

Catholic Education in Australia

Catholic schools have been serving Australian families for 200 years.

Catholic education in Australia has seen extraordinary growth over two centuries to become the single largest provider of schooling outside of government, and the largest provider of faith-based schooling in Australia.

Today, **1,756 Catholic schools** are educating over **805,000 students** from approximately 450,000 families. Our schools employ over **109,000 staff** across Australia. Nearly 40% of schools are outside of metropolitan areas, meeting the needs of regional, rural and remote communities. Over 42% of all Catholic school students are funded for socio-educational disadvantage.

Our strategic focus is on supporting systems and schools to form young people of faith; to lift educational standards so that all students fulfill their learning potential; to better support the needs of students with disability, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and students from disadvantaged communities; and to advocate for greater access to early childhood education and care as part of schooling.

Working collaboratively with state and territory Catholic education authorities, the National Catholic Education Commission advocates through effective liaison with the federal, state and territory governments, and key national education bodies. Our role is to ensure the needs of Catholic schools are served through equitable funding, legislation and policy.

Our work is to foster a thriving Catholic education sector that offers parents affordable access to, and a choice of, a faith-based education for their children. Catholic education continues to advocate for fair and inclusive funding that sustains both public and accessible faith-based school systems widely available across Australia.

Millions of Australian students have been educated in Catholic schools since 1820.

SNAPSHOT OF AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC EDUCATION



38% of Australia's **1,756 Catholic schools** are located in regional, rural and remote areas

805,000 students attend Catholic schools in Australia



Over **109,000 staff** are employed in Catholic education



1 in 5 Australian students attend a Catholic school



Students with disability make up **21.8%** of the student population in Catholic schools



In the past decade, the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in Catholic schools has increased by **161%**

42.1% of Catholic school students are funded for socio-educational disadvantage



91% of Catholic schools are co-educational
3% are boarding schools

Mission

To promote Christ-centred education providing excellent and inclusive schooling.

Strategic priorities

The National Catholic Education Commission has developed a set of strategic priorities for 2024-2026. These national priorities are to:

- **Faith** – Enhance the capacity of Catholic school communities to be places of faith and mission
- **Excellence** – Support the continual improvement of educational outcomes for all students
- **Access** – Enhance access to a Catholic education for any family that chooses it.

2024-26 Strategic Priorities



The value and contribution of Catholic education

There are compelling reasons for federal, state and territory governments to support and invest in Catholic education. Catholic schools are partners with government in delivering quality school education to Australian students, playing a key role in contributing to the social, economic and moral fabric of this nation.

One of the most unique and valuable features of Australia's education system is the wide-ranging availability of genuine, affordable **SCHOOL CHOICE**.

Today, the cost of educating a primary student is over \$13,000 annually, while secondary education costs more than \$16,600 per student. For most Australian families this cost would be out of reach, especially if they have two or more children.

Genuine choice relies on governments providing equitable funding to ensure Catholic schools are accessible and affordable to families who desire a **FAITH-BASED EDUCATION** for their children.

One in five Australian students attend a Catholic school reflecting their family's values and beliefs - this is an important aspect of a pluralist society. Around 59% of students are from Catholic faith backgrounds. Catholic schools also welcome families from other Christian and faith traditions.

In making this choice, Catholic school families take on nearly 26% of the annual cost of their child's education and almost 90% of the funding required to support school buildings and capital works.

In 2022, Catholic school families contributed approximately \$4.2 billion towards their children's education, representing a substantial **SAVING TO AUSTRALIAN TAXPAYERS**.

Catholic education supports approximately 88,000 full time equivalent teaching and non-teaching jobs and estimates the total Gross Value Added¹ (GVA) **CONTRIBUTION TO THE AUSTRALIAN ECONOMY** to be approximately \$13.2 billion. This represents almost 16.5% of the school education sector per year.

