

Indigenous Students

As a group, Indigenous students face significant barriers to educational achievement. In order to overcome these barriers many Indigenous parents are enrolling their children in Independent schools.

Independent schools serve a broad range of students, reflecting the diversity of Australian society.

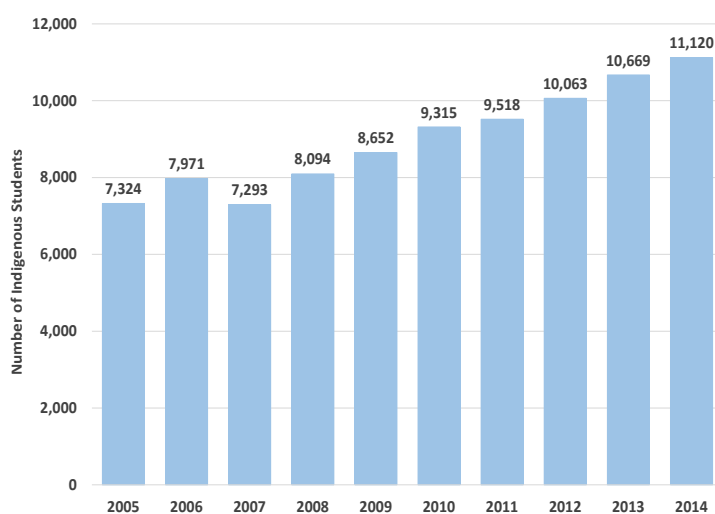
Independent school enrolments include students from a variety of regions, religions, social backgrounds and socio-economic circumstances and students experiencing a range of educational disadvantage.

Indigenous students in Independent schools

Indigenous student enrolments are spread broadly across the sector.

In 2014 there were 11,120 Indigenous students enrolled in 776 Independent schools. 72 per cent of Independent schools in Australia enrolled Indigenous students in 2014.

Growth rates of Indigenous students in Independent sector – 2005 to 2014



Note: The reduction in growth of Indigenous students observed between 2006 and 2007 is a result of a number of Independent Catholic schools with a high percentage of Indigenous students becoming systemic Catholic schools from 2007.

Enrolments of Indigenous students in Independent schools have grown at an average of more than 5 per cent per year over the last two decades.

There are some Independent schools that provide education to significant populations of Indigenous students, and some Independent schools are entirely Indigenous. A significant number of these schools are located in rural or remote areas.

It is often the case that Independent schools in remote Indigenous communities are the sole providers of education for these communities; 36 schools in the Independent sector have an Indigenous enrolment of more than 50 per cent.

Many Independent schools are involved in community based programs to provide scholarships to Indigenous students.

Other Independent schools, such as urban and regional boarding schools, also have large numbers of Indigenous students. Many Independent boarding schools provide scholarships to support access to education for Indigenous students or are involved in community based programs to provide scholarships to these students.

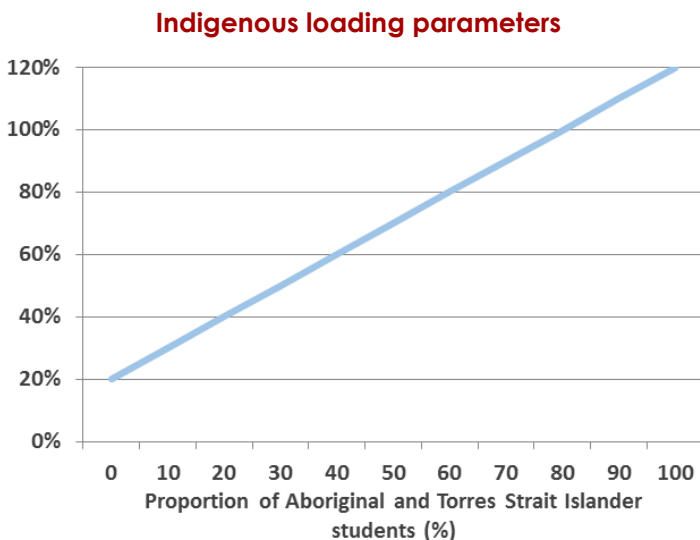
Indigenous students in the Independent Schools Sector, 2014

Indigenous students enrolments	11,120
Independent schools with 50%+ Indigenous enrolment	36
Independent schools with Indigenous enrolments	776
Independent boarding schools with Indigenous enrolments	128

Funding for Indigenous students

Under the Schooling Resource Standard (SRS) model, school funding for Indigenous students comprises of two main components:

- The 'per student' component is based on the Schooling Resource Standard (SRS) which aims to measure the cost of effective and efficient provision of schooling. Majority Indigenous schools and remote 'sole provider' schools are exempt from the 'capacity to contribute' requirement and are set to receive the full SRS per student amount, if and when the full transition occurs.
- Every Indigenous student in every school also attracts a loading. The loading starts at 20 per cent of the per student amount for the first Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander student in a school, increasing up to 120 per cent for schools with 100 per cent Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.



In theory, under the SRS funding model, all Indigenous students are entitled to the same loading amount. However, under the transition arrangements schools will not receive their full entitlement under the loadings until the model is fully implemented. Until then the majority of Independent schools are only receiving a proportion of their additional funding entitlement under the SRS model.

Governments should provide adequate funding to meet the needs of Indigenous students, no matter which school they attend.

Also, loadings provided to Independent schools remove the capacity within the sector to provide cross-sectoral support.

As the only non-systemic school sector, the new funding arrangements mean that the only sector to lose their

capacity to access co-ordinated sector-wide support and economies of scale will be the Independent sector. This inequity is of considerable concern to the Independent schools sector.

Funding arrangements need to ensure that Indigenous students are not disadvantaged because their parents have chosen an Independent school.

Indigenous students in rural and remote areas

Independent schools that serve significant or solely Indigenous student populations often have very limited capacity to raise private income through fees and fundraising; in many cases this ability is non-existent. These schools rely heavily on government assistance to maintain their operations.

The majority of these schools face high costs, in employment, provision of staff housing, transport, and accessing professional and student learning and cultural opportunities, due to their remoteness or distance from large population centres.

Schools frequently need to provide many additional educational, health, recreational, wellbeing and pastoral care services in order to assist students to learn successfully.

2014 -15 Budget additional funding

In the 2014-15 Budget the Australian Government recognised the additional costs associated with boarding and educating Indigenous students from remote communities. The Budget allocated \$6.8 million to specific non government schools for these costs.

The assistance will be provided to non government schools with more than 50 Indigenous boarding students from remote or very remote areas, or where 50 per cent or more of their boarding students are Indigenous students from remote or very remote areas. This is anticipated to apply to approximately 15 schools.

This additional allocation is an interim measure for one year to support schools which qualify while a broader welfare review is conducted. While recognition of the additional costs is welcomed, a longer term solution is required for the future viability of these schools.