

COMMONWEALTH

Role of the Commonwealth in schooling

The Commonwealth has an important part to play in school education in Australia arising from its interest in the achievement of national social and economic goals, particularly those relating to Australia's young people.

The election of a new Federal Government in early 1996 saw a shift in some key aspects of Commonwealth policy in school education. In line with its election commitments, the new Government announced changes to the approval and funding of new non-government schools including the abolition of the New Schools Policy, the abolition of the category 6 funding cap and a review of the Education Resource Index (ERI) as a basis for funding non-government schools.

The new Government's education policies aim to ensure that, as far as possible, all Australian children are able to obtain a quality education, one that gives them the ability to successfully undertake further education, training or employment. The priorities of the Government include improved choice and diversity in schooling, both for parents and students, the provision of the foundation skills – particularly literacy and numeracy – which will enable students to make the most of their education and training opportunities later in life, and improvement of the pathways from school to work.

The Commonwealth seeks to enhance the educational outcomes of all school students by providing support for education systems and schools through its funding programs, through policy development and through research and analysis of nationally significant educational issues. It pursues its objectives by working closely with the States and Territories as well as with the authorities which administer non-government schools.

In 1996, the Commonwealth provided around \$3.3 billion in specific purpose payments for schools through its General Recurrent Grants and Capital Grants Programmes, through the NEPS and through programs which supported language learning, national priority projects, national professional development, key competencies and strategic initiatives in Indigenous education. A further \$608 million of income support was provided directly to individual school students and their families through ABSTUDY, AUSTUDY and the AIC Scheme.

The Commonwealth also has responsibilities in Australia's international relations in education, aiming to promote educational outcomes and links in ways which take account of Australia's location in the Asia-Pacific region.

In 1996, the Commonwealth administered its policies and programs for schools and students through DEETYA.

Initiatives and developments in 1996

Among the key developments at the national level in 1996 were agreement on a national literacy goal and the beginning of work on the national benchmarking of student achievement in literacy and numeracy, the passage of legislation guaranteeing schools funding for the next four years and restructuring the Commonwealth's targeted programs, reforms to Indigenous education funding, announcement of an important new package of vocational education initiatives for schools (described later in this chapter) and changes to the Commonwealth's policy toward the funding of new non-government schools.

New legislation

The year saw the passage of important new schools' funding legislation. The *States Grants (Primary and Secondary*

Education Assistance) Act 1996 provides the legislative framework for Commonwealth funding for schools over the quadrennium 1997–2000. It was given passage by Parliament in November 1996 and commenced operation on 1 January 1997. The new legislation provides close to \$16 billion for schools over four years, including \$640 million for literacy programs, \$680 million for students with special learning needs and \$110 million for languages. It puts into effect a simplified structure for Commonwealth targeted programs and includes for the first time in legislation a provision for reporting by education authorities on the application of Commonwealth grants for schools.

A new program structure

The Government announced in the 1996–97 Budget the streamlining of a plethora of small Commonwealth targeted programs, ranging from the DSP and the ESL Components to the Projects of National Significance Programme, into broad priority area programs. Coming into effect in 1997, the new broadbanded program structure realigns and simplifies more than 40 targeted assistance and quality schooling programs into just nine programs in the five priority areas of literacy, languages, special learning needs, school to work and quality outcomes. During 1996, the Commonwealth undertook extensive consultations with State and Territory education authorities about these proposed changes.

Program broadbanding gives the Commonwealth greater flexibility in directing its funding to emerging priorities and in using funds more strategically to help meet key objectives such as improving literacy outcomes. Broadbanding also reduces the States' administrative burden by giving education authorities greater discretion to use funds in a way that meets national schooling objectives while allowing more scope in determining local priorities. Commonwealth funds for schools are not reduced as a result of broadbanding.

Literacy and numeracy

Literacy and numeracy is a key priority of the Commonwealth Government, and 1996 was a year of progress in development of policy and programs to support this area. During the year, Commonwealth, State and Territory Ministers of Education made two decisions of key importance to literacy and numeracy standards in Australian schools. They agreed to the new national goal “that every child leaving primary school should be able to read, write,

spell and communicate at an appropriate level”, and they also endorsed development of common literacy benchmarks – standards describing student achievement at a year level – at years 3 and 5. In the 1996–97 Budget, the Commonwealth schools' Minister announced funding of \$45 million over three years for a national literacy and numeracy strategy to improve the reading, writing and numeracy skills of all children. The strategy is to be introduced in 1997 as a part of the Commonwealth's new broadbanded Literacy Programme.

To provide reliable national baseline data on outcomes in literacy of Australian primary school students, the National School English Literacy Survey of years 3 and 5 was conducted in September 1996. The results, due for release in the second half of 1997, will include analysis of the data against the draft year 3 and 5 student literacy benchmarks.

Indigenous education

Legislative and administrative amendments to the Commonwealth's main funding program for Indigenous education were implemented during 1996 as a key element of the response to the 1995 *National Review of Education for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples*. The IESIP, formerly the AESIP, provides supplementary assistance to education providers to enhance Indigenous education outcomes in accordance with the goals of the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Policy.

In the 1996 winter sitting of Parliament, the *Indigenous Education (Supplementary Assistance) Amendment Act 1996* was passed, providing the legislative basis for a restructuring of the program. The changes included:

- the introduction of per capita funding, based on Indigenous enrolments, for the main IESIP component, the Supplementary Recurrent Assistance Element;
- outcomes-focused Indigenous Education Agreements between the Commonwealth and funding recipients;
- increased funding up to 1999;
- transitional arrangements to guarantee no loss of funding to existing recipients in 1997; and
- funding for submission-based Strategic Results Projects which aim to identify and trial ways to overcome barriers to educational achievement by Indigenous people.

Funding for new non-government schools

New funding arrangements for new non-government schools or non-government schools changing operations are to be introduced in 1997. The changes were explained by the Commonwealth schools' Minister in September 1996 in the statement, *Commonwealth General Recurrent Funding for New and Changing Non-government Schools 1997–2000*.

From 1 January 1997, the New Schools Policy is abolished, and the restriction of new non-systemic schools to funding categories no better than category 6 is removed.

Commonwealth minimum enrolment requirements and maximum enrolment limits cease to apply, and advance notification is no longer required by the Commonwealth.

To be eligible for Commonwealth General Recurrent Grants funding from 1997, a new non-government school or one changing specified operations must have State recognition for the level of education and location, though there are other basic requirements such as evidence that the school has non-profit status. Non-systemic schools applying for funding for the first time must enter into a standard agreement with the Commonwealth; the funding agreements between the Commonwealth and school system authorities will cover new systemic schools.

