



Australian Government

REMOTE SCHOOL ATTENDANCE STRATEGY

INTERIM PROGRESS REPORT

October 2015

Foreword

This report presents interim findings of the progress of the Remote School Attendance Strategy (RSAS). RSAS commenced in 2014 and is designed to lift school attendance in selected remote communities through employment of local School Attendance Supervisors (SAS) and School Attendance Officers (SAO) who work with schools, families, and children to ensure students go to school every possible day.

This report presents two forms of data analysis: quantitative analysis of weekly school attendance data and qualitative analysis of reasons cited for why children are not attending school.

Chapter 1 was conducted by the Information and Evaluation Branch of the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, in collaboration with the education departments in New South Wales, Queensland, Western Australia, South Australia and the Northern Territory. It assesses trends in quantitative data analysis of weekly school attendance data for each of the participating schools from equivalent periods in 2013 and 2014.

Chapter 2 was prepared by O'Brien Rich Research Group. It presents an analysis of the qualitative data collected as part of weekly reporting for each school which cite reasons why children were not at school that week.

The Commonwealth Government would like to thank each participating jurisdiction for their support of this initiative, as well as the locally employed School Attendance Supervisors and School Attendance Officers for their diligence and hard work in getting more children to school.

Information and Evaluation Branch
Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet

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Acronyms

NSW	New South Wales
NT	Northern Territory
PM&C	Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet
PP	Percentage points
QLD	Queensland
RSAS	Remote School Attendance Strategy
SAS	School Attendance Supervisors
SAO	School Attendance Officers
SA	South Australia
TLR	Traffic Light Reports
WA	Western Australia

Executive summary

Compiled by Information and Evaluation Branch, PM&C

The Remote School Attendance Strategy (RSAS) is designed to lift school attendance levels in selected remote communities through employment of local School Attendance Supervisors (SAS) and School Attendance Officers (SAO) who work with schools, families, and children to ensure they go to school every possible day.

RSAS was rolled out in two stages. Stage one commenced in term one of 2014 and included students from 44 schools in five jurisdictions – Northern Territory (NT), Queensland (QLD), Western Australia, (WA), New South Wales (NSW) and South Australia (SA). Stage two commenced in term two of 2014 including students from a further 33 schools in the five jurisdictions. This report predominately assesses the impact of RSAS on stage one schools.

These remote communities were targeted because their schools have had low school attendance rates over recent years.

Funding for stages one and two of the Strategy is \$46.5 million over two calendar years, covering January 2014 to 31 December 2015.

The Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet (PM&C) receives and analyses school attendance data for the RSAS schools every week and regularly monitors RSAS performance. Once the first year of information was available, two additional evaluation activities were undertaken, based on complementary evaluative methods:

- Quantitative data analysis analysing weekly school attendance data comparing the first year of trend data with the previous year, based on equivalent periods in 2013 and 2014. Information and Evaluation Branch, PM&C conducted this analysis in collaboration with jurisdictional education departments; and
- Thematic coding of qualitative data collected in Traffic Light Reports (TLR) for all stage one schools, and matching the qualitative data with quantitative attendance data to analyse the reasons for changes in attendance on a week-by-week basis. This independent analysis was conducted by O'Brien Rich Research Group between January and March 2015.

Key findings

Quantitative data analysis

- RSAS has only been in operation since 2014 and it is therefore too early to reach firm conclusions about the medium and longer-term impacts on school attendance. Despite this, it is possible to assess the impacts to date by analysing data from equivalent periods in 2013 and 2014.
- It appears that RSAS has had a positive impact on school attendance in the Northern Territory and Queensland. In these two jurisdictions 72.5 per cent of schools (29 out of 40) had a higher term three attendance rate in 2014 than in 2013.
- Across all Northern Territory Government RSAS schools the average number of students attending school on any one day in term three 2014 was 13 per cent higher than in term three 2013.

- While the aggregate data are informative it is more important to establish whether RSAS is having an impact compared to a control group of similar schools. Regression analysis through which changes in attendance in RSAS schools were compared with other schools suggests that RSAS is having a meaningful and statistically significant impact on school attendance in the Northern Territory and Queensland. This positive impact is independent of broad trends. However, there is no clear evidence that RSAS is having a similar impact in other jurisdictions.

Qualitative data analysis

- PM&C representatives in each jurisdiction compile TLRs for each community. TLRs are a synthesis of weekly monitoring information, including reasons for low or high school attendance provided as free-text responses.
- The most frequently cited factors for low school attendance provided in weekly TLRs for stage one schools are:
 - Funerals/cultural activities
 - Poor student behaviour
 - Community unrest
 - Family travel for non-cultural reasons e.g. medical.
- Factors affecting high attendance rates were less frequently noted, and these mostly fell into two categories:
 - Attendance awards
 - Initiative directed to children to encourage attendance.
- There are considerable differences among jurisdictions as well as among schools within each jurisdiction in relation to reasons cited for low school attendance.
- Difficulties recruiting / retaining RSAS staff, and concerns with attendance of RSAS staff appear to be important issues impacting on programme effectiveness.
- Unintended consequences of RSAS reported in comments included:
 - the disruption that resulted when disengaged students or habitual truants returned to school, with an increase in bullying and stress on teachers
 - parent resistance / disrespect shown to RSAS staff, making the job more difficult and affecting recruitment to RSAS vacancies.
- This study found there is no simple relationship apparent between reasons cited for attendance change and actual attendance data each week.

1 Quantitative data analysis: Is RSAS having an impact?

Information and Evaluation Branch, PM&C

1.1 Background

The Remote School Attendance Strategy (RSAS) is a Commonwealth Government initiative implemented by the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet. Total funding for the Strategy is \$46.5 million (\$28.4 million plus \$18.1 million) over two calendar years, until 31 December 2015, to fund the employment of School Attendance Supervisors (SASs) and School Attendance Officers (SAOs) in each community. On the 25th of September 2015 it was announced that the Strategy has been extended for three years to the end of 2018. Total funding for the extension is approximately \$80 million.

RSAS is designed to lift school attendance in selected remote communities by employing local people to become SASs and SAOs. The SASs and SAOs work with schools, families, and children to ensure children go to school every possible day.

RSAS was rolled out in two stages. Stage one commenced in term one of 2014 and involved students attending 44 schools in five jurisdictions – Northern Territory (NT), Queensland (QLD), Western Australia, (WA), New South Wales (NSW) and South Australia (SA). Stage two commenced in term two of 2014 including students from a further 33 schools in the five jurisdictions.

These remote communities were targeted because their schools have had low school attendance rates over recent years, in most instances below 70 – 80 per cent. In some cases the attendance rate over six years has been as low as 38 per cent.

Delivery arrangements are different with each jurisdiction and within jurisdictions. In some jurisdictions the majority of providers are schools who are directly funded by the Commonwealth Government to employ RSAS teams and deliver RSAS. This is the case in the majority of sites in Queensland. In other jurisdictions RSAS providers are third party organisations who are funded to employ RSAS teams. In these locations providers are expected to work closely with local schools and the community. The state and territory government education systems are simultaneously operating their own school attendance programmes and strategies which RSAS aims to complement.

RSAS has been in operation for just over 12 months and it is therefore too early to be reaching firm conclusions about its impact as changes in the first year may not be representative of any medium and longer-term impacts. Despite this, it is worth standing back and assessing the impacts to date. This chapter provides an overview of what the data tells us.

The first part of the chapter provides some comments about data and the scope of the analysis that is possible. The chapter then provides an analysis on change in school attendance from 2013 to 2014 in RSAS schools. It outlines the results of a difference in differences regression analysis, in which we have sought to test whether improvements in RSAS schools are part of a broader trend.

1.2 Method and Scope

To assess the impact of RSAS it is important to analyse data for equivalent periods in 2013 and 2014, otherwise normal seasonal patterns may be mistaken for real impacts. To make this analysis as sound as possible we also restricted the analysis to complete term and semester data. This is important as there can be patterns within a term such as lower attendance rates in the last few weeks of term – it is important that we compare like with like.

It should be noted that RSAS stage one commenced at the start of 2014 while stage two schools commenced in term two, 2014. This means that it is not possible to analyse the impact of RSAS for the stage two schools using semester one (term 1 and 2) data as RSAS only commenced half way through this semester.

In this chapter we have only used data that we have public approval to release. This means that for NSW we can provide data for term one and two in 2014 while for South Australia and Western Australia we can only analyse changes from semester one, 2013 to semester one, 2014. The best assessment is possible for Northern Territory and Queensland schools as we have been able to obtain average attendance data for all the RSAS schools for each term in 2013.

1.3 Results

This section shows results for the RSAS schools for each participating jurisdiction. In this analysis we are simply looking for an overall RSAS impact – we have not assessed how RSAS operates in different schools or the factors that may result in RSAS having a different impact across schools.

1.3.1 Northern Territory

Table 1.1 provides data for the stage one Northern Territory schools. The table shows that 16 of the 19 schools have a higher attendance rate in semester one, 2014 than they had in semester one, 2013; with nine of the schools having seen their attendance rate rise by over five percentage points. The data in Table 1.1 are as-published on MySchool; these data vary slightly from data provided directly by the Northern Territory Government.

Table 1.1: Verified Attendance Rates Years 1-10, Northern Territory RSAS Stage One Schools Average Semester One Attendance Rates 2013 - 2014 and Percentage Point Change

School Name	2013 %	2014 %	Change pp
Alekarenge School	53	56	3
Barunga School	75	70	-5
Borroloola School	57	65	8
Bulman School	58	70	12
Epenarra School	59	61	2
Gapuwiyak School	63	70	7
Gunbalanya School	48	57	9
Lajamanu School	52	61	9
Ltyentye Apurte Catholic School Santa Teresa	71	73	2
Maningrida School	51	55	4
Milingimbi School	48	56	8
Ntaria School Hermannsburg	61	62	1
Ramingining School	63	65	2
Shepherdson College Galiwinku	50	61	11
Tennant Creek Primary School	73	68	-5
Wugularr School	53	61	8
Xavier Catholic College Wurrumiyanga	61	59	-2
Yirrkala School	48	57	9
Yuendumu School	48	53	5

Table 1.2 shows attendance rates for the stage two Northern Territory schools. As stage two only commenced in term two our analysis is restricted to this term in 2013 and 2014. The data suggest that eight of the 14 stage two schools had a higher attendance rate in 2014 than in 2013, and that six schools saw a decline in their attendance rates. It is worth noting that five of the six declines were very small – under three percentage points. Five schools saw their attendance rate rise by five percentage points or more, while one school saw its attendance rate fall by five percentage points or more.

Table 1.2: Verified Attendance Rates Years 1-10, Northern Territory RSAS Stage Two Schools Average Term Two Attendance Rates 2013 and 2014 and Percentage Point Change

School Name	2013 %	2014 %	Change pp
Alyangula School	85.4	83.7	-1.7
Alyarrmandumanja Umbakumba School	51.4	53.6	2.1
Ampilatwatja School	62.4	52.8	-9.6
Angurugu School	37.3	40.3	3.0
Elliott School	71.8	85.7	13.9
Jilkminggan School	63.6	62.4	-1.3
Kalkaringi School	68.3	67.2	-1.0
Milyakburra School	58.3	65.7	7.3
Murrupurtiyanuwu Catholic Primary School Wurrumiyanga	67.0	66.4	-0.6
Ngukurr School	57.2	74.8	17.5
Numbulwar School	47.8	58.5	10.7
Papunya School	57.7	66.8	9.1
Tennant Creek High School	64.0	67.0	2.9
Our Lady of the Sacred Heart Thamarrurr Catholic College Wadeye	54.0	51.6	-2.4

Table 1.3 details Northern Territory Government RSAS school attendance data (stage 1 and 2 schools) for term three, 2013 and 2014 - 29 schools are included. Shepherdson College is not in the list as there are data issues. In 21 out of 29 (72 per cent) Northern Territory Government schools participating in RSAS the attendance rate increased from term three, 2013 to term three, 2014.

