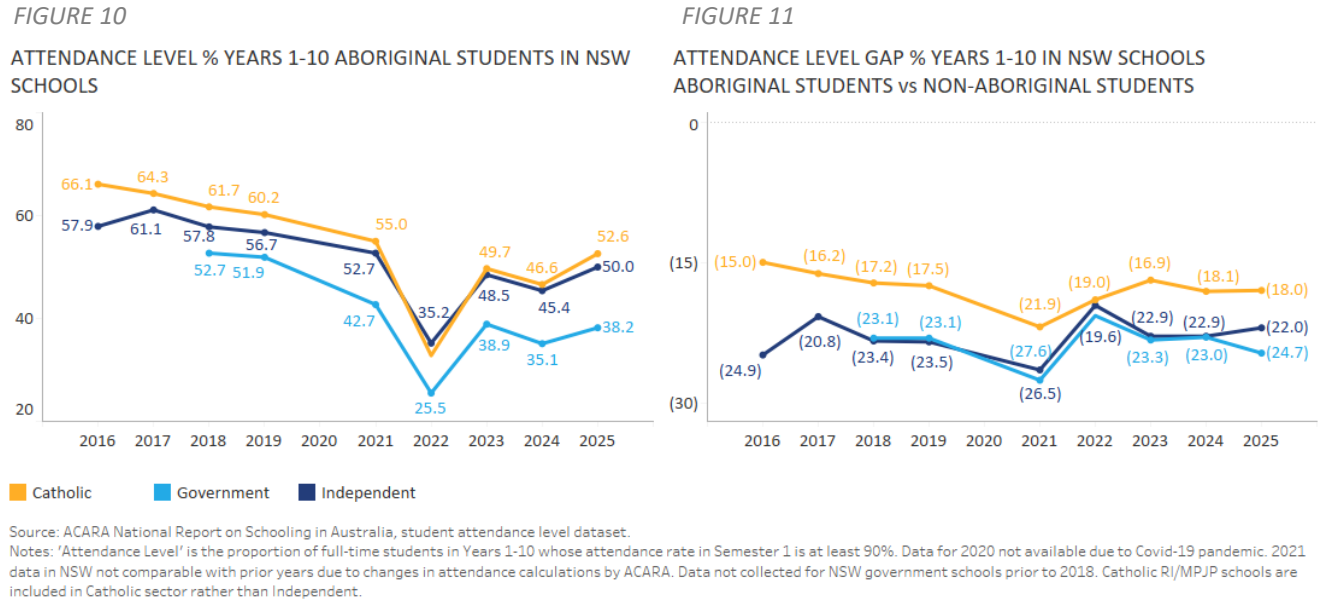
The gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal student Attendance Rates remains smaller for Catholic schools than other school sectors. In 2025, the gap for the Catholic sector was 4.2% compared to 6.8% for Independent schools and 10.0% for Government schools. (Refer to *Figure 9*.)



ATTENDANCE LEVEL

Attendance Level is the proportion of full-time students in Years 1 to 10 whose Attendance Rate in Semester 1 is at least 90%.

Aboriginal students in Catholic schools have the highest Attendance Level across the NSW school sectors at 52.6% in 2025, ahead of the 50.0% recorded for Independent schools and 38.2% at Government schools. There is still a significant gap of 18.0% between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students in Catholic schools, a very slight decrease from 2025 (Refer to *Figures 10 and 11*). Attendance Level trends show a similar pattern to Attendance Rates, where a recovery in 2023 was followed by a dip in 2024 across all school sectors then a positive move upwards in 2025.



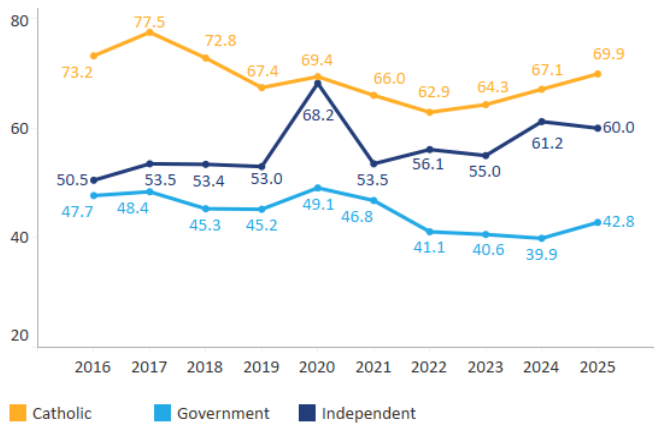
RETENTION RATES

The Apparent Retention Rate (Retention Rate) is an indicative measure of the number of full-time students in a designated year level of schooling as a percentage of their respective cohort in a baseline year.

Figure 12 shows the Retention Rate between Year 10 and Year 12, that is, the proportion of the Year 10 cohort who go on to complete Year 12.

FIGURE 12

RETENTION RATE % YEARS 10-12 ABORIGINAL STUDENTS IN NSW SCHOOLS



Source: ACARA National Report on Schooling in Australia, student retention rate dataset.
Notes: 'Apparent Retention Rate' is an indicative measure of the number of full-time school students in a designated year level of schooling as a percentage of their respective cohort group in a base year. Catholic RI/MPJP schools are included in Catholic sector rather than Independent. Overall, it is estimated that the impacts of COVID-19 on the data were minor.

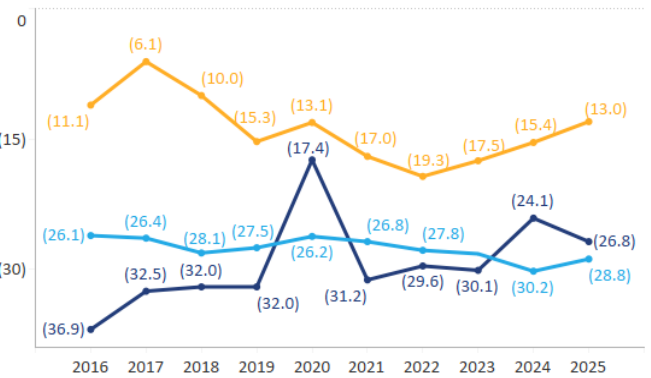
In 2025, the Years 10 to 12 Retention Rate was 69.9% for Aboriginal students in Catholic schools, an improvement on the rate of 67.1% in 2024, but far below the peak of 77.5% recorded in 2017. The Retention Rate for Aboriginal students in Catholic schools remains above the Independent and Government school rates of 60.0% and 42.8% respectively.

Similar to Attendance trends, the gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal student Retention Rates remains significantly smaller for Catholic schools than for Independent and Government schools. Figure 13 also shows the gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students in Catholic schools improved for the third year in a row, falling to 13.0% in 2025 from 15.4% in 2024.

The Retention Rate for Aboriginal students in Catholic schools for 2025 from Year 7 to Year 10 is 100¹%, indicating that all students enrolled in high school reach their final full year of school before they are able to legally leave. The Year 10 to Year 11 Retention Rate is 72.5% for Aboriginal students in Catholic schools. In NSW, when students complete Year 10 or turn 17 they can leave school without a pathway. The Retention Rates for Catholic school Aboriginal students are above the Closing the Gap Target of 67% of Aboriginal youth (15-24 years) being in employment, education or training. Refer to the section in this report on VET & Post-School Destinations for further information on students who leave school early.

FIGURE 13

RETENTION RATE GAP % YEARS 10-12 IN NSW SCHOOLS ABORIGINAL STUDENTS vs NON-ABORIGINAL STUDENTS



¹ The Apparent Retention Rate in 2025 for Aboriginal students from Year 7 to 10 in the Catholic sector in 2025 is 100.4%. The rate can be higher than 100% where the cohort of students in Year 10 has increased from the cohort size from the equivalent Year 7 group.

AUSTRALIAN EARLY DEVELOPMENT CENSUS

KEY POINTS

In the 2024 AEDC, results improved across all summary indicators, with gaps between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students in NSW Catholic Schools reaching their smallest level since the inception of the AEDC.

Despite improvements over time in the AEDC indicators, there remains a gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal children development levels measured in their first year of schooling.

At the last AEDC collection, 47.4% of Aboriginal children in NSW Catholic schools were on track in all five domains, compared with the Closing the Gap target of 55% and 57.1% for non-Aboriginal children.

An outcome of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap is “*Children thrive in their early years*”, with the stated target “*By 2031, increase the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children on track in all five domains of the Australian Early Development Census to 55%*”¹.

In the 2024 census, there were 965 Aboriginal children in their first year of school in NSW Catholic Schools (of a total of 19.5k) captured in the data².

ABOUT THE AUSTRALIAN EARLY DEVELOPMENT CENSUS

The Australian Early Development Census (AEDC) is a national data collection program led by the Australian Government that measures how children are developing when they begin their first year of full-time schooling. Conducted every three years since 2009, the 2024 collection was the sixth cycle and took place from 1 May to 31 July 2024. In NSW, participation was very high (about 94.4%), involving 90,700 Kindergarten children, 5,439 teachers and 2,301 schools across the three school sectors.

The AEDC assesses development across five domains: physical health and wellbeing, social competence, emotional maturity, language and cognitive skills (school-based), and communication skills and general knowledge. Children’s development in each domain is classified as “on track,” “at risk,” or “vulnerable.” The AEDC is not a test of children or schools, rather, it provides population-level insights and is a strong predictor of later academic achievement and social and emotional wellbeing.

FIVE DOMAINS

The five key areas of early childhood development are referred to as “domains”.



Physical health and wellbeing



Social competence



Emotional maturity



Language and cognitive skills



Communication skills and general knowledge

SUMMARY INDICATORS

Summary indicators are used to monitor trends in child development.

Vuln 1

Vulnerable 1 (“DV1”) = developmentally vulnerable in one or more domains

Vuln 2

Vulnerable 2 (“DV2”) = developmentally vulnerable in two or more domains

OT5

On Track 5 (“OT5”) = developmentally on track in all five domains

TRENDS OF DEVELOPMENT FOR ABORIGINAL CHILDREN IN NSW CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

Since the first AEDC collection, there has been an improving trend in the three summary indicators for Aboriginal children. However, there was a downturn between 2018 and 2021 experienced across the board as COVID-19 interrupted early childhood learning participation. In 2024, results improved across all summary indicators, with the gaps between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students in NSW Catholic schools reaching their smallest levels since the inception of the AEDC. Despite the improving results, there remains a clear gap in the summary indicators between Aboriginal children and non-Aboriginal children in NSW Catholic schools.

¹ <https://www.closingthegap.gov.au/national-agreement/targets>

² When considering changes in indicators, for a small community with 100 children, the AEDC results would need to shift by 4 to 7 percentage points to represent a significant shift in child development, depending on which AEDC indicator is of interest.

CATHOLIC SCHOOLS NSW

ABORIGINAL EDUCATION OUTCOMES IN NSW CATHOLIC SCHOOLS | 14

In 2024, the OT5 summary indicator for Aboriginal children improved to 47.4% (see *Figure 14*). This compares to the Closing the Gap target of 55% and the decline to 57.1% for non-Aboriginal children.

Figure 15 shows Aboriginal children in Catholic schools the VULN1 category had a clear improvement between the 2009 and 2018 collections. Following a decline in this indicator in 2021, it was 26.7% in 2024, almost back to the strongest level reported in 2018.

The trends over time are the same in VULN 2 as the other summary indicators. The result in 2024 improved to 14.0%, with the smallest gap to non-Aboriginal students recorded. (Refer to *Figure 16*.)

