

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

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# State of Education in NSW - 2018

Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation



## Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation

The Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation (CESE) undertakes in-depth analysis of education programs and outcomes across early childhood, school, training and higher education to inform whole-of-government, evidence-based decision-making. Put simply, it seeks to find out what works best.

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- build capacity across the whole education sector so that everyone can make better use of data and evidence.

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# List of acronyms and abbreviations

<b>ABS</b>	Australian Bureau of Statistics
<b>ACARA</b>	Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority
<b>ACECQA</b>	Australian Children's Education & Care Quality Authority
<b>AIHW</b>	Australian Institute of Health and Welfare
<b>ATAR</b>	Australian Tertiary Admission Rank
<b>CALD</b>	Culturally and Linguistically Diverse
<b>CCB</b>	Child Care Benefit
<b>COAG</b>	Council of Australian Governments
<b>HSC</b>	Higher School Certificate
<b>NAPLAN</b>	National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy
<b>NCVER</b>	National Centre for Vocational Education Research
<b>NECECC</b>	National Early Childhood Education and Care Collection
<b>NESA</b>	NSW Education Standards Authority
<b>OECD</b>	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
<b>SES</b>	Socioeconomic Status
<b>VET</b>	Vocational Education and Training

# Introduction

Education provides the foundation for long-term social and economic success, both for individuals and the community. In light of reforms aimed at improving outcomes across the education spectrum, it is important for policy-makers, researchers, educators and the general public to have access to information about how NSW is tracking.

The third biennial edition of the State of Education report presents trend data on key education indicators in NSW. It provides an overarching snapshot of performance across early childhood education, schooling, vocational education and training, higher education and post-school destinations.

The Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation is committed to bringing together and sharing information about what NSW education is achieving, what has improved, and where there is room for improvement. The 2018 State of Education in NSW report provides this.

## Data notes and equity groups

The report presents the most recent data available as at 30 June 2018, with up to ten years of trend data provided where possible and some national data included where relevant.

International measures published in the first State of Education report are currently the most recent available and are not repeated here. Data is selected from a range of sources, which may be subject to different protocols, definitions and calculation methods. Different data sources also have different collection periods and release dates – for example, Census data is updated only every five years, whereas other collections are more frequent.

Caution is advised when interpreting graphs showing trends related to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, as changes could partly reflect improvements in the rate of identification by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people along with real changes over time.

### Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Students

Throughout the report the term 'Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander' is used to encompass the many nations, language groups and clans in NSW, including those from the Torres Strait. This is consistent with the national approach in which 'Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander' is the accepted term (ABS, 2014).

There is a known under-reporting of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander identity across all datasets.

### Remoteness Area

This is based on the SA1 of the school location using the Australian Standard Geographical Classification (ASGC) Remoteness Structure. The Regional, Remote and Very Remote areas have been grouped into a single Regional/Remote category. No Remoteness Area is available for students who completed the HSC at recognised schools outside Australia.

### SES Quartile

This is based on the SA1 of the school location using Socio-Economic Indexes for Australia (SEIFA), 2016, Index of Relative Socio-economic Advantage and Disadvantage (IRSAD). No SES quartile is available for students who completed the HSC at schools outside Australia.

# 1. Early childhood education

The early years of life have a profound impact on children's future cognitive, social, emotional and physical development (COAG, 2009). It is well documented that high quality early childhood education in the year before full-time schooling can help children develop skills that will assist them to transition to school and gain the skills needed to succeed later in life (AIHW, 2012).

## The National Quality Framework and Standard

The National Quality Framework aims to raise the quality of early childhood education and care through the National Quality Standard. The framework took effect in 2012 and applies to most long day care, family day care, preschool/kindergarten and outside school hours care services. The Standard aims to provide consistent information about the quality of early childhood education and care services, with the assessment of all services expected to take some time. Other changes include improved educator to child ratios, new qualification requirements and a national assessment and rating process.

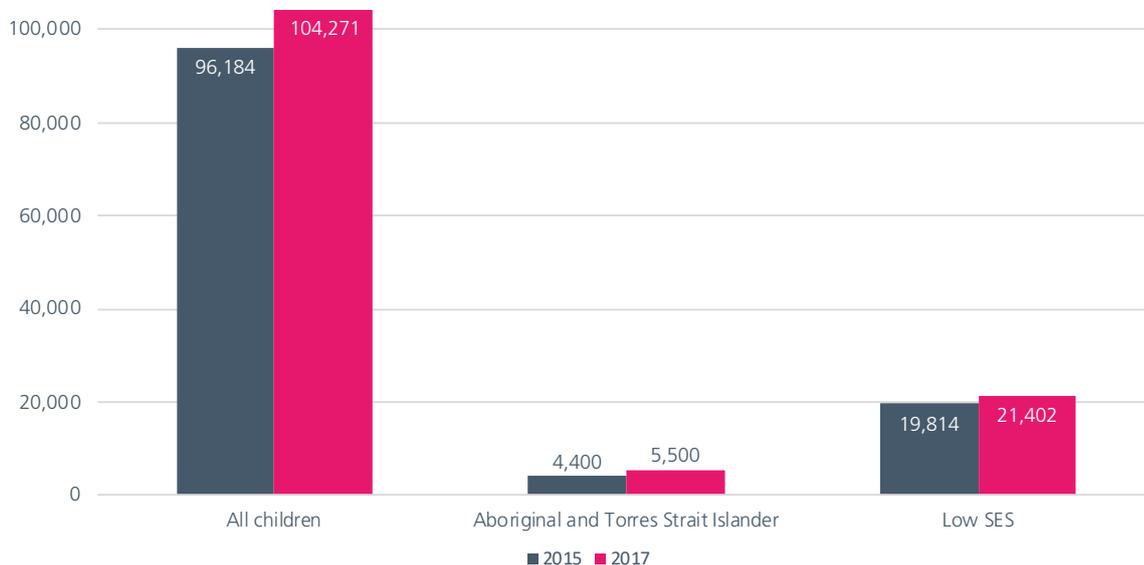
## Enrolments

**The number of 4 and 5 year old children enrolled in a preschool program in early childhood education is increasing.** As at 2017, there were 104,271 children enrolled in a preschool program before starting full-time schooling in NSW. Of that total, 5,500 children were Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and 21,402 were from low SES family backgrounds.

Figure 1.1

Number of 4 and 5 year olds enrolled in a NSW preschool program

Source: ABS, Preschool Education Australia, 2017



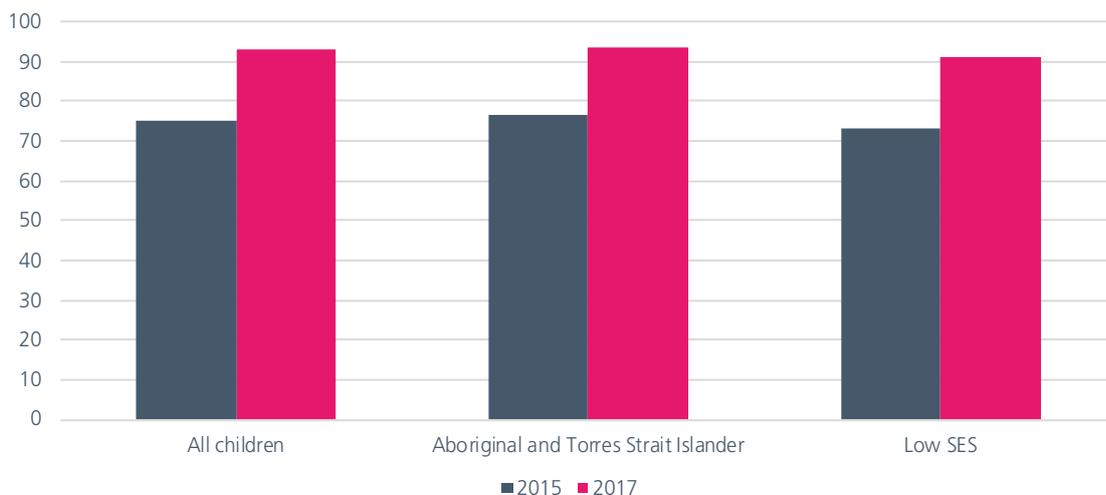
Australian governments made a commitment that by 2013, all children in the year before formal schooling will have access to high quality early childhood education programs delivered by degree qualified early childhood teachers, for 15 hours per week, 40 weeks of the year, in public, private and community-based preschools and child care.

Of the 104,271 children enrolled in a preschool program in NSW in 2017, 93.2% attended for 15 hours or more per week. This represents an increase from 75.3% in 2015. Similar increases were noted for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and children from low SES backgrounds.

**Figure 1.2**

Proportion (%) of 4 and 5 year olds enrolled in a NSW preschool program (15+ hours per week)

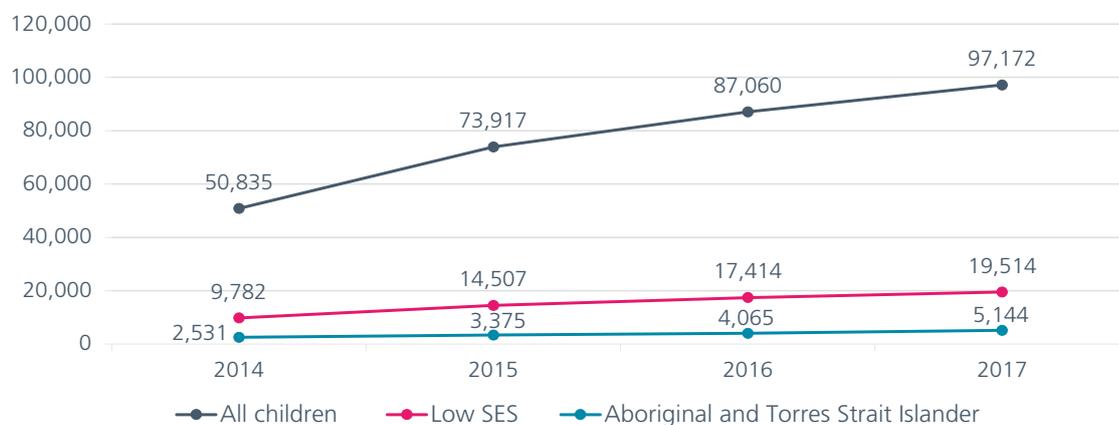
Source: ABS, Preschool Education Australia, 2017



**Figure 1.3**

Number of 4-5 year olds enrolled in a NSW preschool program (15+ hours per week)

Source: ABS, Preschool Education Australia, 2017

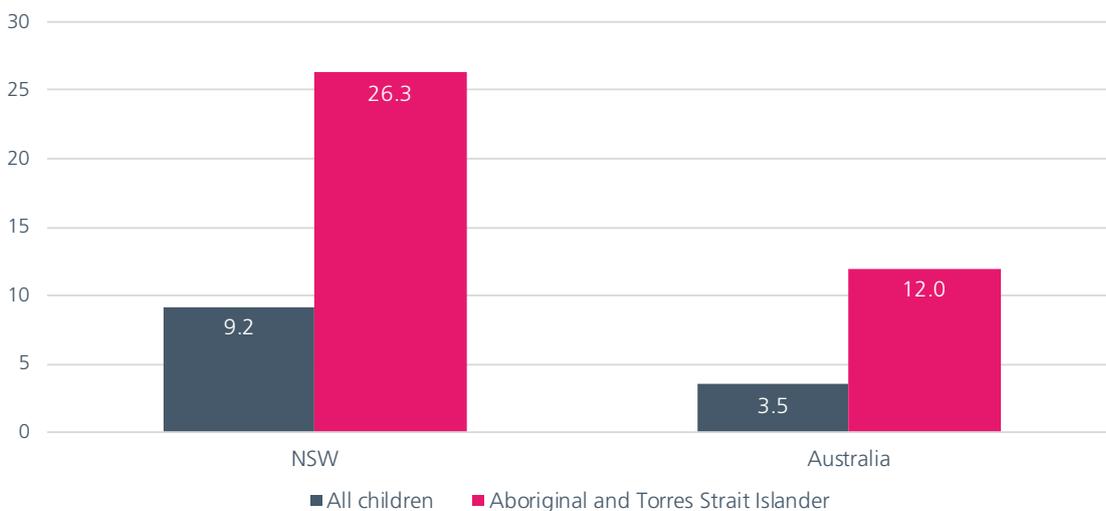


From 2016 to 2017, the number of children enrolled for 15 hours or more increased by 9.2% in NSW, compared to 3.5% nationally. Enrolments for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children also increased substantially – by 26.3% in NSW, compared to 12% nationally.

**Figure 1.4**

Increase in children enrolled in a preschool program (attending 15+ hours per week) between 2016 and 2017

Source: ABS, Preschool Education Australia, 2017



## Early childhood teachers

Teachers working in early childhood settings with university qualifications have been shown to improve outcomes for young children (Torii K, Fox S & Cloney D, 2017). Qualified teachers have a greater understanding of child development, and the ability to lead activities that inspire children and help them learn and develop (ACECQA, 2016).

