

AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

The Australian Capital Territory is a self-governing territory comprising 2,367 square kilometres in south-east Australia. The population of the ACT in 1997 was 309,794.

The ACT is moving to diversify its economy. Servicing government is no longer its main business activity, with the private sector becoming increasingly important.

ACT students attend a range of government, Catholic and independent schools. In 1997, there were 61,234 students enrolled in schools. These included 32,684 primary students and 28,550 secondary students.

Sixty-five per cent of students were enrolled in government schools. The remaining 35 per cent were enrolled in non-government schools. Of non-government enrolments, 75.5 per cent were in Catholic schools, 17.1 per cent in Anglican schools and 7.4 per cent in other schools.

The following chart illustrates the sectoral breakdown of schooling in the ACT:

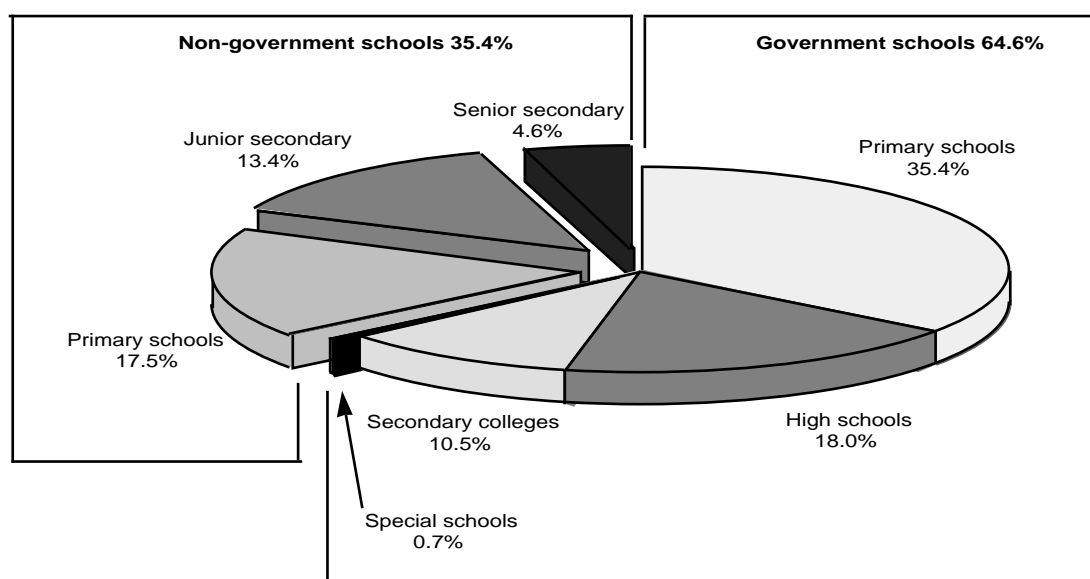
Objectives for schooling

Government sector

The ACT Government aimed to achieve the following outcomes for schooling in 1996–1997:

- education and training opportunities available to provide people with essential skills that help equip them for further education and enable them to fulfil their personal potential and to be responsible citizens. Specifically:
 - ability of parents to choose the schooling most suitable to the needs of their children; and
 - quality-based education for people aged five to 18 years.

Figure 1. Enrolments by sector and level, ACT, 1997



Source: ACT Schools Census, August 1997

The *Education Plan for ACT Government Schooling 1995–97* outlines the following goals and priorities for government schooling:

- improve learning outcomes for all students, through outcomes-based education and access and equity;
- promote dynamic learning communities through flexible approaches to learning and partnerships with a range of community groups and education providers;
- value and develop staff through opportunities to participate in training and development, participative decision making and educational leadership; and
- manage effectively through use of information technology and skilful use of resources.

Catholic and independent sectors

Priority objectives for non-government schools in 1997 were to:

- maximise the competence, efficiency and confidence of teachers;
- provide better feedback to the school community and involve the community in school operations;
- maximise the general competencies of students, particularly in literacy and numeracy skills;
- increase participation in key subject areas, particularly physical education, computer science, languages other than English and science;
- increase the participation and achievement of disadvantaged groups of students;
- broaden the educational experiences of all students, especially in ways which increase their subsequent education, training and employment options;
- facilitate the transition of students between levels of education and from education to employment;
- provide opportunities for the continuing development of teachers;
- develop a range of skills, including reasoning, inquiry, problem solving and independent learning skills; and
- provide better support services, for example, counselling.

