

# AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

## Introduction

The Australian Capital Territory is a self-governing territory comprising 2,367 square kilometres in south-eastern Australia. The population of the ACT in 1996 was 299,243.

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

ACT students attend a range of government, Catholic and independent schools. In 1996 there were 61,384 students enrolled in schools. These included 32,643 primary students, 19,119 high school students, 9,206 secondary college students and 416 special school students.

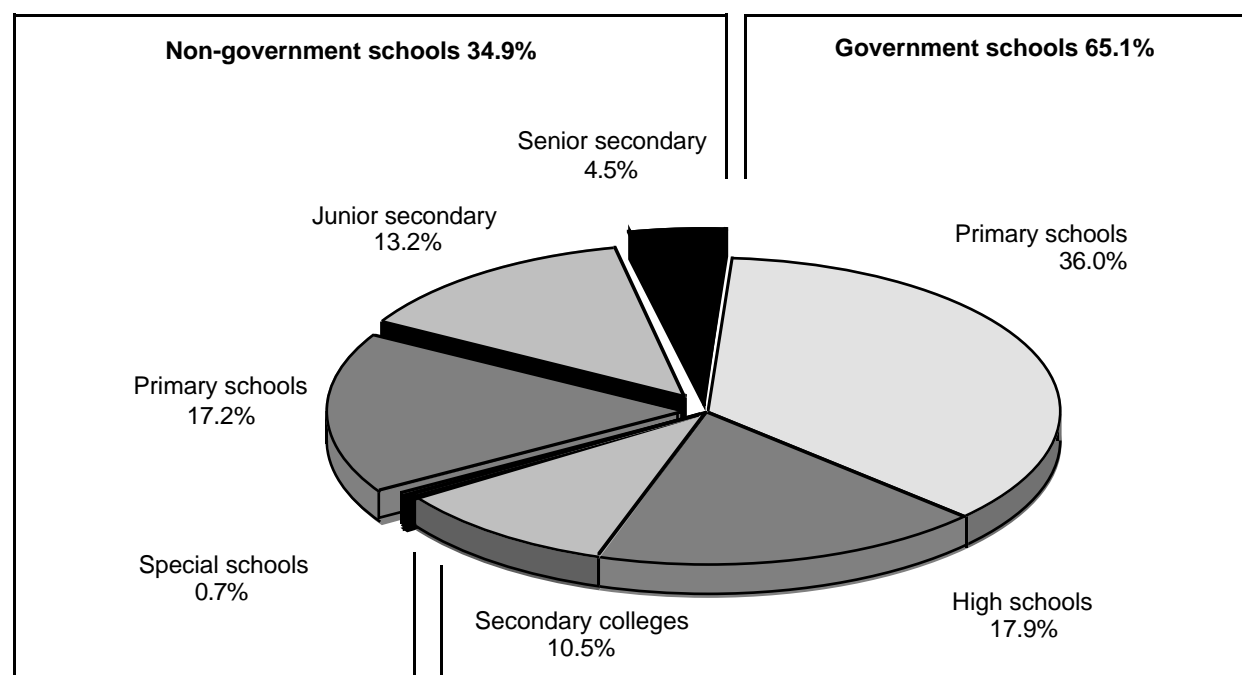
Enrolments in government schools accounted for 65.1 per cent of total enrolment. The remaining 34.9 per cent were enrolled in non-government schools. Of non-government enrolments, 75.4 per cent were in Catholic schools, 17.3 per cent in Anglican schools and 7.3 per cent in other schools.

Figure 18 illustrates the sectoral breakdown of schooling in the ACT.

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

- improve learning outcomes for all students, through outcomes-based education and access and equity;

**Figure 18. Enrolments by sector and level, all ACT schools, 1996**



Source: ACT Schools Census, August 1996

- 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.

Priority objectives for non-government schools in 1996 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.

