

## Chapter 3

# Meeting the national goals for schooling: Literacy

The issue of student achievement in literacy has been a major concern of Ministers for some time. *The National Report on Schooling in Australia: 1997* outlined the new national goal agreed to, and described the national plan that was put in place to achieve the agreed sub-goal:

That every child commencing school from 1998 will achieve a minimum acceptable literacy and numeracy standard within four years.

This section outlines the progress made in 1998 in implementing the national plan. In particular, it describes the developments in the preparation and application of national benchmarks to monitor the literacy achievement of students over time and across the various jurisdictions.

### National benchmarks

The national plan that was agreed to by Ministers in 1997 included:

- development of national benchmarks in literacy and numeracy
- assessing students against the years 3 and 5 benchmarks in numeracy, reading, writing and spelling. The process would use rigorous state-based assessment procedures and, for year 3 literacy, would begin in 1998. Assessment in numeracy and year 5 literacy and numeracy would follow as soon as possible.
- national reporting on student achievement in numeracy, reading, writing and spelling, against the years 3 and 5 benchmarks. Reporting would begin in 1999 on 1998 results, using data comparable by State and Territory.

A Taskforce was established to oversee the development of the benchmarks and Curriculum Corporation was contracted to undertake the task in consultation with all systems. The Taskforce made good progress and reported back to Ministers

on a number of occasions, including the April 1998 meeting of MCEETYA, when Ministers endorsed the following statement on the purpose and use of the benchmarks:

Literacy and numeracy benchmarks articulate nationally agreed minimum acceptable standards for literacy and numeracy at years 3 and 5, and enable State/Territory reporting of aggregated student achievement data against common standards to the Australian community through the National Report on Schooling. (ANR)

States and Territories will report aggregated student achievement data in relation to the achievement or non-achievement of the benchmark standards.

State/Territory aggregated student achievement data in designated literacy and numeracy strands will be made available on the whole cohort of students, by gender, by language background other than English, and by Aboriginal background or Torres Strait Islander background, unless small student numbers mean that State/Territory confidentiality protocols would be breached.

Ministers also approved the benchmarks and professional elaborations for teachers in reading, writing and spelling for years 3 and 5. They also endorsed a methodology, approved in principle by the Benchmarking Taskforce, to facilitate nationally comparable reporting and proposed that the first publication would be year 3 reading data for 1998.

During 1998, all government school systems and a number of non-government schools and systems assessed year 3 students using their own monitoring programs and participated in an equating process with a view to publishing nationally comparable data in this report. Western Australia coordinated the implementation of the equating process for nationally comparable reporting. Officers with responsibility for assessment programs in all jurisdictions met and drew on the advice of three academics with expertise in psychometric

measurement and test development: Professor David Andrich, Associate Professor Jim Tognolini and Dr Geoff Masters.

These independent measurement experts advised the Taskforce's Equating Steering Committee that the process to equate the reading test scores was successful, but they acknowledged a number of difficulties with the results of the equating study. For these reasons the publication of comparative data between systems has not yet been possible and the Taskforce will improve the equating process in order to address this shortcoming for future reports.

The Taskforce also agreed that the equating processes for writing and spelling had not achieved comparable data, and that changes would need to be made to both the assessment instruments and the methodology before results could be confidently reported.

## **Implementing the national literacy plan**

Throughout 1998 there was considerable activity in all schools and systems as they moved to implement the various elements of the national plan for literacy. This frequently occurred in the context of a State or system plan which incorporated the individual aspects of the national plan. The initiatives taken in each State and Territory are described in the individual State chapters of this report. The section that follows provides some general comment on the various elements of the national plan.

### **Early assessment and diagnosis**

All systems have made arrangements for the early identification of students who are considered to be at risk in the area of literacy development. The mechanisms that were in place in 1998 ranged from assessment by classroom teachers of individual students to system level testing of all students in particular early years. The most common year for such testing was year 1, but in some systems it was earlier than this. In many cases the early assessment formed part of a particular plan or scheme and the procedure was followed by appropriate intervention strategies.