Table 1.3 shows that 10 schools improved their 2014 attendance rate on 2013 by five percentage points or more. Nineteen schools showed a small change staying within five percentage points of the 2013 attendance rate. However more than half (11) of those 19 schools posted a positive change in comparison with 2013. No schools declined by five percentage points or more between term three, 2013 and term three, 2014.

Table 1.3: Verified Attendance Rates Years 1-10, Northern Territory RSAS Schools Average Term Three Attendance Rates 2013 and 2014 and Percentage Point Change

School Name	2013 %	2014 %	Change pp
Alekarenge School	49.6	51.7	2.1
Alyangula Area School	86.3	81.9	-4.4
Alyarrmandumanja Umbakumba School	41.2	42.0	0.8
Ampilatwatja School	57.7	59.1	1.3
Angurugu School	30.5	27.1	-3.4
Barunga School	62.2	62.8	0.6
Borrooloola School	56.6	54.3	-2.2
Bulman School	49.4	54.2	4.8
Elliott School	70.2	82.7	12.5
Epenarra School	52.9	57.5	4.6
Gapuwiyak School	43.1	47.1	4.1
Gunbalanya School	48.5	50.8	2.3
Jilkmिंगgan School	53.4	58.8	5.4
Kalkaringi School	53.5	64.4	10.8
Lajamanu School	41.7	41.2	-0.4
Maningrida College	50.3	49.4	-0.9
Milingimbi School	34.4	43.4	9.0
Milyakburra School	55.1	50.8	-4.3
Ngukurr School	52.5	67.3	14.8
Ntaria School	56.2	64.1	7.8
Numbulwar School	43.1	60.2	17.1
Papunya School	46.0	50.5	4.4
Ramingining School	50.8	57.8	6.9
Tennant Creek High School	67.8	66.1	-1.6
Tennant Creek Primary School	67.3	67.0	-0.2
Wugularr School	42.2	51.7	9.5
Yarralin School	63.1	64.9	1.8
Yirrkala School	40.0	52.6	12.6
Yuendumu School	45.5	49.4	3.9

One issue with simply reporting data on attendance rates is that this approach does not give a good sense of the size of any impacts – a rise in the attendance rate in a large school will impact on a larger number of students than an equivalent increase in a smaller school. One way to address this issue is to look at trends in the actual number of students attending school. Using this approach suggests that, across all the Northern Territory Government RSAS schools, the average number of students attending school on any one day in term three, 2014 was 13 per cent higher across the RSAS schools than in term three, 2013.

1.3.2 Queensland

Table 1.4 provides data for the stage one Queensland schools. The table shows that four of the five schools had a higher attendance rate in semester one, 2014 than they had in semester one, 2013. The fall in one school was small and was significantly outweighed by the rises. Across the stage one Queensland schools, the average daily school attendance level was 16.7 per cent higher in semester one 2014 than it was in semester one 2013.

Table 1.4: Verified Attendance Rates Years 1-10, Queensland RSAS Schools Stage One Average Semester One Attendance Rates 2013 and 2014 and Percentage Point Change

School Name	2013 %	2014 %	Change pp
Bwgcolman Community School Palm Island	67	68	1
Camooweal State School Primary	69	66	-3
Doomadgee State School	48	64	16
Mornington Island State School	66	73	7
St Michael's School Primary (Catholic) Palm Island	74	82	8

Table 1.5 shows attendance rates for the stage two Queensland schools. As stage two only commenced in term two our analysis is restricted to this term. The table shows that six of the seven schools saw their attendance rate rise from 2013 to 2014.

Table 1.5: Verified Attendance Rates Years 1-10, Queensland Government Schools Stage Two Average Term Two Attendance Rates 2013 and 2014 and Percentage Point Change

School Name	2013 %	2014 %	Change pp
Kowanyama State School	72.5	79.8	7.3
Lockhart State School	80.6	73.5	-7.0
Normanton State School	70.3	80.2	9.9
Northern Peninsula Area State College	64.7	72.1	7.4
Pormpuraaw State School	78.7	86.4	7.7
Woorabinda State School	80.7	83.3	2.6
Cherbourg State School	75.9	79.6	3.7

Table 1.6 shows term three attendance rates for Queensland Government RSAS schools (both stage 1 and 2). The table shows that eight out of 11 schools saw a rise in their attendance rate. Three schools experienced a fall in their attendance rate between term three, 2013 and term three, 2014. There were four out of 11 schools that improved on their 2013 term three attendance rate by five percentage points or more. Camooweal State School was the standout with an attendance rate 16.1 percentage points higher in term three, 2014 than in term three, 2013.

Six schools showed a small change between term three, 2013 and term three, 2014, staying within five percentage points of the term three, 2013 attendance rate. However two-thirds of those schools posted a positive change between term three, 2013 and term three, 2014. One school (Lockhart State School) declined by more than five percentage points between term three, 2013 and term three, 2014; down 18.6 percentage points.

Both Pormpuraaw State School and Camooweal State School have improved as the year has progressed. There were on average eight per cent more students each week attending Queensland Government RSAS schools in term three, 2014 compared with term three, 2013.

Table 1.6: Verified Attendance Rates Years 1-10, Queensland Government Schools Average Term Three Attendance Rates 2013 and 2014 and Percentage Point Change

School Name	2013 %	2014 %	Change pp
Bwgcorman Community School	59.3	56.9	-2.4
Camooweal State School*	52.8	68.9	16.1
Cherbourg State School	74.4	77.2	2.8
Doomadgee State School	41.1	46.2	5.1
Kowanyama State School	66.3	71.7	5.4
Lockhart State School	77.5	58.9	-18.6
Mornington Island State School	63.0	65.1	2.2
Normanton State School*	68.8	71.6	2.8
Northern Peninsula Area College - All Campuses	62.9	62.5	-0.4
Pormpuraaw State School	72.2	82.3	10.1
Woorabinda State School	69.9	74.1	4.2

* Please note that data for these schools are based on the sum of their un-validated daily attendance. Term attendance for these schools was not part of the collection prior to 2014.

Table 1.7 provides RSAS data for Queensland Government schools for term 4 2014. The table shows that nine of the 11 schools saw their attendance rate rise with two schools showing a small decline (under 5 percentage points). Six of the RSAS schools showed an improvement of five percentage points or more.

Table 1.7: Verified Attendance Rates Years 1-10, Queensland Government Schools Average Term Four Attendance Rates 2013 and 2014 and Percentage Point Change

School Name	2013 %	2014 %	Change pp
Bwgcorman Community School	56.0	58.7	2.7
Camooweal State School [^]	48.8	74.5	25.7
Cherbourg State School	73.4	78.3	5.0
Doomadgee State School	38.1	55.5	17.5
Kowanyama State School	62.1	69.7	7.6
Lockhart State School	61.0	57.6	-3.4
Mornington Island State School	61.1	67.0	5.9
Normanton State School [^]	67.1	71.2	4.1
Northern Peninsula Area College - All Campuses	56.5	54.9	-1.6
Pormpuraaw State School	68.1	79.5	11.4
Woorabinda State School	72.9	76.2	3.3

Note: Term 4, 2013 and Term 4, 2014 data are not complete due to data verification occurring prior to the end of term. Term 4, 2013 data includes up to 26 November 2013 and Term 4, 2014 data includes up to 21 November 2014.

[^] Please note that 2013 attendance for these schools is based on un-validated data as attendance was not validated for these schools prior to 2014.

1.3.3 Overall impact of RSAS in the Northern Territory and Queensland

It is clear, on the evidence to date that RSAS appears to have had a positive impact on school attendance in Queensland and the Northern Territory. If we focus on the government schools in these two jurisdictions then the latest data show that 29 of the 40 schools (72.5 per cent) have a higher term three attendance rate in 2014 than they did in 2013.

1.3.4 South Australia

We only have semester one, 2013 attendance data for South Australia. This means that we are only able to analyse changes in the stage one South Australian schools. As Table 1.8 shows, the attendance rate is higher in 2014 in five of the South Australian schools and lower in three of the schools. It is hard to discern any obvious RSAS impact in these data. This is not to deny that some of the rises in individual schools may relate to RSAS but there seems to be little overall impact.

Table 1.8: Verified Attendance Rates Years 1-10, South Australian Government Schools Average Semester One Attendance Rates 2013 and 2014 and Percentage Point Change

School Name	2013 %	2014 %	Change pp
Amata Anangu School	56	57	1
Ernabella Anangu School	52	47	-5
Fregon Anangu School	66	56	-10
Indulkana Anangu School	71	82	11
Mimili Anangu School	68	77	9
Oak Valley Aboriginal School	37	50	13
Pipalyatjara Anangu School	67	57	-10
Yalata Anangu School	50	63	13

1.3.5 Western Australia

We only have permission to publicly release semester one data for 2014. This means that we can only really assess the impact of RSAS on stage one Western Australian schools for this paper.

Table 1.9 suggests that four Western Australian RSAS schools had a higher attendance rate in 2014 than in 2013 and that three schools saw their attendance rate fall (with one school showing no change)¹. Based on this evidence it is hard to see any discernible RSAS impact in Western Australia.

Table 1.9: Verified Attendance Rates Years 1-10, Western Australian RSAS Schools Average Semester One Attendance Rates 2013 and 2014 and Percentage Point Change

School Name	2013 %	2014 %	Change pp
Carnarvon Community College	76	70	-6
Halls Creek School	58	61	3
Kalumburu Remote Community School	65	74	9
Luurnpa Catholic School Balgo	67	NP	
Meekatharra District High School	67	66	-1
Ngaanyatjarra Lands School	49	53	4
Onslow School	71	67	-4
Rawa Community School Punmu	62	72	10
Roebourne District High School	51	51	0

1.3.6 New South Wales

Table 1.10 provides verified attendance data for NSW RSAS schools (all of the NSW RSAS schools are stage one schools). The table shows that the attendance rate rose in Wilcannia Central School from semester one, 2013 to semester one, 2014. On the other hand the two other NSW RSAS

¹ In addition, RSAS is only in operation on three of the nine campuses for the Ngaanyatjarra Lands School. As the data in Table 2.9 refer to all nine campuses, they should not be used to draw inferences about the impact of RSAS. If we exclude this school then three RSAS schools saw their attendance rate rise while three saw their attendance rate fall.

schools saw small falls in their attendance rate over the same period. These mixed data do not provide clear evidence of any positive RSAS impact in NSW.