Additional objectives identified for independent schools were to:

- develop individual students to their full potential, build self esteem and self awareness and care for and guide the individual child as he/she develops emotionally and spiritually as a whole being;
- prepare students for future employment;
- develop an integrated approach to education which places relationships in context and places emphasis on the development of positive character traits; and
- regularly review and update the social objectives of the school.

## Strategic initiatives in government and non-government schools in 1996

### Literacy and numeracy assessment

In 1996, mechanisms were developed for assessing and reporting on student outcomes in literacy in government primary schools from 1997. Numeracy testing will be trialled in year 5 in government primary schools in 1997 and an instrument for year 3 finalised.

The literacy and numeracy program will be designed to achieve system assessment and reporting goals as well as national benchmarking data collection. Data will be disaggregated by equity target group and used to inform curriculum development and professional development. A process of developing literacy and numeracy assessment instruments is planned for government high schools in 1998.

First Steps was identified as the literacy program for government primary schools and Language for Understanding Across the Curriculum was identified for government secondary schools. First Steps was also

introduced in the Catholic sector and an Early Literacy Program officer was appointed to provide support.

## Curriculum

The ACT Curriculum Frameworks provided strategies to improve learning outcomes for the equity target groups in government schools in each key learning area. An *Across Curriculum Perspective Statement* and a series of support papers were also provided to schools to ensure inclusive learning environments.

Course frameworks for years 11 and 12 in government colleges were developed in 1996, and are being used to provide a systematic approach to course development.

The provision of curriculum services in government schools was reviewed in 1996. The review recommended provision of integrated services across the key learning areas, a focus on literacy initiatives and a client-centred approach to provision of services to schools.

## Quality of schooling

A revised quality assurance process known as School Development was introduced. The process involves the whole community in assessing school effectiveness.

A stratified sample of ten per cent of parents with children in primary and secondary schools and ten per cent of secondary students was surveyed to determine satisfaction with schooling. Over 85 per cent of parents and 90 per cent of students who responded were satisfied with schooling.

The process for registration of non-government schools continued. This is a five year cyclical process. In 1996, 11 non-government schools were registered or re-registered. In the Catholic sector the school renewal process has been progressively established to review quality of schooling.

## Key competencies

The ACT Key Competencies Project was completed in 1996. In this project approximately one-third of ACT year 11 and 12 teachers in government and non-government schools contributed to the development of a range of teaching materials. Teachers participated in workshops, school-based projects, interstate projects and national reference groups.

## School Based Management

In 1996, arrangements were finalised for extended School Based Management (SBM) in government schools, to be

implemented from the beginning of 1997. The new arrangements aim to improve educational outcomes for students by increasing the range of decisions made and resource management at the school level. They were developed following wide discussion within the education community.

The principles underpinning SBM are:

- improved outcomes for students;
- fairness;
- accountability;
- community involvement; and
- transparency.

In implementing SBM, schools will manage around \$12 million in operating costs such as cleaning, rates, utilities and furniture. Schools will also have more responsibility for asset management, with an increase in funding from \$1.2 million to around \$5.3 million.

## Professional development

An SBM training program was a major focus of professional development in government schools. The program covered:

- finance;
- management of staffing resources and workloads;
- team building in the school community;
- networking; and
- conflict resolution.

A leadership development program was provided for system and school staff by the Catholic Education Office. It aimed to enhance the effectiveness of student participation and curriculum choice and delivery through the provision of improved school leadership and administration.

## National Asian Languages and Studies in Australian Schools

Studies of Asia across the curriculum and Asian language programs continued to expand in government and non-government schools under the NALSAS initiative. Work was complemented by a range of professional development activities across all levels of schooling. These included assistance to teachers studying Indonesian language at university and in language centres, and to teachers participating in Indonesian cultural tours.

*Students at Caroline Chisholm High School participated in National Enterprise Day activities.*

## Information technology

An integrated computerised school administration package is being developed for use in government schools. The package will provide a modern, fully integrated system for school administration data, including student attendance, financial and assets management and timetabling. The non-government sectors were involved in a reference group for this project. Implementation of the system is expected to be completed by the end of 1998.