### **Early intervention**

It is possible to identify a number of elements that are common to the early intervention programs in place around the nation. Among these are:

- the allocation of additional resources to support programs in the early years of schooling

- the appointment of senior staff in schools with particular responsibility for the oversight of intervention programs
- the use of teaching teams involving classroom, specialist and support teachers
- the frequent use of small-group and/or individual tuition for students whose progress is slow
- close liaison with parents and the use of joint home and school approaches
- regular monitoring of progress
- professional development for teachers and support staff
- the development of procedures for reporting to parents, communities and governments
- the teaching of literacy in an explicit and systematic way
- the allocation of appropriate uninterrupted time for the teaching of literacy
- the adoption of a K-6/7 approach to literacy teaching
- the use of assessment data to develop and effectively target intervention programs.

## **The results of State assessment programs**

The fourth element of the national plan concerns assessment. School systems in all States and Territories conducted literacy assessment programs in 1998. The monitoring programs always covered the government school systems, and in some States also included all, or some, non-government schools. The results that follow are for government schools only, unless otherwise stated. As indicated above, the national plan for literacy envisages that all schools will be part of the reporting process and plans are in hand to include non-government schools as soon as possible.

### **New South Wales**

In NSW, literacy performance of students in years 3 and 5 was assessed by the Basic Skills testing program in both government and Catholic schools, and the English Language and Literacy Assessment (ELLA) program monitored government school year 7 students' literacy achievement. The results of the Basic Skills Test for years 3 and 5 and the ELLA for year 7 indicate that student literacy levels are rising, with marked improvement among the lowest achieving students.

**Table 3.1 Students in skill bands, government and Catholic schools, NSW, 1998 (per cent)**

	<i>Year 3 literacy</i>	<i>Year 5 literacy</i>
Band 6	n.a.	21
Band 5	14	27
Band 4	22	28
Band 3	27	16
Band 2	24	6
Band 1	14	1

Note: Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding.

Source: Dept of Education and Training, NSW

Approximately 60,000 government school students and 15,000 Catholic students in year 3 sat the test in 1998. This equates to approximately 93 per cent of government and 88 per cent of Catholic school students. The equivalent figures for year 5 were 93 per cent and 82 per cent respectively.

The Basic Skills Test results are reported in five skill bands for year 3 and six skill bands for year 5. Skill Band 1 is the lowest level of achievement. A year 3 student is considered to have demonstrated an acceptable standard if in Band 2 or above for literacy and numeracy. For year 5, students are considered to have demonstrated an acceptable standard if they are in Band 3 or above. The results of the 1998 Basic Skills Test showed that 86 per cent of students in year 3 (Band 2 and above) and 92 per cent of students in year 5 (Band 3 and above) demonstrated competent or higher level skills in the literacy tests in 1998.

In government schools, 90 per cent of the schools participating in the 1997 ELLA program chose to re-test year 8 students in order to evaluate the students' progress. The results of this testing demonstrated significant improvement between years 7 and 8. In particular, students who were targeted for additional

assistance following low scores in year 7 had a higher rate of improvement than other students when re-tested in year 8.

Table 3.3 shows the average growth scores for literacy by year 3 students in 1996 and by year 5 students in 1998 for all equity groups.

A comparison of the average growth for different groups of students indicates that the growth in scores between years 3 and 5 was higher than the State average for boys, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and students from a language background other than English. The growth in scores between years 3 and 5 is similar across rural and metropolitan and areas and across suburbs in Sydney.

**Table 3.3 Average growth in test scores for matched students, year 3 (1996) and year 5 (1998), government schools, NSW (per cent)**

	<i>Literacy</i>
State	6.6
Boys	6.8
Girls	6.5
ATSI	6.8
NESBT	7.1
NESB1	8.8
ESB	6.5

ATSI – Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

NESBT – Students who answered 'Yes' to 'Does anyone use a language other than English at home?'