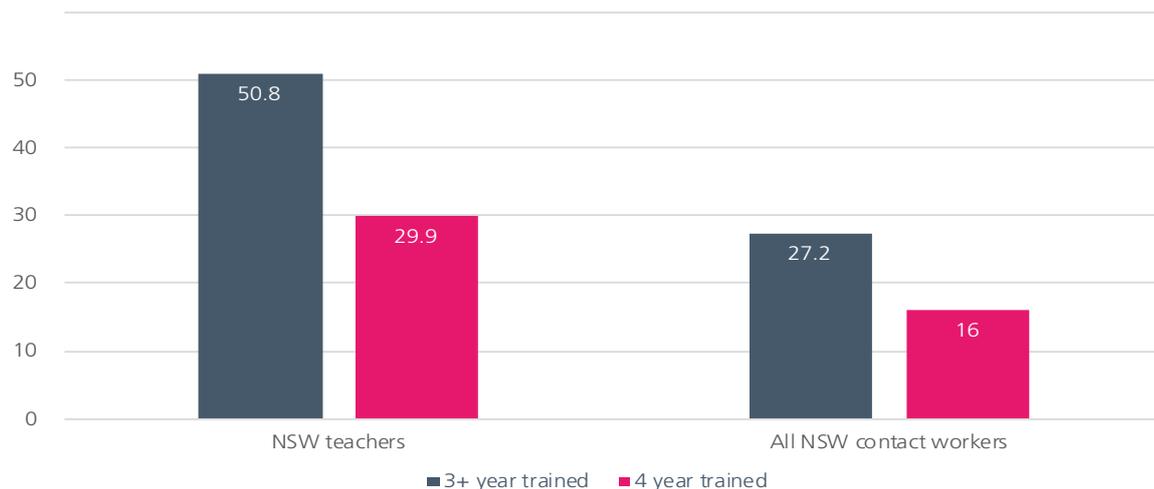
**In 2016, around one half of all teachers delivering a preschool program were university trained, and more than one quarter of all primary contact staff were university trained.** Of those teachers delivering a preschool program in 2016, 50.8% were at least 3 year trained, with 29.9% at least 4 year university trained. Of primary contact staff delivering a preschool program, 27.2% were at least 3 year trained, with 16% at least 4 year trained.

**Figure 1.5**

Proportion (%) of teachers and contact workers\* delivering a preschool program who are university trained and early childhood qualified, 2016

Source: Report on Government Services 2018, vol. B Early childhood education, Productivity Commission, Canberra, Table 3A.32

\*Teachers include: principal, director, coordinator, teacher-in-charge and group leader/teacher. Primary contact staff include: assistant/aide, as well as the teacher roles listed above.



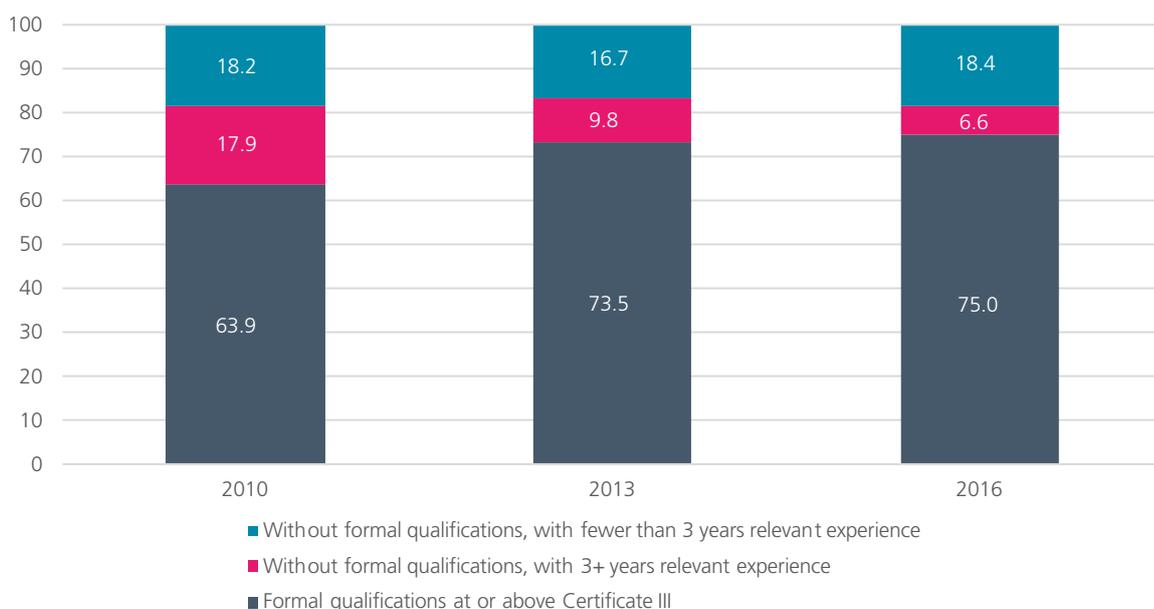
From 2016, NSW early childhood teachers are required to participate in the teacher accreditation process. This has created a register of up to 8,000 university qualified early childhood teachers.

Between 2010 and 2016 there was an increase in the number of paid primary contact staff with formal qualifications at or above Certificate III, employed by Australian Government child care benefit approved early childhood services. In 2016, 75% of staff had formal qualifications of Certificate III or above, compared with 63.9% in 2010.

**Figure 1.6**

Proportion (%) of paid primary contact staff employed by the Australian Government CCB approved child care service, by qualification, NSW

Source: Report on Government Services 2018, vol. B Early childhood education, Productivity Commission, Canberra, Table 3A.30



As part of the National Quality Framework, early childhood services are assessed and rated against 7 quality areas:

- educational program and practice
- children's health and safety
- physical environment
- staffing arrangements
- relationships with children
- collaborative partnerships with families and communities
- governance and leadership.

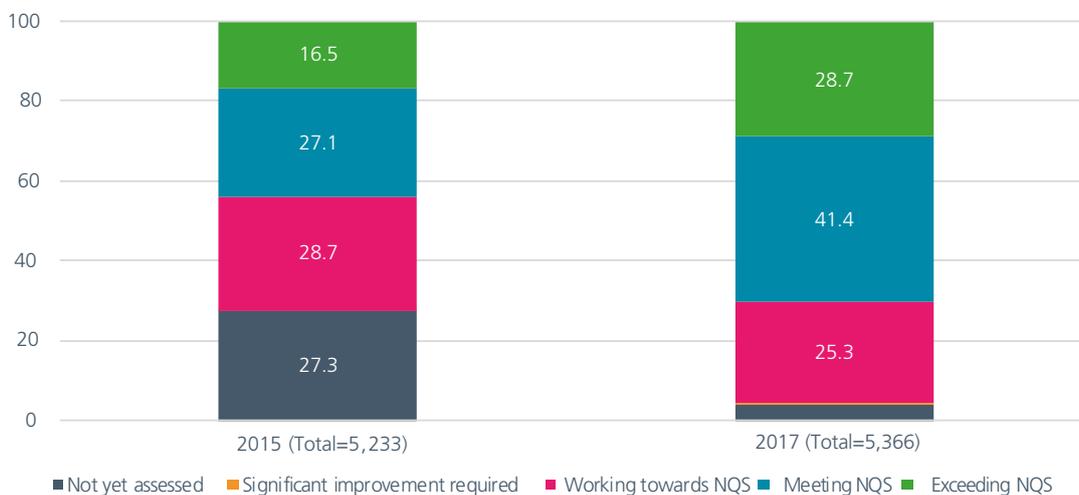
Higher-risk services are being assessed ahead of other services, possibly lowering the percentage of services meeting or exceeding the Standard.

Data published quarterly by ACECQA show that as of December 2017, only 3.9% of approved NSW services are yet to be assessed against the National Quality Standard. Of the services rated, 70.4% were meeting or exceeding the Standard, up from 44% in December 2015.

**Figure 1.7**

Proportion (%) of services by assessment and National Quality Standard (NQS) rating NSW

Source: Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA) NQF Snapshot 2017 Q4, Table 6



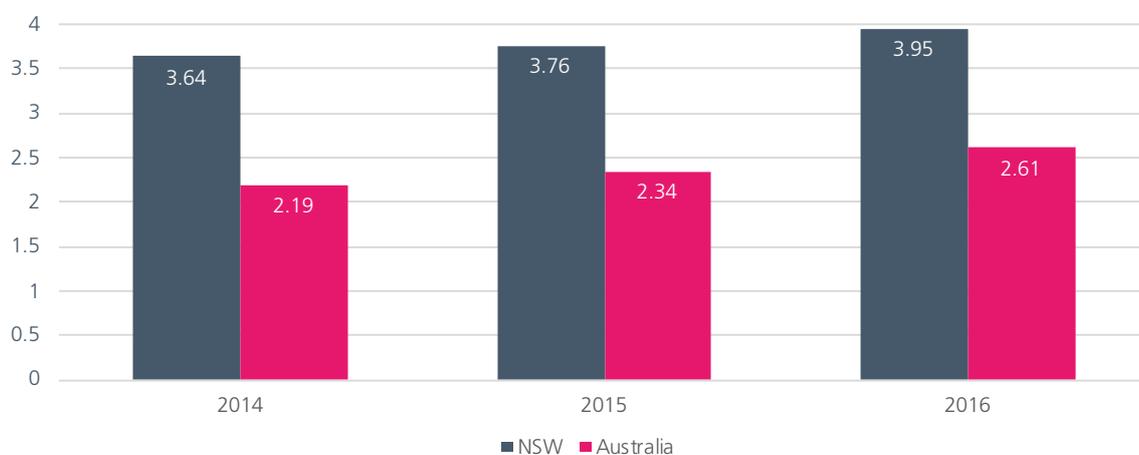
## Costs

The median hourly cost for a child enrolled in a preschool program in NSW (after subsidies) has risen from \$3.64 in 2014 to \$3.95 in 2016. The hourly cost in NSW was consistently higher than the Australian average, which increased from \$2.19 to \$2.61 over the same period.

**Figure 1.8**

Median hourly cost (\$) for a child aged 4-5 years enrolled in a preschool program (after subsidies)

Source: Report on Government Services 2018, vol. B Early childhood education, Productivity Commission, Canberra, Table 3A.25



## 2. School education

### Attendance

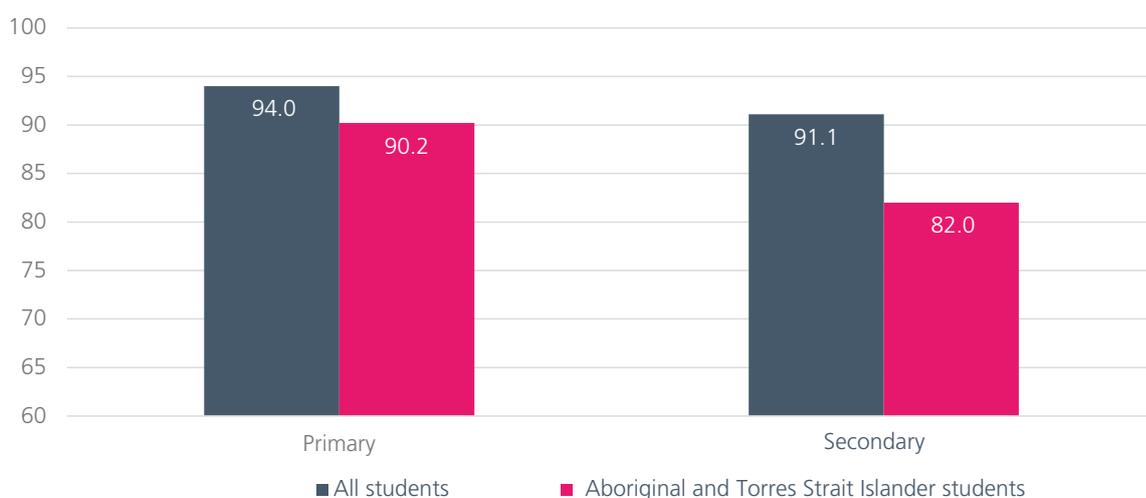
Research shows that regular school attendance has a significant influence on educational outcomes, positive peer relationships and the basic social skills essential for later-life success (Zubrick et al., 2013).

**School attendance rates remained steady between 2015 and 2017.** Attendance rates are consistently higher in primary school than in secondary school – a pattern observed among all student equity groups. The disparities in attendance rates between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and all students are evident in primary school (94% of all students), compared to 90.2% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. The gap widens during the secondary school years.