From 1 January 1997, a non-government school seeking Commonwealth general recurrent funding as a new school or as an existing school changing specified operations will lodge an application under these new, simplified arrangements.

Forty-three new schools received funding approval to commence in 1996 under the New Schools Policy then in force. Another 16 were approved for extension of school years and four for relocation. With the announcement of the abolition of the New Schools Policy, all work by DEETYA on current funding rounds was discontinued.

Information technology in schools

The Commonwealth has recognised the importance of information technology for all levels of education through its support, in partnership with State governments, for EdNA. EdNA is a process of national cooperation and consultation between government and non-government education authorities across all sectors of Australian education and training. It aims to maximise the benefits of

information technology in education and to avoid unnecessary overlap and duplication of services.

In February 1996, the initial version of the EdNA Directory Service was placed on the Internet. It provides a number of powerful tools to assist students and educators to access quality education resources and to communicate with each other on the Internet.

In mid-year, the EdNA Schools Advisory Group was established to coordinate and develop input for the school sector. The group includes representation from government, Catholic and independent schools and is supported by a project officer funded by DEETYA.

The official launch of the EdNA Directory Service is scheduled for November 1997.

Youth policy and support

In 1995–96, the Commonwealth Youth Bureau helped establish five school-based pilot projects for young homeless people, providing grants worth \$0.4 million. The broad aim of these projects is to assist young homeless students or students at risk of homelessness, with the specific goal of attempting to retain these students in school. By maintaining connections with support networks within schools, homeless students can be prevented from moving into chronic homelessness and at-risk students can be assisted before they become homeless.

Of the nine innovative projects funded in 1996 under the Homeless and At Risk Action Package, four were to help students. One provided an alternative education program for Alice Springs children who have dropped out of school by promoting better mental health, suicide prevention and juvenile crime prevention programs. In a second project, Bowden Brompton Community School in Adelaide employed three health professionals to assess students' psychological, medical, drug and alcohol and suicide risk, to develop individual holistic programs for those identified as at risk and to provide counselling, support and advice.

Another project aided Paralowie House in Adelaide, which accommodates 18 homeless young people and acts as a venue for alternative education classes and labour market programs for students having difficulties in mainstream education. Funding went to establishing links between supported accommodation and education by delivering life skills programs to tenants and to providing 'student-specific' accommodation.

Building on earlier research on community initiatives for early intervention into youth homelessness, funds were provided in 1996 for two researchers to develop strategic plans in five school communities with high incidences of youth homelessness. The plans will aim to provide long-term solutions that can be used by other communities.

National Board of Employment, Education and Training

The National Board of Employment, Education and Training (NBEET) has for some years provided advice to the Government across a range of issues within the portfolio. During the early part of 1996 the Schools Council of NBEET released three commissioned reports:

- *Action Plan to Develop Industry-Schools Partnerships in Science and Technology* – this explored the potential for partnerships between industry and schools in promoting science and technology and looked at strategies to address factors which inhibit students' participation in science and technology studies;
- *The Development of Knowledge and Attitudes about Career Options and Australia's Economic Future: Report of the Focus Groups* – this document reported the findings of the young people's focus group discussions which informed the Council's 1995 advice on how young people acquired knowledge and developed their attitudes about careers, postcompulsory education and training and Australia's economic future; and
- *Management of Student Access to Controversial Material on the Internet* – the project explored the nature and extent of student access to controversial material on the Internet and the technical options for controlling access.

Another NBEET Council, the Australian Language and Literacy Council, undertook a study of language teachers in schools and provided advice to the Minister. It also produced the report, *Language Teachers: The Pivot of Policy* which reviewed policy initiatives and recent literature on language teacher supply and demand. This report also looked at aspects of teacher quality, focusing on the minimum skills that language teachers need to teach effectively.

Legislation has been introduced to abolish the National Board and three of its Councils, including the Schools Council. Pending formal abolition, the Board and Councils wound up their activities in June 1996.

Focus areas

This section outlines Commonwealth activities in some of the four key focus areas for the *National Report on Schooling in Australia, 1996*.

Students' attitudes as they apply to the social objectives of schooling

A national sample study funded by the Commonwealth has gathered information about the extent to which the social objectives of schooling are being achieved and has investigated the role and influence of schools in meeting those objectives. The study is described in detail in the *National Overview*.

Geographically isolated students

In addition to its programs for all schools and students, the Commonwealth provides special assistance for students in remote and rural Australia. The main types of assistance are targeted funding for rural schools, capital funding for hostels for rural students, and income support for students who must live away from home to attend school or who study by correspondence. Commonwealth policies and programs which focus on geographically isolated school students are treated at length in the *National Overview*.

During 1996, the method for allocating Country Areas funding between the States and sectors was reviewed with assistance from the Centre for Strategic Economic Studies at Victoria University of Technology. The Centre's report, *A Review of Methodology for the Distribution of Funding under the Country Areas General Component*, examined various approaches to defining rurality and isolation and was distributed widely to education sectors for consultation. While the methodology of the existing allocative mechanism was maintained, the program's funding formula was re-based to target the client group more directly by using student enrolment numbers rather than a general population count, and it was updated with the most recent available ABS Census data. The revised formula takes effect in 1997.

A *Project and Resource Directory* outlining projects and their resource materials funded under the Country Areas National Component of the NEPS over the three years from 1992 to 1994 was published during 1996. Intended to help teachers, parents and community members who want to

improve the educational opportunities and outcomes of students disadvantaged by geographic isolation, the *Directory* was distributed to all education sectors and appropriate bodies.

Under the specific purpose program broadbanding changes announced in the 1996–97 Budget and due for implementation in 1997, the Commonwealth continues to maintain a focus on the educational disadvantage arising from geographic isolation. This will be through a separately identified element – Country Areas – within the new Special Learning Needs Programme.

Numeracy and science

A significant national-level initiative in numeracy and science – the measurement and comparison of student achievement through the TIMSS – is discussed in the *National Overview*.

National-level longitudinal surveys also provided incidental data on numeracy levels of Australian students. In 1975, a representative sample of 14 year olds took part in school-based tests of numeracy and basic reading comprehension. Over the intervening period several similar exercises have been conducted, most recently in 1995 as part of the Longitudinal Surveys of Australian Youth (LSAY). Administered by ACER and supported by the Commonwealth, LSAY surveys interview young Australians annually about their school experiences, post-school education and training and work activities. The Commonwealth schools' Minister drew on data from this source in an important speech about basic literacy and numeracy skills delivered in Perth in October 1996. In 1997, ACER is to publish various research reports using these data.

