

Appendix 2

READING BENCHMARK RESULTS

Introduction

For several years Australia's Ministers for Education have had a strong determination to raise the levels of literacy and numeracy in Australian schools. Their concern stemmed, in part, from the growing body of evidence linking low levels of literacy achievement to early school leaving and low employment prospects. Ministers have also been conscious of the lack of a uniform, national approach to the monitoring of literacy levels in our schools. These concerns have resulted in the introduction of special programs in all States and Territories and culminated in 1997 with the adoption of a National Literacy and Numeracy Plan.

The national plan that was agreed by ministers and is now being implemented, includes:

- development of national benchmarks in literacy and numeracy for selected year groups
- assessing students against the year 3, 5 and 7 benchmarks in numeracy, reading, writing and spelling using rigorous State-based assessment procedures
- national reporting on student achievement in numeracy, reading, writing and spelling, against the year 3, 5 and 7 benchmarks.

The *National Report on Schooling* began the reporting process in 1999, with the publication of a preliminary paper, which contained results for year 3 reading in 1999. This edition of the *National Report on Schooling* repeats the results for years 3 in reading, and also includes the results for year 5 reading in 1999. It is proposed that future editions will include results for each of years 3, 5 and 7 in numeracy, reading, writing and spelling as they become available.

The benchmarks

The benchmarks that underpin the reporting of student achievement describe nationally agreed minimum

acceptable standards for literacy and numeracy at particular year levels. That is, they represent the minimum acceptable standard of literacy or numeracy without which a student will have difficulty making sufficient progress at school.

The benchmarks have been developed with reference to current levels of achievement as demonstrated in national surveys and State assessment programs. There has been extensive consultation with stakeholders and with experts in the areas of literacy, numeracy and educational measurement. As well, the benchmarks have been trialed in classrooms in all States and Territories.

Because the benchmarks represent minimum acceptable standards, education ministers meeting as the Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA), have determined that the national goal should be that all students will achieve at least the benchmark level of performance. Regular publication of benchmark results will enable them and others to monitor progress towards the attainment of that goal.

The standards described by the benchmarks for years 3, 5 and 7 represent increasingly demanding levels of proficiency against which the progress of students through school can be measured and followed. The benchmarks form three important markers of increasing competence.

Students' proficiencies are estimated through the assessment procedures undertaken by the States and Territories.

Students who have achieved the Year 3 Reading Benchmark can read and understand a range of texts that are suitable for this year level. These texts appear in, for example, picture books, illustrated chapter books, junior reference material and the electronic media. Typically, texts that these students are able to read use straightforward, everyday language and have predictable text and sentence structures. Words that may be unfamiliar are explained in the writing or through the illustrations.

At the benchmark standard, year 5 students read and understand a range of texts that are suitable for this year

level. These texts appear in, for example, chapter books, junior novels, junior reference material, magazines, newspapers and the electronic media.

Texts that these students are able to read may have:

- varied sentence beginnings (eg *After ploughing, the soil is raked and flattened*)
- a significant amount of new vocabulary, as long as this is explained by text and illustrations
- some long groups of words (eg *the largest planet so far discovered; a cute, well-trained dog; the edible seed of a type of pod-bearing plant*)
- some use of figurative language (eg *His legs were turning to rubber; The wire swung and bounced like a live thing*).

When students read and understand texts like these, they can:

- identify the main purpose of a text (eg choose a title for a text to highlight purpose)
- identify the main idea in a text
- identify the order of ideas and information in factual texts
- find directly stated information in the written text and/or illustrations
- make links between ideas in a text (eg link information from a heading, written text and diagram; work out a missing step in a set of instructions)
- work out the meaning of unfamiliar phrases and words (eg work out the meaning of some figurative language: *Her face was as white as a sheet*).

The assessment process

Most jurisdictions already have in place State-based literacy and numeracy monitoring programs. These programs are well established, understood and valued within the State educational communities and all States are keen to retain them. As well, they allow States and Territories to report (both publicly and to parents) on the range of performance demonstrated, including benchmark performance. As a result, ministers agreed that assessment against the national benchmarks should occur using the existing State-based programs.

A nationally agreed procedure was developed to equate State and Territory tests and to ensure that reporting of student achievement data against the literacy benchmarks was comparable. The expert committee that developed the procedure included several of Australia's leading educational measurement experts.

At each of years 3 and 5, equating the State and Territory tests is a three-stage process involving the construction of a common achievement scale for reading, determining the location of the benchmark on the common achievement scale, and calculating equivalent benchmark locations on State and Territory achievement scales.

The common achievement scales are constructed from student's responses to tests administered to a sample of students across Australia. In 1999, the tests were developed using questions from the State and Territory reading assessments.

