



National Catholic Education Commission

**REPORT OF THE
WORKING PARTY ON
CATHOLIC SCHOOL ENROLMENT TRENDS
1985-2010**

SEPTEMBER 2001

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

• Aim of Study

This study originated in concerns expressed by members of the National Catholic Education Commission about the perceived changing pattern of enrolments of Catholic school-age children; in particular, that fewer students from Catholic families were now enrolling in Catholic schools, while Catholic schools are enrolling more and more non-Catholic students. The Working Party's study was designed to explore these issues on a national basis with a view to determining the current trends in enrolment patterns, and to identify any policy implications for Catholic educators and the Catholic community more generally.

• Data and Methodology

The Working Party determined the different sources of data (principally ABS and DETYA) required to meet the given Terms of Reference, agreed on how and how far to interpret the Terms of Reference (in consultation with NCEC), gathered the necessary data, undertook the agreed analysis and identified policy issues for consideration.

• Key Findings

The main conclusions or directions arising from the data collected and analysed in this report are:

- At the 1996 Census almost 4.8 million people (or 27% of all Australians) identified themselves as Catholic with the highest proportion of Catholics being in the ACT (30%) and the lowest in Tasmania (19%);
- From 1985 to 2000 the numbers of students in Australian Catholic schools increased by 73,900 with the largest growth in numbers (Graph 5) being in NSW, WA and Queensland, and the fastest growth (Graph 6) being in WA (42%), SA (29%) and NT (22%). The slowest growth was in Victoria (3%);
- From 1985 to 2000 the number of large Catholic primary schools (more than 300 students) increased significantly (Graph 7); while the number of large secondary schools (more than 800 students) doubled (Graph 8), and the number of small secondary schools (less than 400 students) declined dramatically;
- The Apparent Retention Rate for students from primary to secondary exceeds 100% and continues to increase annually (Graph 11), while the secondary Apparent Retention Rate (Graph 12) remains stable although it is greater for girls (82.2% in 2000) than for boys (71.8% in 2000);
- From 1985 to 2000 the number and proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (ATSI) students increased significantly (Graph 13), and this occurred in every state and territory;

- From 1985 to 2000 the number and proportion of Students with a Disability (SWD) in Catholic schools increased significantly (Graph 15), and this occurred in every state and territory;
- The proportion of non-Catholic students in Catholic schools (Graph 17) has risen significantly in recent years, with the data showing clear and strong variations between states and territories;
- Until 1997, the number of Full Fee Paying Overseas Students (FFPOS) in Catholic schools grew quickly and consistently (Graph 19). Since then it has declined in all states except NSW (Graph 20);
- The majority of students from Catholic families attend government schools. The proportion of students from Catholic families in Catholic schools (Graph 21) is 43.7% for Primary and 45 % for secondary although the proportions vary across states (Graph 22).

This project has highlighted several issues for further development, research and consideration:

1. the need for the NCEC to have a permanent database;
2. the need for follow-up research on certain aspects of this study;
3. extension of present study
4. similar treatment of other dimensions of Catholic schooling;
5. the creation of an historical database.

It is the view of the Working Party that this study does not represent a definitive and conclusive response to the Terms of Reference. Instead, this report is best viewed as work in progress. It provides a summary snapshot of the situation at the present time. As such it is developmental and formative. That is to say, the issues dealt with here should form part of a program of ongoing analysis and discussion. Further, the report points the way to new directions and more meaningful analyses of data to enhance policy and planning for Australia's Catholic schools.

Acknowledgments

This study has been conceptualised, monitored and finalised by the Working Party established by the NCEC for the purpose of the study. I would like to thank the Working Party for their willing contributions, especially through providing data for schools in the state/territory and answering queries promptly. The most substantial and crucial contributions to the task, however, were from the technical support staff provided by the CECNSW, namely Crichton Smith and John McKinnon. Their inquisitive and tenacious spirits were combined with considerable technical skill to produce a clear set of maps, tables and graphs for this report. Even more importantly, perhaps, their work has also laid the foundations for more sophisticated and useful analyses of data essential to the ongoing task of local and national policy development in Catholic education. I am especially grateful to them.

Brian Croke
Convenor
September 2001

PART A

THE WORKING PARTY AND ITS OPERATION

1. Terms of Reference, Committee and its Operation

(A) Terms of Reference

The NCEC, at its meeting on 20 July 2000, agreed to establish a *Working Party on Catholic Enrolment Trends*. The Catholic Education Commission, NSW was invited to provide the administrative and technical support for the Working Party. The Working Party was asked to produce a report by May 2001, later revised to September 2001, for the following Terms of Reference:

I. Data Collection

- *identify and collect nationally comparable data on Catholic school enrolment trends K-12 in the period 1985-2000, by State/Territory/Diocese/Statistical Division (city/country);*
- *identify and collect relevant nationally comparable data on the Catholic population in the period 1985-2000;*
- *identify and collect nationally comparable data for particular categories of students in Catholic schools 1985-2000, specifically:*
 - *Non-Catholic*
 - *Aboriginal*
 - *English as a Second Language*
 - *Students with a Disability*
 - *Full Fee-Paying.*
- *Identify and collect data relevant to Catholic school enrolment projections 2001-2010;*
- *identify, and collect where possible, nationally comparable data on the Catholic population and Catholic school enrolments from 1960-1985;*
- *make predictions for the period 2000-2010 and suggest associated policy changes.*

II. Data Analysis and Interpretation

- *compare Catholic school enrolment changes with age group changes/demographic changes in the whole population;*
- *analyse trends in proportion of enrolment by level, by location, and by sector;*
- *analyse the trends on secondary school retention rates;*
- *identify policies which may have influenced enrolment trends, as generated by (1) State, Territory and Diocesan Catholic education authorities; and (2) State and Commonwealth Governments.*

(B) Membership

The membership of the Working Party included nominees of each state/territory Commission, and comprised:

Brian Croke (NSW-Convenor)

Bill Walsh (NSW)

Alan Druery (Qld)
Vin Thomas (SA)
William Griffiths (NT)
Vin Faulkner (Vic)
Sr Anne Marie Webb (ACLRI)
Allan Dooley (SA)
Lyn McClure (Tas)
John Barker (ACT)
Eileen Lawrance (WA)
David de Carvalho (NCEC)

Others attending meetings:

Richard Keys (NT)
Ted Cassin (Qld)
Anne Daley (Tas)

The CEC,NSW provided administrative and expert technical support through Crichton Smith (*Education Officer–School Resources*) and John McKinnon (*Education Officer–Schools Data*).

(C) Operation

The Working Party met on three occasions at Simonds Hall, Melbourne on 21 November 2000, 28 March 2001 and 10 August 2001. Not all members were able to attend all meetings, and some were not able to attend any. Contact was maintained within the Working Party between meetings by e-mail. Individual members provided advice and local data and other support as required.

2. Interpreting the Terms of Reference

The first task of the Working Party was to interpret its terms of reference and come to an understanding of its task. Despite some inconsistencies in the Terms of Reference, it understood that its task was (1) to collect and analyze a range of data from 1985 to 2000 on enrolments of Catholic students, including specific types of students (e.g. Non-Catholic, Indigenous); and (2) to produce a report setting out the requested data in graphical/tabular form and providing an analysis of the issues and decisions underlying the varying trends in the data. Moreover, the data was to be collected and analyzed at the level of Diocese and Statistical Division, not just at State and National level, although the only data included for this report is for State and National level.

The Working Party resolved that, given the special difficulties involved, not to include the collection of data for 1960 to 1985 although it was aware that such data is available from some states (e.g. Victoria). The conceptual starting points for the task, so the Working Party

agreed, were the need to construct a database to manage and manipulate the data, and the need to gather most of the data at the unit level of individual school. This judgment was endorsed by the NCEC at its meeting in July 2001.

Once the Working Party realized that it would necessarily have to construct its own national database in order to undertake its task it went further and considered that it would be beneficial to NCEC and to the Catholic school community more generally to maintain and develop the NCEC database for future reference. It represents potentially a powerful tool for NCEC to use in its policy development and analysis and would form the basis of the further research set down below.

3. Identifying and Collecting Relevant Data

In order to fulfill its task the Working Party had to identify the sources of data necessary to address the terms of reference. The main sources of data identified were:

- (1) *Commonwealth Department of Education and Youth Affairs (DETYA)* for data on students in schools from 1988 (the first available non-government schools census data) to 2000 (the most recently available);
- (2) *Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS)* for all census data on Catholic families and Catholic school-aged children from the 1986 census, the 1991 census and the 1996 census, as well as more recent data on births and population projections;
- (3) *Catholic Education Commissions and Offices* for student data from 1985-1987, plus other data including ESL students for the period 1985-2000;
- (4) *Australian Catholic Bishops Conference (ACBC), Census Project* (Bob Dixon, Melbourne), ABS census data customised from the 1996 Census for demographic characteristics of the Catholic population.
- (5) *Diocesan Chanceries* for baptismal data.

4. Methodology

To execute the project, there was an initial need to (1) define the data required, (2) identify its source, (3) negotiate its availability and (4) secure its receipt in an appropriate format. David de Carvalho, Chief Executive Officer, NCEC negotiated the release by DETYA of data for 1988-2000 and the provision of Baptismal data by diocesan chanceries. Crichton Smith (CECNSW) negotiated with ABS and with Bob Dixon and secured the required data from those sources. In addition, members agreed to provide data for their states/territories as required. At the same time, there was a need to design, develop and test a database which was undertaken by John McKinnon (CECNSW).

(i) Data Collection

1. DETYA:

The data obtained was at the individual school level for:

- DETYA Client Number
- School Name
- Year
- School Type
- Single sex/co-educational school
- Regular or Special school
- Boarding status of school
- Systemic or non-systemic
- Lowest grade of the school
- Highest grade of the school
- Boarding students
- Students with a Disability
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students
- Full Fee Paying Overseas students
- Total Students
- Female staff
- Male staff
- Full-time staff
- Part-time staff
- Lay staff
- Religious staff
- Male students
- Female students
- Primary students
- Secondary students
- Ungraded Students

2. ABS

The data was obtained for every Statistical Local Area in Australia:

- Births by sex (1996-1999)
- Dwelling Approvals (1997-1999)
- Estimated Resident Population for individual ages 0 to 18, and 19+ by sex (1986-1999)
- High, medium and low family incomes for Catholic and non-Catholic families with children attending school (1986, 1991 and 1996 Censuses)

3. ACBC Project

Data was provided by Bob Dixon from the 1996 ABS Census, according to the demographic profile developed for each parish and diocese. Most of the ACBC data is complementary to the other data utilised in the project. Further, the data for students from Catholic families is calculated differently in this project from the way it is calculated for the ACBC project (cf. pp.12-13)

4. Diocesan Chanceries

Twenty-two diocesan chanceries provided baptismal data. As **Table 1** highlights, this is an incomplete dataset, both temporally and geographically, and not all Archdioceses and Dioceses have been able to provide baptismal data at this stage.

Table 1: Baptisms (0-7 years of age) by Diocese, 1985-2000

	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000
Adelaide	3,838	3,742	4,038	3,847	4,037	3,963	3,985	3,985	3,627	4,023	4,180	3,486	1,952	1,904	3,219	3,092
Ballarat	0	0	0	0	1,613	1,633	1,878	1,878	1,537	0	0	1,644	1,274	1,237	1,396	1,159
Brisbane	6,634	6,202	6,325	6,201	6,682	6,984	6,926	6,926	7,334	7,403	7,332	7,091	7,177	6,983	7,014	6,978
Broken Bay	0	0	2,359	2,171	2,527	2,484	2,503	2,503	2,468	2,581	2,512	2,432	2,624	2,663	2,516	2,567
Broome	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	192	153	200	255	169
Bunbury	695	664	760	657	651	698	747	747	596	709	498	582	511	665	592	662
Cairns	0	0	0	0	0	868	948	948	913	953	982	892	927	819	832	774
Canberra-Goulburn										1,928						1,666
Geraldton	328	350	391	381	422	431	415	415	379	338	302	297	311	347	309	281
Hobart	1,439	1,340	999	1,460	1,494	1,442	1,598	1,598	1,145	1,323	1,450	1,269	1,259	1,063	1,123	966
Lismore	1,341	1,423	1,583	1,440	1,426	1,557	1,553	1,553	1,451	1,548	1,469	1,498	1,379	1,325	1,407	1,370
Maitland-Newcastle	2,149	2,389	2,233	2,210	2,355	2,290	2,356	2,356	2,379	2,173	2,166	1,976	1,943	2,092	1,903	2,036
Melbourne	13,944	13,987	14,089	14,554	14,177	16,930	15,290	15,290	14,343	14,294	13,632	13,508	13,490	12,802	13,383	12,937
Parramatta	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4,166	4,261
Port Pirie	460	345	423	439	440	396	489	489	477	522	505	438	438	404	362	383
Sandhurst	1,561	1,475	1,518	1,545	1,496	1,426	1,459	1,459	1,443	1,399	1,572	1,452	1,342	1,323	1,248	1,257
Sydney	15,196	8,331	7,275	8,542	8,377	8,242	7,616	7,616	6,851	6,833	6,891	5,625	5,691	5,649	6,562	6,984
Toowoomba	1,223	1,145	1,062	1,024	1,129	1,148	1,134	1,134	1,219	1,159	1,125	1,119	973	952	961	936
Townsville	1,121	1,158	1,112	930	1,068	1,202	1,138	1,138	1,105	1,077	1,112	1,109	996	949	988	985
Wilcannia-Forbes	779	787	699	718	768	798	773	773	685	717	698	651	841	601	609	550
Wollongong	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2,167	2,186	2,158	2,244

Note: Baptismal data has not been provided from the Archdioceses and Dioceses of Armidale, Bathurst, Darwin, Perth, Rockhampton, Sale and Wagga Wagga.(ii) *Database*

Construction

The original data supplied by DETYA was faulty and had to be re-supplied. All data was then validated and installed in the database and an internet interface developed for general queries on school data. Demographic data is still being prepared and the database will need some minor structural modifications before it can be incorporated into the web interface. Recent enhancements have included faster charting, a facility to track school changes and the provision of a programmer's access screen for more complex queries than the general interface provides.

(iii) Mapping the schools

All states and territories have provided information for mapping schools. A Census Collection District to Parish listing was provided by Bob Dixon and MapInfo files of mapped schools were provided by Queensland, Victoria and NSW. Tasmania provided school locations by Census Collection District. South Australia, Western Australia and Northern Territory provided school locations by Parish. Mapping continues.