Literacy and numeracy measurement is not the main purpose of these surveys, but the reading comprehension and numeracy tests completed by respondents in their junior high school years have enabled ACER to trace some of the links between achievement in these areas and subsequent differences in school completion, entry to higher education and technical and further education, unemployment experiences, type of work gained and levels of income.

From a numeracy perspective, some of ACER's key findings are:

- the capacity of young people to participate effectively in schooling, post-secondary education and the workforce is determined to a significant extent by their level of literacy and numeracy;

- poor numeracy among young people is less extensive than poor literacy, and the overall picture seems to be improving. The period 1975 to 1995 saw a small but significant increase in the proportion achieving 'mastery' – competence in the basic skills necessary for active participation in society – from around 80 per cent to 85 per cent;
- there was little change in the relative performance of the sexes in numeracy: boys continue to do slightly better than girls;
- performance is lower for students whose home language is not English, though the gap is less than for reading. Levels of mastery in numeracy for this group increased from 58 per cent in 1975 to 77 per cent in 1995, but this is mainly the result of changes in the occupational backgrounds of these students;
- achievement is lower for Indigenous students than for others, but the gap has diminished. Levels of mastery have increased dramatically from 22 per cent in 1975 to 65 per cent in 1995 (though some of this change is due to changes in definition and data collection);
- the learning of numeracy and literacy skills is fundamentally linked to remaining at school to year 12. The completion rate for boys who are very low achievers in numeracy and literacy is less than 50 per cent; very high achievers have a completion rate of 90 per cent. Girls are more likely to complete school than boys, but those with weak numeracy skills survive to year 12 far less often than those with average to strong skills. Girls with weak numeracy skills are more at risk of leaving early than girls with weak literacy skills;
- university entry rates depend strongly on literacy and numeracy achievement; numeracy skills are more discriminating for girls, and literacy skills for boys. TAFE entrants come from a wider range of achievement levels, but young people with weak literacy and numeracy skills are still less likely to enrol than those with strong skills. Females entering TAFE tend to have average to above average literacy skills but weak numeracy skills. Participants in apprenticeships are more often drawn from the pool of low to very low achievers in literacy and numeracy; and
- students with low literacy and numeracy skills tend to experience the longest periods of unemployment as teenagers and are more often unemployed at age 19; they more often work in skilled manual and labouring and related occupations, and they tend to earn less.

Other activities

During 1996, the Commonwealth provided \$1.4 million for 16 projects for mathematics and science teachers under the NPDP. Activities included professional development to support curriculum initiatives, a national science summer school and the production of professional development packages.

As reported previously, a 1996 report by NBEET examined the potential for partnerships between industry and schools in promoting science and technology. The *Action Plan to Develop Industry-Schools Partnerships in Science and Technology* also looked at strategies to address those factors which inhibit students' participation in science and technology studies.

Evaluation and research

The Commonwealth carried out evaluations of three of its schools programs during 1996 and funded, in whole or part, research on topics as diverse as school completion, teacher training in the Asia-Pacific region and student achievement in mathematics and science.

Evaluations

General Recurrent Grants

KPMG Management Consulting was commissioned by the Department of Employment, Education and Training (DEET)¹ in 1995 to conduct an evaluation of selected operational aspects of the General Recurrent Grants Programme. The evaluation concluded in August 1996 with the public release of the report.

The General Recurrent Grants evaluation examined conditions of funding, program administration and some aspects of non-government funding: specifically, whether the ERI remained an appropriate indicator of the relative financial needs of non-government schools and systems.

While the report noted that clients of the program were generally supportive of the administrative procedures, it also pointed to areas for improvement. Some recommendations require action by DEETYA, others call for action by the States as paying agents or by schools in meeting conditions for receiving funds. A number of the

¹ DEET was renamed the Department of Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs (DEETYA) in March 1996.

recommendations will be implemented in 1997 while others require further consideration and consultation with the Programme's clients. The report found that the ERI does not meet the tests of an effective indicator of need, and these recommendations will be considered in a review of the Index to be conducted in 1997.

Key competencies

In November 1996, DEETYA commissioned an independent evaluation of the key competencies program by a consortium of the University of Sydney and National Curriculum Services. The evaluation reported on the effectiveness and efficiency of the program and identified strategies for further development of the key competencies. It revealed that, whilst implementation of the key competencies is feasible, desirable and integral to the achievement of a number of quality education and training priorities, it is unlikely that benefits would be realised if the key competencies are not explicitly identified at least in curriculum.

Students at risk

An examination in 1996 of the effectiveness of the STAR Component of NEPS in non-government schools followed on from a study four years earlier reviewing the same program in the government sector. As well, the 1996 study looked at the effectiveness of the program's administrative processes. The major finding was that STAR achieved its aims and has brought about significant and observable differences to the lives of young people.

Research and other publications

1996 saw the publication of a range of research studies funded in full or in part by the Commonwealth.

Longitudinal Surveys of Youth

Over a period of twenty years the surveys now gathered together as LSAY have been collecting information on young people's participation in school, training and work. LSAY is a joint project of ACER and DEETYA. During 1996 two research reports analysing already-collected data were published: *Completing School in Australia: Trends in the 1990s* and *School Students and Part-time Work*.

Following the initial survey in 1995 of 13,500 year 9 students, surveys of the schools and teachers associated with those students were undertaken in 1996. In addition ACER conducted follow-up surveys of the Youth in Transition cohort born in 1975 and now aged 21, and

telephone interviews with the Australian Youth Survey sample group.

Schooling issues

In 1996, the project, *Creating a Supportive School Environment*, investigated how schools can provide safe and supportive learning environments. An evaluation report included recommendations for action by the Commonwealth and State education systems.

The Australian Curriculum Studies Association was commissioned to prepare a resource to support teachers, schools and systems to undertake reforms in the middle years of schooling. *From Alienation to Engagement* covers key findings and recommendations, theoretical constructions and teacher action. The materials will support individuals and groups working to make the middle years of schooling more rewarding for students and provide a framework for further action.

Curriculum collaboration

The Commonwealth funded a national forum, convened by New South Wales in October 1996, on the progress and direction of the implementation of the curriculum profiles. The forum also dealt with outcomes-based approaches to curriculum, teaching and learning, the assessment and reporting of outcomes and educational accountability in schools. The report, *Forum on National Statements and Profiles in Australian Schools*, compiles the papers and proceedings of the forum.

Curriculum profiles were also the subject of an ACER project which researched and analysed the use of curriculum profiles in Australian schools and their role in classroom assessment and the reporting of student learning outcomes. This project documented system initiatives and policy in the implementation of learning area profiles and reported on a survey of the views and practices of 200 principals and over 500 teachers at 26 schools visited.

