



# 2025 ANNUAL REPORT ABORIGINAL EDUCATION OUTCOMES IN NSW CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

July 2025

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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

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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

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Catholic schools in NSW currently educate approximately 12,000 Aboriginal students, more than at any other time in the sector's 205-year history. The sector also employs more than 500 Aboriginal teachers, teaching assistants, community engagement officers and other non-teaching staff.

This is the fourth 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 Council)
- ii. The Measurement Framework for Schooling in Australia (Education Council & ACARA)
- iii. The Australian Education Act, The National School Reform Agreement (applicable until 2024) and The Better and Fairer Schools Agreement (applicable from 2025 – refer below for further details) (Australian Government, state and territory governments)
- iv. The National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Strategy (Education Council)
- 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)
- vii. Building a Culturally Responsive Australian Teaching Workforce Report (Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership)

The report covers a range of metrics, including:

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

Reporting on metrics from the AEDC are covered every third year, following the data release. Information on Aboriginal languages and professional learning is also included in this report.

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

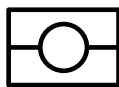
- ▶ Catholic schools have enrolled an increasing share of Aboriginal students in NSW, up from 9.5% in 2008 to 12.4% in 2024. Aboriginal enrolments in 2024 reached 11,504 students, growing 6.7% p.a. since 2008.
- ▶ Since 2008, the proportion of Aboriginal students in NSW Catholic schools has increased from 1.7% to 4.2% in 2024, 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. Attendance rates have trended downwards in 2024 for all sectors.
- ▶ The gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal student Attendance Rates remains significantly smaller for Catholic schools than other school sectors. In 2024, the gap for the Catholic sector was 4.5% compared to 7.4% for Independent schools and 9.8% for Government schools.
- ▶ The Retention Rate gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students in Catholic schools improved for the second year in a row, declining from 17.5% in 2023 to 15.4% in 2024.
- ▶ In 2024, the gaps between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal student NAPLAN results in Catholic systemic schools remain smaller than those noted across all NSW schools.
- ▶ There has been an increase in the proportion of Aboriginal students achieving the Exceeding proficiency level across all Year 5 domains and all Year 9 domains except Spelling in 2024.
- ▶ 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 2024. There was some improvement in Year 9 Numeracy where the gap closed from 40 in 2023 to 37 in 2024.
- ▶ Of the 63% of Aboriginal students in Catholic systemic schools awarded the HSC in 2024, 71% were also eligible for ATAR. ATAR eligibility increased by 4 percentage points compared to 2023, (67% to 71%). This improvement also narrowed the gap with non-Aboriginal students from 14% in 2023 to 9% in 2024—the smallest gap in recent history.
- ▶ The estimated median ATAR for Aboriginal students increased by 2.1 from 60.8 in 2023 to 62.9 in 2024, the highest in recent history. The gap to non-Aboriginal students in Catholic systemic schools, which was typically around 10 points, reduced to 7.9 in 2024.
- ▶ The combined HSC Bands 1 and 2 rates (the lowest two bands) decreased significantly to 7.2% in 2024 for Aboriginal students in Catholic systemic schools, the lowest result in recent history (2023: 12.2%).
- ▶ In 2023, Aboriginal students in NSW Catholic schools participated in Vocational Education and Training (VET) courses at a slightly lower rate (29.2%) than non-Aboriginal students (31.9%).
- ▶ Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students in NSW Catholic schools select similar courses for their top 10 choices. In 2024, the completion rate for Aboriginal HSC students is 78%, compared to 86% for non-Aboriginal students where the full certificate is available. This figure is 84% for Aboriginal HSC students achieving a Certificate III where available, a gap of 2% compared with all HSC students.
- ▶ Although there is no sector breakdown, in 2023 the overall rate of Aboriginal school leavers in NSW either in employment or education/training was 85.1% for school completers (2022: 85.3%) and 72.8% for early school leavers (2022: 75.5%).



# AT A GLANCE



**11,955**  
STUDENTS



**535**  
SCHOOLS STAFF

ATSI\* students at schools    ATSI students    % of total students

PRIMARY	6,494	4.8%
SECONDARY	5,461	3.9%

SYSTEMIC	10,928	4.6%
RI/MPJP	1,027	2.5%

FEMALE	6,072	4.4%
MALE	5,881	4.3%

BOARDING	219	11.0%
ESL	228	0.7%
NCCD	4,160	6.9%

ATSI students at schools    ATSI students    Other students

CATHOLIC	49%	62%
NO RELIGION	19%	11%
OTHER FAITH	17%	11%
OTHER CHRISTIAN	13%	11%
ORTHODOX	1%	5%

ATSI students at schools    ATSI students    Share of total ATSI students

MAJOR CITIES	5,738	48%
REMOTE & REGIONAL	6,217	52%



ATSI staff at schools#    ATSI staff    % of total staff

TEACHING STAFF	180	0.8%
NON-TEACHING STAFF	355	3.4%

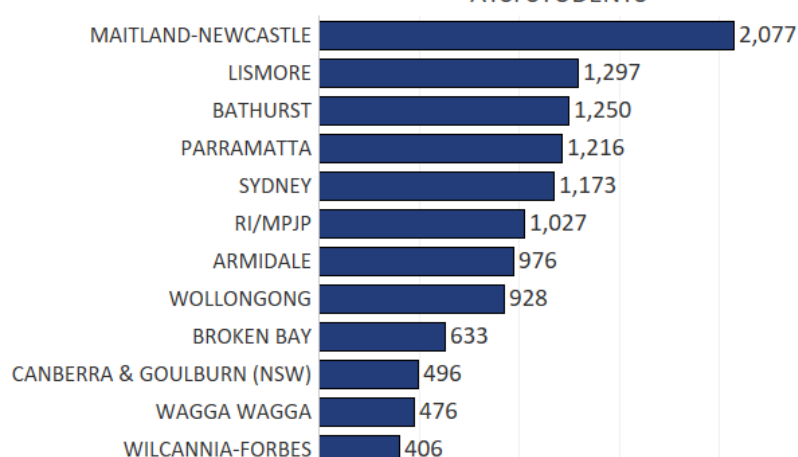
Staff at schools	ATSI staff	Other staff
FULL-TIME	30%	56%
PART-TIME	70%	44%
FEMALE	73%	79%
MALE	27%	21%
CATHOLIC	62%	69%
NON-CATHOLIC	38%	31%

Teaching staff at schools	ATSI staff	Other staff
TEACHERS	70%	69%
COORDINATORS	23%	22%
PRINCIPALS	1%	3%
ASSISTANT PRINCIPALS	2%	3%
RE COORDINATORS	3%	2%
LIBRARIANS	1%	0%

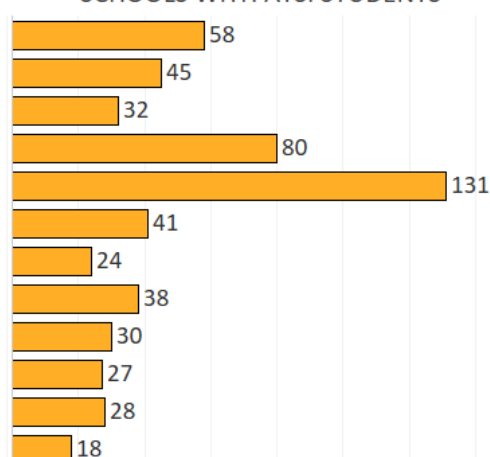
Schools with ATSI students    Schools with ATSI students    % of total schools

MAJOR CITIES	353	90%
REMOTE & REGIONAL	199	99%

ATSI STUDENTS



SCHOOLS WITH ATSI STUDENTS



\*ATSI – Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander

Sources: CSNSW Census February 2025 at 6 May 2025 for systemic and RI/MPJP schools, ACARA MySchool data 2024 for Geolocation, AGDoE August Census 2024 for NCCD. | Notes: #Staff in Schools reported per the CSNSW Census, and may exclude casual pool staff and staff employed by diocesan school offices. 'Non-teaching staff' includes specialist support staff, teacher's aides, administrative staff, building operations and other service staff. CSNSW Census data from pre-2025 has been used for 5 RI/MPJP schools where 2025 data is not available. Percentages may not add up to 100 due to rounding. Gender figures may not add to the total due to the option for unspecified. 'Other Faith' includes 'Religion Unknown'.

# ABORIGINALITY IN CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

## KEY POINTS

- ▶ Catholic schools have enrolled an increasing share of Aboriginal students in NSW, up from 9.5% in 2008 to 12.4% in 2024. Aboriginal enrolments in 2024 reached 11,504 students, growing 6.7% p.a. since 2008.
- ▶ Since 2008, the proportion of Aboriginal students in NSW Catholic schools has increased from 1.7% to 4.2% in 2024, 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

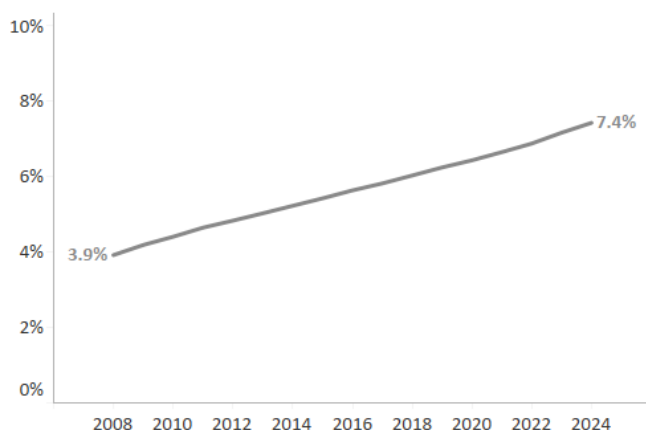
There are challenges to identifying the reasons behind movements in Aboriginal student enrolments. Firstly, it is important to note that Aboriginal students are not a homogenous group. The characteristics of these students, such as socio-economic background, location and community, can vary significantly. 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 (4.9% p.a. from 2008 to 2024) 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 0.8% p.a. from 2008 to 2024.

In 2024, NSW Catholic schools educated 11,504 Aboriginal students, representing a growth rate of 6.7% per annum since 2008 (2008: 4,086 students). These students make up 4.2% of the sector's cohort (4.6% for systemic and 2.4% for RI/MPJP – see *Figure 2* below), up from 1.7% in 2008 (1.8% for systemic and 1.1% for RI/MPJP). As shown in *Figure 1*, this upward trend in Aboriginal student enrolments is reflective of the state as a whole, where the Aboriginal proportion of students increased from 3.9% in 2008 to 7.4% in 2024. Details by diocese are provided in *Appendix 1*.