Table 1.10: Verified Attendance Rates Years 1-10, New South Wales Government Schools, Average Term One, Average Term Two and Average Semester One Attendance Rates 2013-2014 and Percentage Point Change

School	Term	2013 %	2014 %	Change pp
Boggabilla Central School	Term 1	81.8	80.8	-1.0
	Term 2	82.5	77.1	-5.4
	Semester 1	82.1	79.2	-2.9
Wilcannia Central School	Term 1	66.4	76.4	10.0
	Term 2	61.1	68.7	7.6
	Semester 1	64.0	72.9	8.9
Walgett Community College - Primary and High Schools	Term 1	77.0	76.8	-0.2
	Term 2	75.5	74.1	-1.4
	Semester 1	76.3	75.6	-0.7

Source: Semester 1 attendance rates calculated from data collected through the Return of Absences collections 2013 and 2014, NSW Department of Education and Communities (DEC).

Notes: Walgett Community College (High School) and Wilcannia Central School introduced new software packages for recording absences during 2013. Changes in attendance rates for these two schools from 2013 to 2014 may be attributable, in part, to the changes in software packages.

All 3 RSAS schools are part of a major NSW Government initiative (Connected Communities Strategy) involving 17 schools which enrol high proportions of Aboriginal students, with a key outcome of the strategy being to improve the attendance of students in these schools.

1.3.7 Regression Analysis

While the data do suggest that RSAS appears to have had a positive impact on school attendance, we need to go beyond this. Outcomes can change due to factors that are entirely unrelated to a policy, and for that reason it is important to assess not only the outcomes that are achieved, but also the degree to which any change in outcomes can be attributed to a programme or policy. It is entirely possible for a programme to have no impact even though outcomes may have improved, as the improvement in outcomes could reflect an existing trend or another factor unrelated to the programme.

To establish whether RSAS has had a real effect on school attendance it is important to try to establish a counterfactual – that is, what would have happened in the absence of the policy. To do this we have selected a range of comparison schools, to help us assess whether the changes we have observed in the RSAS schools are simply part of a broader trend that has also affected similar schools.

To formally assess whether RSAS schools have seen their attendance rate improve at a faster rate than other schools we have undertaken a difference in differences regression analysis. The basic idea in this type of analysis is to test whether changes in the RSAS schools have been greater than in the comparison schools controlling for other factors. The key assumption with a difference in differences analysis is that without the influence of the programme (the *treatment* in statistical language), both sets of data would follow a similar trend. In this case the underlying assumption is that without RSAS, the RSAS schools would have shown a similar trend in attendance rates from 2013 to 2014 to the comparison schools.

This analysis has been conducted using publically available data (as stated above in section 1.2). To undertake the regression analysis on the effects of RSAS we need consistent school attendance data for both 2013 and 2014. RSAS commenced in stage one schools in term one 2014. For these schools, we can use semester one data for 2013 and 2014 for the regression analysis. As RSAS only

commenced in stage two schools in term two 2014 it's only possible to compare data by term for 2013. Unfortunately these data are only available for Northern Territory and Queensland schools². For that reason, in the first regression analysis we focus on stage one schools across all RSAS jurisdictions.

As we are using panel data (that is data for the same schools over time) we have used a fixed effects model for the difference in differences analysis. This approach has some important advantages, including that it controls for any fixed characteristics of the schools that can lead to differences in school attendance between the schools. This means that we do not have to worry about a significant potential source of omitted variable bias – that is unobserved fixed differences between the schools. The coefficient of interest to us in this regression is an RSAS dummy variable, which takes the value of one if the school is an RSAS school and zero otherwise³.

In any difference in differences regression analysis, decisions need to be made about the choice of a comparison or control group. In this context the normal approach would be to select a group of comparison schools by matching each RSAS school to another school. While this approach has a lot of merit, there can always be debate about which schools to choose and whether the best schools have been chosen. In an effort to avoid these issues, rather than selecting individual comparison schools we have decided to use a wider range of comparisons, based on 2013 school data. We focussed on non-RSAS schools in remote and very remote areas of the RSAS states (NSW, QLD, SA, WA and the NT) where the share of all students who are Indigenous is 70 per cent or above. Special schools⁴ and schools where total enrolment was 10 students or fewer were also excluded⁵. We ran the regression with the comparison schools (subject to the exclusions) where the attendance rate in 2013 was:

- 90 per cent or below
- 85 per cent or below
- 80 per cent or below
- 75 per cent or below.⁶

Rather than focus on the results of one set of comparison schools in isolation, we report the results against all the groups. Each group has its strengths and weaknesses. The groupings with the largest numbers of schools (that is, at the top of the list)⁷ have an advantage in that the overall results are less sensitive to changes in a small number of schools. On the other hand, the groups with a lower attendance rate in 2013 are closer to the average attendance rate for the RSAS schools in 2013⁸. More information on the comparison schools is provided at Attachment A.

The results vary across the different comparison groups, but across the first three comparisons the coefficient on the RSAS variable is statistically significant. This suggests that, other things being

² We do have term two data for NSW schools but all the NSW schools are stage one schools.

³ We used STATA to undertake this analysis. The dependent variable in the regression analysis is the growth in the attendance rate (for semester 1, years 1-10) from 2013 to 2014 (that is, the attendance rate in 2014 minus the attendance rate in 2013 for each school). This fixed effects model is equivalent to including a dummy variable for each school to control for fixed effects. See J D Angrist and J-S Pischke, *Mostly Harmless Econometrics*, Princeton University Press 2009 Chapter 5

⁴ 'Special purpose schools cater for students with physical or intellectual disabilities, autism or social/emotional disturbance, or who are in custody or on remand' <http://www.myschool.edu.au/AboutUs/Glossary/glossaryLink>

⁵ We excluded very small schools as with such small numbers of students, a change in attendance for even two students can result in large apparent changes in the attendance rate. All the RSAS stage two schools were excluded. The Ngaanyatarrra School was also excluded as RSAS is only in operation on three of the nine campuses.

⁶ All four lists exclude Wulungarra Community School because of the volatility in measured attendance rates. The attendance rate at this school fell from 100 per cent in 2012 to 44 per cent in 2013 before rising back to 96 per cent in 2014.

⁷ There were 110 comparative schools at a 90 per cent or below level of attendance, 96 schools at 85 per cent or below, 78 schools at 80 per cent or below and 53 schools with an attendance rate of 75 per cent or below.

⁸ We tested whether any of the groupings showed a statistically significant overall change in attendance from 2008 to 2013. None of the groupings (including the RSAS schools) showed a statistically significant change in attendance rates over this period.

equal, the RSAS schools saw their attendance rate rise at a faster rate than other schools from semester one 2013 to semester one 2014. The coefficients on the RSAS variables were as follows: 4.9 – (with comparison schools with an attendance rate of 90 per cent or below), 4.5 (85 per cent or below), 4.4 (80 per cent or below) and 3.0 (75 per cent or below)⁹. If we take the results for the 85 per cent or below group as an example, the coefficient on the RSAS variable implies that the RSAS schools saw their attendance rate rise by 4.5 percentage points more than for comparative schools from 2013 to 2014. While positive, the coefficient on the RSAS variables where schools with an attendance rate of 75 per cent or under are used as the comparison schools is nearly but not quite statistically significant ($p=0.076$)¹⁰.

1.3.8 Pattern by jurisdiction

The school attendance data in Tables 1.1 to 1.10 suggest that RSAS is having a larger impact in Queensland and the Northern Territory than in other jurisdictions. To test this more formally we repeated the regression analysis but in this case we created two dummy variables. The first variable takes the value of one if the school is an RSAS school in Queensland or the Northern Territory and zero otherwise. The second variable that takes the value of one (zero otherwise) if the school is an RSAS school in NSW, Western Australian and South Australia. The RSAS effect as measured by the coefficient on the dummy variable for Queensland and the Northern Territory is statistically significant across all the control groups. The coefficients on this variable are as follows: 6.1 – (90 per cent or below), 5.7 (85 per cent or below), 5.6 (80 per cent or below), 4.2 (75 per cent or below)¹¹. The coefficient on the dummy variable for RSAS outside of the Northern Territory and Queensland is not statistically significant regardless of the control group used¹².

In the regression analysis above we have used schools as the unit of analysis. This is appropriate given that RSAS is attempting to raise the overall attendance rate for each school. On the other hand it is worth testing whether results vary if we weight results by school size. When we undertook a weighted regression the overall results did not change much, however, it is worth noting that when we weighted the data for school size¹³ the RSAS variable was statistically significant regardless of the comparison schools used (including schools where the attendance rate was 75 per cent or less).

Overall the results suggest that RSAS is having a meaningful and statistically significant impact in the Northern Territory and Queensland (most of the stage 1 RSAS schools are in the NT and Queensland¹⁴), however, we find no evidence in this analysis that RSAS is having a statistically significant impact elsewhere. These are early results and it will be important to continue to monitor the performance of RSAS over time.

More recent attendance data suggests that RSAS continued to have a positive overall impact on school attendance in the Northern Territory and Queensland in 2015 (see Attachment B).

⁹ Attendance rates in the comparison schools fell by 1.2 percentage points from 2013 to 2014 (90 per cent or below), 0.9 percentage points (85 per cent or below), 0.8 percentage points (80 per cent or below) and rose by 0.7 percentage points in the comparative schools with an attendance rate of 75 per cent or below.

¹⁰ Interestingly the RSAS dummy variable is significant if we run the regression for the change in attendance rates from 2012 to 2014 and from 2011 to 2014.

¹¹ As an alternative to the approach used in the previous paragraph we also ran the regression analysis just for the Northern Territory and Queensland. When we did this the coefficient on the RSAS variable was statistically significant against all control groups.

¹² While not our preferred approach we also ran a regression using individually matched comparison schools. For this analysis we matched each RSAS stage one school in each jurisdiction based on 2013 attendance rate, the remoteness area of the school, the proportion of the students at the school and the school type (secondary, primary or combined). We were unable to identify good matches for Amata Anangu School, Ernabella Anangu School, Oak Valley Aboriginal School and Yalata Anangu School, and for that reason these schools were excluded from the analysis. On average, attendance rates in the comparison schools rose by 0.8 percentage points and by 3.6 percentage points in the selected RSAS schools from 2013 to 2014. The regression results were consistent with all the other results – RSAS was shown to be having a statistically significant impact in Queensland and the Northern Territory but not in other jurisdictions.

¹³ We used school enrolment to weight the attendance data for each school. Ideally we would have used data not on enrolment but rather the number of days that students were expected to attend however; we do not have access to these data for all jurisdictions. This is a small issue that is unlikely to have an important impact on the results.

¹⁴ 24 of the 44 stage 1 RSAS schools are in the NT and QLD.

2 Qualitative data analysis

O'Brien Rich Research Group

2.1 Overview

This is a report on the Qualitative Data Analysis. The project consisted of a detailed analysis of the RSAS qualitative monitoring and school attendance data to examine the factors that support, disrupt, or detract from high rates of school attendance. The analysis was undertaken on behalf of PM&C from January to March 2015.

The broad requirement was to conduct research on the qualitative data collected from the 44 stage one RSAS schools to examine the major factors influencing changes in school attendance; the relative contributions of issues identified on school attendance in RSAS communities; the emerging or unintended consequences of RSAS; and the ways in which qualitative data collection could be improved to assist operational monitoring.

The methodology consisted of thematic coding of the qualitative monitoring information contained in the TLRs for all stage one RSAS schools in the 2014 school year; and matching the qualitative data with quantitative attendance data for a sample of schools to determine the reason for changes in attendance on a week-by-week basis.

The chapter starts with a summary of the key findings, followed by a detailed description of the methodology. Section 2.3 presents an overview of the major factors cited as influencing school attendance, followed by a description of the factors for each jurisdiction (Section 2.4). The next section provides an analysis of the Qualitative and Quantitative data matching. The chapter ends with some suggestions for a modified traffic light report.