Additional priority objectives for Catholic Archdiocesan schools were to:

- affirm the dignity of the human person, created in the image of God, promoting the full development of each

person's potential within communities where genuine personal relationships grow in a climate of faith, freedom, peace, justice and love;

- present the Catholic Christian message, centred in the person of Jesus Christ, in ways appropriate for our times, through the renewal of Religious Education in schools and the revision of Religious Education Guidelines;
- provide better feedback to the school community and to involve the community in school operations through the development of a process of school renewal; and
- bring closer together system and school administrators, parents, teachers and students, as members of a cohesive and caring school community.

Objectives for independent schools surveyed in 1997 included improving the schools' resources and changes to the curriculum, particularly literacy and numeracy. There was also a strong focus on the development of strategic, marketing and promotional plans.

Strategic Initiatives in government and non-government schools

School-based management

In 1997, the level of funds devolved to government schools was increased to \$22.8m under extended school-based management. The new arrangements aim to improve educational outcomes for students and the efficiency and effectiveness of school operations. Under school-based management, schools were given greater responsibility for:

- managing operating functions worth approximately \$12m;
- managing asset repairs and maintenance funding of around \$5.3m;
- managing staff promotions within the school;
- converting staff relief resources into cash and vice versa for greater flexibility; and
- managing after hours hire of school facilities for community use.

System level control continues to be exercised over policy development, curriculum frameworks, personnel functions and major cyclic and emergency maintenance.

Funding for school-based management is made quarterly in advance. Schools benefit from any interest earned. An estimated \$109,000 interest is expected to be earned across all schools per annum. The proposed quarterly allocations and accrued interest provide a buffer for seasonal and unexpected impacts.

To assist the implementation of school-based management a program of professional development was run in schools covering financial management, contracting and tendering, asset management and management of staffing resources.

Literacy and numeracy assessment

In 1997, a total of 5,850 government students in years 3 and 5 participated in the ACT literacy assessment program. Students were assessed on reading, writing, listening, speaking and viewing skills. The program was developed following community consultation.

Assessment results were made available to parents through a report which provided information on each child's performance in relation to other children in the year group. Year 3 students performed best in listening and year 5 students performed best in listening and viewing.

Assessment of numeracy achievement by year 5 students is scheduled for 1998. Arrangements are underway for the development of a year 3 numeracy instrument. Instruments for assessment of literacy and numeracy skills in years 7 and 9 are expected to be trialled in 1998.

National Schools Network

In 1997, the involvement of government schools in the National Schools Network (NSN) increased. Projects which were implemented concerned middle schooling, vocational education, transition, cooperative learning, information technology and multi-age classrooms. One school participated in a National Research Circle on integrated curriculum and produced a video. The network promotes improved learning outcomes through critical reflection and improved work practices. Under the Quality Curriculum: The Challenge for High Schools program, professional development was provided for 800 high school teachers.

Several Catholic schools continued with their involvement in the NSN. Projects included an examination of vertical

grouping (where classes contain more than one age group) in secondary schools in conjunction with Queensland University. A primary school was also involved in developing a model for restructuring decision making.

The Middle Schools Network

The Middle Schools Network (MSN) was established by a group of interested teachers in government schools. Approximately 400 teachers attended a series of professional development programs on timetabling, integrated curriculum, the needs of young adolescents and transition from primary to high school.

Health, physical education and sport

A professional development program was concluded in 1997 which was designed to reskill government primary teachers in physical education. Over 300 teachers attended. The program is now offered on a system-wide basis as well as being tailored to the needs of individual schools.

The National Olympic Education Program was launched in the ACT in 1997. The program includes the Pierre de Coubertin Awards which recognise participation in physical education, not necessarily at the elite level. A total of 17 government and non-government students received awards in the ACT.

Ten physical education/sport trainees worked in government primary schools in 1997 as part of the Jobs for Canberra program. The trainees were long-term unemployed people. They were enrolled in the nationally recognised Certificate II course in Sport and Recreation (Operations). The trainees assisted primary teachers achieve appropriate outcomes for students in physical education/sport.