FIGURE 1

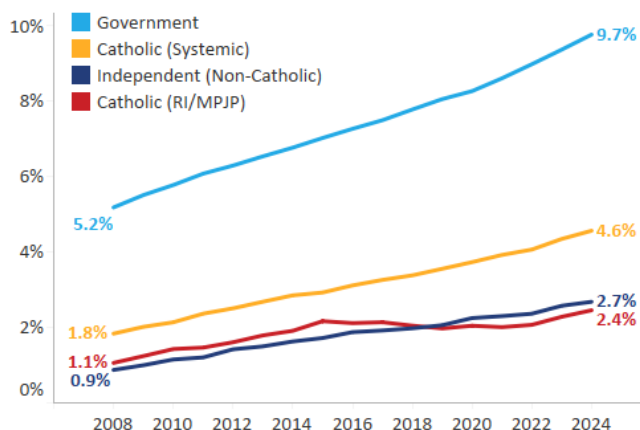
ABORIGINAL STUDENTS AS % OF COHORT - ALL NSW SCHOOLS, 2008-24



Source: ACARA MySchool datasets

FIGURE 2

ABORIGINAL STUDENTS AS % OF COHORT - NSW SCHOOLS BY SECTOR, 2008-24

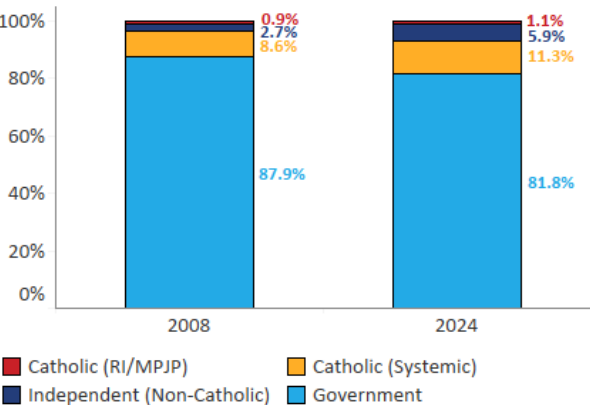


Catholic schools have enrolled an increasing share of Aboriginal students in NSW, up from 9.5% in 2008 (8.6% for systemic and 0.9% for RI/MPJP) to 12.4% in 2024 (11.3% for systemic and 1.1% for RI/MPJP) (Refer to *Figure 3*).

The 11.3% share of NSW's Aboriginal students attending Catholic systemic schools in 2024 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 2.7% in 2008 to 5.9% in 2024. The increases within Catholic and Independent schools have been offset by a decrease in the proportion of Aboriginal students attending Government schools from 87.9% to 81.8% (Refer to *Appendix 2* for details by diocese).

**FIGURE 3**  
PROPORTION OF ABORIGINAL STUDENTS BY SECTOR - NSW SCHOOLS, 2008 vs 2024



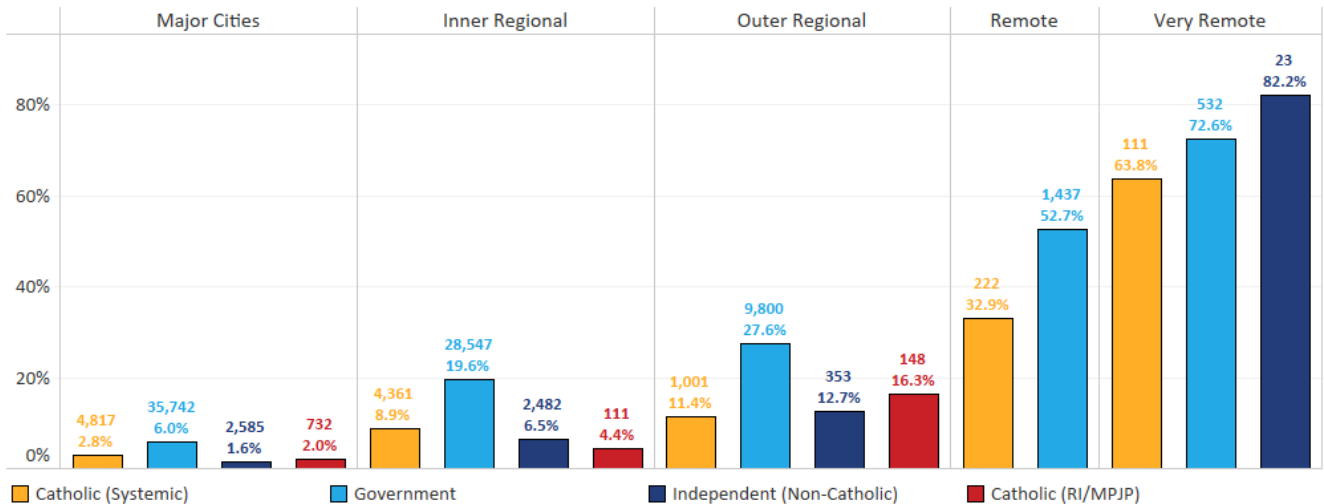
Source: ACARA MySchool Datasets

## GEOLOCATION

In 2024, 4.5% of students in Major City schools in NSW identified as Aboriginal, whereas the rate was 3.8x higher in Regional and Remote schools across all sectors, at 17.1% (Geolocation categories are per the ABS).

*Figure 4* shows Aboriginal students by geolocation of their school. In 2024, there were 43.9k Aboriginal students in Major city schools and 49.1k 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 - NSW SCHOOLS, 2024  
% OF COHORT AND STUDENT NUMBERS



Source: ACARA MySchool Datasets.

## BOARDING STUDENTS

In 2024, Aboriginal students boarding in Catholic schools made up 10.8% of total boarders. There were 11 Aboriginal boarding students attending two systemic boarding schools in the Wagga Wagga Diocese. This represents 4.2% of all Catholic systemic school boarding students in NSW. In 2024, there were a total of 219 Aboriginal boarding students across 11 RI/MPJP boarding schools, representing 11.7% of all RI/MPJP school boarding students. Of all Aboriginal students attending an RI/MPJP school, almost 1 in 4 are boarders.

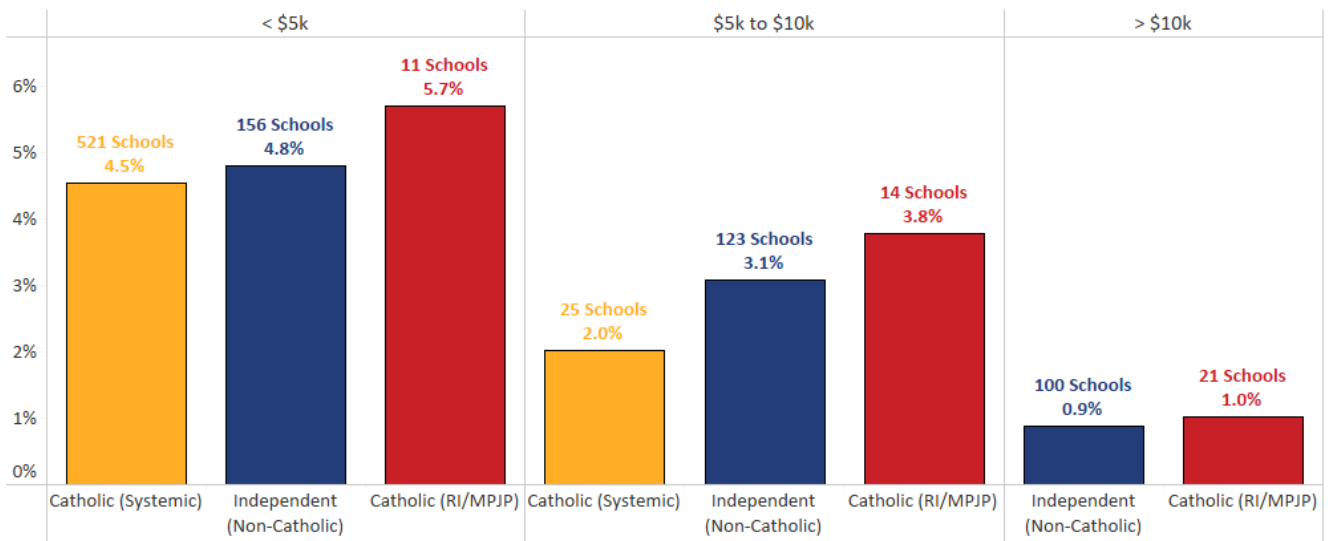


## ENROLMENTS BY FEE RANGE

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 25 Catholic systemic schools fall into this fee range, this suggests the overall higher percentage of Aboriginal students in all Catholic systemic schools (4.6% per *Figure 2*), compared to Independent and RI/MPJP schools (2.7% and 2.4% respectively per *Figure 2*), may be more to do with the level of school fees than other differentiating factors.

In 2024, although Aboriginal students as a % 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.

FIGURE 5  
ABORIGINAL STUDENTS AS % OF COHORT BY FEE RANGE, 2023



Source: ACARA MySchool datasets. Note that 2023 is the most recent available Finance data.

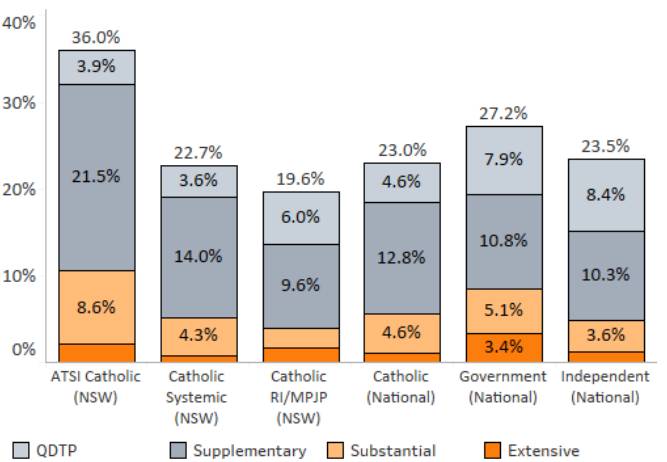
## NCCD STUDENTS

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 2024, 36.0% of Aboriginal students in NSW Catholic schools are reported as having a level of adjustment under the NCCD categorisation. This compares to rates of 22.7% and 19.6% 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 27.2% and 23.5% respectively.

The main contributors to the variance are largely driven by greater levels of Aboriginal students reported in the Supplementary (21.5%) and Substantial (8.6%) categories in NSW Catholic schools.

FIGURE 6  
NCCD BY SECTOR, 2024



Source: ACARA National Report on Schooling in Australia; August Census 2024.  
Notes: NCCD comparative sector data only available at the national level. National level data includes RI/MPJP as part of 'Catholic'.

## STAFF

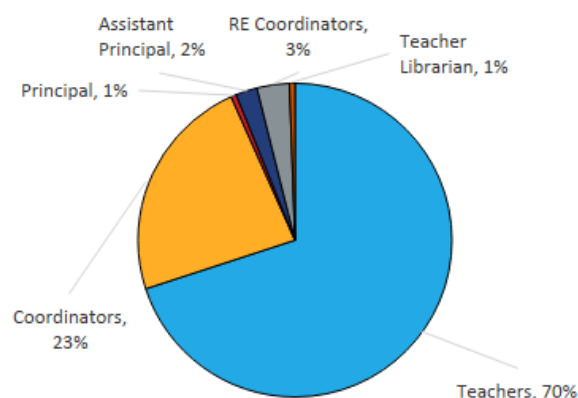
In 2025, only 0.8% of Catholic school Teaching staff identified as Aboriginal (CSNSW Census February 2025). This level of representation is below the state level of 2.0% in NSW<sup>1</sup>. However, representation amongst Non-Teaching staff is much higher at 3.4%. ‘Non-Teaching staff’ includes specialist 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, 3% of teaching staff are principals and 3% are assistant principals, while 1% of principals and 2% 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. It 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 on page 5.

FIGURE 7

ABORIGINAL TEACHING STAFF BY ROLE, 2025



Source: CSNSW February Census 2025

## ABORIGINAL LANGUAGES

The rollout of the new K-10 Aboriginal Language Syllabus in NSW in 2024 supports the language aspirations of Aboriginal students and their families and communities. CSNSW commissioned a report *Let’s Talk The Language Again*<sup>2</sup> 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<sup>3</sup>.

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.