The authors gratefully acknowledge the time and expertise that was freely given by all relevant PM&C staff.

2.1.1 Key findings

Overall the TLR comments tend to provide reasons for low attendance rather than high attendance. This is understandable. It is easier to attribute reasons for low attendance, for example a funeral, than reasons for high attendance, for example an absence of disruptions in the community.

Most frequent factors cited as influencing low school attendance

The data has been analysed separately for each jurisdiction rather than for RSAS as a whole because each jurisdiction has a different pattern of comments (Table 2.1). The most frequent factors cited as influencing low school attendance are shown by jurisdiction in the table below.

The most frequently cited factors are:

- Funerals/cultural activities
- Poor student behaviour
- Community unrest
- Family travel for non-cultural reasons e.g. medical.

Table 2.1: Most frequently cited factors effecting school attendance by jurisdiction

Ranking	NT	WA	SA	QLD	NSW
1	Funerals/cultural activities	Funerals/cultural activities	Funerals/cultural activities	Family travel (non-cultural)	Poor student behaviour
2	Community unrest	Poor student behaviour	Poor student behaviour	Funerals/cultural activities	Funerals/cultural activities Community unrest (equal 2nd)
3	Sporting events/town shows	Community unrest	Community unrest Family travel (non-cultural) (equal 3rd)	Poor student behaviour	Family travel (non-cultural)

Most frequent factors cited as influencing high attendance

There were relatively fewer factors cited for high attendance. These mostly fell into two categories:

- attendance rewards, consisting of prizes or acknowledgement in the form of praise for students and rewards such as vouchers for families
- initiatives directed to children to encourage attendance, such as providing breakfast or lunch

Place based variations

In terms of the patterns of comments in the TLRs, there are considerable differences among jurisdictions as well as among schools within each jurisdiction. While some overall themes are evident it is important to keep these differences in mind.

RSAS staff issues

Difficulties recruiting / retaining staff and concerns with attendance of RSAS staff appear to be important issues for RSAS overall.

Unintended consequences

Unintended consequences of RSAS were sometimes revealed through reporting comments. These fell into two main categories:

- the disruption that resulted when disengaged students or habitual truants returned to school, with an increase in bullying and stress on teachers
- parent resistance / disrespect shown to RSAS staff, making the job more difficult and affecting recruitment to RSAS vacancies

Qualitative and Quantitative data matching

When the qualitative data from the TLRs were matched with the quantitative school attendance data it was evident that there was no clear relationship between the factors identified in the TLRs and actual changes to school attendance rates.

The TLRs provide good quality general information about what is happening at a community level that may impact school attendance rates. However they do not clearly identify factors that affect changes in attendance on a week-to-week basis. Nor is it possible to clearly identify the relative impact of one

factor over others, or the ways in which a multiplicity of factors interact to negatively or positively impact on attendance.

For example, the TLRs contain numerous statements about the effect of funerals on school attendance, but for any of these weeks attendance rates can fluctuate markedly. In some weeks attendance may rise despite comments that might be expected to result in a decrease in school attendance.

Potential improvements to the Traffic Light Reports

The TLRs provide good information on the general reasons for low attendance within each community. The TLRs should not be expected to fully explain changes in attendance from week-to-week. Guidelines for completion of the TLRs should clearly identify the purpose of the collection, that is, general reasons for low attendance and/or reasons for changes in attendance from week-to-week.

If the objective is to obtain a better sense of the relative impact of the range of factors impacting school attendance, the TLRs could be modified to better suit this purpose. Potential modifications are suggested in the body of this report.

2.2 Methodology

2.2.1 Project Objectives

RSAS is based upon a data-driven approach to measuring, monitoring and understanding the specific issues around school attendance in each community and seeks to continually refine its approach. A key element is the weekly collection of qualitative and quantitative attendance data at the school level. The qualitative data provides information on the factors that support, disrupt, or detract from high rates of school attendance. This allows for faster identification of factors related to attendance and for these to be more speedily addressed.

2.2.2 Research questions

The broad requirement was to conduct research on the qualitative data collected from the 44 RSAS stage one schools to determine, to the extent possible, the following research questions:

- What were the major factors influencing changes in school attendance?
 - What were the relative contributions of issues identified on school attendance in RSAS communities?
 - How do the factors vary by context?
- What were the major enabling factors for communities that have increased school attendance levels since the introduction of RSAS?
- What are the emerging or unintended consequences of RSAS?
- How can qualitative data collection be improved to assist operational monitoring?

The research has been split into two components:

- thematic coding of the existing qualitative monitoring information to understand the reasons for low attendance
- qualitative and quantitative matching for a sample of schools to determine the reason for changes in attendance on a week-by-week basis

2.2.3 The monitoring instrument: Weekly Traffic Light Reports

PM&C representatives in each jurisdiction compile TLRs for each community. TLRs are a synthesis of weekly monitoring information received from a variety of sources, including service provider and PM&C Network staff reporting.

TLRs present attendance data, good news stories, issues, challenges and, from mid-2014, information pertaining to SAS and SAO targets and employment. The majority of the information presented in the TLRs (and analysed in this report) are drawn from free-text responses¹⁵. TLRs are used to inform the Minister and PM&C National Office of the progress of RSAS at a community level - providing context for week-to-week fluctuations in attendance rates – and to shape place-based policy responses.

As the programme only began in term one of 2014, the first TLRs for the 2014 academic year were for the week ending 21 February 2014. The format was modified in early July to include, inter alia, SAS/SAO targets and employment figures.

2.2.4 Thematic coding

The thematic coding component has required the coding and analysis of some 1760 weekly TLRs for the 2014 school year (44 schools by 40 weeks) to identify commonly cited reasons for absences or high attendance.

After an initial examination of a sample of the TLRs a coding frame was drawn up for agreement by the department. The data was subsequently coded and entered into an Excel database for analysis. Major issues were identified and analysed for each jurisdiction and each school.

The coding frame is separated into two general themes:

- Factors potentially impacting negatively on attendance
- Factors potentially impacting positively on attendance

It is important to note that the function of the coding exercise is to summarise large amounts of qualitative data by grouping together similar comments or factors. This necessarily means sacrificing some of the detail to make the information comprehensible to the reader. Below is a guide to the types of comments that have been grouped together for this analysis.

Factors potentially impacting negatively on attendance which were sufficient in number to warrant specific coding were:

Funerals / cultural activities: this includes sorry business, general cultural activities such as men's business and women's business as well as funerals. The reason for coding these together is that they all imply cultural obligations. Analysis of the TLRs suggested that it would not be possible to separately code 'travel for funerals' from 'in-community funerals' as the location of the funerals were not always indicated and there were often several funerals in any one week, some in-community and others requiring travel.

Sporting events / town shows (festivals / rodeos, etc.): almost all sporting events and festivals required travel out of the community. When a sporting event was cited as in-community, but still impacting on school attendance it was included in this category. This category excludes sports carnivals run by the school.

¹⁵ It should be noted that since the TLRs draw on monitoring sources that contain free text responses and not pre-defined categories, the reasons provided for low school attendance are generally what was perceived to be the most significant for the reporting period rather than an exhaustive list, therefore it is likely that some reasons for low school attendance are under reported.

Weather impacting (too cold, hot, heavy rain): statements in the TLR that attributed lower attendance to any adverse weather conditions are included in this code.

Royalty payments / Land council meetings: any absences relating to royalty payments / Land council meetings are included here. Statements in the TLR indicating that attendance was lower because families were slow to return to community specifically as a result of royalty payments / land council meetings are also included in this code. It should be noted that royalty payments were cited much more frequently than land council meetings, but they have been coded together because the two were sometimes reported together; in some instances the payments were linked to travel outside the community; in some they were linked with disruptive behaviour due to having additional money; at other times royalty payments are reported as a standalone comment.

Community unrest / fights / alcohol / volatile substance abuse / children out late: from the TLR comments it was not possible to differentiate among these factors as the primary cause of low attendance. In many instances the TLR comments grouped them together, for example, 'there have been fights in the community because of heavy drinking which has kept children out late and too tired to get to school in the morning'.

Gambling: any comments related to gambling are included here. The department specifically requested that this code be included.

Travel for shopping, family (not cultural) or medical: only travel that was out-of-community for these specific reasons was included in this code.

Poor student behaviour / sent home / suspension / bullying: the analysis suggested that these issues were most often related, for example, 'bullying' could mean that the bullied were staying away from school, whilst the bullying could result in children being sent home or ultimately suspended.

Student transport problems / not operating: all instances of problems with the school bus, the walking bus or other issues relating to transport to school were included in this code.

RSAS / school / provider issues: any negative comments on communication involving RSAS, schools and/or providers were included in this code.

Factors potentially impacting positively on attendance which were sufficient in number to warrant specific coding were:

Reliable student transport (including school bus, walking bus): positive comments on school transport were included here. These comments usually related to a new bus arriving or the old bus being fixed, and/or the walking bus being increasingly successful.

Attendance rewards: analysis suggested that attempts to encourage children to attend school could be separated into two different types. This code relates to items that were given to children and sometimes their families as a direct result of good attendance behaviour, for example, monies/prizes/awards for good or best attendance this term, or 'no school/no swim' type programmes.

Initiatives directed to children to encourage attendance, (breakfast, lunch, BBQs, etc.): this relates to general initiatives intended to encourage children on a day-to-day basis. It includes such incentives as BBQs or sports on Friday to encourage attendance on known low days.

School holiday activities / reminders of school starting: some TLR comments described activities undertaken or planned for the school holidays. These included distribution of flyers

reminding families when school terms begin and sports planned to positively engage children with the RSAS team.

2.2.5 Qualitative and quantitative matching

The data for the second component consisted of quantitative attendance data for the 2014 academic year for the 44 schools, to be matched with the data from the TLRs. As the academic terms and holiday periods varied from jurisdiction to jurisdiction an initial exercise in matching the attendance data to the TLRs was required.

The data was matched and analysed in two separate exercises:

- significant changes in school attendance rates (+/- 10%) were examined together with the TLR data and qualitative reporting to identify causal patterns
- key issues identified through the thematic coding were examined to determine the extent of causality reflected in the school attendance rates

2.2.6 Caveat

It is important to recognise that the information contained in this report has a number of limitations in relation to this exercise:

- the reporting format of the TLRs was modified in early July 2014. This may have resulted in somewhat different types of information being provided concerning community issues affecting the school attendance rate
- some providers may have been more forthcoming about factors impacting attendance than others
- SAS/SAO vacancies and attendance information may not be complete for some schools

2.3 Factors cited as influencing school attendance

This section provides an overview of the RSAS stage one jurisdictions as reflected in the thematic coding of the monitoring data. The analysis of the TLRs suggests that although there are some obvious similarities, each jurisdiction also exhibits differences in many aspects. This section concentrates on the key themes across jurisdictions.

2.3.1 Bias towards reasons for low attendance

As indicated above, the TLRs are a week-to-week monitoring tool. They are not necessarily set up to capture very nuanced information about the strength of each reason provided for fluctuations in attendance. Rather, they are intended to highlight key issues, occurrences and events for that week.

It is understandably easier to attribute reasons for low attendance, for example funerals and sporting events are very evident in a community. It is, however, considerably more difficult to directly attribute reasons for high attendance, for example the effect of a community discussion on the importance of children attending school. Similarly, the effect of offering incentives such as breakfast and lunch or rewards for consistent attendance might not be immediately obvious on a week-by-week basis, even to a keen observer.

