



ABORIGINAL STUDENTS IN NSW
PUBLIC SCHOOLS ANNUAL REPORT

2014

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Mazart Design Studio is a 100% Aboriginal owned and operated graphic design studio. The NSW owners, Glen and Jodie 'Maz' Brennan take inspiration from the rivers and plains of the Gamilaraay people, and the coast and mountains of the Yuin people.

The resulting artworks within the Aboriginal Students in NSW Public Schools Annual Report 2014 are a fusion of traditional and contemporary Indigenous designs that show that teaching and learning always has, and always will be, part of the Aboriginal culture.

My Country, featuring on the front cover, is an aerial portrait of Gamilaraay land. It shows the vastness of the region, but also the significance of the rivers and meeting places. The importance of these places is to share knowledge, wisdom and stories from generation to generation. The artwork depicts the importance of the connection of people, country and learning.

Mazart Design Studio is Supply Nation certified and is currently based in Melbourne.

www.mazartdesignstudio.com

SECRETARY'S FOREWORD

I am pleased to share this valuable report with our colleagues and partners, but most importantly with Aboriginal parents, caregivers, local and regional Aboriginal Education Consultative Groups (AECGs), Aboriginal communities, principals, school executives and teachers.

In consultation with the Secretary's Aboriginal Education and Training Reference Group, the Department has prepared an annual report outlining information on data sets for Aboriginal students.

This report will assist schools and Aboriginal communities to plan for Aboriginal students starting school, those already in school and Aboriginal students leaving schools for future opportunities.

The report outlines progress for Aboriginal students from 2009 – 2013 in key areas such as enrolment, NAPLAN performance, attendance, retention and suspension rates.

I would like to see principals and executives of every school with Aboriginal students read this report carefully and share the findings and key messages with their staff, Aboriginal parents and caregivers, local AECGs and Aboriginal community members. The decisions made about education for Aboriginal students will have a far-reaching impact on their future wellbeing.

Principals, teachers, families and communities all share a responsibility to plan for the success of every Aboriginal student.

Dr Michele Bruniges AM
Secretary, Department of Education and Communities



REPORT OVERVIEW

Education plays a key role in determining future employment opportunities, health outcomes and social wellbeing.

Aboriginal parents, caregivers and communities want a good education for their children. Aboriginal students are entitled to leave school with the skills and knowledge to achieve, while maintaining a strong sense of identity and pride in their culture.

It is critical that Aboriginal students in NSW public schools receive a quality education so they are able to make informed decisions and choices about their future. The Department of Education and Communities is committed to working with Aboriginal parents, caregivers, communities, regional and local Aboriginal Education Consultative Groups to improve the engagement and achievement of Aboriginal students in NSW public schools.

THE DEPARTMENT RECOGNISES THAT QUALITY TEACHING & LEARNING IN THE CLASSROOM IS CRITICAL TO STUDENT SUCCESS. IT IS **IMPLEMENTING STRATEGIES TO MAKE SCHOOLS MORE RESPONSIVE TO THE GOALS & ASPIRATIONS** OF THEIR ABORIGINAL STUDENTS.

This report profiles key educational measures for Aboriginal students between 2009 and 2013. The report examines trends in key indicators of school participation and performance and identifies the broad issues facing Aboriginal communities in NSW that impact on the education of their children. This report will inform the community, schools and policy makers, and will help us continue to work together to improve outcomes for Aboriginal students.

Many Aboriginal students are performing well at school. For example, over 80% of Aboriginal students in NSW public schools are performing at or above minimum national standards for literacy and numeracy. In some parts of the state this figure is close to 100%. But the data shows that there are still some students who are not achieving at the levels that we would expect. There is a group of students who are disengaged and not attending school. Too many Aboriginal students are leaving school before Year 12.

One of the key developments in the last few years has been the change to the school leaving age. Before 2010, a student had to stay in school until they were 15. Under the new law, students must stay in school to Year 10. After Year 10, and before they turn 17, they can either be in school, in approved training or in employment or a combination of these. These changes had a major impact on enrolment, attendance and retention figures for all students, particularly in the first years of its implementation.