**Figure 2.1**

Attendance rates (%) for primary and secondary students, NSW, 2017

Source: Report on Government Services 2018, vol. B School education, Productivity Commission, Canberra, Table 4A.18



### NAPLAN

The best indicator of success in life after school is a student's literacy and numeracy skills. These skills are strongly associated with employment, higher salaries and good health (OECD, 2015). They are also important for lifelong learning and help lead to productive and rewarding participation in the community.

NAPLAN is an annual literacy and numeracy assessment for students in Years 3, 5, 7 and 9. It tests the core skills essential for every child to progress through school and life, such as reading, writing, spelling, grammar and numeracy. The tests provide parents and schools with an understanding of how individual students are performing at the time of the tests. They also provide schools, states and territories with information about how education programs are working and which areas need to be prioritised for improvement.

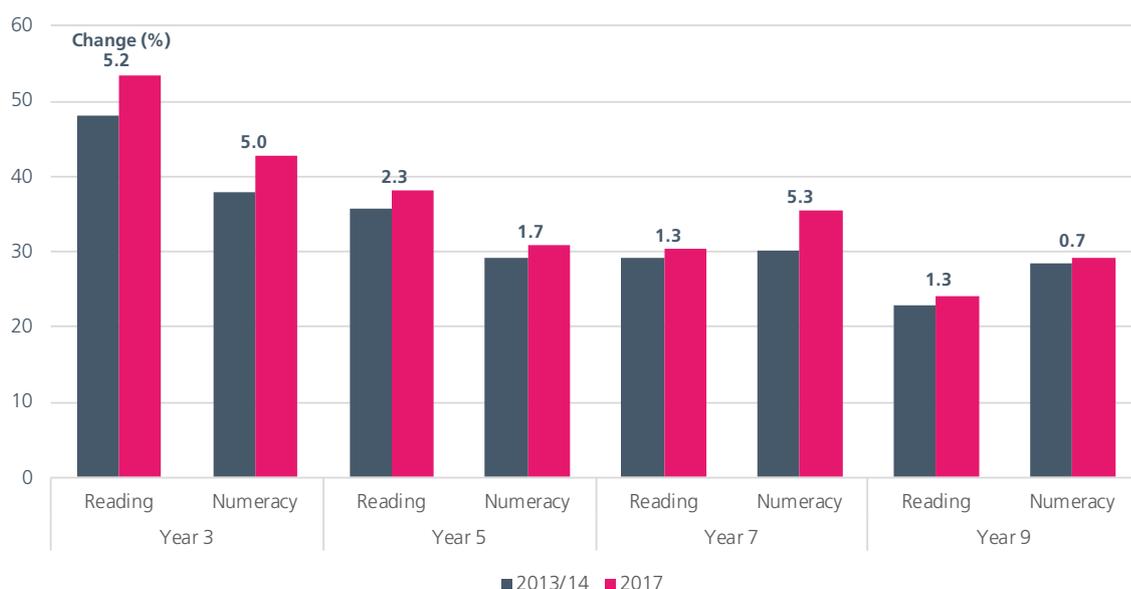
Results are reported along a national achievement scale and are divided into ten bands. Six bands are used for reporting at each year level. The higher the band, the increasingly complex knowledge and skills demonstrated by students.

Figure 2.2

Proportion (%) of students achieving in the top two NAPLAN bands, NSW

Source: ACARA, NAPLAN Achievement in Reading, Persuasive Writing, Language Conventions and Numeracy: National Report for 2017

The proportion of all students from Years 3-9 in NSW achieving in the top two bands in numeracy and reading increased between 2013/14 and 2017.



**Note:** One of the NSW Premier's Priorities is to increase the proportion of students in the top two NAPLAN bands. The baseline used for the Premier's Priority is an average of 2013/2014 results.

## Retention

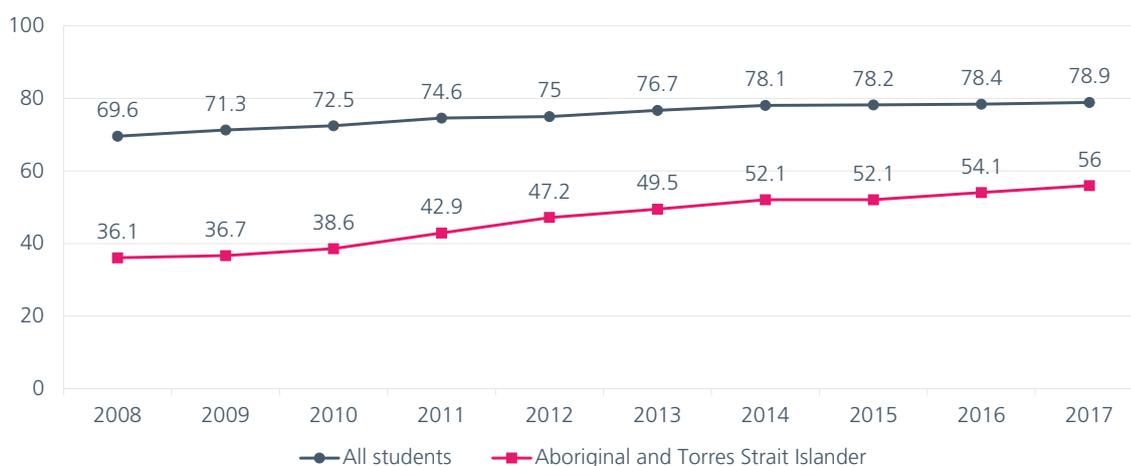
The apparent retention rate is commonly used as a proxy measure of school completion. It is calculated by dividing the number of students in Year 12 by the number of students who were in Year 7 five years prior. This statistic is an 'apparent' retention rate as it does not track each individual student. By monitoring this, it provides an indicative measure of student engagement and what proportions of students are leaving school after completing Year 12.

The Year 7 to Year 12 apparent school retention rate has steadily increased for all students in NSW since 2008. The data also shows that the apparent retention rate for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students has consistently been lower than the rate for all students in NSW. There have been marked improvements in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander retention over the last decade. **In 2017, 56% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students were progressing through to their final year of schooling, an increase from 36% in 2008.**

Figure 2.3

Full time apparent retention rates (%) for Years 7-12, NSW

Source: ABS, Schools Australia 2017 Table 64a; Schools Australia 2016 Table 64a



## Attainment

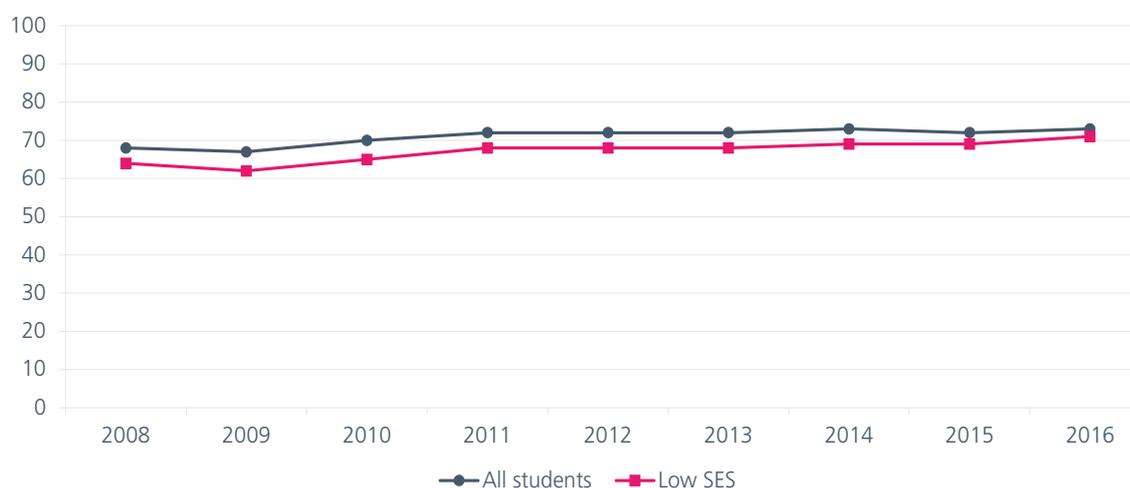
Attainment refers to the number of students who meet the requirements of a Year 12 certificate (HSC in NSW), as a percentage of the estimated potential Year 12 population.

The Year 12 attainment rate for young people from low-SES backgrounds has increased from 64% in 2008 to 71% in 2016. This growth was most pronounced between 2009 and 2011, where the Year 12 attainment rate increased by six percentage points. The Year 12 attainment rate for low SES students remains 2.0 percentage points below all students (73% in 2016).

**Figure 2.4**

Year 12 attainment rates (%), NSW

Source: Report on Government Services 2018, vol. B School education, Productivity Commission, Canberra, Table 4A.55

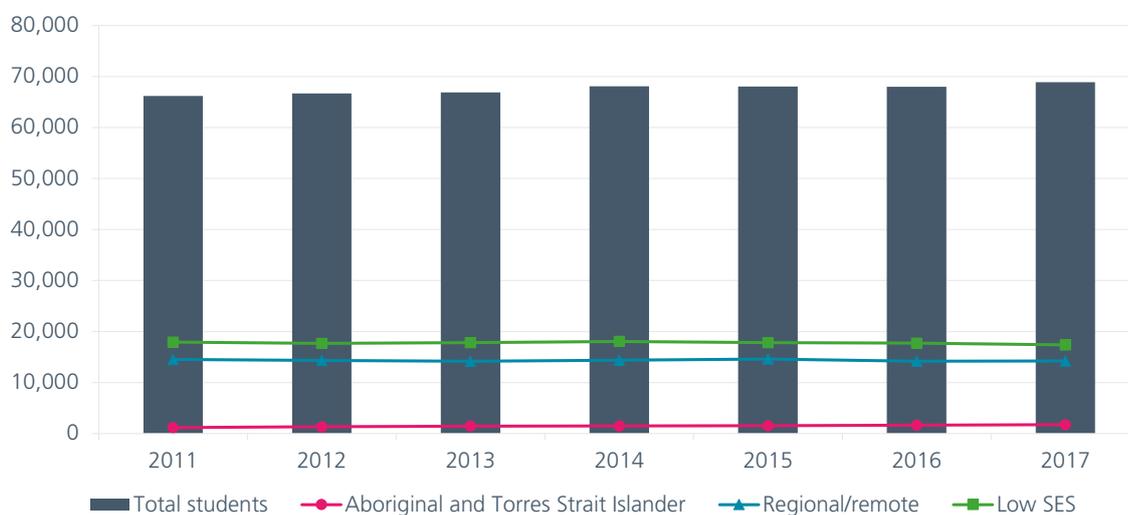


The total number of HSC completions across equity groups has remained consistent between 2011 and 2017 with the exception in the number of completions for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, which increased from 1,169 to 1,750.

**Figure 2.5**

Number of students awarded the HSC, NSW

Source: (Unpublished) NSW Education Standards Authority



Students may complete their pattern of study requirements over 5 years. The HSC can be awarded to students in NSW schools, mature age students completing their HSC through TAFE, or students studying at recognised schools outside NSW.

In 2017, 82.9% of all students awarded the HSC completed an ATAR eligible pattern of study. For all equity groups, fewer students undertake an ATAR eligible pattern of study, especially Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, where just over half take this pattern of study.

**Figure 2.6**

Proportion (%) of HSC students completing an ATAR eligible program, NSW

Source: (Unpublished) NSW Education Standards Authority



## VET delivered to secondary students

Students in NSW schools can undertake VET as part of their HSC. This is dual accredited – students receive a qualification under the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) and the VET units count towards their HSC. The AQF defines the requirements needed to achieve formal qualifications in Australia, with levels ranging from 1 to 10. As levels increase, more complex skills, knowledge and/or autonomy are needed. Currently, AQF Certificate level II or above is recognised as the vocational equivalent of Year 12. Certain VET units include an external examination, the results of which can also contribute to an ATAR.

Around 30% of students awarded the HSC in 2017 were issued with a qualification at AQF level II or above. This rate is substantially higher for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, where 53.5% completed the HSC and were issued a qualification at AQF level II or above. 43% of the HSC students from regional/remote areas and 41.1% of low SES students received an AQF level II or above qualification.