Most schools were in the early stages of implementing profiles and outcomes-based education, but the survey did reveal a substantial shift in primary schools from familiarisation and programming to assessment and reporting in 1996. Secondary schools were using the profiles for programming, with some emphasis on assessment and reporting in 1996. The most effective implementation strategies were found to be support documentation, meetings with key staff members and collaborative planning, and training and development programs. The survey will be published by ACER in 1997.

Assessment and reporting

A series of developmental assessment materials for teachers was released by the Commonwealth through ACER during the year. Guides on developmental assessment, portfolios, performance, projects and progress maps, together with the videotape, *Understanding Developmental Assessment*, are supplemented by a professional development handbook to form the Assessment Resource Kit.

The Kit is designed to help teachers and education systems assess and report student achievement by raising teachers' awareness and understanding of the issues and methods involved, and supporting them in their assessment of student progress against specified learning outcomes. The materials discuss the practical implementation of assessment and reporting policy and provide a range of exemplary classroom practices. They are suitable for use in preservice and inservice professional development programs.

Literacy research

The Children's Literacy National Projects program funded innovative research on children's literacy. Projects conducted in 1996 examined issues as diverse as community literacy practices and schooling, technology and language and literacy learning, connections between literacy development in the prior-to-school period and the first year of schooling and the literacy demands of the curriculum in the postcompulsory years.

Other activities

The *Commonwealth Students at Risk Program: A Resources Guide*, developed by STAR practitioners from both government and non-government sectors, was also published in 1996. Designed to assist education authorities and STAR people in schools and community organisations who want to implement strategies and activities for students at risk, the Guide was distributed to all education authorities.

On the international scene, Australia was part of the second stage of an APEC study on Teacher Training and Professional Development in the Asia-Pacific region which involved a survey of methods of teacher induction in several member nations. After the survey, Australia was chosen as a case study site, and more detailed investigations were undertaken on the nature of induction practices, particularly in the Northern Territory. Progress and results of the study were reported by the project leader, the United States, at APEC Education Forum Meetings in 1996 and the report is expected to be released in early 1997.

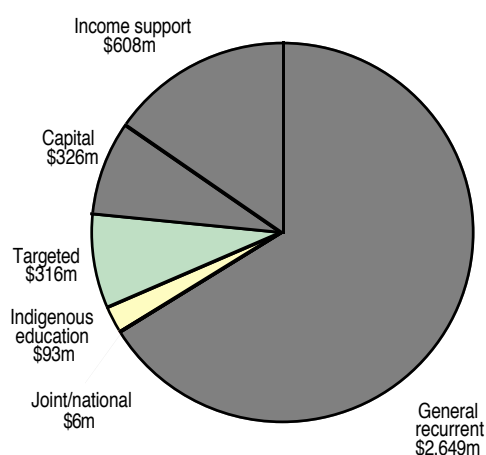
Funding for schools and students

The Commonwealth, through its funding programs for schools and students, addresses national priorities for school education in Australia. For 1996, the Commonwealth provided \$3.3 billion for schools through the States Grants legislation, the main items being \$2.6 billion in General Recurrent Grants, \$326 million in Capital Grants and \$316 million on targeted programs. In addition, \$93 million was provided for Indigenous education and \$608 million as income support for school students (see Figure 19).

Commonwealth grants for schools, excluding Indigenous education funding and Annual Appropriation funding for schools programs going to national and other non-school organisations, totalled \$3.297 billion in 1996, with the government sector receiving \$1.364 billion and the non-government sector \$1.927 billion, and \$5.9 million being allocated to joint national programs benefiting both sectors. Table 101 shows how this was distributed to government and non-government authorities, by State, while Figure 20 summarises distribution according to school sector.

Programs funded under the 1996–97 Annual Appropriations, totalling \$84 million, are outlined in Table 102.

Figure 19. Commonwealth expenditure on schools and students, by program, 1996

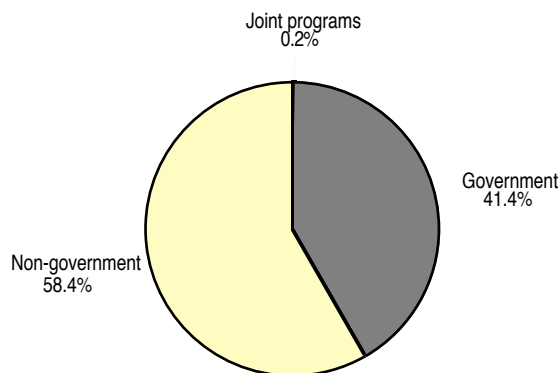


Note: Excludes programs funded under 1996–97 Annual Appropriations.

Source: Commonwealth DEETYA

Approximately 80 per cent of Commonwealth funding for schools in 1996 was for general recurrent funding. Over the period 1981 to 1996, total Commonwealth funding has increased by 70 per cent in real terms with general recurrent funding increasing by 105 per cent in real terms. This has included funding increases to the neediest non-government schools – which have received real increases since 1985 – as well as annual supplementation. General recurrent funding to the government sector was maintained over the period. As Figure 21 shows, combined capital and other expenditure remained steady in real terms for the period 1981 to 1996.

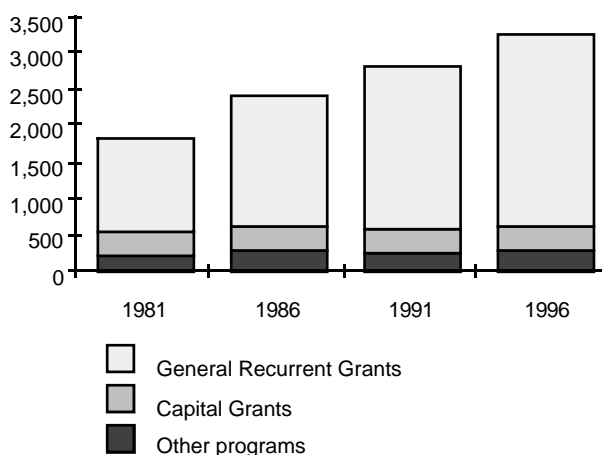
Figure 20. Commonwealth grants under Schools Grants legislation, by sector, 1996 (a)



(a) Excludes Indigenous education, income support and programs funded under 1996–97 Annual Appropriations.

