

Education and Training

With schooling to Year 12, the opportunities open to people for employment and further study are greatly enhanced. Giving Indigenous students the same opportunities as non-Indigenous students is vital. With these opportunities, students have a greater ability to engage in the economic, educational and political affairs of our State.

Overview

The Queensland Government is committed to addressing the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students in reading, writing and numeracy achievements as well as the gap in Year 12 attainment or equivalent. Further trade, training and tertiary qualifications are also seen as essential to providing improved prospects for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders.

The measures which will be used by the Queensland Government to monitor progress, as well as the strategies which will best address the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students, are presented below.

COAG TARGETS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Halve the gap in reading, writing and numeracy achievements for Indigenous children within a decade • Halve the gap for Indigenous students in Year 12 attainment or equivalent attainment rates by 2020.
Q2 TARGETS	<p>Smart</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Three out of four Queenslanders will hold trade, training or tertiary qualifications
PROGRESS MEASURES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Year 3, 5 and 7 reading, writing and numeracy • Year 12 or equivalent certification
STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop responses for improved reading, writing and numeracy outcomes for all ages • Increase young people's engagement with school or other learning pathways • Ensure curriculum is relevant and flexible • Improve teacher and school leader quality and support, particularly for remote Queensland schools



Literacy and Numeracy Outcomes

The Evidence

Literacy and Numeracy

Literacy and numeracy outcomes presented in this report are based on 2007 state based testing where basic literacy and numeracy standards are expressed as benchmarks. Students who do not meet these benchmarks will have difficulty progressing satisfactorily at school.¹ The data from the Years 3, 5 and 7 literacy and numeracy testing in August 2007 show lower percentages of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students reaching the benchmark for each respective year level than all students: see Table 2.1.

In general, students in remote and very remote areas were less likely to achieve literacy and numeracy benchmarks than students schooled elsewhere.²

Reading

- in reading tests, Year 3 students were more likely to score above the benchmark than Year 5 or 7 students, irrespective of remoteness or Indigenous status.
- Year 5 students in remote areas (including most of the discrete Indigenous communities) were least likely to score above the benchmark.

Writing

- schools servicing the discrete Indigenous communities had the lowest proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students achieving the writing benchmark. This was consistent across year levels 3, 5 and 7.

Numeracy

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Year 3 and 7 students were less likely to achieve the numeracy benchmark than the reading or writing benchmark.
- in numeracy tests, Year 3 students were more likely to score above the benchmark than Year 5 or 7 students, irrespective of remoteness or Indigenous status.
- an examination of student test scores over time shows that, compared with the Queensland average, the literacy and numeracy skills of Cape York Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students trail by two to four years in Years 5 and 7.³

From 2008, basic literacy and numeracy standards (expressed as National Minimum Standards) have been established under the National Assessment Program-Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) and endorsed by state, territory and Commonwealth Ministers responsible for education. There will be a time-series break as the different testing regimes are not comparable.

¹ MCEETYA, National Report on Schooling 2007.

² Data relating to remoteness areas were geo-coded by school location and analysis was undertaken on simple counts of students above and below the benchmark. Source: Queensland Studies Authority, unpublished data, 2007.

³ Department of Education, Science and Training, Submission to The Senate Standing Committee on Employment, Workplace Relations and Education Inquiry into the Indigenous Education (Targeted Assistance) Amendment (Cape York Measures) Bill 2007.

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Table 2.1: Proportion (%) of students above Year 3, 5 and 7 benchmarks for Reading, Writing and Numeracy, by Indigenous status, Queensland, 2007

Curriculum area	Year	Indigenous status	Proportion
Reading	Year 3	Indigenous	87.0
		All	93.5
	Year 5	Indigenous	59.3
		All	80.5
	Year 7	Indigenous	61.5
		All	84.2
Writing	Year 3	Indigenous	89.0
		All	95.1
	Year 5	Indigenous	91.4
		All	96.3
	Year 7	Indigenous	91.6
		All	96.3
Numeracy	Year 3	Indigenous	77.6
		All	90.2
	Year 5	Indigenous	62.3
		All	83.7
	Year 7	Indigenous	49.0
		All	77.4

Source: National Report on Schooling in Australia, 2007. Data are included for both state and non-state schools.

Note: These proportions are not exact estimates. Refer to Appendix A for the 95% confidence intervals as an estimate of the variability of these proportions.



Key Queensland Government actions to close the gap

Literacy and numeracy initiatives

The Department of Education, Training and the Arts (DETA) delivers public education to more than 480,000 students, or approximately 70 per cent of all Queensland school students in the State school system and provides support to 466 Catholic and independent schools. In 2008, DETA's budget was over \$6 billion including \$5 billion for education, \$98 million for Arts and Culture, and \$978 million for Vocational Education and Training (the remainder includes funding for higher education, non-state education and corporate services).⁴ The Commonwealth Government provides program funds which the Queensland Government manages (totalling \$35.5 million in 2008) for allocation to schools across the State.

