

Senate Standing Committees on Education and Employment

The national trend of school refusal and related matters QUESTION ON NOTICE

Outcome: Schools

Department of Education Question No. IQ23-000026

The Committee provided in writing.

National attendance level target

Question

1. What is the national attendance level target for all students?
 - a. Are there different targets by year level?

Answer

Under the current National School Reform Agreement, all Australian governments have agreed to three high level outcomes, including “All students are engaged in their schooling”.

Governments are tracking progress on this outcome through the sub-outcome “*Increase the proportion of students attending school 90 per cent or more of the time, including students from priority equity cohorts*”.

There are no attendance targets specified by year level.

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Outcome: Schools

Department of Education Question No. IQ23-000027

The Committee provided in writing.

Gap between the academic outcomes of children engaged in school refusal

Question

1. How much of a gap are we seeing between the academic outcomes of children engaged in school refusal, and other students?
 - a. By what age do we see this gap emerging? How does it change over time?
 - b. How does the growth in school refusal numbers correlate with national changes in academic performance?

Answer

There is currently no national data on the reasons students do not attend school, including absenteeism due to school refusal.

Please refer to [IQ23-000028](#) regarding the correlation between attendance and academic performance.

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Outcome: Schools

Department of Education Question No. IQ23-000028

The Committee provided in writing.

Attendance impact on student's academic performance

Question

What impact does non-attendance, low attendance or sporadic attendance have on a student's academic performance?

Answer

In 2013, the University of Western Australia conducted research on the potential links between attendance and student outcomes for the former Australian Government Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations. The research found that average academic achievement on NAPLAN tests declined with any absence from school and continued to decline as absence rates increased. The research paper, *Student Attendance and Educational Outcomes: Every Day Counts*, is available online via the National Library of Australia at www.nla.gov.au.

More recently, in its 2019 *Attendance Matters* report, the Australian Institute of Teaching and School Leadership highlighted the importance of establishing regular attendance patterns in the pre and early schooling years, and of responding quickly to early signs of disengagement. This report is available at www.aitsl.edu.au.

School attendance has been in decline since 2014, before a more significant drop in 2022. Education Ministers have commissioned the Australian Education Research Organisation to investigate the causes of declining attendance and provide advice to Ministers on evidence-based approaches that support attendance.

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The national trend of school refusal and related matters QUESTION ON NOTICE

Outcome: Schools

Department of Education Question No. IQ23-000029

The Committee provided in writing.

Funding provided to state or territory bodies

Question

What funding is provided to state or territory bodies, NGOs or NFPs to deliver programs that support students or provide targeted support, specifically for students with low attendance or student achievement?

Answer

In 2023, the Australian Government will provide schools with an estimated \$27.3 billion in recurrent funding. This includes \$10.6 billion to government schools, \$9.3 billion to Catholic schools and \$7.4 billion to independent schools.

Additional funding provided to support students (which includes students with low attendance or achievement) includes:

- \$192 million in additional one-off funding to schools for extra student mental health and wellbeing initiatives, including student engagement initiatives
- \$10.75 million for a new voluntary mental health check tool to enable schools to ensure students get the support they need, and
- \$307.2 million over 5 years (2023 to 2027) to deliver the National Student Wellbeing Program which funds Student Wellbeing Officers and Chaplains in schools to support the wellbeing of their students.

In the 2023-24 Budget the Australian Government announced:

- \$40 million in additional funding to help schools in Central Australia better engage with young people and increase school enrolment and education outcomes, and
- \$32.8 million to enable the Clontarf Foundation to extend its program in 2024, supporting up to 12,500 First Nations boys and young men to improve their confidence, school engagement, Year 12 attainment and post school pathways.

Further information about Australian Government funding to support students is provided in the 2023-24 Portfolio Budget Statement, available on the Department of Education website.