As might be expected therefore, the comments provided in the TLRs tend to provide reasons for low attendance rather than high attendance. This bias should be kept in mind in the discussions that follow.

2.3.2 Factors cited for high attendance

Overall, reasons cited for high attendance mostly fell into two categories: attendance rewards, either for the students or family; or initiatives directed to children to encourage attendance, for example providing breakfast, or lunch. Rewards included prizes or acknowledgement in the form of praise for students and rewards in the form of vouchers for families. A third, smaller category of responses related to effective student transport, including such things as the bus being in working order, or the 'walking bus' operating effectively.

It is important to note that the relatively small number of cited instances relating to positive actions does not necessarily mean that these actions are not taking place on a larger scale; it simply reflects what those filling in the forms have thought to include. For example, if attendance rewards are part of what the school always does, business as usual so to speak, it may not seem noteworthy to include a comment on this in the TLR.

2.3.3 Factors cited as influencing school attendance rates

The data has been analysed separately for each jurisdiction rather than for RSAS as a whole. This is because the analysis shows different patterns of responses among jurisdictions and it is important that these differences are captured. Additionally, as the Northern Territory represents some 43 per cent of the total stage one RSAS schools, the Northern Territory factors would tend to overwhelm the data from the other jurisdictions if it were analysed as a whole.

Table 2.2 below presents the 16 most commonly cited factors impacting upon school attendance for each jurisdiction. The purpose of this table is to present an overall picture for the reader of the somewhat different patterns of comments for each jurisdiction. In order to present the data in a comparable format the total number of comments for each jurisdiction has been divided by the number of schools in that jurisdiction. For example, for Northern Territory schools funerals / cultural activities were cited a total of 361 times. This has been divided by the number of schools in the Northern Territory (19) to obtain a 'per school average' of 19. In Western Australia there were 88 references to funerals / cultural activities among nine schools, resulting in a per school average of 9.8.

Table 2.2: RSAS average number of cited instances per jurisdiction

(The average is the total number of comments per jurisdiction divided by the number of RSAS schools in that jurisdiction)

ISSUE	NT	WA	SA	QLD	NSW
Number of schools					
NUMBER OF SCHOOLS	19	9	8	5	3
Instances					
Funerals / cultural activities	19	9.8	17.1	6.4	3.7
Sporting events / town shows (festivals / rodeos, etc.) ¹⁶	7.8	2.2	4.8	4.4	1.3
Family travel, e.g. shopping, medical (non-cultural)	5.9	3.1	7	7.6	2.3
Weather impacting (too cold, hot, heavy rain)	4.4	1.6	2.5	2.8	0.7
Royalty payments / Land council meetings	3.4	2.1	0.6	0.2	0
Community unrest / fights / alcohol / volatile substance abuse / children out late	8.7	5.9	7	3.2	3.7
Gambling	5.5	0.4	2.4	1.2	0
Poor student behaviour / sent home / suspension / bullying	4.8	6.7	8.5	3.8	11.3
Student transport problems / not operating	3.7	2.2	1	0.6	1
Reliable student transport	1.3	1.9	1.1	1.8	1
RSAS / school / provider issues	0.8	2.9	1.4	0	0
Attendance rewards (student and / or family)	3.7	1.9	3.4	3.4	1.2
Initiatives directed to children to encourage attendance, (breakfast, lunch, BBQs, etc.)	4.3	2.1	4	4.8	3.3
Position/s vacant in RSAS team*	14.3	16	10	14.6	17.7
SAS/SAO irregular attendance / poor performance*	11.8	5.1	10.5	7	6.3
School holiday activities, planned /undertaken by RSAS team	1.5	2.2	0.3	1.4	0

* Vacancy and attendance information for SASs/SAOs was not reported consistently in the TLRs until mid-2014.

Although each jurisdiction has a somewhat different pattern of comments some common themes are evident and are discussed below.

¹⁶ Almost all sporting events / town shows (festivals / rodeos, etc) involved travel out of the community.

Overall, the most frequently cited reasons for changes in school attendance were funerals / cultural activities, out-of-community activities (family travel and sporting events / town shows), community unrest and poor student behaviour. It is important to understand that the numbers discussed below relate to the averages only. They do not reflect the issues for individual schools some of which may vary considerably from the average.

2.3.4 Impact of funerals and cultural activities

The most commonly cited factor identified in the TLRs is the impact of funerals and cultural activities on school attendance. This was particularly evident in the Northern Territory and South Australia where it was the most frequently recorded comment. Funerals and cultural activities were also commonly cited in Western Australia (the second most frequently cited factor); and to a somewhat lesser extent in Queensland (fourth most frequent comment) and NSW (equal fourth). The majority of comments related to funerals, with cultural activities such as ceremonies representing a much smaller proportion of the comments.

2.3.5 Out-of-community activities

When the average numbers for sporting events / town shows are combined with the average for family travel for non-cultural reasons (out-of-community activities) it is evident that families being away from community is having a considerable impact on school attendance. The Northern Territory has an average of 13.7 cited instances, Queensland has an average of 12 instances, South Australia has 11.8, and Western Australia has 5.3 instances. Cited instances for NSW are much lower with an average of 3.6 instances.

2.3.6 Poor student behaviour

Poor student behaviour is an issue for most of the jurisdictions, some more so than others. NSW has an average citing of 11.3 instances per school, South Australia has an average of 8.5 instances, Western Australia has 6.7 instances, the Northern Territory has 4.8 instances and Queensland has an average of 3.8 instances. The TLRs contain a small number of anecdotal comments that some students have become aware that being suspended means that they are free of 'inducements' by RSAS staff to go to school each day until their suspension is over. In most of these cases comments suggest that the RSAS staff are aware of the situation and are working with the school to find a solution.

2.3.7 Community unrest

The effect of community unrest (fights / alcohol / volatile substance abuse / children out late) as a reason for fluctuations in school attendance rates is also shared among several of the jurisdictions, with it most frequently cited in the Northern Territory (8.7 instances), followed by South Australia (7 instances), and Western Australia (5.9).

2.3.8 Positions vacant and SAS/SAO irregular attendance

Difficulties recruiting / retaining staff, and concerns with attendance and performance of RSAS staff appear to be important issues for RSAS overall¹⁷.

- Position/s vacant for either the SAS or SAO was the most frequently cited factor for three jurisdictions – NSW, WA and QLD. Vacancies were the second most frequent factor for the NT and the third most frequent for SA.
- Irregular attendance and / or poor performance of RSAS team members were among the top three factors for the NT, NSW, SA and QLD. It was the fifth most frequent issue for WA.

¹⁷ Note that vacancy and attendance information for SASs/SAOs was not reported on consistently in the TLRs until mid-2014.

(The vast majority of comments related to irregular or poor attendance; only a very small number referred to problematic behaviour on the job.)

In the TLRs from mid-2014 on there is a separate section relating to SAS and SAO targets and number employed as well as an employment comment, but irregular attendance issues are not specifically canvassed. Hence, this item is reliant on it being specifically commented upon by the person or persons who complete the reports on a week-by-week basis.

From a reading of the TLRs it is clear that some of the factors that contribute to student non-attendance also contribute to staff attendance problems. The most notable issue was staff being absent because of funerals and cultural obligations. However other factors such as gambling and community unrest also appeared to contribute to staff absences in some cases. Some indicated that bullying by parents made it difficult for the SAS or SAO to fulfil their role.

Although it could reasonably be expected that vacancies and poor attendance of the RSAS personnel lessen the positive impact of the programme in these communities, they are not specifically cited as a reason for low attendance in the TLRs. They have been included in the analysis because of their expected impact on the programme's outputs/outcomes.

2.3.9 Unintended consequences

Analysis of the TLRs revealed a number of comments relating to some unintended consequences of RSAS. These comments were not made with sufficient frequency to be coded as a category or categories in the thematic coding component of this project, but they are worthy of note.

A number of comments related to the disruption in classrooms that resulted when disengaged students or habitual truants were forced to attend school. Increased stress on teachers who were required to deal with newly arrived and disruptive students was a factor. Also noted in the TLRs was an increase in bullying in the classroom and on the bus to and from school. Other comments related to insufficient space or desks to accommodate newly returned students.

Some comments suggested there was a need for a separate classroom and process to ease recalcitrant young people back into the classroom. This related to both dealing with their behaviour and providing focused lesson material so that the students were not too far behind their peers when they were reintegrated.

Parent / family resistance to RSAS was also apparent in a number of communities. There were examples of RSAS staff being abused, and of parents ignoring or not responding to staff who were attempting to get their children to school. In a few communities comments were made that the consequence of families being disrespectful and/or abusing the RSAS team made filling the RSAS positions more difficult.

2.4 Factors cited as influencing school attendance by jurisdiction

This section provides an analysis of the factors cited in the TLRs as influencing school attendance, by each RSAS jurisdiction. The number of schools in each jurisdiction has determined the order; hence the Northern Territory is in the next section, followed by separate sections for Western Australia, South Australia, Queensland and NSW.

As noted in an earlier section of this report, vacancies and irregular attendance of RSAS team members are recorded in TLRs, but the impact of these on school attendance is not known. They are included in the tables and graphs to provide as complete a picture as possible for jurisdictions and individual schools.

2.4.1 Northern Territory overview

This section presents an overview of the issues for the Northern Territory as a whole.

Table 2.3: Total number of cited incidences and average across the 19 Northern Territory RSAS schools
(The average is the total number of comments per jurisdiction divided by the number of RSAS schools)

ISSUE	NUMBER of cited incidences	AVERAGE across 19 schools
Funerals / cultural activities	361	19
Sporting events / town shows (festivals / rodeos)	149	7.8
Family travel, e.g. shopping, medical (non-cultural)	113	5.9
Weather impacting (cold, hot, heavy rain)	83	4.4
Royalty payments / Land council meetings	65	3.4
Community unrest / fights / alcohol / volatile substance abuse / children out late	165	8.7
Gambling	104	5.5
Poor student behaviour / sent home / suspension / bullying	92	4.8
Student transport problems / not operating	70	3.7
Reliable student transport	25	1.3
RSAS / school / provider issues	15	0.8
Attendance rewards (student and / or family)	70	3.7
Initiatives directed to children to encourage attendance, e.g. breakfast, lunch, BBQs	82	4.3
Position/s vacant in RSAS team	271	14.3
SAS/SAO irregular attendance / poor performance	225	11.8
School holiday activities, planned /undertaken by RSAS team	29	1.5

In the Northern Territory the most frequently cited issue impacting on school attendance was funerals / cultural activities, with a total of 361 reported instances, or an average of 19 per school over the 2014 school year. This issue was cited with much greater frequency than all other factors in the Northern Territory.

The second most frequently cited factor was community unrest, with an average of 8.7 instances per school, followed by sporting events (7.8) and family travel for non-cultural reasons (5.9).

Travel away from communities appears to be a relatively important factor for school attendance – travel for events such as sporting events / town shows (7.8); and family travel for shopping and

medical reasons (5.9). When these are grouped together, travel away from communities (for purposes other than cultural) is the second most cited reason for poor attendance for schools in the Northern Territory (13.7 times per school on average).

Gambling (5.5), poor student behaviour (4.8) and weather (4.4) are also cited as reasons for poor attendance, but to a lesser extent, on average, than the above cited factors.