FIGURE 14

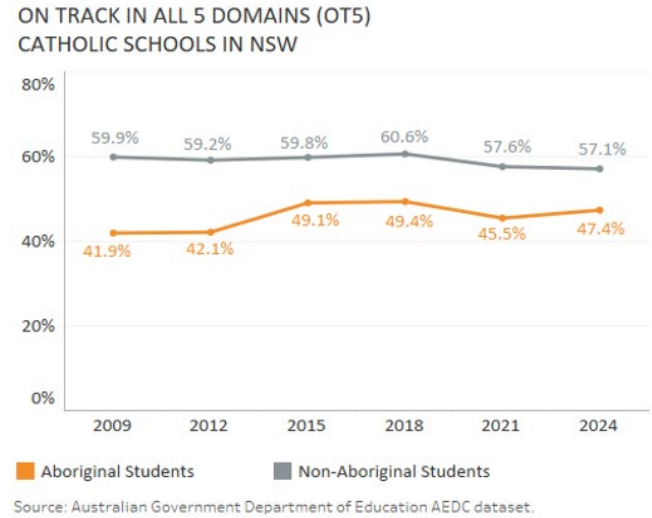


FIGURE 15

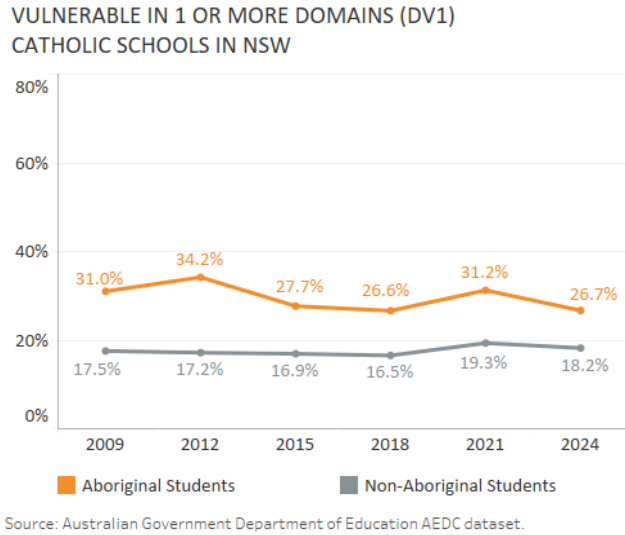


FIGURE 16

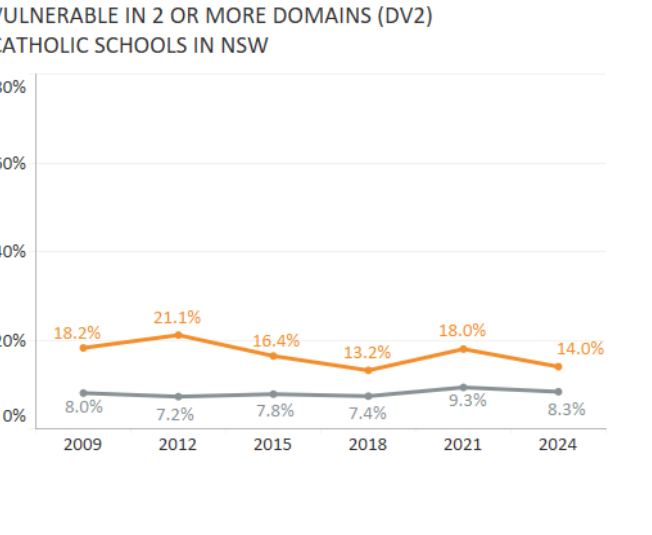
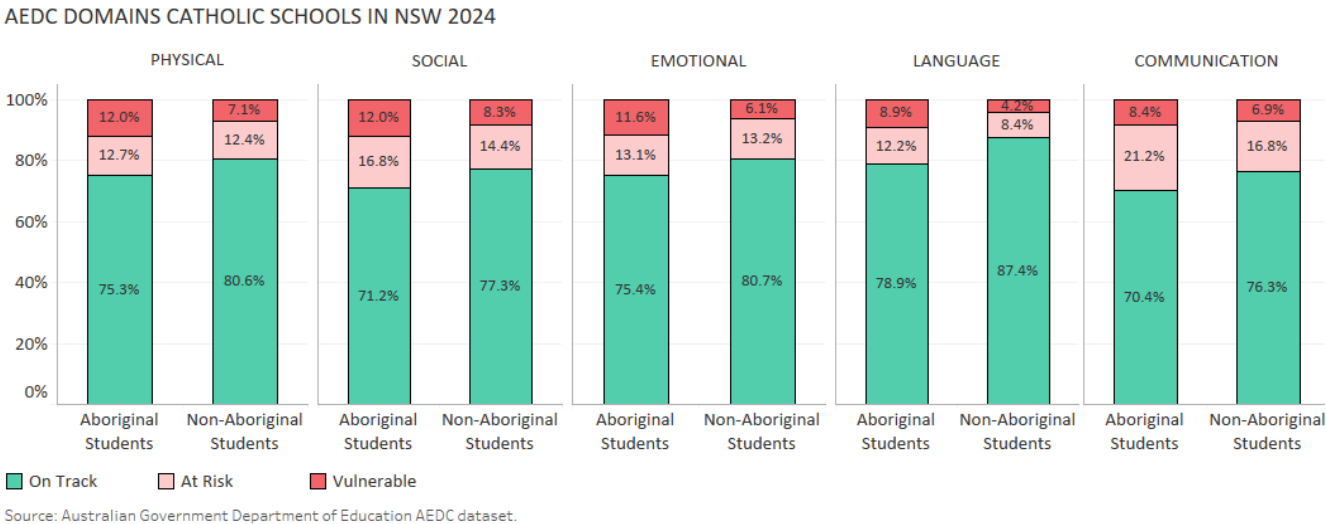


Figure 17 below shows the proportion of Aboriginal students and other students in NSW Catholic schools in each of the developmental categories who are categorised as on track, vulnerable or at risk.

FIGURE 17



NAPLAN PERFORMANCE

KEY POINTS

- ▶ There is typically a shortfall in NAPLAN results between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students across each domain and grade and this gap has remained relatively consistent in Catholic Systemic schools since 2023 (the NAPLAN scale reset in 2023).
- ▶ From 2023 to 2025, the gaps between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal student NAPLAN results in Catholic Systemic schools have remained significantly smaller than those across all NSW schools.
- ▶ In 2025, the proportion of Aboriginal students in Catholic Systemic schools in the Exceeding proficiency level fell across most Year 5 NAPLAN domains, while in Year 9 the proportion rose across most domains.

The National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Strategy 2015 identified Literacy and Numeracy as a priority area. The National Agreement on Closing the Gap has identified being at or above the NAPLAN minimum standards in reading, writing and numeracy as a key driver of Year 12 or equivalent attainment¹.

The National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) test is an annual assessment for all students in Years 3, 5, 7 and 9, covering five domains: Numeracy, Reading, Spelling, Grammar & Punctuation, and Writing. NAPLAN is the only national assessment that all Australian children undertake and provides comparable data about student performance in literacy and numeracy.

The Government made several changes to the timing and measurement of NAPLAN in 2023 (refer to *Appendix 2* for further details). Results from 2022 and prior are not comparable.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR ABORIGINAL STUDENT NAPLAN REPORTING

Analysis comparing NAPLAN performance between Catholic Systemic school Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students should be treated with caution for two reasons:

1. The number of Aboriginal students sitting tests in each NAPLAN cohort is small². In 2025, the number of Aboriginal students in Systemic Catholic schools sitting at least 1 NAPLAN test in each grade was: 933 in Year 3; 878 in Year 5; 990 in Year 7 and 828 in Year 9.
2. NAPLAN analysis comparing Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students does not consider other student background characteristics. This limits the conclusions which can be drawn from the analysis.

Please refer to *Appendix 3* for NAPLAN charts for RI/MPJP schools.

NAPLAN AVERAGE SCORES

Years 5 Reading and Numeracy NAPLAN results for Aboriginal students in Catholic Systemic schools were consistent from 2024 to 2025, while Year 9 results in these 2 domains improved in 2025. (Refer to *Figure 18*.)

There has typically been a shortfall in NAPLAN results between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students across each domain and grade and this gap has remained relatively consistent in Catholic Systemic schools from 2023 to 2025.

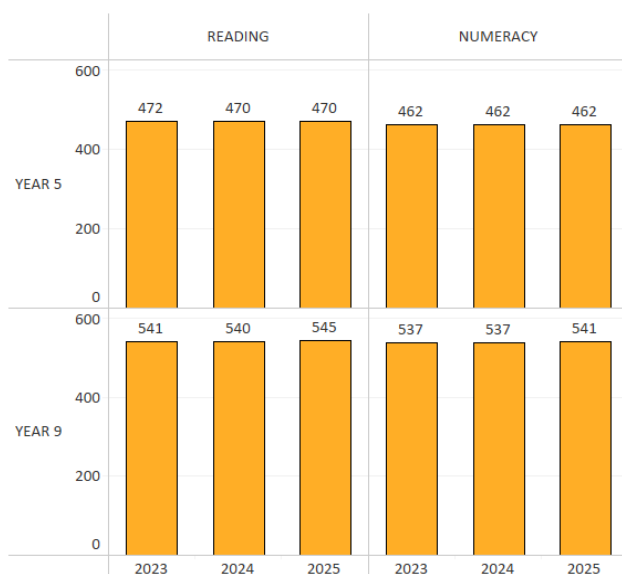
The gaps in Reading and Numeracy for Year 5 Aboriginal students in Catholic Systemic schools are approximately two-thirds of gaps in all NSW schools. In Year 9, the gaps in these domains are approximately half of those seen across NSW all schools. For example, in 2025, Year 9 Reading shows a gap of 32 in Catholic Systemic schools compared to the gap of 65 in all NSW schools.

¹ <https://www.closingthegap.gov.au/>; Outcome 5 Drivers

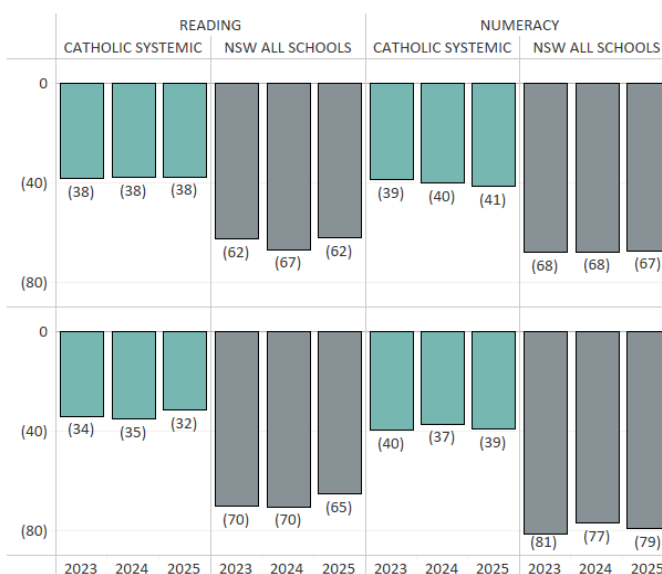
² Includes Aboriginal students marked as “present” or sitting an “alternative format”.

