

## A9 Analysis of agency performance

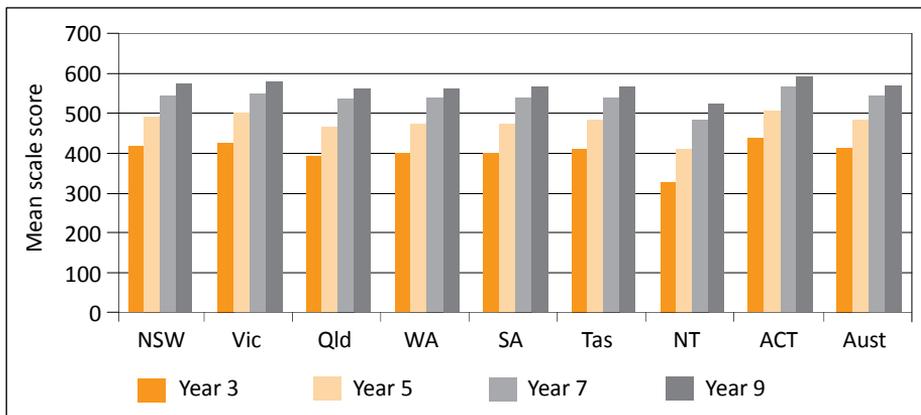
To meet its objective of working in partnership with parents and the community to ensure students are supported and engaged to achieve their full potential, the Directorate has identified priority areas. The performance of the Directorate against these priorities over the 2010-11 is reported in this section.

### Enhanced performance in literacy and numeracy

All ACT school students in years 3, 5, 7 and 9 sat the third cycle of NAPLAN tests in May 2010. Final results for 2010 NAPLAN testing were released in April 2011. The ACT ranked first in the nation, or equal first with New South Wales and Victoria, in mean scores for all year levels and domains, with the only exceptions being years 5 and 7 spelling.

The ACT mean score results in reading for years 3, 5, 7 and 9 students were the highest in Australia and significantly higher than the national mean, maintaining the trend commenced in 2008 and 2009. Between 94 and 97 percent of students achieved at or above the national minimum standard.

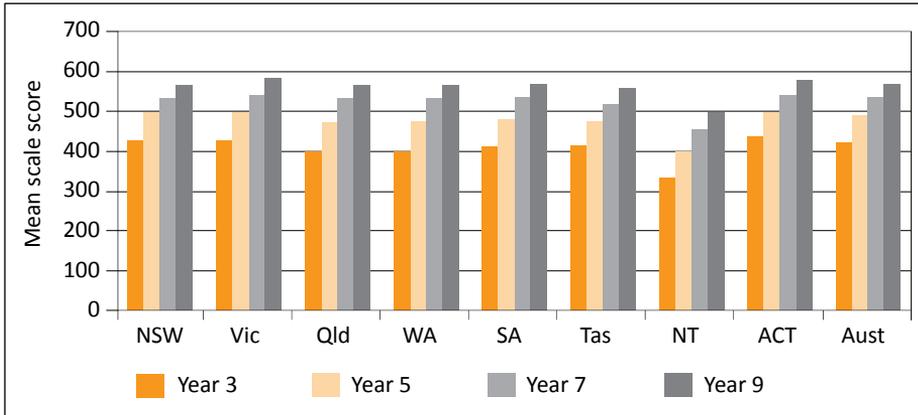
**Figure A9.1: Mean scale score in reading for years 3, 5, 7 and 9 by jurisdiction, NAPLAN 2010**



Source: Ministerial Council for Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs, National Assessment Program—Literacy and Numeracy: Achievement in Reading, Writing, Language Conventions and Numeracy National Report 2010

Results in writing showed improvement across all year levels with the year 3 mean score significantly higher than ACT results in 2008 and 2009. ACT mean score results for years 3, 5 and 7 have improved each year relative to other jurisdictions. Between 88 and 97 percent of students achieved at or above the national minimum standard.