Source: Commonwealth DEETYA

Figure 21. Commonwealth grants for schools, selected years (\$ million, final 1996 prices)



Source: Commonwealth DEETYA

Table 101. Commonwealth grants for schools by program and category of school, States, 1996 (\$'000) (a)

<i>Program</i>	<i>NSW</i>	<i>Vic.</i>	<i>Qld</i>	<i>SA</i>	<i>WA</i>	<i>Tas.</i>	<i>NT</i>	<i>ACT</i>	<i>Australia</i>
Government schools									
General Recurrent	319,494	216,037	176,240	73,269	97,293	27,010	11,290	16,859	937,492
Capital	72,044	49,600	38,438	17,315	21,267	6,107	2,567	3,800	211,138
NEPS									
ESL – General Support	18,292	14,116	4,113	3,610	3,595	475	926	897	46,024
ESL – New Arrivals	17,446	10,215	2,762	2,786	2,427	215	446	410	36,706
Special Education – Schools Support	9,861	6,790	5,261	2,370	2,911	835	352	518	28,898
Special Education – Intervention Support	57	542	1,874	297	1,160	464	213	77	4,683
Disadvantaged Schools	21,267	14,969	7,141	5,312	6,013	2,593	1,284	56	58,635
Country Areas General	3,510	2,035	3,369	1,639	2,393	523	586	0	14,055
Students at Risk	2,077	1,181	833	352	529	207	106	0	5,285
Early Literacy	2,466	1,744	890	603	673	280	129	69	6,853
Students with Disabilities	1,731	1,160	716	986	473	257	150	131	5,604
Priority Languages	919	810	215	197	105	81	4	88	2,418
Community Languages	2,932	1,985	542	415	312	22	34	90	6,332
Total	472,097	321,184	242,394	109,150	139,150	39,068	18,086	22,994	1,364,123
Non-government schools									
General Recurrent (incl. STEA)	561,956	459,548	304,684	124,129	167,699	38,450	14,626	40,721	1,711,813
Capital	36,551	31,416	15,885	12,660	9,877	2,957	2,929	2,595	114,871
NEPS									
ESL – General Support	8,907	8,547	1,957	1,467	1,902	198	302	456	23,736
ESL – New Arrivals	1,352	1,125	347	108	682	39	30	0	3,683
Special Education – Schools Support	9,313	8,711	4,138	2,032	2,506	620	314	569	28,202
Special Education – Capital Support	529	235	180	22	81	223	14	0	1,284
Special Education – Intervention Support	5,628	4,140	1,872	1,184	533	91	24	224	13,696
Transition Support – Special Schools	1,645	348	0	0	0	0	0	0	1,993
Disadvantaged Schools	3,533	3,882	791	448	676	134	84	19	9,567
Country Areas General	473	322	455	16	420	29	5	0	1,720
Students at Risk	793	556	300	101	219	82	64	0	2,115
Early Literacy	865	744	205	110	227	32	27	33	2,243
Students with Disabilities	2,290	1,676	790	610	352	107	58	103	5,985
Priority Languages	527	519	221	158	161	41	2	33	1,662
Community Languages	894	3,294	324	130	153	4	0	94	4,893
Total	635,256	525,064	332,148	143,174	185,489	43,007	18,478	44,848	1,927,464
Joint programs									
Education Centres	632	667	462	313	312	172	93	0	2,651
Projects of National Significance	206	1,273	135	163	18	10	18	313	2,137
Transition Support	236	203	209	101	95	54	101	63	1,063
Total	1,075	2,143	806	577	425	236	212	376	5,851
All programs									
Total – all programs	1,108,428	848,391	575,349	252,901	325,063	82,311	36,777	68,218	3,297,438

(a) 1996 program year expenditure as at 30 June 1997.

Source: Commonwealth DEETYA

Table 102. Commonwealth grants for schools, Annual Appropriations, 1996–97 (\$'000 actual expenditure)

<i>National Priorities</i>	
Projects of National Significance	851
Curriculum Development Projects	1,660
Civics and Citizenship Education (schools component only)	2,030
National School English Literacy Survey	1,056
Australian Students Prize	998
Quality Schooling	2,107
Grants-in-Aid	942
Curriculum Corporation	115
Key Competencies	1,284
Enterprise Education	752
National Professional Development Programme	8,735
<i>Languages</i>	
National Asian Languages and Studies in Australian Schools Strategy	10,057
Asia Education Foundation	1,114
Language Australia (formerly NLLIA)	1,438
Children's Literacy National Projects	574
Vocational Education in Schools	1,942
Aboriginal Education Direct Assistance	48,606
Total	84,261

Source: Commonwealth DEETYA

General assistance

General recurrent grants

In 1996, the Commonwealth provided over \$2.6 billion in recurrent funding to government and non-government schools through the General Recurrent Grants Programme, an increase of 5.4 per cent over 1995. This program underpins the Commonwealth's priorities and objectives for schooling by providing funding to support the recurrent costs of schools. The Commonwealth works with school authorities to develop agreed priorities for the General Recurrent Grants Programme that will prepare the nation's young people to undertake post-school education and training, to participate successfully in the labour market and to contribute to, and benefit from, Australian society.

Grants are made on a per capita basis. In the government sector they are provided as block grants, while non-government school grants are needs-based, each school being placed in one of 12 categories with category 1

receiving the least financial support. Schools in categories 5 to 12 continued to receive real annual increases in their grant levels while schools in categories 1 to 4 were maintained in real terms. Per capita grant levels by category are given in Table 12 in the *National Overview*. Table 103 shows changes in the numbers of Commonwealth funded non-government schools and students since 1991.

The 1996–97 Budget foreshadowed introduction of the EBA. It costs the Commonwealth more and the States less to educate a child in a non-government school than in a government school, resulting in a saving to the States when students move to the non-government sector. The purpose of the EBA is to recover half of the savings the States and Territories make by virtue of the continuing movement of student enrolments from government schools to non-government schools. The EBA will come into effect in 1998, calculated according to movements between 1996 and 1997 enrolment proportions.

Capital grants

The objectives of the Commonwealth's Capital Grants Programme are to prepare the nation's young people to undertake post-school education and training, participate successfully in the labour market, and contribute to, and benefit from, Australian society.

The program seeks to improve educational outcomes by assisting in the provision of school facilities, particularly in ways that contribute most to raising the overall level of educational achievement of Australian school students. The Capital Grants Programme has a special emphasis on improving educational outcomes in schools catering for students from disadvantaged socioeconomic backgrounds and other disadvantaged groups.

Of the \$326 million provided in 1996, \$211 million funded 515 major and 1,390 minor projects at government schools and, in the non-government sector, \$115 million supported 595 school and hostel projects.

National priorities

The Department administers a number of programs and projects which support national level priorities in school education. In 1996, these ranged from Projects of National Significance to programs addressing key competencies, civics and citizenship education and quality schooling. Some developments are outlined below.

