

# **SOME OUTCOMES OF CIVIC AND CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION IN AUSTRALIAN SCHOOLS**

**A paper prepared for the Joint Standing Committee on  
Electoral Matters of the House of Representatives**

**John Ainley, Julian Fraillon, Tim Friedman, and Rachel Parker  
Australian Council for Educational Research**

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## Executive summary

The following summary statements that are elaborated in this paper are based on the published reports from the National Assessment Program - Civics and Citizenship (NAP - CC) covering 2004 to 2019, the International Civic and Citizenship Education Studies (ICCS) conducted in 2009, 2016 and 2022, and an ACER report comparing Australian students with students from other OECD countries regarding global competence from the OECD Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) in 2018.

### Achievement in civics and citizenship

- Civics and citizenship achievement was much higher for Year 10 students than Year 6 students.
- Average Year 6 achievement in civics and citizenship has not changed significantly between 2004 and 2019.
- Average Year 10 achievement in civics and citizenship increased between 2004 and 2010 and then declined by a similar amount from 2010 to 2019.
- Several characteristics are consistently associated with higher achievement in civics and citizenship: socioeconomic background, school location, gender, and Indigenous status.
- There were no significant differences in civics and citizenship achievement between students who spoke a language other than English and those who spoke English at home.

### Values and attitudes toward civics and citizenship issues

- There were few changes in students' views of good citizenship between 2010 and 2019 although, among Year 10 students, greater importance was accorded to 'social movement' citizenship by female students and students with higher achievement in civics and citizenship.
- Students in Year 10 expressed significantly lower levels of trust in civic institutions and processes than students in Year 6 and there were small increases in trust between 2010 and 2019.
- Positive attitudes towards Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures strengthened since 2010, were stronger among Year 10 than Year 6 students, among female than male students, and among students with higher levels of achievement in civics and citizenship.
- Students with higher achievement expressed more positive attitudes to Australian diversity than did students with lower achievement. In addition, female students expressed more positive views of diversity than did male students.

### Engagement with civics and citizenship

- Year 10 students reported lower rates of participation in civic activities than did Year 6 students and female students reported higher rates of participation than did male students. Examples of civic engagement at school were voting for a class representative' (83% Year 6, 70% Year 10); peer support, 'buddy' or mentoring programs (74% Year 6, 48% Year 10), community activities (66% and 61% in Years 6 and 10 respectively); helping to prepare a school webpage social media post, newspaper, or magazine' (22% Year 6, 17% Year 10).
- Between 2010 and 2019, there was an increase in the percentage of students using the internet to get news of current events on a weekly basis (72% Year 6 students, 87% Year 10 in 2019)
- Between 2010 and 2019, there was a decline in the percentage of students watching the news on television at least once each week (but still 67% of Year 6 students and 64% of Year 10 students).

- In 2019, talking about political or social issues with family took place at least once per week for 29 per cent of Year 6 students (no change from 2010 and 2019) and 43 per cent of Year 10 students (an increase between 2010 and 2019).
- Among listed civic issues, most interest was expressed in environmental issues (interest increased between 2010 and 2019) and least interest was expressed in Australian politics.
- Female students expressed greater interest in civic issues than did male students, especially in Year 10.
- Students with higher civics and citizenship achievement expressed greater interest in civic issues than students with lower achievement.

## Globally oriented citizenship

PISA 2018 collected data on global competence among 15-year-old students. In comparison to the average among OECD countries, students in Australia were:

- more likely to report greater awareness of global issues (but less than students in Canada);
- more likely to have a greater ability to understand the perspectives of others (but less than students in Canada and Ireland);
- more likely to express positive attitudes to immigrants (but less positive attitudes than students in Canada);
- less likely to report learning about different cultures at school; and
- less likely to be invited by their teachers to give an opinion about international news.

## Purpose

In this paper we provide an overview of evidence from large-scale assessment studies concerning civics and citizenship outcomes of students in Australian schools. Those outcomes include students' knowledge and understanding of civics and citizenship, their values and attitudes toward civics and citizenship processes and issues, and their behavioural intentions regarding future participation in civic and citizenship activities. The paper draws on the published reports from the National Assessment Program - Civics and Citizenship (NAP - CC) which have been conducted in Australia on a triennial basis since 2004 (ACARA, 2020a; ACARA, 2017; ACARA, 2014; ACARA, 2011; MCEETYA, 2009, MCEETYA, 2006), and the International Civic and Citizenship Education Studies (ICCS) conducted in 2009, 2016 and 2022 (Schulz, et al., 2024). We also review the reports on global competence based on the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) in 2018 (De Bortoli, et al., 2021; OECD, 2020),

## Background

### Awakened interest in civics and citizenship in school education

The roles of schools in preparing young people to undertake their roles as citizens in society has a long history. Civic and citizenship education can be implemented using a variety of overlapping approaches that range from the teaching of specific civic-related subjects through to its integration into other related subjects (such as history or social science studies), to its definition as a cross-curricular learning area (Malak-Minkiewicz & Torney-Purta, 2021). Nevertheless, there is a broad consensus that civic and citizenship education seeks to develop young people's knowledge and understanding of society's principles and institutions, their critical appraisal of citizens' roles and responsibilities, and their learning on how to influence policies and practices through democratic processes (European Commission/EACEA [European Education and Culture Executive Agency]/Eurydice, 2017). Reichert & Print (2018) point out that civic and citizenship education takes place in schools through both formal and informal learning. They argue that informal learning can occur through 'instrumental' activities (such as student governance, elections, and publications) and 'expressive' activities (such as social activities).

Several important developments in the 1990s and into the early 2000s, initiated under different governments, signalled an accelerated interest in civic and citizenship education in Australia. One of these was the report of the Civics Expert Group (1994) which argued for a greater emphasis on civics and citizenship education (Print, Kennedy & Hughes, 1999). A second was the *Discovering Democracy* program from 1997 to 2004 that developed curriculum materials and supported professional learning for teachers (Print, 2016). A third was the Adelaide declaration of national goals for schooling by the Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA) in 1999 which asserted that when students leave school, they should (inter alia) 'be active and informed citizens with an understanding and appreciation of Australia's system of government and civic life' (MCEETYA, 1999). The subsequent meeting of the ministerial council in 2008 affirmed in the Melbourne Declaration the importance of developing citizenship by stating that 'all young Australians become successful learners, confident and creative individuals, active and

informed citizens' (MCEETYA, 2008, pp. 08-09). More recently, the 2019 meeting of the Educational Council resolved in the Mparntwe Declaration that the educational goals for young Australians include that 'all young Australians should become ... active and informed members of the community' (Education Council, 2019).

## The emergence of large-scale assessments in civics and citizenship

Possibly linked to the growing interest in civic and citizenship education in the 1990s was Australian participation in the Civic Education Study (CIVED) conducted by the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA). CIVED involved a 38-item test of civic knowledge and a questionnaire about civic-related attitudes and behaviours conducted among 14-year-old students (Year 9 in Australia) in 28 countries with national samples averaging 3,000 students (Torney-Purta, Lehmann, Oswald, & Schulz, 2001). It concluded that civic knowledge of Australian Year 9 students was not significantly different from the international average (p. 54). The Australian report of CIVED suggested that Australian students appeared less interested in participating in civic society than their international peers (Mellor, Kennedy, & Greenwood, 2002). That national report also observed that 'formal programs of civic education were relatively recent, and informal rather than formal activities have characterised much civic education' (p. 125). There were antecedent large-scale assessments of civics including an earlier IEA study of civic education conducted in 10 countries in 1971 (Torney, et al., 1975) and the United States National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) sample-based assessments of citizenship (sometimes as part of social studies) intermittently from 1969 onwards and as NAEP Civics since 1998 (Hansen, et al., 2018). The most recent NAEP civics assessment was administered in 2022 to just under 8,000 students in grade 8.

Following the Adelaide Declaration in 1999 MCEETYA, through its National Educational Performance Monitoring and Reporting Taskforce, commissioned the construction of two Key Performance Measures (KPMs) for civics and citizenship education (Print & Hughes, 2001). The first of these (KPM1) focused on civics knowledge and understanding ('key concepts and understandings relating to civic institutions and processes in Australian democracy, government, law, national identity, diversity, cohesion and social justice'). The second (KPM2) concerned citizenship participation and civic values ('understandings related to the attitudes, values, dispositions, beliefs, and actions that underpin active democratic citizenship'). The Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) was contracted to develop and trial assessment instruments and to conduct the inaugural National Civics and Citizenship Sample Assessment of student performance in civics and citizenship (NAP – CC). The final versions of the assessment domain and the assessment instruments were developed with guidance from the Benchmarking and Educational Measurement Unit (BEMU) of the Performance Monitoring and Reporting Taskforce (PMRT) and a review committee that represented each jurisdiction and sector (Wernert, Gebhardt, Murphy, & Schulz, 2006). The assessment was conducted at Year 6 and Year 10 in 2004 and has continued every three years since then. The first two cycles, in 2004 and 2007, were conducted for MCEETYA and subsequent cycles (in 2010, 2013, 2016, and 2019) were conducted for the Australian Curriculum and Assessment Authority (ACERA). The data collection for the seventh cycle will be completed later this year.