(iv) Producing Tables

Once completed, the database is capable of producing any tables requested. From the data already provided and validated, some tables addressing specific aspects of the Terms of Reference can be produced and are contained in Part B of this report.

(v) Validating problematic data

1. ESL Students

The number of ESL students has been collected by some states/territories from the mid-1970s, but using varying definitions across states. The early years of the DETYA census collected NESB students, not ESL. Only later was the census changed to ESL and linked to a common national definition. It is not clear when the data first became sufficiently reliable nationally, but it is not available from DETYA at all. Instead, the data produced here, for the period 1990-2000 only, was provided by CECs. In brief, the ESL students data was not available in a valid and reportable form even though it is currently considered consistent and reliable.

2. Defining Catholic and Non-Catholic Students

This study is focussed on changing patterns of enrolment in Australian schools. It is therefore based on two key propositions: (1) that parents choose the school their child attends; and (2) that parents choose the religion of their child. So, the study proceeded on the assumption that students were enrolled in Catholic schools as a conscious act of one or both parents and that students described as Catholic on the ABS Census form reflect the conscious decision of their parents. It is on this basis that the study defines Catholic students as being students in Catholic families, and defines Catholic families as being where at least one parent is Catholic.

Catholic Students

In the 1996 ABS census, it became possible for the first time to separate Catholic schools from other non-government schools, so that we can now calculate the school attended by students in Catholic families that is, whether it is a government, Catholic, or other non-government school. Given the Terms of Reference of the present study and the focus on which Catholic families choose for their children, the definition of a Catholic family was taken to be one where *at least one parent is Catholic*. Accordingly, the proportion of Catholic students attending Catholic schools is defined as the proportion of school-age children living in families where at least one parent is Catholic. This calculation differs from that used in the ACBC project which has previously been supplied to all dioceses. For the purposes of the ACBC project, the

proportion of Catholic students attending different types of schools is calculated on a narrower base: the proportion of students recorded on the Census form as 'Catholic', irrespective of the religion of the parents and excluding those whose religion is counted as 'unstated' for whatever reason.

Non-Catholic Students

A 'non-Catholic' student is one attending a Catholic school from a household where neither parent is reported as Catholic. The number of non-Catholic students in Catholic schools has not been collected everywhere in a common format since 1985, and there are some definitional inconsistencies in the present data. Hence, it was decided to use the data on students attending school from the ABS census in 1996. The validity of this assumption is confirmed by CEC,NSW data which is usually collected by school at the point of enrolment and maintained for reporting on the annual CEC census. For 1996 the CEC data (13.3%) and the ABS Census data (14.1% primary) are broadly comparable. The data for NSW only from 1985 to 2000 is assumed to be typical of the trend elsewhere:

Table 2: Non-Catholic Students in NSW Catholic schools

Year	% Non-Catholic	Year	% Non-Catholic
1985	9.0	1993	11.0
1986	9.0	1994	11.7
1987	9.0	1995	12.7
1988	9.2	1996	13.3
1989	9.3	1997	14.3
1990	9.7	1998	15.0
1991	10.1	1999	15.9
1992	10.3	2000	16.4

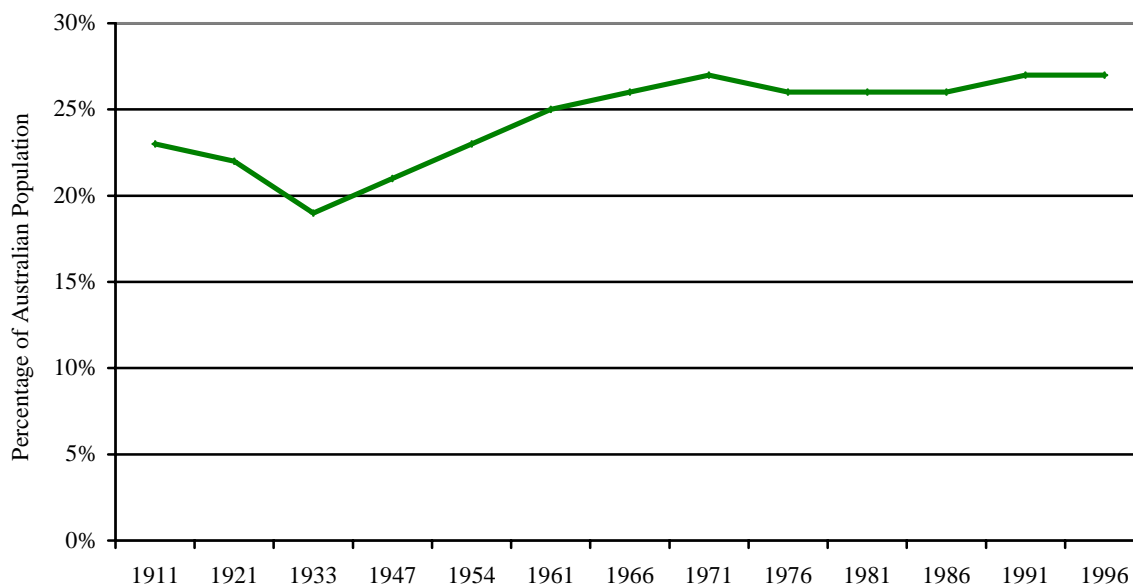
As a point of comparison over time, the proportion of Non-Catholic students in NSW Catholic schools in 1975 was 1.6% and by 1980 was 4.8%. A further point of comparison currently is with Catholic schools in the United States where, in 2000, the proportion of Non-Catholic students was 13.6%. (National Catholic Education Association (Washington, D.C), *United States Elementary and Secondary School Statistics, 2000-2001*, which is available at: <http://www.ncea.org./PubPol/databank.shtml>).

PART B
ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

1. Catholics and Catholic Schools in Australia

1. This study begins by placing the Catholic education effort in the context of the Catholic community itself. As **Graph 1** demonstrates, historically Catholics have always formed a significant proportion of the Australian population. In 1871 Catholics were 23% of all the inhabitants of the Australian colonies, and were still 23% when the first Australian census was held in 1911. That proportion declined during the 1920s and early 1930s before rising again. With natural growth and a disproportionate increase during the years of high migration from 1946 to 1966 the Catholic proportion of the population only increased further. More recent patterns of migration have maintained the Catholic proportion of the population.

Graph 1: Catholics as a proportion of the Australian Population, 1911-1996 Censuses



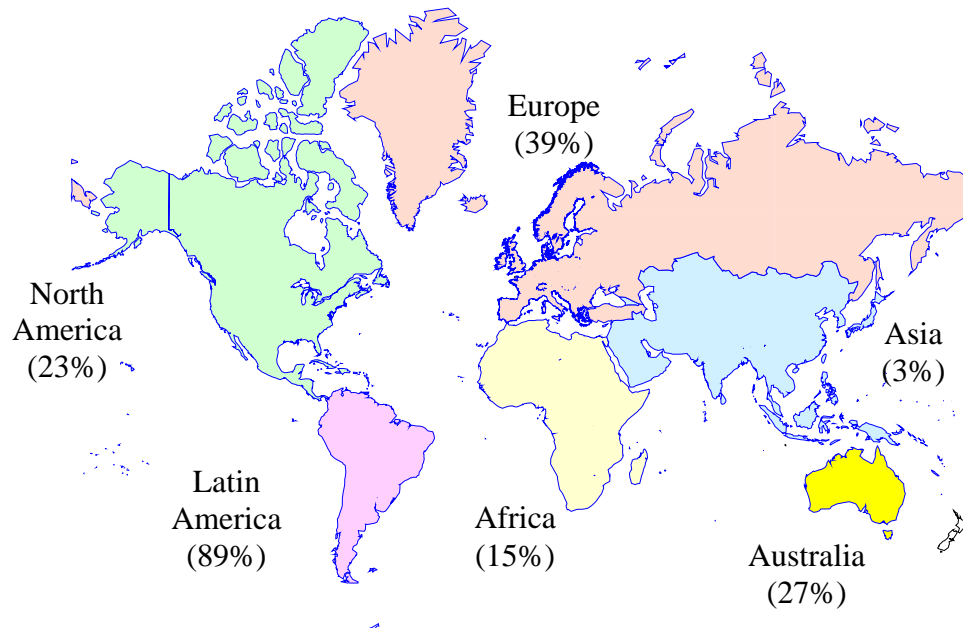
2. At the latest ABS census for which information is available (1996), almost 4.8 million Australians identified themselves as Catholic. This constituted 27% of all Australians and 38% of all Christians (**Table 3**), in both cases this was an increase on the previous decade.

Table 3: Catholics as a proportion of the Australian Population, 1986-1996

Census	Catholic Population	Catholics as % of Christian Population	Catholics as % of Australian Population
1986	4,052,827	35.7%	26.1%
1991	4,591,622	37.0%	27.4%
1996	4,798,530	38.1%	27.0%

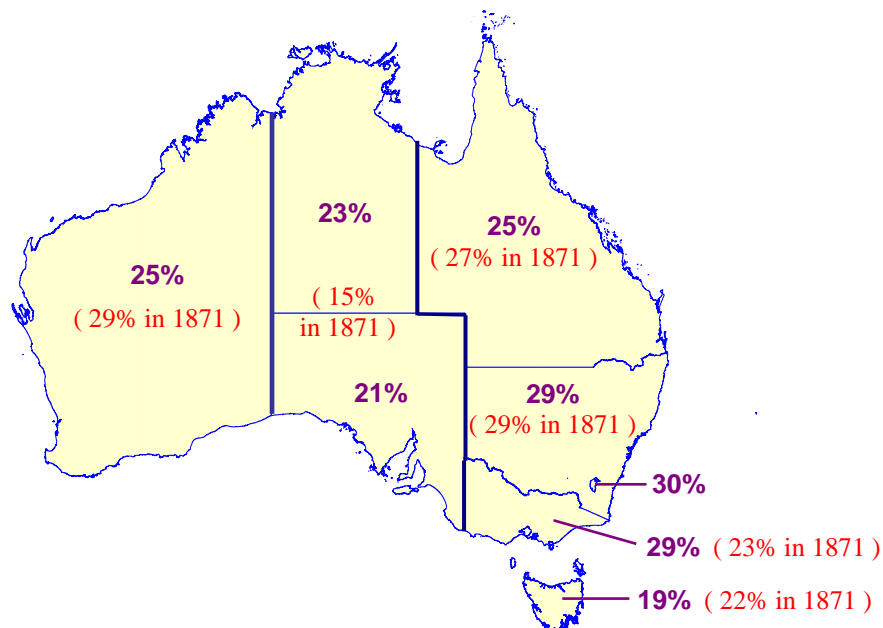
- At 27%, Australia remains a region with a high proportion of Catholics (**Map 1**) compared to North America, Africa and Asia (data in *Religious Population of the World 1998*, available at <http://www.factmonster.com/ipka/A0001484.html>), although the Australian Catholic community constitutes only a tiny fraction of the world's Catholics.

Map 1: Catholics of the world, as a proportion of their region's population, 1998



- There are considerable variations in the Catholic proportion of the Australian population across states and territories reflecting the different historical circumstances of these states and territories. The highest proportion of Catholics at the 1996 Census was in the ACT (30%) and the lowest was in Tasmania (19%). In some states (e.g. NSW) the Catholic proportion of the population has hardly changed in 120 years, in others it has declined (Vic, Tas, WA) and in others increased (SA/NT, Qld).

Map 2: Catholics as a proportion of the Australian population, by States and Territories, 1996 (and 1871)



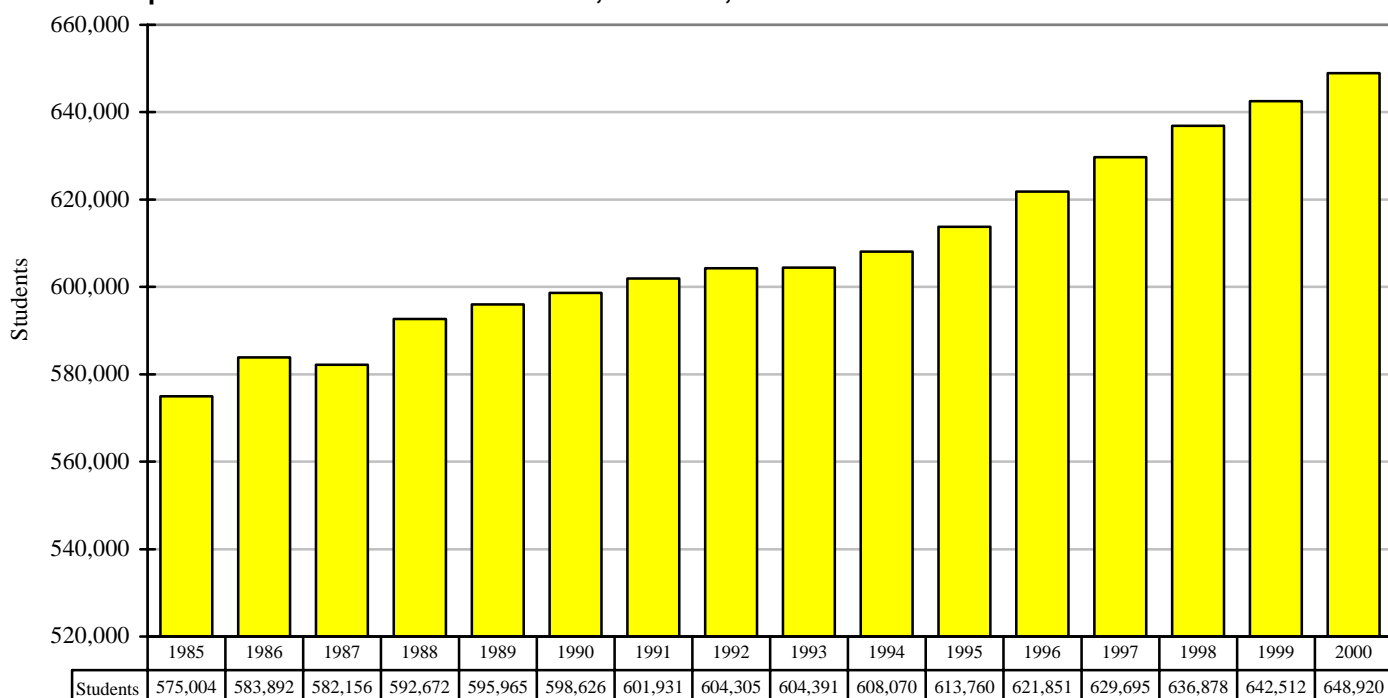
5. Unlike most other faith communities in Australia, the Catholic community has always sought to provide a Catholic education for its children. Since George Morley opened the first Catholic school at Parramatta in 1820, each new Catholic community, in both city and country, has striven to first provide what other Catholic communities already had and valued – a school. With the cessation of government financial aid in the 1870s/1880s the influx of religious men and women ensured that Catholic schools continued to survive and that new ones were founded.
6. The Catholic school is an integral part of Australian Catholic culture and its constructive contribution to the building of the Australian nation is incalculable. At the same time, the Catholic school has been central to the creation of Catholic identity in Australia and has created its own popular mythology. Part of the mythology is that there was a time when all Catholic children attended Catholic schools. However, this was never the case. In 1933, for instance, the proportion of Catholic children attending Catholic schools was 65% (calculated from data in *Commonwealth Yearbook No.37 (1946-7)*, p.228). Currently, Catholic schools accommodate just under half of the Catholic school-age population.