Table 103. Number of Commonwealth-funded non-government schools and students (FTE), by funding category and affiliation, selected years

	<i>Schools</i>			<i>Students</i>		
	<i>1992</i>	<i>1994</i>	<i>1996</i>	<i>1992</i>	<i>1994</i>	<i>1996</i>
Category 1	53	50	61	48,004	45,887	54,985
Category 2	38	27	36	29,777	22,341	30,356
Category 3	109	91	99	60,830	52,935	57,362
Category 4	26	21	16	9,216	6,003	5,444
Category 5	44	38	28	7,082	7,577	7,721
Category 6	121	99	118	24,804	23,753	29,800
Category 7	33	35	48	11,486	8,967	10,449
Category 8	133	154	154	29,238	35,497	37,631
Category 9	93	95	98	43,101	42,716	40,350
Category 10	1,594	1,578	1,593	525,997	531,740	560,797
Category 11	165	180	174	60,515	69,227	71,256
Category 12	37	38	41	7,443	8,364	9,804
Other (a)	3	49	0	1,636	25,302	0
Total	2,449	2,455	2,466	859,128	880,308	915,952
<i>Systemic schools</i>						
Catholic	1,517	1,536	1,557	494,332	507,169	536,252
Independent	101	124	156	13,864	23,903	35,510
Sub-total	1,618	1,660	1,713	508,196	531,072	571,761
<i>Non-systemic schools</i>						
Catholic	171	156	128	106,520	97,770	82,192
Independent	660	639	625	244,413	251,466	261,999
Sub-total	831	795	753	350,932	349,237	344,191
Total	2,449	2,455	2,466	859,128	880,308	915,952

(a) The category 'Other' refers to schools re-categorised into a lower funding category but which had their per student grants maintained in money terms each year until their revised funding category rate of grant reached the previous level of grant. For 1996, these schools and students are shown against the funding category to which the school is moving.

(b) Where figures have been rounded discrepancies may occur between sums of the component items and totals.

Source: Commonwealth DEETYA

Vocational education and training in schools

In 1996, the Government made a commitment to put in place new Commonwealth policy building on the principles which underpin the AVTS and developed in partnership with industry to meet the needs of enterprises. These initiatives would provide for a broader approach to training and give more emphasis to developing effective and reliable pathways from schooling to employment.

The 1996–97 Federal Budget provided a package of measures to expand VET in schools and help students to begin apprenticeships and traineeships while at school. The package included \$20 million of VET funds each year for the four years 1997 to 2000 to mount new programs such as school-based apprenticeships and traineeships and to support innovative and promising projects. Another \$23 million over four financial years would go to employ more teachers, enable greater participation of industry and

VET personnel in the delivery of courses and provide professional development for teachers to ensure they have up-to date industry experience. Also part of the package was funding for workplace training opportunities for students, the employment of 200 work placement co-ordinators and funding for the Jobs Pathway Programme to assist in the transition from school to work.

The Australian Student Traineeship Foundation

The ASTF was set up in 1994 to promote opportunities for young Australians to acquire workplace knowledge and experience before they graduate from school. It supports school-industry partnerships to develop, implement and enhance vocational education programs for school students and supports the training of workplace supervisors and provides resource materials, networks and advisory services. The ASTF is funded by the Commonwealth through ANTA.

The ASTF had a core budget of \$9.9 million in 1996–97 to promote and develop school-industry partnerships, providing grants to individual schools and school clusters to support students in structured workplace learning programs. Another \$7.5 million supported the employment of 150 workplace coordinators to assist in this process.

The Jobs Pathway Programme

The Jobs Pathway Programme was established to help senior secondary students who have done vocational courses in years 11 and 12 to make the transition from school to work by giving them access to an employment broker in their local area. In the pilot phase in 1995–96, ten brokers in eight areas were contracted to provide assistance which included job placement with local employers, post-placement support for twelve months, industry and labour market advice, assistance with jobseeking skills and career counselling. In 1996–97, the program was being expanded to 40 regions across Australia with 42 employment brokers under contract.

Enterprise education

In 1995, the Commonwealth allocated \$3.4 million over four years to the Enterprise Education in Schools Programme to support national activities. Enterprise education arises from recommendations made by education Ministers in mid-1995. It embraces the development of new curricula and curriculum materials, teacher professional development programs on how to develop the enterprising student, strategies to encourage closer liaison between schools and business and industry for better advice on careers in business (especially small business), and strategies for community awareness of the value of enterprise, the contribution of small business, and the role of schools in developing an enterprise culture in the community.

Education Centres

In 1996, the Commonwealth funded 22 Education Centres around Australia to support the development and dissemination of teaching and learning materials and to provide professional development and training to teachers, principals, parents and school support staff. The Education Centres made a particularly important contribution to school education through the delivery of professional development in literacy and information technology. Each Education Centre develops specific education and training services to meet local needs: in 1996, the Fremantle Education Centre, for example, piloted a program to address truancy in local schools and the Orana Education Centre at

Dubbo in western New South Wales delivered VET programs to secondary school students.

National Professional Development Programme

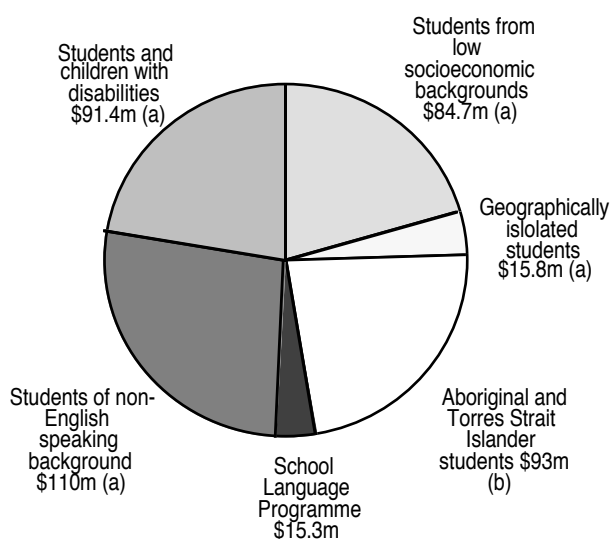
Work funded under the NPDP in 1996 concentrated on priorities including the curriculum statements and profiles, vocational education in schools, literacy and numeracy, science and mathematics, technology and the arts. Project outcomes were reviewed through a national conference during 1996.

Forty projects were funded under the General Element of the program in 1996 and 44 projects under the Strategic Initiatives Element. Most projects had completed their work by the end of 1996 and the NPDP was scheduled to end in June 1997 with provision of final projects payments.