NESB1 – Students who have lived in Australia for four years or less and never or only sometimes speak English at home.

ESB – Students who answered 'No' to 'Does anyone use a language other than English at home?'

Source: Dept of Education and Training, NSW

**Table 3.2 Levels of proficiency, years 7 and 8, government schools, NSW (per cent)**

	<i>High skills</i>		<i>Proficient</i>		<i>Elementary</i>		<i>Low</i>	
	<i>1997</i>	<i>1998</i>	<i>1997</i>	<i>1998</i>	<i>1997</i>	<i>1998</i>	<i>1997</i>	<i>1998</i>
Writing	30	36	53	50	12	10	4	4
Reading	33	42	46	44	15	11	6	4
Language	35	38	44	44	13	11	8	6

Note: Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding.

Source: Dept of Education and Training, NSW

**Table 3.4 Reading and writing, years 3 and 5, all schools, Victoria, 1998 (per cent)**

	<i>CSF levels</i>				
	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>
<i>Year 3 English – reading</i>					
All	10.9	20.8	50.8	17.5	
Boys	13.7	23.4	47.9	15.0	
Girls	8.1	18.0	53.8	20.1	
LBOTE	14.5	25.8	48.1	11.6	
ATSI	30.4	27.4	35.3	7.0	
Rural	12.6	21.9	48.9	16.6	
Disadvantaged	16.8	24.9	46.2	12.1	
Isolated	13.0	22.2	49.4	15.4	
<i>Year 3 English – writing</i>					
All	7.1	28.9	44.2	19.8	
Boys	9.1	34.1	41.9	14.8	
Girls	4.9	23.3	46.7	25.1	
LBOTE	9.3	32.2	41.4	17.2	
ATSI	20.4	45.6	29.1	4.8	
Rural	7.0	28.5	45.4	19.1	
Disadvantaged	11.1	33.4	40.3	15.2	
Isolated	8.1	31.1	43.9	16.9	
<i>Year 5 English – reading</i>					
All		10.2	48.5	26.1	15.2
Boys		13.2	50.4	23.1	13.3
Girls		7.0	46.6	29.1	17.3
LBOTE		15.0	55.3	20.7	8.9
ATSI		29.9	56.7	11.0	2.4
Rural		11.2	49.2	25.6	14.0
Disadvantaged		16.4	54.2	20.3	9.2
Isolated		12.4	50.7	24.4	12.6
<i>Year 5 English – writing</i>					
All		7.9	51.8	20.5	19.8
Boys		10.8	57.8	17.9	13.5
Girls		4.8	45.7	23.3	26.2
LBOTE		10.5	55.6	18.1	15.8
ATSI		23.9	65.0	8.7	2.3
Rural		8.3	51.5	20.8	19.4
Disadvantaged		13	56.8	16.7	13.5
Isolated		9.9	54.5	19.3	16.4

LBOTE – Students from a language background other English.

ATSI – Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

Rural – Students attending rural schools.

Disadvantaged – Students attending schools receiving special learning needs funding or disadvantaged schools.

Source: Board of Studies, Victoria

**Table 3.5 Year 2 Diagnostic Net: Proportion in phases, government schools, Queensland, 1997–98 (per cent)**

		<i>Phase A</i>	<i>Phase B</i>	<i>Phase C</i>	<i>Phase D</i>	<i>Phase E</i>
<i>All</i>						
Reading	1997	6.0	33.5	60.2	0.3	0.0
	1998	6.0	38.6	55.2	0.2	0.0
Writing	1997	10.6	64.0	25.4	0.1	0.0
	1998	11.6	68.4	20.0	0.0	0.0
<i>Male</i>						
Reading	1997	7.3	37.4	55.0	0.3	0.0
	1998	7.4	42.4	50.0	0.2	0.0
Writing	1997	12.9	64.7	22.4	0.1	0.0
	1998	14.5	68.1	17.3	0.0	0.0
<i>Female</i>						
Reading	1997	4.6	29.3	65.8	0.2	0.0
	1998	4.5	34.6	60.7	0.2	0.0
Writing	1997	8.0	63.2	28.6	0.0	0.0
	1998	8.4	68.7	22.8	0.0	0.0

Note: Phase E is the highest achievement level; Phase A is the lowest.