## NAP-CC and the Australian Curriculum

The first cycle of NAP-CC, with data collection completed in 2004, was developed at a time when civics and citizenship curricula varied across the Australian jurisdictions. The initial NAP-CC assessment and student questionnaire content was developed with reference to the content

specified for two KPMs for civics and citizenship (Print and Hughes, 2001) that were elaborated to establish the NAP-CC Assessment Domain (MCEETYA, 2006).

In 2006, the National Statements of Learning in Civics and Citizenship were developed, under the auspices of MCEETYA. These statements were developed collaboratively among States and Territories to 'provide a description of knowledge, skills, understandings and capacities that all students in Australia should have the opportunity to learn and develop' (Curriculum Corporation, 2006 p. 2). The statements of learning included nationally agreed civics and citizenship learning outcomes for Years 3, 5, 7 and 9. While they were released after the content for the second cycle of NAP-CC (2007) had been developed, they provided a foundation for further developments in civics and citizenship education, and were agreed by all sectors to be implemented in school programs by January 2008 (MCEETYA, 2009, p. 4).

In 2008, the Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians was released (MCEETYA, 2008). The Melbourne Declaration included more detailed statements than the preceding Hobart (1989) and Adelaide (1999) declarations with respect to the attributes of active and informed citizens. The NAP-CC Assessment Domain that had underpinned NAP-CC 2004 and 2007 was revised, restructured, expanded, and published as the NAP-CC Assessment Framework in preparation for the third cycle of NAP-CC in 2010. The revisions were influenced, in particular, by the content described in the Statements of Learning for Civics and Citizenship (AESOC, 2006) and by the 'implicit and explicit values, attitudes, dispositions and behaviours' in the Melbourne Declaration (ACARA, 2011, p. X).

The Australian Curriculum: Civics and Citizenship was under development at the same time as the content of NAP-CC 2013 was being developed. NAP-CC 2013 was therefore developed with specific reference to the NAP-CC Assessment Framework. Even though the Australian Curriculum: Civics and Citizenship had not been endorsed before the NAP-CC 2013 content had been developed, it was available for use by educators. The Australian Curriculum: Civics and Citizenship and NAP-CC Assessment Framework were compared and judged both to 'recognise the differences and connections between civics and citizenship...' and to '...include similar definitions and breadth of the knowledge, understanding, skills values and dispositions that underpin the learning area' (ACARA, 2014 p. 5). The documents were also judged to share content relating to 'identity and culture in Australia' and 'local, regional and global perspectives and influences on Australian democracy' (ACARA, 2014 p. 5). At the time it was also acknowledged that some of the behavioural skills for participation that were recognised in both documents were beyond the scope of testing in NAP-CC, and that there were some 'differences in emphasis regarding historical perspectives' (ACARA, 2014 p. 5).

The Australian Curriculum: Civics and Citizenship was endorsed by ministers in September 2015 (ACARA, 2017 p. xiv), after development of content for NAP-CC 2016 had been completed. As such, NAP-CC 2016 was developed with reference to the pre-existing NAP-CC Assessment Framework with its acknowledged overarching commonality and some differences of emphasis to the Australian Curriculum: Civics and Citizenship. It was, however, observed that 'the aims Australian Curriculum: Civics and Citizenship [are] both congruent with and reflected in the NAP-CC Assessment Framework' (ACARA, 2017 p 6).

The NAP-CC Assessment Framework was revised in 2018 to align with the content and skills of the Australian Curriculum. This was done with reference to the representation of civics and citizenship content in the F-6/7 Australian Curriculum: Humanities and Social Sciences (AC: HASS), and the 7-10 Australian Curriculum: Civics and Citizenship (AC:CC). Where the content was also relevant, aspects

of the knowledge and skills of the Australian Curriculum: History (Years 5-6 and 9-10) were also included (ACARA, 2020b).

This alignment resulted in a broadening of the content included in the NAP-CC Assessment Framework and consequently the NAP-CC 2019 Assessment relative to previous cycles. While the core civics and citizenship content remained, the revised framework made more explicit the types of knowledge and reasoning skills that were to be demonstrated, and further included references (as relevant) to General Capabilities as expressed in the Australian Curriculum Civics and Citizenship and Humanities and Social Science. The revised framework included an explicit NAP-CC History sub-strand and an affective domain relating to attitudes and values associated with civics and citizenship and civics and citizenship participation (ACARA, 2020b).

The addition of the NAP-CC History sub-strand brought with it a requirement of a new subset of test items that extended beyond the scope of previous NAP-CC assessments.

The NAP-CC assessments have evolved over time to reflect changes in civic and citizenship curricula and standards that, through the lifecycle of the program, have developed from being decentralised products of the Australian jurisdictions to having a stronger national overview framed by the content and standards specified in the Australian Curriculum. While most of the content assessed in NAP-CC has remained stable over time, the inclusion of explicit historical content associated with civics and citizenship has increased as NAP-CC has been aligned to the Australian Curriculum.

It is worth also noting that the declarations on the goals of Australian Schooling, in particular those of Adelaide (1999), Melbourne (2008) and Alice Springs (Mparntwe) (2019) have been used as touchstones in the development of NAP-CC, in particular when making judgements about the shared values and aims we have regarding attitudinal and behavioural outcomes associated with civics and citizenship education in Australia.

## Students' understandings of civics and citizenship

Much of what is known about students' knowledge and understanding of civics and citizenship is derived from the sequence of NAP – CC studies. These studies are based on systematic representative samples of students in Year 6 and Year 10 and use a rotated test design to maximise coverage of the field (see Appendix A).

Results for are reported for both year levels in each cycle on the same empirical achievement scale established in 2004 (with a mean of 400 and a standard deviation of 100 for Year 6). In addition, achievements are described in terms of the attainment of proficiency levels (ranges of scores that can be described in terms of the knowledge and understandings represented by the items with difficulties in that range) and the proficient standards set for Year 6 and 10<sup>1</sup> (ACARA 2020a; ACARA,

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<sup>1</sup> The proficient standard for Year 6 is defined as boundary between levels 1 and 2 on the NAP–CC scale (or 405 scale points). The proficient standard for Year 10 is the boundary between levels 2 and 3 on the scale (or 535 scale points).

- Students working at level 3 demonstrate knowledge of specific details of the Australian democracy such as election processes. They make connections between the processes and outcomes of civil and civic institutions and demonstrate awareness of the common good as a potential motivation for civic action. Students working at level 3 demonstrate awareness that civic processes can be explained and justified in relation to their broader purposes. (ACARA 2020a, p.49)



2020b). The proficient standards were set to ‘represent a ‘challenging but reasonable’ expectation of student achievement at year level with students needing to demonstrate more than elementary skills expected at that year level’ (ACARA, 2020, p.5). This is not the same as a national minimum standard used in NAPLAN reporting. The proficient standards for each year level were determined by an empirical judgment technique based on consultations with panels of judges (curriculum experts and teachers nominated by jurisdictions and sectors) and informed by data on student achievement and item difficulties in the first cycle of NAP – CC (Wernert et al., pp. 38-39).

## Differences in achievement between Year 6 and Year 10

Over the six cycles of NAP – CC since 2004, the difference between the mean score for Year 6 and the mean score for Year 10 has averaged 96 scale points. In 2019 and 2016 the differences averaged 80 scale points (ACARA, 2020a, p. 54), in 2010 and 2013 the differences averaged 110 scale points (ACARA, 2011, p. 41) and in 2004 and 2007 the differences averaged 96 scale points. The wider gaps were in 2010 and 2013 were significantly different for the preceding and following cycles. In summary, the difference between Year 6 and Year 10 average scores is similar to the standard deviation of the scores for each year level. Differences in curriculum emphases may contribute to the differences between year levels.

In NAP – CC 2019, it was evident that the spread of scale scores in Year 10 was broader than the spread of scores in Year 6. This is indicated by the range between score attained by 90 per cent of students and the score attained by the top 10 per cent of students. The difference between the 90th percentile and the 10th percentile was 324 scale points for Year 6 and 354 scale points for Year 10 (ACARA, 2020a, p. 52).