The Department recognises that quality teaching and learning in the classroom is critical to student success. It is implementing strategies to make schools more responsive to the goals and aspirations of their Aboriginal students. These include new funding models that better support Aboriginal students, working more closely with local Aboriginal communities, and putting more focus on student wellbeing.

THE ROLE OF COMMUNITY



COLLABORATIVE DECISION MAKING

The Department has a formal Partnership Agreement with the NSW Aboriginal Education Consultative Group (NSW AECG Inc.), *Together we are, together we can, together we will.*

This partnership provides the opportunity to develop and maintain strong, respectful and productive partnerships. It is critical that schools engage with Aboriginal parents and community to provide opportunities for local decision making about school planning and practices to achieve positive outcomes for Aboriginal students.

Collaborative decision making between schools and the AECG network of local and regional AECGs will build future success for Aboriginal students.

CONNECTED COMMUNITIES

Connected Communities was launched in 2012 to address the educational and social aspirations of Aboriginal children and young people living in a number of complex and diverse communities in NSW. This strategy focuses on schools and their community working together. School leaders work with parents, local governance groups, Aboriginal leaders and the local community to break down barriers to student learning and help improve education outcomes for Aboriginal students.

Connected Communities schools are community hubs that facilitate a range of services from birth, through school, to further training and employment.

ABORIGINAL PARENTS, CAREGIVERS & COMMUNITIES WANT A **GOOD EDUCATION FOR THEIR CHILDREN.** STRONG & RESPECTFUL PARTNERSHIPS ARE FUNDAMENTAL TO IMPROVING EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES FOR ABORIGINAL STUDENTS.

IMPACT OF SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS

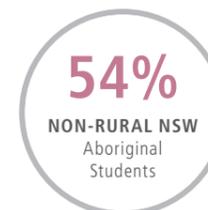
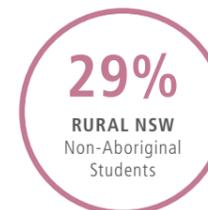
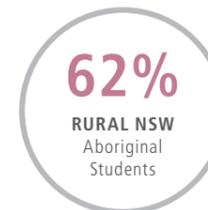
Aboriginal student participation and performance at school is closely associated with other social factors such as health, socio-economic status and remoteness. These factors can impact on the educational attainment of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students. It is their combination and interaction for Aboriginal students that creates differences across educational measures.

Socio-economic status (or SES) is a measure of the relative social and economic position within society. Data for the general population shows that a low SES background will affect participation and attainment measures for all students.

In rural NSW, 62% of Aboriginal students are reported as low-SES. In non-rural areas, 54% of Aboriginal students are reported as low-SES. These figures are more than double the rate for the non-Aboriginal student population.

The gap between the educational participation and attainment levels of Aboriginal students in rural and non-rural areas reflects a similar difference in the broader student population. *Rural and Remote Education: A Blueprint for Action* launched in November 2013, contains a range of strategies to support schools, teachers and students in rural NSW and improve student outcomes.

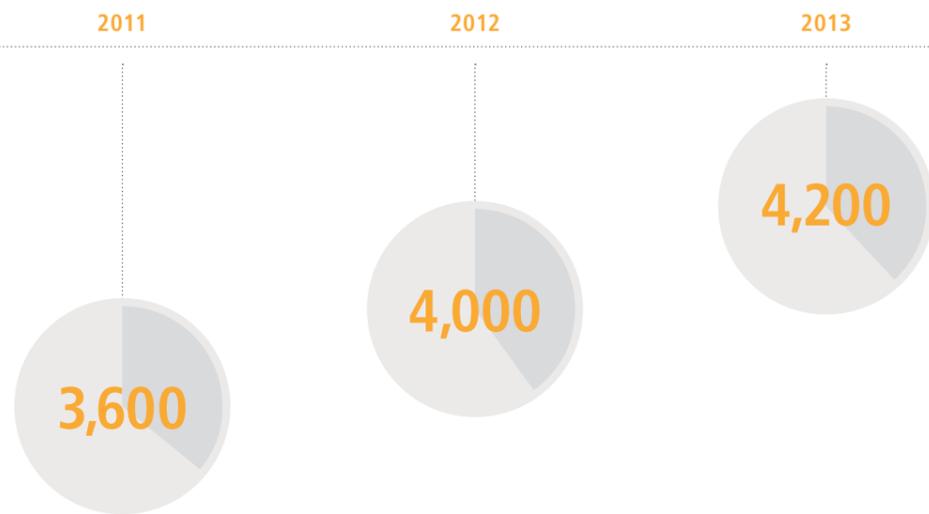
PROPORTION OF STUDENTS RECORDED AS LOW SES