FIGURE 18

NAPLAN AVERAGE SCORES
ABORIGINAL STUDENTS IN CATHOLIC SYSTEMIC SCHOOLS



NAPLAN AVERAGE SCORES GAP
ABORIGINAL STUDENTS vs NON-ABORIGINAL STUDENTS



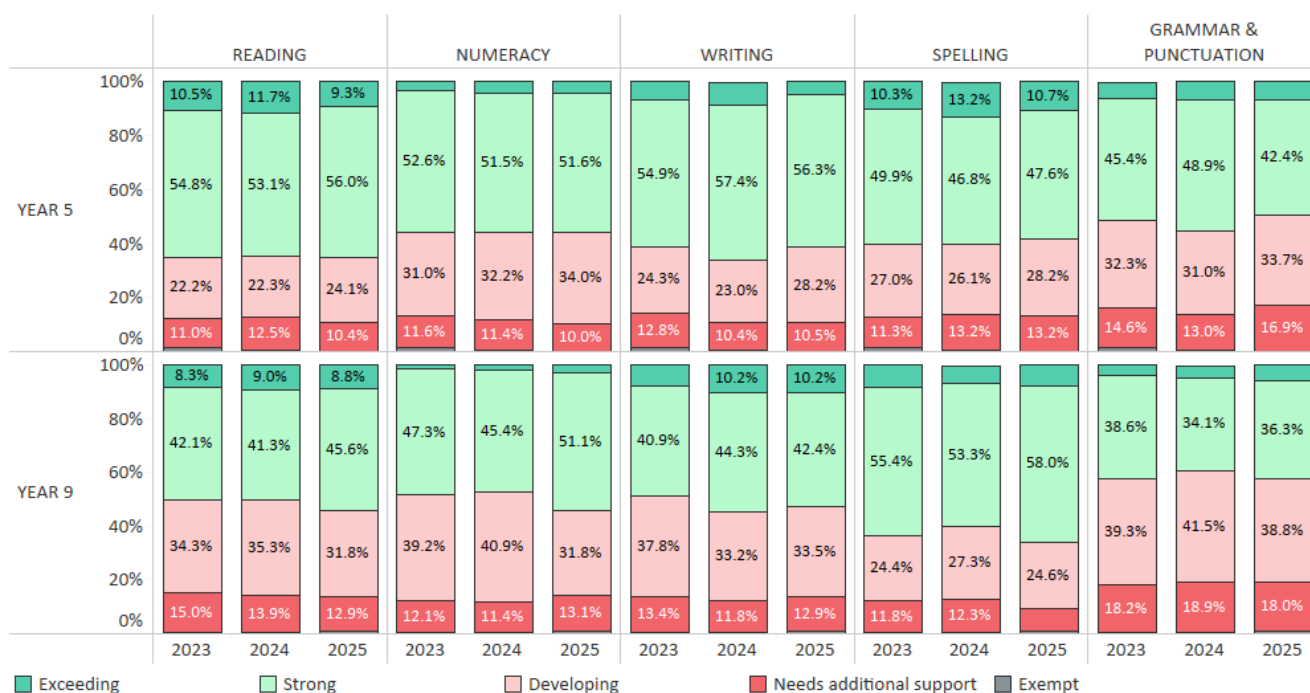
Source: NSW Education Standards Authority (NESA).
Notes: For brevity, results are shown for Year 5 and Year 9 Reading and Numeracy only.

PROFICIENCY LEVELS

Figure 19 shows the proportion of Aboriginal Catholic Systemic school students in each NAPLAN proficiency level by domain for Years 5 and 9 for 2023, 2024 and 2025. Please refer to the next two sections for discussion on movements in the Exceeding and Needs Additional Support proficiency levels.

FIGURE 19

NAPLAN PROFICIENCY LEVELS
ABORIGINAL STUDENTS IN CATHOLIC SYSTEMIC SCHOOLS

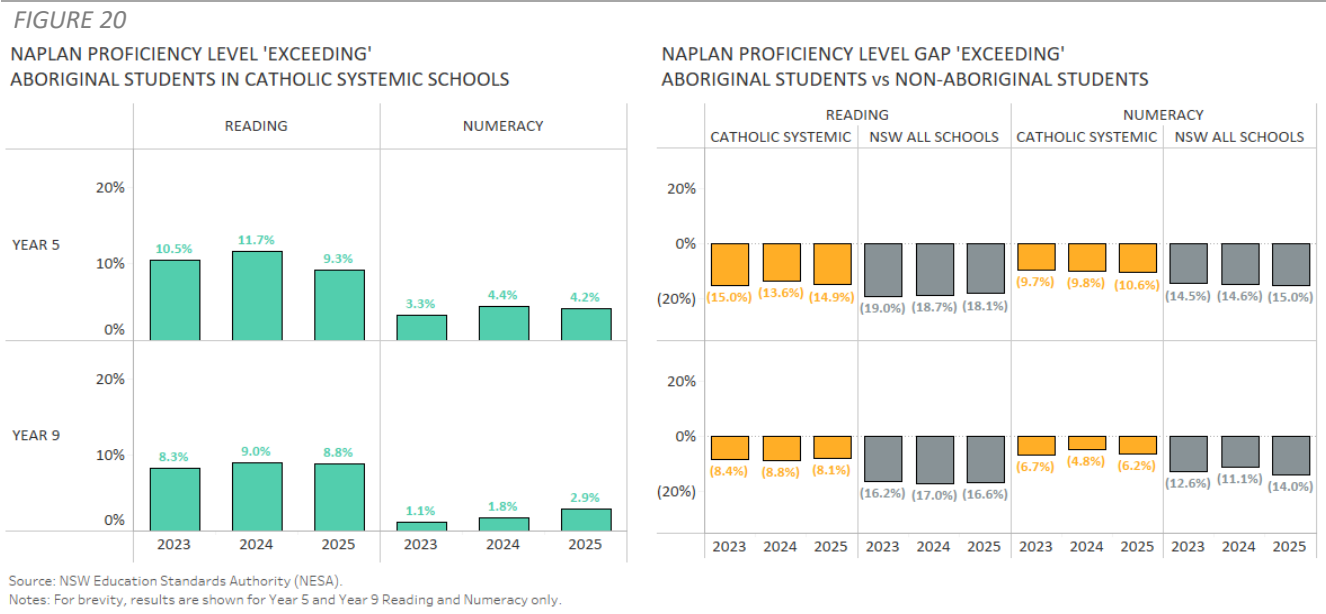


Source: NSW Education Standards Authority (NESA).
Notes: For brevity, results are shown for Year 5 and Year 9 only.

EXCEEDING PROFICIENCY LEVEL

In 2025, the proportion of Aboriginal students in Catholic Systemic schools achieving the Exceeding proficiency level declined across Years 5 Reading and Numeracy, and Year 9 Reading as shown in *Figure 20*. The gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students has widened compared to 2024 in Year 5 results for Reading and Numeracy, and Year 9 results for Numeracy. There was a decline in the gap for Year 9 Reading.

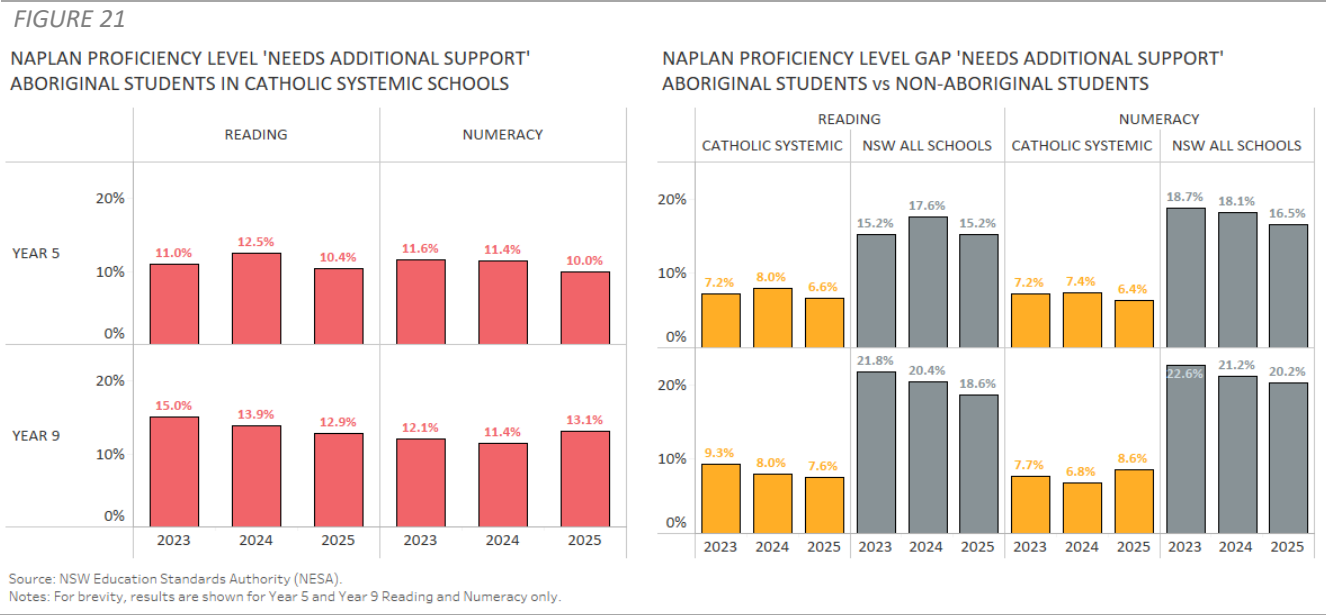
The gaps in Catholic Systemic schools remain notably smaller than those across all NSW schools.



NEEDS ADDITIONAL SUPPORT PROFICIENCY LEVEL

In 2025, there was a reduction in the proportion of Aboriginal students in Catholic Systemic schools within the Needs Additional Support proficiency level for Year 5 Reading and Numeracy and Year 9 Reading, and the gap compared to non-Aboriginal students also fell. Year 9 Numeracy saw a rise in the Needs Additional Support level for Aboriginal students as well as an increase in the gap to non-Aboriginal students.

The gaps in Catholic Systemic schools remain significantly smaller than those noted across all NSW schools.



HSC PERFORMANCE

KEY POINTS

▶

Of the 64.2% of Aboriginal students in Catholic Systemic schools awarded the HSC in 2025, 65.0% were also eligible for ATAR. This compares favourably with the NSW all-sector rate of 50%.

▶

After a number of years of trending upward, the estimated median ATAR for Aboriginal students in Catholic Systemic schools decreased to 58.7 in 2025 from 62.9 in 2024.

▶

For Aboriginal students in Catholic Systemic schools, the combined HSC Bands 3 and 4 rate (the middle two bands) increased in 2025, while the rate for Bands 5 and 6 (highest bands) fell and the rate for Bands 1 and 2 (lowest bands) increased.

▶

For the HSC, Aboriginal students in Catholic Systemic schools take a higher proportion of VET, PDHPE and Creative Arts subjects compared to non-Aboriginal students.

An outcome of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap is “*Students achieve their full learning potential*”, with the stated target “*By 2031, increase the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people (age 20-24) attaining year 12 or equivalent qualification to 96%*”¹.

Reporting on Aboriginal students for HSC and ATAR requires that NESA records capture students’ identity information. For Year 12 Catholic Systemic student records with NESA, approximately 1% in 2024 do not have any identification information.² Enrolment of Aboriginal students in Year 12 are taken from the August Census.