2. Trends: 1985 – 2000

7. From 1985 to 2000 the numbers of students in Australian Catholic schools increased by 73,916 (**Graph 2**). This increase in enrolments has occurred in both primary and secondary schools (**Graph 3**). The annual percentage change in the school-age population of Australia from 1990 to 2000 shows that the rate of growth for Catholic schools was faster than for Government schools but slower than for Anglican and other

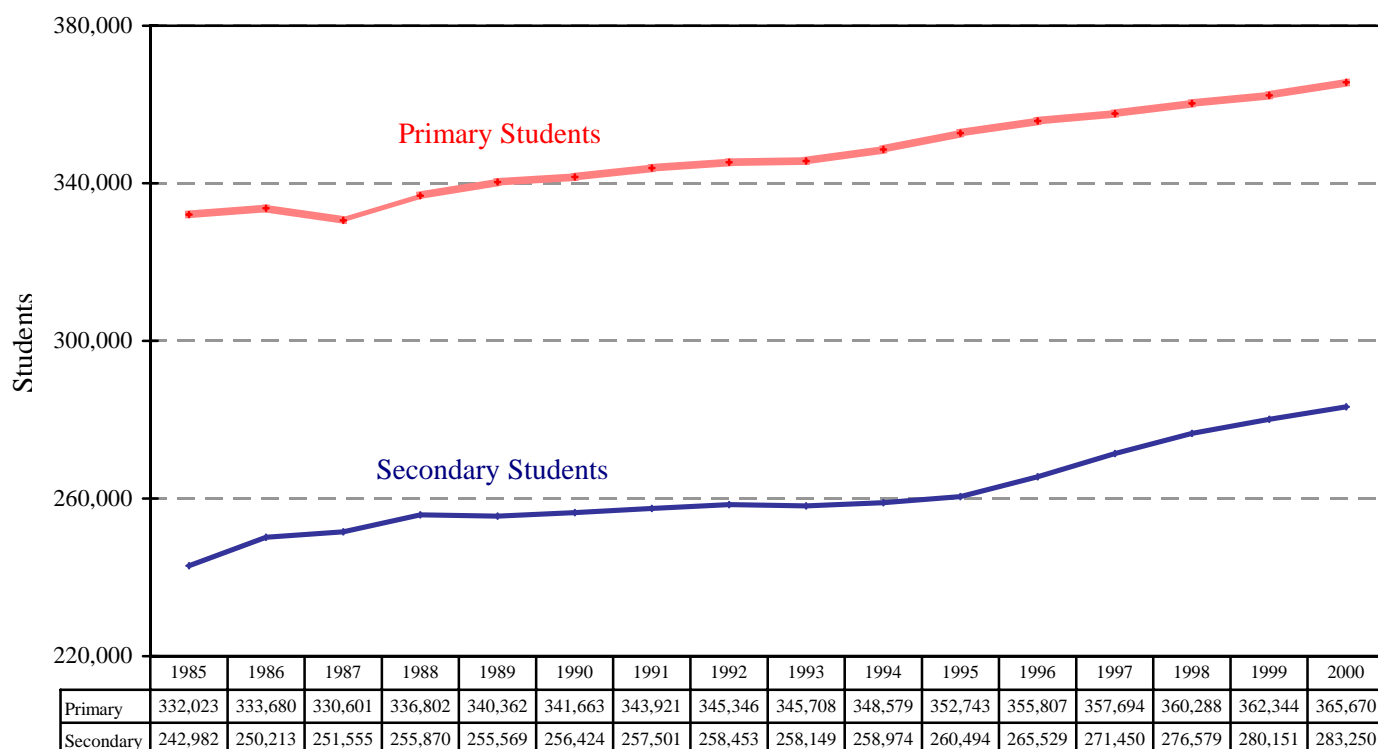
non-government schools (**Graph 4**). Of particular interest is the differing patterns between Anglican and the other non-government schools before and after 1994.

Graph 2: Students in Catholic Schools, Australia, 1985-2000

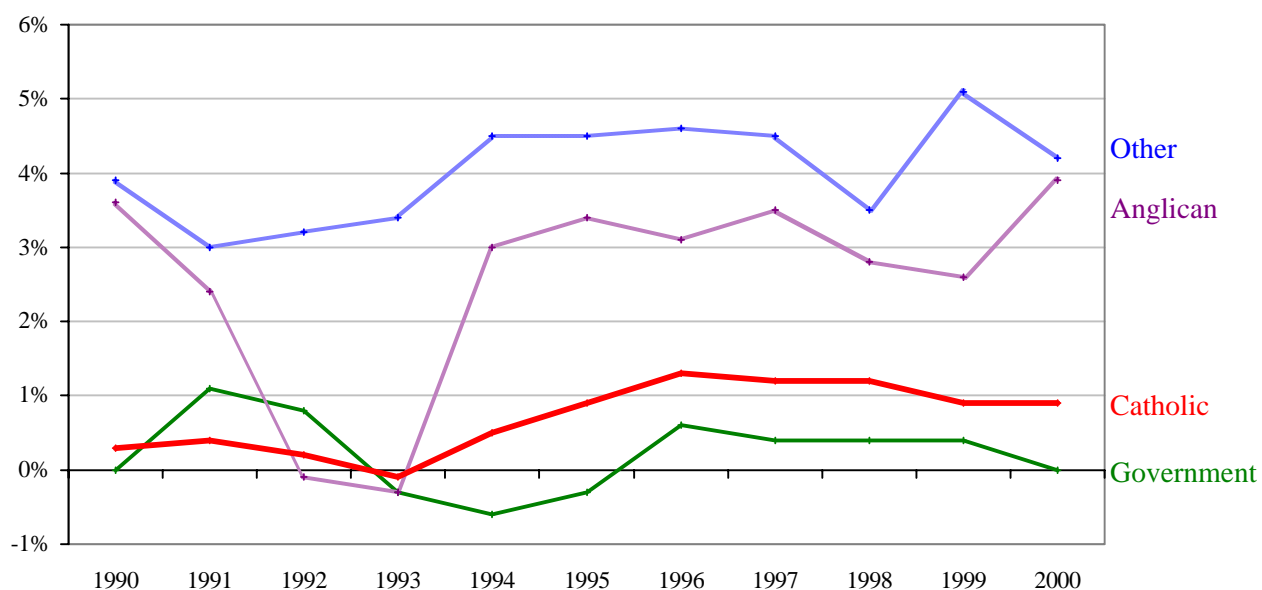


Note: Student enrolments differ between DETYA and those published in the *ABS Schools, Australia* publications.

Graph 3: Students in Catholic Schools, Primary and Secondary, 1985-2000



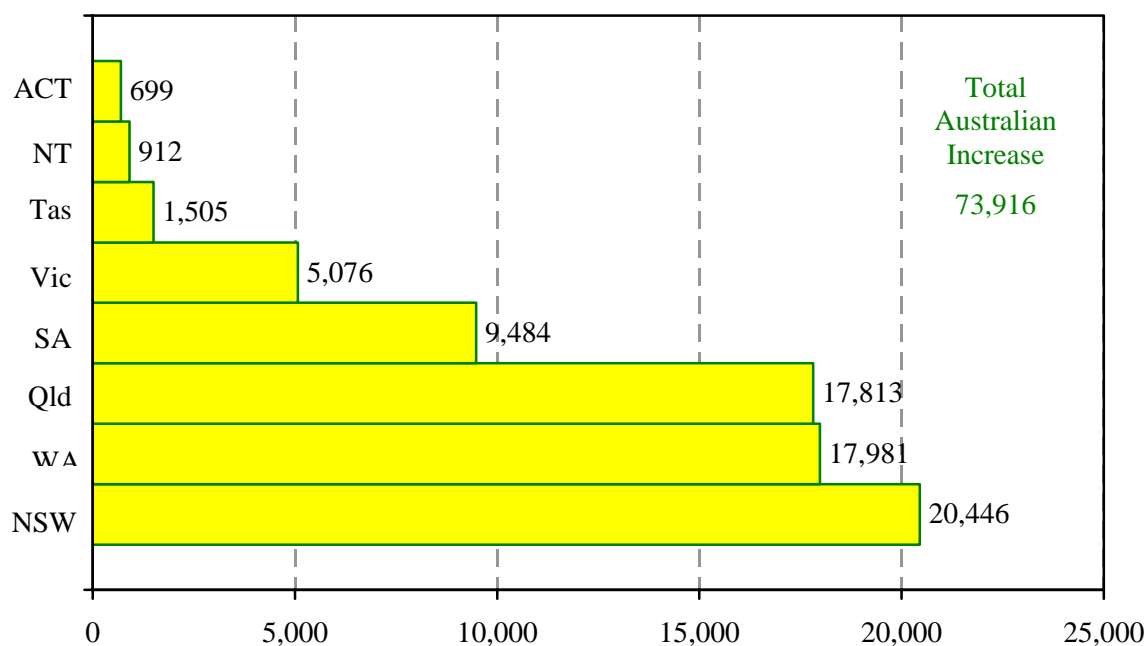
Graph 4: Annual Percentage Change - Students in Schools, by Sector, Australia, 1990-2000



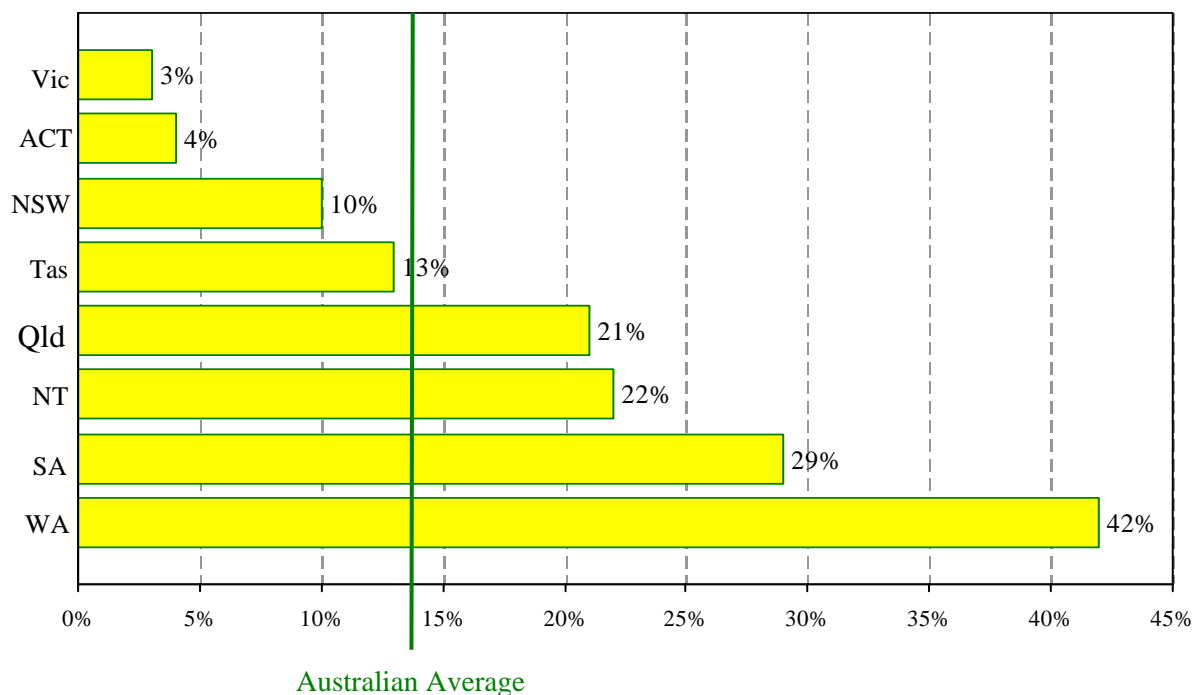
- **All schools**

8. This overall increase in Catholic school enrolments represents different growth-rates in different states and territories, with the largest growth in numbers (**Graph 5**) being in NSW, Western Australia and Queensland and the fastest growth (**Graph 6**) being in WA (42%), SA (29%), NT (22%) and Qld (21%). The lowest growth rate has been in Victoria (3%). Factors influencing the relative growth rates have been increased retention in secondary schools, local capacity to build new schools, and to create new places in existing schools.