To establish the location of the benchmark at each year level, expert judges are required to envisage a student who is just able to demonstrate the skills described in the benchmark and to estimate the probability of this minimally competent student succeeding on each test item. The judges used in 1999 were from all States and Territories and included a range of literacy specialists and classroom teachers who were qualified to make decisions about the likelihood of students succeeding on the test items.

The three aspects of the process work together in order to allow for the comparison of benchmark performance as determined by the different tests for any given year level. The benchmark standards for year 3 and year 5 are different and thus the proportions of students achieving the benchmarks should not be directly compared.

The results

The data in Tables 1 and 2 represent students who have achieved the benchmark as a percentage of the students participating in the State and Territory testing. The results reported here are for assessed students. This term has been used for students who sat the test and students who were formally exempted. Exempted students are reported as below benchmark and thus are included in the benchmark calculation. Students not included in the benchmark calculation are those who were absent or withdrawn by parents/caregivers from the testing and students attending a school not participating in the testing.

It is also important to note that as the performance scales for year 3 and year 5 are not linked, direct comparisons of the scores are inappropriate. For example, if a State benchmark score is less for year 5 than for year 3, this does not indicate that year 5 students are performing at a lower level than year 3 students. Conversely, a higher score for year 5 does not represent superior performance to year 3 students.

Figures 3 and 4 highlight apparent differences between States and Territories in relation to the proportion of students achieving the benchmark. However considerable caution needs to be applied when considering these differences. While the assessment and equating processes are designed to allow comparability of the results from the various tests, large differences remain in the populations being assessed in each State and Territory. For example, while ministers are keen that the monitoring against national benchmarks will soon include all students from both government and non-government schools, not all non-government schools participated in 1999 and this may have contributed to differences between States.

Other relevant issues include the significant variation between jurisdictions in school starting arrangements which result in the time students have spent at school prior

to assessment to vary widely. As well, there are large differences between States and Territories in relation to a number of factors that are known to influence measured literacy achievement.

For example, it is known that achievement in reading is strongly correlated with the socioeconomic circumstances of students being assessed. As well, students who do not usually speak English, or who have just begun to speak English, would be expected to be at some disadvantage during assessment. Not only are there variations in the proportion of such students between States and Territories, but there are also variations in the policies regarding inclusion in the testing programs.

Tables 3, 4 and 5, as well as the Explanatory Notes, attempt to describe and quantify some of the interstate differences.

Table 1 Percentage of year 3 students achieving the reading benchmark

<i>State/Territory</i>	<i>Percentage of students achieving the benchmark</i>	<i>Percentage of male students achieving the benchmark</i>	<i>Percentage of female students achieving the benchmark</i>	<i>Percentage of Indigenous (c) students achieving the benchmark</i>	<i>Percentage of LBOTE (c) students achieving the benchmark</i>
<i>1 Average Age (a)</i>					
<i>2 Years of Schooling (b)</i>					
<i>New South Wales</i>	91.2	89.6	92.7	77.8	91.3
1. 8yrs, 9mths	± 2.2	± 2.6	± 1.8	± 4.8	± 2.3
2. 3yrs, 7mths					
<i>Victoria</i>	86.2	82.6	89.9	68.0	81.1
1. 8yrs, 11mths	± 2.2	± 2.9	± 2.0	± 5.4	± 3.0
2. 3yrs, 7mths					
<i>Queensland (d) (e)</i>	82.6 ^r	79.9	86.7 ^r	67.3 ^r	80.8 ^r
1. 8yrs, 3mths	± 2.3	± 2.5	± 2.0	± 3.4	± 2.8
2. 2yrs, 8mths					
<i>South Australia</i>	83.2	81.5	84.9	64.0	n/a
1. 8yrs, 6mths	± 3.1	± 3.4	± 2.7	± 6.6	
2. 3yrs, 3mths					
<i>Western Australia</i>	87.9	85.5	90.4	54.4	85.2
1. 8yrs, 2mths	± 1.9	± 2.2	± 1.6	± 3.9	± 2.1
2. 3yrs, 7mths					
<i>Tasmania</i>	85.9	82.0	89.9	76.3	71.1
1. 9yrs, 0mths	± 2.4	± 2.8	± 2.0	± 3.2	± 3.6
2. 3yrs, 7mths					
<i>Northern Territory</i>	72.3	69.8	74.9	29.7	18.2
1. 8yrs, 8mths	± 1.6	± 1.7	± 1.2	± 1.6	± 0.7
2. 3yrs, 3mths					
<i>Australian Capital Territory</i>	89.9	87.6	92.2	67.2	n/a
1. 8yrs, 9mths	± 1.5	± 2.0	± 1.1	± 1.1	
2. 3yrs, 6mths					
<i>Australia</i>	87.0 ^r	84.5 ^r	89.8 ^r	66.3 ^r	n/a

r = revised

Note: The achievement percentages reported in this table include 95% confidence intervals, for example, 80% ± 2.7%.