As shown in the early childhood section, the Queensland Government is committed to providing all Queensland children with strong educational foundations as demonstrated through its investment in **pre-Preparatory education programs** in remote Indigenous communities. This complements the introduction in 2007, extended in 2008 through-out Queensland, of a non-compulsory full-time **prep-Year of education** before Year 1 to provide a seamless transition into more formal schooling.

The Queensland Government along with other states and territories is negotiating a new **National Education Agreement**, as well as specific **National Partnership Agreements** on Teacher Quality, Low Socio-Economic Status School Communities and Literacy and Numeracy. These will contain both general and Indigenous-specific targets and initiatives that will benefit Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and contribute to closing the gap in educational outcomes.

⁴ Source: DETA Annual Report 2007/08 Unpublished.

DETA actively engages **key stakeholders** to inform Indigenous education strategies, including a revitalised Queensland Indigenous Education Consultative Committee, the Indigenous Education Leadership Institute, and groups such as the Yalari Foundation and the Higher Expectations Program.

As well as general initiatives to improve educational facilities and practice, specific Indigenous initiatives underway to improve literacy and numeracy outcomes, including curriculum and teacher quality, include:

- the **Indigenous Education Support Structures** project pilot, which focuses on working with Indigenous students, teachers and families in five clusters of state schools in Cunnamulla/Charleville, Ipswich/Moreton, Mount Isa, Cairns and Rockhampton. The project budget of \$10 million over four years starting in 2007/08 includes funding to support the project in non-state schools
- the **Let's Stay Put for Literacy and Numeracy Learning** pilot project, which focuses on addressing student mobility as a major factor influencing low student achievement in literacy and numeracy. The Commonwealth is investing \$2.4 million in the two year pilot (2008/2010), which will target schools across central and northern Queensland, with the State Government providing in-kind support
- the **Palm Island Senior Phase Program**, which provides a vocationally oriented curriculum, including a literacy and numeracy component, for the young people of Palm Island. In 2006/07 it had a budget of \$2.7 million over three years and an additional \$700,000 in capital funding was allocated in 2007/08. The program functions through a partnership between Kirwan State High School, the Barrier

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Encourage and Maintain Involvement in Learning

Reef Institute of TAFE and the Australian College of Agriculture

- the Cape York Welfare Reform Trial, which incorporates a project to improve school attendance and literacy which has commenced in the three trial communities of Coen, Hope Vale and Mossman Gorge in 2008 and will extend to Aurukun in 2009. Each school has made available an existing room and teacher for the **Making Up Lost Time In Literacy** (MULTILIT) program, and support for the **school attendance case managers**, employed by Cape York Partnerships
- the **Bound For Success Consistent Curriculum** (also known as Scope and Sequence), which was developed explicitly for the schools servicing discrete Indigenous communities on Cape York and in the Torres Strait. The curriculum reflects local, regional and systemic priorities across all learning areas for Years 1–9
- the **Remote Area Teacher Education Program** (RATEP), which was established in 1990 and has been extended to rural and urban areas. With funding of \$1.1 million from the Queensland Government and \$700,000 from the Commonwealth Government, the program provides flexible, community-based training to Indigenous teachers in 19 remote, rural and urban sites across Queensland. To date, 120 teachers have graduated from the program through James Cook University and 442 through the Tropical North Queensland TAFE.

The Evidence

Year 12 or Equivalent Attainment Rates

In 2007, 1,231 Senior Certificates were awarded to Queensland students who identified as being of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent, representing 3.0 per cent of all certificates awarded to students throughout the State. In the same year, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander 17 year olds represented 5.7 per cent of all 17 year olds.

Queensland students have a range of study options, including working towards tertiary study or completing a vocation certificate (VET). Students wishing to undertake tertiary education normally require an Overall Position (OP). Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people were almost three times as likely to complete Year 12 without receiving a vocational qualification or an OP (36.1% compared with 12.1% of non-Indigenous students): see Table 2.2.

Queensland Year 12 students completing school in 2007 were the last group to receive Queensland Senior Certificates – a new certification scheme has now been introduced – the Queensland Certificate of Education.

Table 2.2: Year 12 OP eligibility and vocational qualifications, Queensland, 2007

	OP eligible, no VET %	OP eligible with VET %	OP ineligible with VET %	OP ineligible, no VET %
Non-Indigenous young people	47.1	18.2	22.6	12.1
Indigenous young people	17.0	8.1	38.8	36.1



There were significant variations in certification across remoteness areas for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people:

- the likelihood of not being eligible for either an OP or VET qualification increased with remoteness, ranging from 23.3 per cent for students who lived in major cities to 53.2 per cent for students who lived in remote/very remote areas. A similar pattern was evident for non-Indigenous students, however, the proportions were much smaller. It is worth noting that options for completing Year 12 in remote and very remote areas are limited, thus students are more likely to be attending boarding school: see Table 2.3
- as a proportion of all 17 year olds, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people in major cities and remote/very remote areas were slightly more likely to participate in Year 12 education (as measured by senior certificate eligibility) than those in inner and outer regional areas (40.7% compared with 32.1%).