Graph 5: Change in Catholic Student Numbers, 1985-2000



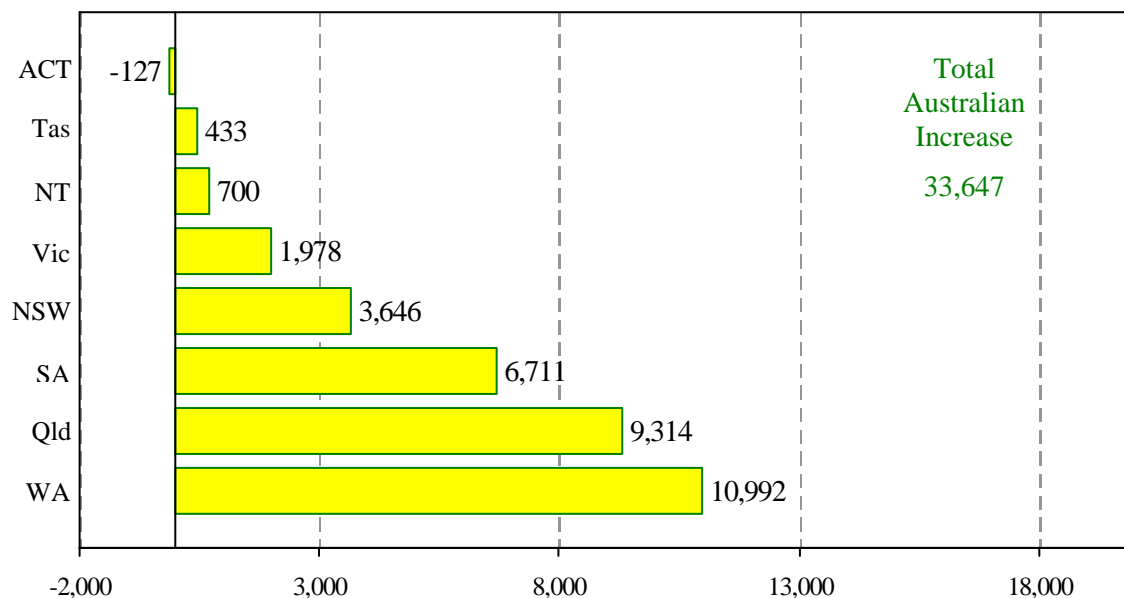
Graph 6: Percentage Change in Student Numbers, 1985-2000



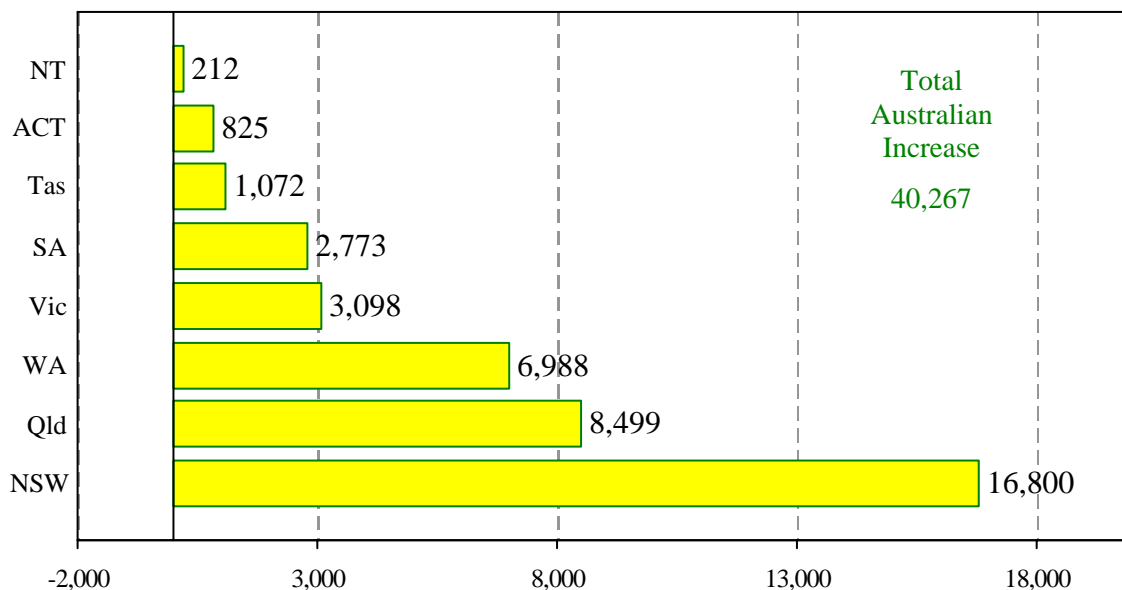
• **Primary and Secondary**

- Of particular interest are the varying patterns of growth across both primary and secondary schools. While the growth rates for both primary and for secondary have been broadly comparable at a national level (**Graph 3**), there are significant state differences. In primary (**Graph 9**) the largest growth has been in WA and the lowest in Tasmania. Enrolments in Catholic primary schools in the ACT have declined slightly. As for secondary (**Graph 10**), by far the greatest increase (nearly double the nearest state) has been in NSW which is mainly attributable to increased retention and the establishment of large new schools in outer metropolitan areas (south-west and north-west Sydney) and on the north coast (Port Macquarie to Tweed Heads).

Graph 7: Changes in Catholic Primary Students, 1985-2000



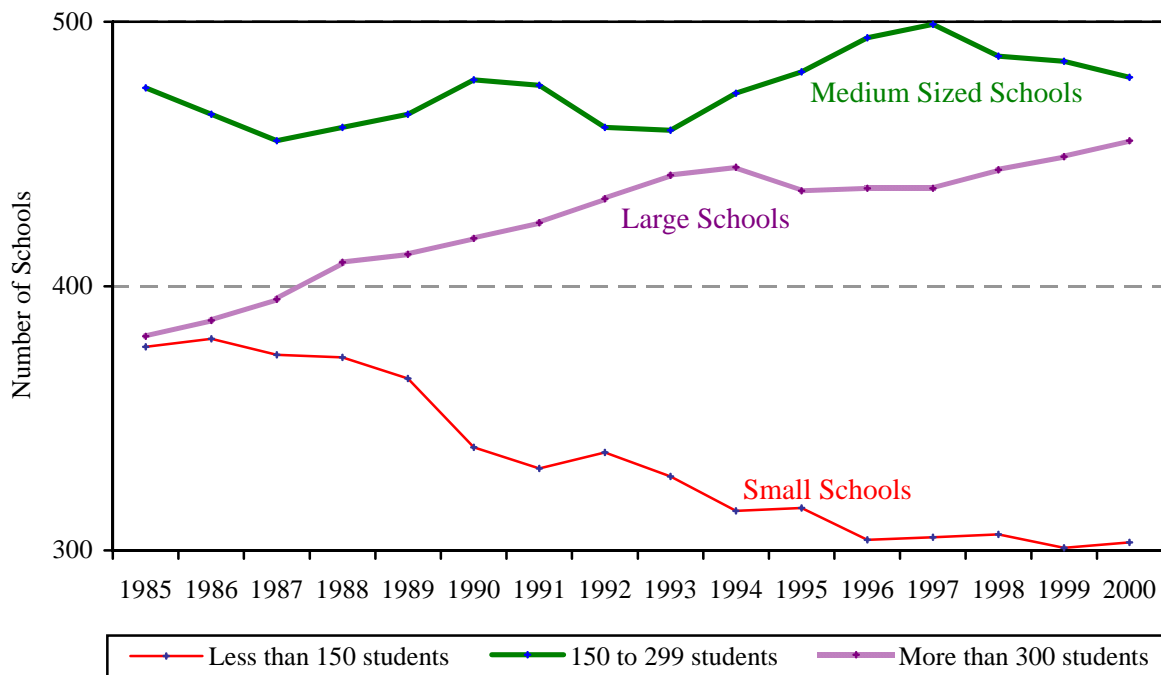
Graph 8: Changes in Catholic Secondary Students, 1985-2000



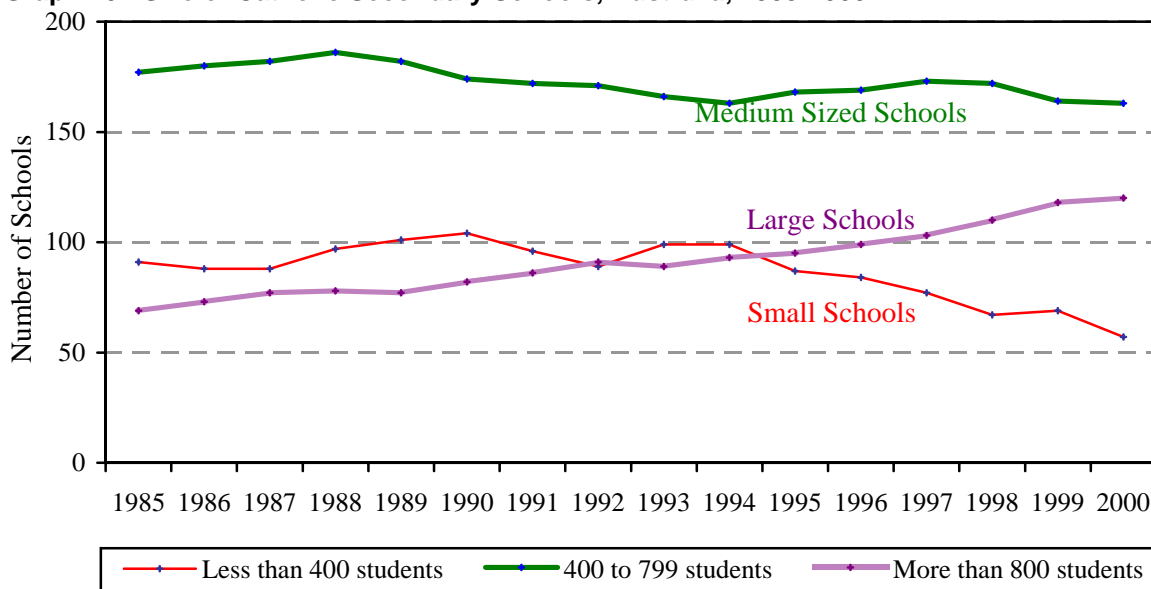
• **School size**

9. One of the associated factors in the increase in enrolments in Catholic schools has been the tendency to develop and redevelop schools, particularly secondary schools, to their greatest capacity. In the period 1985 to 2000 the number of large primary schools (more than 300 students) has increased significantly (**Graph 7**); while the number of large secondary schools with (more than 800 students) has doubled (**Graph 8**), and the number of small schools (less than 400) has declined dramatically.

Graph 9: Size of Catholic Primary Schools, Australia, 1985-2000



Graph 10: Size of Catholic Secondary Schools, Australia, 1985-2000



• **Apparent Retention Rates**

11. Part of the growth in larger secondary schools has been created by students increasingly tending to stay in Catholic schools once they commence. The Apparent Retention Rate for students from primary to secondary continues to increase annually (**Graph 11**). Retention rates in excess of 100% from primary to secondary (**Table 4**) means in effect that there are more students in the first year of Catholic secondary schools than there were in the last year of primary school the previous year. Clearly, many students from other schools commence their Catholic education in secondary school. Anecdotal evidence suggests that a considerable number of these are Catholic students for whom the local Government primary school was more convenient than the Catholic school. It also suggests that many parents seek to confine their fee-paying commitment to the secondary school years only.

Graph 11: Apparent Retention Rates for Catholic Primary to Catholic Secondary Schools, Australia, 1990-2000

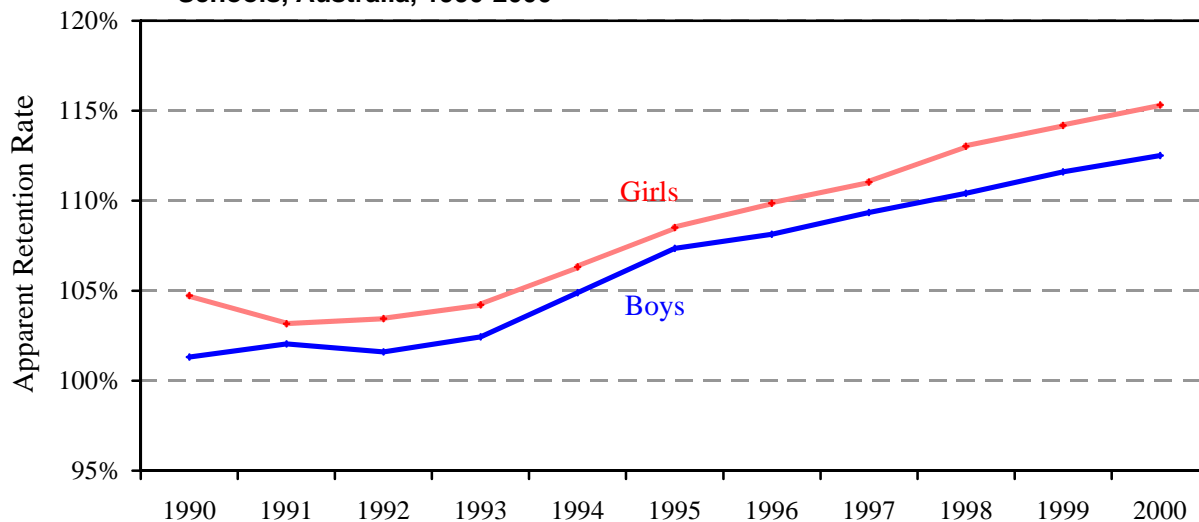


Table 4: Apparent Retention Rates, Catholic Primary to Secondary Schools, Australia and States, 2000

	Boys	Girls	All Students
Australia	112.5	115.3	113.9
NSW	119.2	119.7	119.5
Vic	100.2	103.2	101.7
Qld	116.7	124.4	120.3
SA	110.6	120.4	115.3
WA	121.1	119.6	120.4
Tas	104.9	100.0	102.5
NT	103.1	93.1	97.8
ACT	114.5	133.2	123.4

Note: NSW, ACT, Vic and Tas retention is from Grade 6 to Grade 7.
SA, NT, Qld and WA is from Grade 7 to Grade 8

12. A contributing factor to the increase in enrolments in Catholic secondary schools has been the improvement in the secondary Apparent Retention Rate in the 1980s and early 1990s although that is now fairly stable in all states (**Graph 12**). Further, there has always been a difference in apparent retention rates between boys and girls in all school sectors and that is no less evident in Catholic schools (**Table 5**). The Retention Rate for girls (82.2% in 2000) remains consistently higher than for boys (71.8% in 2000).

Graph 12: Apparent Retention Rates for Catholic Secondary Schools, Australia, 1994-

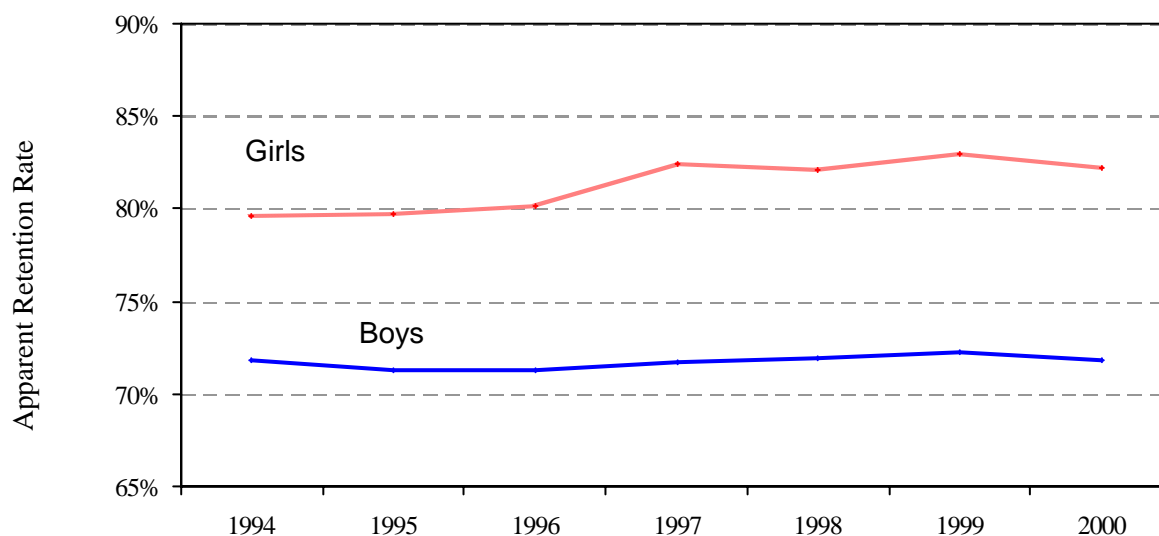


Table 5: Apparent Retention Rates for Catholic Secondary Schools, Australia and States, 2000

	Males	Females	All Students
Australia	71.8	82.2	76.9
NSW	71.8	81.3	76.4
Vic	69.7	84.0	76.8
Qld	79.0	87.2	82.9
SA	74.7	85.6	80.4
WA	71.3	81.7	76.3
Tas	60.1	68.5	64.3
NT	22.5	44.9	32.7
WA	59.6	57.1	58.4

Note: NSW, ACT, Vic and Tas retention is from Grade 7 to Grade 12.
SA, NT, Qld and WA is from Grade 8 to Grade 12

- **Student/Teacher Ratios**

13. Throughout the period of enrolment growth from 1985 to 2001 there has been a reduction in the student/teacher ratios in both primary and secondary Catholic schools. **Table 6** sets out the changes.