- (a) The typical average age of students at the time of testing, expressed in years and months.
- (b) The typical average time students had spent in schooling at the time of testing, expressed in years and months.
- (c) The methods used to identify Indigenous students and students with a language background other than English (LBOTE) varied between jurisdictions as outlined in the Explanatory Notes.
- (d) Data from Queensland are based on a sample of approximately 10% of year 3 students from government and non-government schools. Details of test populations in all States and Territories are provided in Table 3.
- (e) Data from Queensland for the percentage of male, female, Indigenous and LBOTE students do not include students who were formally exempted from the testing.

Figure 1 Proportion of year 3 Australian students achieving the reading benchmark

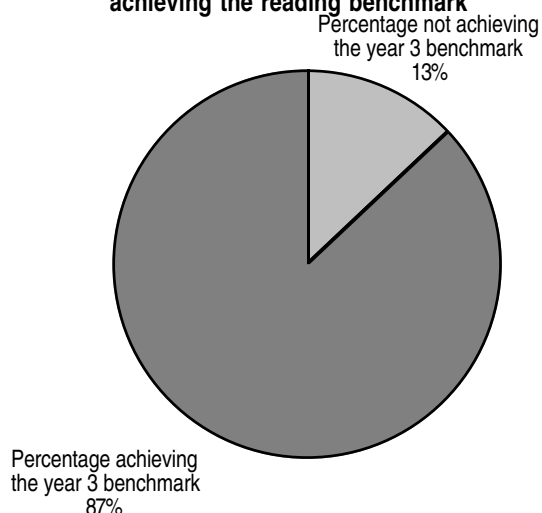


Figure 2 Proportion of year 5 Australian students achieving the reading benchmark

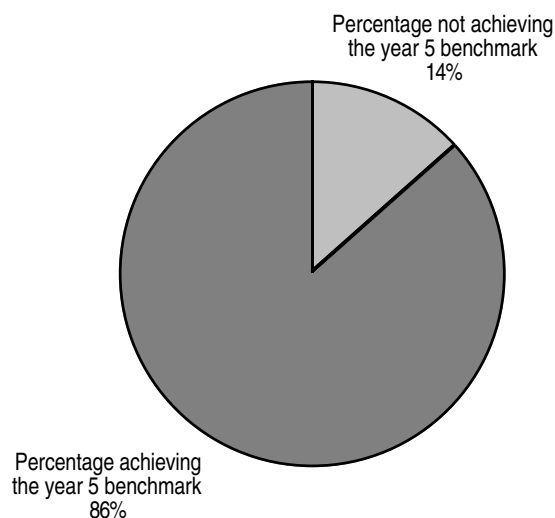


Table 2 Percentage of year 5 students achieving the reading benchmark

<i>State/Territory</i>	<i>Percentage of students achieving the benchmark</i>	<i>Percentage of male students achieving the benchmark</i>	<i>Percentage of female students achieving the benchmark</i>	<i>Percentage of Indigenous (c) students achieving the benchmark</i>	<i>Percentage of LBOTE (c) students achieving the benchmark</i>
<i>1 Average Age (a)</i>					
<i>2 Years of Schooling (b)</i>					
<i>New South Wales</i>	90.3	88.6	92.0	72.5	89.1
1. 10yrs, 9mths	± 1.4	± 1.6	± 1.3	± 3.6	± 1.8
2. 5yrs, 7mths					
<i>Victoria</i>	88.0	85.6	90.5	64.8	83.4
1. 10yrs, 11mths	± 1.9	± 2.1	± 1.7	± 6.7	± 2.6
2. 5yrs, 7mths					
<i>Queensland (d)</i>	80.0	78.2	84.3	54.4	75.2
1. 10yrs, 3mths	± 3.0	± 3.5	± 2.6	± 5.6	± 3.8
2. 4yrs, 8mths					
<i>South Australia</i>	82.8	80.2	85.8	58.7	n/a
1. 10yrs, 6mths	± 1.5	± 1.8	± 1.4	± 2.9	
2. 5yrs, 3mths					
<i>Western Australia</i>	79.5	75.5	83.6	42.2	73.1
1. 10yrs, 2mths	± 2.7	± 3.1	± 2.3	± 4.1	± 3.2
2. 5yrs, 7mths					
<i>Tasmania</i>	78.7	76.2	81.3	63.3	63.3
1. 11yrs, 0mths	± 2.1	± 2.2	± 1.9	± 2.3	± 3.3
2. 5yrs, 7mths					
<i>Northern Territory</i>	78.4	77.3	80.0	46.2	37.5
1. 10yrs, 7mths	± 1.7	± 2.0	± 1.5	± 2.4	± 2.2
2. 5yrs, 3mths					
<i>Australian Capital Territory</i>	90.4	88.6	92.1	69.1	77.6
1. 10yrs, 9mths	± 1.6	± 2.2	± 1.9	± 27.5	± 4.9
2. 5yrs, 6mths					
<i>Australia</i>	85.6	83.4	88.4	58.6	n/a

Note:

The achievement percentages reported in this table include 95% confidence intervals, for example, 80% ± 2.7%.