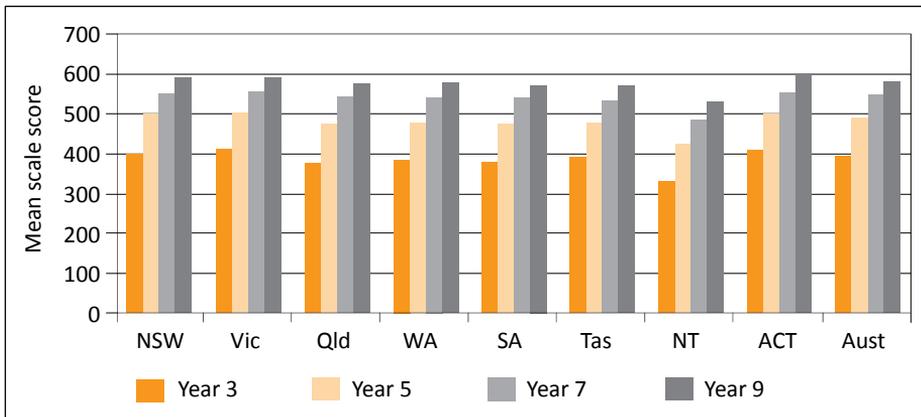
**Figure A9.2: Mean scale score in writing for years 3, 5, 7 and 9 by jurisdiction, NAPLAN 2010**



Source: Ministerial Council for Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs, National Assessment Program—Literacy and Numeracy: Achievement in Reading, Writing, Language Conventions and Numeracy National Report 2010

In numeracy the ACT, with Victoria and New South Wales, had the highest mean score across all year levels. The results were significantly higher than the national mean in all years except year 7, where ACT results were equivalent. Overall, between 95 and 97 percent of students achieved at or above the national minimum standard in numeracy.

**Figure A9.3: Mean scale score in numeracy for years 3, 5, 7 and 9 by jurisdiction, NAPLAN 2010**



Source: Ministerial Council for Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs, National Assessment Program—Literacy and Numeracy: Achievement in Reading, Writing, Language Conventions and Numeracy National Report 2010

ACT female students achieved higher mean scores in the literacy domains than ACT male students. ACT males achieved higher mean scores in numeracy, consistent with Australian trends. A higher proportion of females than males achieved above the national minimum standard in all tests and all year levels with the exception of years 7 and 9 numeracy.

## Implemented the Australian Curriculum

In December 2010, the nation's Ministers for Education agreed to the ongoing development of an Australian Curriculum covering English, mathematics, science and history. Locally, the ACT cross-sectoral Australian Curriculum implementation committee guided implementation of Phase 1.

Commencing in 2011, kindergarten to year 6 classes were taught English and science. Year 7 students were taught English, mathematics, science and history. Year 9 students undertook studies in English, mathematics and science. By 2013 all ACT schools will be teaching the full Australian Curriculum from kindergarten to year 10.

Implementation of the Australian Curriculum was supported through a range of professional learning opportunities for teachers across the ACT. Phase 1 units of work were mapped to the ACT curriculum framework *Every chance to learn* and then uploaded to the Directorate's teaching and learning website for shared access.

### Box A9.1: Australian Curriculum comes of age



On 9 and 10 December 2010, the Directorate led professional development for 145 curriculum coordinators from schools across all sectors. The training addressed the implementation of the Australian Curriculum, with two of the six Train-the-Trainer modules focusing on the implementation process and timeline.

## Improved teacher quality

The ACT Teacher Quality Institute (TQI) was established in mid 2010 to create, manage and maintain leading edge teaching standards in the ACT. Full operation commenced in 2011 with responsibilities covering teacher registration, accreditation of pre-service teacher education programs, and certification of teachers in the ACT against national standards. The annual report of TQI is annexed to this annual report, and provides detailed analysis on TQI activities and achievements.