DATA FOR THE GENERAL POPULATION SHOWS THAT A LOW SES BACKGROUND WILL **AFFECT PARTICIPATION & ATTAINMENT** MEASURES FOR ALL STUDENTS.

PRESCHOOL ENROLMENTS

ABORIGINAL & TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER CHILDREN 4 – 5 YEARS OLD ACCESSING A PRESCHOOL PROGRAM IN THEIR YEAR PRIOR TO SCHOOL



Source: State of Education in NSW inaugural Biennale Report 2014 and NSW Department of Education and Communities, NSW 2013 Supplementary Data Report under the National Partnership Agreement on Universal Access to Early Childhood Education (forthcoming).

The NSW government has entered an agreement with the Federal government to increase the number of children enrolled in preschool. This can include government and non-government preschools and long day-care settings that provide a preschool program. Under this agreement, the Department has been collecting data on preschool attendance since 2009.

The data indicates a steady increase in enrolments, with over 4,000 Aboriginal children enrolled in a preschool or preschool program in 2013. This corresponds to an increase of over 15% since 2011.

Caution must be used in using this data the way the data was collected changed in 2013.

THE DATA INDICATES A STEADY **INCREASE IN ENROLMENTS**, WITH OVER 4,000 ABORIGINAL CHILDREN ENROLLED IN A PRESCHOOL OR PRESCHOOL PROGRAM IN 2013. THIS CORRESPONDS TO AN INCREASE OF **OVER 15%** SINCE 2011.

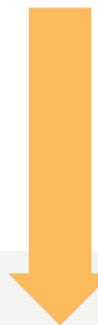
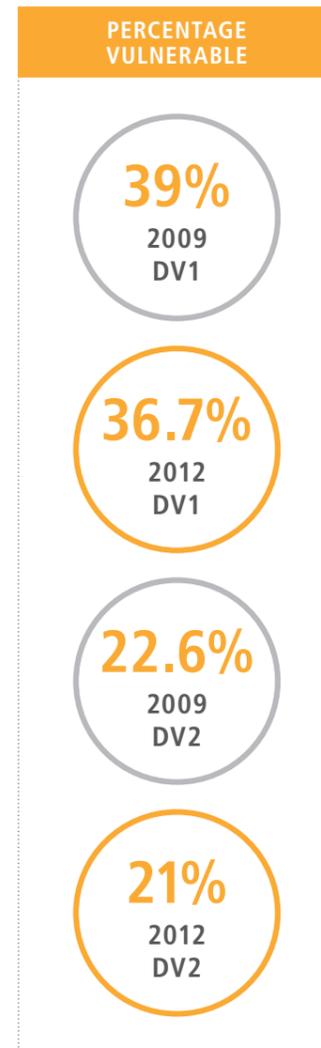
STARTING SCHOOL EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT

The Australian Early Development Census (AEDC) measures early childhood development across five developmental domains: physical health and wellbeing, social competence, emotional maturity, language and cognitive skills, and communication skills and general knowledge. The AEDC is measured in the first year of formal schooling and is collected every 3 years.

A child is considered to be "developmentally vulnerable" if they fall within the lowest 10% of children assessed in one of the domains. The AEDC information was first collected in 2009 and then again in 2012.

The data shows a general decrease in the number of Aboriginal children in NSW who have been assessed as developmentally vulnerable in either one domain (DV1) or two domains (DV2) over this time.