In 1996, the Plan for Information Technology in Learning and Teaching 1997–98 was finalised and distributed to government schools. The plan provides a framework for use of information technology in schools and planning for improved student outcomes. It aims to establish appropriate information technology environments for students, develop teacher skills and establish mechanisms for assessing and reporting student outcomes.

## Health, physical education and sport

The Health, Physical Education and Sport Implementation Plan was introduced into government schools in 1996. The plan covers time allocations, curriculum development, professional development and reporting requirements for schools. In the Catholic sector, personal development, health and physical education were identified as development areas for 1996. An officer was appointed to support curriculum initiatives.

## Mandatory reporting training

A number of workshops on mandatory reporting were conducted for key mandated persons in government and non-government schools, including principals, deputy principals, school counsellors and student welfare officers. A train-the-trainer model allowed maximum coverage of organisations.

## Capital projects

In 1996, the Commonwealth provided \$3.8 million towards capital projects in the government sector under the General Element of the Capital Grants Programme, and \$2.53 million in the non-government sector. This included \$0.8 million to help broaden the secondary curriculum and to implement the Finn and Carmichael Reports.

In government schools there were two major and five minor projects funded by the Commonwealth and completed both physically and financially in 1996. Major projects involved works to improve access for persons with disabilities and upgrading of a technology area. All minor projects involved upgrading of school administration areas.

Of the 12 capital projects funded by the Commonwealth in the non-government sector and completed both physically and financially in 1996, 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 construction of general learning areas and the refurbishment of library/administration areas. Major works in secondary schools included the upgrading of administration areas and facilities for art and other technology curriculum areas.

Table 99 provides data on per capita grants to non-government schools in the ACT, by category and level of education, for 1996.

The ACT government provided \$15.45 million for capital works projects in government schools in 1996 and \$1.88 million in interest subsidies for capital projects to the non-government sector in 1995–96.

*Students participate in the official opening of Ngunnawal Primary School.*

**Table 99. Per capita grants, non-government schools, by category and level of education, 1996 (\$ per student)**

Category	Primary (\$)	Secondary (\$)
1	231	366
2	307	484
3	383	561
4	466	733
5	539	784
6	598	872
7	656	958
8	720	1,053
9	769	1,126
10	816	1,193
11	866	1,264
12	917	1,340

Source: ACT Department of Education and Training, Non-government Schools Office, 1996

A total of \$231,000 was provided in 1996 for improving access for students with disabilities to government schools through provision of facilities such as lifts, ramps and toilets.

## Focus areas

### Social objectives of schooling

School education in the ACT seeks to promote:

- learning about attitudes and values;
- students having self-confidence, taking risks and being responsible for their behaviour and learning; and
- creativity, problem solving and negotiating outcomes.

Learning in ACT schools emphasises social responsibility, citizenship, working cooperatively in teams, and caring for others and the environment.

### Curriculum

The social objectives of schooling are encompassed by the ACT Key Learning Area Frameworks and the Across Curriculum Perspectives which were completed in 1996 for government schools. The perspectives apply to nine curriculum areas, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait

*Erindale College students participate in National Enterprise Day activities.*

Islander education, gender equity, multicultural education, special needs and work education. They cover those educational and societal issues that cross curriculum boundaries. They are designed to be embedded in all course documents and classroom practice. During 1996 government schools continued to bring curriculum into line with these guidelines.

Other curriculum initiatives in government schools in 1996 included development of an anti-racism policy and materials for programs on civics, citizenship and enterprise behaviours. Students directly experience the democratic processes of citizenship through their representative councils and class parliaments, where they negotiate classroom, playground and school rules. The principles of cooperative learning, practised in all key learning areas, encourage the development of democratic skills such as sharing, paying attention to the needs of others, giving help when needed, listening to others, understanding agreement and disagreement and reaching consensus.

Student leadership has also been promoted through the development of the ACT Government Schools Student Network. The network meets monthly and involves student representatives and the senior executives of the Department. Students are also involved in district network meetings and the School Board Forum. Workshops have been held for network members to enhance participation in decision-making.