To improve teaching quality, 39 teachers undertook either individual scholarship programs with a range of universities or the targeted Graduate Certificate in Early Childhood Studies with the University of Canberra. There were a number of workshops to support teacher quality in schools. Workshops targeted at building teacher knowledge and understanding in English as a second language (ESL) included Teaching ESL Students in Mainstream Classrooms, ESL in the Mainstream for the Early Learner, Time for Talk and Incorporating Strategies for an Inclusive Curriculum. Teachers were awarded scholarships for the Graduate

Certificate in Teachers of English to Speakers of other Languages.

The Directorate recognises that professional learning and leadership underpin quality teaching, and provided support for school leaders in facilitating professional discussion workshops. The annual professional discussion, implemented in all ACT public schools and colleges from term 1, 2011 is an extension of the Professional Pathways process, which requires principals to assess classroom teacher performance for improved learning and teaching outcomes.

### **Increased workforce skills**

The Productivity Places Program (PPP) is part of the Commonwealth Government's Skilling Australia for the Future initiative and aims to reduce skills shortages and increase the productivity of workers and industry. In 2010-11, 2,586 qualifications were commenced under PPP. This training is additional to training delivered under existing programs, such as Australian Apprenticeships and the Priorities Support Program. Approximately 1,157 qualifications were completed successfully during the reporting period. As of 30 June 2011, 2,356 participants were continuing to work towards finishing their qualifications, some of which can take up to three years to complete.

Under the PPP, 94 percent of the qualifications allocated to existing workers in 2010-11 were for Certificate IV and above. Twenty-nine percent of allocated qualifications were Diplomas or Advanced Diplomas. Of the qualifications allocated for job seekers in 2010-11, 47 percent were at Certificate III and 32 percent at Certificate IV level.

### **Improved services for students with disabilities**

The Directorate developed the *Excellence in Disability Education in ACT Public Schools: Strategic Plan 2010-2013* (Disability Plan) following the outcomes of a review of special education in the ACT. Launched on 7 September 2010, the Disability Plan provides direction for special education improvement across all school sectors in the ACT.

The Disability Plan also proposes online delivery of learning for teachers and learning support assistants in the domains of behaviour management and disability education. An external specialist was engaged to prepare a training package designed to build staff capacity. The online training package has been successfully trialled and evaluated in the United Kingdom, New South Wales and the Northern Territory.

In June 2011 the Directorate hosted an annual information seminar about schooling options for parents of preschool children with a disability moving to primary school. More than 40 parents and carers considering an application for support or placement of their child in a disability education program attended this seminar. Parents met representatives from the Directorate, the Catholic Education Office and the Association of Independent Schools, to access information on the type of support and programs provided for students with a disability.

The Language Difficulties Conference held in June 2011 and co-organised by the Directorate, the Catholic Education Office and Therapy ACT brought together 100

teachers drawn from each system, to share and learn about promising practices in supporting the learning of students with language difficulties. The conference was an example of Directorate efforts to align disability education strategies, build capacity and foster increased collaboration.

A cross-agency Post School Transitions Joint Advisory Group met in June 2011 with the aim of enhancing community capacity to support young people with a disability and their families and to maximise their potential for citizenship. The group developed a work plan for 2011-12 that includes a broadening of the disability focus at the Canberra Careers Market, developing better information tools for families in planning post school transitions, and aligning actions in post school transitions across whole of government.

The Directorate entered into a contract with House with No Steps (HWNS) to coordinate and arrange work experience and social placement opportunities for year 9 and 10 ACT public school students with a disability. HWNS will work with students, parents and schools to identify the young person's interests and abilities and find suitable placements where possible.

The Directorate provides transport services for students with special needs. In 2010-11, 549 students with special needs received transport services. No formal complaints were received by the Directorate about this service.

#### **Box A9.2: Crash hot drummers spread joy**



The Crash Hot Drum Troupe comprises of students from The Woden School, Black Mountain School, Malkara and Cranleigh specialist schools.

The Crash Hot Drum Troupe started this year as an auditioned group with members picked for their musical skills and their stagecraft from the four specialist schools in Canberra: The Woden School, Black Mountain School, Malkara and Cranleigh.