**Figure 2.7**

Proportion (%) of HSC students with a qualification at AQF level II or above, NSW

Source: (Unpublished) NSW Education Standards Authority



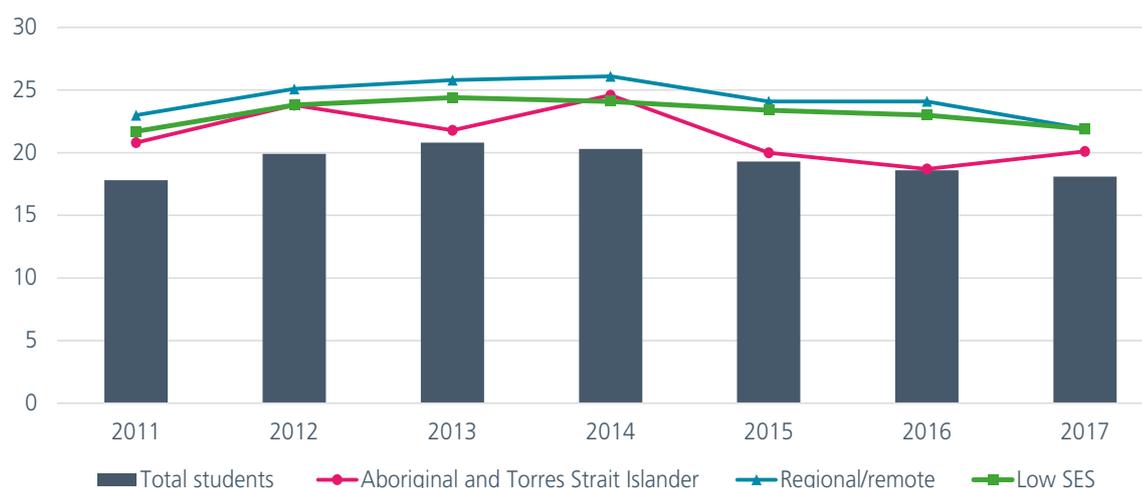
**Note:** A student is counted if they were awarded the HSC and issued with at least one qualification at AQF Level II or above. The year refers to the year in which they were awarded the HSC. Their AQF qualification(s) may have been completed at any time within the 5-year HSC credential window. Students with more than one AQF qualification are counted only once.

In 2017, 18.1% of all students awarded the HSC were issued with at least one qualification at AQF level II or above and completed an ATAR eligible pattern of study. This figure was slightly higher for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, students from low SES backgrounds and students from regional/remote areas.

Figure 2.8

Proportion (%) of HSC students with a qualification at AQF level II or above and an ATAR, NSW

Source: (Unpublished) NSW Education Standards Authority



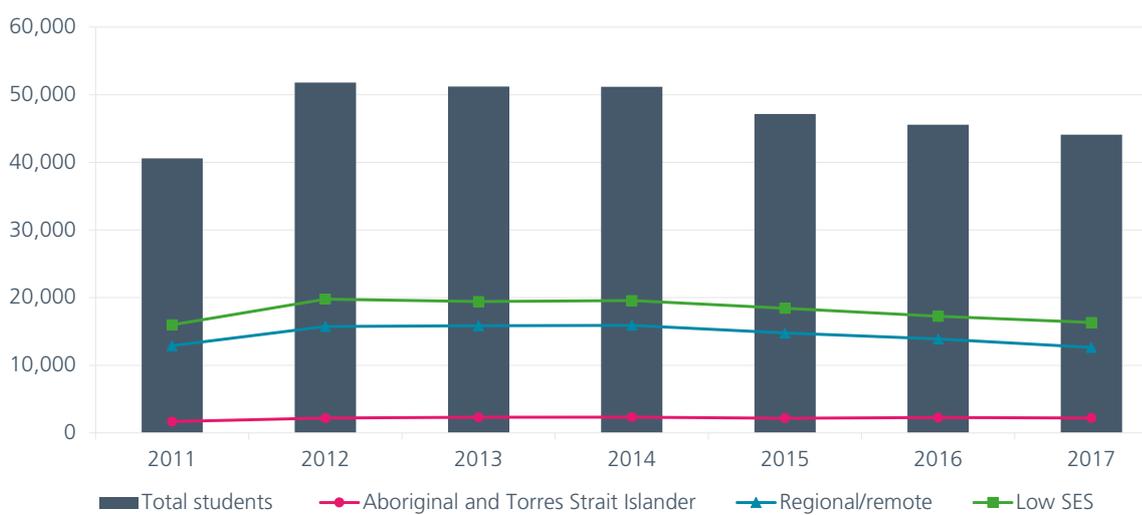
**Note:** A student is counted if they were awarded the HSC, were issued with at least one qualification at AQF Level II or above and completed an ATAR eligible pattern of study. Their AQF qualification(s) may have been completed at any time within the 5-year HSC credential window. Students with more than one AQF qualification are counted only once.

The total number of students with a qualification at AQF level II or above has been declining since 2012. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student numbers with a qualification at AQF level II or above have remained steady since 2012. There has been a decline in overall numbers of low SES students and regional/remote students since a peak in 2012.

Figure 2.9

Number of students with a qualification at AQF level II or above, by equity groups, NSW

Source: (Unpublished) NSW Education Standards Authority



**Note:** Students undertaking VET are issued with the relevant AQF credentials regardless of their eligibility for the HSC. The figures include students who completed the HSC, students completing Preliminary and/or HSC courses who have not yet met the requirements for the HSC, or students who may have left school during the reporting year.

It is important to note that all VET in schools curriculum in NSW is developed or endorsed by NESA and is based on national training package qualifications. Depending on the specific Industry Curriculum Framework syllabus or VET Endorsed Course, NESA may structure courses to result in a Statement of Attainment qualification rather than a full qualification outcome on completion. This can mean that interpretation of completion data does not tell the full story.

NESA VET curriculum is based on national training packages which are under continuous improvement and change regularly, therefore courses and outcomes can not always be compared.

### 3. Post-school destinations

There are many pathways for students once they exit the secondary school setting, including post-school education, training and employment. This section provides information on education pathways, attainments and destinations of young people in NSW. NSW monitors post-school pathways using sample surveys. It is important to remember that these estimates are based on the responses of a small number of the total students and may vary from year to year because of the differences in the characteristics of students randomly selected to participate.

#### Year 12 completers

In 2016, 70.2% of Year 12 completers were undertaking some form of education and training, 27.1% were employed or looking for work, while 2.8% were not in the labour force, education or training. Studying a Bachelor degree was the most common form of further education and training, with 51.2% of Year 12 completers studying at this level.

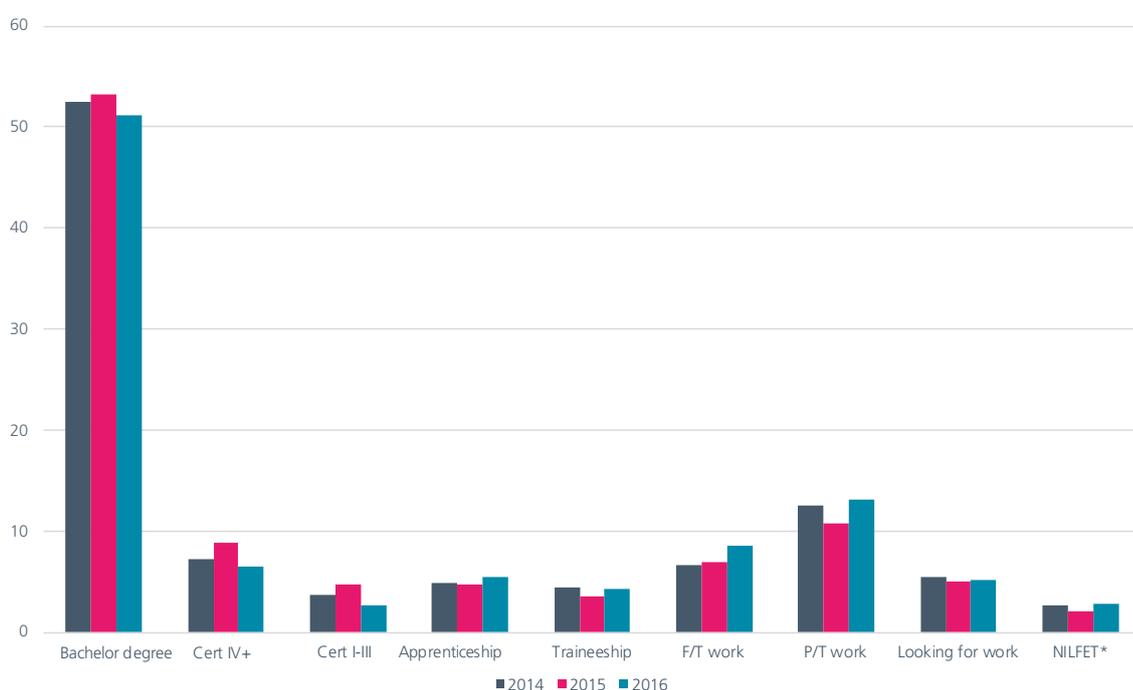
There was a small decrease in the proportion of Year 12 completers entering some form of education and training between 2015 and 2016. In particular the proportion of Year 12 completers entering VET courses not associated with an apprenticeship or traineeship dropped from 13.7% in 2015 to 9.2% in 2016.

**Figure 3.1**

Main post-school destination of Year 12 completers (%), NSW

Source: NSW Secondary Students' Post-School Destinations and Expectations 2016 Annual Report.

\*NILFET: Not in labour force, education or training



## Early school leavers

In 2016, more than half of early school leavers were undertaking some form of education or training. The main post-school destination continues to be apprenticeships (27.8% of early school leavers).

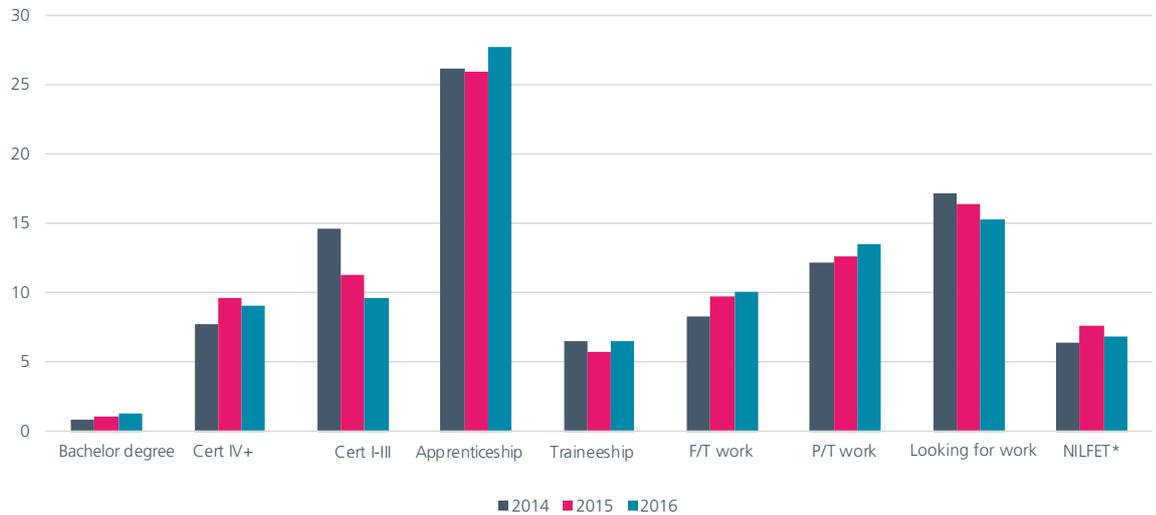
Since 2014 there have been several small changes in the main post-school destination of early school leavers in NSW. The most notable change is a decrease in participation in Certificate I-III courses (down 3.3 percentage points in 2015 and 5.0 percentage points from 2014 to 2016).

**Figure 3.2**

Main post-school destination of early school leavers (%), NSW

Source: NSW Secondary Students' Post-School Destinations and Expectations 2016 Annual Report.

\*NILFET: Not in labour force, education or training



## Participation in further education or training

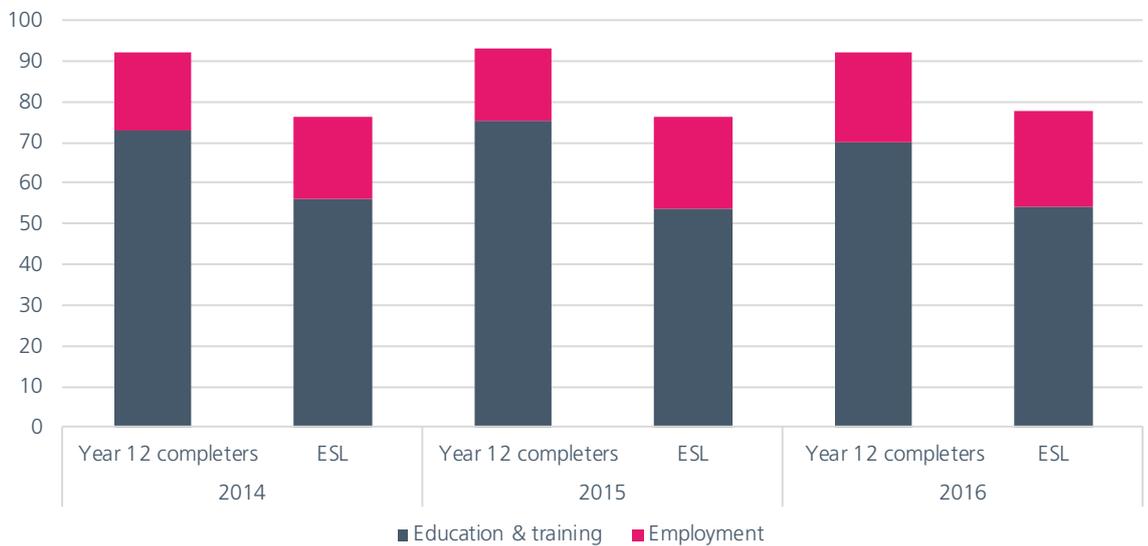
Overall participation in further education or training continues to differ markedly between Year 12 completers and early school leavers. Of Year 12 completers, 70.2% were currently participating in some form of further education or training in 2016. By comparison, only 54.3% of early school leavers were currently participating in some form of further education or training.

