

Collection of school information by the Australian Government under the *Australian Education Act 2013*

Dear Parent/Guardian

Collection of information about schools

The Australian Government provides funding to Australian schools under the *Australian Education Act 2013*. That Act and the associated *Australian Education Regulation 2013* require that your child's school provide the Australian Government with certain information about the school, its financial arrangements, and its student body, in order that the funding is properly calculated and accounted for.

What information is collected by the Australian Government?

The authority that operates your child's school such as, a state or territory education department, a Catholic Education Office, or an independent school authority, will provide basic information about the school to the Australian Government, such as its name, address, contact details, years of schooling, and number and makeup of its staff.

The authority must provide the Australian Government with information about the school's finances, including annual audited financial statements and certification that Government funding has been used for proper purposes relating to education.

In addition, the authority will provide certain performance information at an aggregate level, including student attendance rates, student results in the National Assessment Program, and for secondary schools, post-school student destinations; such as going into the workforce, vocational education and training, or higher education.

The authority is required to publish much of this information, and it is also published by the Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) on the myschool web site at www.myschool.edu.au.

The school authority must also provide information to the Australian Government about the makeup of the school's student body during an annual school census. This is because Australian Government funding varies according to whether students are primary, secondary, receiving distance education, or are overseas students; and is calculated to provide additional funding, called 'loadings', for students at educational disadvantage.

The authority must provide information about the number of students attending the school, including the number of:

- primary and secondary students
- full-time and part-time students
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students
- students with disability
- students with low English proficiency
- students receiving distance education
- boarding students
- overseas students.

Who receives this information?

Most of the information is provided by school authorities to the Australian Government Department of Education. Some of it is provided directly to ACARA.

The Department of Education may in turn pass the information on to ACARA, state and territory education departments and authorities, the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), and the Productivity Commission. The department will also provide the information to other organisations if required or authorised by law to do so.

Why is this information collected?

The Department of Education collects information about schools under the *Australian Education Act 2013* for the purposes of that Act, which include:

- calculation of Australian Government funding
- oversight of funding conditions and requirements
- monitoring of financial performance and educational outcomes of schools
- publishing and providing information about schools to the public.

The department also uses the information for research, statistical analysis, and policy development on school education for the Australian Government.

Information passed to ACARA, state and territory education authorities, the ABS, and the Productivity Commission is used by those organisations for their public purposes. For example, the information collected from school authorities under the *Australian Education Act 2013* forms part of the national statistical collection maintained by the ABS.

Is my child identified in the information collected by the Australian Government?

Where school authorities are required to provide the Australian Government with information about students, that information is aggregated statistical data that does not identify individual students. The information is not matched with any other information held by the Australian Government that can be used to identify individual students.

However, from time to time the Department of Education engages contractors to audit or verify school records, to ensure that the information that a school provides to the department is accurate. The information previously collected by the department may also be passed onto these contractors for this purpose.

When carrying out an audit, the contractors may need to access information about individual students from the school's records. This information may be 'personal information' within the meaning given in the Privacy Act 1988. The contractors may pass this information onto officers within the department if there is a discrepancy in the data provided by the school and the school's records and further investigation is required.

There may be other circumstances in which a school authority will voluntarily provide information about individual students to the department, when seeking additional funding for those students. Most commonly, these are where a student has not been in attendance at a school during the annual school census but the authority wishes to receive funding for him or her, and where the authority believes that the demographics of the students at the school are not representative of the households in the ABS statistical areas serviced by the school.

Other than in exceptional circumstances (for example, investigation of fraud relating to overseas students), the department does not disclose personal information to any overseas recipients.

Contacts for further information

If you have questions about the collection of information about schools by the Australian Government under the Australian Education Act 2013, please contact:

The Recurrent Assistance for Schools team at: GrantsandData.help@education.gov.au.

The Department of Education's privacy policy is available on the department's website at www.education.gov.au. The privacy policy contains information about:

- how individuals can access and seek correction of the personal information held by the department
- how complaints about breaches of the *Privacy Act 1988* can be made
- how the department will deal with these complaints.

If you wish to contact the department about privacy related matters, please e-mail the department at privacy@deewr.gov.au or write to:

Privacy Contact Officer

Legal and Compliance Group
Location C12MT1
Department of Education
GPO Box 9980
Canberra ACT 2601