The troupe has performed at various school events as well as Step into the Limelight, the creative and performance showcase for ACT public schools, and the Belconnen Community Festival. There are eight students in the troupe with at least one representative from each of the schools.

The troupe also performed at the International Day of Disability in ACT.

### **Addressed gaps in learning achievement**

The Directorate's Reconciliation Action Plan 2010-2011 (RAP) partners the Directorate's Strategic Plan and expresses our strong commitment to closing the learning achievement gap between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and other students in the ACT. Copies of the RAP were sent to schools at the end of 2010. The RAP is available on the Directorate's website.

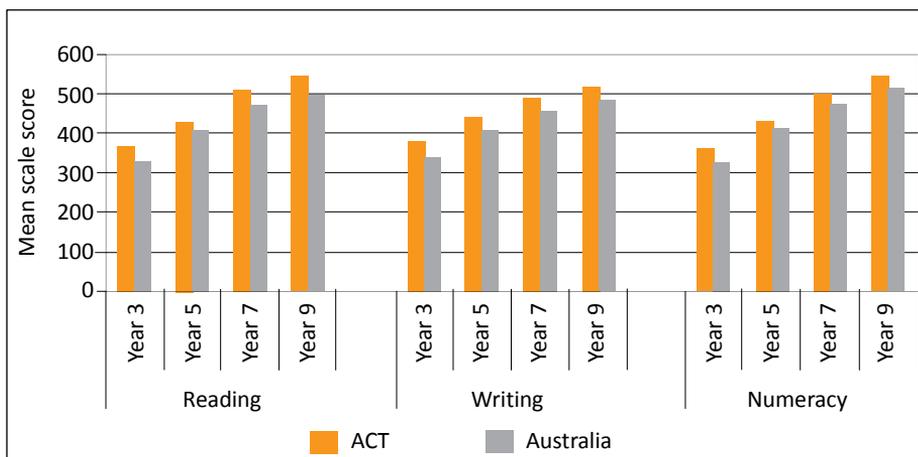
The *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Matters: Strategic Plan 2010-2013* was developed by the Directorate in consultation with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Consultative Group, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body, the Australian Education Union, the Network Principals' Reference Group and the ACT Community Services and Health Directorates. The Plan provides strategies to enable individuals to lead productive and fulfilling lives.

The Directorate, in collaboration with the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations and the Gugan Gulwan Community Centre entered into a joint-project entitled *Closing the Gap*, which will run over 2011 and 2012 to support and improve literacy outcomes of at risk year 6 to year 9 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in the Tuggeranong Valley. The project provides \$500,000 over two years for an administrative staff member, a classroom teacher and a learning support assistant at Gugan Gulwan Community Centre and is governed by an Expert Advisory Committee.

In September 2010, a working group was established to explore how sport can be used to help Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students get more out of school. Research indicates children exposed to physical activity at primary school age are more inclined to develop the skills and habits that will make them active and healthy adults. A forum attended by members of the ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Consultative Group and the Sport and Recreation Minister's Advisory Council discussed how it might develop strategies to better engage students across all ACT schools through sport.

In the ACT, a higher proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students achieved above the national minimum standard in NAPLAN 2010 in all tests and all year levels when compared with national results. A higher proportion of ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students achieved in the top two performance bands across all year levels and all domains compared with national results.

**Figure A9.4: Mean scale score in reading, writing and numeracy by year level for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, ACT and Australia, NAPLAN 2010**



Source: Ministerial Council for Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs, National Assessment Program—Literacy and Numeracy: Achievement in Reading, Writing, Language Conventions and Numeracy National Report 2010

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students' participation in Australian School-based Apprenticeships (ASBAs) rose by 85 percent in the school year 2010 when compared with 2009 commencements. The number of ASBAs who identify as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander as a proportion of total ASBA commencements rose from 5.1 percent in 2009 to 6.7 percent in 2010. In order of popularity, the top four ASBAs chosen by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in 2010 were in the occupation areas of community recreation, construction, business and retail.