## Trends in achievement from 2004 to 2019 in NAP – CC

Over the 15 years from 2004 to 2019, there was no significant change in the average achievement on the civics and citizenship assessment for Year 6 students across Australia. In 2004 the mean achievement score was 400 scale points, and in 2019 the mean achievement score was 408. This difference is not statistically significant. Correspondingly the percentages achieving the proficient standard were 50 per cent (in 2004) and 53 per cent (in 2019) (ACARA, 2020a, pp. 53-54).

For students in Year 10, the national mean achievement score was 496 in 2004 and 488 in 2019 with the difference not being statistically significant. However, there had been an increase between 2004 and 2010 to 519 scale points with the 23-point gain being statistically significant. This gain was substantially maintained through to 2013 (where the mean score was 511) before falling to 491 in 2016 and 488 in 2019. The falls from 2012 to 2016 and 2019 were statistically significant. Expressed in terms of the percentages of students attaining the proficient standard, we can conclude that there

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- Students working at level 2 demonstrate knowledge of core aspects of the Australian democracy. They demonstrate awareness of the connection between fundamental principles (such as fairness) and their manifestation in rules and laws. They demonstrate awareness that citizenship rights and responsibilities are collective as well as individual and make simple evaluations of given mechanisms of civic action. (ACARA 2020a, p.49)
  - Students working at level 1 demonstrate knowledge of broad features of the Australian democracy. They recognise the cultural significance of the land to Indigenous Australians and that cultural attitudes and values can change over time. They demonstrate familiarity with simple mechanisms of community engagement and how civic actions inform and influence change. (ACARA 2020a, p.49)

was a rise from 39 to 49 per cent between 2004 to 2010 followed by a fall to 38 per cent in 2016 and 2019 (ACARA, 2020a, pp. 53-54). No obvious explanation for this curvilinear trend is apparent.

## Differences associated with student and school characteristics

Over the period of NAP – CC there have been changes in the way data about student characteristics are collected, improvements that have reduced the amount of missing data, and the introduction of a changed classification for geographic location. Therefore, our consideration of any associations of student achievement with student characteristics, other than gender, focuses on NAP – CC 2019.

### Gender

Across all NAP – CC cycles, female students have consistently scored significantly higher than male students. At Year 10, the difference in average achievement between female and male students has ranged from 14 (in 2013) to 30 (in 2004 and 2010) scale points, averaging 25 points. At Year 6, the difference in achievement between female and male students ranged from 18 (in 2004) to 38 (in 2019) scale points, averaging 24 scale points. In NAP – CC 2019, these differences correspond to 58 per cent of female students and 47 per cent of male students in Year 6 attaining the proficient standard. In the same cycle the corresponding figures for Year 10 students were 42 per cent of females and 35 per cent of males attaining the proficient standard (ACARA, 2020a, p. 62). The same trend can be observed when examining Australian students' results on PISA 2018 Global Competence, where females outperformed males in most areas measured including sense of global mindedness, acting for collective wellbeing, positive attitudes toward immigrants and respect for people from other cultures (De Bortoli, Underwood & Richardson, 2021). These findings are consistent across a range of studies (De Bortoli, Underwood & Richardson, 2021) and suggest that at school age, girls are more likely than boys to possess the range of capabilities and dispositions well suited to public life, yet in most countries including Australia, women are underrepresented in all levels of decision-making including parliament (UN Women, 2023).

### Socioeconomic background

Data on two aspects of socioeconomic background were available in NAP – CC 2019: the highest educational level attained by the students' parents and the highest occupational status of the student's parents. There are quite strong associations between achievement in civics and citizenship and these indicators of socioeconomic status. In the summary that follows we have selected categories that indicate the strength of these associations.

In terms of parental educational attainment at Year 6 the mean scores for students whose parents had attained a bachelor's degree or higher was 463 scale points (corresponding to 71% attaining the proficient standard) compared to 382 scale points (42% attaining the proficient standard) for those whose parents had completed Year 12 and 328 scale points (25% attaining the proficient standard) for those whose parents had attained Year 10. The corresponding data for Year 10 students were mean scores of 554 (58% attaining the proficient standard) for students whose parents had attained a bachelor's degree, 468 (34% attaining the proficient standard) for those whose parents had attained Year 12 and 381 (12% attaining the proficient standard) for those whose parents had attained Year 10. (ACARA, 2020a, pp. 67-69).

In terms of parental occupation at Year 6 the mean scores for students whose parents worked as senior managers and professionals was 471 scale points (corresponding to 74% attaining the proficient standard) compared to 356 scale points (35% attaining the proficient standard) for those whose parents worked as unskilled labourers, office sales and service staff. The corresponding data

for Year 10 students were means scores of 548 (corresponding to 57% attaining the proficient standard) for students whose parents worked as senior managers and professionals (corresponding to 74% attaining the proficient standard) compared to 415 scale points (18% attaining the proficient standard) for those whose parents worked as unskilled labourers, office sales and service staff (ACARA, 2020a, pp. 66-67).

### **Geographic location**

NAP – CC 2019 reports differences in student achievement by three categories of geographic location: metropolitan, regional, and remote. Year 6 students at metropolitan schools had significantly higher average scale scores than those enrolled at regional schools (a difference of 43 scale points and 13 percentage points in those attaining the proficient standard) (ACARA 2020a, pp. 65-66). For Year 10 students, the corresponding difference was 49 scale points or 13 percentage points in those attaining the proficient standard. Differences of these categories and students in remote locations do not appear as statistically significant because of the small numbers of students in remote schools.

### **Language background**

In NAP – CC 2019 there was no significant difference in achievement in civics and citizenship between Year 6 students who spoke a language other than English and those who spoke English at home (ACARA, 2020a, p. 64). The same lack of difference was found among Year 10 students.

### **Indigenous status**

Differences in achievement between non-Indigenous and Indigenous students were observed at both Year 6 and Year 10 in 2019. At both year levels the average scale scores for Indigenous students were approximately 100 scale points lower than those for non-Indigenous students. The corresponding differences in the percentages of non-Indigenous students and Indigenous students attaining the proficient standard were 29 and 26 percentage points at Year 6 and Year 10 respectively (ACARA, 2020a, p. 63).

### **Differences among states and territories**

There were differences among states and territories in NAP – CC 2019 (ACARA, 2020a, p. 55-58). In Year 6, the highest performing jurisdiction was the ACT (mean score was 444) and it was significantly higher than every other jurisdiction. There were no significant differences among Queensland (mean score was 415), Victoria (mean score was 414), New South Wales (mean score was 407) and Western Australia (mean score was 407). Below this group were Tasmania (mean score was 385) and South Australia (mean score was 377) which did not differ from each other. It was not possible to provide an unbiased estimate for Northern Territory.

In Year 10, the highest performing jurisdictions were the ACT (mean score was 525) and Western Australia (mean score was 511) which did not differ significantly from each other (ACARA, 2020a, p. 55-58). They were followed by New South Wales (mean score was 500) and Victoria (mean score was 485) which did not differ significantly from each other. Queensland (mean score was 476) and South Australia (mean score was 466) had lower mean scores than New South Wales but did not differ significantly from Victoria or each other. It was not possible to provide unbiased estimates for Tasmania or the Northern Territory.

### **Associations of achievement and student characteristics in other countries**

The International Civics and Citizenship Study (IEA) is an international large-scale assessment study that uses an achievement test which is conceptually like NAP – CC and investigates associations with a range of student characteristics (Schulz et al, 2024). Its target population is Year 8 students in those countries and has been conducted in 2009 (in 38 countries), 2016 (24 education systems) and

2022 (24 education systems). Even though Australia has not participated in ICCS it is possible to compare some relationships with those observed in NAP – CC. This is possible because of the similarities in the content domains underpinning the cognitive scales, as well as the contextual questionnaires of both studies measuring similar constructs. It is worth noting that ACER was primarily responsible for the development of both studies.

Across the three cycles of ICCS, the achievement of female students has been consistently higher than that of male students with an average difference of 26 scale points in the 2022 cycle (on a scale with a standard deviation of 100 scale points) but with a range across countries (Schulz et al, 2024, p 98). In ICCS 2016, the average difference was 25 scale points (Schulz et al, 2018) and in ICCS 2009 the average difference was 22 scale points (Schulz et al, 2010). This appears to be a similar picture to that found in NAP – CC 2019.