### Student management

Student management programs in government schools address the social objectives of schooling by fostering social responsibility in students, including a tolerance of others and a respect for others' rights. Schools have developed a student behaviour management policy and

adopted protective behaviours, gender awareness and human relationships programs.

A Safe Schools Policy Framework was introduced into government schools in 1996. This emphasises positive student management and includes strategies for minimising violence, bullying and all forms of harassment.

Representatives from the government and non-government sectors participated in a series of forums on violence. The forums developed strategies for students, teachers, schools and the community for eliminating violence in schools and identified available resources.

Various student management policies which reflect the philosophy and commitment of the schools to this issue are in place in independent schools.

Programs provided to government school students in withdrawal units focus on literacy and numeracy skill development and aim to re-integrate students into mainstream settings or to facilitate transition to work where appropriate.

An interagency Youth Connection service was established for students at risk of leaving school early. The service focuses on prevention of truancy, school refusal and escalation of severe behaviours.

## Middle schooling

Work commenced on the implementation of middle schooling in government schools in response to the identified physical, cognitive, social and psychological needs of young adolescents. The program includes design and development of appropriate curriculum, pedagogy, organisation and learning environments.

## Drug education

Drug education programs were developed under the NIDE in government and non-government schools. The independent sector held an Exploring Drug Education Initiatives seminar to introduce teachers to the current range and suitability of packages available to schools.

## Road safety

Road safety programs were developed in government and non-government schools. In Catholic schools, professional development was provided to teachers on road safety policy development and school management plans. The Road Safety Unit was transferred from the Department of Urban Services to the Department of Education and Training to improve coordination of driver education.

## Quality assurance

ACT government schools monitor the social objectives of schooling through a five-yearly quality assurance process called School Development. Each school reviews its operations and prepares a development plan. The 1996 review involved data collection from system questionnaires distributed to parents, staff and students in high schools and years 5 and 6 in primary schools. Information collected included perceptions of the school's ability to build self confidence, citizenship, organisational skills, independent learning, teamwork, and an acceptance of the values of other cultural groups.

## Equity

### Review of special education

The effectiveness of programs for students with disabilities was evaluated in a review of special education in ACT government schools. The review provided a number of recommendations for improving services, including changing resourcing to a needs-based model. An implementation plan based on consultation on review recommendations will be developed in 1997.

## Resources

In 1996, a total of \$28.7 million, from Commonwealth and State funding, was spent on equity programs in government and non-government schools, including \$27.3 million in government schools, \$1.35 million in Catholic schools and \$16,600 in independent schools. Table 100 provides expenditure data by equity target group.

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**Table 100. Equity expenditure in government and non-government schools, 1996 (\$ million)**

Students with disabilities	13.7
Students at risk	8.7
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students	1.0
Non-English speaking background students	3.9
Geographically isolated students	0.04
Socioeconomically disadvantaged students	1.3
Gender equity	0.06
<b>Total</b>	<b>28.7</b>

*Sources:* ACT Department of Education and Training, Catholic Education Office and Association of Independent Schools

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*'Girls in PE Day' attracted students from schools across the ACT.*

## Students with disabilities

In 1996, assistance to students with disabilities in government schools included provision of a range of early intervention, transition and special needs transport services. A program of building modifications continued in government schools to improve access.

Under the Transition Program, two school liaison officers were employed to provide assistance to teachers of students with special needs in government schools. The officers facilitated initiatives including transition meetings in schools, professional development, work experience, course accreditation and teaching materials.

In Catholic schools, assistance to students with disabilities included professional development for teachers and teacher assistants, programming and panel review support, parent involvement in programming and review, development and monitoring of Individual Education Programs and provision of capital support. Capital support included computers, software, printers, furniture, resources and minor building modifications.

Commonwealth funding was provided to independent schools to directly assist students with disabilities. Other initiatives included guest speakers on health related topics, parents were involved as tutors, programs were modified to accommodate individual needs and classroom teachers had access to resource staff.