However, the national statistics still show that Indigenous children are more than twice as likely to be developmentally vulnerable than non-Indigenous children.



- BETWEEN 2009 AND 2012, IN NSW, THERE HAS BEEN A 2.3 PERCENTAGE POINT REDUCTION IN THE NUMBER OF ABORIGINAL CHILDREN ASSESSED AS DEVELOPMENTALLY VULNERABLE IN ONE AEDC DOMAIN (DV1).
- IN THE SAME PERIOD, IN NSW, THERE HAS BEEN A 1.6 PERCENTAGE POINT FALL IN THE NUMBER OF ABORIGINAL CHILDREN ASSESSED AS DEVELOPMENTALLY VULNERABLE IN TWO AEDC DOMAINS (DV2).

ENROLMENTS

Enrolments of Aboriginal students are steadily increasing in all age groups. The bulk of this increase has been in the primary grades. Generally there are more primary students enrolled than secondary students. This in part reflects the increases in younger students within Aboriginal communities and the NSW

population generally. However, there has also been a large increase in enrolments in later years of high school over the same period, mainly due to the increase in the school leaving age to 17 in 2010. There are approximately 25% more Aboriginal students enrolled in rural NSW than in non-rural areas.

PUBLIC SCHOOL ENROLMENTS – ABORIGINAL STUDENTS

	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
RURAL PRIMARY	13,982	14,405	14,810	15,380	16,151
RURAL SECONDARY	8,904.2	9,594.9	10,374.4	10,684.5	11,076.9
NON-RURAL PRIMARY	10,638	11,208	11,792	12,456	13,261
NON-RURAL SECONDARY	7,080.3	7,639.7	8,207.6	8,566.3	8,819.5

THERE HAS BEEN A **LARGE INCREASE** IN ENROLMENTS IN THE LATER YEARS OF HIGH SCHOOL.

In 2013, **49,308 FTE students** in NSW public schools identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander out of a total student population of about 755,000 students.

Since 2009, the number of Aboriginal students attending NSW public schools has increased by **over 8,500 students**.

There was a **26% increase** in K-2 enrolments of Aboriginal students between 2009 and 2013.

In 2013, **60%** of Aboriginal students were in primary school and **40%** were in high school.

ATTENDANCE

The majority of Aboriginal students attend school regularly. Some factors that affect attendance rates are out of the school's control. Many students who are not in class will have a valid reason for being away, such as illness or family issues. However, a small number of these students have poor attendance patterns.

In some parts of NSW, the attendance rate of Aboriginal students is not markedly different to that of non-Aboriginal students, particularly in NSW public schools. In

secondary schools the gap is larger, mainly in rural and remote areas. Work is needed to address issues that affect the attendance of all students in these areas, but particularly Aboriginal students.

Attendance rates have been increasing since 2011. This may have been due to increased understanding in communities about the benefits of staying at school longer and new initiatives implemented by schools to address the needs of students.

THE MAJORITY OF ABORIGINAL STUDENTS ATTEND SCHOOL REGULARLY. ATTENDANCE & STUDENT ENGAGEMENT IN LEARNING ARE KEY FACTORS FOR SUCCESS AT SCHOOL.

ATTENDANCE RATES – ABORIGINAL STUDENTS

	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
RURAL PRIMARY	87.4%	87.9%	88%	88.4%	89%
RURAL SECONDARY	77.9%	77.1%	75.7%	76.6%	77%
NON-RURAL PRIMARY	90%	90.4%	90.3%	90.4%	90.7%
NON-RURAL SECONDARY	81.9%	80.7%	80.1%	80.2%	81.2%

On an average school day **more than 85%** of Aboriginal students will be attending school.

In primary schools the attendance rate for Aboriginal students **increased by 1.3%** from 2009 to 2013.

An increase in the school leaving age in 2010 impacted on the secondary school attendance rate. Since 2011, attendance rates for Aboriginal students in secondary schools have **started to improve**.

RETENTION

STUDENT RETENTION FIGURES ARE AN ESTIMATE OF THE NUMBER OF STUDENTS STAYING IN NSW PUBLIC SCHOOLS FROM YEAR TO YEAR.