Source: Education Queensland

## Victoria

In 1998, students in Victoria were assessed using the Learning Assessment Project (LAP), which was introduced in 1995 for years 3 and 5 students in all schools. Each year the LAP assesses achievements in English and mathematics and one other key learning area.

The LAP involves a series of assessments taken over a period of two weeks. Two tasks are assessed by the teacher and four tasks are assessed by the Board of Studies. The assessments are designed to help schools and parents monitor student learning outcomes in specific strands and modes of the Curriculum and Standards Framework (CSF). Year 3 tasks assess learning outcomes in levels 1–4 of the CSF, while year 5 tasks assess learning outcomes in levels 2–5. Each student's achievement is reported to schools against CSF levels. For parents, student achievement is reported against school year-levels and CSF-levels. In 1998, students achieved the results as set out in Table 3.4.

## Queensland

Queensland government schools have been monitoring year 2 literacy performance since 1995 using the process devised by the Queensland Schools Curriculum Council and known as the year 2 Diagnostic Net. In 1998, for the first time,

**Table 3.6 Year 2 scale scores, government schools, Queensland, 1997–98**

		<i>No.</i>	<i>Mean scale score</i>
<i>All</i>			
Reading	1997	38,890	2.55
	1998	39,223	2.50
Writing	1997	38,862	2.15
	1998	39,213	2.08
<i>Male</i>			
Reading	1997	20,161	2.48
	1998	20,251	2.43
Writing	1997	20,133	2.10
	1998	20,245	2.03
<i>Female</i>			
Reading	1997	18,729	2.62
	1998	18,972	2.57
Writing	1997	18,729	2.21
	1998	18,968	2.14

Note: Mean scale score based on a 5-point scale (5 = Phase E, 4 = Phase D, 3 = Phase C, 2 = Phase B and 1 = Phase A).

Source: Education Queensland

literacy performance in year 5 was also measured, using the Aspects of Literacy assessment program. This program is a Curriculum Council initiative and the tests were undertaken by both government and non-government schools.

**Table 3.7 Aspects of literacy, year 5, all schools, Queensland, 1998**

	<i>Reading / Viewing</i>	<i>Writing</i>	<i>Spelling</i>
	<i>Mean</i>		
All students	592.8	599.7	598.2
Male students	582.6	581.7	585.7
Female students	602.8	617.7	610.9
ATSI students	532.1	547.2	555.3
LBOTE students	578.4	593.2	598.0
ESL students	575.0	590.6	595.3
Urban students	593.9	601.0	599.4
Rural students	573.8	576.8	577.2

Notes:

- 1998 was the first year of the year 5 testing program, which is census-based.
- Language background other than English (LBOTE) students do not include ATSI students.
- English as a second language (ESL) students do not include ATSI students.

Source: Education Queensland

The 1998 results indicated that:

- there was a general stability in year 2 performance from 1997 to 1998, which was also true for all student cohorts
- females tended to perform better than males in literacy in both years
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait students continued to perform at a much lower level than other students
- students whose main language was not English continued to perform at a lower level than other students, particularly in writing
- there was no difference in the performance of urban and rural students
- students in disadvantaged schools did not perform as well as those in other schools, and their performance tended to be more variable.

Among the significant findings from this assessment program were the following:

- Female students out-performed male students on all literacy tests.
- Students with a language background other than English scored lower than other students in reading and viewing and writing, but had similar performance in spelling.
- English as a second language students scored lower than other students on all tests, and their performance tended to be more variable.

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students scored well below other students in all tests.
- The performance of rural students was lower and more variable than that for urban students.