Table 6: Student/Teacher Ratios for Primary and Secondary Catholic Schools, 1989 and 2000, Australia and States

	Primary			Secondary		
	1989	2000	Change	1989	2000	Change
Australia	21.6	19.7	1.9	14.2	13.7	0.5
NSW	21.8	20.0	1.8	14.3	13.8	0.5
Vic	21.1	19.6	1.5	14.2	13.7	0.5
Qld	21.7	19.0	2.7	14.2	13.4	0.8
SA	20.1	18.6	1.5	13.1	13.6	(-) 0.5
WA	23.2	21.0	2.2	13.8	13.9	(-) 0.1
Tas	20.5	19.6	0.9	14.1	13.8	0.3
NT	20.5	19.6	0.9	13.6	12.4	1.2
ACT	23.2	21.8	1.4	14.6	14.4	0.2

3. Projections: 2001 – 2010

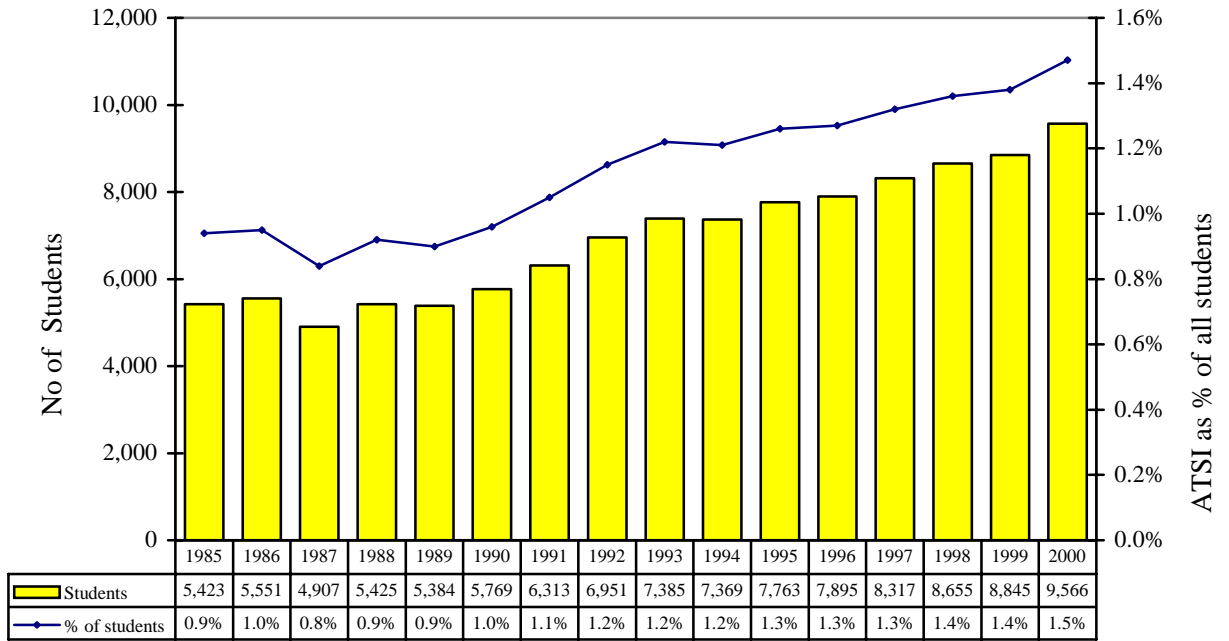
14. Some students in Catholic schools in 2001, those currently in the initial three years, will still be at school in 2010. The remaining students of 2010 have not yet started school. Indeed, the students in the initial three years of schooling of 2010 are not yet born. So, projecting Catholic school enrolments forward to 2010 requires certain assumptions to be made about retention, about grade-progression through Catholic schools in the period 2001-2010, and about the number of students commencing school from 2002 to 2010. There is obviously some margin of potential error in these calculations.
15. This report has eschewed the expectation of providing detailed projections on a national or state basis for the period 2002-2010. There are two main reasons for adopting this stance: (1) the inevitable difficulty of determining a comprehensive and appropriate methodology for formulating projections; and (2) identifying and collecting the key sources of data, such as annual numbers of baptisms. Irrespective of the difficulties, however, it is clear that Catholic school enrolments in the period to 2010 can look forward to a period of relative stability.
16. Further, the Working Party is of the view that detailed projections are really only valid and meaningful at a local level in the first instance. It is suggested that in future closer attention be paid to developing local projections and the results of this work could then be aggregated into state and national projections. Experience, recent analyses for planning purposes and the incomplete baptism data gathered thus far, reinforce the conviction that local projections must form the starting point for anything larger. Projections are further complicated by the difficulty of identifying and gathering data for local growth areas, particularly for new schools. Moreover, projections are particularly sensitive to the dynamics of changing public policy, Catholic schools policy, parental intentions, as well as financial and other factors dependent on local context.

4. Student specific trends

- **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Students (ATSI)**

17. It is important to recognize the increased openness of Catholic schools to indigenous students in recent years. The number and proportion of ATSI students has increased significantly over the period 1985-2000 (**Graph 13**), and in all states (**Graph 14** and **Table 7**). This increase is likely to be maintained for the foreseeable future, especially given the increased levels of financial and other support now available for indigenous students. One of the key factors has been the significant increase in the level of Commonwealth Government support mainly through the Indigenous Education Strategic Initiatives Programme. Apart from the Commonwealth program, many dioceses began to develop more systematic enrolment and support policies in response to the Statement by Pope John Paul II to the indigenous community at Alice Springs in 1985.

Graph 13: ATSI Students – Number of ATSI students in Catholic Schools, and percentage of students identified as ATSI in Catholic Schools, Australia, 1985-2000



Graph 14: ATSI Students – number of students in Catholic Schools, States and Territories, 1985-2000

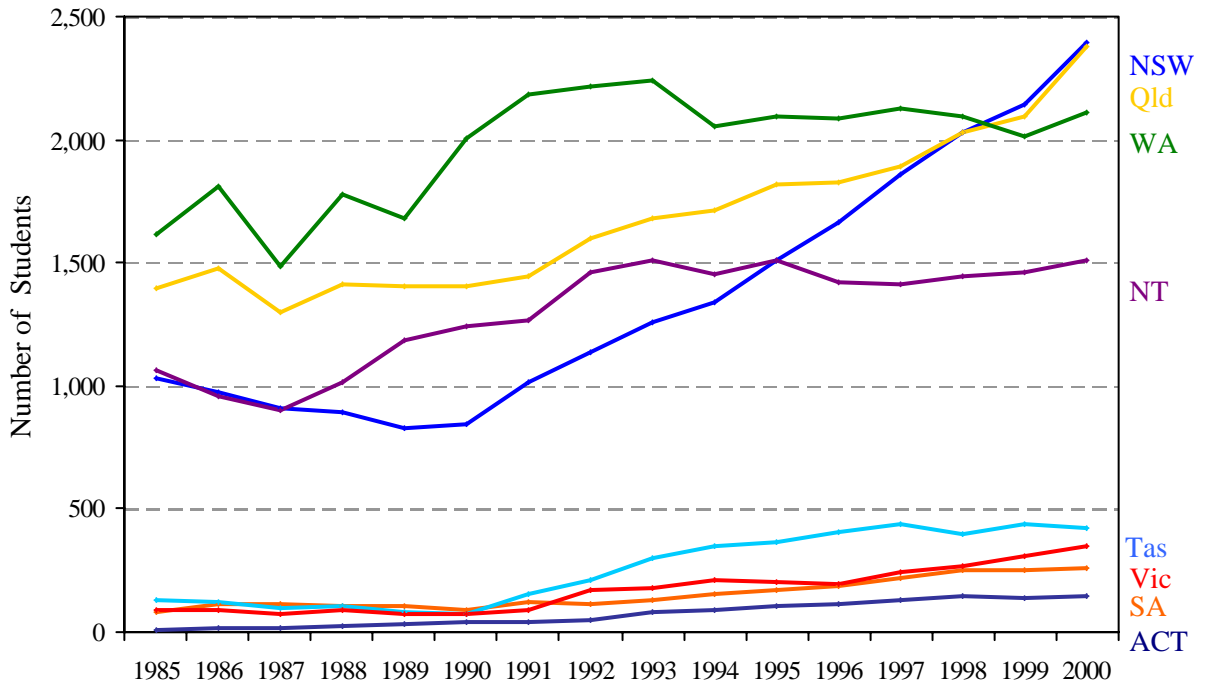


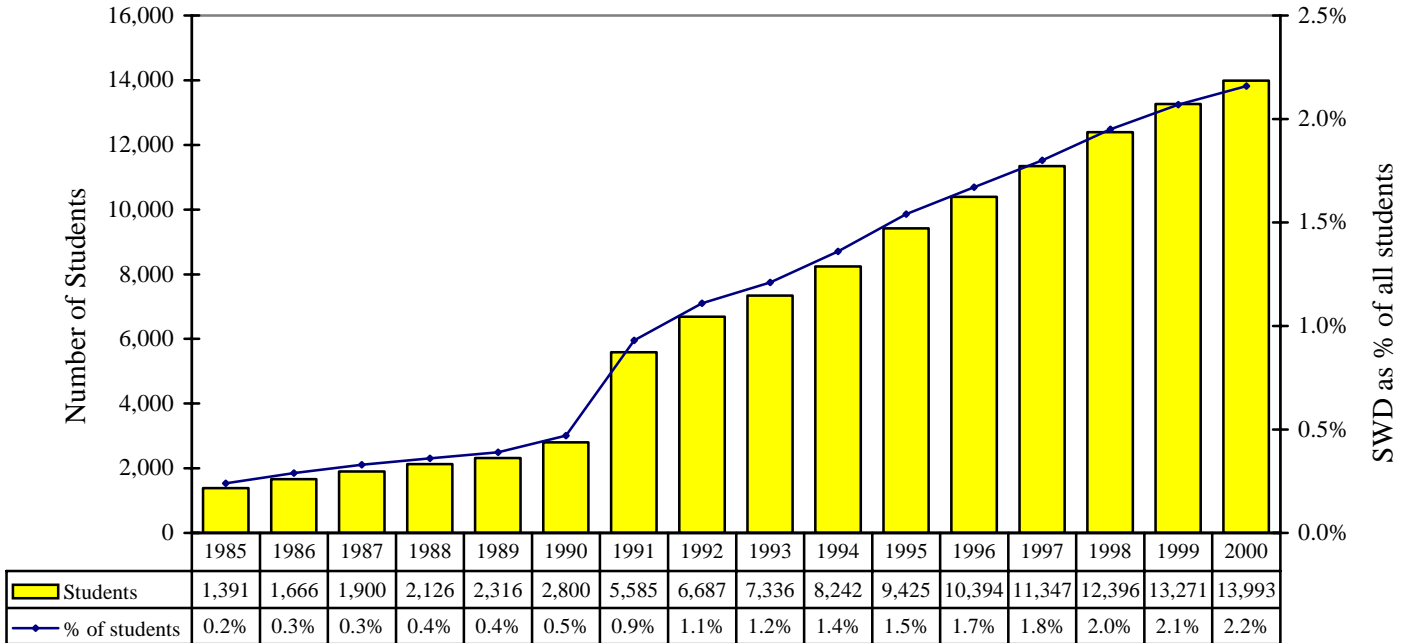
Table 7: ATSI Students in Catholic Schools, Australia and States/Territories, 1985 and 2000

	1985		2000		Change in Number
	Number of Students	% of Students	Number of Students	% of Students	
NSW	1,029	0.5%	2,392	1.0%	+ 1,363
Vic	93	0.1%	347	0.2%	+ 254
Qld	1,400	1.6%	2,382	2.3%	+ 982
SA	83	0.3%	261	0.6%	+ 178
WA	1,617	3.8%	2,108	3.5%	+ 491
Tas	131	1.2%	419	3.3%	+ 288
NT	1,060	25.4%	1,507	29.6%	+ 447
ACT	10	0.1%	150	0.9%	+ 140
Australia	5,423	0.9%	9,566	1.5%	+ 4,143

- **Students with a Disability (SWD)**

18. The fastest growing category of students in Catholic schools from 1985 to 2000 has been those with a disability (**Graph 15**), and this has occurred in every state and territory (**Graph 16** and **Table 8**). As with indigenous students, there arose a greater awareness among Catholic educators in the early 1980s of the educational needs of Students with a Disability and a preference for integrating them into regular schools wherever possible. This led to improved access to appropriately trained staff and better advisory services. Despite the failure of the Commonwealth to match the increase in students with comparable per capita funding increases, the trend of increased enrolment of Students with a Disability is likely to continue. The advent of the Commonwealth *Disability Discrimination Act* in 1992 is clearly reflected in the data. It has both heightened awareness and created a real pressure point for enrolment. In brief, the data illustrates that Catholic schools have responded significantly to this particular challenge.