Student retention figures are an estimate of the number of students staying in NSW public schools from year to year. The rate is not calculated based on the movements of individual students. Rather, retention rates are "apparent" as they do not track individual students through their schooling. What they measure is the ratio of the number of students in a designated year (i.e. Year 12 in 2013)

divided by the number of students in a previous year (i.e. Year 7 in 2008). So, for example, if a student moves from the Government schooling system to the non-government schooling system they will not be counted in the following year. The number of Aboriginal students staying in school to Year 12 in both rural and non-rural areas has been increasing since 2009.

As a result of the introduction of the higher school leaving age in 2010, the retention rate shows that more Aboriginal students are now staying in school through to Year 10. There is still a significant gap between retention rates for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students both in rural and non-rural areas between Year 10 and Year 12.

RETENTION RATES YEARS 7-12

RURAL ABORIGINAL STUDENTS



NON-RURAL ABORIGINAL STUDENTS

SUSPENSION RATES: PERCENTAGE OF ABORIGINAL STUDENTS

SHORT SUSPENSIONS OF ABORIGINAL STUDENTS



LONG SUSPENSIONS OF ABORIGINAL STUDENTS

SUSPENSIONS

Establishing, maintaining and fostering positive student discipline is an absolute priority for effective learning to happen in every public school. Schools engage a range of individual, class and whole school approaches to manage challenging or disruptive behaviour, particularly where it impacts on the learning of others. Principals are authorised to take action when the safety or wellbeing of others is at risk, or where a student has an ongoing history of disruptive behaviour that impacts on learning and wellbeing.

Suspension is not about simply excluding a student from the school as a disciplinary measure. Suspension is used as a strategy that allows time for the school to work with the student, their family and related support services to plan for the student's successful participation in school.

ALTERNATIVES TO SCHOOL ABORIGINAL SCHOOL-AGE STUDENTS ENROLLED WITH TAFE NSW

TAFE NSW is the leading provider of vocational education and training (VET) to Aboriginal people in Australia, with a state wide footprint of over 130 campuses across NSW and the widest range of courses offered (over 1,300 work-related qualifications). The TAFE NSW network of 10 Institutes extends to rural and remote centres where TAFE NSW is often the only provider of vocational and tertiary education and training to Aboriginal students.

The total number of Aboriginal students enrolled with TAFE NSW has decreased

since the implementation of the higher school leaving age legislation. Since this time, TAFE NSW has increased its support of school aged students enrolled in schools through programs such as TAFE-delivered vocational education and training (TVET) and the Participation Phase Initiative.

TAFE NSW provides Aboriginal students with pathways to employment, including trade areas, and 'second chance' education, including literacy and numeracy programs.

PERCENTAGE OF ABORIGINAL STUDENTS SINCE 2009*

Enrolled at TAFE and schools **increased by 35%**

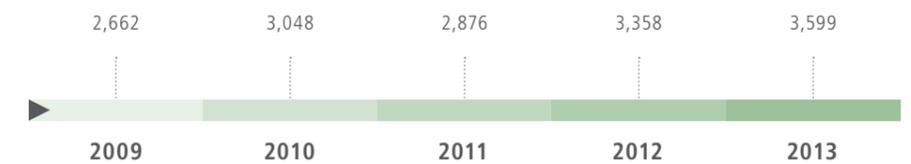
Enrolled at TAFE but not at school **decreased by 12%**

Enrolled in Certificate III and above qualifications **increased by 74%** in line with TAFE NSW's shift to deliver more higher level qualifications

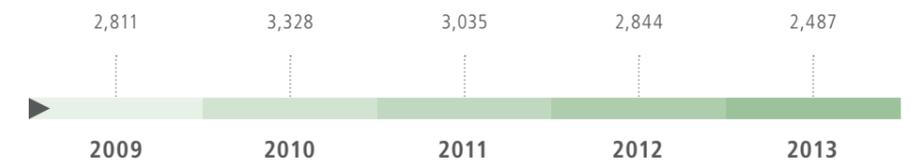
Were enrolled in TAFE NSW Institutes outside the Sydney metropolitan region approximately **3/4 of the time**

ABORIGINAL STUDENTS ENROLLED WITH TAFE NSW*

IN SCHOOL



NOT IN SCHOOL



Source: TAFE Strategy and Finance – Business Analytics and Accountability

*All data are a count of Aboriginal students, not a count of enrolments of Aboriginal students. All Aboriginal students self-identified as Aboriginal on enrolment forms, were residents of NSW, had not completed Year 12 and were aged 13-18 years.