The average number of SAS/SAO vacancies recorded for the Northern Territory was 14.3 per school; compared with other jurisdictions this was about average. However, irregular attendance / poor performance of the RSAS team was cited more frequently in the Northern Territory than in other jurisdictions (11.8 per school).

2.4.2 Western Australia overview

This section presents an overview of the issues for Western Australia as a whole.

Table 2.4: Total number of cited incidences and average across the nine Western Australian RSAS schools
(The average is the total number of comments per jurisdiction divided by the number of RSAS schools)

ISSUE	NUMBER of cited incidences	AVERAGE across 9 schools
Funerals / cultural activities	88	9.8
Sporting events / town shows (festivals / rodeos)	20	2.2
Family travel, e.g. shopping, medical (non-cultural)	28	3.1
Weather impacting (cold, hot, heavy rain)	14	1.6
Royalty payments / Land council meetings	19	2.1
Community unrest / fights / alcohol / volatile substance abuse / children out late	53	5.9
Gambling	4	0.4
Poor student behaviour / sent home / suspension / bullying	60	6.7
Student transport problems / not operating	20	2.2
Reliable student transport	17	1.9
RSAS / school / provider issues	26	2.9
Attendance rewards (student and / or family)	17	1.9
Initiatives directed to children to encourage attendance, e.g. breakfast, lunch, BBQs	19	2.1
Position/s vacant in RSAS team	144	16
SAS/SAO irregular attendance / poor performance	46	5.1
School holiday activities, planned /undertaken by RSAS team	20	2.2

Of the factors impacting on school attendance, funerals / cultural activities were the most frequently cited (9.8 on average). The second most frequently cited was poor student behaviour (6.7) followed by community unrest (5.9).

Compared with the Northern Territory, South Australia and Queensland, Western Australia had a lower reported incidence of families being away from community, either for sporting events / shows (2.2) or family travel (3.1).

Schools in Western Australia had the second highest incidence of SAS/SAO vacancies across the jurisdictions, with a total of 144 or an average of 16 per school. However, Western Australia had the lowest number of reports of irregular attendance (5.1), less than half that of the Northern Territory or South Australia.

2.4.3 South Australia overview

This section presents an overview of the issues for South Australia as a whole.

Table 2.5: Total number of cited incidences and average across the eight South Australian RSAS schools
(The average is the total number of comments per jurisdiction divided by the number of RSAS schools)

ISSUE	NUMBER of cited incidences	AVERAGE across 8 schools
Funerals / cultural activities	137	17.1
Sporting events / town shows (festivals / rodeos)	38	4.8
Family travel, e.g. shopping, medical (non-cultural)	56	7
Weather impacting (cold, hot, heavy rain)	20	2.5
Royalty payments / Land council meetings	5	0.6
Community unrest / fights / alcohol / volatile substance abuse / children out late	56	7
Gambling	19	2.4
Poor student behaviour / sent home / suspension / bullying	68	8.5
Student transport problems / not operating	8	1
Reliable student transport	9	1.1
RSAS / school / provider issues	11	1.4
Attendance rewards	27	3.4
Initiatives directed to children to encourage attendance, e.g. breakfast, lunch, BBQs	32	4
Position/s vacant in RSAS team	80	10
SAS/SAO irregular attendance / poor performance	84	10.5
School holiday activities, planned /undertaken by RSAS team	2.4	0.3

In South Australia, funerals / cultural activities were the most frequently cited reason for poor school attendance (17.1). This was slightly less than the Northern Territory but substantially more than the other jurisdictions.

The second most frequently cited factor was poor student behaviour (8.5). This was higher than all jurisdictions except NSW. Community unrest was reasonably frequently cited (7), as was family travel e.g. shopping, medical, non-cultural (7).

Travel away from communities appears to be a relatively important factor for school attendance. When family travel for shopping and medical reasons (7) and travel for events such as sporting events / town shows (4.8) are grouped together, travel away from communities (for purposes other than cultural) is high (11.8 times per school on average). This is the third highest of all the jurisdictions, just slightly below Queensland (12 on average).

2.4.4 Queensland overview

This section presents an overview of the issues for Queensland as a whole.

Table 2.6: Total number of cited incidences and average across the five Queensland RSAS schools
(The average is the total number of comments per jurisdiction divided by the number of RSAS schools)

ISSUE	NUMBER of cited incidences	AVERAGE across 5 schools
Funerals / cultural activities	32	6.4
Sporting events / town shows (festivals / rodeos)	22	4.4
Family travel, e.g. shopping, medical (non-cultural)	38	7.6
Weather impacting (cold, hot, heavy rain)	14	2.8
Royalty payments / Land council meetings	1	0.2
Community unrest / fights / alcohol / volatile substance abuse / children out late	16	3.2
Gambling	6	1.2
Poor student behaviour / sent home / suspension / bullying	19	3.8
Student transport problems / not operating	3	0.6
Reliable student transport	9	1.8
RSAS / school / provider issues	0	0
Attendance rewards (student and / or family)	17	3.4
Initiatives directed to children to encourage attendance, e.g. breakfast, lunch, BBQs	24	4.8
Position/s vacant in RSAS team	73	14.6
SAS/SAO irregular attendance / poor performance	35	7
School holiday activities, planned /undertaken by RSAS team	7	1.4

The most frequently cited factor for low attendance in Queensland was family travel (7.6). The second most cited was funerals / cultural activities (6.4), followed by sporting events (4.4). Queensland reported a lower incidence of poor student behaviour compared with the other jurisdictions.

Travel away from communities appears to be a relatively important factor for school attendance. When family travel for shopping and medical reasons (7.6) and travel for events such as sporting events / town shows (4.4) are grouped together, travel away from communities (for purposes other than cultural) is high (12 times per school on average). This is the second highest of all the jurisdictions, with the Northern Territory having the highest average overall non-cultural travel at an average of 13.7.

The average number of SAS/SAO vacancies recorded for Queensland was 14.6, with irregular attendance averaging seven instances per school. Compared with the other jurisdictions Queensland is close to the middle on these factors.

2.4.5 New South Wales schools

This section presents an overview of the issues for NSW as a whole.

Table 2.7: Total number of cited incidences and average across the three New South Wales RSAS schools
(The average is the total number of comments per jurisdiction divided by the number of RSAS schools)

ISSUE	NUMBER of cited incidences	AVERAGE across 3 schools
Funerals / cultural activities	11	3.7
Sporting events / town shows (festivals / rodeos)	4	1.3
Family travel, e.g. shopping, medical (non-cultural)	7	2.3
Weather impacting (cold, hot, heavy rain)	2	0.7
Royalty payments / Land council meetings	0	0
Community unrest / fights / alcohol / volatile substance abuse / children out late	11	3.7
Gambling	0	0
Poor student behaviour / sent home / suspension / bullying	34	11.3
Student transport problems / not operating	3	1
Reliable student transport	3	1
RSAS / school / provider issues	0	0
Attendance rewards (student and / or family)	6	1.2
Initiatives directed to children to encourage attendance, e.g. breakfast, lunch, BBQs	10	3.3
Position/s vacant in RSAS team	53	17.7
SAS/SAO irregular attendance / poor performance	19	6.3
School holiday activities, planned /undertaken by RSAS team	0	0

Of the factors potentially impacting negatively on school attendance, poor student behaviour was the most frequently cited issue (an average of 11.3 per school). This was substantially higher than for other jurisdictions. The next most frequently cited impact was from funerals / cultural activity and community unrest (both an average of 3.7).

In general, NSW cited fewer factors impacting on school attendance than any other jurisdiction. It is not possible to say to what extent these factors might be less problematic in NSW, or whether it is the result of less complete reporting in the TLRs.

NSW reported a high level of SAS/SAO vacancies, with 53 cited vacant positions across the three schools in the 2014 school year. This equates to an average incidence of 17.7 per school, which was the highest of all RSAS jurisdictions.

2.5 Qualitative and Quantitative data matching

This section provides an examination of the relationship between the qualitative data from the TLRs and the quantitative school attendance data provided by the department.

The purpose of the analysis was to determine the extent to which changes in school attendance could be attributed to the reasons cited in the TLRs.

2.5.1 Methodology

The analysis involved identifying schools that had experienced large fluctuations (greater than 10 percent) in school attendance on a week-to-week basis; schools that had sustained higher than average or lower than average attendance over three or more weeks; and schools where the attendance rate was relatively stable over a term. The corresponding TLRs were then identified and matched to the attendance data.

Analysis also investigated whether apparent drops in school attendance at the beginnings and ends of terms could be attributed to any particular issue cited in the TLRs.

2.5.2 Overall conclusion

The data matching exercise found no clear pattern or relationship between changes in school attendance and factors cited in the TLRs. It is not possible from the TLRs to confidently identify factors that would clearly explain changes in attendance on a week-to-week basis. Nor is it possible to clearly identify the relative impact of one factor over others, or the ways in which a multiplicity of factors interact to negatively or positively impact on attendance.

Some weeks show markedly different attendance rates from other weeks where the same reasons for non-attendance are provided in the TLRs. For example, the TLRs contain numerous statements about the effect of funerals on school attendance, but for any of these weeks attendance rates can fluctuate markedly. Indeed in some weeks attendance may rise despite comments that might be expected to result in a decrease in school attendance. In a similar fashion, royalty payments / land council meetings were often mentioned in the Northern Territory as a reason for the change in attendance rates, however, these were often coupled with other important reasons such as funerals / cultural issues, community unrest and poor student behaviour. It was not possible to clearly identify the relative impact of any of these factors through the TLRs. In weeks where the attendance rate was close to the term average there were also factors cited that might be expected to negatively impact attendance.

In relation to the drops in attendance at the beginnings and ends of term, many TLR comments confirm that these times are problematic, with the TLRs citing various factors. Overall the theme that comes through is that many families prioritise other issues over regular school attendance, whether they are extended holidays, funerals, cultural events or other reasons. It could reasonably be inferred from the TLRs that some parents do not appreciate the importance of children being at school for every week of term; although this is rarely explicitly provided as a reason for low attendance. Appendix 2 contains a selection of cases across jurisdictions with the reasons provided in the TLRs for low attendance at the beginnings and ends of school terms.

There are a number of reasons why the TLRs do not explain variations in school attendance. One is that while the reports capture the more visible or obvious factors, they do not capture other potentially important factors such as teacher quality, parental attitudes, or the effects of other government programmes or policies in the community.

Additionally (and this is frequently a limitation of programme monitoring systems) some of the people entering the data may not appreciate the value of collecting the information, and may consider it a low priority relative to their other responsibilities. There may be a tendency for some to identify a factor that is thought to impact on school attendance, without giving due consideration to its actual impact.

2.5.3 Examples of instances of attendance changes

A range of TLRs across all jurisdictions and school terms were selected for analysis based on the selection criteria described in Section 2.5.1. Two examples are presented below to demonstrate the limitations of the TLRs in explaining changes in attendance.

Example 1: Drop/rise in attendance over four weeks

In this example there was a drop in attendance in week six from 58 per cent to 33 per cent followed by a rise of more than 20 percentage points in the following weeks (66 per cent in week 7 and 53 per cent in week 8).

Week five: attendance 58 per cent

Attendance was above the term average, with a rise from 47 per cent to 58 per cent this week. The TLR does not report on reasons for the rise, instead it concentrates on the ongoing reasons for non-attendance.

“Funerals inside and out of community continue to impact school attendance.