Schools Equity Fund

The Schools Equity Fund was introduced into government schools in 1997. The objective of the fund is to improve the learning outcomes of relatively disadvantaged students. The fund targeted individual students rather than schools and was allocated in a manner that benefited the broadest range of relatively disadvantaged students.

Allocation for the 1997 Schools Equity Fund was based on the Australian Bureau of Statistics Index for Relative Social Disadvantage. The index focusses on low income, low educational attainment and high unemployment. Students

from suburbs identified as disadvantaged by the index received support. Over 3,113 students at 30 schools benefited.

Initiatives in Catholic schools

Major priorities for the Catholic Education Office (CEO) in 1997 were leadership, curriculum, communications and school boards. Leadership programs provided support and development for principals, religious education coordinators and office staff. Curriculum initiatives were focussed on a review of a major religious education program, *Sharing Our Story*, and on the progressive introduction of *First Steps* as part of a literacy strategy. A review of communication strategies was held, and a strategic plan developed, for the use of information technology to support communications between schools and the CEO. The introduction of new operational guidelines and constitutions for school boards progressed during the year with 197 people attending regional meetings representing 48 of the 54 schools in the Archdiocese.

Non-government Schools Special Education Program

The Non-government Schools Special Education Program was set up in 1997 with ACT Government funding. The program targets students with sensory impairment and provides an assessment service to non-government schools. It includes a series of behaviour management workshops aimed at assisting schools to develop and update behaviour management policies. A behaviour management program is currently being developed to target classroom teachers.

Resourcing

Capital projects

In 1997, the Commonwealth provided \$3.86m towards capital projects in the government sector under the general element of the Capital Grants Program and \$956,126 in the non-government sector.

In government schools, there were 18 major and two minor projects funded by the Commonwealth and completed both physically and financially in 1997. Major projects involved works to improve access for persons with disabilities and upgrading specialist science and technology areas. Minor projects involved upgrading landscaping in primary schools.

Of the seven capital projects funded by the Commonwealth in the non-government sector and completed both physically and financially in 1997, the most common types of work undertaken in primary schools involved the provision of computers and associated networking. In addition, major building works at primary schools included the refurbishment of general learning areas. Major works in secondary schools included the upgrading of administration areas and the upgrading of facilities for design and technology curriculum areas.

In 1996–97, the ACT government provided \$18.45m for capital works projects in government schools. Of this amount, a total of \$0.98m was provided for improving access for students with disabilities through provision of facilities such as lifts, ramps and toilets. The ACT Government also provided \$1.96m in interest subsidies for capital projects in the non-government sector in 1996–97.

Additional capital project funding of \$588,043 was provided in 1997 for Catholic schools and \$83,309 for independent schools.

General Recurrent Grants

During 1997, the Commonwealth contributed \$38.1m of recurrent funding to Catholic schools and \$7.58m to independent schools.

School-industry links

In the ACT there are already linkages in place between schools and industry that promote enterprising activities and behaviours. There has been a concerted effort to integrate these into school life. Programs have been initiated to ensure that young people leave school ready to play a role in regional business. Initiatives include enterprise education, use of community and business expertise and provision of financial support and sponsorship by business. Local businesses also work with schools to offer work placements for students, professional development for teachers and guest speakers for school activities. The responsiveness of schools to the needs of industry is strengthened through industry representation on vocational education course accreditation panels.

ACT students participated in the Business Skills Program run under the auspices of Young Achievers Australia. Under this program, business assisted groups of year 11 students to establish and operate their own small companies. The



Stirling College Automotive Workshop

Leadership Development Program was conducted for year 9 and 10 students at the Australian Defence Force Academy. Students also took part in the ACT Youth Parliament and the market place display at the ACT and Southern Tablelands Youth Enterprise Conference.

Schools and colleges receive sponsorship and financial support from local businesses including:

- sponsorship of concerts, projects and sporting teams;
- partnerships between computer companies and schools;
- localised sponsorship and advertising in school newsletters;
- donation of prizes for school competitions; and
- sponsorship of school buses, uniforms and competitions by sporting clubs.

Developments in 1997

Vocational education and training (VET) in secondary schools was expanded with a greater emphasis on coordination between key stakeholders.