There have been minor modifications to the method for calculating the year 5 reading results from the method used for the year 3 results.

- (a) The typical average age of students at the time of testing, expressed in years and months.
- (b) The typical average time students had spent in schooling at the time of testing, expressed in years and months.
- (c) The methods used to identify Indigenous students and students with a language background other than English (LBOTE) varied between jurisdictions as outlined in the Explanatory Notes.
- (d) Data from Queensland for the percentage of male, female, Indigenous and LBOTE students do not include students who were formally exempted from the testing

Figure 3 Student performance against the year 3 reading benchmark, by State and Territory, 1999

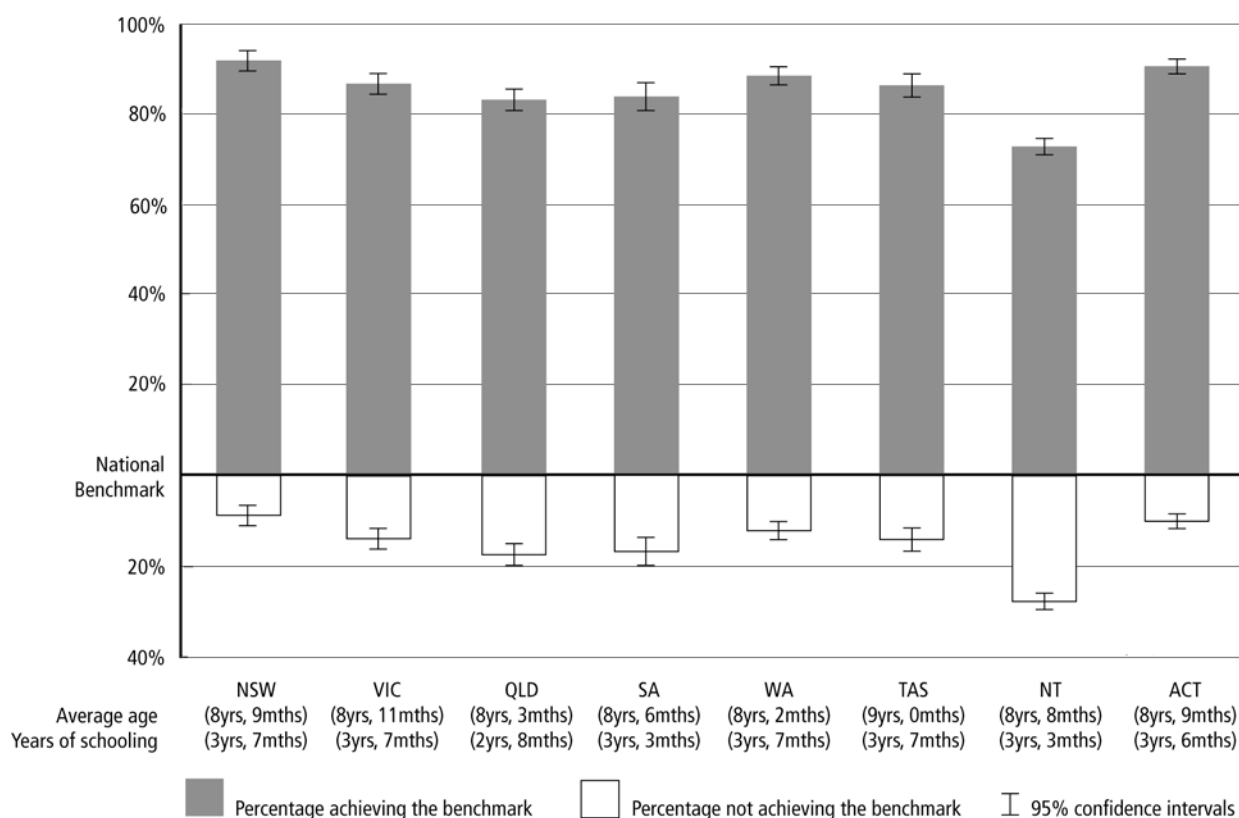


Figure 4 Student performance against the year 5 reading benchmark, by State and Territory, 1999

