



Australian Government

Department of Education, Skills and Employment

Dear parent / guardian / staff member

2020 Non-Government School Census collection notice

The Australian Government provides funding to Australian schools under the *Australian Education Act 2013* (AE Act). The AE Act and the associated *Australian Education Regulation 2013* (the AE Regulation) require that a school authority provides the Australian Government with certain information about the school, its staff, and student body to ensure the school's funding is properly calculated and appropriately managed. This information is collected by the Department of Education, Skills and Employment (the department) on behalf of the Australian Government.

What information does the department collect in the Non-Government Schools Census?

Any personal information collected is protected by law, including the *Privacy Act 1988*, and will be handled in accordance with that Act, the AE Act and the AE Regulation.

The authorities that operate schools, such as a Catholic Education Office or an independent school authority, will provide basic information about the school to the Australian Government. This includes its name, address, contact details and years of schooling offered.

The school authority must provide information to the department about the makeup of the school's staff and 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 school authority must provide the department with information about the number of staff and students at the school (no names are provided), including the number of:

- teaching and non-teaching staff
- primary and secondary students
- full-time and part-time students
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff and students
- students with disability
- students receiving distance education
- boarding students
- overseas students.

The department will also collect the name, position and contact details of the staff member nominated as the primary contact for the annual census.

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

There may be circumstances in which a school authority will voluntarily provide personal information about individual students to the department. Where a student has not attended a school during the annual Census Reference Period, but the authority wishes to receive funding for them, the authority will provide the department with information about a student showing they meet funding criteria. The department does not require information that identifies an individual student and asks the authority to censor any documents before providing them. The department will destroy any documents it deems sensitive immediately upon receiving them.

Why is this information collected?

The department collects the information outlined above for the purposes of the AE Act, which include:

- calculation of Australian Government funding
- 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.

Aggregated information from the annual school census about the school's student body may also be used to validate data from other collections undertaken by the department, such as the Student Residential Address And Other Information Collection.

Who receives this information?

School authorities provide this information directly to the department. The department 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. 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 AE Act forms part of the national statistical collection maintained by the ABS.

From time to time, the department engages contractors to audit or verify school records to ensure that the information a school authority provides to the department on behalf of a school 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.

The department will also provide the information to other organisations if required or authorised by law to do so. Other than in exceptional circumstances (for example, investigation of fraud relating to overseas students), the department does not disclose any of the personal information collected to 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: schools@dese.gov.au.

You can get more information about the way in which the department will manage any personal information collected, including information on accessing or correcting that personal information, and how to make a complaint, in our full privacy policy at www.dese.gov.au/privacy or by requesting a copy from the department at privacy@dese.gov.au.