Schools delivered a range of VET programs that meet national standards, respond to industry needs, articulate with apprenticeships, traineeships, employment and further training, provide for the needs of the equity target groups, and develop regional and community partnerships.

An ACT School–Industry Taskforce was established under the auspices of the Australian Student Traineeship Foundation (ASTF). The Taskforce is a partnership between industry and school sector representatives from government and non-government schools. Its role is to develop strategies to promote VET programs in schools,

particularly the establishment of a sustainable structure for vocational placements in industry.

The Australian Broadcasting Corporation produced the video, *A Step Ahead*, for government schools featuring interviews with students and host employers on the value of vocational courses. A marketing plan was developed for non-government schools. It involves the provision of materials including a multimedia presentation kit, course and school brochures and information on the internet.

A Student to Industry Program team was established by the ACT Joint Industry Training Council with ASTF funding. The team seeks new host employers and conducts employer information sessions. It has also established an industry partner scheme to recognise employers who are involved in providing work placements.

In 1997, the department, the Catholic Education Office and the Association of Independent Schools worked with a local Rotary Club to inaugurate annual vocational excellence awards for outstanding students. Presentations were held during Training Excellence Week. The marketing of year 11 and 12 vocational courses to year 10 students was another joint activity.

All independent schools surveyed supported work experience programs for students in year 10, covering 60–90 per cent of students, with the use of industry speakers and other mechanisms to introduce the world of work.

Only one independent school surveyed extended through to year 12, and this school supported a range of vocationally oriented programs, including: continuing work experience in years 11 and 12, accredited vocational courses for year 11 and 12 students in the fashion and hospitality sectors and participation of year 11 students in the Young Achievers Australia program.

In addition to industry links supporting the accredited courses, the independent school was in receipt of industry funding to support work placement programs.

Also in the non-government sector, funds were used to support a skills audit of Parents and Friends Associations. Members could provide valuable mentoring services because of their involvement in schools and their background as employers and industry experts. The outcomes of the audit will inform the development of appropriate training programs. The legal and industrial implications of such a mentoring program were also investigated.

Sites are being selected for regional skill centres in government colleges to meet industry employment needs identified in the ACT Training Profile. Two were established in colleges to provide multimedia courses. Regional management groups were established for the projects including representatives from government and non-government schools.

Plans for future years

The ACT School–Industry Task Force has set as a priority the involvement of Industry Training Advisory Boards in the coordination of school–industry committees. A forum has been arranged for early 1998. Work will continue on improving the capacity of employers to support vocational education for students in years 9 and 10 as well as secondary college students.

The independent school surveyed plans to refine its careers education program and expand the range and number of opportunities for work placements. It is also looking at new opportunities for developing real or simulated work experience, such as the establishment of an on-site restaurant.

School-based traineeships and apprenticeships are to be piloted in 1998 in a range of industry areas. Group training companies will be involved in pilots in the building and construction, automotive and electrical industry areas.

Indigenous students

Needs of the students and their families

Indigenous students and their families were given support to access education services and achieve improved educational outcomes. Both the government system and Catholic sector developed targets in consultation with the Commonwealth to achieve improvements in seven specified areas. Schools in both sectors were given assistance in the implementation of inclusive curriculum, incorporating Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander educational perspectives in all key learning areas. Other targets included increasing indigenous employment, involvement of Indigenous people and professional development for teachers.

In 1997, the Minister established the Indigenous Education Consultative Body to provide advice on Indigenous education and to provide a forum for parents of Indigenous students in government schools.



Village Creek Primary School Indigenous Studies.

Special programs

Three home–school liaison officers were employed in government schools including one in the preschool area and one in Catholic schools. Parents and caregivers were encouraged to participate in educational decision making, especially through Aboriginal Student Support and Parent Awareness Committees.

Six Aboriginal education workers provided support for Indigenous students in government schools and three in Catholic schools. These officers also worked in the wider school community to raise awareness of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures.

An Aboriginal artist-in-residence worked in government and Catholic schools to promote recognition and pride in Indigenous cultures.

A behaviour management consultant assisted Indigenous students in government schools experiencing behavioural problems.

An early childhood teacher assisted indigenous students in government schools with literacy.