The payment of royalties has impacted school attendance this week and will likely impact next week as well. Payments were paid in [regional centre] late this week and will also be paid early next week. Families have left community for [regional centre] in order to receive their payments. The provider anticipates that many families will stay longer in [regional centre] in order to go shopping, further impacting school attendance.

There continues to be some animosity in the community as a result of the homicide three weeks ago. Family members who temporarily left the community until it settles down have not yet returned.”

Week six: attendance 33 per cent

Attendance dropped this week, with the TLR attributing low attendance to royalty payments in [regional centre] and land council meetings.

“[The service provider] reports that, across their RSAS communities, the payment of royalties is leading to social issues arising from alcohol consumption and fighting over allocation of funds. This impacts safety for children and school attendance.”

Week seven: attendance 66 per cent

Attendance rose in week seven. The TLR reports that attendance has improved but provides no specific attribution for the increase.

“Attendance improved considerably this week and is above both the Term 1, 2014 average and Term 2, 2013 average. However, the royalty payments are continuing to impact school attendance (as previously reported). Some families are still in [regional centre] due to the payments.”

Week eight: attendance 53 per cent

Attendance dropped this week but is still above the term two average. The TLR concentrates on the ongoing reasons for non-attendance.

“The Health Clinic reports many community members are presenting with colds, impacting attendance. Some families left for [regional centre] for a funeral held on 6 June for the community member murdered in April. This has stirred up some animosity in the community. Some families have left community as a result, further impacting school attendance.

Football matches held over the weekend [in regional centres] continue to impact school attendance. Some families have travelled to take part in a Festival.”

Example 2: Steady decrease in attendance in over three weeks

In this example there was a drop in attendance from weeks six to nine in term three, from 56 per cent to 44 per cent to 32 per cent to 48 per cent.

Week six: attendance 56 per cent

No comments were made in the TLR relating to attendance in week six.

Week seven: attendance 44 per cent

“The rodeo and the associated visiting food vans and travelling entertainment starting on Friday School has identified that students were leaving the school grounds to purchase food from these outlets and not returning.”

Week eight: attendance 32 per cent

“A week after the rodeo and the associated high through community after this event has left many families and students tired. Families have been travelling to two large family funerals in the region. The funeral service on Wednesday saw families out of community for 3-4 days.”

Week nine: attendance 48 per cent

In week nine, attendance goes up again from 32 per cent to 48 per cent. The TLR for this week states:

“Sorry business and funeral of a significant elder in nearby community on Friday saw families begin to travel on Thursday and Friday. Warmer weather has led to students going to the river to swim and play. RSAS team identified an area where the students were gathering and had set up a camp.”

In week eight, where attendance was lowest, the TLR notes two large funerals, plus post-rodeo tiredness, but doesn't elaborate on the relative impact of these on attendance. In week nine, families are also travelling for funerals, and it suggested that the warm weather has resulted in students not attending school, yet the attendance rate has gone up.

The above examples provide a sense of the events / situation in this community for the selected time period. However it is not possible to discern the extent to which any of these factors impact school attendance, or to get any clear sense of which factors have a bigger impact than others.

2.6 Suggestions for a modified traffic light report

This section provides some suggestions for improvements to the collection of monitoring information through the TLRs, informed by the thematic coding and qualitative / quantitative data matching exercises.

Future modifications to the TLRs need to be considered in relation to their primary intended purpose. In their present format the TLRs provide good quality general information to assist policy makers and government to understand issues at the individual community level, and to assist the RSAS to focus efforts towards what needs to be worked on for each community. However they do not clearly identify factors that affect changes in attendance on a week-to-week basis. Nor is it possible to clearly identify the relative impact of one factor over others, or the ways in which a multiplicity of factors interact to negatively or positively impact on attendance.

It is important to clarify and prioritise the type of information that is sought through the TLRs.

If the objective is to obtain a better sense of the relative impact of the range of factors impacting school attendance, this should be made explicit and the TLRs could be modified to better suit this purpose.

For example, tick box options covering the range of factors that have been identified in this analysis could be included. People could be prompted to identify events in that particular week that could have impacted school attendance, either positively or negatively. An example of one potential modification, using a tick box methodology, is provided below.

Reason for low attendance this week	Impact on attendance		
	High	Medium	Low
Item			
Funerals/cultural activities			
Sporting events/town shows			
Weather impact			
Royalty payments			
Etc.			
Etc.			

Part of the difficulty with asking people to provide comments in relation to school attendance is that some people may feel compelled to put something in the form, (given the generally low attendance rates in the RSAS schools) even though that factor may not have had a significant impact on the attendance rate for that week. Also, because providing comments (particularly on a weekly basis) may be seen as burdensome, there is a temptation for some to simply repeat the comments from previous weeks, or to note issues that are known to be problems in the community, but which may or may not impact school attendance in the particular week in question. A tick box option may alleviate these issues to some extent.

It would also be possible to combine a weekly tick box report with fortnightly or monthly qualitative comments. One of the strengths of the qualitative commentary is that it can assist in developing an understanding of issues at the community level and hence facilitate a focus on implementation strategies relevant to that community.

Attachment A

Comparison schools

The normal approach for a difference in differences regression analysis would be to select a group of comparison schools by matching each stage one RSAS school to another school. However, there can always be debate about the comparison schools chosen. As a result rather than simply choosing one set of comparison schools we used a range of comparison schools.

The criteria for the comparison schools were:

- Not an RSAS school
- Located in NSW, Queensland, South Australia, Western Australia or the Northern Territory
- Share of enrolled students who are Indigenous is at least 70 per cent
- Not a special school¹⁸
- More than 10 enrolled students¹⁹
- Low attendance rate in semester one 2013 (further information is provided below)²⁰

Schools with missing data in any of the above criteria were excluded. Also excluded were schools with a missing value for the semester one 2014 attendance rate – the change in attendance from 2013 to 2014 is needed for the regression.

From the resultant group of schools, four sets of comparison schools were derived for the regression, based on an increasingly restrictive criterion for attendance:

- 90 per cent or less (110 schools)
- 85 per cent or less (96 schools)
- 80 per cent or less (78 schools)
- 75 per cent or less (53 schools)

The regression was run separately using each set of comparison schools. Each set has its strengths and weaknesses. The results from the set with the largest number of schools (that is, with an attendance rate up to 90 per cent) are less sensitive to changes in a small number of schools. On the other hand, the sets restricted to lower attendance rates have an average attendance rate closer to that of the RSAS schools²¹.

The schools in each set are listed in Attachment A1 to A4 below. The sets overlap, with all the schools in Attachment A4 contained in Attachment A3, and so on.

¹⁸ Special purpose schools cater for students with physical or intellectual disabilities, autism or social/emotional disturbance, or who are in custody or on remand" <http://www.myschool.edu.au/AboutUs/Glossary/glossaryLink>

¹⁹ We excluded very small schools as with such small numbers of students, a change in attendance for even two students can result in large apparent changes in the attendance rate. All the RSAS stage two schools were excluded. The Ngaanyatjarra School was also excluded, as RSAS is only in operation in three of its nine campuses.

²⁰ All four lists exclude Wulungarra Community School because of the volatility in its reported attendance rates. The attendance rate at this school fell from 100 per cent in semester one 2012 to 44 per cent in 2013 before rising back to 96 per cent in 2014.

²¹ We tested whether any of the groupings showed a statistically significant overall change in attendance from 2008 to 2013. None of the groupings (including the RSAS schools) showed a statistically significant change in attendance rates over this period.

Attachment A1: Comparison schools set with a 2013 attendance rate of 90 per cent or less

NSW

- Brewarrina Central School
- Collarenebri Central School
- Coonamble Public School
- Gulargambone Central School
- St Therese's Community School

QLD

- Bloomfield River State School
- Boulia State School
- Burketown State School
- Cape York Aboriginal Australian Academy
- Cunnamulla P-12 State School
- Sunset State School
- Tagai State College

WA

- Bayulu Remote Community School
- Birlirr Ngawiyiwu Catholic School
- Burringurrah Remote Community School
- Christ the King Catholic School
- Christian Aboriginal Parent-Directed School (Caps), Kurrawang
- Dawul Remote Community School
- Djugerari Remote Community School
- Jigalong Remote Community School
- John Pujajangka Piyirn School
- Jungdranung Remote Community School
- Kulkarriya Community School
- Kururrungku Catholic Education Centre
- La Grange Remote Community School
- Leonora District High School
- Looma Remote Community School
- Marble Bar Primary School
- Menzies Community School
- Mount Margaret Remote Community School
- Mullewa District High School
- Muludja Remote Community School
- Ngalangangpum School
- Ngalapita Remote Community School
- Nullagine Primary School
- One Arm Point Remote Community School
- Pia Wadjarri Remote Community School
- South Hedland Primary School
- St Joseph's School
- Strelley Community School
- Tjuntjuntjara Remote Community School
- Wananami Remote Community School
- Wangkatjunga Remote Community School
- Warlawurru Catholic School
- Yalgoo Primary School
- Yandeyarra Remote Community School

- Yiyili Aboriginal Community School
- Yulga Jinna Remote Community School

SA

- Crossways Lutheran School, Ceduna
- Lincoln Gardens Primary School
- Marree Aboriginal School
- Oodnadatta Aboriginal School

NT

- Alcoota School
- Alpururulam School
- Amoonguna School
- Areyonga School
- Arlparra School
- Banyala Garrangali School
- Belyuen School
- Bonya School
- Braitling Primary School
- Bulla Camp School
- Canteen Creek School
- Docker River School
- Finke School
- Gawa Christian School
- Haasts Bluff School
- Harts Range School
- Imanpa School
- Laramba School
- MacFarlane Primary School
- Mamaruni School
- Manyallaluk School
- Mapuru Christian School
- MBunghara School
- Milikapiti School
- Minyerri School
- Mount Allan School
- Mulga Bore School
- Murray Downs School
- Mutitjulu School
- Neutral Junction School
- Newcastle Waters School
- Nganambala School
- Nganmariyanga School
- Nyangatjatjara College
- Nyirripi School
- Peppimenarti School
- Pigeon Hole School
- Pine Creek School
- Pularumpi School
- Robinson River School
- Sadadeen Primary School
- St Francis Xavier Catholic School
- Stirling School
- Ti Tree School

- Timber Creek School
- Titjikala School
- Tiwi College
- Urapunga School
- Wallace Rockhole School
- Walungurru School
- Warruwi School
- Watarrka School
- Watiyawanu School
- Willowra School
- Woolaning Homeland Christian College
- Woolianna School
- Yirara College
- Yirrkala Homeland School

Source: MySchool data

Attachment A2: Comparison schools set with a 2013 attendance rate of 85 per cent or less

NSW

- Collarenebri Central School
- Gulargambone Central School
- St Therese's Community School

QLD

- Burketown State School
- Cape York Aboriginal Australian Academy
- Sunset State School
- Tagai State College