## 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

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

<sup>2</sup> [Let’s Talk The Language Again Report](#)

<sup>3</sup> Closing the Gap Target 16 states “Cultures and languages are strong, supported and flourishing”

perspectives into the curriculum and improving awareness of First Nations histories. Also offered are on-country experiences, conferences and networking meetings to allow participants to further develop their understanding, build skills and learn from others. The triennial *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander State Education Conference* has attracted over 2,800 participants since starting in 2004. (See below for further detail on the 2024 conference). Courses offered 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 *Crossing Cultures Hidden Histories* course, with approximately 1,000 participants to date. In 2024, the Wilcannia-Forbes Diocese ensured that all staff, both teaching and non-teaching, were able to participate in this training by holding four workshops across the Diocese on gazetted pupil free days. This allowed the Diocese to deliver this professional learning in a focused setting, and support the cultural responsiveness of leaders and teachers in their teaching practice, as well as other staff in their various roles within schools. Across the four workshops, over 430 staff were able to participate in the training.

## **CSNSW 2024 ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER STATE EDUCATION CONFERENCE**

In 2024, CSNSW and Armidale Catholic Schools proudly co-hosted the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander State Education Conference, *Spirit On Country: Learning Together Then, Now and Always*, a three-day event held from 22–24 October at the Tamworth Regional Entertainment and Conference Centre. This triennial gathering reaffirmed the essential role of Catholic education in empowering Aboriginal students as successful lifelong learners.

Drawing over 500 delegates from across NSW and beyond, the conference brought together system and school leaders, teachers, support staff, parents, elders, and students. Participants engaged in keynote addresses, breakout sessions, workshops, and an on-country experience at the historic site of the Myall Creek Massacre, deepening their connection to Aboriginal history and culture.

The conference significantly strengthened participants' historical awareness and enhanced their intercultural and cross-cultural competencies in Aboriginal education. It also provided a platform for collaborative dialogue on the development of inclusive classroom environments and the continuous pursuit of educational excellence for Aboriginal students. Following the conference, engagement by participants has included the creation of 57 community boards on specific topics and 13 meetups planned by attendees.



# ATTENDANCE AND RETENTION

## KEY POINTS

- ▶ The Attendance Rate for Aboriginal students in Catholic schools remains higher than for Independent and Government schools. Attendance rates have trended downwards in 2024 for all sectors.
- ▶ The gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal student Attendance Rates remains significantly smaller for Catholic schools than other school sectors. In 2024, the gap for the Catholic sector was 4.5% compared to 7.4% for Independent schools and 9.8% for Government schools.
- ▶ The Retention Rate gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students in Catholic schools improved for the second year in a row, declining from 17.5% in 2023 to 15.4% in 2024.

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%”.

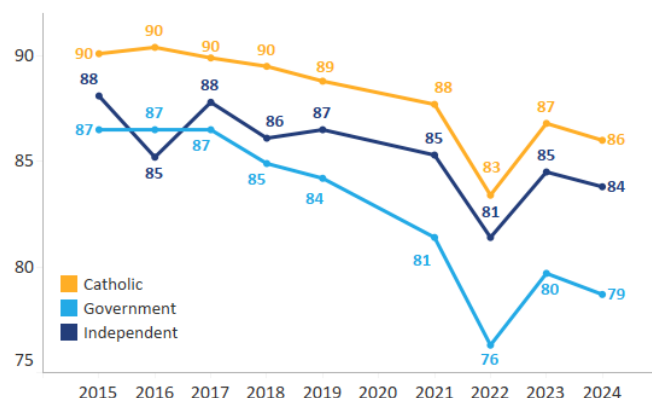
Overall, the gaps in attendance and retention rates between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students are much smaller for Catholic schools compared to Government and Independent schools. The smaller gaps noted for Catholic schools may be partly attributed to the structure of intentional support for Aboriginal 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

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. Despite a healthy rebound in Attendance Rates in 2023, the overall downward trajectory has resumed in 2024 across all school sectors in NSW. The Attendance Rate for Aboriginal students in Catholic schools decreased from 87% to 86% in 2024 but remains higher level than for Independent and Government schools (Refer to Figure 8).

FIGURE 8

ATTENDANCE RATE (%): YEARS 1-10, ABORIGINAL STUDENTS, NSW

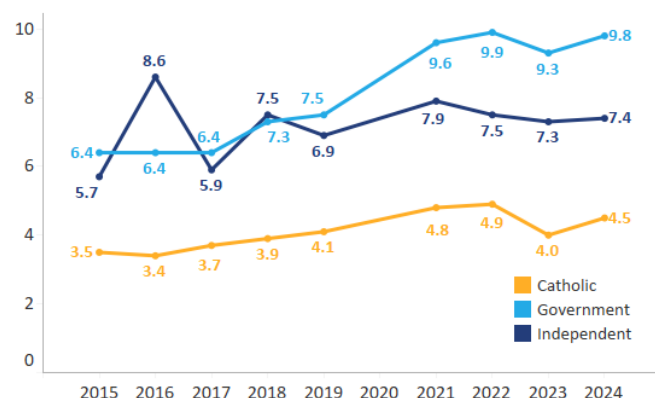


Source: ACARA National Report on Schooling in Australia.

Notes: ‘Attendance Rate’ is defined as 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.

FIGURE 9

ATTENDANCE RATE GAP (%): YEARS 1-10, NSW



‘Attendance Rate Gap’ is defined as the difference between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal attendance.

RI/MPJP Catholic schools are counted as Catholic rather than as Independent.

Data not available in 2020 due to COVID-19. 2021 attendance data in NSW is not comparable with previous years due to changes to the attendance calculations.

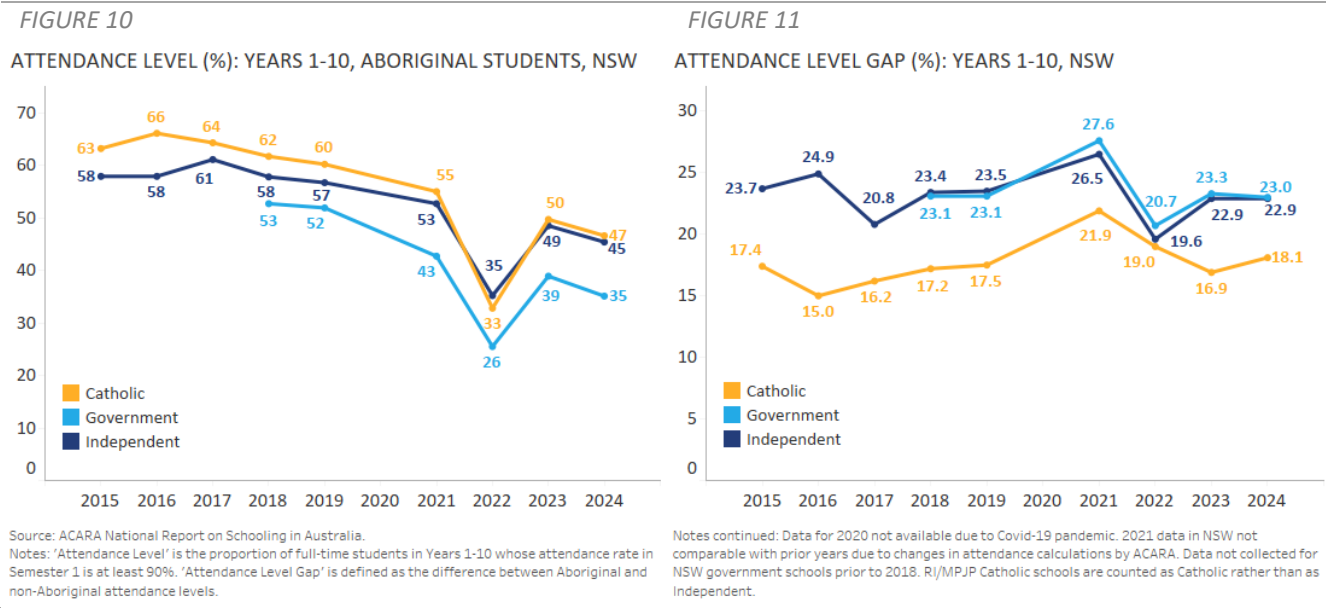
The gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal student Attendance Rates remains significantly smaller for Catholic schools than other school sectors. In 2024, the gap for the Catholic sector was 4.5% (Refer to Figure 9).

The *School Attendance: New Insights from AERO* report released in January 2025<sup>1</sup> 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.
- First Nations students: Additional barriers include racism, cultural disconnect, language barriers, and past negative experiences with education.

ATTENDANCE LEVEL

Attendance Level is the proportion of full-time students in Years 1-10 whose Attendance Rate in Semester 1 is at least 90%. Aboriginal students in Catholic schools have the highest Attendance Level across NSW school sectors at 47%, slightly ahead of the 45% recorded for Independent schools. This still represents a significant gap of 18.1% between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students in Catholic schools, an increase on the 16.9% gap noted in 2023 (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 continued downward trajectory in 2024 across all school sectors.



<sup>1</sup> <<https://www.edresearch.edu.au/summaries-explainers/explainers/school-attendance-new-insights-aero>>

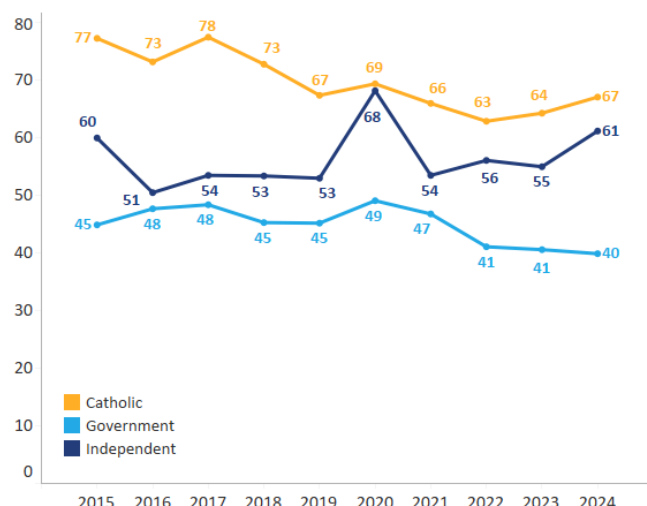


## RETENTION RATES

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, NSW

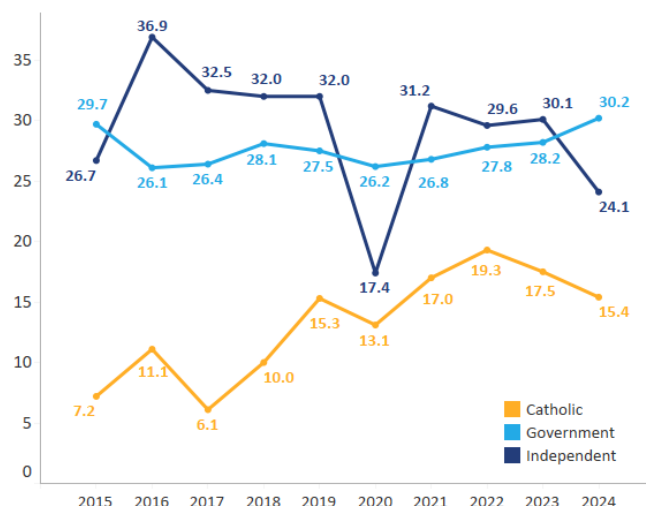


Source: ACARA National Report on Schooling in Australia.

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. RI/MPJP schools are counted as Catholic rather than as Independent. Overall, it is estimated that the impacts of COVID-19 on the data were minor.

FIGURE 13

RETENTION RATE GAP %: YEARS 10-12, NSW



In 2024, the Years 10-12 Retention Rate was 67% for Aboriginal students in Catholic schools, an improvement on the rate of 64% in 2023, but far below the peak of 78% recorded in 2017. The Retention Rate for Aboriginal students in Catholic schools remains above the Independent and Government school rates of 61% and 40% 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 declined for the second year in a row, from 17.5% in 2023 to 15.4% in 2024.