Graph 15: SWD Students – Number of SWD students in Catholic Schools, and percentage of students identified as SWD in Catholic Schools, Australia, 1985-2000



Graph 16: SWD Students – Number of students in Catholic Schools, States and Territories, 1985-2000

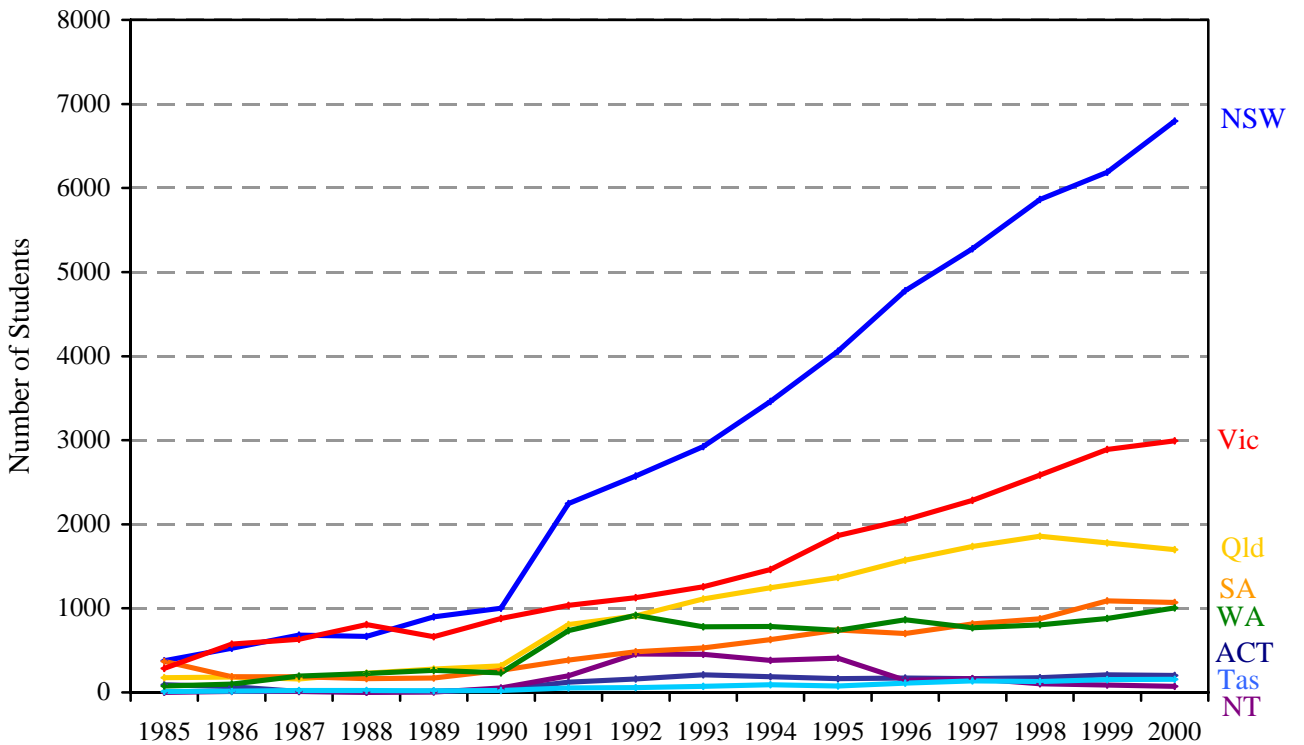


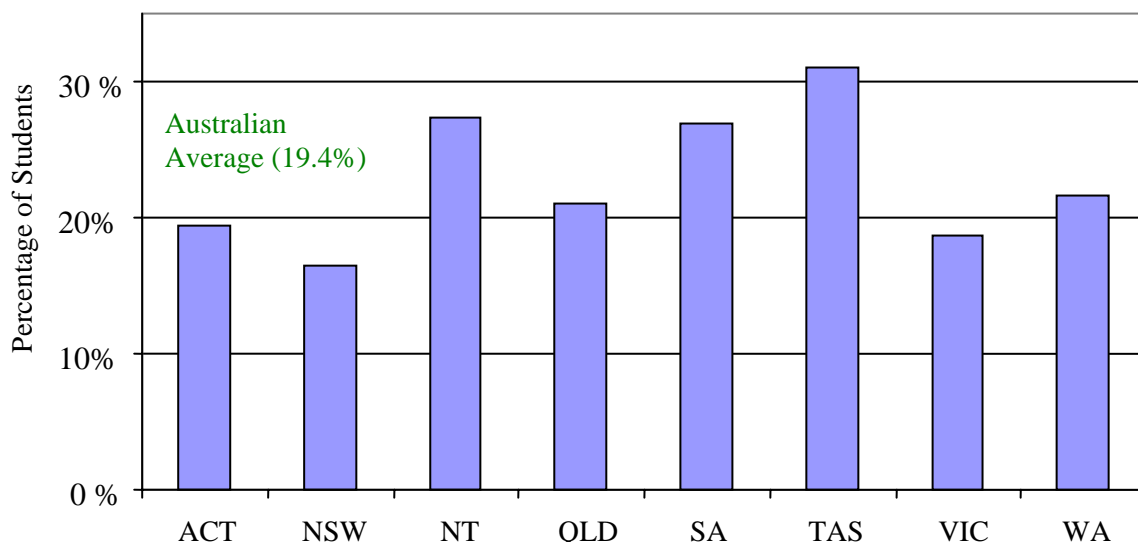
Table 8: SWD Students in Catholic Schools, 1985 and 2000

	1985		2000		Change in Number
	Number of Students	% of Students	Number of Students	% of Students	
NSW	377	0.2%	6,798	3.0%	+ 6,421
Vic	287	0.2%	2,991	1.7%	+ 2,704
Qld	177	0.2%	1,697	1.6%	+ 1,520
SA	371	1.2%	1,071	2.6%	+ 700
WA	75	0.2%	1,007	1.7%	+ 932
Tas	12	0.1%	155	1.2%	+ 143
NT	Nil	—	74	1.5%	+ 74
ACT	92	0.6%	201	1.2%	+ 109
Australia	1,391	0.2%	13,994	2.2%	+ 12,603

• **Non-Catholic students**

19. There was a time when nearly all students in Catholic schools were Catholic. Catholic schools were not considered a viable or preferable option for non-Catholic parents. This situation has clearly changed in recent years. The existence of a school with a religious, or at least a strong values base has become an attractive option for many non-Catholic parents who seek a religious or values-based education for their children. All dioceses have an enrolment policy which, generally speaking, provides for non-Catholic students where places exist. The proportion of non-Catholic students has risen significantly in recent years, with the 1996 ABS data showing clear and strong state diocesan variations (**Graph 17**) which obviously reflects local state and diocesan policy and practice. While this data is taken from the ABS census it has been validated by separately collected data provided by schools (see Section 1 above , p.13).

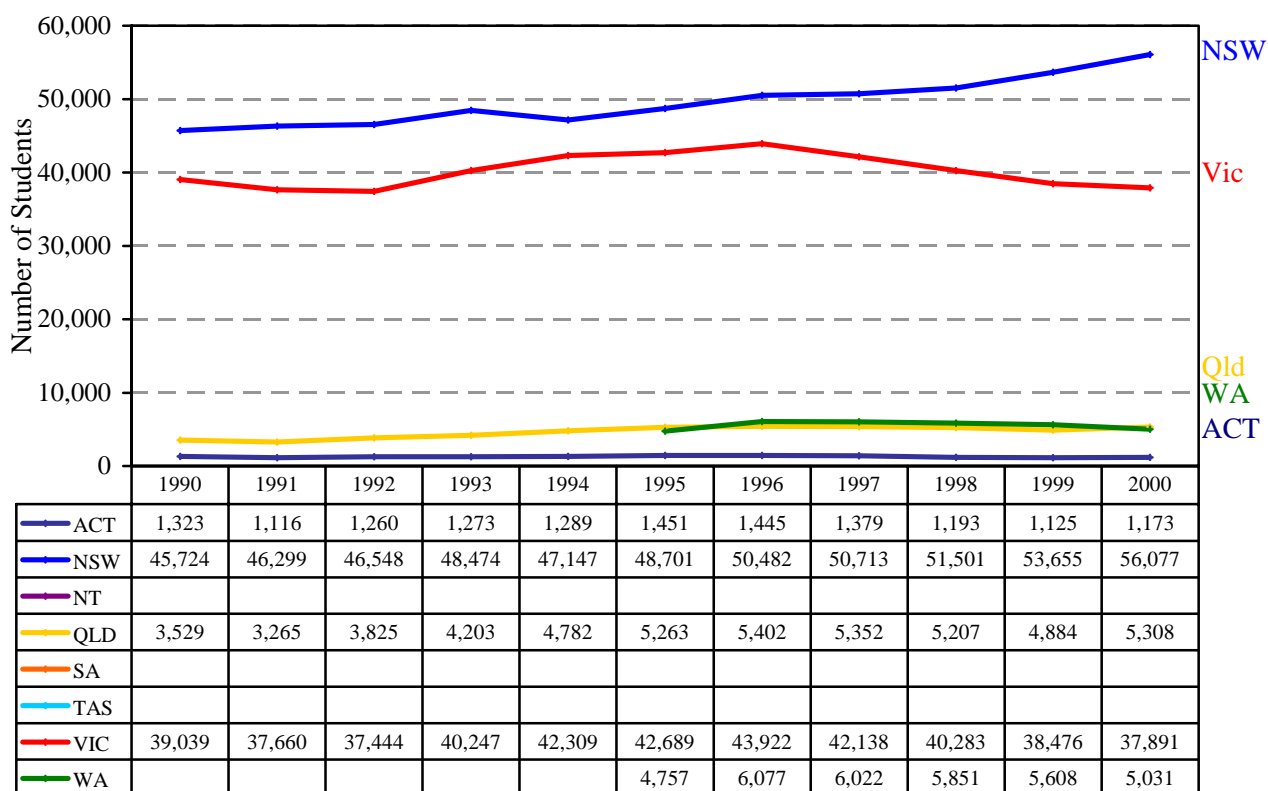
Graph 17: Non-Catholic Students in Catholic Schools, Australia and States/Territories, 1996



- **English as a Second Language Students (ESL)**

20. As described in Section 1 (p.12) there are particular problems in locating reliable and consistent data for ESL students in Catholic schools. The data set out here (**Graph 18**) has been provided by CECs. Clearly, the available data needs more refinement, but it does show a significant increase in ESL students in Catholic schools. The state variations obviously reflect local variation in the impact of the chief factors contributing to the number of ESL students, namely the recent patterns of migration from certain countries with significant population of Catholics.

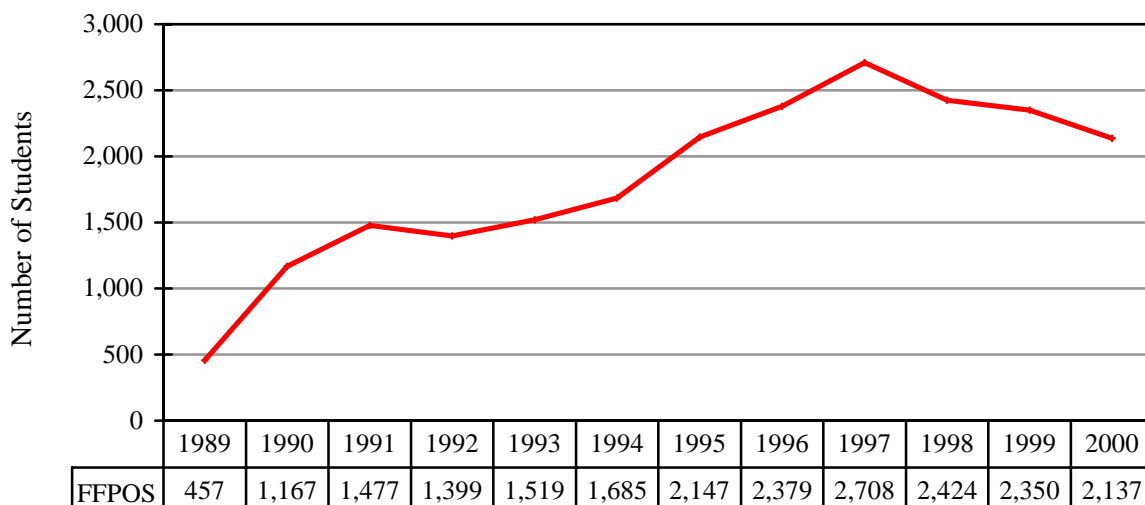
Graph 18: ESL Students in Catholic Schools by State (some States only), 1985-2000



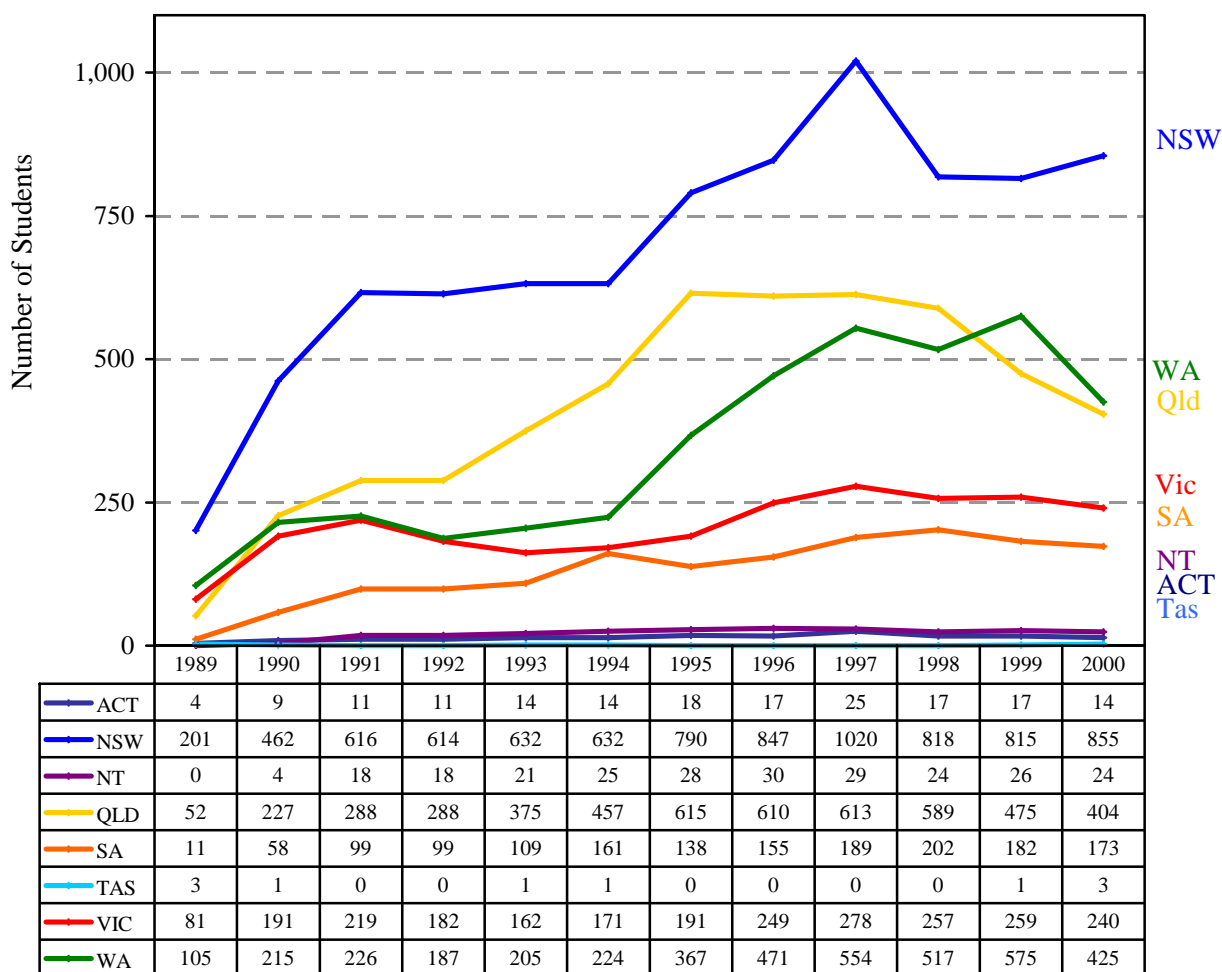
- **Full-Fee Paying Overseas Students (FFPOS)**

21. Catholic schools entered the FFPOS scheme on its introduction by the Commonwealth Government in 1989. In the following years, at least until 1997, the number of FFPOS grew quickly and consistently (**Graph 19**). Since then, it has declined in all states/territories except NSW (**Graph 20**). This is attributable to a number of factors including the fact that Catholic schools found that there were considerable pastoral challenges involved in providing for such students.