Targeted assistance

During 1996, the Commonwealth provided \$410.3 million for school programs aimed at improving the educational outcomes of disadvantaged young people and expanding and improving the learning of languages other than English. Figure 22 shows how this assistance, provided under the NEPS, the AESIP and the School Language Programme, was distributed.

Figure 22. Commonwealth expenditure on targeted assistance, Australia, 1996



a) Calculated from relevant components of NEPS.

b) AESIP only—excludes AEDA programs funded under annual appropriations.

Source: Commonwealth DEETYA

Table 104. National Equity Programme for Schools, numbers of schools and students assisted, 1996

<i>State/sector</i>	<i>Country Areas General (a)</i>		<i>Disadvantaged Schools (a)</i>		<i>ESL General Support</i>		<i>ESL New Arrivals</i>		<i>Students at Risk (c)</i>
	<i>Students</i>	<i>Schools</i>	<i>Students</i>	<i>Schools</i>	<i>Students (b)</i>	<i>Schools</i>	<i>Students (b)</i>	<i>Schools</i>	<i>Schools</i>
New South Wales									
Government	27,301	213	146,720	473	75,954	704	5,831	470	149
Catholic	3,876	38	26,500	117	50,334	329	426	69	63
Independent	75	2	2,609	21	2,779	56	26	8	28
Total	31,252	253	175,829	611	129,067	1,089	6,283	547	240
Victoria									
Government	35,089	314	105,517	369	42,177	454	3,414	47	51
Catholic	5,288	46	37,750	149	37,501	173	329	157	31
Independent	124	3	2,270	11	2,345	48	47	13	32
Total	40,501	363	145,537	529	82,023	675	3,790	217	114
Queensland									
Government	36,277	226	52,734	243	5,070	449	923	203	113
Catholic	3,786	29	13,947	n/a	5,461	153	83	38	26
Independent	167	2	1,710	6	993	34	33	11	14
Total	40,230	257	68,391	249	11,524	636	1,039	252	153
South Australia									
Government	13,646	102	35,708	169	9,902	339	931	11	13
Catholic	244	3	4,497	20	2,772	27	22	11	9
Independent	217	2	577	5	1,138	33	14	11	2
Total	14,107	107	40,782	194	13,812	399	967	33	24
Western Australia									
Government	26,612	172	52,267	187	4,688	146	811	95	37
Catholic	1,769	16	5,727	34	6,077	60	131	29	14
Independent	463	8	516	8	779	16	97	4	8
Total	28,844	196	58,510	229	11,544	222	1,039	128	59
Tasmania									
Government	(d)	(d)	27,415	124	200	26	72	27	24
Catholic	253	2	1,157	6	210	24	8	5	5
Independent	—	—	272	4	30	9	5	—	10
Total	253	2	28,844	134	440	59	85	32	39
Northern Territory									
Government	11,415	98	16,984	111	2,379	40	149	2	3
Catholic	300	1	3,973	10	532	10	—	—	3
Independent	—	—	363	3	489	4	10	1	5
Total	11,715	99	21,320	124	3,400	54	159	3	11
Australian Capital Territory									
Government	—	—	767	2	2,885	94	137	4	—
Catholic	—	—	66	1	1,800	26	—	2	—
Independent	—	—	—	—	38	3	—	—	—
Total	—	—	833	3	4,723	123	137	6	—
Australia									
Government	150,340	1,125	438,112	1,678	143,255	2,252	12,268	859	390
Catholic	15,516	135	93,617	337	104,687	802	999	311	151
Independent	1,046	17	8,317	58	8,591	203	232	48	99
Total	166,902	1,277	540,046	2,073	256,533	3,257	13,499	1,218	640

(a) Number of schools eligible for assistance and number of students enrolled in schools assisted.

(b) Number of students assisted.

(c) Number of schools assisted; student numbers are not available. Number of schools reported should be treated with caution in any comparison between States since they reflect policy differences in State allocations

(d) Tasmanian Country Areas and Disadvantaged Schools funding for 1996 was amalgamated into one program. It is not possible to distinguish between the two, and all figures are included in the Disadvantaged Schools figure.

Source: State departments of education and Commonwealth DEETYA

Equity program

The NEPS aimed at removing the educational disadvantage experienced by many school children, particularly as a result of poverty and socioeconomic circumstances, disability, geographic location, or non-English speaking and/or Indigenous background. Funding was provided under agreements with States and non-government systems which cover objectives, targets, evaluations, mechanisms for community involvement and the provision of nationally consistent data on equity outcomes.

NEPS Components and funding for 1996 can be found in Table 101. Table 104 shows the numbers of schools and students assisted (or eligible for assistance) under five NEPS components. NEPS Components have been re-organised in the broadbanding reforms referred to earlier in this chapter, to take effect from 1997.

The ELC of NEPS supported a number of projects during 1996 aimed at fostering literacy improvement for K-3 students from low socioeconomic backgrounds, including Reading Recovery and First Steps. An ELC conference late in the year showcased government and non-government school initiatives in developing early literacy skills and explored recent research and developing issues in literacy. Reports on the ELC and the conference were produced and distributed to all education sectors. The ELC concluded in 1996.

Indigenous education

The Commonwealth contributes to the achievement of the 21 goals of the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Policy through a range of programs including General Recurrent Grants and specific support programs including student assistance schemes like ABSTUDY. However, the Commonwealth's main supplementary contribution to Indigenous education during 1996 was through the two programs detailed below: AESIP and AEDA.

The Aboriginal Education Strategic Initiatives Programme

AESIP was the Commonwealth's principal funding program in 1996 aimed specifically at Indigenous education. It allocated funds to education providers for agreed strategic initiatives contained in Operational Plans aimed at enhancing Indigenous education outcomes in accordance with the goals of the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Policy. AESIP funding supplemented mainstream Commonwealth, State and Territory education funding and

Table 105. AESIP expenditure, payments to States, 1996 (\$'000) (a)

<i>State</i>	
New South Wales	16,537
Victoria	4,767
Queensland	17,685
South Australia	10,669
Western Australia	18,599
Tasmania	2,275
Northern Territory	21,478
Australian Capital Territory	941
Total (b)	92,950

(a) Calendar year 1996 up to 27 February 1997.

(b) Includes indexation.

Source: Commonwealth DEETYA

was provided on a triennial basis through the Aboriginal Education (Supplementary Assistance) Act 1989.

Funds allocated to AESIP under the Act in 1996 totalled \$93 million and were expended as outlined in Table 105. AESIP will be replaced by IESIP, as from 1997.