The Retention Rate for Aboriginal students in Catholic schools from Year 7/8 to Year 10 is 95.2%, indicating almost 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 78.1% for Aboriginal students in Catholic schools, around 11% higher than the Year 10 to Year 12 rate. When students turn 17 they can leave school without a pathway. Students electing an alternate skills pathway are more likely to leave at the end of Year 11 or early Year 12.<sup>1</sup> Refer to the section in this report on VET & Post-school Destinations for further information on students who leave school early.

<sup>1</sup> NSW Department of Education "Historical Retention Rate Aboriginal Students - Y12 2018 to Y12 2020"

# NAPLAN PERFORMANCE

## KEY POINTS

- ▶ In 2024, the gaps between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal student NAPLAN results in Catholic systemic schools remain smaller than those noted across all NSW schools.
- ▶ There has been an increase in the proportion of Aboriginal students achieving the *Exceeding* proficiency level across all Year 5 domains and all Year 9 domains except Spelling in 2024.
- ▶ 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 2024. There was some improvement in Year 9 Numeracy where the gap closed from 40 in 2023 to 37 in 2024.

**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 attainment<sup>1</sup>.**

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 3* for further details.

## 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 small<sup>2</sup>. In 2024, the number of Aboriginal students in systemic Catholic schools sitting at least 1 NAPLAN test in each grade was: 837 in Year 3; 791 in Year 5; 917 in Year 7 and 743 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

Years 5 and 9 Reading and Numeracy NAPLAN results for Aboriginal students in Catholic systemic schools were relatively consistent from 2023 to 2024 as shown in *Figure 14*. The most significant movement was a slight decline in Year 5 Reading from 472 to 470.

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 2024. There was some improvement in Year 9 Numeracy where the gap closed from 40 in 2023 to 37 in 2024.

The gaps noted in Catholic systemic schools are approximately half those noted in all NSW schools. For example, in 2024, Year 5 Reading shows a gap of 38 in Catholic systemic schools compared to a gap of 67 in all NSW schools.

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

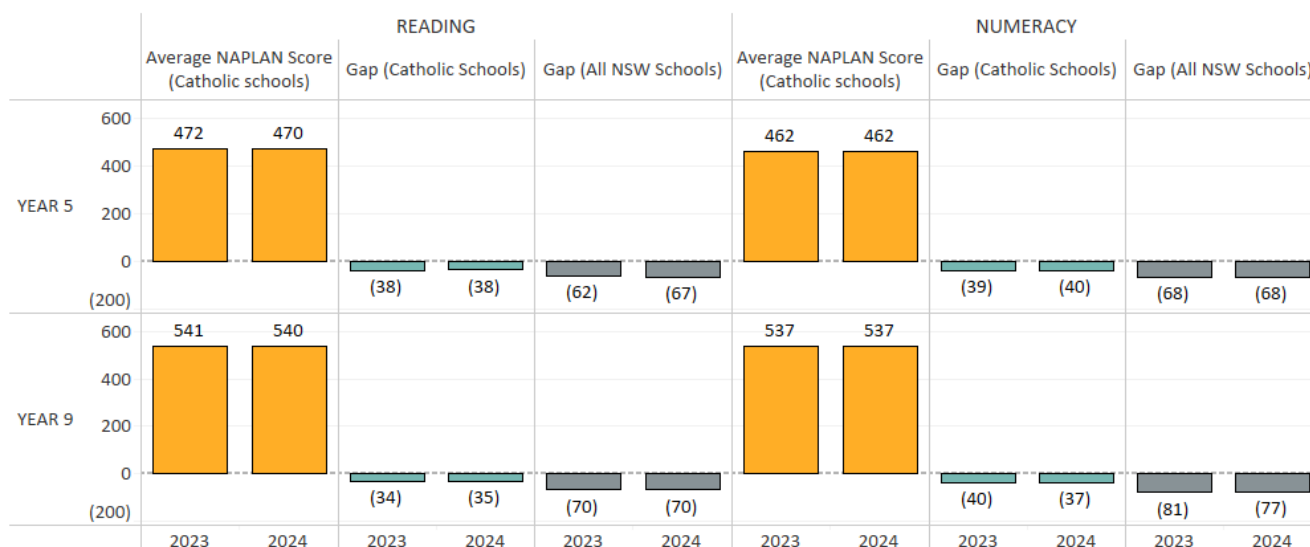
<sup>2</sup> Includes Aboriginal students marked as “present” or sitting an “alternative format”.

FIGURE 14

### NAPLAN PROFICIENCY LEVELS, 2023-24 ABORIGINAL STUDENTS IN CATHOLIC (SYSTEMIC) SCHOOLS

"Gap (Catholic schools)" represents the gap between Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal students within the selected Catholic school sector.

"Gap (All NSW schools)" represents the gap between Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal students across all NSW schools.



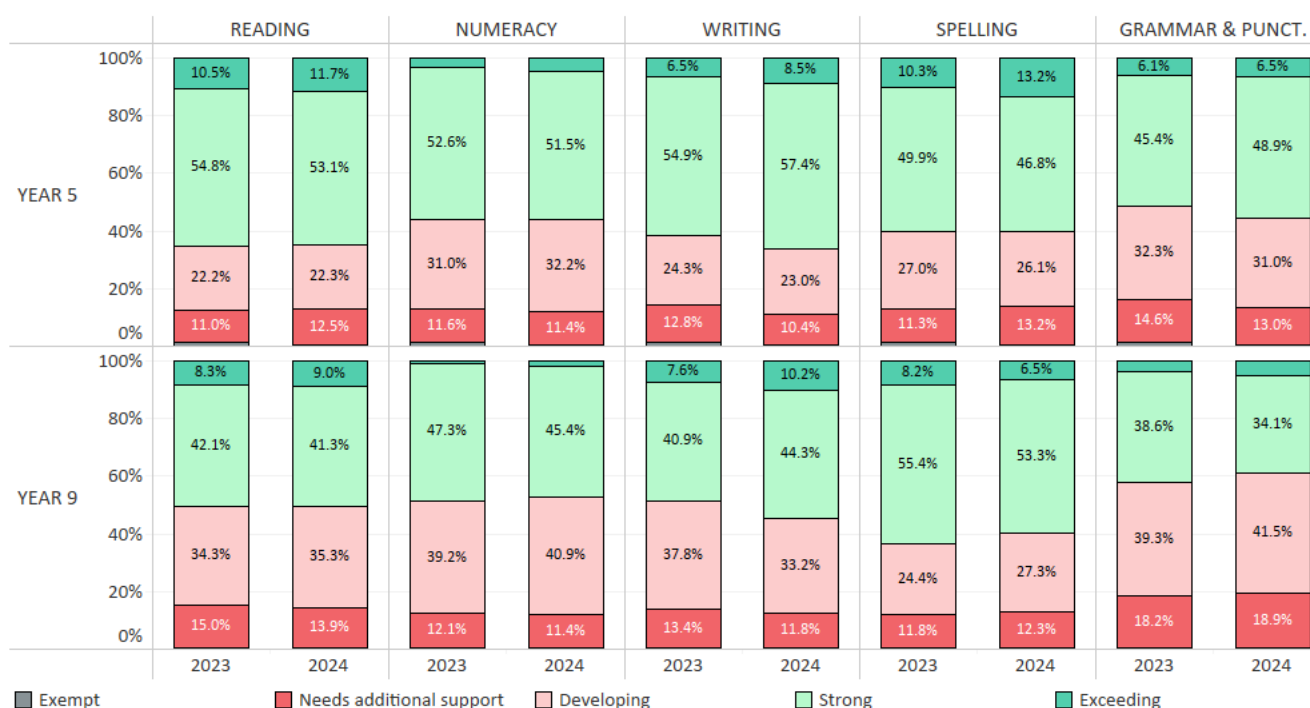
Source: NESA NAPLAN dataset and <https://acara.edu.au/reporting/national-report-on-schooling-in-australia/naplan-national-results>. Notes: For brevity, results are shown for Year 5 and Year 9 Reading and Numeracy only.

## PROFICIENCY LEVELS

Figure 15 shows the proportion of Aboriginal Catholic systemic school students in each NAPLAN proficiency level by domain for Years 5 and 9 in 2023 and 2024. In 2024, there has been an increase in the proportion of Aboriginal Catholic systemic school students achieving the *Exceeding* proficiency level across all Year 5 domains and all Year 9 domains except Spelling. Year-on-year results for the *Needs Additional Support* proficiency level were mixed, though declines were observed in Years 5 and 9 for Numeracy and Writing.

FIGURE 15

### NAPLAN PROFICIENCY LEVELS, 2023-24 ABORIGINAL STUDENTS IN CATHOLIC (SYSTEMIC) SCHOOLS



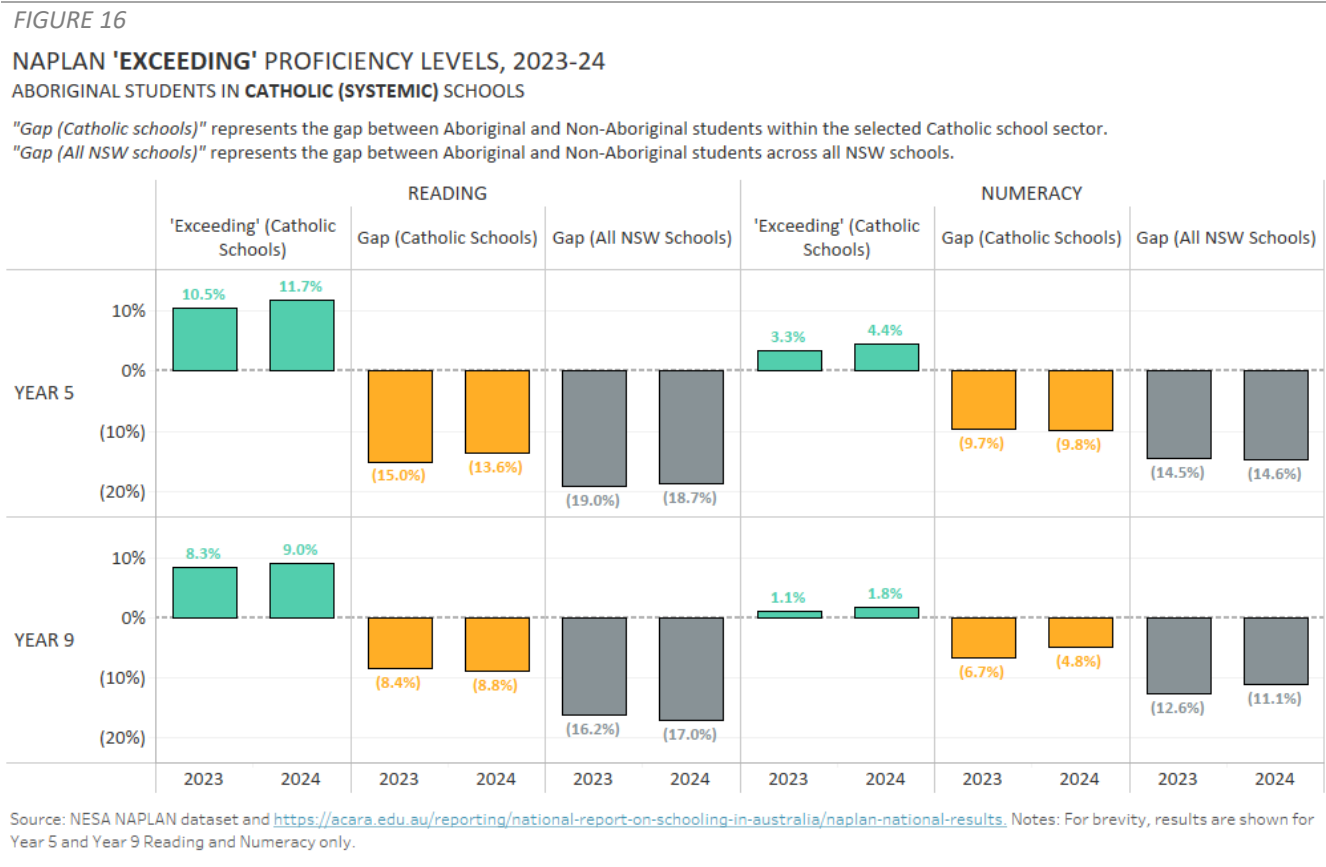
Source: NESA NAPLAN dataset. Notes: For brevity, results are shown for Year 5 and Year 9 only.