## South Australia

In 1998, students in years 3 and 5 in South Australian government schools sat the Basic Skills Tests in aspects of literacy and numeracy. Students' results were calculated and placed within one of five skill bands for year 3 and one of six skill bands for year 5. The results are shown in Tables 3.8 and 3.9. Band 1 represents the lowest level of achievement.

A total of 12,794 students in year 3 sat the Basic Skills Tests in aspects of literacy and numeracy. Of that total, 6,512 were boys and 6,282 were girls. In aspects of literacy, the mean score for girls, at 48.7, was higher than the mean score for boys at 46.6. The mean score for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students was 41.5.

A total of 12,471 students in year 5 sat the Basic Skills Tests in aspects of literacy and numeracy in 1998. Of that total, 6,405 were boys and 6,066 were girls. In aspects of literacy, the mean score for girls, at 55.7, was higher than the mean for boys at 53.8. The mean for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students was 47.3.

**Table 3.8 Students in literacy skill bands, year 3, government schools, SA, 1998 (per cent)**

<i>Band</i>	
Band 5	10
Band 4	17
Band 3	25
Band 2	27
Band 1	21

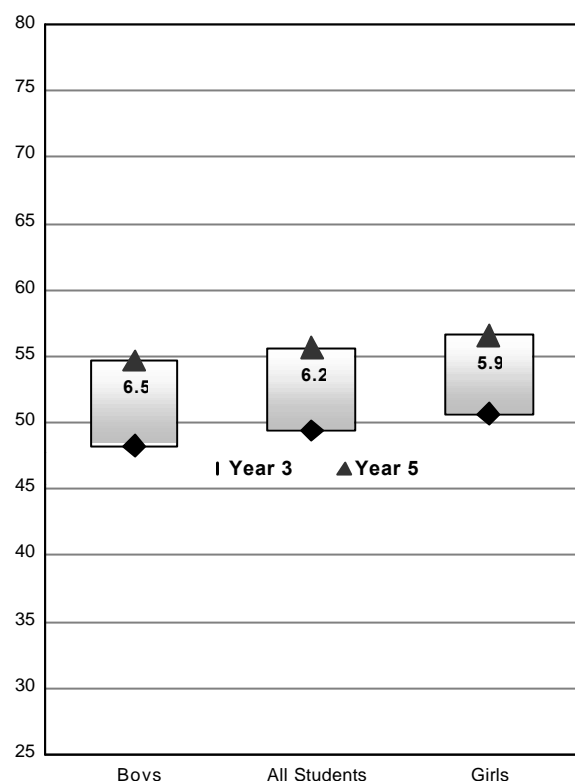
Source: Dept of Education, Training and Employment, SA

**Table 3.9 Students in literacy skill bands, year 5, government schools, SA, 1998 (per cent)**

<i>Band</i>	
Band 6	14
Band 5	25
Band 4	29
Band 3	20
Band 2	9
Band 1	3

Source: Dept of Education, Training and Employment, SA

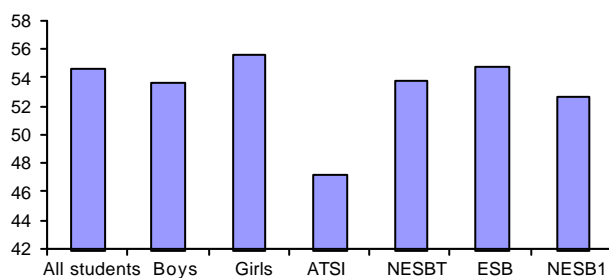
**Figure 3.1 Average growth in test scores, BST: Aspects of Literacy, for cohort year 3 (1996) and year 5 (1998), government schools, SA**



Source: Dept of Education, Training and Employment, SA

The 1998 testing of year 5 students has made it possible to measure the growth from 1996, when the same cohort was tested in year 3. In 1998, 7,776 year 5 students sat for the Aspects of Literacy component of the Basic Skills Tests in the same school in which they had sat the test when they were in year 3. These students showed an average increase of 6.2 points in literacy. The average growth for boys was higher than the average growth for girls.