WA

- Bayulu Remote Community School
- Birlirr Ngawiyiwu Catholic School
- Burringurrah Remote Community School
- Christ the King Catholic School
- Djugerari Remote Community School
- Jigalong Remote Community School
- John Pujajangka Piyirn School
- Jungdranung Remote Community School
- Kulkarriya Community School
- Kururrungku Catholic Education Centre
- La Grange Remote Community School
- Leonora District High School
- Looma Remote Community School
- Marble Bar Primary School
- Menzies Community School
- Mount Margaret Remote Community School
- Mullewa District High School
- Muludja Remote Community School
- Ngalangangpum School
- Ngalapita Remote Community School
- Nullagine Primary School
- One Arm Point Remote Community School
- Pia Wadjarri Remote Community School
- South Hedland Primary School
- St Joseph's School
- Strelley Community School
- Tjuntjuntjara Remote Community School
- Wananami Remote Community School
- Wangkatjungka Remote Community School
- Warlawurru Catholic School
- Yandeyarra Remote Community School
- Yiyili Aboriginal Community School
- Yulga Jinna Remote Community School

SA

- Crossways Lutheran School, Ceduna

- Lincoln Gardens Primary School
- Marree Aboriginal School
- Oodnadatta Aboriginal School

NT

- Alcoota School
- Alpururulam School
- Amoonguna School
- Areyonga School
- Arlparra School
- Bonya School
- Braitling Primary School
- Canteen Creek School
- Docker River School
- Finke School
- Gawa Christian School
- Haasts Bluff School
- Harts Range School
- Imanpa School
- Laramba School
- MacFarlane Primary School
- Mamaruni School
- Manyallaluk School
- Mapuru Christian School
- MBunghara School
- Minyerri School
- Mount Allan School
- Mulga Bore School
- Murray Downs School
- Mutitjulu School
- Neutral Junction School
- Newcastle Waters School
- Nganmariyanga School
- Nyangatjatjara College
- Nyirripi School
- Pigeon Hole School
- Pine Creek School
- Pularumpi School
- Robinson River School
- Sadadeen Primary School
- St Francis Xavier Catholic School
- Stirling School
- Ti Tree School
- Timber Creek School
- Titjikala School
- Tiwi College
- Urapunga School
- Wallace Rockhole School
- Walungurru School
- Waruwi School
- Watarrka School
- Watiyawanu School
- Willowra School

- Woolaning Homeland Christian College
- Woolianna School
- Yirara College
- Yirrkala Homeland School

Source: MySchool data

Attachment A3: Comparison schools set with a 2013 attendance rate of 80 per cent or less

NSW

- Collarenebri Central School

QLD

- Cape York Aboriginal Australian Academy
- Sunset State School

WA

- Bayulu Remote Community School
- Birlirr Ngawiyiwu Catholic School
- Burringurrah Remote Community School
- Christ the King Catholic School
- Djugerari Remote Community School
- Jigalong Remote Community School
- Jungdranung Remote Community School
- Kururrungku Catholic Education Centre
- La Grange Remote Community School
- Leonora District High School
- Menzies Community School
- Mount Margaret Remote Community School
- Mullewa District High School
- Ngalangangpum School
- Ngalapita Remote Community School
- Nullagine Primary School
- One Arm Point Remote Community School
- Pia Wadjarri Remote Community School
- South Hedland Primary School
- Strelley Community School
- Tjuntjuntjara Remote Community School
- Wananami Remote Community School
- Wangkatjungka Remote Community School
- Warlawurru Catholic School
- Yandeyarra Remote Community School
- Yiyili Aboriginal Community School
- Yulga Jinna Remote Community School

SA

- Crossways Lutheran School, Ceduna
- Lincoln Gardens Primary School
- Marree Aboriginal School
- Oodnadatta Aboriginal School

NT

- Alcoota School
- Alpururulam School
- Amoonguna School
- Areyonga School
- Arlparra School
- Bonya School
- Braitling Primary School

- Canteen Creek School
- Docker River School
- Finke School
- Gawa Christian School
- Haasts Bluff School
- Harts Range School
- Imanpa School
- Laramba School
- Mamaruni School
- Manyallaluk School
- Mapuru Christian School
- MBunghara School
- Mount Allan School
- Mulga Bore School
- Mutitjulu School
- Neutral Junction School
- Newcastle Waters School
- Nganmariyanga School
- Nyangatjatjara College
- Nyirripi School
- Pine Creek School
- Robinson River School
- Sadadeen Primary School
- St Francis Xavier Catholic School
- Stirling School
- Ti Tree School
- Titjikala School
- Urapunga School
- Wallace Rockhole School
- Walungurru School
- Warruwi School
- Watarrka School
- Watiyawanu School
- Willowra School
- Woolaning Homeland Christian College
- Yirara College
- Yirrkala Homeland School

Source: MySchool data

Attachment A4: Comparison schools set with a 2013 attendance rate of 75 per cent or less

QLD

- Cape York Aboriginal Australian Academy

WA

- Bayulu Remote Community School
- Birlirr Ngawiyiwu Catholic School
- Burringurrah Remote Community School
- Christ the King Catholic School
- Djugerari Remote Community School
- Jigalong Remote Community School
- Kururrungku Catholic Education Centre
- Mullewa District High School
- Ngalangangpum School
- Ngalapita Remote Community School
- Nullagine Primary School
- One Arm Point Remote Community School
- Tjuntjuntjara Remote Community School
- Wananami Remote Community School
- Wangkatjungka Remote Community School
- Warlawurru Catholic School
- Yandeyarra Remote Community School
- Yiyili Aboriginal Community School

NT

- Alcoota School
- Amoonguna School
- Areyonga School
- Arlparra School
- Bonya School
- Canteen Creek School
- Docker River School
- Finke School
- Gawa Christian School
- Harts Range School
- Imanpa School
- Laramba School
- Mamaruni School
- Mount Allan School
- Mulga Bore School
- Mutitjulu School
- Neutral Junction School
- Newcastle Waters School
- Nganmariyanga School
- Nyangatjatjara College
- Nyirripi School
- Robinson River School
- St Francis Xavier Catholic School
- Stirling School
- Ti Tree School
- Titjikala School
- Wallace Rockhole School

- Walungurru School
- Warruwi School
- Watiyawanu School
- Willowra School
- Woolaning Homeland Christian College
- Yirara College
- Yirrkala Homeland School

Source: MySchool data

Attachment B

Attendance rates for term two 2013 and 2015, Queensland and the Northern Territory

The following tables provide attendance rates for Queensland Government (Table B1), Northern Territory Government (Table B2) and Northern Territory Catholic RSAS schools (Table B3).

Table B1: Verified Year 1-10* Attendance Rates for Queensland Government RSAS Schools
Average Term Two attendance rates 2013 and 2015 and Percentage Point Change

School Name	2013 (%)	2015 (%)	Change (pp)
Bwgcorman Community School	63.1	65.6	2.5
Camooweal State School [^] *	69.1	86.4	17.3
Cherbourg State School*	77.2	82.9	5.7
Doomadgee State School	46.7	55.5	8.8
Kowanyama State School	72.5	73.3	0.8
Lockhart State School	80.6	64.1	-16.4
Mornington Island State School	67.1	72.3	5.2
Normanton State School [^]	70.3	76.1	5.8
Northern Peninsula Area State College	64.7	67.9	3.2
Pompuraaw State School*	77.5	82.1	4.6
Woorabinda State School*	81.2	85.9	4.6

* Please note that 2013 data for primary schools excludes year 7 so they are comparable to 2015 data, as the year levels included in primary schools changed from years 1 to 7 to years 1 to 6 between 2014 and 2015.

[^] Please note that 2013 attendance for these schools is based on un-validated data as attendance was not validated for these schools prior to 2014.

- The attendance rate rose in 10 Queensland Government RSAS schools and fell in one school from term two 2013 to term two 2015. Overall there was a three percentage point increase in the attendance rate in these schools from term two 2013 to term two 2015.
- On average there were 12 per cent more students attending Queensland Government RSAS schools in term two 2015 than in term two 2013.
- There were five out of 11 schools that improved on their 2013 term two attendance rate by five percentage points or more. Camooweal State School was the standout - the attendance rate at this school rose by 17.3 percentage points from 2013 to 2015.
- Five schools showed a small positive change of less than five percentage points from term two 2013 to term two 2015.
- Lockhart State School saw its attendance rate decline by more than five percentage points (16.4 percentage points) from term two 2013 to term two 2015.

Table B2: Verified Year 1-10 Attendance Rates for Northern Territory Government RSAS Schools, Average Term Two Attendance Rates 2013 and 2015 and Percentage Point Change

School Name	2013 (%)	2015 (%)	Change (pp)
Alekarenge School	45.9	60.7	14.8
Alyangula Area School	85.4	82.1	-3.3
Alyarmandumanja Umbakumba School	51.4	36.4	-15.1
Ampilatwatja School	62.4	59.7	-2.7
Angurugu School	37.3	22.5	-14.8
Barunga School	68.6	70.9	2.3
Borrooloola School	57.3	61.1	3.8
Bulman School	51.0	54.5	3.5
Elliott School	71.8	77.2	5.4
Epenarra School	58.5	65.2	6.7
Gapuwiyak School	59.4	48.9	-10.5
Gunbalanya School	49.5	50.5	1.0
Jilkmिंगgan School	63.6	55.8	-7.8
Kalkaringi School	68.3	60.1	-8.2
Lajamanu School	54.3	55.8	1.4
Maningrida College	44.6	48.6	4.0
Milingimbi School	48.2	55.5	7.3
Milyakburra School	58.3	51.9	-6.4
Ngukurr School	57.2	72.2	15.0
Ntaria School	61.4	62.6	1.2
Numbulwar School	47.8	56.8	9.0
Papunya School	57.7	64.1	6.4
Ramingining School	64.6	66.9	2.3
Shepherdson College*	42.2	45.6	3.3
Tennant Creek High School	64.0	65.8	1.7
Tennant Creek Primary School	70.7	71.2	0.5
Wugularr School	56.2	64.9	8.7
Yarralin School	64.7	63.5	-1.2
Yirrkala School	42.7	46.2	3.5
Yuendumu School	49.8	60.3	10.6

*Care needs to be taken when interpreting Shepherdson College 2013 attendance. In 2014 there was administrative relocation of two homeland centres from Shepherdson College to Yirrkala Homelands School. To allow like for like comparisons, attendance data of the relocated students has been excluded. Data cannot be compared to previously published data.

- Twenty one (70 per cent) of Northern Territory Government schools showed an increase in attendance compared to term two 2013.
- The overall attendance rate across Northern Territory Government RSAS schools increased by 3.2 percentage points compared to term two 2013.
- Nine schools improved their attendance rate by five percentage points or more compared to term two 2013, with Ngukurr School experiencing the largest increase of 15.0 percentage points.

- Fifteen schools showed a small change in their attendance rate, staying within five percentage points of their term two 2013 attendance rate. Twelve of those schools posted an increase in attendance.
- Six schools experienced a decline in their attendance rate of more than five percentage points between term two 2013 and term two 2015.

Table B3 Year 1-10 Attendance Rates for Northern Territory Catholic RSAS Schools, Average Attendance Rates Semester One 2013 and Term One 2015 and Percentage Point Change

	2013 Semester 1 (%)	2015 Term 1 (%)	Change (pp)
Ltyentye Apurte Catholic School Santa Teresa	71.0	81.2	10.2
Our Lady of the Sacred Heart Thamarrurr Catholic College Wadeye	54.0	55.0	1.0
Murrupurtiyanuwu Catholic Primary School Wurrumiyanga	67.0	83.8	16.8
Xavier Catholic College Wurrumiyanga	61.0	76.1	15.1

NB: Only semester one 2013 data available, term one 2013 data not available.

- In all four (100%) Northern Territory Catholic schools the attendance rate increased from semester one 2013 to term one 2015.