Formal K-12 schooling in Australia consists of six to eight years of primary school education followed by five to six years of secondary school education, depending on the State or Territory. At the beginning of August 2008, there were 9,562 schools in Australia (6,448 primary schools, 1,455 secondary schools and 1,659 combined and special schools) catering for 3.4 million full time students. 71.5 per cent of the schools are government owned and managed.

Under constitutional arrangements, the State and Territory governments have responsibility to ensure the delivery of schooling to all children of school age, with the Federal Government providing supplementary funding for schools. Australian, State and Territory government recurrent expenditure on school education was AUD 36.4 billion in 2007-08.

Nationally, State and Territory governments provided 91.4 per cent of total government recurrent expenditure on government schools in 2007-08, and the Australian Government provided 8.6 per cent. In contrast, government expenditure on non-government schools in that year was mainly provided by the Australian Government (72.1 per cent), with State and Territory governments providing 27.9 per cent. More information on Australia’s K-12 system is at http://www.pc.gov.au/gsp/reports/rogs/2010.

National curriculum
The Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) is overseeing the development of an Australian Curriculum from Kindergarten to Year 12, with a focus on English, mathematics, science, history, languages, geography and the arts. Teachers from approximately 150 schools across Australia are currently engaging in intensive, short-term activities using components of the draft Australian Curriculum in their classrooms. The full curriculum will be implemented across Australia in 2011.

http://www.acara.edu.au

National testing
The National Assessment Program - Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN), which commenced in 2008, implements national tests in reading, writing, language conventions (spelling, grammar and punctuation) and numeracy for all Australian school students in years 3, 5, 7 and 9.

http://www.naplan.edu.au

Accountability and transparency
On 28 January 2010 the Australian Government officially launched the My School website, which contains information about all of Australia’s schools, including the number of students at the school, the number of teachers at the school, and how the school is performing in national literacy and numeracy testing. The website received nine million hits on its first day.

http://www.myschool.edu.au

School infrastructure
The Building the Education Revolution program was the single largest element of the Australian Government’s AUD 42 billion economic stimulus plan. This AUD 16.2 billion investment in 24,000 infrastructure projects aimed to modernise schools, support local jobs and stimulate investment. The program also provided AUD 110 million to fund the creation of trade training centres in more than 110 Australian schools.


Digital education
The Australian Government launched the Digital Education Revolution to enhance digital teaching and learning in Australian schools. The Government is providing AUD 2.4 billion over seven years to provide new computers for all secondary schools (at a computer to student ratio of 1:2); support the deployment of high speed broadband connections; increase the level of ICT proficiency of teachers and school leaders; provide online curriculum resources; and facilitate online access for parents.

Literacy and numeracy
The Australian Government has committed funding of AUD 540 million over four years to facilitate and reward the implementation of evidence-based strategies that lead to improvements in literacy and numeracy outcomes through the National Partnership Agreement on Literacy and Numeracy. This National Partnership focuses on quality teaching of literacy and numeracy, stronger school leadership and the effective use of student performance information to identify where students need support.
http://www.deewr.gov.au/Schooling/Programs/SmarterSchools/Pages/Lifting_lit_num_outcomes.aspx

Teacher and principal quality
The Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL), created in January 2010, provides national leadership for Commonwealth, state and territory governments in promoting excellence in the profession of teaching and school leadership. AITSL is currently developing rigorous national professional standards and supporting high quality professional development for teachers and school leaders.
http://www.aitsl.edu.au/ta/go

The Australian Government is also working with states and territories to improve the quality of the Australian teaching workforce through the AUD 550 million over five years Improving Teacher Quality National Partnership (TQNP) agreement. Under the TQNP, Australian governments are implementing a range of reforms targeting critical points in the teacher ‘lifecycle’ to attract, train, place, develop and retain quality teachers and leaders in schools and classrooms.
http://www.deewr.gov.au/Schooling/Programs/SmarterSchools/Pages/TeacherQuality.aspx

Social inclusion
On 28 January 2010 the Australian Government released its national statement on social inclusion, which sets out the Government's vision and strategy for social inclusion. This strategy will form partnerships between the people in government, the not-for-profit sector and businesses that have the greatest experience in addressing disadvantage.
http://www.socialinclusion.gov.au

Through the National Partnership for Low Socio-Economic Status School Communities, the Australian Government is providing AUD 1.5 billion over seven years (2008-09 to 2014-15) to support education reform activities in approximately 1,700 low socio-economic status schools around the country. This funding will be matched by State co-investment over the life of the partnership.
http://www.deewr.gov.au/Schooling/Programs/SmarterSchools/Pages/LowSESschoolComm.aspx

Indigenous education
Closing the gaps between the outcomes of Indigenous Australians and other Australians is a national priority. Australia’s Education Ministers are developing an Indigenous Education Action Plan to drive actions to close the gaps in early childhood development and education outcomes. The Indigenous Education Action Plan is being developed in consultation with Indigenous Australians, and will include a focus on readiness for school, engagement and connections, attendance, quality teaching and workforce development, literacy and numeracy, and pathways to post-school options.

Youth attainment and transitions
The National Partnership on Youth Attainment and Transitions aims to increase the educational engagement and attainment of young people and to improve their transition to post school education, training and employment. The National Partnership clarifies roles and responsibilities between the Commonwealth and the States and Territories and was established to support the achievement of a national Year 12 or equivalent attainment rate of 90 per cent by 2015. Under the National Partnership, the Australian Government is providing funding of AUD 623 million over four years for improved youth engagement, attainment and transition arrangements.