SCHOOL PERFORMANCE PARTICIPATION IN NAPLAN

Between 2009 and 2013, the difference between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students performing at or above national minimum standard has narrowed. 2013 saw a marked improvement in Year 5 reading. More data is required to determine if this change is sustainable but the size and magnitude suggest a great improvement by this cohort. The percentage of students in the top two NAPLAN bands has remained stable over this time.

THE NUMBER OF ABORIGINAL STUDENTS SITTING BOTH NUMERACY & READING TESTS OF NAPLAN IN ALL YEARS **INCREASED BETWEEN 2009 & 2013.** THERE HAS ALSO BEEN A GROWTH IN THE NUMBER OF ABORIGINAL STUDENTS PARTICIPATING IN NAPLAN.

READING – NAPLAN YEARS 3-5 – % AT AND ABOVE NATIONAL MINIMUM STANDARD

	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
YEAR 3 ABORIGINAL STUDENTS	87.8%	86.9%	86.6%	86.3%	89.6%
YEAR 5 ABORIGINAL STUDENTS	77.2%	74.8%	76%	73.5%	92.25%
YEAR 3 NON-ABORIGINAL STUDENTS	96.6%	96.1%	96.0%	96.3%	97.0%
YEAR 5 NON-ABORIGINAL STUDENTS	93.3%	91.9%	92.1%	91.7%	98.1%

NUMERACY – NAPLAN YEARS 3-5 – % AT AND ABOVE NATIONAL MINIMUM STANDARD

	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
YEAR 3 ABORIGINAL STUDENTS	81.0%	87.1%	90.1%	84.5%	89.1%
YEAR 5 ABORIGINAL STUDENTS	86.5%	82.5%	82.6%	79.9%	82.2%
YEAR 3 NON-ABORIGINAL STUDENTS	94.4%	96.4%	96.9%	95.8%	97.0%
YEAR 5 NON-ABORIGINAL STUDENTS	96.9%	95.3%	95.7%	94.5%	94.4%

READING – NAPLAN YEARS 7-9 – % AT AND ABOVE NATIONAL MINIMUM STANDARD

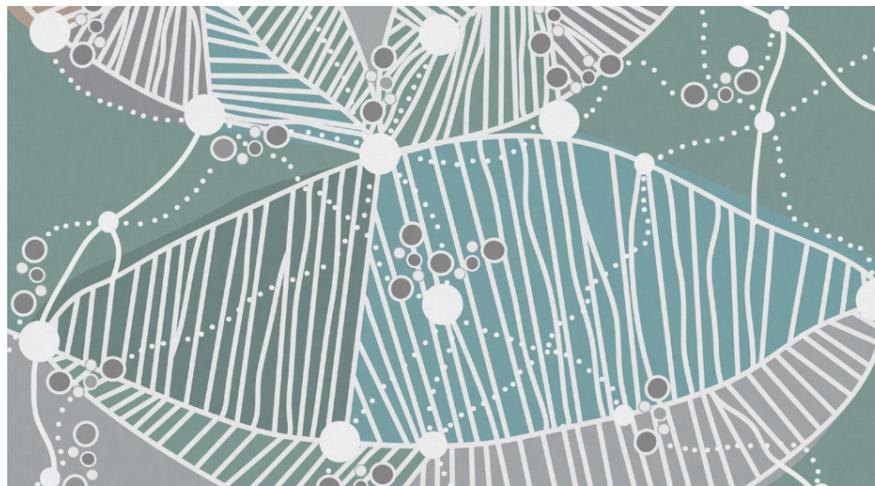
	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
YEAR 7 ABORIGINAL STUDENTS	79.6%	81.3%	85.8%	80.8%	81.0%
YEAR 9 ABORIGINAL STUDENTS	75.4%	69.9%	76.8%	74.4%	80.6%
YEAR 7 NON-ABORIGINAL STUDENTS	93.7%	94.0%	95.7%	93.7%	94.3%
YEAR 9 NON-ABORIGINAL STUDENTS	91.2%	89.8%	92.1%	91.1%	93.9%