EXCEEDING PROFICIENCY LEVEL

In 2024, the proportion of Aboriginal students in Catholic systemic schools achieving the *Exceeding* proficiency level increased across Years 5 and 9 Reading and Numeracy as shown in *Figure 16*. The improvement in Year 5 Reading results reduced the gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Catholic systemic school students from 15.0% to 13.6%.

The gap noted for Year 9 Numeracy decreased from 6.7% to 4.8%, while the gaps remained similar in Year 5 Numeracy and Year 9 Reading when comparing 2023 to 2024.

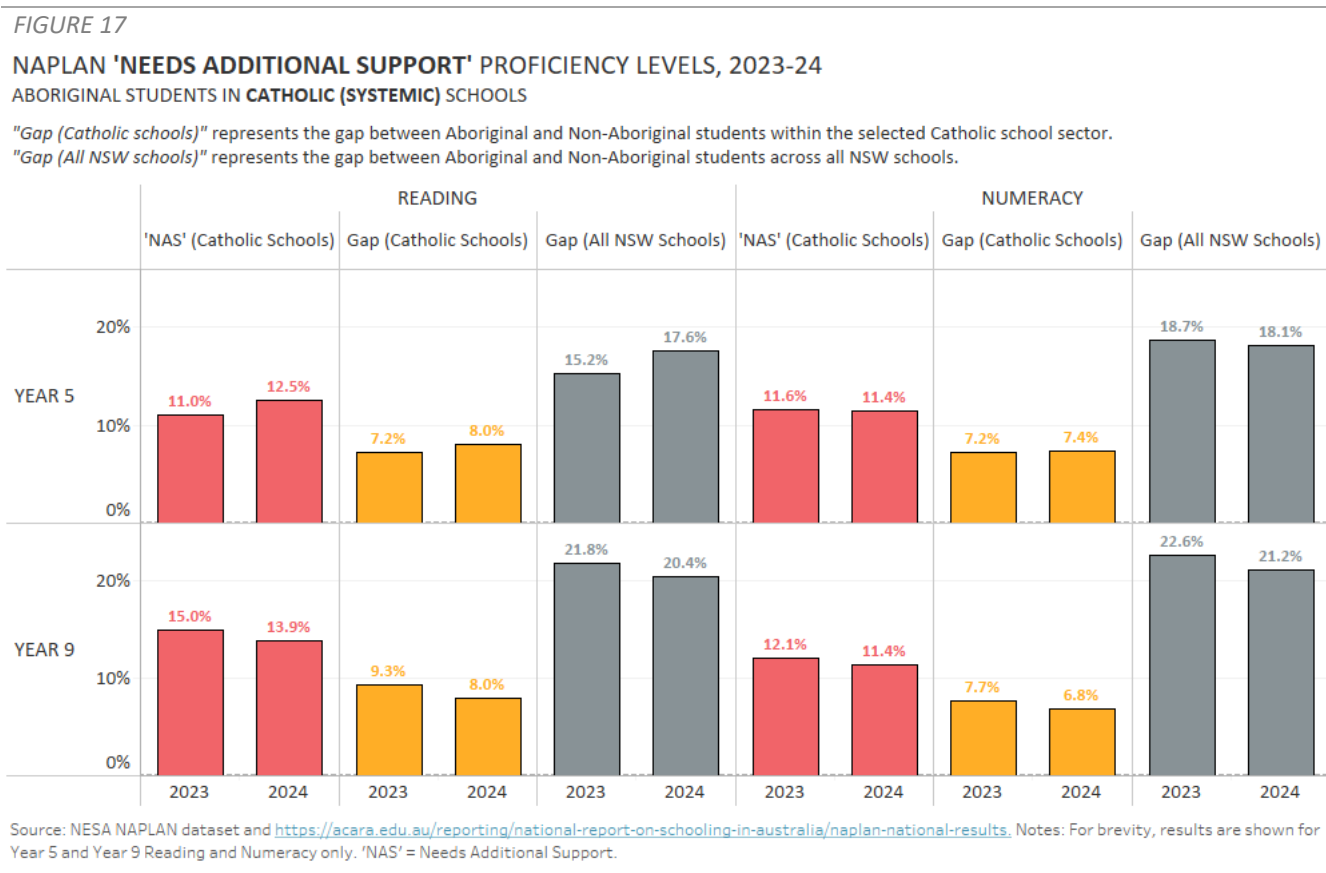
The gaps in Catholic systemic schools remain smaller than those noted across all NSW schools.



NEEDS ADDITIONAL SUPPORT PROFICIENCY LEVEL

In 2024, the proportion of Aboriginal students in Catholic systemic schools falling within the *Needs Additional Support* proficiency level increased for Year 5 Reading but decreased in Year 5 Numeracy and Year 9 Reading and Numeracy. The gap to non-Aboriginal students increased slightly in Year 5 Reading and Numeracy but decreased in Year 9 Reading and Numeracy.

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



Please refer to *Appendix 4* for all NAPLAN charts for the RI/MPJP schools.



# HSC PERFORMANCE

KEY POINTS

Of the 63% of Aboriginal students in Catholic systemic schools awarded the HSC in 2024, 71% were also eligible for ATAR. ATAR eligibility increased by 4 percentage points compared to 2023 (67% to 71%). This improvement also narrowed the gap with non-Aboriginal students from 14% in 2023 to 9% in 2024—the smallest gap in recent history.

The estimated median ATAR for Aboriginal students increased by 2.1 from 60.8 in 2023 to 62.9 in 2024, the highest in recent history. The gap to non-Aboriginal students in Catholic systemic schools, which was typically around 10 points, reduced to 7.9 in 2024.

The combined HSC Bands 1 and 2 rates (the lowest two bands) decreased significantly to 7.2% in 2024 for Aboriginal students in Catholic systemic schools, the lowest result in recent history (2023: 12.2%).

Aboriginal students take a higher proportion of PDHPE, technologies 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%*”.

This section reports on HSC and ATAR trends in our Catholic systemic schools. Reporting on Aboriginal students 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.<sup>1</sup>

## HSC AND ATAR TRENDS

As shown in *Table 1*, 275 Aboriginal students in Catholic systemic schools were awarded their HSC in 2024, representing 63% of those identified in the August Census<sup>2</sup>. Of these students, 195 (71%) were eligible for an ATAR.

These results mark a significant improvement compared to previous years. The 275 Aboriginal students awarded their HSC in 2024 is the highest number recorded since 2020—a year affected by COVID-19. Additionally, the 71% ATAR eligibility rate represents a 4-percentage point increase from 2023, and an 8-percentage point rise compared to 2020.

TABLE 1

Catholic Systemic Schools	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Aboriginal Students					
Awarded HSC	292	258	238	248	275
Eligible for ATAR	185	170	161	167	195
% Eligible for ATAR	63%	66%	68%	67%	71%
Non-Aboriginal Students					
Awarded HSC	12,286	12,251	12,142	12,389	12,847
Eligible for ATAR	10,035	10,014	9,986	10,095	10,312
% Eligible for ATAR	82%	82%	82%	81%	80%

Source: NESA HSC Extract

The percentage of non-Aboriginal HSC students eligible for an ATAR in Catholic systemic schools decreased slightly from 81% in 2023 to 80% in 2024.

The ATAR eligibility gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students in Catholic systemic schools narrowed from 14% in 2023 to 9% in 2024—the smallest gap in recent history (see *Table 1*). By comparison, only 50% of Aboriginal student HSC recipients across all NSW schools were eligible for an ATAR.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Per the NESA Student Identities records for 2024 HSC. Note this information comes from school records which relies on students being correctly identified and recorded.

<sup>2</sup> In 2024, 436 Year 12 students were identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander in the August Census; 275 students were identified in NESA records as being awarded the HSC. Caution should be taken when comparing data from two different sources

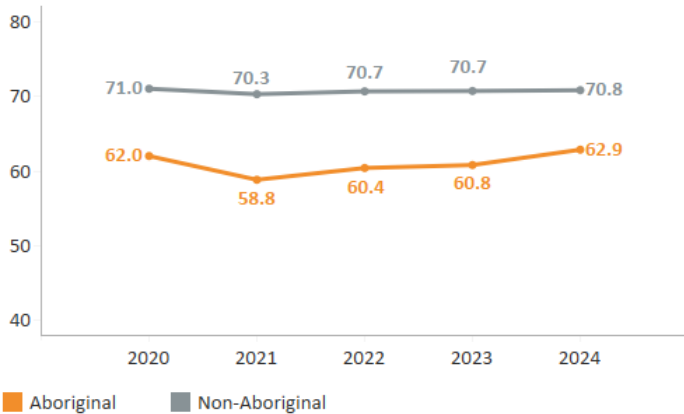
<sup>3</sup> NESA HSC 2024: Results Summary, December 2024

As shown in *Figure 18*, the estimated median ATAR<sup>1</sup> 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 (71.6 in 2024 as released by UAC<sup>2</sup>).

The estimated median ATAR for Aboriginal students increased by 2.1 from 60.8 in 2023 to 62.9 in 2024, the highest in recent history. The gap to non-Aboriginal students in Catholic systemic schools, which was typically around 10 points, reduced to 7.9 in 2024.

FIGURE 18

MEDIAN ESTIMATED ATAR TRENDS - NSW CATHOLIC SYSTEMIC SCHOOLS



Source: CSNSW estimates using UAC Model

### HSC BAND TRENDS

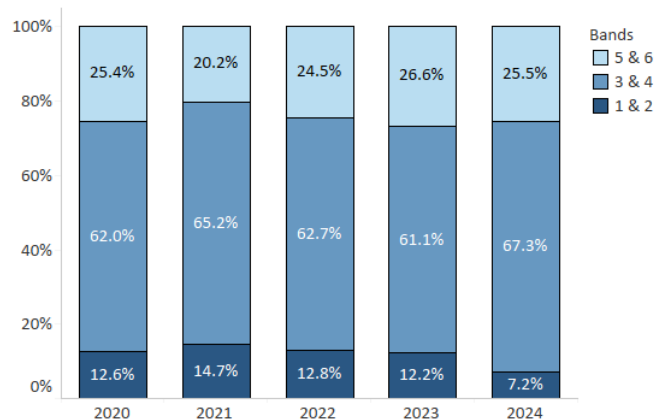
For each HSC course, performance bands indicate levels of achievement demonstrated by students. For a 2-Unit course, Band 6 indicates the highest level of performance, while Band 1 indicates that a student's performance is considered to be below the minimum standard expected<sup>3</sup>.