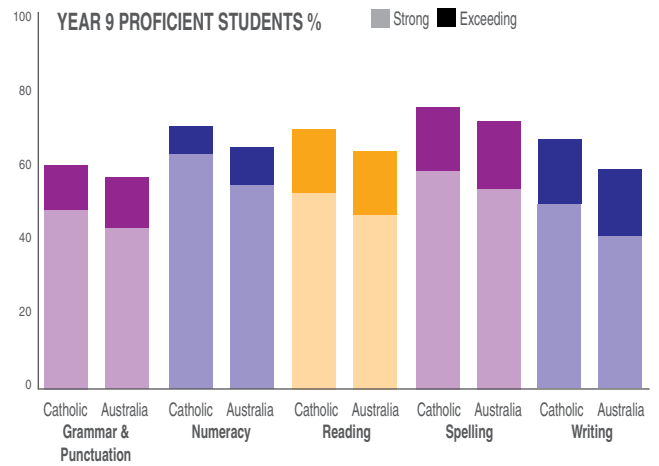
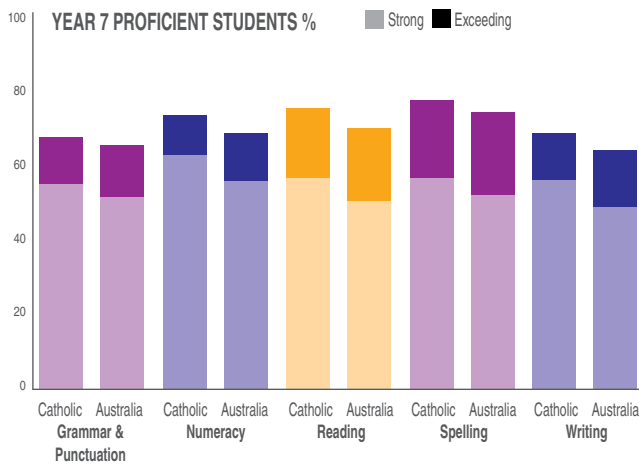
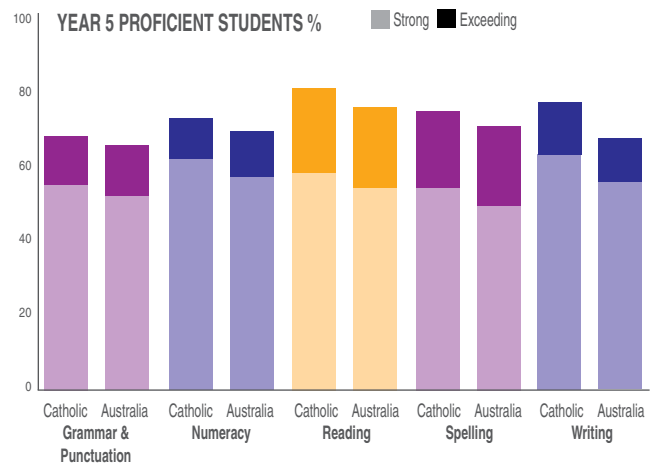
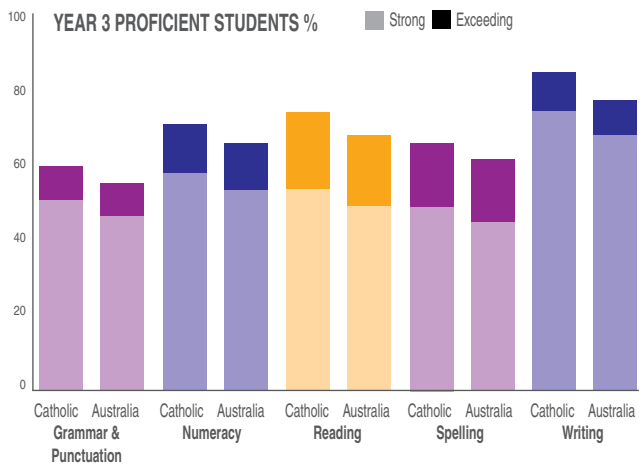
Catholic schools also contribute to Australia's **CAPITAL INFRASTRUCTURE** through the building of school and community infrastructure. In 2022 alone, this investment was about \$2.2 billion in capital projects, with federal and state governments contributing around 10.3% in total.

IN 2022, CATHOLIC SCHOOL FAMILIES CONTRIBUTED \$4.2 BILLION TOWARDS THEIR CHILDREN'S EDUCATION.

¹Estimation based on 2019 Ernst & Young analysis of Catholic Education Western Australia.

2023 NAPLAN student proficiency

In 2023, for all grades and test domains, a larger percentage of Catholic school students (Catholic jurisdictions) who took part in NAPLAN are proficient compared to Australian students (ACARA).



Year 11 to 12 retention

All students	2022	2023
National average	86.4%	87.1%
Catholic	92.9	93.5%
Government	82.2%	82.7%
Independent	91.9%	92.6%

In 2022 and 2023, Catholic schools had higher apparent retention (ABS) of all **Year 11 to Year 12 students** than government and independent schools.

ATSI Year 11 to 12 retention

ATSI students	2022	2023
National average	70.6%	72.8%
Catholic	85.1	89.5%
Government	67.2%	68.8%
Independent	76.7%	80.3%

Catholic schools had higher apparent retention (ABS) of Year 11 to Year 12 **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander** students than government and independent schools.