NUMERACY – NAPLAN YEARS 7-9 – % AT AND ABOVE NATIONAL MINIMUM STANDARD

	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
YEAR 7 ABORIGINAL STUDENTS	82.3%	82.6%	84.4%	81.1%	87.9%
YEAR 9 ABORIGINAL STUDENTS	85.4%	77.2%	78.3%	83.9%	72.0%
YEAR 7 NON-ABORIGINAL STUDENTS	95.1%	95.5%	95.2%	94.6%	96.6%
YEAR 9 NON-ABORIGINAL STUDENTS	96.0%	93.2%	93.8%	95.0%	90.1%

ACKNOWLEDGING ABORIGINAL STUDENTS' IDENTITY & CULTURE

THE DEPARTMENT IS COMMITTED TO A SERIES OF REFORMS DESIGNED TO **DELIVER A RIGOROUS, & MEANINGFUL** EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCE FOR ALL STUDENTS.



The three key areas centre around:

1. Delivery of a quality learning experience for all
2. Improving individual and collective capacity of teachers and schools
3. Increasing the connection of schools to their communities

RESOURCING EVERY PUBLIC SCHOOL TO SUPPORT ABORIGINAL STUDENTS

New funding models are ensuring that funding is directed to address individual student need. The Resource Allocation Model (RAM) is providing specific funding for every Aboriginal student in the state with an increase in funding for Aboriginal students of \$18.5 million, bringing the total 2014 allocation to approximately \$48 million under RAM.

Additionally, the Every Student, Every School initiative ensures that every school has a learning and support teacher. These specialist positions help schools to provide support to students with additional learning needs.

WELLBEING

From 2015 schools will be required to address student wellbeing in their school planning process. Wellbeing capitalises on the strengths of school community members; helping students, teachers and families recognise where support might be needed for themselves or for others and guiding them to develop strength in situations of need.

Planning for wellbeing is premised on evidence that shows people with higher levels of wellbeing are more likely to complete school and achieve success in life.

This new approach complements and builds on other education reforms, to give school leaders more authority to make local decisions that can better meet the needs of their students.

ABORIGINAL LANGUAGE & CULTURE NESTS HAVE BEEN ESTABLISHED FOR ABORIGINAL PEOPLE & COMMUNITIES IN 5 LOCATIONS ACROSS NSW TO **RECLAIM, REVITALISE & MAINTAIN** THEIR TRADITIONAL LANGUAGES.

ABORIGINAL LANGUAGE AND CULTURE NESTS

Language is fundamental to Aboriginal culture and identity. The teaching of Aboriginal languages and culture aims to increase school participation and retention for all Aboriginal students.

Aboriginal Language and Culture Nests have been established for Aboriginal people and communities in 5 locations across NSW to reclaim, revitalise and maintain Aboriginal languages. Aboriginal Language and Culture Nests will provide Aboriginal students and community members with access to language learning pathways, beginning as early as preschool and continuing into high school and further education.

PERSONALISED LEARNING PATHWAYS – SUPPORTING SELF-DETERMINATION AND AUTONOMY

NSW public schools recognise that every student is an individual with their own goals, aspirations and learning needs. Personalised learning pathways are developed to support Aboriginal students in NSW public schools. A key feature of the process is engagement between the student, their parents, carers and teachers. In pathway planning, a student identifies their learning goals and the ways in which they will achieve them. Identifying a student's cultural, social and academic aspirations and the means by which they can control their own educational journey is critical. Planning is underpinned by high expectations for students and builds on each student's strengths.

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NSW Department of Education and Communities



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