**Figure 3.3**

Post-school participation in education & training and employment (%), Year 12 completers and early school leavers (ESL), NSW

Source: NSW Secondary Students' Post-School Destinations and Expectations 2016 Annual Report.

\*NILFET: Not in labour force, education or training



## Gender and age

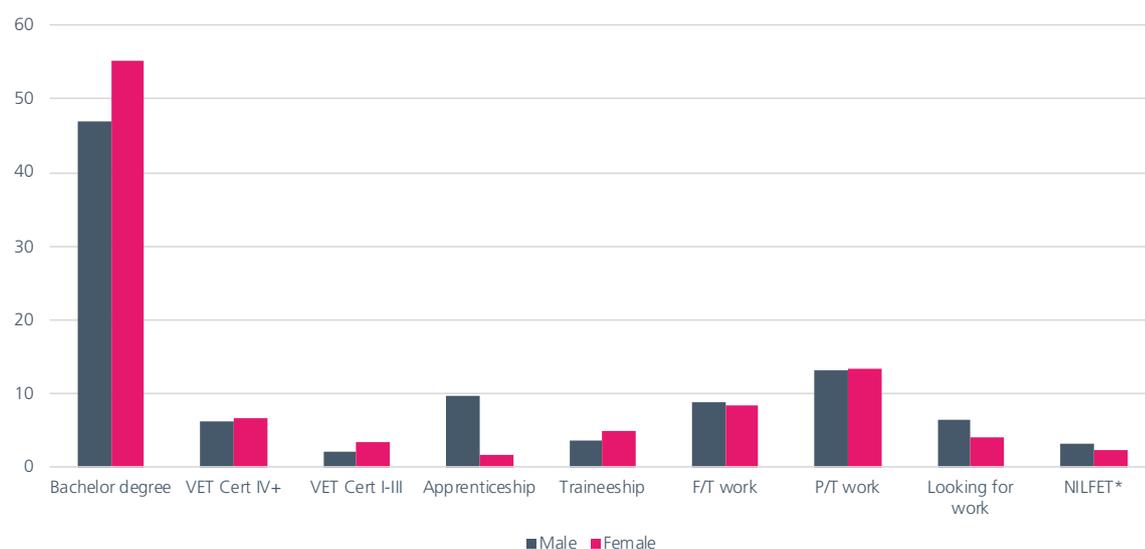
In 2016, female Year 12 completers were more likely to enter a Bachelor degree than their male counterparts. In comparison, male Year 12 completers were more likely to have entered an apprenticeship.

**Figure 3.4**

Main post-school destination of Year 12 completers (%) by gender, NSW, 2016

Source: NSW Secondary Students' Post-School Destinations and Expectations 2016 Annual Report.

\*NILFET: Not in labour force, education or training



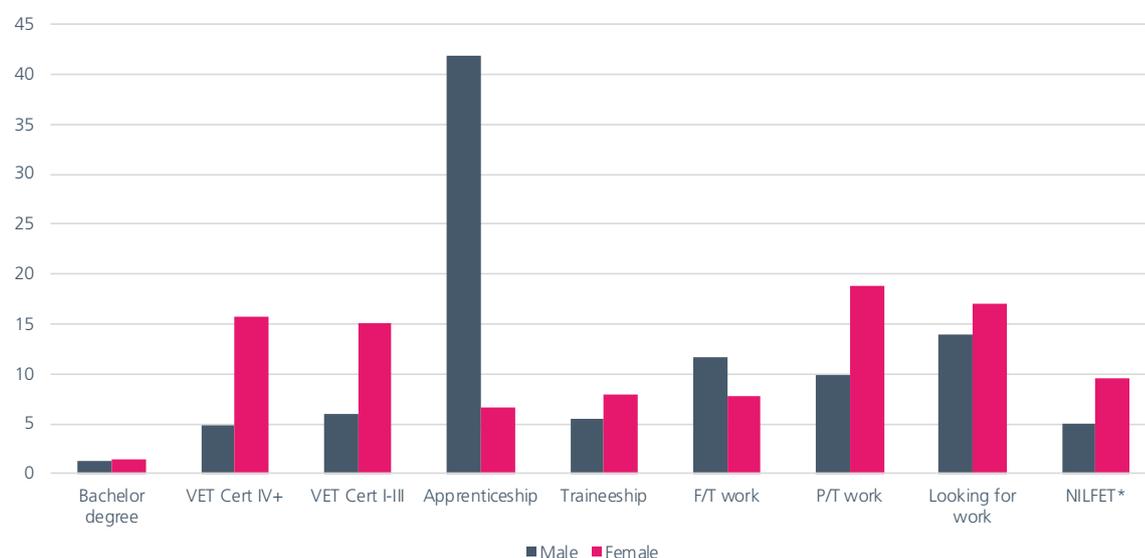
Consistent with results from previous years, gender differences associated with post-school destinations were more pronounced among early school leavers than among Year 12 completers. Female early school leavers were more likely to have entered a Certificate IV+, Diploma or Advanced Diploma, Certificate I-III or part-time employment. By comparison, male early school leavers were six times more likely to have entered an apprenticeship than female early school leavers. Male early school leavers were also more likely to have entered full-time employment.

**Figure 3.5**

Main post-school destination of early school leavers (%) by gender, NSW, 2016

Source: NSW Secondary Students' Post-School Destinations and Expectations 2016 Annual Report.

\*NILFET: Not in labour force, education or training



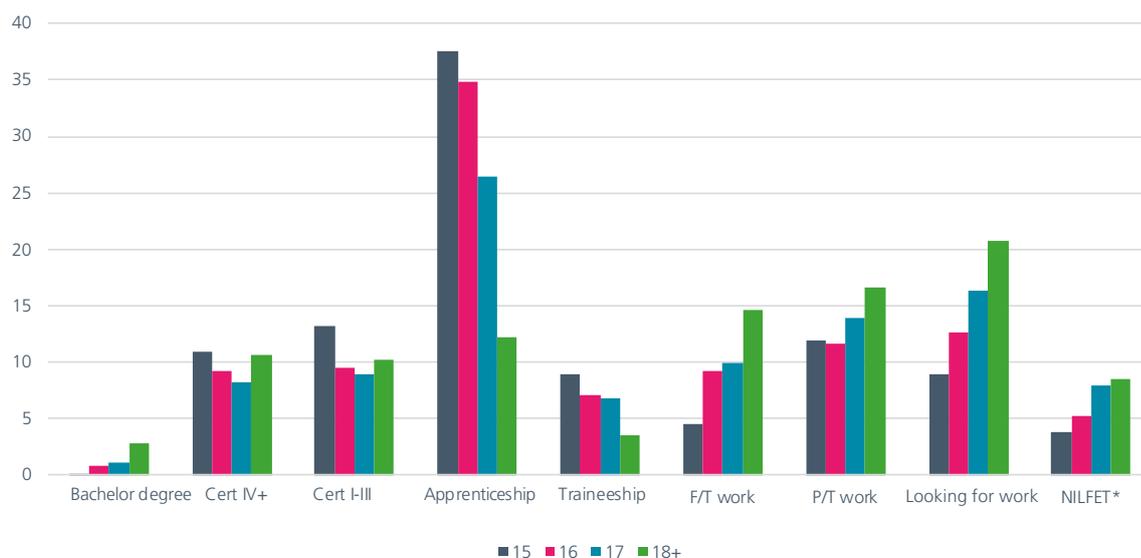
**Figure 3.6**

Main post-school destination of early school leavers (%), by age (at the end of 2015), NSW, 2016

Source: NSW Secondary Students' Post-School Destinations and Expectations 2016 Annual Report.

\*NILFET: Not in labour force, education or training

The main post-school destination of early school leavers varied by age. Older early school leavers tended to enter employment-related destinations, while their younger counterparts tended to enter apprenticeships.



### Equity groups

Of the Year 12 completers who identified as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, 26.5% were likely to have entered a Bachelor degree, compared to 51.9% of all Year 12 completers. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Year 12 completers were more likely than other groups to have entered a VET Certificate I-III course, a traineeship, employment (full or part-time) or be looking for work.

Of Year 12 completers from a Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) background, 65.8% entered a Bachelor degree in 2016, a much higher rate than other equity groups. They were less likely to have entered full-time or part-time employment, or take VET pathways.

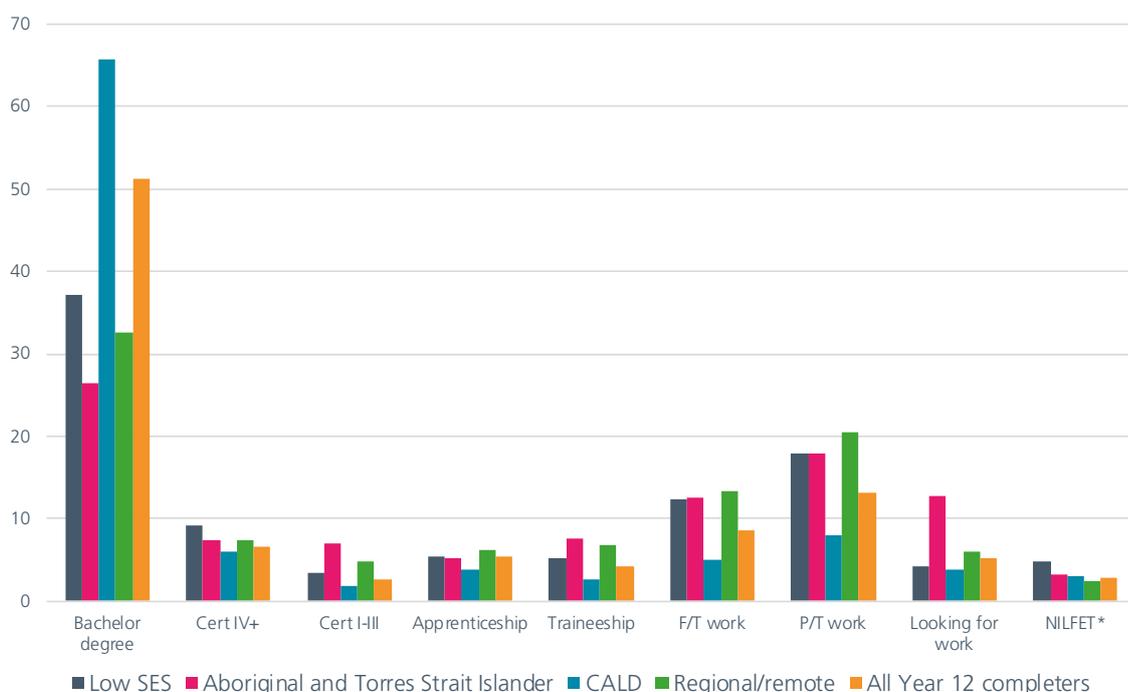
Year 12 completers from regional/remote areas of NSW were more likely to have entered a VET Certificate I-III course, traineeship or full time/part-time employment than other students.

**Figure 3.7**

Main post-school destination of Year 12 completers (%), by equity groups, NSW, 2016

Source: NSW Secondary Students' Post-School Destinations and Expectations 2016 Annual Report.