**Figure 3.2 BST literacy mean scores, year 5, government schools, SA, 1998**



Note: Sub-groups as for Table 3.3

Source: Dept of Education, Training and Employment, SA

**Table 3.10 Writing results, year 3, selected government schools, SA, 1998 (per cent)**

<i>Skill band</i>	
Band 5	8.2
Band 4	24.4
Band 3	33.9
Band 2	24.7
Band 1	8.7

Source: Dept of Education, Training and Employment, SA

**Table 3.11 Writing results, year 5, selected government schools, SA, 1998 (per cent)**

<i>Skill band</i>	
Band 6	7.1
Band 5	22.6
Band 4	40.0
Band 3	22.8
Band 2	6.2
Band 1	1.4

Source: Dept of Education, Training and Employment, SA

Further analysis of the results of the Basic Skills Test is provided in Figure 3.2, which shows the mean literacy scores achieved by students from a number of sub-groups.

In 1998, South Australian government schools were invited to take part in a writing assessment trial involving years 3 and 5 students. A total of 167 schools across the State took part, with 3,833 year 3 students and 3,869 year 5 students participating. The writing results provided supplementary information to teachers in those schools about the achievement in writing of individual students and groups of students. The information was complementary to that provided by the Basic Skills Tests, which did not assess students' writing ability. The aim was to develop an assessment of student writing which uses teacher expertise and is valued by, and useful to, teachers and schools.

The sample was not a random sample and the summary of results in Tables 3.10 and 3.11 is representative only of the 167 schools which agreed to participate.

For senior students in South Australia, the Writing-Based Literacy Assessment is a compulsory component of the South Australia Certificate of Education for years 11–12. Students are required to submit four pieces of writing, each of 250 words, demonstrating their ability to use written English in various forms and for a range of purposes. Students must receive a satisfactory rating in each; if they do not they are provided with feedback and the opportunity to resubmit. The Senior Secondary Board of South Australia records the Writing-Based Literacy Assessment on the Certificate.

**Table 3.12 Literacy benchmark performance, year 3, all sectors, WA, 1998**

	No.	Girls	Boys	Language background other than English	Indigenous
<i>Reading</i>					
Students	23,672	11,468	11,976	1,791	1,241
Benchmark*(%)	78.1	81.1	75.2	67.4	32.6
<i>Writing</i>					
Students	23,538	11,414	11,897	1,763	1,186
Benchmark*(%)	78.1	83.3	73.1	71.5	39.0
<i>Spelling</i>					
Students	23,514	11,406	11,884	1,758	1,175
Benchmark*(%)	81.5	86.2	77.1	77.9	47.4

\*The provisional WA benchmarks were calculated by the Education Department, using national guidelines.

Source: Education Dept of WA

## Western Australia

Some 23,000 students from 642 government, 125 Catholic and 48 independent schools participated in the year 3 literacy assessment in August 1998. In government schools, 3.9 per cent of students were granted exemptions and 4.2 per cent were absent during the testing.

## Tasmania

A statewide assessment and monitoring program in literacy was conducted in July 1998 for all year 3 and 7 students in government and Catholic schools. The results of these tests form baseline data for monitoring the progress of these same students in the year 2000. The results for government school students in Tables 3.13 and 3.14 are expressed in terms of the Key Intended Literacy Outcomes (KILOs), which are statements of competency in aspects of literacy arranged in a two-year developmental continuum from Kinder–Prep to years 7–8.

Results on this test indicated that:

- approximately 95 per cent of year 3 students were able to comprehend the meaning of age-appropriate texts
- 45 per cent of the year 3 students had achieved reading ages markedly above their chronological ages
- over 60 per cent of year 3 students could write accurate and extended texts on given topics.