ICCS also uses parental education and occupation as indicators of socioeconomic background. ICCS 2022 found that average difference between students whose parents had a tertiary education and students whose parents did not have a tertiary education was 47 scale points (Schulz, et al, 2024, p. 101). It also reported a difference associated with parental occupation scale differences above and below 50 SEI score points (the scale is not the same as that used in NAP – CC) of 53 scale points (Schulz et al, 2024, p. 101). These results appear to be broadly similar to those found in NAP – CC 2019.

ICCS 2022 reported differences in civic knowledge scores between students whose home language use was the same as the test language and those whose home language use was another language in just 16 of the education systems. The average difference was 47 scale points (Schulz et al., 2024, p.103). This is a different picture to that found in NAP – CC, where there was little difference associated with language background.

## Values and attitudes toward civics and citizenship

The first formulation of the assessment of civics and citizenship involved two key performance measures (KPMs) (Print & Hughes, 2001). One of these focussed on ‘key concepts and understandings relating to civic institutions and processes in Australian democracy, government, law, national identity, diversity, cohesion and social justice’. The other concerned ‘understandings related to the attitudes, values, dispositions, beliefs, and actions that underpin active democratic citizenship’. The second of these domains was first incorporated in NAP – CC 2010 and has continued to form part of the survey in each cycle since.

In this section we focus on student perceptions of the behaviours that contribute to ‘good citizenship’, that is, trust in government and institutions, attitudes to Australian diversity, and attitudes to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures. Each of these constructs was represented by several items and Rasch Item Response Theory was used to construct scales with the mean set to 50 scale points and the standard deviation to 10 scale points, nationally for Year 10 students (ACARA, 2020b, pp. 58–61).

### Perceptions of good citizenship

In NAP – CC 2019 students rated the importance of various behaviours for good citizenship. Analyses confirmed the two-dimensional structures consistent with previous cycles of NAP – CC (ACARA,

2020b). Six of the behaviours were indicators of conventional citizenship<sup>2</sup> and five were indicators of 'social movement citizenship'<sup>3</sup>. There were only small or no differences at either year level between 2010 and 2019 in the importance of the listed behaviours for good citizenship in either the conventional or social movement sense (ACARA 2020a, pp. 75-76). Generally, in 2019, Year 6 students gave slightly higher importance ratings to most of the listed behaviours except for 'learning about political issues in the news, on the radio, on TV or on the internet' where importance ratings were reversed (ACARA, 2020a, pp. 73-74).

In 2019, Year 10 students in Australia placed a little more importance (responded as 'very' or 'quite' important) on this activity than did Year 8 students in ICCS 2022 (73% compared to 67%) (Schulz et al., 2024). Year 10 students in Australia in 2019 accorded slightly lower importance ratings than Year 8 student in ICCS 2022 on 'taking part in activities to protect the environment' (79% compared to 84%) and 'taking part in action to protect human rights' than did Year 8 students in ICCS 2022 (76% compared to 81 %) (Schulz et al., 2024<sup>4</sup>). However, Year 10 students in Australia placed a just little more importance on 'learning about Australia's history' than did Year 8 students in ICCS 2022 place on learning about their country's history (81% compared to 77 %) (Schulz et al., 2024). There was no significant difference between the importance placed on 'participating in activities to benefit the local community' by Year 10 students in Australia in 2019 and Year 8 students in ICCS 2022 (78% and 76%).

In NAP – CC 2019, female students accorded slightly greater importance to conventional good citizenship behaviour at both year levels. In both year levels, but especially in Year 10, female students accorded greater importance than did male students to social movement citizenship behaviour (ACARA, 2020a, pp. 75-76). Similar results were found in PISA 2018 Global Competence where Australian female students also outperformed male students on social movement citizenship behaviour such as taking action for collective wellbeing (De Bortoli, Underwood & Richardson, 2018). The importance accorded to conventional citizenship was associated to a small extent with civics and citizenship achievement but to a moderate extent with social movement citizenship achievement at Year 10. In other words, Year 10 students who achieved higher achievement scores accorded greater importance to social movement citizenship than did students who achieved lower achievement scores (ACARA, 2020a, pp. 77-78). ICCS 2022 also reported that, in every country, students with higher civic knowledge scores accorded greater importance to social movement citizenship but there were no consistent associations between civic knowledge and the importance attached to conventional citizenship (Schulz et al., 2024, p. 181).

## Trust in civic institutions and processes

Trust in civic institutions has been investigated over many years and there has been some concern about an apparent decline in trust in civic institutions albeit with a great deal of variation between countries (Witschge, et al., 2019). NAP – CC investigated trust in six civic institutions and processes: the Australian parliament, your state or territory parliament, your local government (for example,

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<sup>2</sup> Learning about Australia's history; learning about political issues in the newspaper, on the radio, on TV or on the internet; learning about what happens in other countries; discussing politics; and voting in elections.

<sup>3</sup> Participating in peaceful protests about important issues; participating in activities to benefit the local community; taking part in activities promoting human rights; taking part in activities to protect the environment; making personal efforts to protect natural resources (for example, water-saving, recycling).

<sup>4</sup> Some importance ratings in ICCS 2022 were computed from the international data base because they were not published in the international report.

local council or shire), law courts, the police, and Australian political parties<sup>5</sup>. These formed a reliable scale that measured students' trust in civic institutions (ACARA, 2020a, p. 79). In addition, NAP – CC asked students about trust in the media and social media.

In 2019, the most trusted institutions were the police (87% in Year 6 and 74% in Year 10 trusted the police completely or quite a lot) and law courts (correspondingly 74% and 70%). Corresponding average percentages for Year 8 students in ICCS 2022 were 69 percent for the police and 66 per cent for the courts of justice (Schulz et al., 2024). The least trusted were the media (48% and 36%) and social media (32% and 30%) (ACARA, 2020a, p. 79). Corresponding average percentages for Year 8 students in ICCS 2022 were 50 percent for the media and 39 per cent for social media (Schulz et al., 2024). Percentage trust figures for the Australian parliament were 74 and 55 per cent for Year 6 and Year 10 respectively and for state or territory parliament the corresponding figures were 75 and 58 per cent. The corresponding figure for trust in parliament or congress by Year 8 students in ICCS 2022 was 48 per cent (Schulz et al., 2024). Political parties were trusted a little less than the parliaments (61% and 43%). The corresponding figure for trust in political parties by Year 8 students in ICCS 2022 was 37 per cent (Schulz et al., 2024). As a broad summary it appeared that Australian Year 10 students trusted police, law courts, the Australian parliament, political parties, and the (traditional) media a little more than Year 8 students in ICCS 2022. However, Year 10 students in NAP – CC trusted social media a little less than did Year 8 students in ICCS 2022.

Based on the scale scores for the scale that measured students' trust in civic institutions, NAP – CC found no change in trust in civic institutions and processes between 2016 and 2019 for either Year 6 or Year 10 and a small increase in trust between 2010 and 2019 (ACARA, 2020a, p. 80). In addition, there were no gender differences in 2016 or 2019 but slightly greater trust among female students in 2010 and 2013. Year 6 students expressed greater trust in civic institutions and processes than did Year 10 students. Students at each year level with higher citizenship achievement recorded greater trust in civic institutions than did students with lower citizenship achievement (ACARA, 2020a, pp.80-81). The International Civics and Citizenship Study (ICCS 2022) found that trust in civic institutions was significantly higher for students with greater civic knowledge than those with lower civic knowledge in countries with low levels of perceived corruption such as Estonia, the Netherlands, Norway, and Sweden but that the reverse was the case in countries with high levels of perceived corruption (Schulz, et al., 2024; Lauglo, 2013).

## Attitudes towards Australian indigenous cultures

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures feature strongly in the Australian Curriculum as part of Civics and Citizenship and as a cross-curriculum priority. Understanding and appreciating these cultures are also identified in Goal 2 of the Ministerial goals for schooling (Education Council (2019)). NAP – CC measured students' attitudes to Australian Indigenous cultures and traditions by asking students their extent of agreement with a series of five statements<sup>6</sup>. An

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<sup>5</sup> Trust in these institutions was indicated as 'completely', 'quite a lot', 'a little' or 'not at all'.

<sup>6</sup> The statements were (response categories were strongly agree, agree, disagree, and strongly disagree):

- *Australia should support the cultural traditions and languages of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.*
- *Australia has a responsibility to improve the quality of life of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.*
- *It is important to recognise traditional ownership of their land by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.*

overwhelming majority of students at each year level indicated their agreement (strongly agree or agree) with these statements ranging from 82 to 95 per cent. Moreover, there was no significant change in these levels of agreement with almost all these statements from 2010 to 2019 (ACARA, 2020a, pp. 81-82). There was a very small decrease of two percentage points from 2016 to 2019 among Year 10 students in agreement with ‘it is important to recognise traditional ownership of their land by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples’, but this followed an increase in agreement of four percentage points since 2010 (ACARA, 2020a, pp. 81-82).