\*NILFET: Not in labour force, education or training



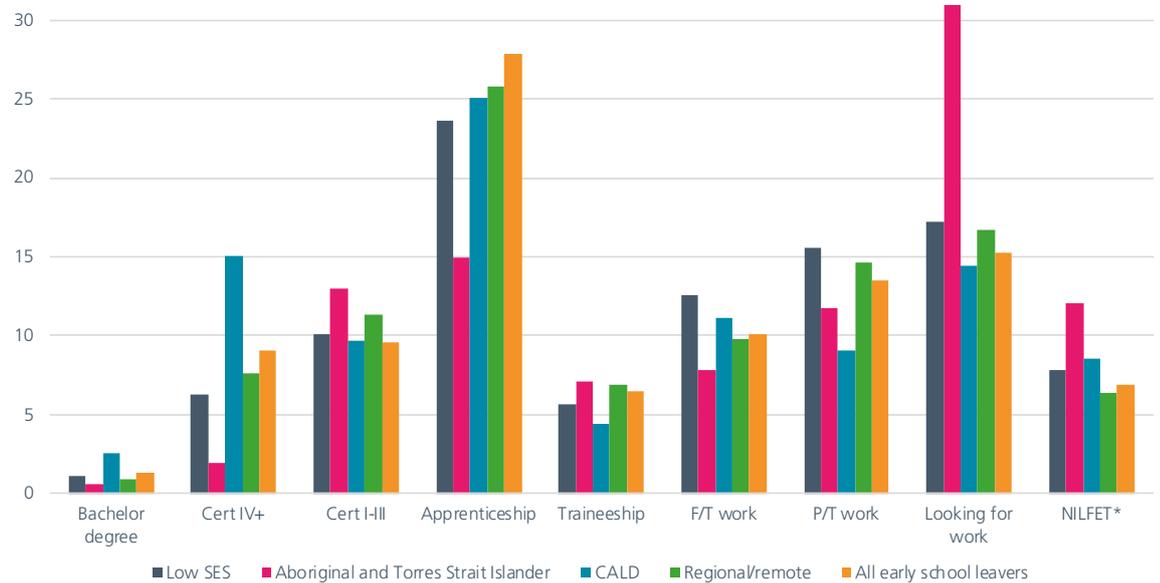
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander early school leavers were more likely than others to be looking for work or not in the labour force, education or training. They were less likely than others to have entered a Certificate IV+, Diploma or Advanced Diploma course or an apprenticeship. Early school leavers from a CALD background were more likely to have entered a Certificate IV+, Diploma, Advanced Diploma course or Bachelor degree than other early school leavers.

**Figure 3.8**

Main post-school destination of early school leavers (%), by equity groups, NSW, 2016

Source: NSW Secondary Students' Post-School Destinations and Expectations 2016 Annual Report.

\*NILFET: Not in labour force, education or training



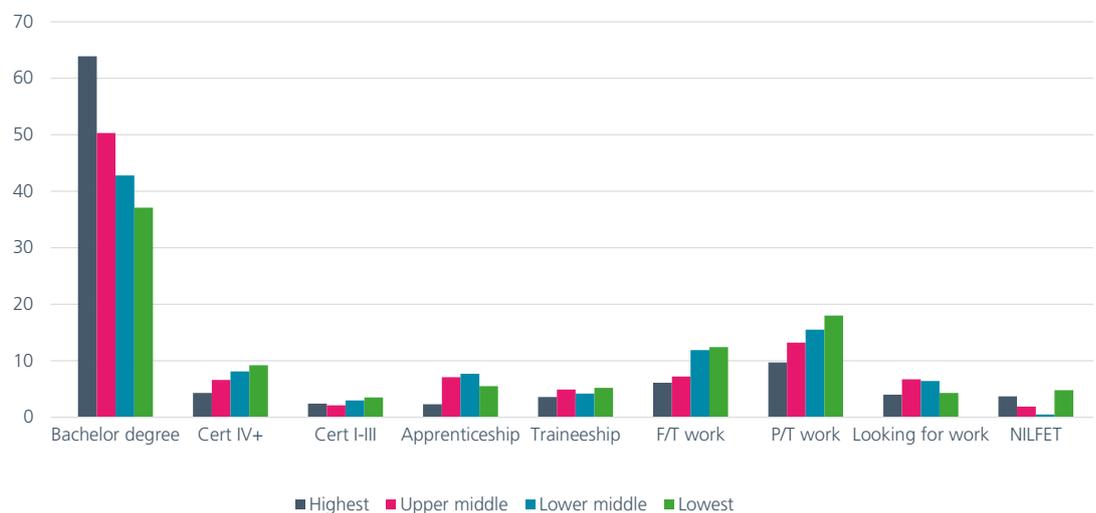
Entering a Bachelor degree was highest among Year 12 completers from the highest SES quartile at 63.9% and lowest among those from the lowest SES quartile at 37.1%. The proportion of Year 12 completers who entered a Certificate IV+, Diploma, Advanced Diploma or employment increased as SES decreased. The proportion of Year 12 completers entering an apprenticeship tended to be higher among those from the middle SES quartiles.

**Figure 3.9**

Main post-school destination of Year 12 completers (%), by socio-economic quartile, NSW, 2016

Source: NSW Secondary Students' Post-School Destinations and Expectations 2016 Annual Report.

\*NILFET: Not in labour force, education or training



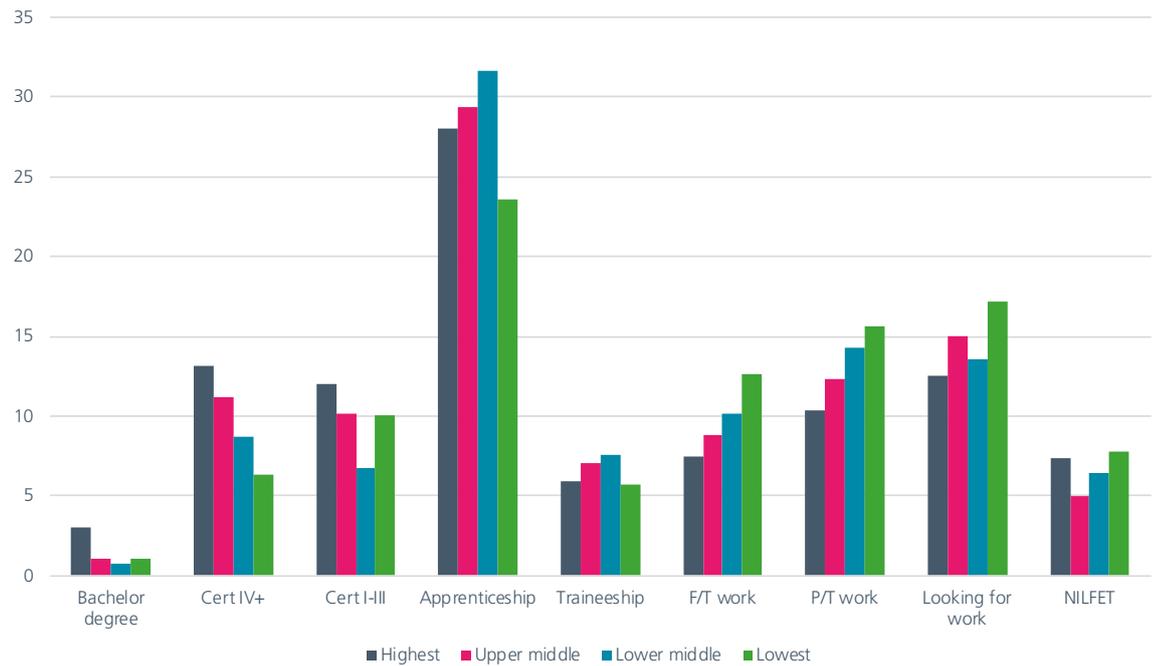
Early school leavers from the lowest SES quartile were the least likely to have entered an apprenticeship, but more likely to be entering employment or looking for work. Unlike Year 12 completers, the percentage of early leavers entering a higher-level VET course tended to increase with SES quartile.

**Figure 3.10**

Main post-school destination of early school leavers (%), by socio-economic quartile, NSW, 2016

Source: NSW Secondary Students' Post-School Destinations and Expectations 2016 Annual Report.

\*NILFET: Not in labour force, education or training



### Fully engaged in work or study

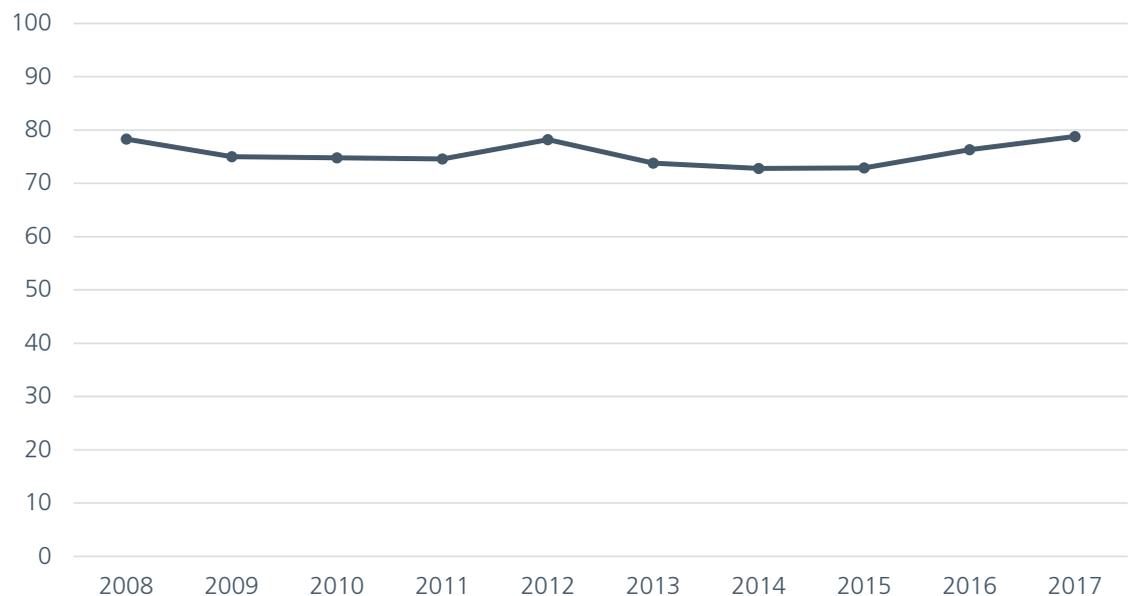
Monitoring the proportion of young people fully engaged in education, training or work provides an indication of how well students are transitioning from schooling to further education and/or employment.

From 2008 to 2015 there was a small downward trend in the proportion of young adults fully engaged in work or study (72.9% in 2015). Since 2016 the proportion has increased. In 2017, 78.8% of young people were fully engaged in work or study – the highest level observed over the decade.

**Figure 3.11**

Proportion of 17-24 year olds fully engaged in work or study, NSW, 2008-2017

Source: ABS, Education and Work, fully engaged through formal study and/or employment, persons not in school study aged 15-64 years, 2017



# 4. VET post-school

VET is a part of the tertiary education and training system, providing people over the age of 15 with accredited training and job-related technical skills. The system includes government and privately-funded VET, with courses delivered through a wide range of registered training organisations. The Certificates I-IV, Diploma, Advanced Diploma, Graduate Certificate and Graduate Diploma qualifications are Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) accredited in the VET sector. Schools also provide some vocational education and training known as VET in schools, discussed in the Schools section of this report. This section begins with Certificate III or above, as Year 12 is currently the vocational equivalent of Certificate II.

## Certificate III or above

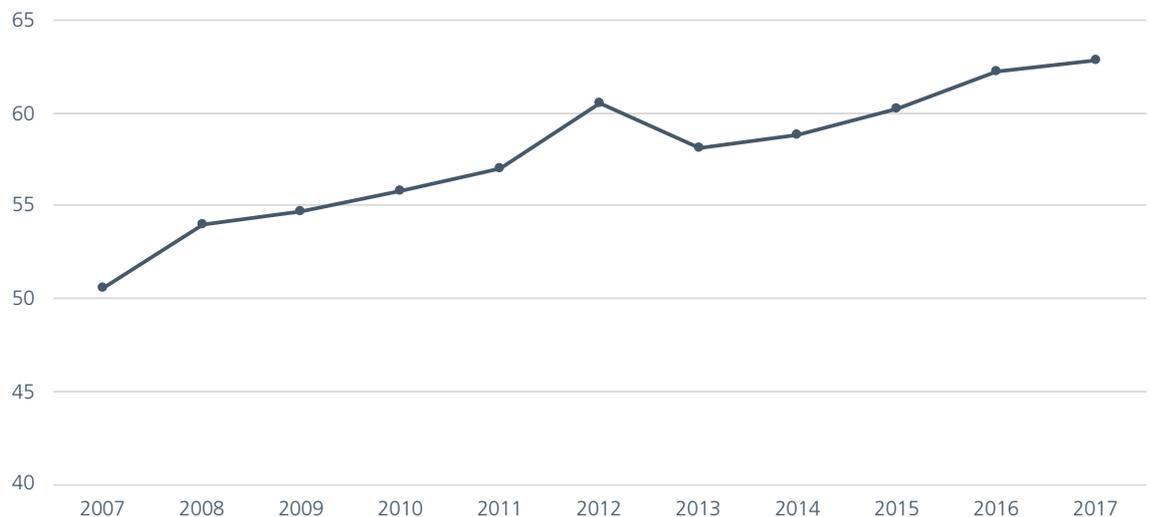
Certificate III is the third level in the AQF and qualifies people to use their theoretical knowledge and skills to perform skilled work or pursue further learning.

The proportion of 20-64 year olds in NSW who have completed a Certificate III or above increased between 2007-2017, reaching 62.8% in 2017. This figure has risen 4.7 percentage points since 2013.