*Figure 19* below groups HSC Bands 1 & 2, 3 & 4 and 5 & 6 for HSC subjects studied by Aboriginal students in Catholic systemic schools between 2020 and 2024. The Bands 5 & 6 rate decreased slightly in 2024 to 25.5% (2023: 26.6%). The Bands 1 & 2 rate fell significantly to 7.2% (2023: 12.2%), the lowest proportion in recent history.

*Figure 20* compares the Bands 5 & 6 rate for HSC subjects completed by Aboriginal students mentioned above, with the Bands 5 & 6 rate for non-Aboriginal students. The gap increased slightly from 12.1% in 2023 to 13.3% in 2024.

FIGURE 19

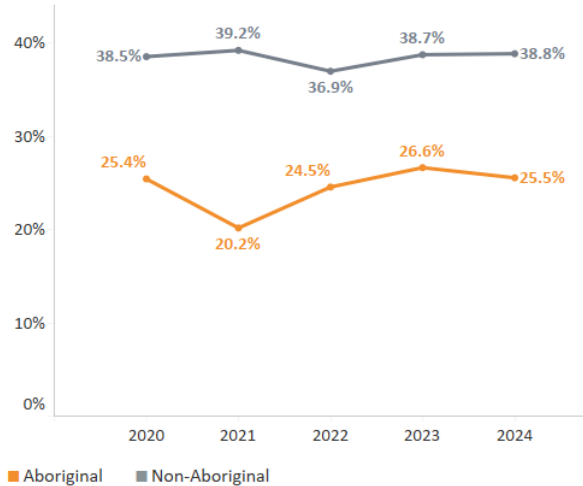
ABORIGINAL STUDENT HSC BAND GROUPS - NSW CATHOLIC SYSTEMIC SCHOOLS



Source: NESA HSC Extract

FIGURE 20

BANDS 5 & 6 RATES - NSW CATHOLIC SYSTEMIC SCHOOLS



Band results for extension subjects are not included here due to small cohort sizes.

<sup>1</sup> Median ATARs are estimated by CSNSW modelling using, HSC marks and Tables A3 and A9 of the [“ATAR 2024 – Preliminary Report on the Scaling of the 2024 NSW HSC”, UAC](#)

<sup>2</sup> Report link above

<sup>3</sup> <<https://arc2.nesa.nsw.edu.au/page/faq>>

## HSC SUBJECT SELECTION

Table 2 shows the proportion of total HSC subject units taken in each of the key learning areas 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 higher proportion of PDHPE, technologies and creative arts subjects compared to non-Aboriginal students. The proportion of Aboriginal students taking HSIE subjects increased to 28.0% in 2024 (24.5% in 2023), the same rate as non-Aboriginal students.

High-scaling subjects<sup>1</sup> represent 11.2% (up from 11.0% in 2023) of HSC units taken by Aboriginal students compared to 17.3% for non-Aboriginal students.

High-scaling subject areas include Chemistry, Economics, English, History, Mathematics, Music, Physics and Science (advanced and extension subjects where applicable).

TABLE 2

HSC Key Learning Area in Catholic Systemic Schools	% of Units Taken 2024	
	Aboriginal Students	Non-Aboriginal Students
Human Society and its Environment (HSIE)	28.0%	28.0%
English	19.8%	19.5%
Mathematics	14.5%	17.3%
Personal Development, Health and Physical Education (PDHPE)	11.5%	9.6%
Science	10.7%	11.9%
Technologies	6.5%	6.1%
Creative Arts	5.9%	4.5%
Vocational and Educational Training (VET)	2.8%	2.7%
Languages	0.4%	0.5%

Source: NESA HSC Extract; Systemic schools only

Note: HSIE includes subjects such as History, Geography, Economics, Business Studies, Legal Studies, Aboriginal Studies and Studies of Religion.

<sup>1</sup> 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 2023, Aboriginal students in NSW Catholic schools participated in Vocational Education and Training (VET) courses at a slightly lower rate (29.2%) than non-Aboriginal students (31.9%).

Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students in NSW Catholic schools select similar courses for their top 10 choices. In 2024, the completion rate for Aboriginal HSC students is 78%, compared to 86% for non-Aboriginal students where the full certificate is available. This figure is 84% for Aboriginal HSC students achieving a Certificate III where available, a gap of 2% compared with all HSC students.

Although there is no sector breakdown, in 2023 the overall rate of Aboriginal school leavers in NSW either in employment or education/training was 85.1% for school completers (2022: 85.3%) and 72.8% for early school leavers (2022: 75.5%).

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%”*.

*“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

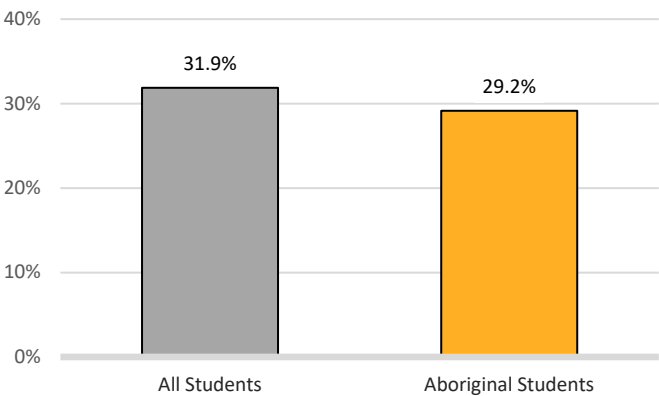
In 2023 (the most recent cross-sector data available), almost 11,000 Year 11 & 12 students in NSW Catholic schools participated in VET courses through diocesan Registered Training Organisations (RTOs). This is estimated to make up around 32% of the cohort, which is slightly higher than the 28% figure for Government schools, and significantly higher than the 13% for Independent schools. Refer to *Figure 21*.

In NSW Catholic schools, the estimated VET participation rate of 29.2% for Aboriginal students is slightly lower than the total of 31.9% for all students.

Due to data limitations, it was not possible to compare the Aboriginal student participation rate across sectors.

FIGURE 21

ESTIMATED % OF YEAR 11/12 CATHOLIC SCHOOL STUDENTS TAKING VET COURSES, 2023



Source: NCVET DataBuilder 2023, August Census 2023

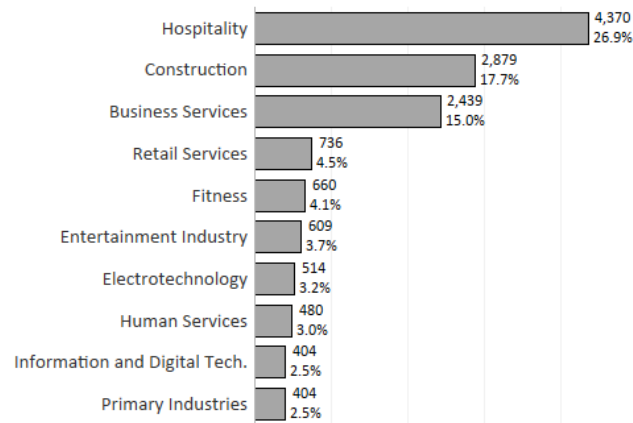
## VET COURSE SELECTION

The three most common VET courses in NSW Catholic schools for both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students are Hospitality, Construction, and Business Services in 2024. These courses comprise 59.6% of VET course selections for non-Aboriginal students and 55.6% for Aboriginal students (Refer to *Figure 22* and *Figure 23*). Aboriginal students’ fourth most common choice was in Human Services courses, compared with the non-Aboriginal student cohort selection of Retail Services, with Fitness being the fifth top choice across both cohorts. 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 Early Childhood Education and Care, while Information and Digital Technology featured in

the top 10 for non-Aboriginal students, but not for Aboriginal students. In 2024, Information and Digital Technology and Sport Coaching dropped out of the top 10 for Aboriginal students, replaced by Early Childhood Education and Care and Electrotechnology.

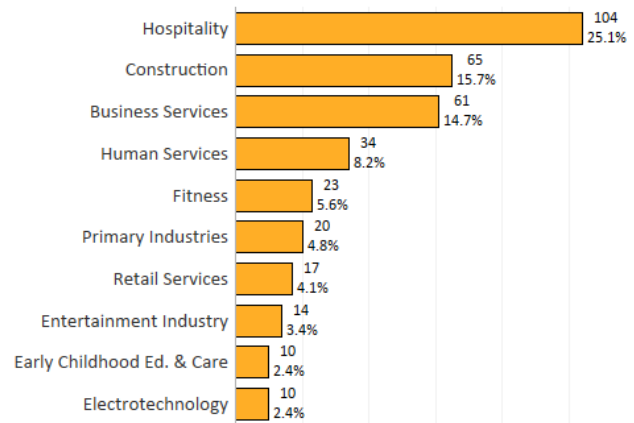
TOP 10 VET COURSES FOR STUDENTS IN NSW CATHOLIC SCHOOLS, 2024

FIGURE 22  
NON-ABORIGINAL STUDENTS



Source: NESA VCS Online

FIGURE 23  
ABORIGINAL STUDENTS

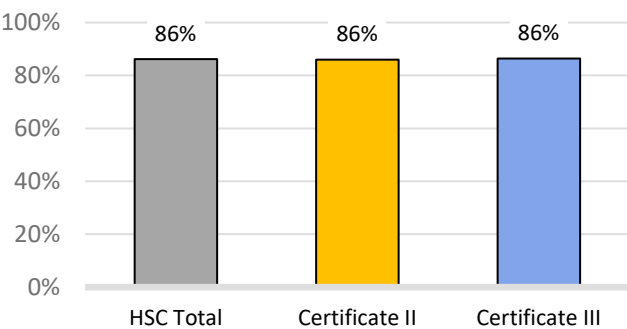


VET COMPLETION

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.

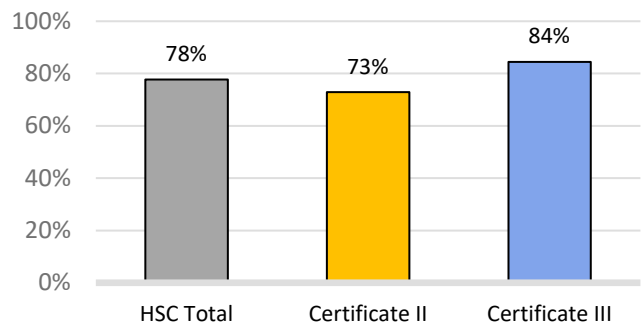
Where a full certificate is available, around 86% of all HSC students in Catholic schools achieved it in 2024, compared to 84% of Aboriginal students (Refer to Figure 24 and Figure 25). Studying towards or obtaining a Certificate III is the minimum requirement for employment in certain industries, particularly health and education. In Catholic schools in 2024, 86% of all HSC students, and 84% of Aboriginal students enrolled in a Certificate III achieved their qualification where the full certificate was available. This gap of 2% is down significantly from the 7% noted last year.

