

## Where does Australia stand on education equity and quality?

### Key strengths

- In PISA 2018, Australia remained a high performer in reading and science, with comparatively favourable equity indicators. Other large-scale assessments show improved outcomes for younger students.
- ECEC coverage in Australia has increased for children in the year before school.
- Australia has low levels of grade repetition as reported in PISA, and students are not tracked until age 16.
- Australia has comparatively high levels of academic inclusiveness among schools, according to PISA evidence.

### Key challenges

- Student performance, as measured in some large-scale assessments, has been stagnant or shown some decline for older school students.
- Access to quality ECEC, particularly for the ages 3-5, could be expanded, with participation gaps for disadvantaged and Indigenous children.
- Australia has less strong social diversity between schools, which translates into a difference in learning opportunities.
- More positive national averages related to equity indicators mask important sub-national and sub-population differences.

## Where does Australia stand on preparing students for the future?

### Key strengths

- A large and growing share of students choose to enter upper secondary pathways in Australia.
- Relative to other OECD peers, 15-year-old VET students in Australia only slightly underperformed in PISA compared to their peers in general and modular programmes.
- There is a high level of participation in tertiary education, and a large share of young adults have attained a tertiary qualification.

### Key challenges

- High average skills' proficiency for both 15-year-olds and adults mask skills gaps, as shown by international surveys.
- There is evidence of growing disengagement from education for older school students, in part due to recent disruptions and pre-existing challenges of cumulative learning gaps.
- VET faces challenges to be an attractive option at upper secondary level, including through becoming more adapted to labour-market conditions and leading to strong basic skills.
- As returns to tertiary education compare less favourably in the context of a higher baseline, sustaining incentives to participate in higher education will be important.

## Where does Australia stand on school improvement?

### Key strengths

- Students in Australia view their teachers positively overall, reporting high levels of support and teacher enthusiasm.
- National professional standards are in place for school leaders and teachers, and help guide professional learning opportunities open to both trainee and in-service professionals.
- According to TALIS 2018, teachers in Australia have comparatively high levels of satisfaction with both salary and non-salary conditions and feel the profession is valued in society more often than elsewhere.

### Key challenges

- High teacher turnover, teacher supply challenges, and absence of sufficiently structured career pathways despite national and sub-national efforts. Supporting teacher development in classroom management and student behaviour management to drive improvement in school disciplinary climate.
- Varied approaches to school leader improvement and professional development across States and territories may contribute to inconsistencies in support and quality.
- Mixed evidence on levels of satisfaction with the profession and deepening shortages suggest a more nuanced picture.

## Where does Australia stand on education evaluation and assessment?

### Key strengths

- Australia has a robust culture of standards setting, accountability, evaluation and reform across all education levels.
- A set of reliable national and international assessment tools informs school-level system evaluation.
- In early childhood, a holistic and improvement-focused learner assessment tool supports the transition to school.

### Key challenges

- Although an important component of the overall evaluation and assessment framework, the purpose and use of NAPLAN is not always well understood.
- Although commonly in place, school accountability efforts and teacher appraisal are diverse and may not always foster improvement as desired.
- The critical contribution of teachers and their classroom-based formative assessment to the overall evaluation and assessment framework risks being overlooked.

## Where does Australia stand on education funding?

### Key strengths

- Australia dedicates a large share of national wealth to education.
- A high relative share of private funds is offset by public subsidies in ECEC and tertiary education.
- Targeted funding to support disadvantaged students, in particular Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander students, exists from ECEC through to higher education.

### Key challenges

- High spending on education has not always translated to improved student performance or equity across the system.
- In terms of per-student funding, ECEC and VET programmes appear less well-funded than other programmes and education levels in Australia, despite being priority policy sectors.
- Targeted equity funding still appears not to reach the students and schools who need it most in sufficient amounts to redress equity gaps, despite ongoing policy efforts.