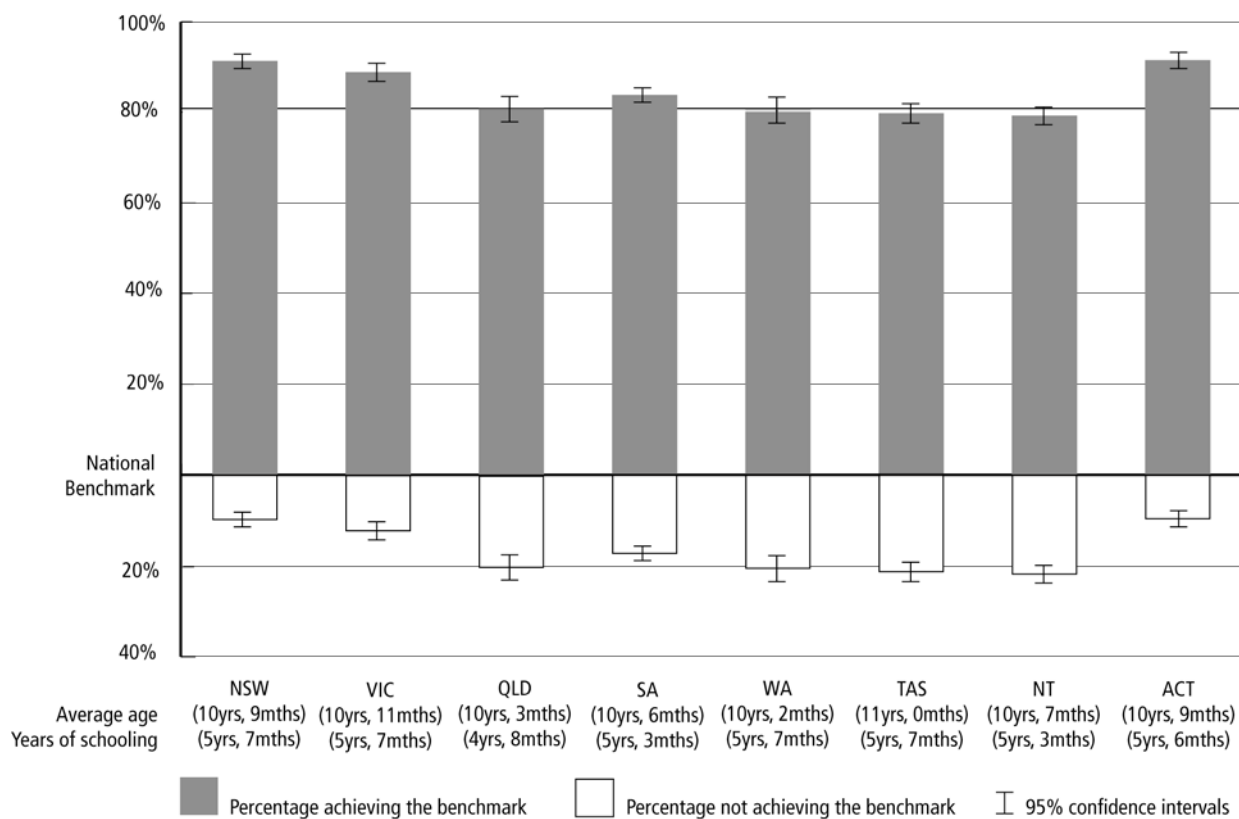


Table 3 Years of schooling and level of participation, by State and Territory

State or Territory	Years of schooling				Percentage of year 3 and year 5 students assessed (c)	
	Average age at time of testing (a)		Years at school (b)			
	Year 3	Year 5	Year 3	Year 5	Year 3	Year 5
New South Wales	8yrs,9mths	10yrs,9mths	3yrs,7mths	5yrs,7mths	90.9	91.1
Victoria	8yrs,11mths	10yrs,11mth	3yrs,7mths	5yrs,7mths	91.0	88.7
Queensland	8yrs,3mths	10yrs,3mths	2yrs,8mths	4yrs,8mths	8.8(d)	96.9
South Australia	8yrs,6mths	10yrs,6mths	3yrs,3mths	5yrs,3mths	68.2	67.8
Western Australia	8yrs,2mths	10yrs,2mths	3yrs,7mths	5yrs,7mths	89.9	89.6
Tasmania	9yrs,0mths	11yrs,0mths	3yrs,7mths	5yrs,7mths	90.7	89.9
Northern Territory	8yrs,8mths	10yrs,7mths	3yrs,3mths	5yrs,3mths	80.4	86.5
Australian Capital Territory	8yrs,9mths	10yrs,9mths	3yrs,6mths	5yrs,6mths	61.8	60.5

(a) The typical average age of students at the time of testing, expressed in years and months.