## **Implemented school improvement**

The core principles and key initiatives described in *School Improvement 2011* assist the Directorate to strengthen and consolidate its approach to school and system improvement. The document sets out the Directorate's priority areas for school improvement and the expectations and support available to assist schools in achieving system objectives. The document complements strategies contained in the Operational Plan 2011.

To monitor the impact of school improvement cycles, external validation of 21 public schools took place between late August and early September 2010. Schools undergoing validation were assessed by a three-member external panel of experienced school leaders, sourced from public and/or non-government schools across the ACT. An externally contracted Lead Validator provided the panels with training, advice and supervision to ensure consistency of validation across the ACT's public school system.

The Lead Validator noted that schools undergoing validation had experienced significant systemic change across this four-year cycle of improvement, most notably the introduction of a networked approach to principal support and accountability. In addition, there had been substantial school building and refit programs. In summary, the Lead Validator found that in 2010 a majority of schools had explicit curriculum documents to guide teaching and were actively engaged in the Quality Teaching Program. It was evident that school targets for lifting literacy and numeracy outcomes were supported by a range of effective programs. All schools in the validating group for 2010 reported progress towards improvements in their NAPLAN results.

A further important element of school improvement advanced during the year was the implementation of the initiative to reduce the average class size. In 2010, 70 additional teachers were appointed to ACT public schools (10 in primary schools, 50 in high schools and 10 in colleges). Average class size was reduced to 21.4 in primary schools (kindergarten to year 6) and high schools, and 19.4 in colleges.

Student absenteeism can lead to lower educational outcomes. The Directorate is exploring options for providing and analysing data on the effectiveness of the SMS Notify System on reducing student absenteeism. This system notifies parents and carers if students are not at school.

## **Established directions for high school and college sector reform**

The Directorate undertook consultation with the community to reform the high school and college sector. The consultation led to the release of the Excellence and Enterprise Framework which is aimed at delivering a more distinctive secondary school system, increasing the diversity and choice of learning available to students including through other learning providers. The framework encourages better support to students with learning difficulties and a greater range of options to address behavioural and engagement issues.

The Directorate will continue to build community confidence in public schools by implementing strategies that enable our high schools and colleges to:

- demonstrate high quality teaching and learning and provide learning programs that challenge, excite and engage all young learners
- deliver more personalised and diversified learning pathways for students in ways that suit their interests and advance their aspirations
- enhance young peoples' learning and career pathways by more effectively collaborating with other schools
- innovate in ways that extend and diversify the curriculum and promote improved access to, and success, in learning
- establish partnerships and proactively and productively engage with parents, industry and the broader community
- access an exciting capital works program to provide facilities and infrastructure to support contemporary teaching and learning
- become more flexible and responsive to local needs through increased autonomy.

## **Implemented the education participation policy**

The ACT Youth Commitment was developed to ensure that no young person in the ACT is lost from education, training or employment. In August 2010, the Directorate announced that young people in the ACT will have individual Pathways Plans within four years, to support student transitions through school and on to further education, training and employment. The plans provide opportunities for young people to identify strengths, interests and goals and outline the steps needed to attain individual goals. Through the plans, young people explore the different learning opportunities available to them, and learn to manage change as a planned process.

A Youth Attainment and Transitions ACT Regional Forum was held on 2 September 2010. The Forum provided participants with the opportunity to learn more about two new programs: School Business Community Partnership Brokers, and Youth Connections. They also discussed ways of sharing information and best practice, networking with other key stakeholders in the region and developing strategies to support the ACT Youth Commitment.

## **Developed next generation online learning environments**

The Directorate developed online teaching and learning resources including the delivery of a new virtual learning environment called Connected Learning Communities (cLc). A phased roll-out of cLc saw 20 early adopting schools provided with intensive training in cLc coordination and principles of cyber-safety.