Analyses of the scale based on these five items, measuring students’ attitudes towards Indigenous cultures indicated that Year 10 students recorded stronger levels of agreement than did Year 6 students, that female students held more positive attitudes than did male students (especially in Year 10), and that positive attitudes towards Indigenous cultures have strengthened since 2010 (ACARA, 2020a, p.92). Moreover, in 2019 there was a positive correlation ( $r = 0.31$  and  $0.35$  for Year 6 and 10) between achievement and positive attitudes to Indigenous cultures. This association had increased between 2010 and 2019 among Year 10 students.

## Attitudes to Australian diversity

The Australian Curriculum, and the Ministerial statement of goals for Australian schooling, includes the goal of fostering students’ appreciation of Australian diversity (Education Council, 2019, p.8). NAP – CC measured Year 10 students’ attitudes to Australian diversity by asking students their extent of agreement with a set of seven statements<sup>7</sup>. The responses were used to form a reliable scale measuring students’ attitudes to Australian diversity. Majorities of students at each year level expressed agreement (strongly agree or agree) with the statements. In 2019 levels of agreement ranged from 76 per cent (having people from many different cultures and backgrounds makes it easier for a country to be united) to 90 per cent (immigrants should be encouraged to keep their cultural beliefs, practices, and languages). Analyses of the 2019 scale scores indicated that female students expressed significantly more positive views than did male students (ACARA, 2020a, pp. 85-86) and that students whose achievement was above the proficient standard recorded significantly more positive attitudes to cultural diversity than did students whose achievement was below the proficient standard (ACARA, 2020a, pp. 85-86). By comparison, ICCS 2022 also found in 24 education systems that those with higher levels of civic knowledge scored, on average, four scale points higher on the *equal rights for immigrants* scale than those with lower levels of civic knowledge. This difference was significant in every country (Schulz, et al., 2024, p. 167).

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- *All Australians have much to learn from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples’ cultures, traditions, and people.*
  - *All Australians should be given the chance to learn about reconciliation between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and other Australians.*

(ACARA, 2020a)

<sup>7</sup> These statements were (response categories were strongly agree, agree, disagree, and strongly disagree):

- *Immigrants should be encouraged to keep their cultural beliefs, practices, and languages.*
- *Australia will remain a peaceful country as more people from different backgrounds come to live here.*
- *Australia benefits greatly from having people from many cultures and backgrounds.*
- *At school, all Australians should learn about different cultural beliefs and practices.*
- *All Australians should accept different cultural beliefs and practices.*
- *Having people from many different cultures and backgrounds makes it easier for a country to be united.*
- *Australia will be a better place in the future as more people with different backgrounds come to live here.*

(ACARA, 2020a)

## Engagement with civics and citizenship

One of the two key performance measures for the first formulation of the assessment of civics and citizenship included understanding ‘actions that underpin active democratic citizenship’ (Print & Hughes, 2001). Civic engagement is a central characteristic of democratic societies, and the nurture of civic engagement is commonly a goal of civic and citizenship education (Schulz et al., 2024). There are limits to the formal civic engagement by students by participating in traditional groups and organisations. However, students can experience civic engagements by participating in civic and citizenship activities within their schools and local communities, seeking and exchanging information about political and social issues, developing interests in civic and civil life, and developing their confidence in civic participation. They can also develop expectations regarding their future civic engagement as adults.

### Civic engagement at school and in communities

NAP – CC, (through 2013, 2016 and 2019) asked students whether they had participated in nine activities at their school<sup>8</sup>. The highest levels of participation in NAP – CC 2019 were for ‘voted for a class representative’ (83% of Year 6 and 70% of Year 10 students) and lowest levels of participation were recorded for ‘helped prepare a school webpage social media post, newspaper or magazine’ (22% in Year 6 and 17% in Year 10) (ACARA, 2020a, p. 94). Many had participated in peer support, ‘buddy’ or mentoring programs (74% in Year 6, 48% in Year 10) or in activities in the community (66% and 61% respectively.). Generally, Year 10 students reported lower rates of participation in school civic activities with the greatest difference being in ‘peer support’ programs (74% compared to 48%). Female students reported higher rates of participation than male students at both year levels. There were few statistically significant changes between 2013 and 2019 but in Year 6 there were small declines in participation in preparing a school webpage, social media post, newspaper, or magazine, and participating in peer support, ‘buddy’ or mentoring programs and activities in the community. In addition, there was an increase in the percentage of Year 6 students who participated in excursions to a parliament, local government, or law court. For Year 10 students, there was also an increase in the percentage of students participating in excursions to a parliament, local government, or law court between 2013 and 2019 but a decrease in participation in community activities (ACARA, 2020a, p. 94).

In 2019, a smaller percentage of Year 10 students in Australia had ‘voted for class representatives’ at school than did Year 8 students in ICCS 2022 (70% compared to 78%) (Schulz et al., 2024). Similarly, a smaller percentage of Year 10 students in Australia had ‘been a candidate in a...’ at school than did Year 8 students in ICCS 2022 (25% compared to 47%). Four of the items were shown to be concerned

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<sup>8</sup> The activities were (with percentages of Year 6 and Year 10 students having done this shown):

- *voted for class representatives* (83%, 70%)
- *been elected to a Student Council, Student Representative Council (SRC) or class/school parliament* (41%, 22%)
- *helped to make decisions about how the school is run* (49%, 37%)
- *helped prepare a school webpage, social media post, newspaper, or magazine* (22%, 17%)
- *participated in peer support, ‘buddy’ or mentoring programs* (74%, 48%)
- *participated in activities in the community* (66%, 61%)
- *represented the school in activities outside of class (such as drama, sport, music or debating)* (83%, 77%)
- *been a candidate in a Student Council, SRC or class/school parliament election* (46%, 25%)
- *participated in an excursion to a parliament, local government, or law court* (60%, 48%).



with school governance and four were concerned with other civic activities. Scales reflecting these constructs were weakly correlated with civics and citizenship achievement at both year levels (the average correlation coefficient was 0.21) (ACARA, 2020a, p. 96).

NAP – CC asked Year 10 students whether they had participated in activities with six listed community groups or organisations<sup>9</sup>. In 2019, two of these had involved substantial proportions of Year 10 students: collecting money for a charity or cause (63%) and participating in a voluntary group doing something to help the community (61%) (ACARA, 2020a, pp. 98-98). In comparison, a smaller percentage of Year 8 students in ICCS 2022 had been involved in such a voluntary group (37%) (Schulz et al., 2024).

Participation was higher among female students than male students for both collecting money for a charity (71% compared to 56%) and participating in a voluntary group to help the community (66% compared to 57%). Participation in community activities was only weakly correlated with civics and citizenship achievement ( $r = 0.17$ ). There were no significant changes over the three NAP – CC cycles from 2013 to 2019. Collecting money for a charity or social cause appeared to decline between 2013 to 2016 and then increase in 2019 resulting in an overall increase between 2013 and 2019.

## Civic and citizenship communication

Students' civic engagement includes the ways they become informed about political, social, and civic issues, as well as the ways they exchange views about those issues inside and outside school. The idea that civic engagement includes becoming informed, and exchanging views, about issues has been called latent political participation in that people keep themselves informed so as to become engaged when they see it as appropriate (Amnå & Ekman, 2014). These forms of civic engagement are possibly more accessible to young people than participation in groups and activities. NAP – CC asks about the frequency with which students participate in various activities relating to discussions of political or social issues<sup>10</sup>.

NAP – CC reports the percentages of Year 6 and Year 10 students who engaged in a civic-related communication activity at least once a week since 2010. In both year levels, there was a significant increase in the number of students using the internet to get news of current events at least once per week (reaching 72% of Year 6 students and 87% of Year 10 students in 2019). Correspondingly, there was a significant decline in the numbers of students watching the news on television at least once each week (but still 67% of Year 6 students and 64% of Year 10 students) (ACARA, 2020a, p. 100). In ICCS 2022, 29 per cent of Year 8 students used the internet to get news of current events, and 50 per cent reported 'watching television to inform [yourself] about national and international news' weekly (Schulz et al., 2024). It appears that the propensity of secondary students to use the internet as a source of news is greater in Australia than in ICCS 2022 countries but that Australian students retain television as a news source to a greater extent than their counterparts in other countries.