(b) The typical average time students had spent in schooling at the time of the testing, expressed in years and months.

(c) The percentage of students from all schools who were assessed includes exempted students but not students absent or withdrawn by parents/caregivers from the testing and not students attending schools which did not participate in the testing at all. The figure is calculated as a percentage of the total number of full-time government and non-government students based on data from the *National Schools Statistics Collection*.

(d) Queensland assessed a representative sample of students at the year 3 level – if population testing had been undertaken it is estimated 95% of the year 3 students would have been assessed.

Table 4 Participation by school sector

State or Territory	Percentage of assessed government school students (a)		Percentage of assessed non-government school students (b)		Proportion of assessed students			
					Government school students (c)		Non-government school students (d)	
	Year 3	Year 5	Year 3	Year 5	Year 3	Year 5	Year 3	Year 5
New South Wales	95.3	96.1	79.1	78.3	76.4	76.1	23.6	23.9
Victoria	93.0	87.5	87.0	91.7	71.0	70.2	29.0	29.8
Queensland	9.0(e)	96.3	8.2(e)	94.4	78.8	76.5	21.2	23.5
South Australia	94.1	92.8	0.0	0.0	100.0	100.0	0.0	0.0
Western Australia	91.1	90.7	86.2	86.4	77.0	76.4	23.0	23.6
Tasmania	97.6	97.3	68.3	65.8	82.8	83.0	17.2	17.0
Northern Territory	79.7	85.3	82.2	91.7	79.2	79.3	20.8	20.7
Australian Capital Territory	92.3	93.3	0.0	0.0	100.0	100.0	0.0	0.0

(a) The percentage of assessed students from government schools includes exempted students in all states other than Queensland, but not students withdrawn by parents/caregivers from the testing and not students attending schools that did not participate in testing at all. The figure is calculated as a percentage of the total number of full-time government students based on data from the *National Schools Statistics Collection*.

(b) The percentage of assessed students from non-government schools includes exempted students in all states other than Queensland, but not students absent or withdrawn by parents/caregivers and not students attending schools which did not participate in testing at all. The figure is calculated as a percentage of the total number of full-time non-government students based on data from the *National Schools Statistics Collection*.

(c) The percentage of assessed government school students compared with all assessed students.

(d) The percentage of assessed non-government school students compared with all assessed students.

- (e) Queensland assessed a representative sample of students at the year 3 level – if population testing had been undertaken it is estimated that approximately 95% of the year 3 students from both government and non-government schools would have been assessed.

Table 5 Exemptions, absences and participation of equity groups, by State and Territory

State or Territory	Percentage of students exempted from testing (a)		Percentage of students absent or withdrawn (b)		Percentage of assessed students			
	Year 3	Year 5	Year 3	Year 5	Indigenous students (c)		LBOTE students (d)	
					Year 3	Year 5	Year 3	Year 5
New South Wales	1.2	1.3	4.3	3.7	3.7	3.5	24.1	24.3
Victoria	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	0.7	0.6	15.3	14.9
Queensland	0.8	1.1	2.8	1.9	7.1	5.8	6.2	7.9
South Australia	4.6	3.7	5.9	7.2	3.8	2.3	n/a	n/a
Western Australia	1.6	0.2	6.6	7.5	5.7	5.2	15.5	14.8
Tasmania	0.3	0.4	2.2	2.6	5.6	5.8	1.3	1.0
Northern Territory	10.7	7.4	6.9	13.5	21.9	25.3	14.9	17.5
Australian Capital Territory	1.4	1.5	7.7	6.7	1.8	1.4	n/a	12.5

- (a) The percentage of students who were exempted from the testing program in the relevant State or Territory. Exempted students are reported as not achieving the benchmark. The percentage of exempted students is calculated as a percentage of the total number of full-time government students based on *National Schools Statistics Collection* data, together with the non-government students who participated in the relevant State and Territory testing programs.
- (b) The percentage of students who were absent or were withdrawn by parents/caregivers from the testing program in the relevant State or Territory. These students are not included in the benchmark calculations. The percentage of absent/withdrawn students is calculated as a percentage of the total number of full-time government students based on *National Schools Statistics Collection* data, together with non-government students who participated in the relevant State and Territory testing programs.
- (c) The percentage of assessed Indigenous students. This percentage includes exempted students from all States and Territories other than Queensland. It is calculated as a percentage of the total number of full-time government students based on preliminary figures for the *National Schools Statistics Collection* and non-government students who participated in the relevant testing programs. The specific ways in which Indigenous student information was collected and/or categorised were characterised by a degree of variation across the jurisdictions.
- (d) The percentage of assessed students with a language background other than English (LBOTE). This percentage includes exempted students from all States and Territories other than Queensland. It is calculated as a percentage of the total number of full-time government students based on preliminary figures for the *National Schools Statistics Collection* and non-government students who participated in the relevant State or Territory testing programs. The specific ways in which LBOTE information was collected and/or categorised were characterised by a degree of variation across the jurisdictions.