Engagement of students and teachers with the cLc exceeded expectations, with the cLc surpassing Google as the most hit website within ACT public schools in late August 2010. The cLc homepages have been enhanced based on feedback from users.

Online capacity of cLc was increased to meet the demand. By May 2011, the virtual environment had an average of 4,000 hits per day. For the start of the 2011 school year wireless networks were available to all ACT public schools and colleges. Discussions are ongoing between the Directorate and the ACT Government ICT services provider to further improve the user experience of the cLc; prepare for the next version of the cLc (*LIFE*); and plan for the introduction of a parent portal in term 4, 2011.

The online learning portal Atomic Learning went live in February 2011. Atomic Learning has been integrated within the cLc and allows users to access resources that improve their skills in a wide range of software and hardware including interactive whiteboards, Adobe and Microsoft. A combination of instructional videos and self paced learning products offer significant benefits including 'just in time' access to professional learning for staff and students.

The National Secondary Schools Computer Fund allowed for the deployment of 9,241 computers to ACT public high schools and colleges by December 2010. By March 2011 over 5,044 notebook computers were also deployed through this program, bringing the ratio of students to computers in years 9 to 12 in ACT public schools to 1:1. The ACT Government invested in primary schools' ICT with 1,532 additional computers deployed to schools as of December 2010.

In June 2011, all teachers gained access to free-to-air television through SchoolsNET, the Directorate's media server solution. Teachers can record television programs through this new product to enhance student learning.

## **Facilitated safe and inclusive learning environments**

The Directorate's promotion of safe and inclusive environments was guided by the *Equity and Diversity Plan 2010-2013* which sits alongside the ACT Public Service's *Respect, Equity and Diversity Framework*.

The fundamental skills required for establishing and maintaining positive classrooms were outlined to over 200 new educators (teachers in their first year of employment) who took part in the *Essential Skills for Classroom Teachers* professional learning package. The program will continue and will be further enhanced by a Train-the-Trainer module for executive staff, and an advanced skills course for ongoing development.

The ImpACT—Behaviour Management module (an interactive scenario-based training tool) was trialled with small groups of new educators in October and November 2010 and will be rolled out to all new teachers as part of the Essential Skills program in 2011. In addition, the ImpACT program on critical incidents training continued to be offered to school executives in conjunction with the Australian Federal Police and was rated highly by participants as excellent training in the event of a crisis occurring in schools.

In 2011 the Behaviour Support Partners program commenced in schools. The program helps schools and teachers to engage students with behavioural difficulties in learning. The partners work with the schools to develop plans to manage behaviour and bullying and work with new educators in schools to support the development of their skills in classroom behaviour management. Individual teachers receive assistance in cases of complex student issues that impact on learning. Six partners work intensively on these issues in particular schools for up to two years, and a further four partners operate across the school networks.

Students representing all Canberra schools took part in an innovative cyber safety summit *Who R U in the Digital World* in March 2011. The student summit was an initiative of the ACT Safe Schools Taskforce and was supported by the ACT Government, the Australian Federal Police and ACT Government IT provider: InTACT.

## **Implemented a nationally consistent approach to early childhood education**

The Directorate continued to provide universal access to 15 hours of preschool education across public schools. In 2010, eight schools joined the existing five early childhood schools in offering early childhood education. The early childhood schools continued to increase enrolments and positive learning outcomes for children, and increase cross-family connectedness.

A national census of early childhood workers reported that more ACT preschool staff (78.2%) have a four year bachelor degree when compared to the national average (50.2%); and the highest proportion of long day care staff are qualified to diploma level or above (71.4% in ACT versus 59.0% nationally).

The Directorate, along with the Community Services Directorate, held a consultative forum for early childhood teachers on the *Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010*. The Directorate's intention is to provide assistance in understanding the requirements of the new legislation.