Graph 19: FFPOS in Catholic Schools, Australia, 1989-2000



Graph 20: FFPOS for States and Territories, 1989-2000



5. Policy Issues

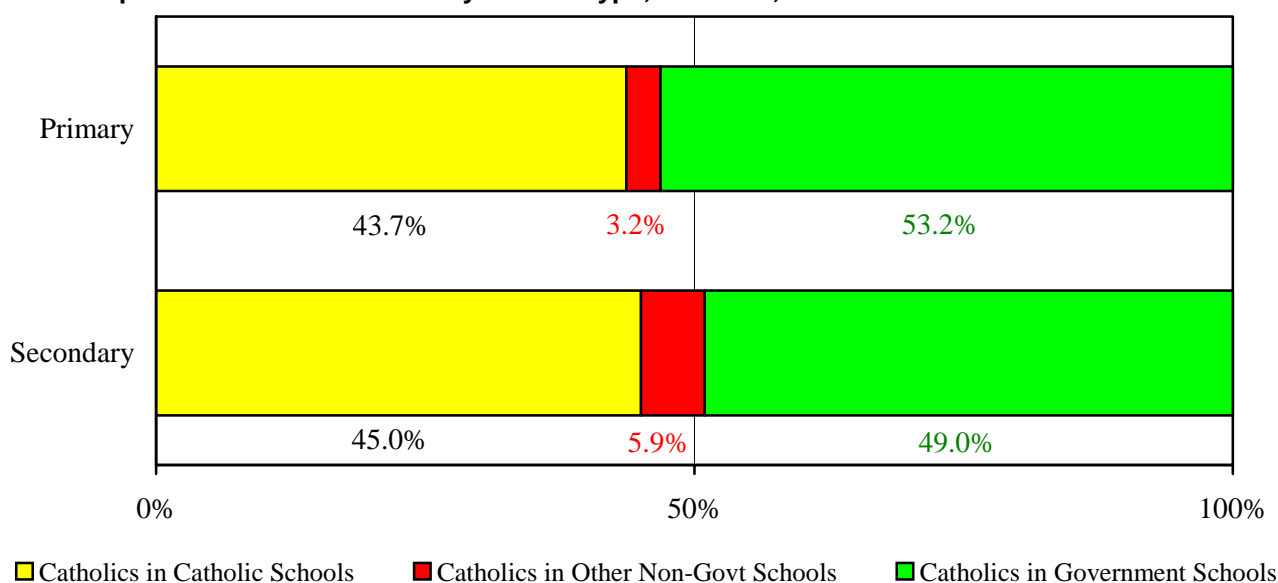
22. The impetus for this study was a number of concerns and uncertainties about the changing composition of Catholic schools, as well as some perceived changes in pattern of school choice among Catholic families. The data set out in response to the Terms of Reference documents these changing patterns of enrolment. The challenge for NCEC, however, is how to interpret those changes and to identify the policy issues arising from those interpretations. At this stage the most immediate implications would appear to focus around four key questions:

- *What schools do children of Catholic families attend?*
- *Who attends Catholic schools in terms of religion?*
- *Who attends Catholic schools in terms of family income?*
- *What schools do Catholic school-age children attend in terms of income?*

- *What schools do children of Catholic families attend ?*

23. Students from Catholic families attend, in fact have always attended government schools, and other non-government schools ('ONG' in graphs), as well as Catholic schools. However, data on Catholic students attending other non-government schools has never been obtainable until the 1996 ABS census. Data on Catholic students in government schools used to be collected and made available by state governments. It is understood that most, if not all, states no longer collect the religious affiliation of students enrolled in government schools so that data is no longer available either. Instead, the data has had to be taken from the 1996 census, employing a definition of Catholic family as being one where at least one parent is Catholic (cf p12. above). This data (**Graph 21**) shows that the majority of students from Catholic families attend government schools although the proportion varies across states (**Graph 22**) with the highest proportion of Catholic students in Catholic schools being in ACT and Victoria.

Graph 21: Catholic Students by School Type, Australia, 1996 Census



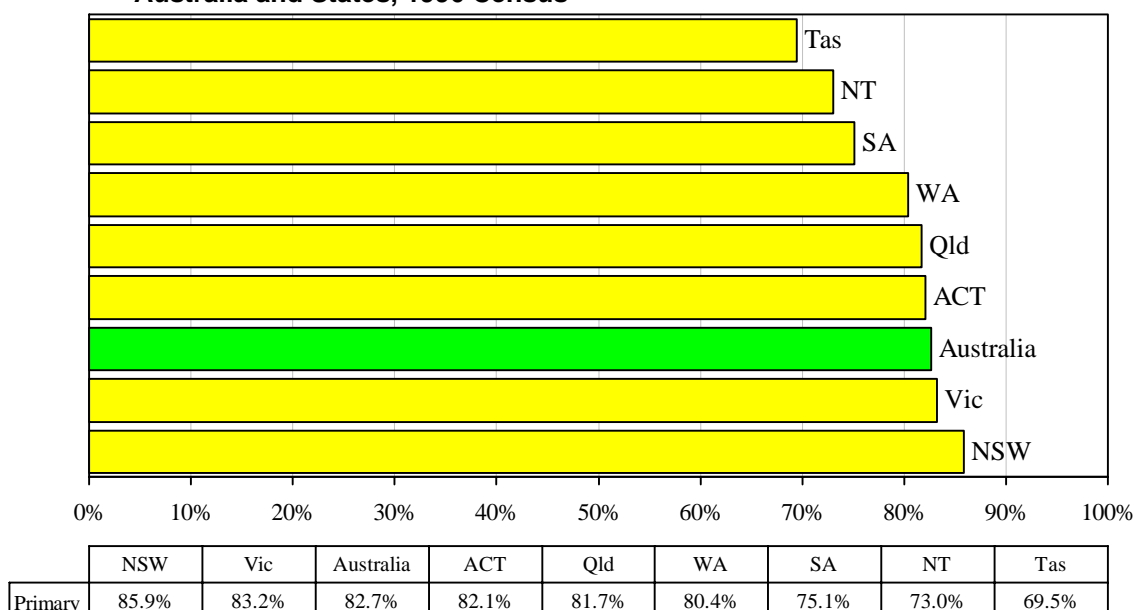
Graph 22: Catholic students by School Type, States and Territories, 1996 Census



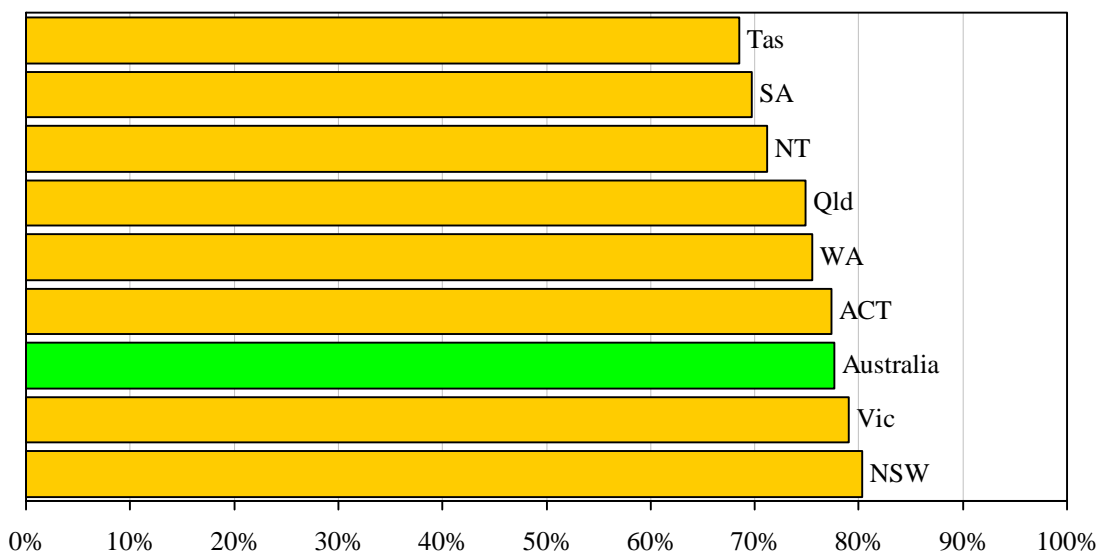
• *Who attends Catholic schools in terms of religion?*

24. The data is unequivocally clear. The majority of students in Catholic schools are from families where one or both parents is Catholic. The proportion of Non-Catholic students in Catholic schools varies considerably from state to state, ranging from 14.1% in NSW to 30.5% in Tasmania for primary (**Graph 23**) and from 19.7% in NSW to 31.5% in Tasmania for secondary (**Graph 24**). The significant, and evidently still growing, proportion of non-Catholic students in Catholic schools poses special questions for Catholic schools and their communities. Such questions concern the essential character and integrity of Catholic schools with large proportions of non-Catholic students, the expectations a school may make of students and parents, as well as pastoral implications. In summary, it touches on the tension between the Catholic school's evangelical and catechetical roles and aims.

Graph 23: Catholics as a proportion of all students in Catholic Primary Schools, Australia and States, 1996 Census



Graph 24: Catholics as a proportion of all students in Catholic Secondary Schools, Australia and States, 1996 Census

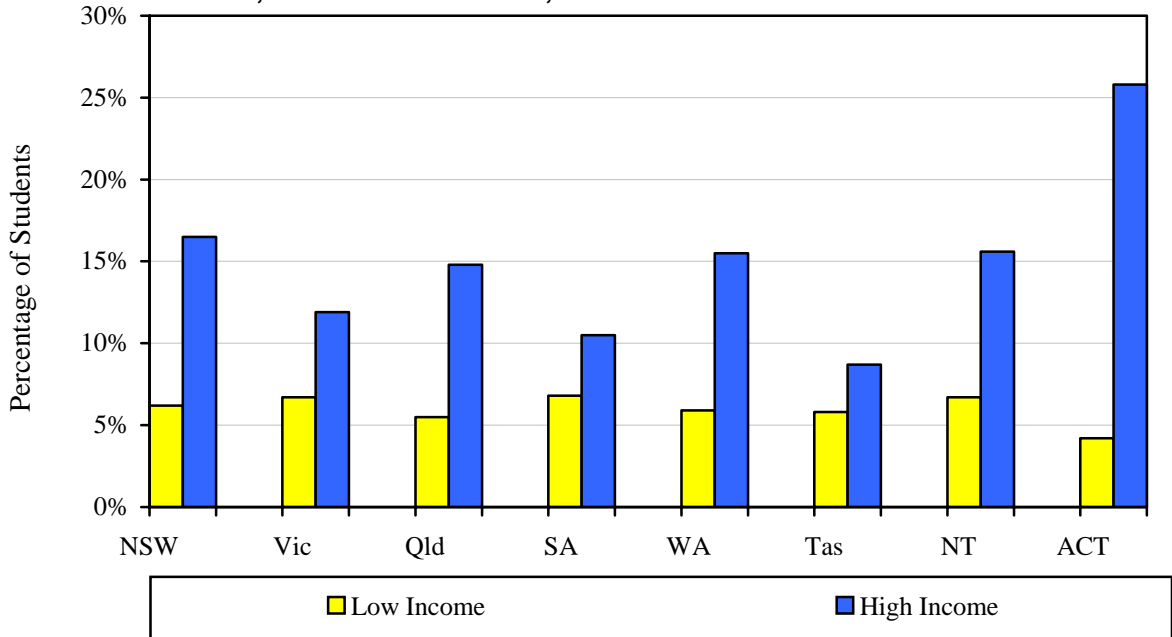


	NSW	Vic	Australia	ACT	WA	Qld	NT	SA	Tas
Secondary	80.3%	79.0%	77.7%	77.4%	75.5%	74.9%	71.2%	69.7%	68.5%