Explanatory notes

New South Wales

<i>Exemption from Testing Policy</i>	Students may be exempted from the test if, in consultation with parents, the school believes that participation in the test will be detrimental to the student. Reasons for exemption include: students from a non-English speaking background who have been enrolled in an English-speaking school for less than 12 months; students with high support needs; students with a medical condition that would affect well-being and test performance; students attending Stewart House on the test day; students attending Schools for Specific Purposes (SSP). (Note: as these students are ungraded, the age distribution of year 3/year 5 students doing the test was used to estimate the notional number of year 3/year 5 students.)
<i>Average Age Calculation Method</i>	Average age at time of testing was determined from NSW Department July census data for government schools.
<i>Years at School Calculation Method</i>	Since most students in NSW complete Kindergarten, year 1,2,3 and 4, and do the Basic Skills Test at the beginning of August, years of schooling was taken to be 3 years, 7 months for year 3 students and 5 years, 7 months for year 5 students.
<i>Definition, Identification of Indigenous Students</i>	Indigenous students are those who answered “yes” to the question; “Are you an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander person?”
<i>Definition, Identification of</i>	LBOTE students are those who answered “yes” to the question; “Does anyone speak a

<i>LBOTE Students</i>	language other than English in your home?"
Victoria	
<i>Exemption from Testing Policy</i>	The principal may grant an exemption to students with disabilities and impairments and to students who have been learning English in Australia for less than two years. The decision is made at the school level and the principal should consult specialist staff and ensure that parents sign a document agreeing to the exemption.
<i>Average Age Calculation Method</i>	Students provide date of birth on test task books. Average age is calculated at August 1999 by using the month and year of birth and averaging the age of all students who participated in the test.
<i>Years at School Calculation Method</i>	Students commence schooling in the Preparatory year and the year of schooling is calculated as the three of five years from Prep to the beginning of year 3 or 5 and 7 months to the beginning of August to when testing takes place.
<i>Definition, Identification of Indigenous Students</i>	Schools were asked to answer the following question; "Is this student Aboriginal or a Torres Strait Islander?" on the front page of each student's test booklet. Students are identified as Indigenous on enrolment forms at the commencement of school.
<i>Definition, Identification of LBOTE Students</i>	Schools were asked to answer the following question; "Is this student of non-English speaking background?" on the front page of each student's test booklet. The generally accepted definition of an LBOTE student is one where the student or either parent was born in a non-English speaking country or has a home language other than English.

Queensland

<i>Exemption from Testing Policy</i>	Students for whom English is not their first language and who are assessed by their ESL teacher and/or classroom teacher as achieving at or below Level 2 using the Draft Queensland ESL Proficiency Levels or Reading and Writing Level 3-NLLIA ESL Band Scales. Also those with intellectual impairment who have been identified as having educational needs at levels 5 or 6 through the system ascertainment process.
<i>Average Age Calculation Method</i>	The averages are calculated on age distributions of the populations of years 3 and 5 students attending government and non-government schools, collected as at July 1999 through enrolment assessment processes. The average age figures have been adjusted to accommodate the timing of the year 3 and 5 tests which were administered in late August.
<i>Years at School Calculation Method</i>	Compulsory schooling commences at year 1. Year 3 students who sat the test would have been at school for two full years of schooling and eight calendar months based on testing having taken place on 25 August, 1999. The average years of schooling has thus been computed at 2 years and 8 months for year 3 students and 4 years and 8 months for year 5 students and does not take account of school holiday breaks.
<i>Definition, Identification of Indigenous Students</i>	Students self-identify that they are Indigenous by answering yes to either or both the questions; "Are you an Aboriginal person?" or "Are you a Torres Strait Islander person?" Teachers are required to check the accuracy of the students' responses.
<i>Definition, Identification of LBOTE Students</i>	LBOTE students are those who answer "Yes" to the question; "At home, do either of your parents/care-givers speak a language other than English MOST of the time?" and who are not classified as indigenous. Students self-identify and teachers are required to check the accuracy of the students' responses.