## **Implemented Council of Australian governments reforms**

In the National Agreement for Skills and Workforce Development, the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) agreed to work towards increasing the qualifications and skill level of the Australian population. The vocational education and training programs administered by the Directorate contribute significantly to increasing the proportion of 20-64 year olds with, or working towards, post-school qualifications in Certificate III, Certificate IV, Diploma and Advanced Diploma.

Through the National Partnership Agreement on Youth Attainment and Transitions the ACT and Australian Governments commit to work towards achieving improvements in high level outcomes for schooling agreed by COAG in the National Education Agreement. This work includes achieving improvements in the numbers of young Australians making successful transitions from schooling into further education, training or employment.

### **Provided flexible and responsive vocational training options**

The Directorate contracts registered training organisations to provide vocational training to the ACT community under the Priorities Support Program (PSP). The PSP assists disadvantaged people who find it difficult to access, or be successful in, vocational training qualifications ranging from statement of attainment to diploma.

In 2010-11 the Directorate allocated 70 percent of PSP places for training at Certificate I and II, 23 percent at Certificate III, and seven percent at Certificate IV levels. Of the PSP participants who commenced training in 2010-11, 89 percent had completed, or were continuing to work towards a qualification or statement of attainment, as at 30 June 2011. Of the PSP participants who completed a qualification or skill set in 2010-11, 55 percent achieved at Certificate III level or above.

The Directorate fosters partnerships with employers that improve the commencement, retention and completion of Australian Apprenticeships. This collaborative approach to skills development is highlighted in the ACT Joint Group Training Program (JGTP), where the ACT and Australian Governments fund group training organisations (GTOs) to employ and manage the training, additional care and support of persons in Australian Apprenticeships. The training of 412 apprentices and trainees was supported by GTOs through the JGTP in 2010-11.

Under the Australia Apprenticeships Program, of the apprentices and trainees who completed a qualification in 2010-11, 87 percent achieved at Certificate III level or above. Of the Australian apprentices who commenced their training in 2010-11, 92 percent worked towards a qualification at Certificate III level or above.

The ACT's performance in providing vocational education and training outcomes continues to rank among the highest in the nation. The ACT exceeds the national average on several vocational education and training (VET) performance indicators:

- 88.7 percent of ACT VET graduates (students who completed a VET qualification in 2009) were employed after training, compared to 76.3 percent nationally
- 82.5 percent of module completers (students who successfully completed part of a VET course) were employed after training, which is the highest rate for this group in the nation for 2010.

The Directorate provides vocational education and training in schools. Structured Workplace Learning (SWL) is undertaken by students in years 10, 11 and 12 who are currently enrolled in school. In 2010, a total of 844 SWL placements for both public and non-government ACT school students were coordinated by the Directorate.

## Enhanced environmental sustainability in schools

*The ACT Climate Change Strategy 2007-2025* continues to guide the Directorate's activities in environmental sustainability and in supporting schools to become carbon neutral by 2017.

To promote sustainability in our schools the Directorate published *What is a Sustainable School?* during the reporting period. This publication complements the ACT Sustainable Schools Initiative and supports school communities in becoming environmentally sustainable. Detailed discussion of school and office sustainability is provided in **Section C21**.

A workshop for teachers titled 'Teaching in an Environmentally Sustainable Future' was held at the Australian National University in July 2010 to help staff plan and deliver programs that support teaching and learning around sustainability in schools.

In July 2010, a government sponsored competition 'Your city, your vision' asked Canberra school students for their ideas on how to develop our city sustainably. Students were asked to create their vision for a sustainable Canberra in 2030 in any narrative or visual art form.

In sponsoring this competition, the Environment and Sustainable Development Directorate (previously ACT Planning and Land Authority) incorporated UNICEF's principles of child-friendly planning (from *Building Child Friendly Cities – A Framework for Action*) and entries were judged by the Office of the Commissioner for Sustainability and the Environment. Entries were displayed at the 'Kids Teaching Kids' workshop on creating a sustainable Canberra at the Albert Hall on 1 September 2010 and expressed a wide range of ideas, showing how much our young people care about the environment, their future and their city.