

## RTEI RESULTS: Australia

Australia has an overall index score of 83 (with 100 being optimal). Of the 15 countries studied, this places Australia in front of Chile, Democratic Republic of Congo, Tanzania, Zimbabwe, Palestine, United States, Honduras, Nigeria, Ethiopia, South Korea, Philippines, Indonesia; but behind Canada and the United Kingdom. This overall index score is a weighted average of the theme results: Governance 81, Availability 100, Accessibility 77, Acceptability 92, and Adaptability 66. Full results can be viewed below.

Notably, the focus area of this report is the theme of Adaptability, specifically the Children of Minorities (45) subtheme. Specifically, this demands focus towards the cross-cutting themes of *SDG4 Beyond K-12* (45), and *Indigenous and Minority Population discriminatory environment* (46).

### Data Availability

As Education rights are not a key advocacy focus area in Australia, data was readily available regarding outcomes and structures of education, but not rights-based issues and processes such as sanitation and violence. The main hindrance in data collection concerned discrepancies between States and Territories operating under different education systems. This often lead to misleading indicators in circumstances where the questionnaire results indicate a lack of national strategy, when in fact there are multiple state strategies which compile to cover all pupils within the nation. Recent nation-wide assessments (NAPLAN) were a prime source of data for outcomes, but greater breadth of studies across the nation in other areas are needed for consistency in understanding of the nation. This will become particularly vital as the nation moves towards nationalized curriculums and testing.

### Issue Area 1: Indigenous and Minority Populations

#### Findings

*Indigenous and Minority Populations Discriminatory Environment* scored only 46 – the lowest score of this indicator of the 15 countries studied. This is in comparison to other OECD countries comparable to Australia, such as Canada scoring 84, the United Kingdom scoring 66 and the United States scoring 64. The highest scoring countries of this indicator were Honduras (99), Philippines (97), Palestine (93), and Nigeria (92).

#### Recommendations

Recommendations involve targeted education specific implementations as well as broader policy instruments at a societal level. Greater inclusion of Indigenous culture in curriculums for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous students could aid in closing gaps of adaptability and acceptability.

This could involve teaching of local Indigenous language, art, history, and cultural practices. Regarding Accessibility, adapting teaching methods to localized student needs, particularly in remote communities could aid both availability and outcomes. Specifically, greater reach into

remote communities, changed delivery methods to be culturally sensitive and departing from Western norms (such as circular seating patterns, greater flexibility with activities and scheduling, outdoor education, and practical hands-on delivery) and targeted programs could be effective.

Discrimination against Indigenous people also occurs outside of the education sector, in areas such as [median income](#), [health status](#), [life expectancy](#), [unemployment](#) and [imprisonment rates](#). Broader policy instruments could promote better health care, particularly in remote areas, and more targeted welfare spending. Policy mechanisms that target society are encouraged over direct Indigenous-only mechanisms to ensure social cohesion.

## Issue Area 2: SDG4 Beyond K-12

### Findings

Within the Cross-Cutting theme of SDG4, part 4.3 *Beyond K-12* scores 45. This is below South Korea (95), United States (87), Indonesia (75), Canada (65), Chile (54), United Kingdom (49); but above Honduras (44), Palestine (34), Ethiopia (27), Philippines (22), and Zimbabwe (22). SDG4 is to “ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all”.

Regarding *Beyond K-12*, SDG4.3 specifies “by 2030, ensure equal access for all women and men to affordable and quality technical, vocational and tertiary education, including university”, SDG4.4 outlines “by 2030, substantially increase the number of youth and adults who have relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills, for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship”, and SDG4.5 specifies “by 2030, eliminate gender disparities in education and ensure equal access to all levels of education and vocational training for the vulnerable, including persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples and children in vulnerable situations”.

*Beyond K-12* is taken to include both technical and vocation training, as well as tertiary schooling. It was found that no national laws protect the right to technical and vocational training, or higher education/university. Australia’s gross enrollment rate for technical and vocational training is 19.6%. This is higher for males than females (22.1% to 17%), and higher for rural than urban schools (24.95 to 15.7). The completion rate is 77.6%. Australia’s gross enrollment rate for tertiary schools is 86.55%. The completion rate is 73.6%. Females have significantly higher enrollment rates than males (101.67% to 72.46%), and urban schools have greater enrollments rates than rural (34.6% to 6.7%). There is a progressive correlation between increasing income quintiles and gross enrollment rates, with 67.2% of the highest income quintile being enrolled compared to 26.7% of the lowest. It was found that average tuition fees for public universities in Australia is AU\$24,081 ([compared to an average annual income of AU\\$51 896](#)) depending upon area of study and potential for government subsidization.

### Recommendations

Greater political consistency between education stages (primary, secondary, tertiary) could ensure more collaboration and symmetries to create pathways to education beyond K-12. Recent movements towards a National Curriculum, and Australia-wide tertiary admissions rankings, suggests an existing movement to federal jurisdiction. Clearly defining and reallocating the jurisdictions of levels of government concerning both K-12 and post K-12 education could aid in directing funding towards areas of need.

The *National Priorities Pool 2016* emphasises and prioritizes access to universities by rural and low socio-economic students. Whilst schemes exist regarding tuition fee cost deferral (HECS), it appears further financial costs inhibit regional students from tertiary education. Greater assistance (without prohibitive bureaucratic restrictions such as means testing or proving independence) to aid in relocation could increase rural enrollments. This also includes continued government support to regional universities, and all universities continuing and initiating distance education or online modes. Improvements to government infrastructure, such as the National Broadband Network, could make this increasingly accessible. With increased rural enrollments, it would also be vital for university qualified job types to be created within regional areas. This would further have the flow on effects of redefining the value of university education in rural areas, and creating social norms to encourage university study. Further research is needed into regional access to tertiary education in Australia. To ensure tertiary study is accessible to all students across socio-economic backgrounds, recommendations involve looking beyond just tuition payment to living expenses, rental affordability and casual employment options. Further, ensuring an adequate job market exists for tertiary qualified students is vital. Continued support to vocational training, particularly with incentives from social welfare, could ensure vocational training enrollments continue.

### **Issue Area 3: International Framework**

#### ***Findings***

The sub-theme of *International Framework* under the theme of *Governance* recorded 59. This includes analysis of ratification of UN treaties, UNESCO treaties, ILO conventions, Geneva Conventions and regional treaties.

#### ***Recommendations***

Whilst Australia's score within the sub-theme of International Frameworks initially appears low, closer scrutiny identifies the standards endorsed by many international treaties is met within Australia, but managed at a state level. National-level policies concerning rights would be recommended to ensure greater accountability of state governments, greater transparency and consistency, and greater ease in international negotiations. Given many of the reservations by Australia regarding particular geographic or demographic characteristics that may be shared by other nations, greater input into formation and negotiation of international policies would be beneficial. Regarding Acts that concern particular demographics, greater inclusivity in the formation of the Acts themselves would herald improved acceptability and adaptability.