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<sup>9</sup> These activities were: a charity or social cause (collecting money), a voluntary group doing something to help the community, an environmental organisation, a human rights organisation, a youth development organisation, or an animal rights or protection organisation.

<sup>10</sup> These activities were: use the internet (including social media) to get news of current events, watch the news on television, listen to news on the radio, read about current events in a paper or online newspaper, post or share a comment or image about a political or social issue on the internet (including social media), talk about political or social issues with your family, and talk about political or social issues with your friends.

NAP – CC 2019 also shows that posting or sharing comments or images about a political or social issue remained relatively rare (11% of Year 6 or 15% of Year 10 did this each week). Among Year 8 students in ICCS 2022, these forms of communication were even more rare (6% for posting content, 7% for sharing content, and 8% for commenting on a post), although almost one quarter (24%) reported ‘liking’ a post about a political or social issue (Shulz et al, 2024, p. 126).

In 2019, a little more than half the students still listened to news on radio at least once each week (58% of Year 6 and 54% of Year 10 students). Reading weekly about current events in a paper or online newspaper also declined substantially between 2010 and 2019 (to 27% of Year 6 and 32% of Year 10 students)<sup>11</sup>. The corresponding figure for Year 8 students in ICCS 2022 was lower at 21 per cent.

In 2019, ‘talking about political or social issues with your family’ was reported to happen at least once per week for 29 per cent of Year 6 (no significant change between 2010 and 2019) and 43 per cent of Year 10 students (a significant increase between 2010 and 2019) (ACARA, 2020a, p. 100). Talking about political and social issues with friends on a weekly basis was a little less widespread than talking with family (22% of Year 6 students and 36% of Year 10 students) and this had increased between 2020 and 2019. The corresponding figures for Year 8 students in ICCS 2022 were lower than Australian Year 10 students in 2019 (34% for talking with parents about political or social issues and 24% for talking with friends about political or social issues) (Schulz et al., 2019, pp. 121-122).

## Interest in civic issues

Interest in civic issues is an aspect of engagement that is accessible to school students. NAP – CC measured student interest in civic issues over the period from 2010 to 2019 by asking them about their interest in six civic issues<sup>12</sup>. In Year 6 the issues that evoked most interest were ‘environmental issues in Australia’ (77% of Year 6 students were very or quite interested) and ‘global (worldwide) issues’ (70% were very or quite interested) (ACARA 2020a, p. 103). The issue that evoked least interest was ‘Australian politics’ (34% were very or quite interested). Year 10 students, on average, expressed stronger interest in the listed civic issues than did Year 6 students. Among Year 10 students the issue that evoked the most interest was ‘global (worldwide) issues’ (79% were very or quite interested) and the issue that evoked least interest was ‘Australian politics’ (35% were quite or very interested). It is notable that over the period from 2010 to 2019, there was greater interest in ‘environmental issues in Australia’ among both year levels (from 70% to 77% at Year 6 and from 60% to 71% at Year 10).

These items formed a one-dimensional and statistically reliable scale (ACARA, 2020b, p. 59). Analyses of the scale scores indicated a small decline in interest in civic issues among Year 6 students, and no change among Year 10 students, from 2016 to 2019 (ACARA, 2020a, p. 104). In 2019, and earlier cycles, female students recorded greater interest in civic issues than did male students at both year levels but more so in Year 10 than Year 6. For every NAP – CC cycle from 2010 to 2019, and at both year levels but especially at Year 10, students whose civics and citizenship achievement was above the proficient level recorded greater interest in civic issues than those

<sup>11</sup> Although it should be noted that there was a small increase between 2016 and 2019 possibly associated with a wording change in the item.

<sup>12</sup> These issues (in which interest was recorded as ‘very interested’, ‘quite interested’, ‘not very interested’ or ‘not interested at all’) were: what is happening in your local community, Australian politics, social issues in Australia, environmental issues in Australia, what is happening in other countries, and global (worldwide) issues.

whose civics and citizenship achievement was below the proficient level. In 2019, the correlation coefficients between achievement and civic interest scores were 0.19 and 0.36 for Year 6 and Year 10 respectively (ACARA, 2020a, p. 104).

## Confidence to actively engage in civic action

Students' confidence in their capacities for civic action have been argued to be associated with learning about citizenship and future engagement as citizens (Eidhof & de Ruyter, 2022). This association is analogous to the association between self-efficacy and learning in other fields (Hattie, 2012). International studies of civic and citizenship education have long included measures of citizenship self-efficacy (a focused form of confidence) (Schulz et al., 2024). NAP – CC measures citizenship self-efficacy by asking students to indicate how well they could perform each of eight civic activities<sup>13</sup>. In NAP – CC 2019, Year 6 students were most confident about their capacity to 'organise a group of students in order to achieve changes at school' (67% thought they could do this very or fairly well) and least confident about their capacity to 'present information about a political or social issue on social media' (35% thought they could do this very or fairly well) (ACARA, 2020a, p. 106). Year 10 students were most confident about their capacity to 'argue your opinion about a political or social issue' (57% thought they could do this very or fairly well) and least confident about their capacity to 'express your opinion on a current issue in a letter or email to a newspaper' (39% thought they could do this very or fairly well) (ACARA, 2020a, p. 106). Over the period from 2010 to 2019, the percentage of Year 6 students who were confident about doing many of the listed tasks declined.

Corresponding percentages among Year 8 students in ICCS 2022 who were confident they could do various tasks 'very well' or 'fairly well' were: 70 per cent for 'argue your point of view about a controversial political or social issue'; 58 per cent for 'stand as a candidate in a [school election]'; 61 per cent for 'organise a group of students in order to achieve changes at school'; and 54 per cent for 'speak in front of your class about a social or political issue' (Shulz et al., 2024)<sup>14</sup>. For all of these tasks there was a higher level of confidence from secondary students in other countries than in Australia (by between 11 and 14 percentage points).

These six items formed a statistically reliable scale reflecting student confidence to engage in civic action (ACARA, 2020b, p. 46). Analyses showed that there were very small or no differences in civic confidence between Year 6 and Year 10 students, female students reported greater civic confidence than male students at both year levels and in every cycle of NAP – CC from 2010 to 2019. Students with civic and citizenship achievement above the proficient standard had greater confidence than students with achievement below the proficient standard (ACARA, 2020a, pp. 107-108). In NAP – CC 2019, the correlation coefficients between confidence in civic action and civic and citizenship

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<sup>13</sup> These civic activities (rated as 'very well', 'fairly well', 'not very well' or 'not at all') were:

- *discuss news about a conflict between countries*
- *argue your opinion about a political or social issue*
- *be a candidate in a school or class election*
- *organise a group of students in order to achieve changes at school*
- *express your opinion on a current issue in a letter or email to a newspaper*
- *give a speech to your class about a social or political issue*
- *present information about a political or social issue on social media*
- *express your opinion in a comment you post on a website.*

<sup>14</sup> Figures computed from the international database for ICCS 2022 for this paper.

achievement were 0.27 in Year 6 and 0.39 in Year 10. In ICCS 2022, there was only a small difference (one scale point) between the civic self-efficacy scores for those whose civic knowledge was high (at or above level B) and those whose civic knowledge was low (below level B) (Schulz et al, 2024, p. 116).

## Other aspects of civic engagement

NAP – CC also investigated the extent to which students believed that civic action would be beneficial in their school contexts and, for Year 10 students, whether they intended to engage in civic action in the future.

*Value of civic action.* Students were asked whether they believed in the general value of civic action within their school context and beyond and whether they agreed with a set of five statement about specific aspects of civic action<sup>15</sup>. In 2019, substantial majorities (74% or more) of students at both Year 6 and Year 10 expressed agreement (combining those who agreed with those who strongly agreed) with the propositions that these forms of civic action were effective (ACARA, 2019, p. 109). Based on analyses of a reliable scale based on these items (ACARA, 2020b, p. 59), it appeared that female students saw civic action as effective to a greater extent than did male students, at Year 6 and Year 10 and consistently over four cycles of NAP – CC (ACARA, 2020a, p. 109). Moreover, student belief in the value of civic action was positively and significantly correlated with their civics and citizenship knowledge (the correlation coefficients averaging 0.25).