## Professional development

Professional development courses on inclusive schooling were held for teachers, teachers' assistants and parents of students with disabilities in government and non-government schools. The courses aimed to increase understanding of the issues associated with integration of students with special needs into mainstream schools.

Professional development activities for teachers in Catholic schools included:

- the NPDP Early Intervention for Special Education Students which was offered jointly with University of Canberra, ACT Department of Education and Training and the Australian Association of Special Education (ACT Chapter);
- workshops for special needs teacher assistants; and
- training days for special needs resource teachers.

## Numeracy

### Third International Mathematics and Science Study

Students from government and non-government schools in the ACT participated in the TIMSS. The results for mathematics ranked ACT students equal first with Queensland, Western Australia and the Northern Territory and well above the international average.

### Outcomes assessment and reporting

ACER is developing a numeracy instrument which will be trialled in government schools for year 5 in 1997 with a view to implementation in 1998. A process for developing a numeracy assessment instrument in government high schools is planned for 1998.

Parents of all students who participate in numeracy testing will receive a report on achievement within the year group and in relation to the relevant national curriculum profile. The program will be designed to achieve system assessment and reporting goals and contribute to national benchmarking. School aggregated data will be used to target resources for improving numeracy outcomes.

In independent schools, internal diagnostic tools were used to identify students' strengths and weaknesses and design remedial or extension work. Schools used these tools to develop curriculum and individual numeracy programs.

## Strategic initiatives

A range of professional development activities was available to teachers in government and non-government schools, including:

- a workshop on early numeracy for primary and high school teachers; and

- workshops for teachers of mathematics conducted jointly by the ACT Department of Education and Training and the Canberra Mathematical Association.

In 1996, advanced mathematics students from government and non-government colleges and high schools throughout the ACT and NSW attended the annual Maths Day run by the University of Canberra and sponsored by the Australian Mathematics Trust. The competition aims to test students' problem solving abilities and to encourage enjoyment of the study of mathematics.

Independent schools sought to increase participation and achievement by all students and to provide specialist teachers and innovative teaching practices.

## Science

### Third International Mathematics and Science Study

ACT students from government and non-government schools participated in the TIMSS. In science, the ACT ranked equal second to Western Australia and performed as well as students from Japan and the United States.

### The Green Machine

In 1996, the Green Machine Science Education Centre, initiated in 1992 by the ACT Department of Education and Training, CSIRO and the Cooperative Research Centre for Plant Science, attracted 2,694 students and 920 teachers. The ACT Government and the Catholic Education Office provide teaching staff for the centre which is open to all schools in the ACT.

The program at the centre:

- enhances student and teacher interest in all aspects of plant science using a multidisciplinary approach;
- provides hands-on science activities for students ranging from primary to secondary level;
- promotes an understanding of and interest in scientific research and its importance to the community; and

- provides a focus for the CSIRO Double Helix Science Club and Student Research Scheme.

In 1996, the CSIRO Student Research Scheme involved 59 year 12 students. These students worked with scientists from research organisations. The CSIRO Double Helix Science Club has 1,438 members in the ACT.

### Creativity in Science and Technology program

The CSIRO CREST program was successfully trialled in primary schools in 1996. The program offers opportunities for students in government and non-government primary and secondary schools to undertake experimental science or technology projects. Projects range from ten to 100 hours' duration. For the more complex projects, students are encouraged to use a mentor from industry or the community.

### Community involvement

Government and non-government schools regularly involve parents in curriculum development and school celebrations, such as science activity days, Science Week and science fairs. A poster competition was conducted during the Science Week in 1996 and ACT finalists competed at the national level. Students also participated in the Australian Science Festival and the national Earthworm environmental awards.

### Professional development

Science teachers in government and non-government schools were provided with professional development opportunities using funding provided through the NPDP. These included development of a resource for teachers, parents and students preparing entries for the ACT Science Fair. A second project aimed to develop in teachers a better understanding of the learning environment for students in primary and secondary schools. Teachers were released to work with each other in their respective classrooms.