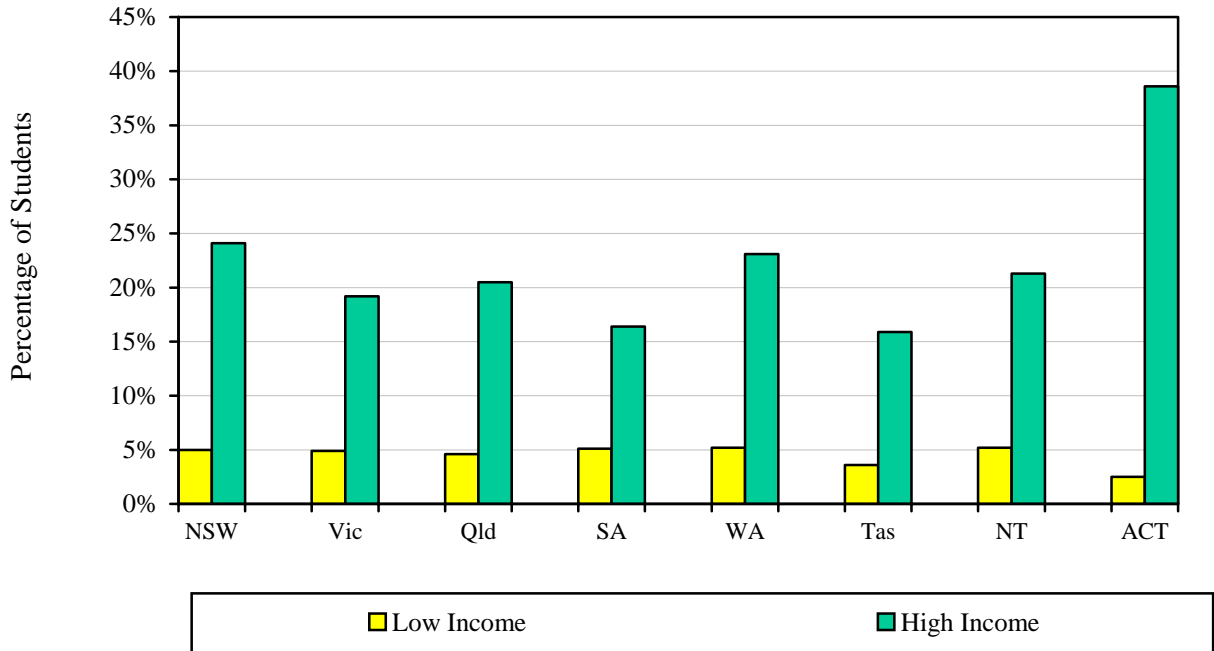
- *Who attends Catholic schools in terms of family income?*

25. Although not part of the Terms of Reference, recent national discussion and debate about the connection between socio-economic status of parents and their choice of school prompted the question: who, in terms of family income, attends Catholic schools? There is data now available (from the 1996 Census) on the relative income levels of families whose children attend school. Moreover, this data can be analysed by type of school, so that it is possible to compare the income pattern of families with children attending Catholic schools and those with children attending government schools. For this purpose, the 'Low' Income is households with weekly income of less than \$300 per week, and 'High' Income is households with more than \$1,500 per week. These categories are the same as those used by the ABS in their *1996 Census Social Atlas* publications.
26. The data shows that in primary schools (**Graph 25**) a greater proportion of higher, rather than lower, income families attend Catholic schools. For secondary schools (**Graph 26**) the preponderance to higher income levels is even greater. There is, however, a significant distinction between the Catholic and Non-Catholic families in terms of income (**Graph 27**) with Non-Catholic families forming a greater proportion of the lower income families. This data requires more careful and extensive analysis.

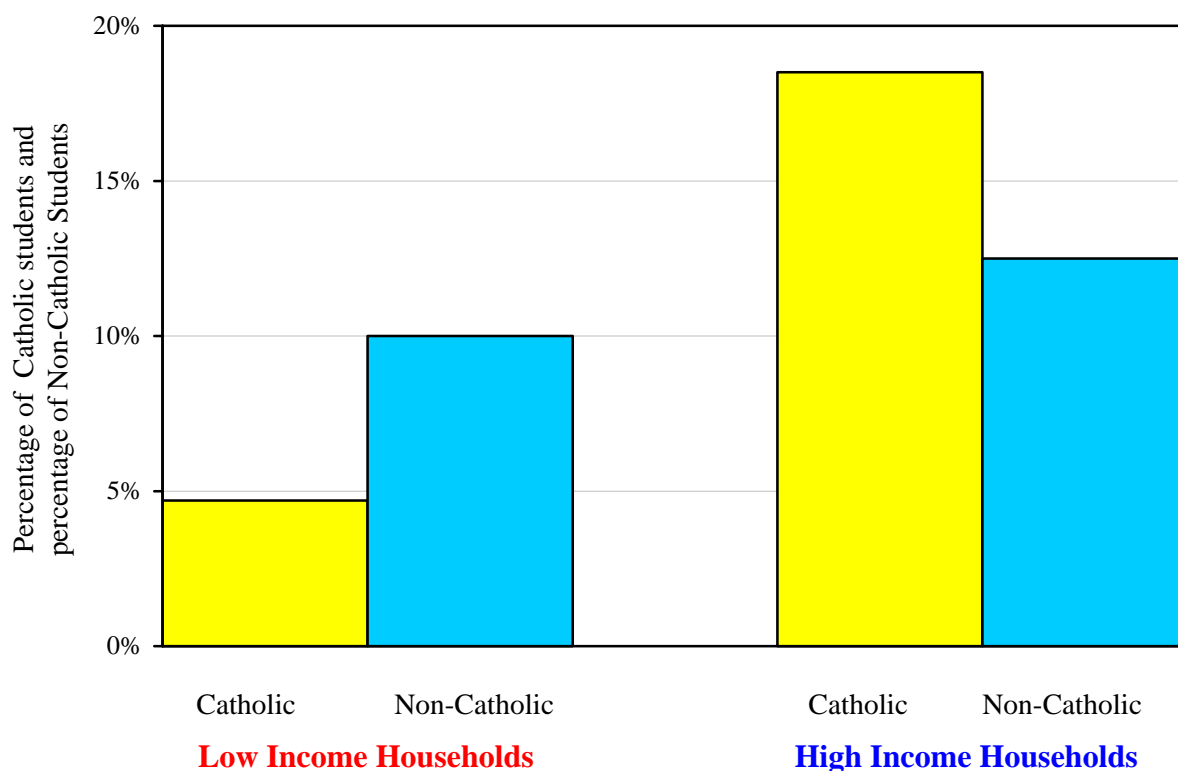
Graph 25: Students from Low and High Income households attending Catholic Primary Schools, States and Territories, 1996 Census



Graph 26: Students from Low and High Income households attending Catholic Secondary Schools, States and Territories, 1996 Census



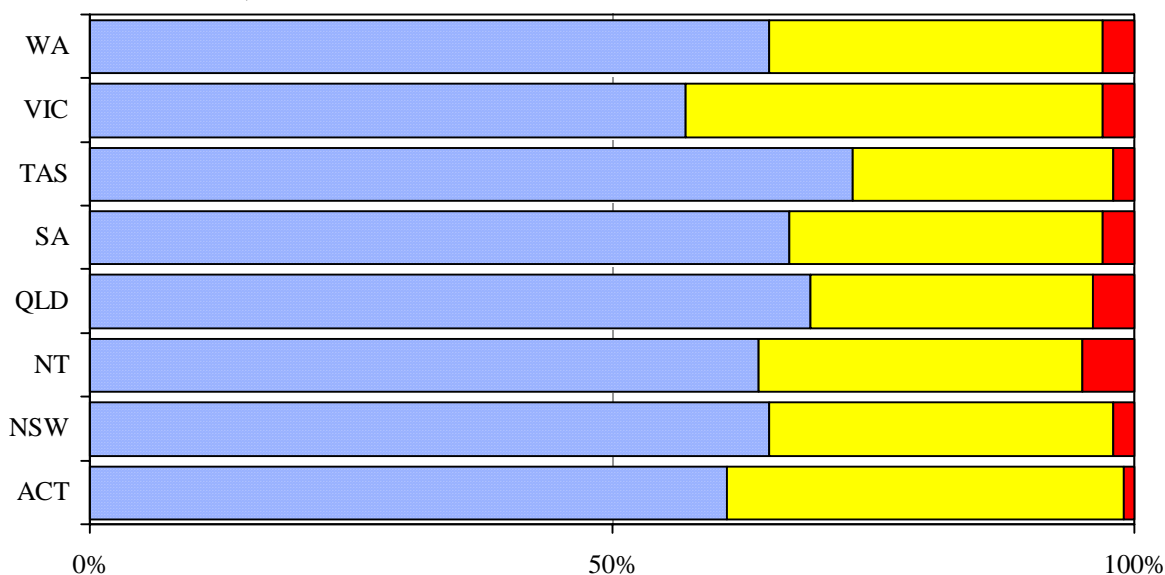
Graph 27: Catholic and Non-Catholic Students from Low and High Income households attending Catholic Schools, Australia, 1996 Census



- *Where do Catholic school-age children attend school in terms of income?*

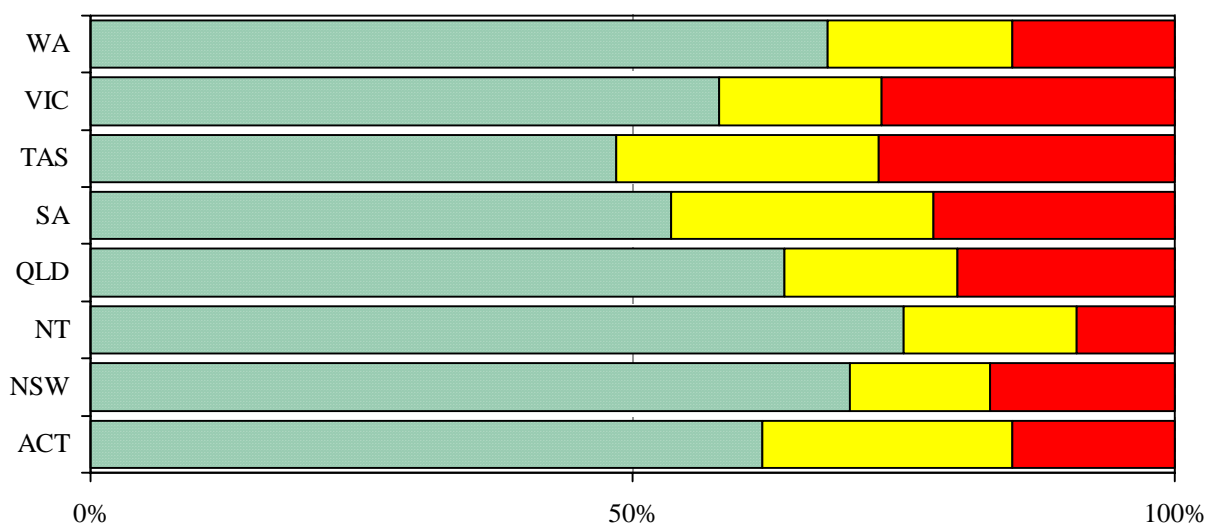
27. When this data on high and low income households is combined with type of school attended, the question to be asked is which schools do the poorest and the richest Catholic families choose for their children. For low income families (**Graph 28**) it is evident that the majority of the poorest Catholic families choose Government schools, with the greatest proportion being in Tasmania (73%), while the highest proportion choosing Catholic schools is in Victoria (40%). Conversely, a significant proportion of the richest Catholic households (**Graph 29**) choose other non-government schools (ONG), presumably a high-fee/high resource school, on average. Again, in some states (Tasmania, NSW, Victoria) a greater proportion choose another non-government school than choose a Catholic school.

Graph 28: Catholics from Low Income Households by School type, States and Territories, 1996 Census



	ACT	NSW	NT	QLD	SA	TAS	VIC	WA
ONG	1%	2%	5%	4%	3%	2%	3%	3%
Catholic	38%	33%	31%	27%	30%	25%	40%	32%
Govt	61%	65%	64%	69%	67%	73%	57%	65%

Graph 29: Catholics from High Income Households by School type, States and Territories, 1996 Census



	ACT	NSW	NT	QLD	SA	TAS	VIC	WA
ONG	15%	17%	9%	20%	22%	27%	27%	15%
Catholic	23%	13%	16%	16%	24%	24%	15%	17%
Govt	62%	70%	75%	64%	53%	48%	58%	68%

6. Further Research Issues

This project has highlighted several issues for further development, research and analysis: (1) the need for the NCEC to have a permanent database, (2) the need for follow-up research on certain aspects of this study; (3) extension of present study; (4) similar treatment of other dimensions of Catholic schooling; (5) creation of an historical database. Taking each of these in turn:

(1) Permanent NCEC Database

The NCEC has already agreed to consider a proposal that the database assembled for the present study should form the basis for a more comprehensive and up-to-date national database on Catholic schools.

(2) Further exploration of present study

Various aspects of this study and its supporting data require further refinement or elaboration:

- Defining ‘Catholic’ and ‘Non-Catholic’ for policy and planning purposes;
- Baptismal data, and its usefulness for projecting Catholic school enrolments;
- Planning, and the data required for it;
- Local use of data and database, particularly the production of graphs and tables for data at diocesan and SLA level which is available, in accord with the Terms of Reference, but has not been produced for this report because of the complexity of having to report data across 28 separate dioceses.

(3) Extension of present study

The data from the 2001 ABS census will be available towards the end of 2002, so there would be clear value in NCEC seeking an updated report in 2003 which would extend the present study to include the data for 2001. Of particular interest will be monitoring changes in school choice on the basis of high and low family income between 1996 and 2001.

(4) Other dimensions of Catholic schooling

Complementary to the present study on students in Catholic schools, there is considerable data, historical and current, on teachers in Catholic schools. Given the clear importance of teachers in Catholic school identity and culture, there is a case for collecting and analysing this data too. Aspects of teachers in Catholic schools would include:

- Male and female, primary and secondary 1985-2001;

- Full-time/part time, male and female, primary and secondary;
- Catholic/Non-Catholic, primary and secondary 1985-2001.

It may be possible to locate and calculate data relating to teacher age and/or level of teaching experience, over the same period or for a shorter period.

(5) Historical Database

The NCEC agreed that the Working Party should postpone any consideration of the period 1960 to 1985 in the present report. It is understood that Victoria has already prepared basic data back to the 1960s; while NSW now has identified the location and extent of historical data in NSW back to the 1950s. Preliminary investigation suggests that basic data on school, student and teacher numbers is available in various published sources back to the mid-nineteenth century. At some point there would be value in bringing this historical data together, possibly in a separate database, and linking it with current data in order to extrapolate long-term trend analysis.

(6) Policy Implications

While this wide-ranging report has focussed on presenting nationally comparable and available data, it is recognised that the data itself merely reflects a complex mix of personal, institutional, social and religious decisions and structures. Further, in proposing the updating and expansion of the report, the prime focus has necessarily been on the gathering and validation of further data. Yet data can only ever tell part of the story, that is, that part which can be readily quantified. The questions of where families (Catholic and non-Catholic) choose to send their children to school, and why, can only be meaningfully addressed in a proper research study based on surveying the dynamics of the decision-making process for families. Likewise, the policies of the Australian bishops and Catholic education authorities related to who may attend Catholic schools, how they may be financed, and what future is sought for Catholic schooling in Australia, are all fundamental questions requiring much deeper and more comprehensive analysis than has been possible in this study. They inevitably embrace theological, ecclesial, educational, legal, and sociological issues well beyond the bounds of a survey of trends in enrolment data. Nonetheless, this survey identifies and implies a range of important issues which might form a substantial and long-term research agenda for Australian Catholic education.

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