FIGURE 24  
% OF ALL HSC STUDENTS AWARDED FULL CERTIFICATE WHERE AVAILABLE BY LEVEL, 2024



Source: NESA VCS Online

FIGURE 25  
% OF ABORIGINAL HSC STUDENTS AWARDED FULL CERTIFICATE WHERE AVAILABLE BY LEVEL, 2024



Note: Certificate I not shown as typically c.1% of student selections



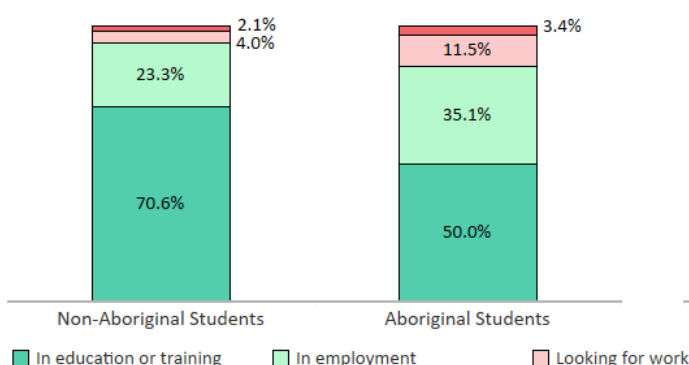
## POST-SCHOOL DESTINATIONS

Each year, the Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation (CESE) conducts a survey assessing the post-school destinations and experiences of former NSW school students. 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').<sup>1</sup> 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 summarises CESE's survey results of Aboriginal students at the NSW state level only. In 2023, 1,421 Aboriginal Year 12 completers and 921 Aboriginal early school leavers completed the survey.

In 2023, 85.1% of Aboriginal Year 12 completers and 72.8% of Aboriginal early school leavers were in education, training, or employment—compared to 93.9% and 86.8% of their non-Aboriginal peers (*Figures 26 & 27*). This was a slight decrease for Aboriginal Year 12 completers (85.3% in 2022) and a decline for early school leavers (75.5% in 2022).

FIGURE 26

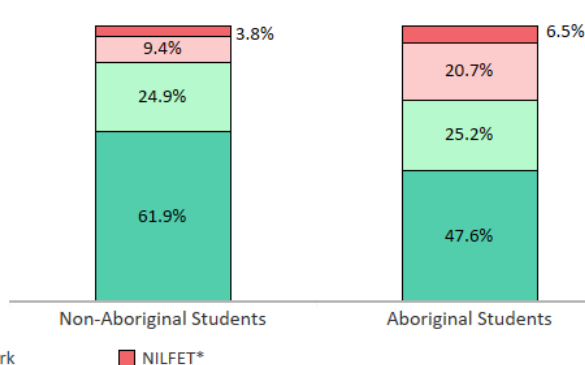
POST-SCHOOL DESTINATIONS OF **YEAR 12 COMPLETERS**, 2023



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

FIGURE 27

POST-SCHOOL DESTINATIONS OF **EARLY SCHOOL LEAVERS**, 2023

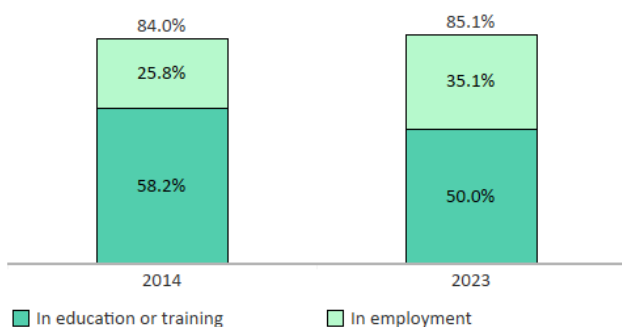


For Year 12 completers, since 2014 there has been a decrease in the proportion of Aboriginal students enrolled in education or training after leaving school from 58.2% to 50.0%. This has been more than offset by the increase in the proportion of Aboriginal students in full-time or part-time work from 25.8% to 35.1% (refer to *Figure 28*).

*Figure 29* shows that in 2023, Aboriginal early school leavers engaged in both education or training and work had increased significantly since 2014. As a result, in 2023, there were 14.5% fewer Aboriginal early school leavers looking for work or not in the labour force, education or training ('NILFET') compared with 2014.

FIGURE 28

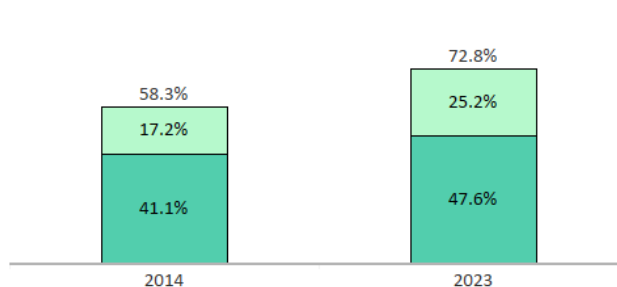
% OF ABORIGINAL **YEAR 12 COMPLETERS** IN EMPLOYMENT OR EDUCATION/TRAINING



Source: NSW DoE Post-School Destinations and Experiences Survey

FIGURE 29

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

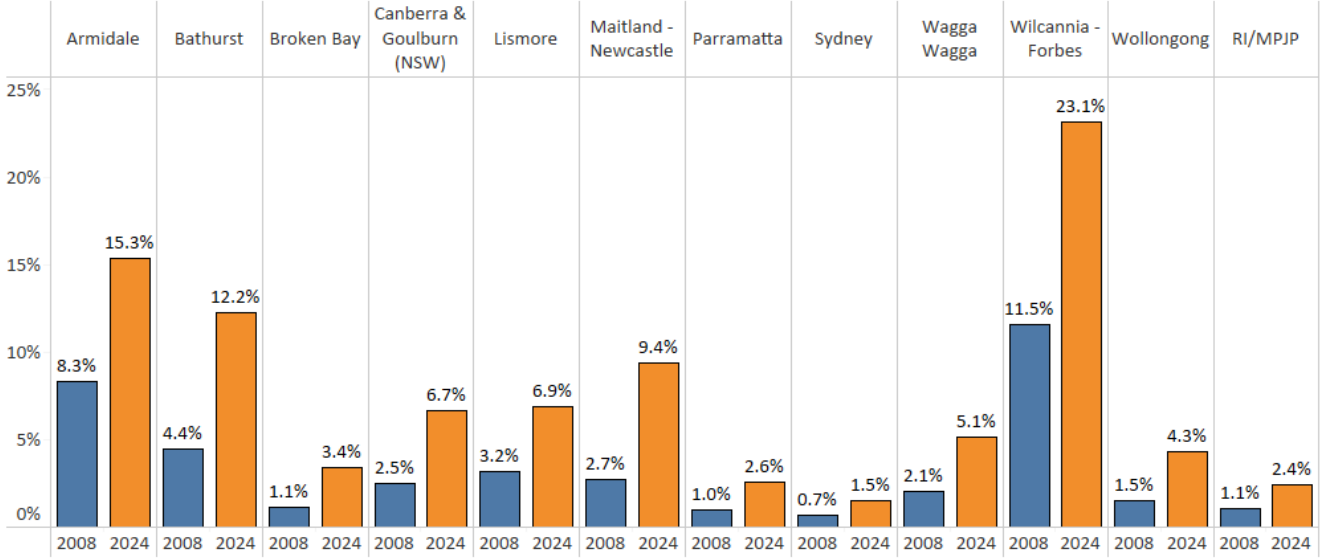


<sup>1</sup> <https://education.nsw.gov.au/about-us/education-data-and-research/cese/publications/research-reports/nsw-post-school-destinations-and-experiences-survey>

# APPENDICES

## APPENDIX 1

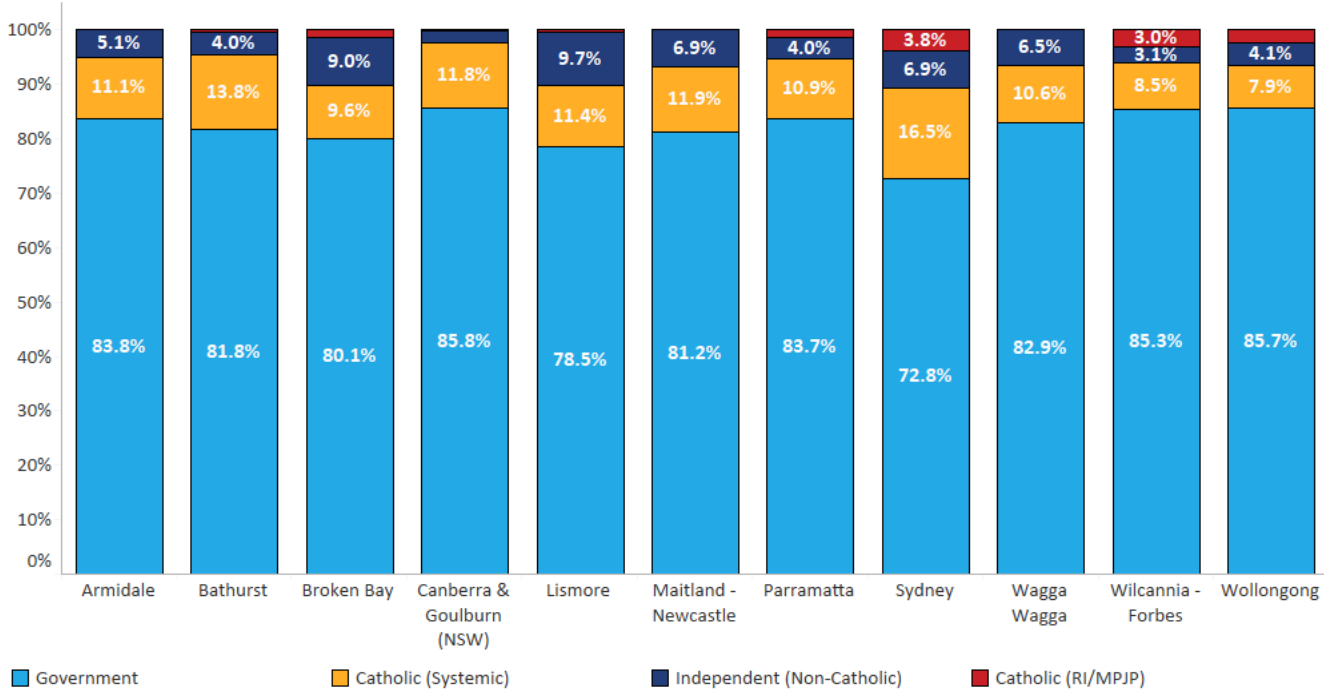
ABORIGINAL STUDENTS IN CATHOLIC SCHOOLS AS % OF COHORT BY DIOCESE, 2008 VS 2024



Source: ACARA MySchool Datasets

## APPENDIX 2

PROPORTION OF ABORIGINAL STUDENTS BY SECTOR BY DIOCESE - NSW SCHOOLS, 2024



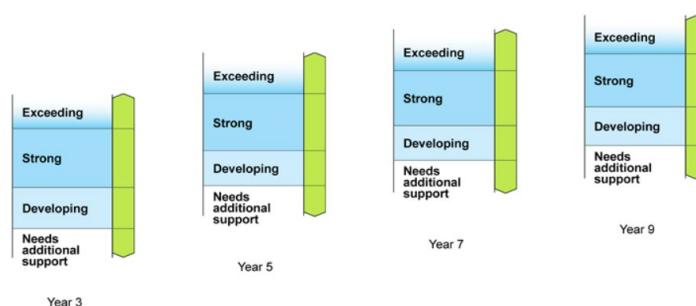
Source: ACARA MySchool datasets.

## APPENDIX 3

### NAPLAN CHANGES FROM 2023

- The NAPLAN test window moved to March from May in 2023.
- Student achievement is reported against proficiency standards on a revised NAPLAN measurement scale, that makes better use of online adaptive tests. This replaces the “band” methodology used in 2022 and prior years. The proficiency levels are as follows:
  - Exceeding** – the student’s result exceeds expectations at the time of testing.
  - Strong** – the student’s result meets challenging but reasonable expectations at the time of testing.
  - Developing** – the student’s result indicates that they are working towards expectations at the time of testing.
  - 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.