NAPLAN participation

All students	2022	2023
National average	91.7%	93.7%
Catholic	94.8%	96.4%
Government	90.2%	92.3%
Independent	93.6%	95.6%

In 2022 and 2023, Catholic schools had higher **NAPLAN participation** than government and independent schools.

Secondary school completion

All students	2022	2023
National average	94.1%	93.9%
Catholic	96.7	96.5%
Government	92.5%	92.2%
Independent	95.8%	95.6%

In 2022 and 2023, the proportion of Catholic school students who received a **senior secondary certificate** was higher than government and independent school students.

National priorities

The scale and systemness of the Australian Catholic school sector enables close cooperation with government and education bodies across federal, state and territory levels to deliver national and local priorities.

Catholic education is an integral partner with the government in contributing to, and delivering, current and emerging national priorities including:

- National School Reform Agreement
- National Teacher Workforce Action Plan
- Learning progressions and online formative assessment
- Initial Education of Teachers
- Australian Education Research Organisation
- Teacher accreditation systems
- Review of Senior Secondary Pathways
- Review of the Disability Standards for Education
- Implementation of the Unique Student Identifier
- Review of the Australian Curriculum and more.

With increasing student **MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING** challenges, schools are an important partner in identifying, supporting and monitoring student wellbeing. While Catholic schools already have a strong focus on pastoral care and wellbeing, greater recognition and access to mental health and wellbeing programs and services to support students and families is needed (e.g. Chaplaincy program and psychology services, etc). Additionally, staff and principal wellbeing are of increasing concern.

Catholic school communities are facing the same challenges as their public school counterparts in managing increased cost of living pressures, as well as responding to **TEACHER SHORTAGES** and workforce issues. Government initiatives such as the Commonwealth Teaching Scholarships and cost of living subsidies should be extended to allow access and participation by Catholic schools, who serve the same communities as public schools.

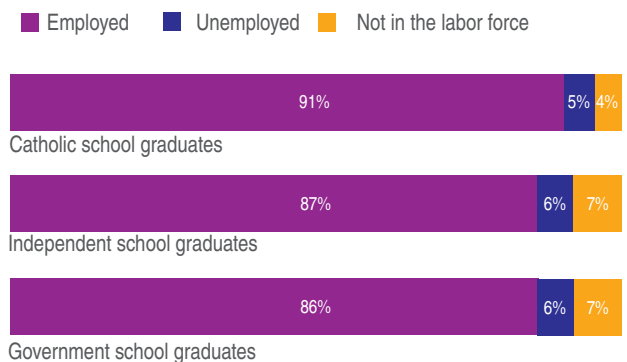
Catholic education is increasing the delivery of **EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION**, a vital component of each child's development. With over 15,000 children in 400 centres across Australia, we are working towards a future where all children have access to high quality early childhood education in the two years before compulsory schooling. We welcome the Australian Government's commitment to work towards universal childhood education and remove barriers for the delivery of early learning to be co-located with schools to meet the needs of families. Underpinning this strategy is the need to ensure every child has access to a fair start to life, out-of-pocket costs for families are reduced and funding is applied consistently across jurisdictions and sectors.

Graduate outcomes

Longitudinal data from the NCVER 2023, Longitudinal Surveys of Australian Youth, school sector for the 2015 cohort, show that:

- More Catholic school graduates are **employed** than government (5 percentage points) and independent (4 percentage points) graduates.
- More Catholic school graduates have obtained or are obtaining **tertiary qualifications** than government school graduates.
- The same percentage of Catholic and Independent school graduates reported being 'very happy' (16%) and 'happy' (67%) for their overall **life satisfaction**.

LONGITUDINAL SURVEYS OF AUSTRALIAN YOUTH Y15
2022 LABOUR FORCE STATUS



Catholic schools are well placed to meet this need, with many new early childhood education centres being built onsite with Catholic schools. This enables greater economic efficiencies, allowing for shared infrastructure and facilities that reduce operating costs; offer children and their families the opportunity to participate in the life of a Catholic school community; enable smoother transition to primary school; and facilitate increased knowledge exchange between educators.

Over the past decade, the number of **ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER** students has increased in Catholic schools by 161%. Catholic schools are focused on Closing the Gap targets and initiatives to respond to the complex needs of students across a range of urban, remote and boarding centres, including lifting the participation in early childhood education; promoting health and wellbeing programs; supporting targeted early literacy and numeracy development; transition to school and post-school programs; embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories, cultures, language and perspectives; and supporting youth to be engaged in meaningful employment and education opportunities.