**Figure 4.1**

Proportion (%) of 20-64 year olds with a Certificate III or above, NSW, 2007-2017

Source: ABS Education and Work, Australia, May 2017, Highest non-school qualification at Certificate III level or above, persons aged 20-64 years

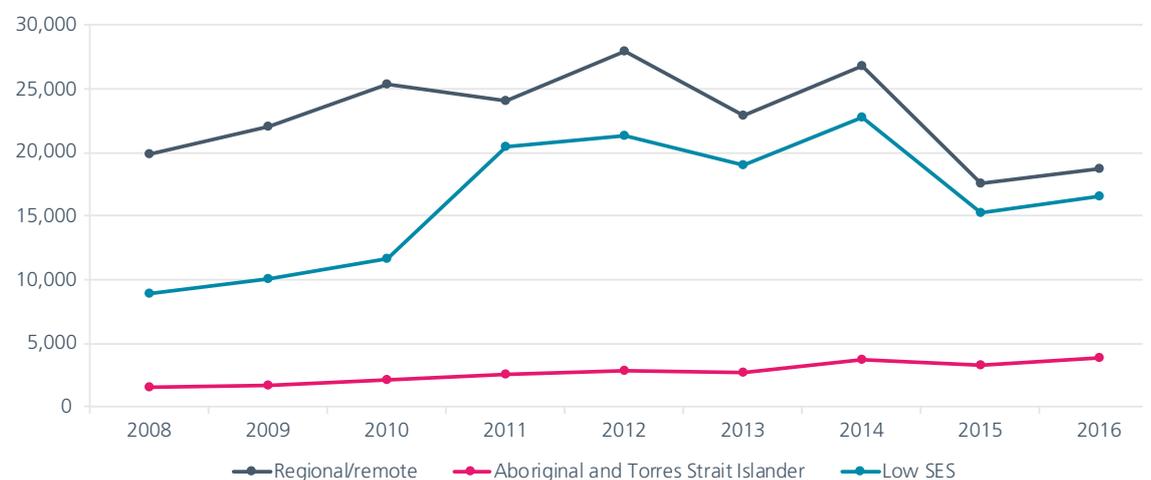


Since 2008, the number of people who completed a Certificate III or above has increased for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and low SES equity groups. The number has declined for the regional/remote equity group.

**Figure 4.2**

Number of 20-64 year olds who completed a Certificate III or above, by equity groups, NSW

Source: NCVER, National VET Provider Collection, VOCstats



## Diplomas

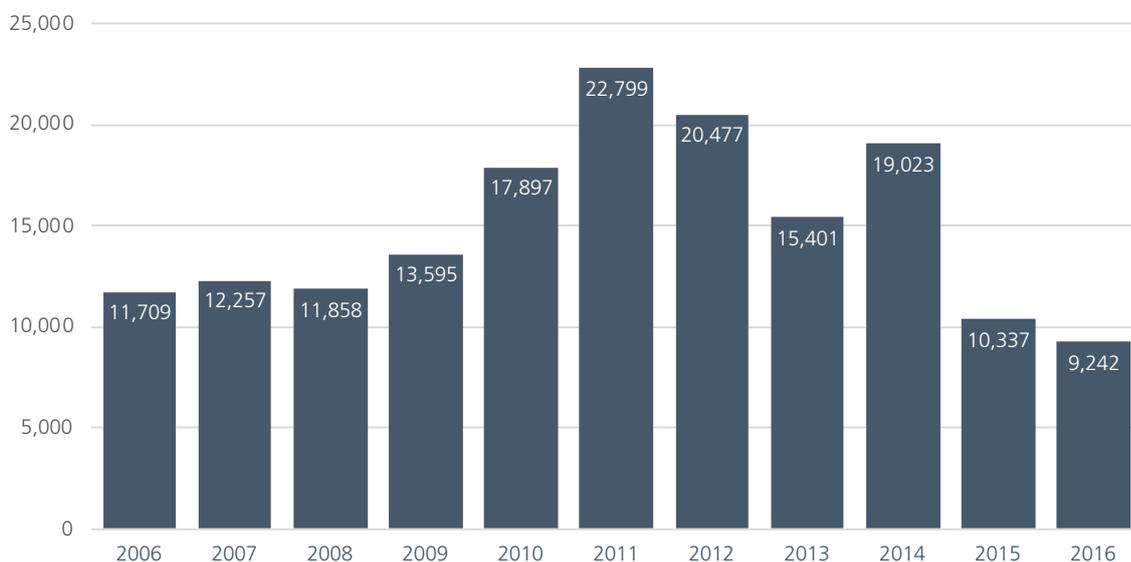
The number of adults completing Diplomas and Advanced Diplomas steadily increased between 2006 and 2011, with nearly 22,800 individuals in NSW completing one of these qualifications in 2011.

**Completions sharply declined between 2014 and 2016, with numbers dropping to 9,242.**

**Figure 4.3**

Number of Diploma and Advanced Diploma completions, NSW

Source: NCVET, National VET Provider Collection, VOCstats



## Apprenticeships and traineeships

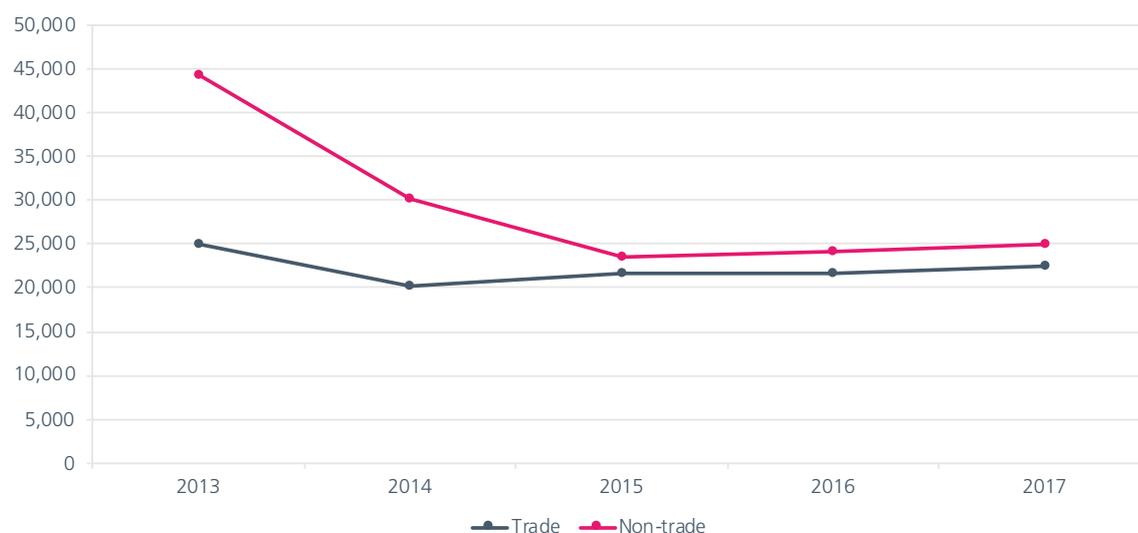
Apprenticeships and traineeships combine work-based training with an employer and formal training from a training provider. Apprentices are usually trained in a skilled trade, such as electrical, plumbing, mechanical or automotive. Trainees are usually trained in vocational areas, such as administration, business, tourism or hospitality.

There was a decline in non-trade commencements in NSW with 45,325 commencements in 2013 compared with 23,530 commencements in 2015. This fall in commencements is in part due to changes in Commonwealth incentive payments for existing workers. Completions remained relatively steady between 2015 and 2017 in both trade and non-trade commencements.

**Figure 4.4**

Number of apprenticeship and traineeship commencements, NSW

Source: NCVET  
Apprentices and trainees  
2017: December quarter  
- NSW



## 5. Higher education

In NSW, the higher education system is made up of ten public universities and other approved higher education providers. They play a critical role in stimulating innovation, driving productivity and giving students the skills they need for future success.

In 2012, caps were lifted on domestic undergraduate student places at Australian universities. This resulted in a large expansion of undergraduate enrolments at NSW universities as places began to be determined by demand.

### Proportion of population with a Bachelor degree or above

The Bachelor degree is the standard university qualification, usually taking three to four years of full-time study to complete. It qualifies individuals to undertake a range of professional work, and acts as a pathway for further postgraduate study. It is widely recognised that tertiary education is a driver of economic competitiveness, innovation and social wellbeing (OECD, 2008).

**The proportion of 25-34 year olds with a Bachelor degree or above has increased steadily since 2008.** In 2008, the Bradley Review of Australian Higher Education set an ambitious national target for at least 40% of 25-34 year olds to have a Bachelor level qualification by 2025. NSW exceeded this target in 2015.

Figure 5.1

Proportion (%) of 25-34 year olds with a Bachelor degree or above, NSW

Source: ABS, Education and Work, Australia, May 2017. Highest non-school qualification at Bachelor degree or above, persons aged 20-64 years



In 2017, 43.4% of individuals aged 25-34 in NSW held a Bachelor degree or higher qualification, compared to 39.4% across Australia.

Figure 5.2

Proportion (%) of 25-34 year olds with a Bachelor degree or above

Source: ABS, Education and Work, Australia, May 2017. Highest non-school qualification at Bachelor degree or above, persons aged 20-64 years



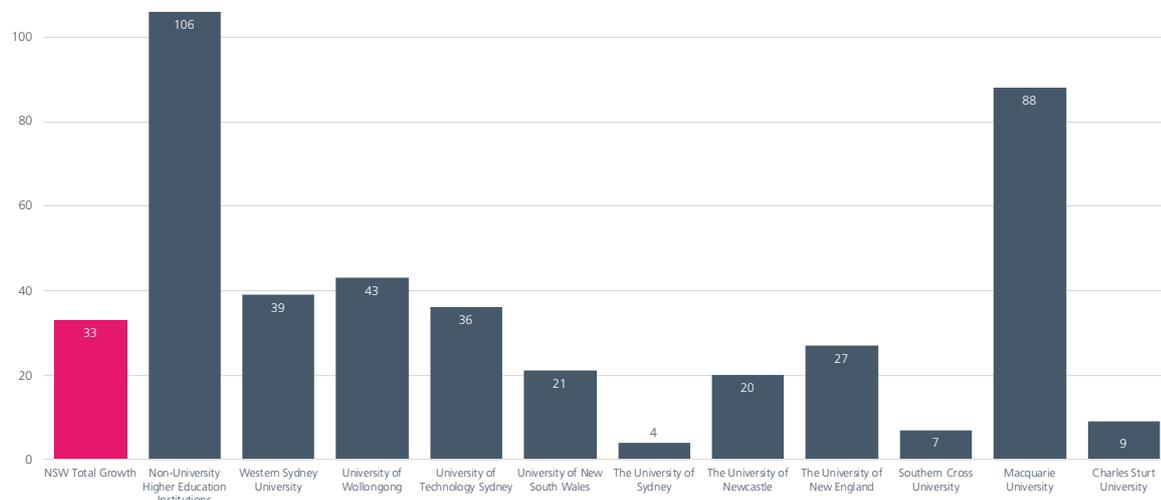
## Commencements

Due to the uncapping of undergraduate student places, domestic undergraduate enrolments increased from 183,149 in 2008 to 242,678 in 2016. Despite an overall increase, enrolment growth rates vary widely by university. For example, while domestic undergraduate enrolments grew by 88% at Macquarie University and 43% at the University of Wollongong, they only increased by 4% at the University of Sydney.

**Figure 5.3**

Enrolment growth (%), domestic undergraduates, NSW, 2008-2016

Source: (Unpublished) Department of Education and Training, Selected Higher Education and Statistics



## Equity enrolments

**While the number of enrolments of students from equity groups are increasing, the proportion of overall enrolments have remained relatively steady.**

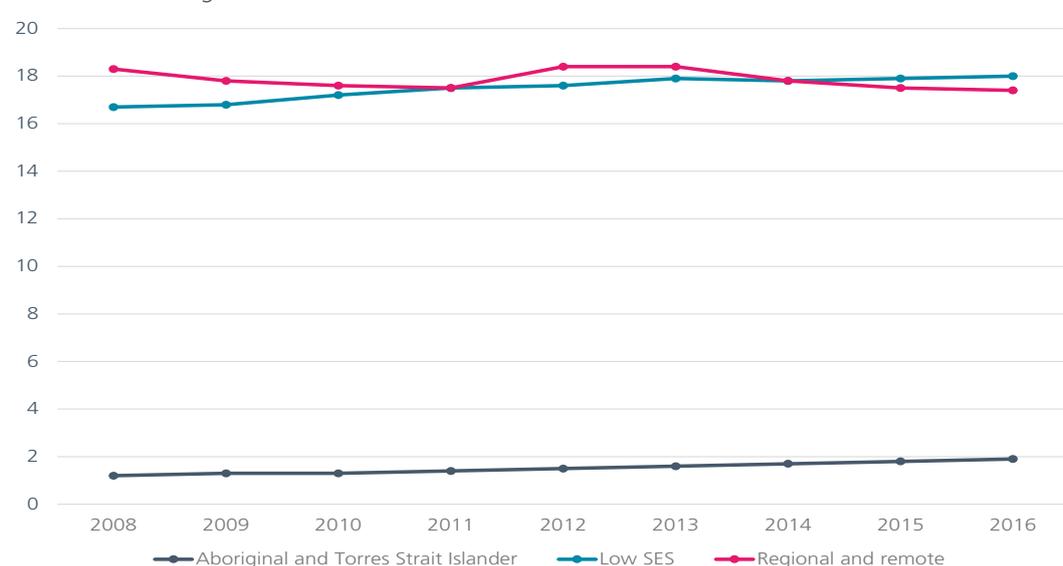
The proportion of enrolments of students from regional and remote areas has declined, falling from 18.3% in 2008 to 17.4% in 2016. The proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and low-SES students amongst domestic undergraduate enrolments has increased over time. These trends were evident both before and after the implementation of the demand driven system in 2012, suggesting the uncapping of university places has had little discernible impact on the demographic composition of domestic students.