*Intention to engage in civic action.* Year 10 students were asked to rate the probability that they would engage in a series of activities. The most likely form of civic engagement was ‘find information about candidates before voting in an election’ which was indicated as certain or probable by more than three quarters (78%) of the students in 2019. Just a little fewer than one third (30%) indicated that they would certainly or probably ‘help a candidate or party during an election campaign’. Rather fewer of the students indicated that they would certainly or probably ‘join a trade or other union’ (20%), ‘join a political party’ (14%), or ‘stand as a candidate in local council or shire elections’ (13%) (ACARA, 2020a, p. 112). There had been few changes in these percentages over time other than a decline in the percentages who indicated that they would ‘join a trade or other union’ (from 29% in 2020). Corresponding figures for Year 8 students in ICCS 2022 were 75 per cent for ‘find information about candidates before voting in an election’ (not significantly different from the Australian Year 10 figure), 25 per cent for joining a political party and 27 per cent for joining a political party (both of which were significantly higher than the Australian Year 10 figures for 2019) (Schulz et al., 2024, p. 139).

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<sup>15</sup> The statements (with responses ‘Strongly agree’, ‘Agree’, ‘Disagree’ or ‘Strongly disagree’) were:

- *If students act together at school they can make real change happen.*
- *Elected student representatives (such as Student Council or Student Representative Council (SRC) members) contribute to school decision-making.*
- *Student participation in how schools are run can make schools better.*
- *Organising groups of students to express their opinions could help solve problems in schools.*
- *It is important for students to vote in school elections.*
- *Citizens can have strong influence on government policies in Australia (Year 10 only)*

## Globally oriented citizenship

Global citizenship has attracted increasing attention in recent years and is specifically mentioned in the Goal 4.7 of the United Nations goals for sustainable development (United Nations, 2015). Global citizenship education (GCED) has also come to prominence as a concept in which people are seen as members of a globalized community as well as being citizens of nations (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2017; UNESCO, 2015). UNESCO (2015) describes global citizenship as, ‘a sense of belonging to a broader community and common humanity’ and that it ‘emphasizes political, economic, social, and cultural interdependency and interconnectedness between the local, the national and the global’ (p. 14). ICCS 2022 reported that most participating education systems included students’ understanding of global issues and interconnections as a learning goal for civic and citizenship education (Schulz et al., 2024, p 276).

Parker and Fraillon (2016) noted that the Australian national curriculum (version 8.2) includes global citizenship concepts and content across the curriculum in civics and citizenship as well as in geography, history, and economics (ACARA, nd). However, they argue that, despite high-level commitments to global citizenship, the concept is not well defined, and this makes development of a framework for application difficult. Others have also commented on the fragility of definitions of GCED (Pashby, et al, 2020; Oxley & Morris, 2013). Parker and Fraillon (2016) further argued that many of the topics within global citizenship are also evident in civics and citizenship and social education. They argue for strengthening connections between local and global themes in a way that enhances civics and citizenship education rather than conflicts with it.

ICCS 2022 asked lower-secondary school students to rate their perceptions of the behaviours that constitute each of good conventional, social movement-related, and globally oriented citizenship. Most students viewed behaviours such as helping people in less developed countries and supporting initiatives to promote equal opportunities across the world as important for good globally oriented citizenship. Students with higher levels of civic knowledge regarded globally oriented citizenship and social movement-related citizenship behaviour as more important than those with lower levels of civic knowledge (Schulz et al., 2024). However, no consistent relationships with civic knowledge were observed for the importance of conventional citizenship. ICCS 2022 also reported that majorities of teachers of civic-related subjects included in their teaching activities related to global issues (Schulz et al., 2024, pp. 222-223 and Table 6.18).

In its 2018 cycle, the Programme for International Students Assessment (PISA) assessed global competence among 15-year-old students as an optional supplement in many countries using a cognitive test of global competence (not administered in Australia) and questionnaire items concerned with students’ self-reported awareness of global issues and cultures, skills, and attitudes (OECD, 2020, De Bortoli, et al., 2021). The optional nature of this component of PISA 2018 means that some international comparisons of interest are not available.

However, it is possible to make some informative comparisons. Australian students reported a greater awareness of global issues<sup>16</sup> than did students in participating OECD countries on average. To illustrate the global awareness of Australian students was greater than that of students in New Zealand, similar to that of students in Germany, Poland, and Ireland, but less than that of students in

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<sup>16</sup> The following issues were listed: the following global issues: climate change and global warming, global health (e.g. epidemics), migration (movement of people), international conflicts, hunger, or malnutrition in different parts of the world, causes of poverty, and equality between men and women in different parts of the world.

Canada). Similarly, Australian students reported higher levels of self-efficacy<sup>17</sup> regarding global issues than students in participating OECD countries on average. Their self-efficacy regarding global issues was greater than that of students in Ireland, New Zealand, and Scotland, but less than that of students in Germany, Poland, and Canada (De Bortoli, et al., 2021, pp. 8-16).

Australian students reported a greater ability to understand the perspectives of others than students in participating OECD countries on average and more positive attitudes to immigrants than students than students in participating OECD countries on average (DeBortoli, et al., 2021, pp. 47-52). A lower percentage, but still approximately half, of Australian students reported acting on, or keeping informed about, specified global issues than students in participating OECD countries on average (DeBortoli, Underwood and Richardson, 2021, pp. 77-78).

Four out of five Australian students reported learning about different cultures at school, but this was lower than the figure for participating OECD countries. However, Australian students were less often (43%) invited by their teachers to give an opinion about international news. This was lower than for students in participating OECD countries on average (and lower than students in Singapore, Canada, Korea, Poland, and Germany) and across the OECD. However, just over half (53%) of Australian students indicated that they analysed 'global issues together with classmates' in small groups (DeBortoli, et al., 2021, pp. 83-84).

Principals of schools reported on the inclusion of various activities related to globally oriented citizenship. Most indicated that teachers included in their teaching: intercultural learning activities, histories of diverse cultural groups that live in the country, the cultures of different cultural groups that live in the country, cultural perspectives on historical and social events, activities that encourage students' expression of diverse identities. Overall, lower percentages of students in Australia attended schools where principals reported that global issues were taught in year 10 than in participating OECD countries on average but higher percentages reported that respect for cultural diversity was covered in the curriculum (DeBortoli, et al., 2021, pp. 82-98).

## Summary and conclusions

A major review of civic education in the United States asserts that there is accumulating evidence that civic education in schools impacts the future civic engagement of young people (Campbell, 2019). That review identifies four aspects of schooling that influence civic learning: 'classroom instruction, extracurricular activities, service learning, and a school's ethos' (p. 32). Campbell (2019, p. 37) concludes that the impact of civic education is enhanced through 'an open classroom climate' where students discuss political and social issues and share their opinions with other students and their teachers. The review makes two points relevant to this paper. One is that civic education in schools can compensate for a lack of civic resources in homes and communities (see also Neundorff et al., 2016). A second is that civics assessments can have beneficial effects on understanding of 'politics and government' by encouraging a greater emphasis on civic learning in schools (Campbell & Niemi, 2016).

Our review of the sequence of six cycles of NAP – CC identifies enduring positive associations between students' achievement in civics and citizenship, positive civic values, and dispositions to engage in civic activities (consistent with those of the Australian Curriculum and the Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Declaration). While these associations should not be assumed to imply causation,

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<sup>17</sup> Self-efficacy refers to confidence in doing certain global competence-related tasks on their own.

students' development of knowledge and understanding of the content of civics and citizenship is inextricably linked to the development of their attitudes and values. Good civic and citizenship education makes the connection for students between the development of knowledge and understanding, their interest in civic issues and a disposition to engage actively in civic life. The review by Campbell (2019) points to some directions at school and classroom level that would support these outcomes of civic learning.

## Achievement in civics and citizenship

Our review of the results from NAP – CC over 15 years indicates that the achievement scores for students in Year 10 were about 100 points higher than for students in Year 6. The magnitude of this difference is similar to the within-year national standard deviation at each year level. Even though NAP-CC is not a longitudinal survey, the consistent differences in achievement between representative samples of students in Years 6 and 10 over the six study cycles suggests that considerable learning growth takes place in students over the four years of schooling from Year 6 to Year 10.

Since 2004, average Year 6 achievement in civics and citizenship, and the percentage attaining the proficient standard for Year 6, has not varied significantly. At Year 10 average achievement increased significantly between 2004 and 2010 by 23 scale points. This was followed by a decline in average Year 10 achievement from 2010 to 2019 by 31 scale points. In other words, after an increase in average Year 10 achievement to a peak in 2010, average Year 10 achievement has dropped back to 2004 levels. It would be helpful to investigate some possible reasons for these changes.

A number of characteristics that are consistently correlated with achievement in civics and citizenship have been identified in NAP – CC 2019 and these are also evident in the results of international studies.