HSC AND ATAR TRENDS

As shown in *Table 1*, 283 Aboriginal students in Catholic Systemic schools were awarded their HSC in 2025, the highest number in the last five year period. After a decline from the peak in 2021 to 2024, the HSC Awarded rate increased to 64.2% in 2025 of those Aboriginal students identified in the August Census³.

The Closing the Gap target is to increase the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, age 20-24, attaining their Year 12 or equivalent qualification to 96%. The HSC Awarded rate of 65.0% for Aboriginal students in Catholic Systemic schools has a significant gap to this target, however, it reflects only the achievement rates for HSC, and for those completing it through the school system.

Of the Aboriginal students in Catholic Systemic schools awarded their HSC in 2025, 184, or 65.0% were eligible for an ATAR. By comparison, 50% of Aboriginal student HSC recipients across all NSW schools were eligible for an ATAR.⁴ The percentage of Catholic Systemic school Aboriginal students eligible for an ATAR in 2025 fell from the high recorded in 2024.

TABLE 1

Catholic Systemic Schools	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Aboriginal Students					
HSC Awarded	258	238	248	275	283
% HSC Awarded	73.7%	65.7%	66.3%	63.1%	64.2%
Eligible for ATAR	170	161	167	195	184
% Eligible for ATAR	65.9%	67.6%	67.3%	70.9%	65.0%
Non-Aboriginal Students					
HSC Awarded	12,251	12,142	12,389	12,847	13,079
% HSC Awarded	99.8%	99.5%	99.9%	99.9%	99.9%
Eligible for ATAR	10,014	9,986	10,095	10,312	10,736
% Eligible for ATAR	81.7%	82.2%	81.5%	80.3%	82.1%

Source: NESA Authorities Online, August Census
Note: In the August Census, where the Aboriginal identity of a student is recorded as ‘not stated’ (less than 1% for Year 12 students), this is included with ‘non-Aboriginal’ students.

¹ <https://www.closingthegap.gov.au/national-agreement/targets>

² HSC Awarded per the NESA Student Identities records for HSC. Note this information comes from school records which relies on students being correctly identified and recorded.

³ In 2025, 441 Year 12 students from Catholic Systemic schools were identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander in the August Census. Those reported as ‘Not-stated’ for Indigenous identity were included with non-Aboriginal students (less than 1% for Year 12 students). 283 students were identified in NESA records as being awarded the HSC.

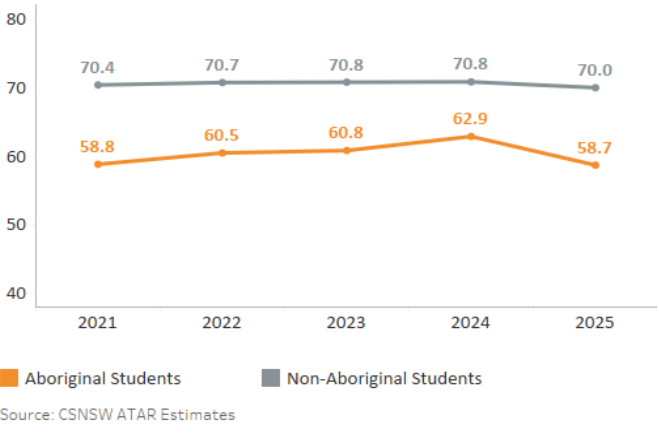
⁴ NESA HSC 2025 data

The percentage of non-Aboriginal HSC students eligible for an ATAR in Catholic Systemic schools increased to 82.1% in 2025 from 80.3% in 2024. The ATAR eligibility gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students in Catholic Systemic schools widened to 17.1% in 2025, from 9.4% in 2024 (see *Table 1*).

As shown in *Figure 22*, the estimated median ATAR¹ for non-Aboriginal students in Catholic Systemic schools has been approximately 70 to 71 over the past five years and is generally close to the overall NSW median (70.8 in 2025 as released by UAC²).

After a number of years of trending upward, the estimated median ATAR for Aboriginal students decreased to 58.7 in 2025 from 62.9 in 2024. The gap to non-Aboriginal students in Catholic Systemic schools, increased to 11.3 in 2025.

FIGURE 22
MEDIAN ESTIMATED ATAR TRENDS IN NSW CATHOLIC SYSTEMIC SCHOOLS



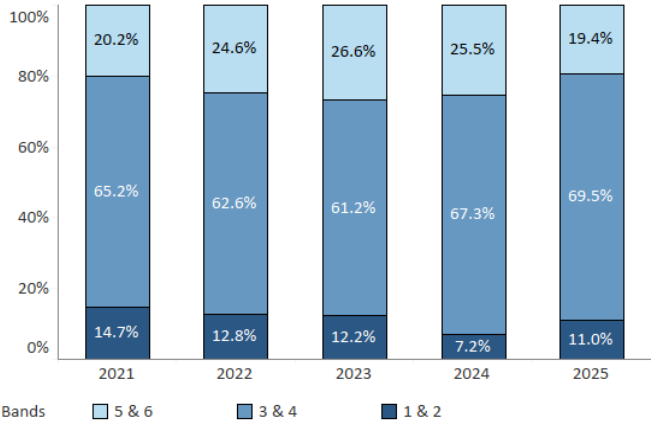
HSC BAND TRENDS

For each HSC course, performance bands indicate levels of achievement demonstrated by students. For a 2-Unit course, Band 6 indicates the highest level of performance, while Band 1 indicates that a student’s performance is considered to be below the minimum standard expected³.

Figure 23 below groups HSC Bands 1 and 2, 3 and 4, and 5 and 6 for HSC subjects studied by Aboriginal students in Catholic Systemic schools between 2021 and 2025. The Bands 3 and 4 rate increased in 2025 compared to 2024, while the Bands 5 and 6 rate decreased and the Bands 1 and 2 rate increased.

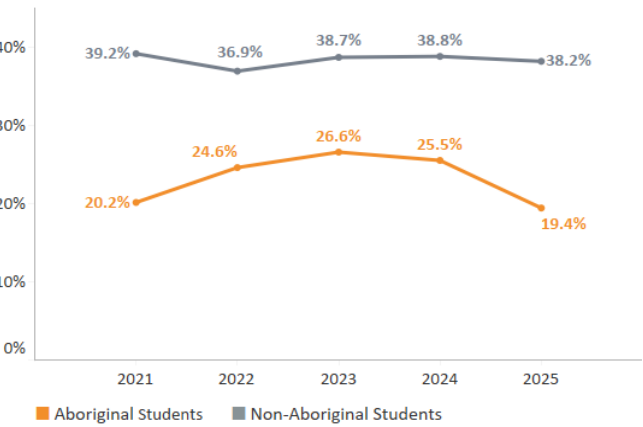
Figure 24 compares the Bands 5 and 6 rate for HSC subjects completed by Aboriginal students, with the Bands 5 and 6 rate for non-Aboriginal students. While the non-Aboriginal student rate stayed similar to the prior year, the rate fell for Aboriginal students, causing the gap to widen in 2025 to 18.8%.

FIGURE 23
HSC BAND RATES
ABORIGINAL STUDENTS IN NSW CATHOLIC SYSTEMIC SCHOOLS



Source: NESA Authorities Online Master Student Results. Bands 5 and 6 are the top two highest bands.

FIGURE 24
BAND 5 & 6 RATES IN NSW CATHOLIC SYSTEMIC SCHOOLS



¹ Median ATARs are estimated by CSNSW modelling using HSC marks and Tables A3 and A9 of the [“ATAR 2025 - Preliminary Report on the Scaling of the 2025 NSW Higher School Certificate”, UAC](#)

² Report link above

³ <https://www.nsw.gov.au/education-and-training/nesa/hsc/results-and-certificates/understanding-your-results>

HSC SUBJECT SELECTION

Table 2 shows the proportion of total HSC subject units taken in each of the Key Learning Areas (KLA) by Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students in Catholic Systemic schools. While the top three key learning areas are the same for both groups. Aboriginal students take a slightly lower proportion of units across these subjects, but higher proportions of VET, PDHPE and Creative Arts subjects compared to non-Aboriginal students.

High-scaling subjects¹ represent 10.3% in 2025 (down from 11.2% in 2024) of HSC units taken by Aboriginal students compared to 16.9% for non-Aboriginal students. High-scaling subject areas include Chemistry, Economics, English, History, Mathematics, Music, Physics and Science.

TABLE 2

HSC Key Learning Area in Catholic Systemic Schools	% of KLA Units Taken 2025	
	Aboriginal Students	Non-Aboriginal Students
Human Society and its Environment (HSIE)	23.9%	26.3%
English	18.5%	19.0%
Mathematics	14.4%	15.9%
Vocational and Educational Training (VET)	14.2%	9.7%
Personal Development, Health and Physical Education (PDHPE)	9.7%	9.1%
Science	9.4%	10.2%
Creative Arts	5.3%	3.9%
Technologies	4.2%	5.1%
Languages	0.3%	0.9%

Source: NESA Authorities Online, HSC Systemic schools results data.

Note: HSIE includes subjects such as History, Geography, Economics, Business Studies, Legal Studies, Aboriginal Studies and Studies of Religion. Units of study counted do not include optional examinations separately to the subject (applicable to English Studies, Mathematics Standard 1 and all optional exams in VET Industry Curriculum Frameworks).



¹ High-scaling subjects are courses where the average scaled score was over 30, excluding languages (which typically have small cohorts).

VET AND POST-SCHOOL DESTINATIONS

KEY POINTS

- ▶ In 2024, approximately 1 in 4 Aboriginal students in Year 11 and 12 in NSW Catholic schools participated in Vocational Education and Training (VET) courses.
- ▶ In 2024, the overall VET qualification completion rate for Aboriginal HSC students in Catholic schools is 75.1%, compared to 88.2% for non-Aboriginal students where the full certificate is available. This figure is 85.5% for Aboriginal HSC students in Catholic schools achieving a Certificate III where available, above the Closing the Gap target of 70%.
- ▶ The overall rate of Aboriginal school leavers in NSW in 2024 either in employment or education and training was 82.3% for school completers and 69.4% for early school leavers, with both rates above the Closing the Gap target of 67%.

An outcome of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap is “Students reach their full potential through further education pathways”, with the stated target “By 2031, increase the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged 25-34 years who have completed a tertiary qualification (Certificate III and above) to 70%”¹.

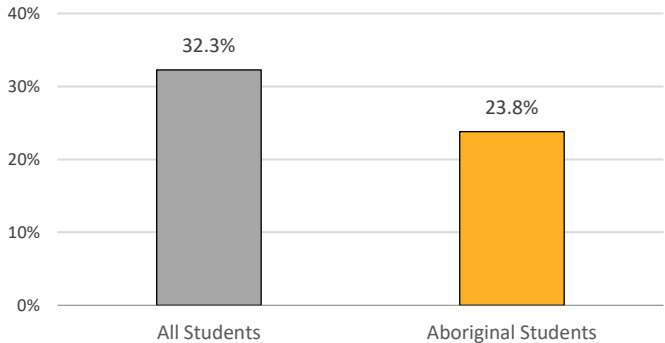
“Youth are engaged in employment or education” is another stated outcome of the Closing the Gap agreement, with a stated target “By 2031, increase the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth (15-24 years) who are in employment, education or training to 67%.”