Table 2.3: Year 12 OP eligibility and vocational qualifications, by remoteness area, 2007

	OP with/without VET %		VET with/without OP %		No OP-No VET %	
	Indigenous	Non-Indigenous	Indigenous	Non-Indigenous	Indigenous	Non-Indigenous
Major Cities	37.8	67.4	53.4	39.6	23.3	10.8
Inner Regional	27.3	64.4	52.7	40.6	28.8	13.4
Outer regional	16.9	61.4	46.3	43.0	40.1	14.3
Remote/Very Remote	16.5	51.4	35.0	54.1	53.2	15.4

These data are not additive as some students have been counted in both the OP and VET categories: OP with/without VET represents all students eligible for an OP, including those who also obtained VET qualifications; VET with/without OP represents all students with VET qualifications including those who were eligible for an OP.

Source: Queensland Studies Authority.

- the level of achievement for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people in 2007 declines on average with increasing remoteness. For example, of those Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students enrolled in Year 12 English in 2007, the proportion achieving a sound achievement or higher (i.e., a pass mark) varied from 72.1 per cent in major cities, down to 53.0 per cent in the remote/very remote areas. This could possibly be attributed to English being a second or third language for the students in the more remote regions. This is supported by the level of achievement in Year 12 English of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students from the discrete communities, where only 26.1 per cent of students were awarded a sound achievement or higher in English. In comparison, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students from the Torres Region and the Balance of Queensland (areas other than the discrete communities) were awarded sound or higher at twice the rate of those in discrete communities (57.1% and 65.5% respectively).

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Key Queensland Government actions to close the gap

Encourage and maintain involvement in learning

The Queensland Government is pursuing a range of general and Indigenous-specific initiatives, to actively encourage the involvement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people to achieve Year 12 or equivalent qualifications.

The **Education and Training Reforms for the Future** strategy has been designed to improve young people's senior phase of learning experience and opportunities through:

- more flexible learning options such as a mix of schooling, vocational training and work-based programs
- the development of the Queensland Certificate of Education to recognise a broader range of learning achievements and strengthen the overall education standards attained by young people
- improved career planning through individual Senior Education and Training Plans which identify young people's education, training and career goals.

Key initiatives to increase young people's engagement with school or other learning pathways have included:

- **Flexible Learning Services and Access to Pathways** programs introduced specifically to support 15-17 year olds who have disengaged, or are at risk of disengaging, from full-time education, training or work
- the **Get Set for Work Program** for young people 15-17 years of age who no longer attend school or are at risk of leaving mainstream education to help them prepare for work. With funding from a total budget of \$11.7 million, 124 Indigenous participants were supported in 2007/08

- the **Youth Support Coordinator Initiative (YSCI)**, a state-wide initiative funded at \$10.9 million annually (ongoing) to support young people at risk of disengagement from education, training and employment to successfully transition into and through the senior phase of learning (years 10, 11 and 12)
- **School-based apprenticeships and traineeships (SATs)**, which allow high school students to work for an employer, train for a recognised qualification and complete their secondary school studies. The Government made an election commitment to double the number of school based apprenticeship and traineeship commencements from 6,200 to 12,400 over three years between 2007 and 2009
- **Transition Support Services** to assist Indigenous students and their families in rural and remote areas to attend secondary school in locations away from their communities. Funding of \$1.7 million in 2007/08 and \$1.5 million in 2008/09 has helped 360 students (from Cape York and the Torres Strait) to attend school at the start of the 2008 school year.

A further recent initiative is the establishment of the **Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Foundation**, an independent trust with start-up capital of \$25.8 million, which will focus on improved educational opportunities through scholarships, bursaries and like support commencing in 2009.

The Queensland Government is also committed to supporting the transition of Indigenous young people from school to work and/or further study, and to providing opportunities for the Indigenous working age population to obtain the skills and capabilities required for the 21st century labour market.



CASE STUDY: Spinifex State College Mount Isa – Residential Campus

The Spinifex State College, a residential campus in Mount Isa, is the first state-run boarding facility in Queensland. Its purpose is to provide access to quality education for students from rural and remote areas who otherwise would not attend school through to senior level.

The College consists of a Junior and a Senior campus, Special Education Program, Education and Training Precinct and the Residential Campus. As at February 2008 Spinifex State College had 1064 students enrolled, with 693 students in the Junior campus (33% Indigenous) and 371 in the Senior campus (28.3% Indigenous).

Since its opening in 2003, the Residential Campus has expanded from an initial intake of 23 students to 40 students in June 2008, drawn from 11 communities. The majority of its boarders are Indigenous (66% in 2008).

The Residential Campus provides pastoral support and case management that ensures individual needs are met and chances of success maximised. The formation of partnerships with parents is central to its philosophy.

Outcomes achieved include 100 per cent school attendance, 100 per cent student participation in daily afternoon activities and study sessions, 100 per cent attendance in life-skills programs and an 85 per cent pass rate. All of the seven Indigenous Year 12 students successfully completed Year 12 in 2007 and transitioned to either employment or employment-based training, in the form of apprenticeships or traineeships.

Source: Spinifex State College – Residential Campus database. The school attendance outcome relates to periods when students are in residence and it excludes authorised absences (eg, illness).