Despite continued improvements in access to higher education, both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and low-SES students remain substantially under-represented in the NSW higher education sector. While Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students comprised 1.9% and low-SES 18% of domestic undergraduate enrolments in 2016, they had a population share of 2.8% and 23.4% respectively. Similarly, while 22.9% of people in NSW are classified as regional and remote, they only made up 17.4% of enrolling students in 2016.

**Figure 5.4**

Proportion (%) of domestic undergraduate enrolments by equity groups, NSW

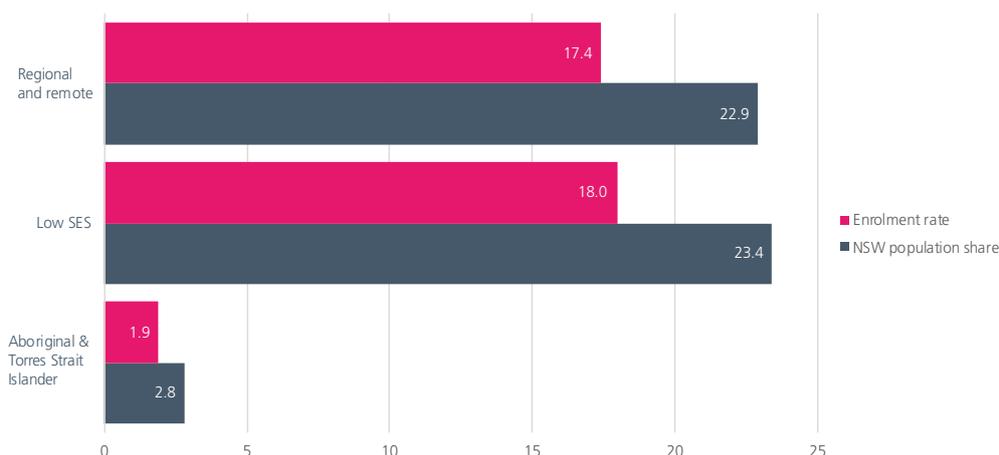
Source: (Unpublished) Department of Education and Training, Selected Higher Education and Statistics



**Figure 5.5**

Enrolment rate (%) for NSW students relative to the population share for that equity group, NSW, 2016

Source: (Unpublished) Department of Education and Training, Selected Higher Education and Statistics



### Basis of admission

The basis of admission to all higher education institutions remained relatively consistent between 2007 and 2016. The biggest shift was in students admitted based on their secondary education. The proportion of students admitted based on their secondary education has declined 10 percentage points since 2007, though numbers of students admitted in this category have remained relatively steady. The change in the overall proportion for students admitted on this basis reflects growth in other categories, including students admitted based on previous higher education study.

**Figure 5.6**

Basis of admission for domestic, commencing undergraduates\* at all higher education institutions, NSW

Source: (Unpublished) Department of Education and Training, Selected Higher Education and Statistics

\*Includes Bachelor's (Pass, Honours and Graduate entry), Associate Degree, Advanced Diploma and Diploma



### ATAR

ATAR provides a measure of a student's overall academic achievement in the HSC compared to that of other students, helping universities rank applicants for selection into courses. Universities set an ATAR cut-off according to what they believe is the minimum academic standard required by applicants, as well as reflecting supply and demand for the degree. Monitoring the ATAR profile of commencing students helps indicate the standard of candidature applying for courses and reflects changes in demand due to wider economic conditions.

### There has been an increase in students admitted to university with a lower ATAR.

In 2015, the median ATAR of transitioning students was 79.2 (compared to 83 in 2008). The shift is even greater at the lower end of the spectrum. In 2015, the bottom 20% of students transitioning into university had an ATAR at or below 62.8, compared to 69.3 in 2008.

**Figure 5.7**

ATAR cut-offs by key percentiles of NSW HSC students transitioning into Bachelor degrees

Source: (Unpublished) Department of Education and Training, Selected Higher Education and Statistics

Percentile	ATAR cut-off	
	2008	2015
Bottom 20%	69.3	62.8
Median	83.0	79.2
Top 20%	93.7	92.2

### Attrition

Attrition refers to the rate at which students 'drop out' of university. The Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Authority (TEQSA) defines attrition as the ratio of first-year higher education commencing students in a year who neither completed nor returned to study in the following year, to the total commencing students in that year. Monitoring the attrition rate assists with public policy aimed at ensuring that wider access to university translates into tangible benefits for students. Attrition is influenced by a range of factors, both institutional and individual.

The attrition rate in NSW is lower than Australia overall. The attrition rate declined from 2005-2008, with small increasing trends from 2008-2015. After peaking in 2005, the student attrition rate has remained fairly stable across all NSW higher education providers – increasing from 10.9% in 2008 to 12.7% in 2015.

**Figure 5.8**

Attrition rate for domestic students commencing a Bachelor degree

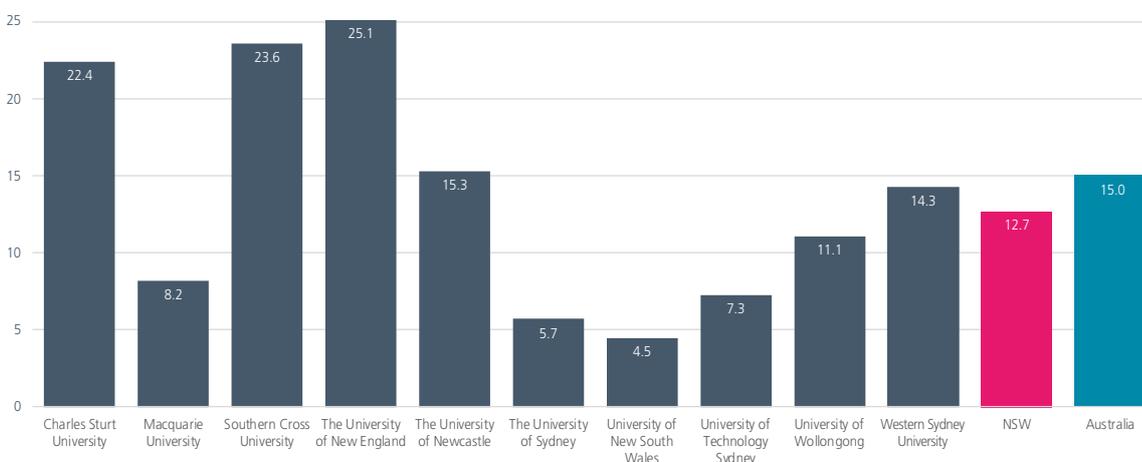
Source: (Unpublished) Department of Education and Training, Selected Higher Education and Statistics



**Figure 5.9**

Attrition rate for domestic students commencing a Bachelor degree, NSW universities, 2015

Source: (Unpublished) Department of Education and Training, Selected Higher Education and Statistics



## Overseas commencements

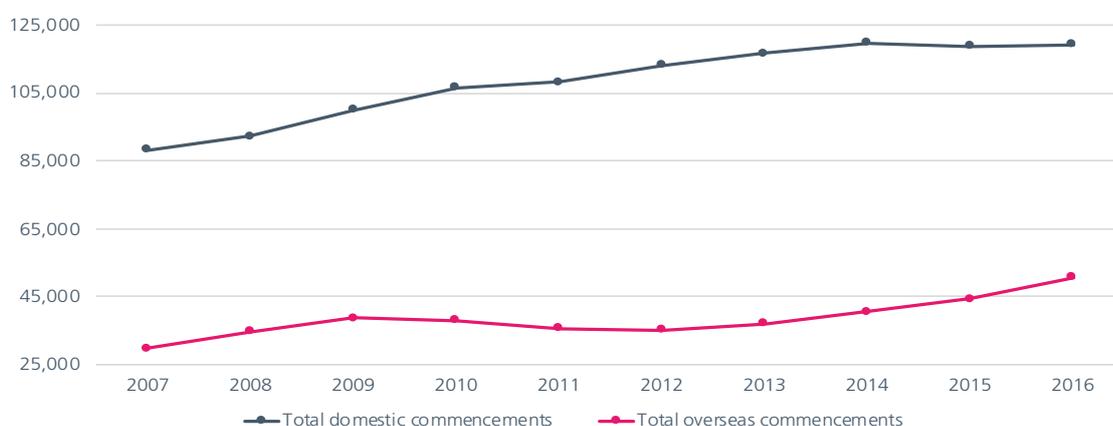
The international education sector is Australia's leading services export sector. Many higher educational institutions benefit from the income from full-fee paying international students, assisting in the provision of the core university activities of teaching and research. Some international students also go on to become permanent residents, creating a more diverse skills base and stronger international links.

While domestic student numbers have plateaued over the past couple of years, overseas student numbers have continued to increase.

**Figure 5.10**

Total domestic and overseas commencements, NSW

Source: (Unpublished) Department of Education and Training, Selected Higher Education and Statistics

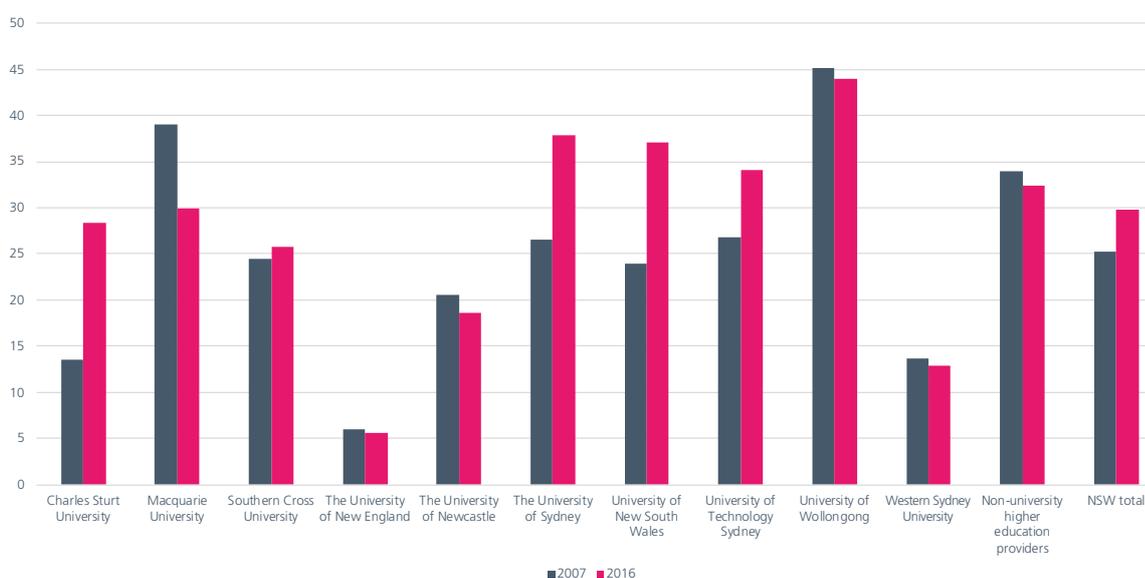


Growth in overseas commencements is unevenly distributed across NSW universities. Overseas commencements have been higher for metropolitan universities than regional universities.

**Figure 5.11**

Overseas commencements as a proportion (%) of total commencements, by institution, NSW

Source: (Unpublished) Department of Education and Training, Selected Higher Education and Statistics



In 2016, China was the top country of origin for overseas students enrolled in NSW with 40.7% of enrolments. India has the second largest number of commencements with 9.4% of overseas student commencements.

**Figure 5.12**

Top 5 countries of origin for overseas students, 2016

Source: (Unpublished) Department of Education and Training, Selected Higher Education and Statistics

Country	Enrolments
China	40.7%
India	9.4%
Nepal	4.1%
Singapore	4.1%
Vietnam	3.7%

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