Diagram: NAPLAN measurement scales averaged across domains



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

There are slight variations between domain areas – the precise location of each proficiency level on the NAPLAN scale is shown in the table below.

- Proficiency results are only available for the Catholic sector.

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

- 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.
- Given that the NAPLAN time series was reset in 2023, progress results will not be available until 2025 NAPLAN is completed.

## APPENDIX 4

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 2024 the number of Aboriginal students in Catholic RI/MPJP schools sitting at least 1 NAPLAN test in each grade was: 7 in Year 3; 17 in Year 5; 176 in Year 7 and 142 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.

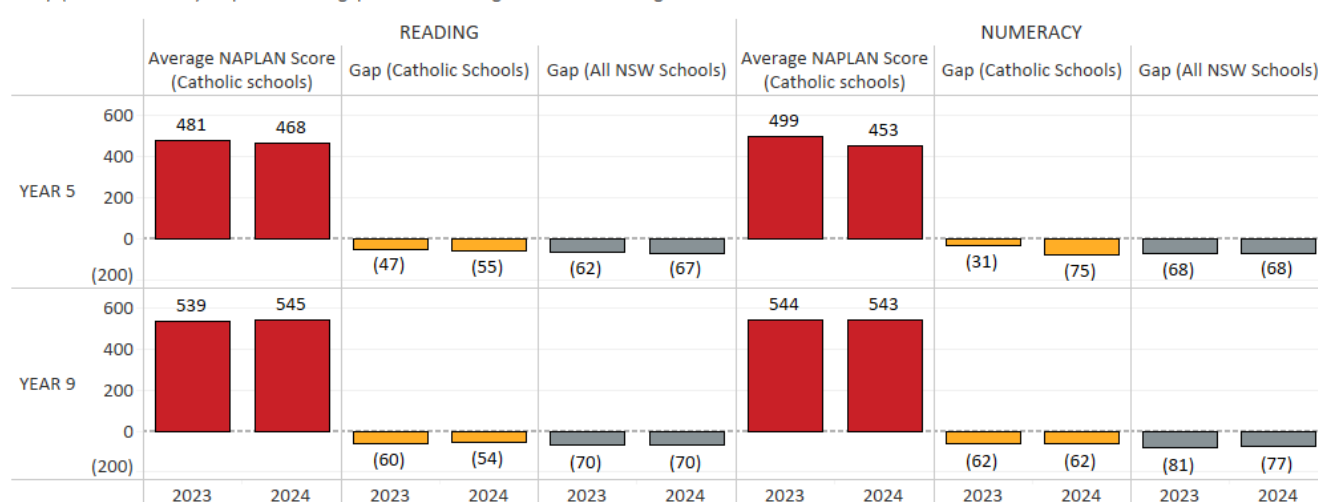
### NAPLAN AVERAGE SCORES, 2023-24 – RI/MPJP SCHOOLS

#### NAPLAN PROFICIENCY LEVELS, 2023-24

##### ABORIGINAL STUDENTS IN CATHOLIC (RI/MPJP) SCHOOLS

"Gap (Catholic schools)" represents the gap between Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal students within the selected Catholic school sector.

"Gap (All NSW schools)" represents the gap between Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal students across all NSW schools.

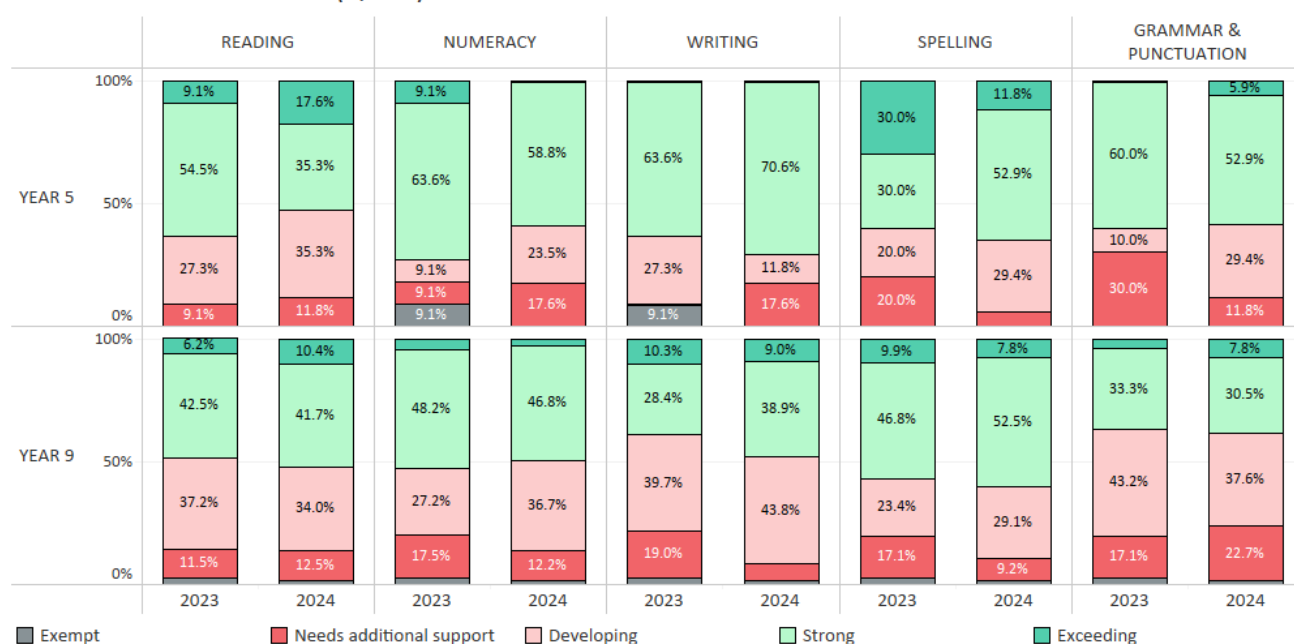


Source: NESA NAPLAN dataset and <https://acara.edu.au/reporting/national-report-on-schooling-in-australia/naplan-national-results>. Notes: For brevity, results are shown for Year 5 and Year 9 Reading and Numeracy only.

### PROFICIENCY LEVELS, 2023-24 – RI/MPJP SCHOOLS

#### NAPLAN PROFICIENCY LEVELS, 2023-24

##### ABORIGINAL STUDENTS IN CATHOLIC (RI/MPJP) SCHOOLS



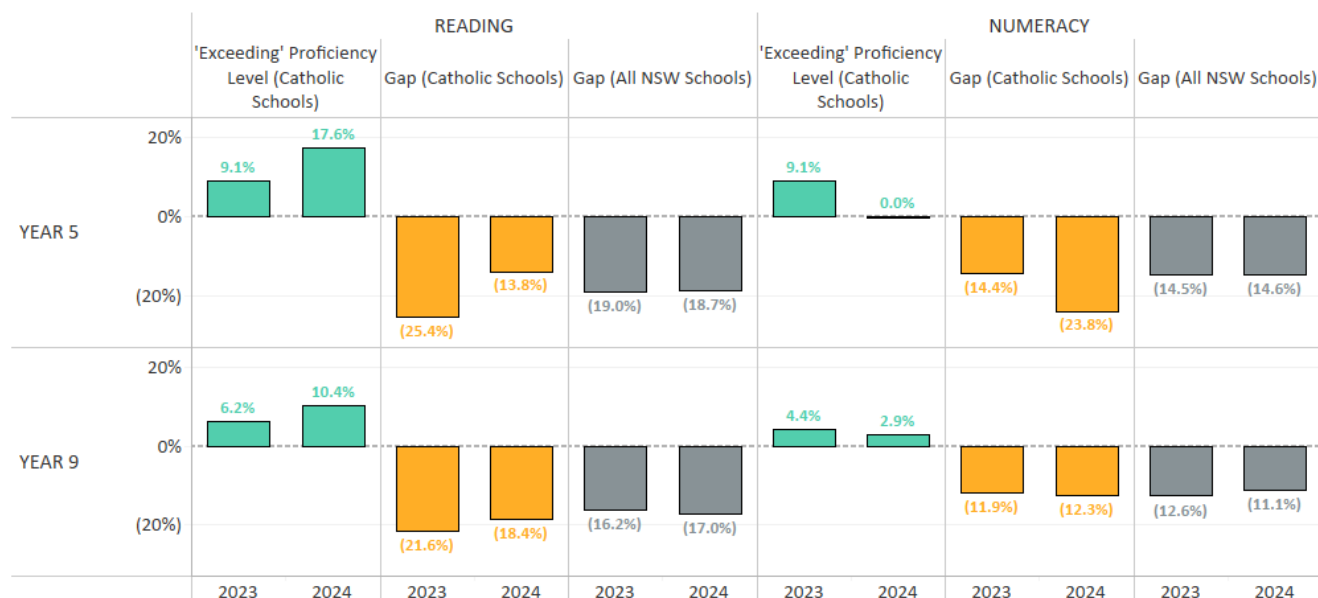
Source: NESA NAPLAN dataset. Notes: For brevity, results are shown for Year 5 and Year 9 only.

## EXCEEDING PROFICIENCY LEVEL, 2023-24 – RI/MPJP SCHOOLS

### NAPLAN 'EXCEEDING' PROFICIENCY LEVELS, 2023-24 ABORIGINAL STUDENTS IN CATHOLIC (RI/MPJP) SCHOOLS

"Gap (Catholic schools)" represents the gap between Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal students within the selected Catholic school sector.

"Gap (All NSW schools)" represents the gap between Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal students across all NSW schools.



Source: NESA NAPLAN dataset and <https://acara.edu.au/reporting/national-report-on-schooling-in-australia/naplan-national-results>. Notes: For brevity, results are shown for Year 5 and Year 9 Reading and Numeracy only.

## NEEDS ADDITIONAL SUPPORT PROFICIENCY LEVEL, 2023-24 – RI/MPJP SCHOOLS

### NAPLAN 'NEEDS ADDITIONAL SUPPORT' PROFICIENCY LEVELS, 2023-24 ABORIGINAL STUDENTS IN CATHOLIC (RI/MPJP) SCHOOLS

"Gap (Catholic schools)" represents the gap between Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal students within the selected Catholic school sector.

"Gap (All NSW schools)" represents the gap between Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal students across all NSW schools.



Source: NESA NAPLAN dataset and <https://acara.edu.au/reporting/national-report-on-schooling-in-australia/naplan-national-results>. Notes: For brevity, results are shown for Year 5 and Year 9 Reading and Numeracy only. 'NAS' = Needs Additional Support.



## APPENDIX 5

### BETTER AND FAIRER SCHOOLS AGREEMENT

*The Better and Fairer Schools Agreement – Full and Fair Funding 2025-2034* (the Agreement)<sup>1</sup> is an agreement between the Commonwealth, states and territories to help create a better and fairer education system for all students. The Agreement commenced 24 January 2025 and expires 31 December 2034. It replaces the National School Reform Agreement.

The Agreement has defined certain Improvement Measures, the following of which are specific to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students:

- *Pathways for success:* 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).
- *Learning equity:* 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 (including, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, outer regional, remote and very remote, and parental education (Year 11 or below)) in the Strong and Exceeding NAPLAN proficiency levels.
- *Student attendance:* By 2030, return the Student Attendance Rate to 2019 levels for the following priority equity cohorts nationally:
  - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students;
  - Students from regional and remote locations; and
  - Students from low socio-educational advantage (SEA) schools (Quartile 1).
- *Student attendance:* By 2035, the Student Attendance Rate for priority equity cohorts is the same as the overall student population.

Reporting on these targets will begin from 2025.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.education.gov.au/recurrent-funding-schools/resources/heads-agreement>