VET PARTICIPATION

In 2024 (the most recent cross-sector data available), 11,220 Year 11 and 12 students in NSW Catholic schools participated in VET courses through diocesan Registered Training Organisations (RTOs). This is estimated to make up around 32.3% of the cohort (see *Figure 25*), which is higher than the 27.4% rate for Government schools, and significantly higher than the 12.1% for Independent schools².

Approximately 1 in 4 Aboriginal students in NSW Catholic schools participated in Vocational Education and Training (VET) courses, compared with around 1 in 3 students across Year 11 and 12.

FIGURE 25
ESTIMATED % OF YEAR 11 AND 12 CATHOLIC SCHOOL STUDENTS
TAKING VET COURSES 2024



Source: NCVET DataBuilder 2024. Census August 2024.

VET COURSE SELECTION

The three most common VET courses in NSW Catholic schools for both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students are Hospitality, Construction, and Business Services in 2025, which is consistent with the prior year. These courses comprise 59.0% of VET course selections for non-Aboriginal students and 51.9% for Aboriginal students (Refer to *Figure 26*). Aboriginal students’ fourth and fifth most common choices were in Human Services and then Active Volunteering, compared with the non-Aboriginal student cohort selections of Active Volunteering then Retail Services.

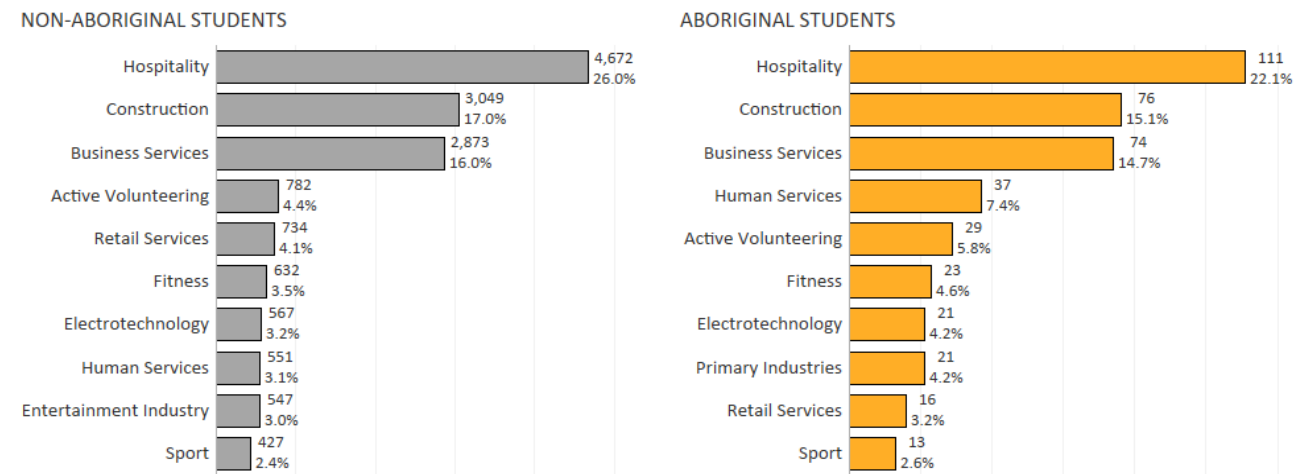
The only course to feature in the top 10 for Aboriginal students that does not feature in the top 10 for non-Aboriginal students is Primary Industries, while Entertainment Industry appeared in the top 10 for non-

¹ <https://www.closingthegap.gov.au/national-agreement/targets>

² Government and Independent participation rates using NCVET DataBuilder and ACARA Enrolments by Grade data.

Aboriginal students, but not for Aboriginal students.

FIGURE 26
TOP 10 VET COURSES FOR STUDENTS IN NSW CATHOLIC SCHOOLS 2025
% OF COHORT AND STUDENT NUMBERS



Source: NSW Education Standards Authority (NESA) VCS Online

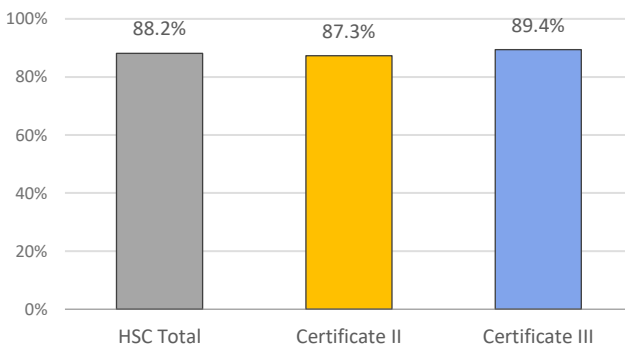
VET COMPLETION

Students vary in the proportion of the VET qualification they complete while at school. Most commonly, they complete the full certificate, which is the nationally recognised qualification for entry level work in a particular industry. Some students only partially complete a qualification in Year 12. The reasons for this vary, though often it is due to course structure, including students undertaking a short course to meet HSC requirements, or in the case of apprenticeships, further training and final assessment are arranged to be completed post-school with a second RTO (Registered Training Organisation) such as TAFE.

Where a full certificate is available, 88.2% of all HSC students in Catholic schools achieved it in 2025, compared to 75.1% of Aboriginal students (Refer to *Figure 27* and *Figure 28*).

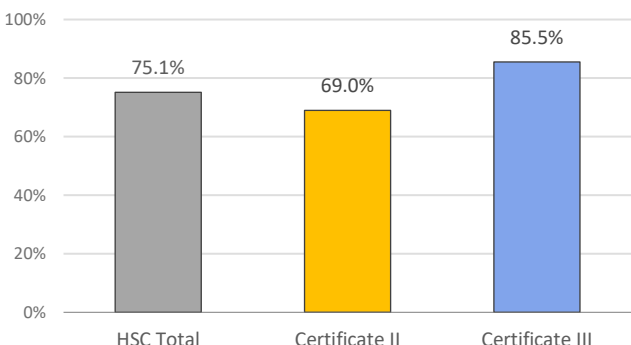
Studying towards or obtaining a Certificate III is the minimum requirement for employment in certain industries, particularly health and education. It can also allow students to gain access to degree courses. In Catholic schools in 2025, 85.5% of Aboriginal students enrolled in a Certificate III achieved their qualification where the full certificate was available. This completion rate is above the Closing the Gap target of 70%. Of all Aboriginal student enrolments to complete a full certificate where available, 20% were in a Certificate III qualification. While all students increased their overall completions rates for Certificate III in 2025, the gap between all students and Aboriginal students increased slightly to 3.9% compared to the 2.0% reported last year.

FIGURE 27
% OF ALL HSC STUDENTS AWARDED FULL CERTIFICATE WHERE AVAILABLE BY LEVEL 2025



Source: NSW Education Standards Authority (NESA) VCS Online
Note: Certificate I not shown as this typically counts for c.1% of student selections

FIGURE 28
% OF ABORIGINAL HSC STUDENTS AWARDED FULL CERTIFICATE WHERE AVAILABLE BY LEVEL 2025



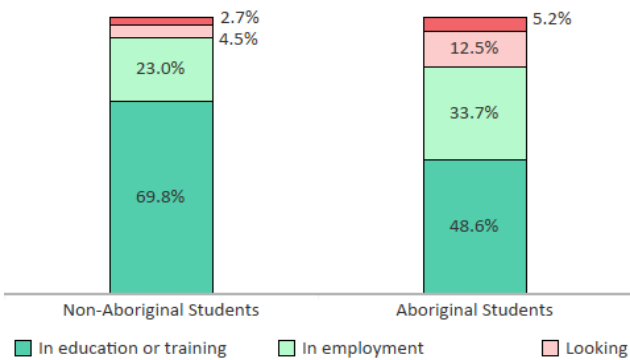
POST-SCHOOL DESTINATIONS

Each year, the Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation (CESE) reports on a survey covering the post-school destinations and experiences of former NSW school students¹. The survey has two cohorts: students who completed Year 12 in the year prior to the survey ('Year 12 completers') and students who left school before completing Year 12 in the year prior to the survey ('Early school leavers'). Early school leavers are Year 10, Year 11 or Year 12 students. There is no sector break-down for results for Aboriginal students due to small sample sizes. The following information uses the latest CESE report results of Aboriginal students at the NSW state level only. In 2024, 1,181 Aboriginal Year 12 completers and 839 Aboriginal early school leavers completed the survey.

Figures 29 and 30 show that in 2024, 82.3% of Aboriginal Year 12 completers and 69.4% of Aboriginal early school leavers were in education, training or employment—this is above the Closing the Gap target of 67%. (These rates achieved are for post-school destinations and do not consider the Aboriginal youth still in school).

FIGURE 29

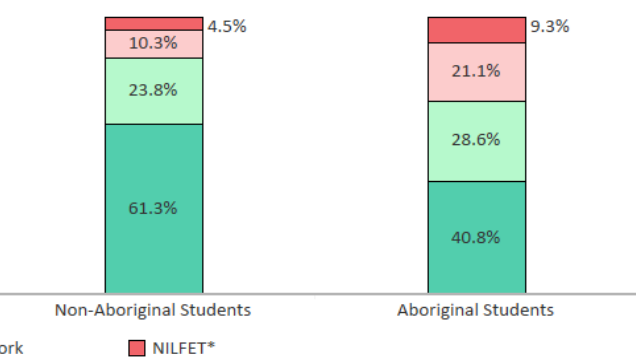
POST-SCHOOL DESTINATIONS OF NSW YEAR 12 COMPLETERS 2024



Source: NSW DoE Post-School Destinations and Experiences Survey.
Note: *NILFET means not in the labour force, education or training.

FIGURE 30

POST-SCHOOL DESTINATIONS OF NSW EARLY SCHOOL LEAVERS 2024

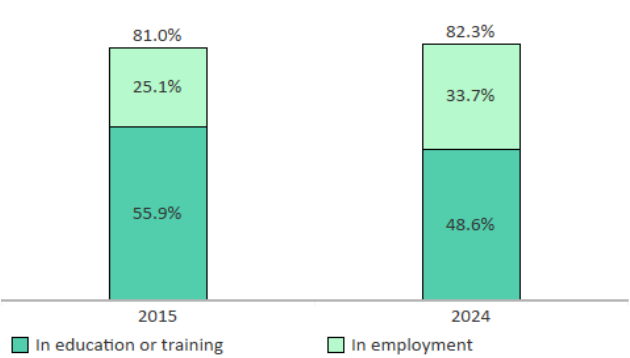


For Year 12 completers, in the 10-year period to 2024 there has been a decrease in the proportion of Aboriginal students enrolled in education or training after leaving school from 55.9% to 48.6%. This has been more than offset by the increase in the proportion of Aboriginal students in full-time or part-time work from 25.1% to 33.7% (refer to Figure 31).

Figure 32 shows that in 2024, Aboriginal early school leavers engaged in employment, education or training had increased significantly to 69.4% since 2015. As a result, in 2024 there were 12.0% fewer Aboriginal early school leavers looking for work or not in the labour force, education or training ('NILFET') compared with 2015.