Professional development

Literacy development, especially in the early childhood area, was the focus for the government system and the non-government sector. Teachers of Indigenous students have been assisted to implement strategies to enhance educational outcomes. The Teaching Aboriginal Students in-service training program was offered to raise cultural awareness and introduce teachers to a variety of teaching and learning strategies for Aboriginal students. The inclusion of Aboriginal education workers as participants and facilitators in the program increased the effectiveness of the course.



Indigenous preschool, at Narrabundah Early Childhood Education Centre

The Deadly eh Cuz program was introduced in government schools as a literacy focus to provide teachers with strategies for Indigenous students who speak Aboriginal English. The Teaching the Teachers program provided teachers in Catholic schools with the knowledge, skills, confidence and resources to teach Indigenous studies and perspectives programs across the curriculum for the years K–12. In conjunction with this program, an intensive, inclusive curriculum development project was run to increase the effectiveness of the consultation, planning, delivery and evaluation of Indigenous education programs.

Student outcomes

There were 755 indigenous students in ACT schools in 1997, including 617 in government schools (311 females, 306 males) and 138 in non-government schools (70 females, 68 males). Approximately 53 per cent of students who sat for the year 12 Certificate received a tertiary entrance rank.

Of the Indigenous students who commenced year 10 in government schools, 83 per cent completed the year and of those who commenced year 12, 100 per cent completed the year. A number of students leaving school at the end of year 11 went on to further education and training. All Indigenous students who commenced year 10 or 12 in Catholic schools completed the year.

Other achievements

In 1997, two camps were held for students in years 6–12 in all ACT schools. These camps focussed on transition programs, staying at school and identifying opportunities for Indigenous students when they leave school.

Three Koori preschool sessions operated weekly to improve Indigenous students' opportunities to achieve learning

outcomes similar to non-Indigenous students and to promote Indigenous cultures.

While none of the independent schools surveyed reported any Indigenous students as currently enrolled, they all indicated that they were using a variety of resources to support the study of Indigenous issues. In one case, particular emphasis had been placed on incorporation of Indigenous issues into art and studies of society and the environment.

Languages other than English

Enrolments

In 1997, 96 per cent of government and non-government schools offered a language other than English (LOTE) and approximately 53 per cent of all students were enrolled in a LOTE program. Between 1995 and 1997, the number of LOTE enrolments increased by 4,249 (12 per cent), reflecting the increased emphasis on LOTE studies.

There were some sectoral differences in enrolments, particularly choice of language. The most frequently studied languages in government schools were Japanese, French and Indonesian, which together accounted for 81 per cent of all language enrolments in that sector. In non-government schools the most frequently studied languages were Italian, French and Japanese, which together accounted for 76 per cent of all language enrolments in that sector.

Of the four National Asian Languages and Studies in Australian Schools (NALSAS) targeted languages, Indonesian and Japanese together accounted for 45 per cent of LOTE enrolments, while Chinese and Korean accounted for only 3.7 per cent and 0.02 per cent respectively.

LOTE offered in the independent schools surveyed included German, Indonesian, French and Japanese, with the choices available to students ranging from one to three languages, depending on the school. Some LOTE studies were compulsory at all schools up to year 8, with the same languages optional in later years. At the one school with year 12 coverage, 19 per cent were studying a LOTE.

Curriculum time allocated to LOTE

The government sector action plan, *Setting Directions for LOTE 1994–2006*, sets minimum class teaching times at 60 minutes per week for lower primary schools and 90 minutes per week for upper primary. Data on actual class times are not collected. However, classes range from 30 to 150

minutes per week in primary schools, and average 150 minutes in secondary schools.

The action plan states that primary schools are expected to offer a LOTE program for all students from kindergarten to year 6. Where this is not possible, LOTE programs are mandatory for years 3–6. The majority of primary schools offer LOTE for years 2–6. The majority of secondary schools run full-year classes for years 7–8. Years 9–10 tend to be elective years, with the exception of a small number of schools which mandate LOTE learning for years 7–10.

Significant achievements

The Ethnic Schools Program allowed parents and the community to contribute to LOTE learning through after hours community language programs in government schools. Parents and members of the community also worked as voluntary teachers and administrators for individual ethnic schools.