Results on this test indicated that:

- approximately 70 per cent of year 7 students could read, understand and respond to a range of age-appropriate texts

**Table 3.13 Literacy results, year 3, government schools, Tasmania, 1998 (per cent)**

Performance level	Girls	Boys	All
Insufficient information	2	2	2
Working towards years 1–2 KILOs	4	6	5
Achieved years 1–2 KILOs	23	35	29
Achieved years 3–4 KILOs	48	43	45
Achieved years 5–6 KILOs	23	14	18

Source: Dept of Education, Tasmania

**Table 3.14 Literacy results, year 7, government schools, Tasmania, 1998 (per cent)**

Performance level	Girls	Boys	All
Insufficient information	2	3	3
Achieved Kinder–Prep KILOs	1	2	1
Achieved years 1–2 KILOs	3	6	5
Achieved years 3–4 KILOs	20	32	26
Achieved years 5–6 KILOs	49	45	47
Achieved years 7–8 KILOs	26	12	19
Working beyond years 7–8 KILOs	1	0	0

Source: Dept of Education, Tasmania

- over 60 per cent of year 7 students could write fluently with appropriate accuracy about a variety of subjects
- just over 40 per cent of year 7 students could write extended texts accurately, organising ideas and events in a logical and coherent manner
- for both years 3 and 7, on average, the performance of girls exceeded that of boys. These results are consistent with recent studies of literacy performance in government schools in Tasmania.



**Table 3.15 Achievement on reading benchmarks, government schools, NT, 1998 (per cent)**

	<i>Year 3</i>	<i>Year 5</i>
All students (urban & non-urban)	68	62
Female	70	66
Male	66	59
Indigenous	31	20
Non-Indigenous	82	78
ESL Indigenous	9	5
ESL non-Indigenous	60	58
Non-ESL	82	74

Source: Dept of Education, NT

## Northern Territory

In 1998, years 3 and 5 students in urban schools and those aged 8 and 10 in non-urban Indigenous schools were assessed against the reading benchmarks using the Multilevel Assessment Program. Table 3.15 shows the percentages of all students achieving the benchmarks. The overall average ages of students participating were 8.8 years in year 3 and 10.7 years in year 5.

In the case of non-urban Indigenous schools and using the benchmarks as targets, only 6 per cent of 8-year-olds achieved the reading benchmark standard for year 3 and only 4 per cent of 10-year-olds achieved the reading benchmark standard for year 5, as shown in Table 3.16. These results are extremely low and might cause great concern.

However, students exempted from the tests were counted among those not achieving the benchmarks and these numbers accounted for the majority of students in both age groups. The average ages of students participating were 8.5 years in year 3 and 10.5 years in year 5.

The numbers participating were low and the numbers exempted and absent were relatively high, as Table 3.17 shows.

In 1998, the Northern Territory changed the test populations to years 3 and 5 to satisfy the national agreement for assessment of students against the literacy benchmarks. The extent to which the targets were met can be gauged from the percentages of students achieving the years 3 and 5 benchmarks. Using the benchmarks as targets, 78 per cent of year 3 students in urban schools achieved the reading benchmark standard; and 71 per cent of year 5 students achieved the benchmark standard, as shown in Table 3.18.

Students exempted from the tests were counted among those not achieving the benchmarks but these numbers were relatively small compared with the numbers exempted in

**Table 3.16 Performance on reading benchmarks, non-urban Indigenous schools, NT, 1998 (per cent)**

<i>Target group</i>	<i>Year 3 (8-year-olds)</i>	<i>Year 5 (10-year-olds)</i>
Achieved benchmarks	6	4

Source: Dept of Education, NT

**Table 3.17 Participation on the reading benchmarks, non-urban Indigenous schools, NT, 1998**

	<i>Participated</i>	<i>Exempted</i>	<i>Absent</i>	<i>Total</i>
Yr 3 (8 yrs)	57	277	74	408
Yr 5 (10 yrs)	132	212	112	456