FIGURE 31

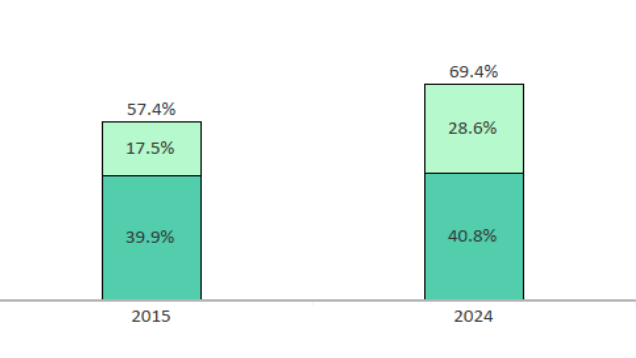
% OF ABORIGINAL NSW YEAR 12 COMPLETERS IN EMPLOYMENT OR EDUCATION/TRAINING



Source: NSW DoE Post-School Destinations and Experiences Survey.

FIGURE 32

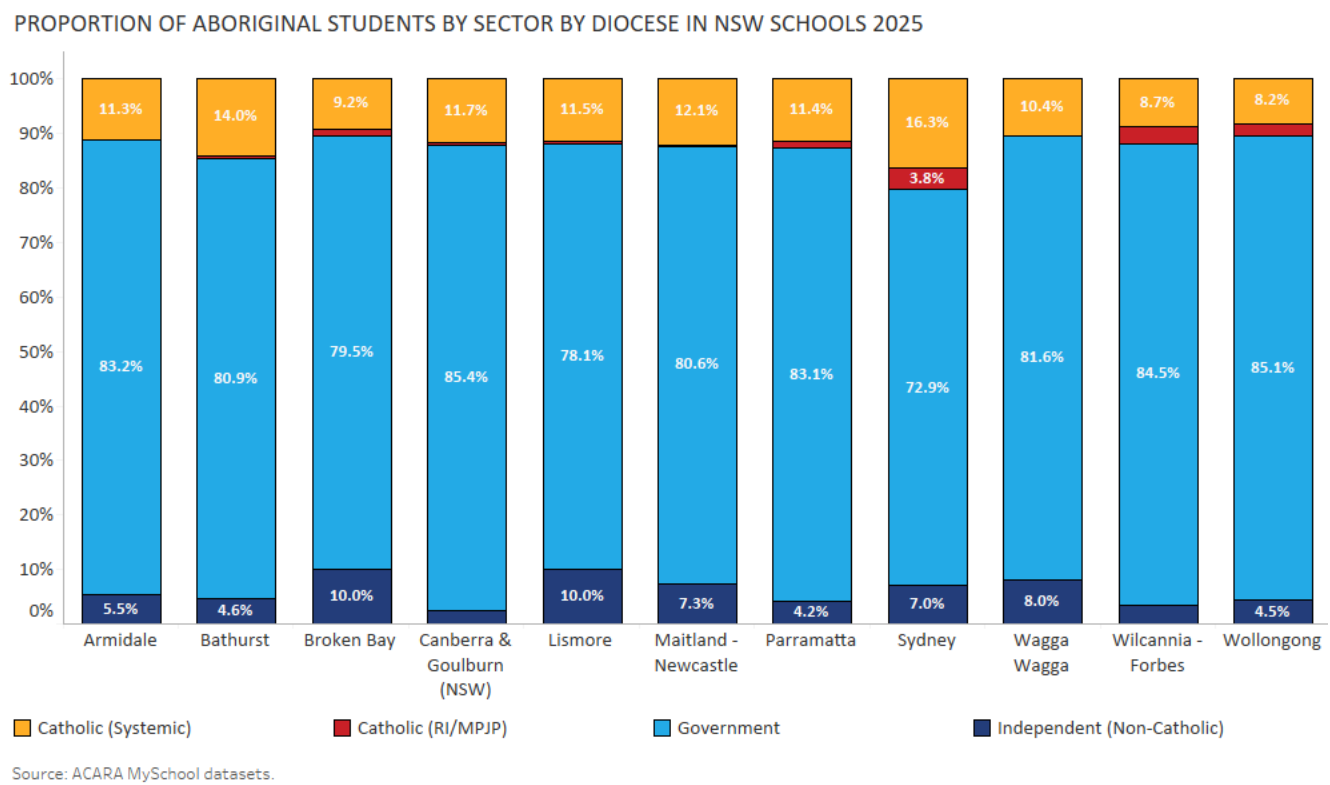
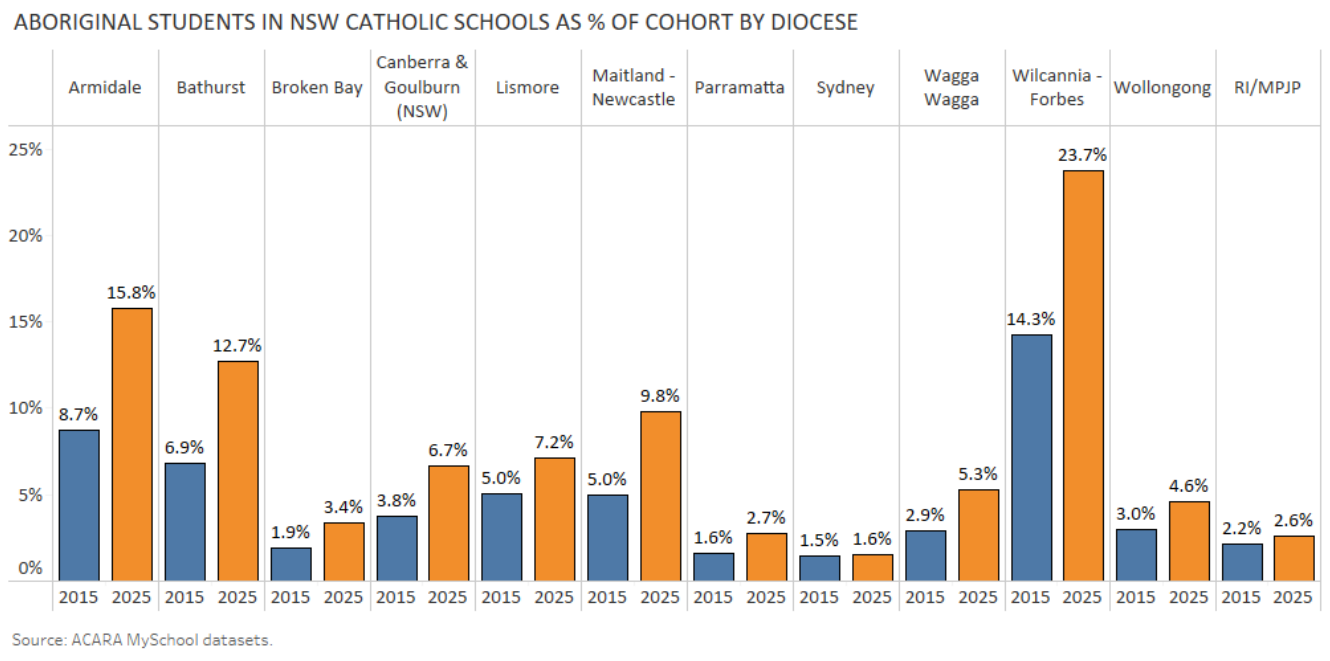
% OF ABORIGINAL NSW EARLY SCHOOL LEAVERS IN EMPLOYMENT OR EDUCATION/TRAINING



¹ [NSW Post School Destinations and Experiences Survey](#) report by CESE, part of the NSW Department of Education (NSW DoE)

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1 ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ON ENROLMENTS



APPENDIX 2 ADDITIONAL NAPLAN INFORMATION

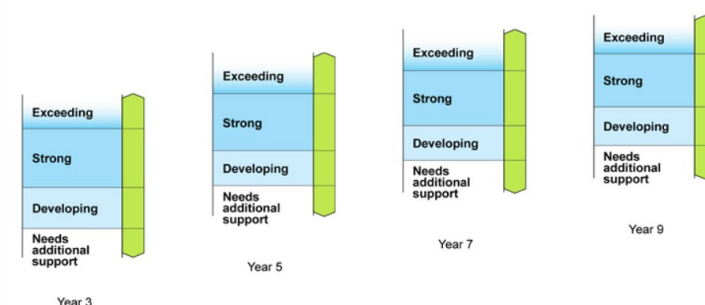
The Government made several changes to the timing and measurement of NAPLAN in 2023 as follows:

1. The NAPLAN test window moved from May to March.
2. The student achievement “bands” were replaced with proficiency standards on a new NAPLAN measurement scale, that make better use of online adaptive tests. The proficiency levels are as follows:
 - a. **Exceeding** – the student’s result exceeds expectations at the time of testing.
 - b. **Strong** – the student’s result meets challenging but reasonable expectations at the time of testing.
 - c. **Developing** – the student’s result indicates that they are working towards expectations at the time of testing.
 - d. **Needs Additional Support (NAS)** – the student’s result indicates that they are not achieving the learning outcomes that are expected at the time of testing. They are likely to need additional support to progress satisfactorily.

3. The diagram to the right illustrates the progression of proficiency levels from Year 3 to Year 9. It shows an average of the five domain areas¹.

There are slight variations between domain areas (see table below on *NAPLAN scale score cut points between proficiency levels*)

Diagram: NAPLAN measurement scales averaged across domains



4. The changes to the NAPLAN measurement scale and test window resulted in the NAPLAN time series being reset, which means results from 2023 onwards cannot be directly compared with results from 2008 to 2022. As the NAPLAN time series was reset in 2023, progress results are available from 2025.

Table: NAPLAN scale score cut points (lower bounds) between proficiency levels

Domain	Year	Needs additional support / Developing	Developing / Strong	Strong / Exceeding
Numeracy	3	311	378	493
	5	386	451	577
	7	431	500	632
	9	463	536	673
Reading	3	282	368	481
	5	377	448	555
	7	430	500	603
	9	464	539	639
Writing	3	296	370	503
	5	385	455	570
	7	439	511	614
	9	469	553	647
Spelling	3	294	380	489
	5	378	451	553
	7	430	497	595
	9	470	532	627
Grammar and Punctuation	3	312	404	523
	5	397	470	582
	7	444	513	620
	9	460	545	649

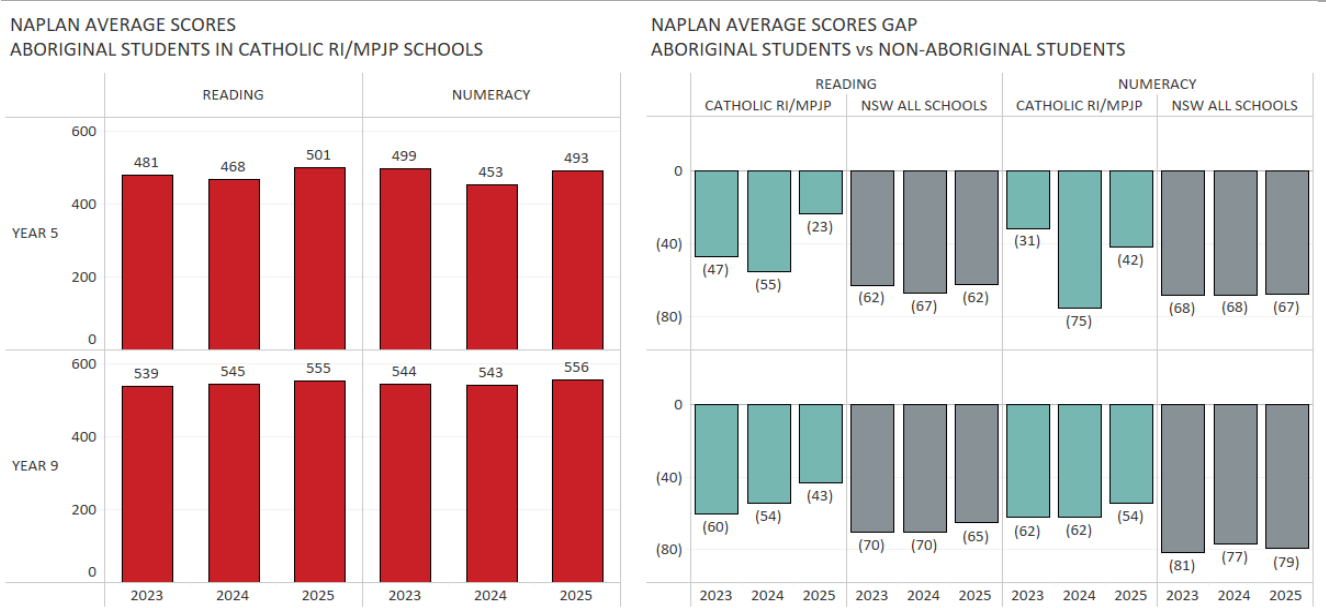
¹ <https://www.nap.edu.au/naplan/results-and-reports>