South Australia

<i>Exemption from Testing Policy</i>	Every student in years 3 and 5 is expected to undertake the test except students who may be exempted. Principals may exempt a student: from a non-English speaking background who has been enrolled in an English-speaking school for less than 12 months prior to the test; has high support needs and who would need intensive one-to-one support throughout the duration of the test; who would not be able to read the test.
<i>Average Age Calculation Method</i>	The average age of students at the time of testing is calculated from student information which schools provide in census data collected during the first week of August each year.
<i>Years at School Calculation Method</i>	The typical number of years that students have spent at school is estimated from the enrolment policy. Students can be admitted to a government school when they turn 5 years of age. It is government policy that students have between 10 and 13 terms in junior primary school classes (ie Reception, and Years 1 and 2).
<i>Definition, Identification of Indigenous Students</i>	Indigenous students are those who answered "yes" to the question: "Are you an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander person?"
<i>Definition, Identification of LBOTE Students</i>	A definition of LBOTE is currently being developed.

Western Australia

<i>Exemption from Testing Policy</i>	Exemptions may be granted by the principal with the signed agreement of parent/caregivers on the following grounds: temporary or permanent disability or impairment; enrolment in specified intensive language centres; English as a Second Language (ESL) students in mainstream classes who have been in Australia for one year or less.
<i>Average Age Calculation Method</i>	Students provided date of birth on test booklets and average age was calculated at the week of testing on the basis of this information.
<i>Years at School Calculation Method</i>	Exact data were not collected at the time of testing. The figure given is an estimate based on the assumptions of: (a) continuous attendance of students in all years of schooling; (b) an equal number of students skipping a year of studies and repeating a year of studies, and one year of continuous full-time attendance of all students in a pre-primary year of schooling.
<i>Definition, Identification of Indigenous Students</i>	Indigenous students were identified by a “yes” response to the question “Are you an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander person?”
<i>Definition, Identification of LBOTE Students</i>	Students from language backgrounds other than English were identified by a “yes” response to the question “Does anyone in your home usually speak in a language other than English?”
Tasmania	
<i>Exemption from Testing Policy</i>	Exempt students were: those on the Category A intellectual disabilities register for government schools; those determined to be intellectually disabled by the Catholic Education Office; and ESL students who the Principal Education Officer (ESL) identified as being unable to complete the test owing to the students’ inability to comprehend English.
<i>Average Age Calculation Method</i>	The date of birth of each student was provided from enrolment records. The age of each student, as at July 31, 1999 was then calculated to the nearest month. Data were collected separately from government and Catholic schools and a combined average was calculated by weighting the averages from each sector.
<i>Years at School Calculation Method</i>	Most students begin full-time schooling in the Preparatory year and then complete years 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5. Thus the average number of years of schooling is approximately 3 years, 7 months in year 3 and 5 years, 7 months in year 5
<i>Definition, Identification of Indigenous Students</i>	Indigenous students were identified by each school from information collected at enrolment, or through self-identification. If the Indigenous status was unknown, the student was not considered to be Indigenous.
<i>Definition, Identification of LBOTE Students</i>	Government schools identified LBOTE students from enrolment records and Catholic schools used new-arrival and special education applications to identify LBOTE students.
Northern Territory	
<i>Exemption from Testing Policy</i>	Students are exempted if they are unable to attempt any questions at the earliest levels of the MAP tests-Level 2 in the urban program and Early level 2 in the non-urban program of the mathematics or reading test, or write one or two sentences independently.
<i>Average Age Calculation Method</i>	The ages of all students (including those exempted) were recorded on the cover of the tests. The average was calculated by summing all ages and dividing by the total number of students.
<i>Years at School Calculation Method</i>	Schooling begins at age 5 in Transition classes. The typical time in school for year 3 students was calculated as follows: 2 years, 8 mths (years 1, 2 and 3 to time of testing) plus 7 mths (Transition) equals 3 years, 3 mths. For year 5 students, the calculation was as follows: 4 years, 8mths (years 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 at time of testing) plus 7 ths (Transition), equals 5 years and 3 mths.
<i>Definition, Identification of Indigenous Students</i>	Indigenous students are identified by schools at the time of enrolment or by self-identification.
<i>Definition, Identification of LBOTE Students</i>	Data represent students identified by teachers as being eligible for inclusion in the ESL program.
Australian Capital Territory	
<i>Exemption from Testing Policy</i>	Exempt students in the ACT include mainstream ESL students who have been learning English in Australia for less than 2 years and students with physical or intellectual disabilities who are enrolled in special educational units.
<i>Average Age Calculation Method</i>	From date of birth until August 1, year 3 or year 5, calculated through the MAZE student record keeping system.
<i>Years at School Calculation Method</i>	The years and months beginning February 1, in the Kindergarten year through to August 1, in Year 3 or 5.
<i>Definition, Identification of</i>	Indigenous students are identified at the time of enrolment by the parents/caregivers.

Indigenous Students

Definition, Identification of LBOTE Students Year 3 data represent funded ESL students rather than the broader LBOTE category. In year 5, LBOTE students are students who have identified that English is not the first language spoken at home.