- Year 6 students who had at least one parent with a bachelor's degree achieved scores on civics and citizenship 135 scale points higher than those whose parents had not progressed beyond Year 10 (or a difference of 47 percentage points in attainment of the proficient standard). The corresponding difference was 173 scale points for Year 10 students (or 46 percentage points in attainment of the proficient standard). These differences are larger than the difference in average achievement between Year 6 and Year 10 students.
- The difference in achievement in civics and citizenship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students was approximately 100 scale points at both Year 6 and Year 10.
- Year 6 students in metropolitan schools achieved scores on civics and citizenship 43 scale points higher than those in regional schools. The corresponding difference for Year 10 students was 49 scale points.
- Female students achieved higher average scores on civics and citizenship than did male students by 38 scale points at Year 6 and 26 scale points at Year 10. This corresponded to differences of 11 percentage points at Year 6 and seven percentage points at Year 10 (attaining the proficient standard). Over all six cycles of NAP -CC the average difference in achievement between female and male students was 25 scale points.
- There were no significant differences in civics and citizenship achievement between students, at either Year 6 or Year 10, who spoke a language other than English and those who spoke English at home.

## Values and attitudes toward civics and citizenship

NAP – CC has investigated student perceptions of the behaviours that contribute to aspects of ‘good citizenship’, that is, trust in government and institutions, attitudes to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and attitudes to Australian diversity.

- There were small differences in students’ views of what made for good citizenship between 2010 and 2019. Among Year 10 students, civics and citizenship achievement was associated with greater importance being attached to ‘social movement’ citizenship. In addition, female Year 10 students placed greater importance on ‘social movement’ citizenship than did male students.
- There were small increases in trust in civic institutions and processes between 2010 and 2019 but no change between 2016 and 2019 and students in Year 10 showed significantly lower levels of trust than students in Year 6 across all cycles since 2010.
- Positive attitudes towards Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures were stronger among Year 10 than Year 6 students, among female students than male students, and among students with higher levels of achievement in civics and citizenship than students with lower levels of achievement. In addition, positive attitudes towards Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures have strengthened since 2010.
- In NAP – CC 2019, students whose achievement was at or above the proficient standard expressed significantly more positive attitudes to Australian diversity than did students with lower achievement. In addition, female students expressed more positive views of diversity than did male students.

## Engagement with civics and citizenship

Students can experience civic engagements by participating in civic and citizenship activities within their schools and local communities, seeking and exchanging information about political and social issues, developing interests in civic and civil life, and developing their confidence in civic participation. They can also develop expectations regarding their future civic engagement as adults.

- The highest levels of civic engagement at school in 2019 were for ‘voted for a class representative’ (83% of Year 6 and 70% of Year 10 students) and lowest levels of participation were for ‘helped prepare a school webpage social media post, newspaper or magazine’ (22% of Year 6 and 17% of Year 10 students). Many students had participated in peer support, ‘buddy’ or mentoring programs (74% of Year 6 students, 48% of Year 10) or in activities in the community (66% and 61% respectively). Generally, Year 10 students reported lower rates of participation in school civic activities than did Year 6 students and female students reported higher rates of participation than did male students at both year levels.
- Between 2010 and 2019, there was a significant increase in the number of students using the internet to get news of current events on a weekly basis reaching 72% of Year 6 students and 87% of Year 10 students in 2019) and a significant decline in the numbers of students watching the news on television at least once each week (but still 67% of Year 6 students and 64% of Year 10 students). In 2019, talking about political or social issues with family was reported to happen at least once per week for 29 per cent of Year 6 (no significant change between 2010 and 2019) and 43 per cent of Year 10 students (a significant increase between 2010 and 2019).



- Among a range of civic issues, most interest was expressed in environmental issues (in which interest had increased between 2010 and 2019) and global issues, and least interest was expressed in Australian politics. Female students expressed greater interest in civic issues than did male students, especially in Year 10. Students whose civics and citizenship achievement was at or above the proficient level expressed greater interest in civic issues than those whose achievement was lower.
- The most likely form of future civic engagement was to find information about candidates before voting (three-quarters of Year 10 students). Fewer than one third indicated that they would certainly or probably help a candidate or party during an election campaign. Rather fewer (about 1 in 7) indicated that they would join a political party.

## Globally oriented citizenship

Based on the global competence component of PISA 2018 it appears that Australian 15-year-old students reported:

- a greater awareness of global issues than students in participating OECD countries (e.g. greater than students in New Zealand, similar to students in Germany, Poland, and Ireland, but less than students in Canada),
- a greater ability to understand the perspectives of others than students in participating OECD countries (e.g. greater than students in New Zealand and Scotland but less than students in Canada and Ireland), and
- more positive attitudes to immigrants than students in participating OECD countries on average (e.g. more positive than in Poland and Germany but less positive attitudes than students in Canada).

Four out of five Australian students reported learning about different cultures at school but this was lower than the figure for participating OECD countries. They were less often (43%) invited by their teachers to give an opinion about international news than for students in participating OECD countries on average (and lower than students in Singapore, Canada, Korea, Poland, and Germany).

School principals reported on the activities at their schools related to globally oriented citizenship. Overall, lower percentages of students in Australia attended schools where principals reported that global issues were taught in year 10 than in participating OECD countries on average but higher percentages reported that respect for cultural diversity was covered in the curriculum.

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## Appendix. Features of NAP – CC surveys

NAP – CC studies focus on systematic samples of students in Year 6 and Year 10. These were two-stage stratified cluster design samples with schools at each year level sampled with a probability proportional to size and a random sample of 20 students selected within each school. In NAP – CC 2019 the Year 6 achieved sample was 5611 students from 332 schools at Year 6 and 4510 students from 295 schools at Year 10 (ACARA, 2020a). In NAP – CC 2018, exclusions from the target population accounted for fewer than three per cent of the target population at each year level (ACARA, 2020, p. 21). Overall weighted student response rates, including replacement schools, were 89 per cent in Year 6 and 76 per cent in Year 10. Weights are used to generate population estimates and standard errors (or confidence intervals) take account of the cluster sample design.

The assessments used a rotated block design to maximise coverage of the field. This means that not every student answers every item but that common items enable the scores on each form to be equated to a common scale. For example, in NAP – CC 2019, there were 179 items in total and there were seven test forms at Year 6 (averaging 39 items per form) and nine test forms at Year 10 (averaging 42 items per form). Common items between Year 6 and Year 10 assessments provide for results from each year level to be reported on a common scale. For example, in NAP – CC 2019, there were 53 items that were only in the Year 6 assessment, 88 items were only in the Year 10 assessment and 38 items were included in both the Year 6 and Year 10 assessments (ACARA, 2020b).

The one-parameter Rasch Item Response Theory model was used to establish an empirical achievement scale (ACARA 2020b, p. 50 - 58). Scores over successive cycles are reported on a common scale established in NAP – CC 2004. The reporting scale was established in NAP – CC 2004 as having a national mean of 400 and a standard deviation of 100 for Year 6 students (Wernert et al., 2006, p. 37). Common (secure) items are used to link scores across cycles. For example, in NAP – CC 2019, the assessment included 30 link items at Year 6 and 40 link items at Year 10 (ACARA 2020b, p. 13).

Student achievement is also described in terms of proficiency levels. Results that are located within a proficiency level are considered to have demonstrated the understandings and skills associated with that level, and those defined as applying at lower proficiency levels. The judgements of experts in the field and analyses of students' response were used to develop descriptions for each level (Wernert et al., 2006). The proficiency level descriptors were updated in 2013, and again in 2019, to reflect developments in the framework (ACARA, 2020b, p. 64). There are six proficiency levels at equally spaced intervals across the NAP–CC scale (ACARA, 2020a, pp. 47-50). The description of each proficiency level is accompanied by examples of what students working at this level can do successfully.

NAP – CC also reports the proportions of students achieving at or above the proficient standard for each of Year 6 and Year 10. The proficient standards 'represent a 'challenging but reasonable' expectation of student achievement at year level with students needing to demonstrate more than elementary skills expected at that year level' (ACARA, 2020, p.5). This is not the same as a national minimum standard used in NAPLAN reporting. These were established through consultations with civics and citizenship education experts from all states and territories and all school sectors in 2004 (Wernert et al., 2006). The proficient standard for Year 6 and the proficient standard for Year 10 were established in 2004. The proficient standard

for Year 6 was defined as boundary between levels 1 and 2 on the NAP–CC scale (or 405 scale points). The proficient standard for Year 10 is the boundary between levels 2 and 3 on the scale (or 535 scale points).