APPENDIX 3 NAPLAN PERFORMANCE FOR RI/MPJP SCHOOLS

Analysis comparing NAPLAN performance between Catholic RI/MPJP school Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students should be treated with caution for two reasons:

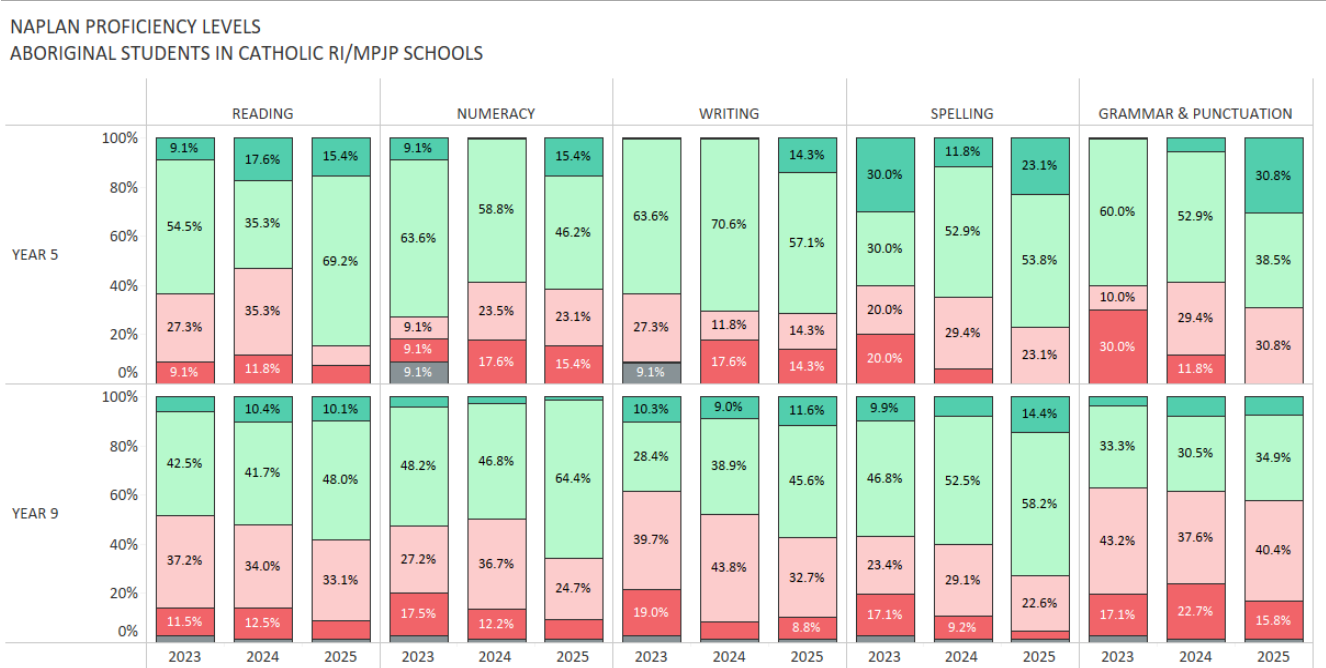
- 1. The number of Aboriginal students sitting tests in each NAPLAN cohort is very small. In 2025 the number of Aboriginal students in Catholic RI/MPJP schools sitting at least 1 NAPLAN test in each grade was: 7 in Year 3; 14 in Year 5; 194 in Year 7 and 165 in Year 9.
- 2. NAPLAN analysis comparing Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students does not consider other student background characteristics. This limits the conclusions which can be drawn from the analysis.

NAPLAN AVERAGE SCORES CATHOLIC RI/MPJP SCHOOLS



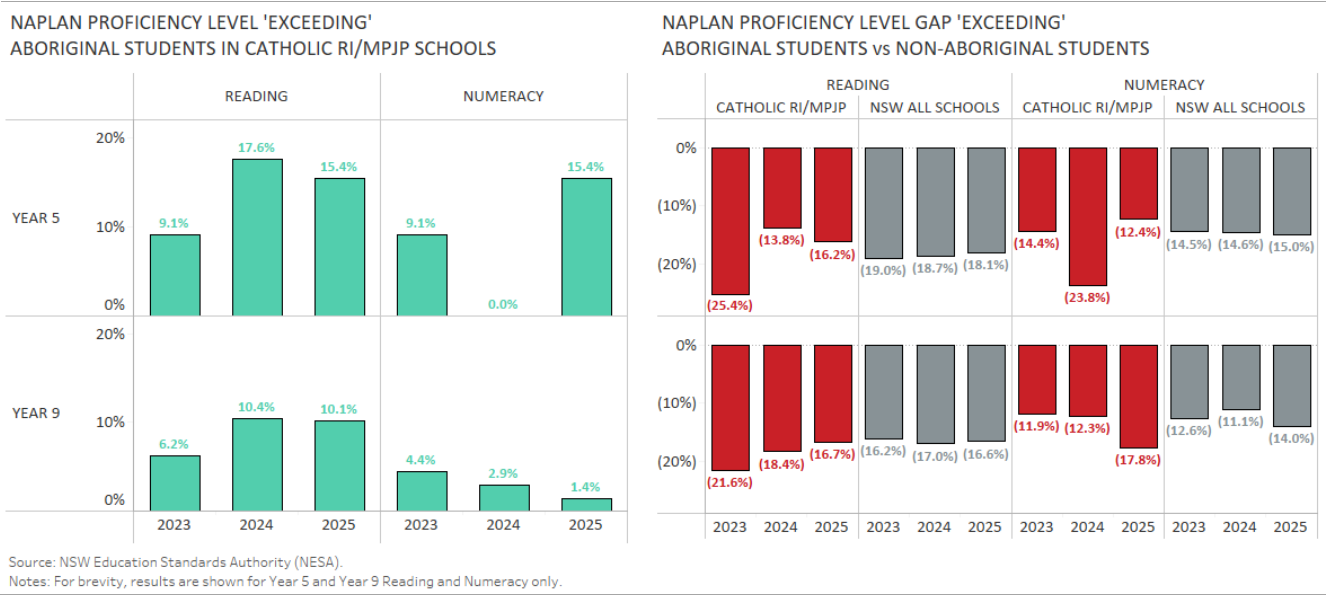
Source: NSW Education Standards Authority (NESA).
Notes: For brevity, results are shown for Year 5 and Year 9 Reading and Numeracy only.

PROFICIENCY LEVELS CATHOLIC RI/MPJP SCHOOLS

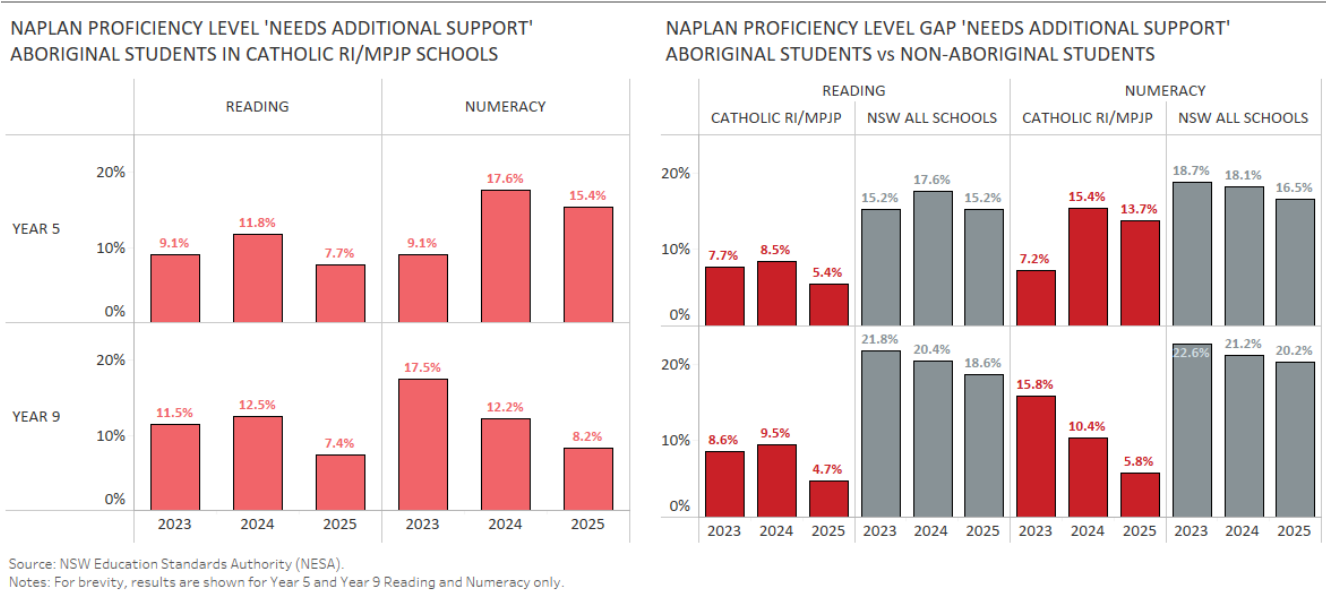


Source: NSW Education Standards Authority (NESA).
Notes: For brevity, results are shown for Year 5 and Year 9 only.

EXCEEDING PROFICIENCY LEVEL CATHOLIC RI/MPJP SCHOOLS



NEEDS ADDITIONAL SUPPORT PROFICIENCY LEVEL CATHOLIC RI/MPJP SCHOOLS



APPENDIX 4 BETTER AND FAIRER SCHOOLS AGREEMENT

The *Better and Fairer Schools Agreement 2025-2034* (BFSA) is an agreement between the Commonwealth, states and territories to help create a better and fairer education system for all students. The BFSA commenced 24 January 2025 and expires 31 December 2034, replacing the *National School Reform Agreement*.