Source: Dept of Education, NT

**Table 3.18 Performance on reading benchmarks, all urban schools, NT, 1998 (per cent)**

<i>Target group</i>	<i>Year 3</i>	<i>Year 5</i>
Achieved benchmarks	78	71

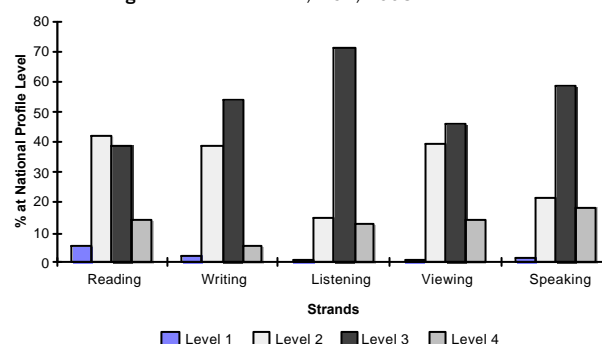
Source: Dept of Education, NT

non-urban Indigenous schools. The average ages of students participating were 8.8 years in year 3 and 10.8 years in year 5.

## Australian Capital Territory

The overall good performance levels of ACT government school students in literacy in the initial 1997 assessment were maintained in both years 3 and 5 in 1998. Over 80 per cent of year 3 students performed between National English Profile Levels 2 and 3 in each strand of literacy. Over 76 per cent of year 5 students performed between Levels 3 and 4 in each strand of literacy.

**Figure 3.3 Performance against National English Profiles, year 3, government schools, ACT, 1998**



Note: Profile Levels do not equate to year levels. Typically, a student may take 18 months or more to move from one profile level to the next.

Source: Dept of Education and Community Services, ACT

**Table 3.19 Performance against National English Profiles, year 3, government schools, ACT, 1998 (per cent)**

<i>National Profile Level</i>	<i>Reading</i>	<i>Writing</i>	<i>Listening</i>	<i>Viewing</i>	<i>Speaking</i>
1	5.2	2.4	0.8	0.9	1.8
2	42.0	38.5	15.1	39.3	21.7
3	38.9	53.9	71.3	45.6	58.3
4	13.9	5.3	12.8	14.2	18.2

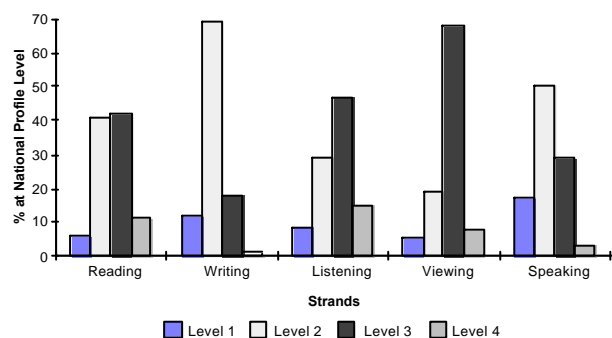
Source: Dept of Education and Community Services, ACT

**Table 3.20 Performance against National English Profiles, year 5, government schools, ACT, 1998 (per cent)**

<i>National Profile Level</i>	<i>Reading</i>	<i>Writing</i>	<i>Listening</i>	<i>Viewing</i>	<i>Speaking</i>
2	5.8	11.8	8.5	5.3	17.2
3	41.2	69.3	29.3	19.3	50.5
4	41.7	18.1	46.9	67.9	29.0
5	11.3	0.8	15.3	7.5	3.3

Source: Dept of Education and Community Services, ACT

**Figure 3.4 Performance against National English Profiles, year 5, government schools, ACT, 1998**



Note: Profile Levels do not equate to year levels. Typically, a student may take 18 months or more to move from one Profile Level to the next.

Source: Dept of Education and Community Services, ACT

Reading remained the weakest strand for year 3 students, with 5.2 per cent of students still at Level 1. In writing, year 3 students performed much more strongly, with 98 per cent having mastered skills at Level 2 and above. Year 5 students found speaking and writing the most difficult, with 17.2 per cent and 11.8 per cent respectively at Level 2. In reading, 98 per cent of year 5 students were at or above Level 2.