The Language Inservice for Teachers program was jointly run with the Australian National University. It provided teachers with access to the latest research and methodology in LOTE teaching and learning. The success of the program has attracted interest from other States. A report on the program is due to be released in 1998. LOTE teachers also had access to the Stepping Forwards in LOTE Teaching program, the ACT LOTE Certificated Course and language specific in-service programs.

Teachers from government and non-government schools in the ACT participated in the Access Asia program. Schools involved in this program offered Asia awareness units across all subjects. A major focus was on professional development. Around 60 per cent of government schools participate. Teachers are also eligible to participate in Asia Education Foundation study tours. Participation in the program in 1997 included seven teachers from government schools, four from Catholic schools and one from an independent school.

In the independent schools surveyed, linkages with parents and community groups and other education providers in LOTE varied from non-existent to extensive, including exchange schemes, school linkages and sharing of resources, and liaison with tertiary institutions and embassies/high commissions based in Canberra.

Issues and plans for the future

Targets set in the ACT LOTE action plan will be reviewed in 1998. The review will take into account the findings of the

Commonwealth languages program evaluation and will shape the direction of LOTE teaching and learning to 2006.

All independent schools surveyed indicated that they were intending to make greater use of technology in LOTE teaching in the future. All LOTE courses were being developed in the context of the National Curriculum Statement, via the use of ACT Curriculum Frameworks.

Technology

Initiatives in 1997

In 1997, government schools developed strategies for implementing the *Plan for Information Technology in Learning and Teaching 1997–1999*. The plan aims to increase access to technology, upgrade the skills of teachers and students and develop a process for assessing the competencies of year 10 students.

The ACT Government announced a \$20m information technology package to be implemented in government schools from 1998. The package includes:

- a new computer for every permanent teacher;
- \$5m in grants to schools to provide computers, training and infrastructure;
- establishment of a digital network for fast and reliable communications; and
- a new school administration system.

Government high schools moved towards multipurpose workshops and design based programs. The final stage of a Technology by Design project was implemented including the development of a marketing plan. Solar boat races were conducted in partnership with the ACT Electricity and Water Authority and the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation. Students from 36 primary schools, 17 high schools and nine colleges participated.

Two technology teachers were granted ACT Government awards for promoting occupational health and safety in the workplace. A new policy and procedures document for occupational health and safety in government school technology programs was released in 1997. The policy covers teacher/leader qualifications and risk assessment and includes a preventative maintenance progress chart for schools.

All independent schools surveyed identified a range of technology subjects being taught, including textiles and design, food studies, design technology, technical



Graphic design laboratory at Narrabundah College.

graphics, information technology, computer applications and wood construction. Such courses were generally compulsory in the year 7–8 range.

Gender imbalances in enrolments were noticeable, with female students identified as predominant in textiles and home economics, and male students in design technology, graphics and wood construction. A closer balance was apparent in food studies and information technology subjects.

Independent schools identified a range of measures being pursued to support gender balanced participation, including programs targeting stereotyping and sexism, access to resources, monopolising behaviours and gender role identification.

Independent schools surveyed identified a general tendency for educationally disadvantaged students to prefer technology subjects, and have a range of programs in place to support such students.

In Catholic schools, technology appears in the curriculum of primary schools in its own right, as part of science and technology and through the use of information technology (IT) resources. Schools have differing levels of IT resources depending on the priorities of the school and the community.



Belconnen High School Technology (metalwork) workshop.

All Catholic secondary schools include technology in their curriculum. The curriculum emphasis is generally on design and technology. Secondary schools have IT resources and students have varying access. Pilot programs in using laptops in the classroom continued in 1997. The introduction of learning centres in secondary schools has increased. Students in these programs have access to a range of resources to support their learning. IT has also become an important aspect of learning for students with disabilities.

Future plans

Professional development opportunities for technology teachers in government schools are being investigated in collaboration with ACT tertiary education institutions. The Technology Educators Association ACT annual national conference will be held in Canberra in January 2000. Preparation for this event will provide impetus for technology as a core curriculum learning area.

In the independent schools survey, plans for technology education include the integration of IT and technology into learning programs, increased professional development in the areas of IT and vocational education, and addressing issues of gender equity and participation.