

Education in Australia

Under the federal system of government in Australia, the six states and the Northern Territory are responsible for providing education services for their own residents. The Australian Government is responsible for public education in the Australia Capital Territory and some external territories.

The Australian Constitution empowers the Federal Government to make grants to the states for education. The Commonwealth Schools Commission and the Commonwealth Tertiary Education Commission advise the Government on the level of the grants.

School attendance is compulsory between the ages of six and 15 in all states except Tasmania, where the leaving age is 16. About two thirds of children are educated in government schools, where tuition is free. A total of 2260 551 children were enrolled at 7544 government schools in 1984. There were a total of 155 461 full-time and part-time teachers in government schools in 1984.

In 1984, a total of 759 930 children were enrolled at 2454 non-government schools, mostly conducted by religious denominations. Seventy-six per cent of them attended Catholic schools. Teaching staff at non-government schools totalled 50 458 (full and part-time). Non-government schools usually charge tuition fees.

PRE-SCHOOL

Most Australian children begin school before the compulsory school age and many attend pre-school centres within the school system. Pre-school centres usually enrol four-year-old children and provide 2-3 hours sessions for two groups of children each day. Most children attend 3-5 sessions a week, but some children in country areas attend only one. In all states except Victoria, departments of education have some responsibility for pre-school education and

there is a trend towards government involvement throughout Australia.

PRIMARY AND SECONDARY

Primary schooling usually lasts for six or seven years. Children are involved in a curriculum which is similar in all Australian primary schools. The lower primary course consists of basic language and literacy skills, simple arithmetic, social and health education and creative activities.

Secondary schooling begins in years 7 or 8 and can continue to year 12. While the study of English, mathematics, science and social studies continue, more subjects, such as technical, commercial or foreign language subjects, are introduced.

ABORIGINAL EDUCATION

Most Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students attend the same schools as other Australian children, but special education provisions assist them to benefit from this schooling while recognising their different cultural heritage. These include pre-school programs, the employment of Aboriginal teaching assistants, the use of special advisers and resource teachers, and the development of special curriculums, including bilingual programs in traditionally oriented communities.

HANDICAPPED CHILDREN

Special education provides classes for handicapped children attending government and non-government schools, including integration in regular classes. Services available in special and regular schools are designed to provide for the needs of children with intellectual physical, sensory, emotional, social and learning disabilities.

POST SECONDARY

The Participation and Equity Program is a major element of the Federal Government's provision for the needs of youth.

Under the program, the Government is providing \$82.2 million in 1985 to the states to develop and expand appropriate education and training programs in schools and colleges of technical and further education.

UNIVERSITIES

Australia has 19 universities. Many have quotas on enrolment in some of their courses. In 1984, Australian universities had 172 678 students of whom 106 019 were full-time, 50 682 part-time and 15 977 external.

COLLEGES

Colleges of Advanced Education offer courses which have a greater vocational emphasis than universities. Colleges of advanced education range from institutions offering a diversity of courses to single-purpose colleges specialising in one discipline such as music or teacher education. In 1984, 177 879 students were enrolled at the 47 colleges of advanced education and institutes of advanced education and in many ties. Advanced education courses are also conducted at some technical and further education institutions and 4959 students were enrolled in such courses in 1984.

TEACHER EDUCATION

Pre-school and primary teachers, who usually teach the whole school curriculum, complete three years of training in a college of advanced education.

Secondary school teachers usually complete a degree course and professional training such as a diploma of education. There has been a growing tendency in recent years in universities and colleges of advanced education to integrate the professional with the degree studies from the beginning of the course. Specialist teachers of physical education, music, art, manual arts and domestic science train for three

Contd. on page 17

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Contd. from page 6
to four years either wholly in a teacher-training institution or partly at the training institution and partly at another institution such as an institute of technology or a conservatorium of music.

TECHNICAL EDUCATION

Australian colleges of technical and further education offer training in all the major industrial skills in a wide range of commercial artistic and domestic occupations. The colleges are concerned with ap-

Education in Australia

prenticeship, trade, post-trade and technician courses, as well as commercial and general courses to certificate level. There were 271 principal technical education institutions in 1983 with branches and annexes throughout Australia.

ADULT EDUCATION

Adult education includes vocational and non-vocational courses. Technical and further

education colleges provide kinds. Most Australian universities have departments which specialise in non-degree continuing-education programmes.

HIGHER EDUCATION

Areas of university research and development include the humanities, the social physical biological earth and applied sciences, engineering, agriculture, astronomy and medicine. The growth of university research is reflected in the expansion of postgraduate studies.