Aboriginal Education Direct Assistance

AEDA comprises three separate elements. The Aboriginal Tutorial Assistance Scheme (ATAS) offers supplementary tuition and other kinds of study assistance to Indigenous students, individually or in small groups, who need help with their studies. Assistance can be provided to students at all levels from primary school to TAFE, university and other formal education and training. The VEGAS funds sponsoring organisations to provide information on education and career options to Indigenous school students and their parents and foster positive attitudes towards participation in education. ASSPA brings Indigenous people together by funding parent committees to conduct school-based activities which enhance educational opportunities for students.

Funding for these programs totalled \$48.6 million in 1996.

Languages and Asian studies

NALSAS

The NALSAS Strategy is a cooperative initiative of the Commonwealth, State and Territory governments. The Strategy assists government and non-government schools

to improve participation and proficiency levels in language learning, particularly in four targeted Asian languages Japanese, Chinese (Mandarin), Indonesian and Korean and to introduce and maintain Asian studies content in the subjects studied by all students. Most funds are provided direct to school systems to assist them to implement the Strategy, with approximately \$0.5 million set aside for collaborative projects.

School Language Programme

The School Language Programme has two Elements, both of which aim to support the expansion of and improvement in the learning of languages other than English.

Under the Community Languages Element, the Commonwealth provides funds to the government sector in each State for community language classes during regular school hours in government schools and for all after-hours classes held in each State. The Catholic Education Commissions administer the non-government sector and are funded for the provision of community language classes held during regular school hours within non-government (mainly Catholic) schools.

Ten languages have been identified as being priority needs for Australia. To encourage the study of these languages at secondary level, the Commonwealth provides funds on the basis of numbers of students completing an accredited course and presenting for assessment at year 12 or equivalent level. These funds are provided under the PLSE (see Table 106).

During 1996, the school language programs were broadbanded and funding will move to a calendar year basis from 1997. Funds were adjusted in the second half of 1996 to take account of this move. Systems will now be able to move funds between the Community and Priority Language Support Elements according to their needs.

Other programs

The Commonwealth also continued to fund the Asia Education Foundation to work with schools, education authorities, teacher education institutions, professional associations, philanthropic foundations and the corporate sector throughout Australia to promote and support studies of Asia across all curriculum areas.

Language Australia, formerly the National Languages and Literacy Institute of Australia (NLLIA), was funded to act as an expert body which stimulates applied research in language learning and teaching across all three education sectors in keeping with the requirements of the Commonwealth, States and Territories.

Income support for students

The Commonwealth aims to promote equality of educational opportunity and improve access to, participation and retention in, and completion of, education through the provision of financial assistance to students who are financially disadvantaged, geographically isolated or of Indigenous descent.

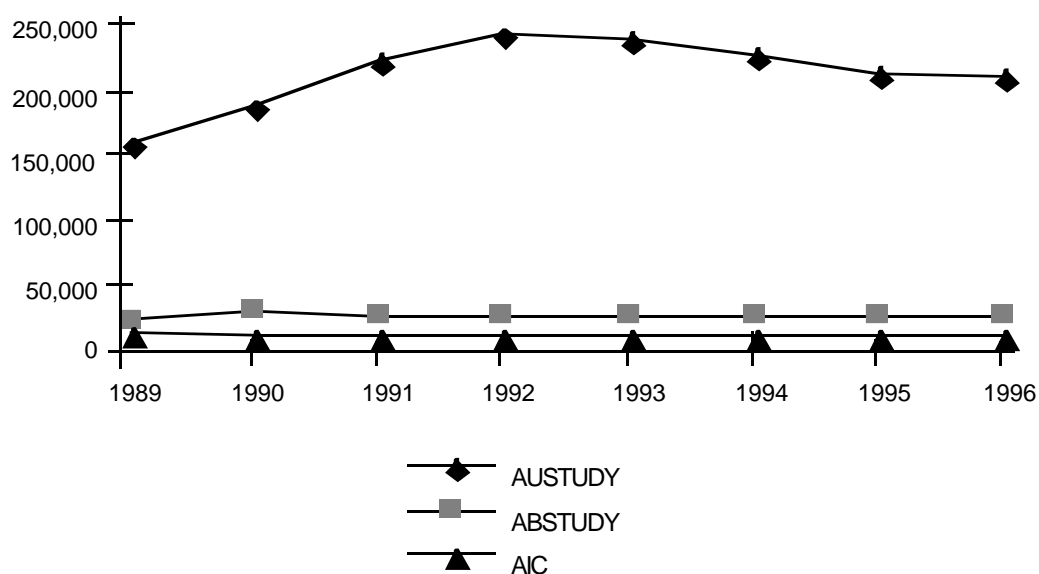
Table 106. Numbers of students attracting Priority Languages funding, by State and language, 1996 (a)

<i>Language</i>	<i>NSW</i>	<i>Vic.</i>	<i>Qld</i>	<i>SA</i>	<i>WA</i>	<i>Tas.</i>	<i>NT</i>	<i>ACT</i>	<i>Australia</i>
Aboriginal languages	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Arabic	446	143	—	1	9	1	—	—	600
French	1,699	1,068	636	288	443	179	4	207	4,524
German	753	624	706	323	110	125	2	99	2,742
Italian	685	772	101	232	336	65	3	47	2,241
Modern Greek	502	952	16	93	—	9	12	8	1,592
Russian	42	92	5	—	—	10	—	—	149
Spanish	382	235	—	111	8	23	—	52	811
Thai	9	—	—	1	4	2	—	1	17
Vietnamese	434	665	27	165	—	1	—	—	1,292
Total	4,952	4,551	1,491	1,214	910	415	21	414	13,968

(a) Numbers of students who attracted funding for 1996 calculated according to year 12 completions in 1994.

Source: Commonwealth DEETYA

Figure 23. School students who received Commonwealth income support, by type of assistance, 1989–1996



Source: Commonwealth DEETYA

AUSTUDY assists needy students to complete their secondary education and continue on to further study. Generally, assistance is available to full-time students aged 16 years or over, although disadvantaged students, particularly those without parental support because of, for example, homelessness, can receive assistance from the minimum school leaving age, commonly age 15.

The AIC Scheme provides assistance to families of primary and secondary students and tertiary students under 16 who are unable to attend an appropriate school on a daily basis because of geographic isolation.

ABSTUDY encourages Indigenous Australian students to take full advantage of the educational opportunities at

secondary school which are available to other Australian students. It seeks to increase Indigenous education participation to the same levels as for the rest of the community, by providing financial assistance to eligible students undertaking an approved course of study.

Arising from the 1995–96 Budget, the Actual Means Test was introduced from 1 January 1996 to supplement existing AUSTUDY assets and income tests for secondary and tertiary students. The objective of the new test was to target AUSTUDY benefits more tightly, and promote greater equity between all applicants for AUSTUDY.