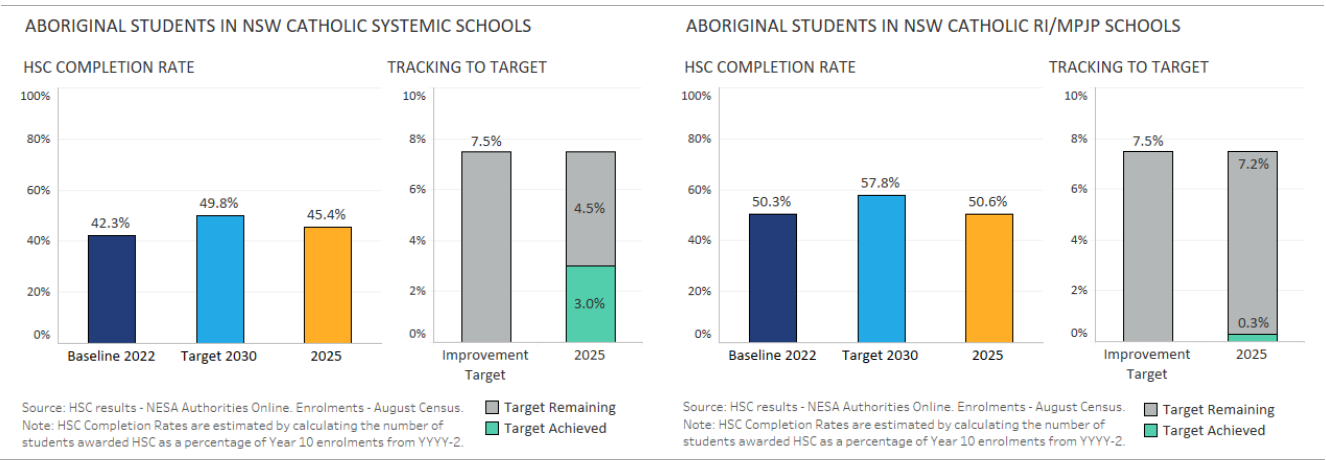
IMPROVEMENT MEASURES

The BFSA identifies six Improvement Measures across three Priority Areas: Equity and Excellence; Wellbeing for Learning and Engagement; and A Strong and Sustainable Workforce. Of the six Improvement Measures, the following can be reported by the school sector using available data: Year 12 Certification / Pathways for Success, Learning Equity (NAPLAN), and Student Attendance.

While Improvement Measures (Measures) are set at a national level, each jurisdiction, system and school individually contributes towards the achievement of the overall target. Each Measure covers the overall student population and has differentiated targets for priority equity cohorts. The targets are defined here at the national level (per the BFSA), and the charts are adapted for the Catholic school system and Aboriginal student cohorts to assist with tracking progress against the overall measures.

Year 12 Certification and Pathways for Success Improvement Measures

- Where statistically possible, report annually on the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students with a Year 12 (or equivalent) certification. (Please refer to HSC Performance section, *Table 1.*)
- The target for all students is: By 2030, increase the proportion of students with Year 12 (or equivalent) certification by 7.5 percentage points compared with 2022 results nationally. Note: this is adapted below for Aboriginal students, but it is not a Measure specifically for Aboriginal student cohorts.
- There is also an Improvement Measure ‘*Pathways for success*’, which is specific to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander persons aged 20 to 24: By 2031, increase the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people (age 20-24) attaining Year 12 or equivalent qualification to 96 per cent (this is a Closing the Gap target and will be updated to adopt any changes to the target in the Closing the Gap Agreement). Note: the charts below only report on HSC completion rates in school, and they also do not consider International Baccalaureate or VET qualifications.

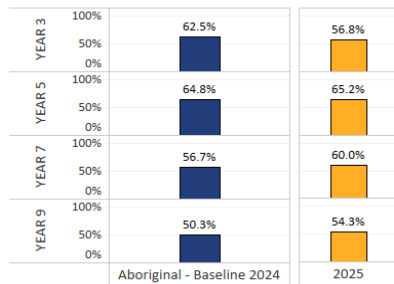


Learning Equity Improvement Measures

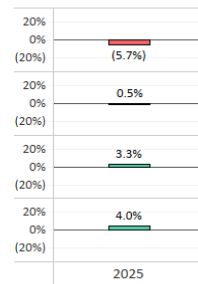
- By 2030, in the National Assessment Program—Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) Reading and Numeracy, of Years 3, 5, 7 and 9, trend upwards the proportion of priority equity cohort students in the Strong and Exceeding NAPLAN proficiency levels.

ABORIGINAL STUDENTS IN NSW CATHOLIC SYSTEMIC SCHOOLS

NAPLAN READING PROFICIENCY LEVEL % STRONG & EXCEEDING



TRACKING TO TARGET

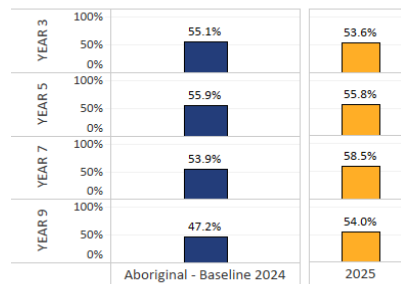


Source: NAPLAN results - NSW Education Standards Authority (NESA).

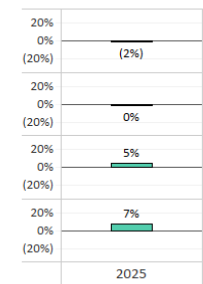
Target Achieved
Baseline Decline

ABORIGINAL STUDENTS IN NSW CATHOLIC SYSTEMIC SCHOOLS

NAPLAN NUMERACY PROFICIENCY LEVEL % STRONG & EXCEEDING



TRACKING TO TARGET

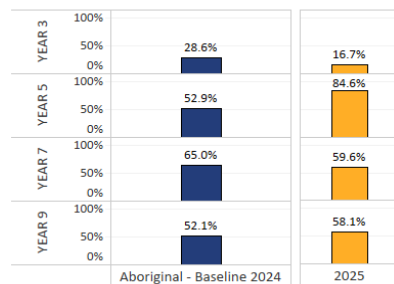


Source: NAPLAN results - NSW Education Standards Authority (NESA).

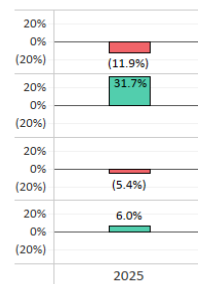
Target Achieved
Baseline Decline

ABORIGINAL STUDENTS IN NSW CATHOLIC RI/MPJP SCHOOLS

NAPLAN READING PROFICIENCY LEVEL % STRONG & EXCEEDING



TRACKING TO TARGET

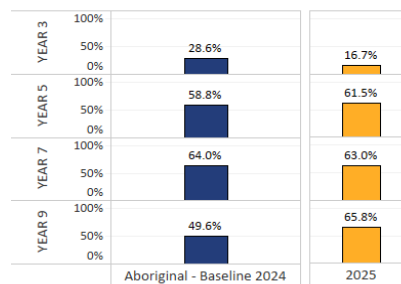


Source: NAPLAN results - NSW Education Standards Authority (NESA).

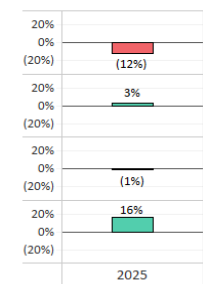
Target Achieved
Baseline Decline

ABORIGINAL STUDENTS IN NSW CATHOLIC RI/MPJP SCHOOLS

NAPLAN NUMERACY PROFICIENCY LEVEL % STRONG & EXCEEDING



TRACKING TO TARGET



Source: NAPLAN results - NSW Education Standards Authority (NESA).

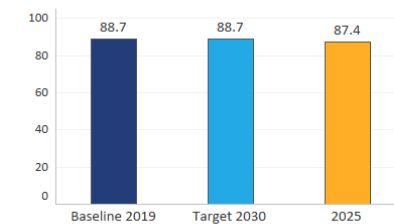
Target Achieved
Baseline Decline

Student Attendance Improvement Measures

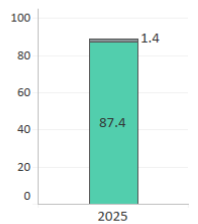
- By 2030, return the Student Attendance Rate to 2019 levels for priority equity cohorts.
- By 2035, the Student Attendance Rate for priority equity cohorts is the same as the overall student population.

ABORIGINAL STUDENTS IN NSW CATHOLIC SYSTEMIC SCHOOLS

WEIGHTED AVERAGE ATTENDANCE RATE %



TRACKING TO TARGET %

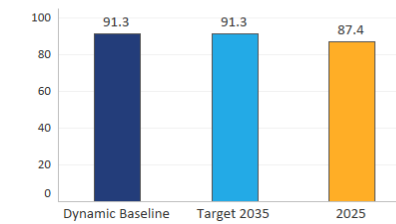


Source: Student Attendance Rates (Semester 1) from ACARA MySchool datasets. Full-time equivalent figures from August Census.
Note: Weighted by number of FTE students in each school. 'Student Attendance Rate' is the number of actual full-time equivalent student-days attended by full-time students in Years 1-10 as a percentage of the total number of possible student-days attended over the period.

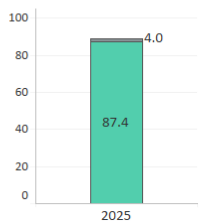
Target Remaining
Target Achieved

ABORIGINAL STUDENTS IN NSW CATHOLIC SYSTEMIC SCHOOLS

WEIGHTED AVERAGE ATTENDANCE RATE %



TRACKING TO TARGET %

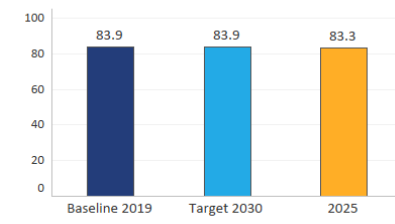


Source: Student Attendance Rates (Semester 1) from ACARA MySchool datasets. Full-time equivalent figures from August Census.
Note: Weighted by number of FTE students in each school. 'Student Attendance Rate' is the number of actual full-time equivalent student-days attended by full-time students in Years 1-10 as a percentage of the total number of possible student-days attended over the period.

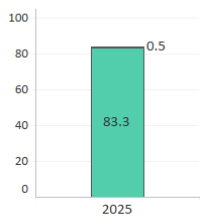
Target Remaining
Target Achieved

ABORIGINAL STUDENTS IN NSW CATHOLIC RI/MPJP SCHOOLS

WEIGHTED AVERAGE ATTENDANCE RATE %



TRACKING TO TARGET %

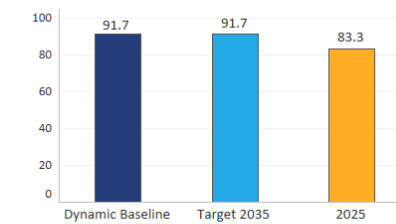


Source: Student Attendance Rates (Semester 1) from ACARA MySchool datasets. Full-time equivalent figures from August Census.
Note: Weighted by number of FTE students in each school. 'Student Attendance Rate' is the number of actual full-time equivalent student-days attended by full-time students in Years 1-10 as a percentage of the total number of possible student-days attended over the period.

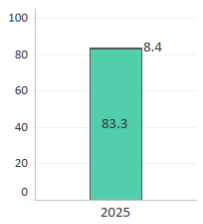
Target Remaining
Target Achieved

ABORIGINAL STUDENTS IN NSW CATHOLIC RI/MPJP SCHOOLS

WEIGHTED AVERAGE ATTENDANCE RATE %



TRACKING TO TARGET %



Source: Student Attendance Rates (Semester 1) from ACARA MySchool datasets. Full-time equivalent figures from August Census.
Note: Weighted by number of FTE students in each school. 'Student Attendance Rate' is the number of actual full-time equivalent student-days attended by full-time students in Years 1-10 as a percentage of the total number of possible student-days attended over the period.

Target Remaining
Target Achieved

