The Measurement of Language Background, Culture and Ethnicity for the Reporting of Nationally Comparable Outcomes of Schooling

Draft Report (Version 3) for the National Education Performance Monitoring Taskforce

Australian Council for Educational Research

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### ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ABS</td>
<td>Australian Bureau of Statistics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACER</td>
<td>Australian Council for Educational Research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CBOTE</td>
<td>Cultural background other than English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COMIMA</td>
<td>Council of Ministers of Immigration and Cultural Affairs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DETYA</td>
<td>Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESL</td>
<td>English as a Second/an Additional Language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESLL</td>
<td>English as a Second/an Additional Language Learner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IEA</td>
<td>International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LBOTE</td>
<td>Language background other than English</td>
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<tr>
<td>LSAY</td>
<td>Longitudinal Surveys of Australian Youth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MLOTE</td>
<td>Main language other than English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MCEETYA</td>
<td>Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NEPMT</td>
<td>National Education Performance Monitoring Taskforce</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NESB</td>
<td>Non-English speaking background</td>
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<tr>
<td>NMAC</td>
<td>National Multicultural Advisory Council</td>
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<td>NSELS</td>
<td>National School English Literacy Survey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OECD</td>
<td>Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OMA</td>
<td>Office of Multicultural Affairs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PISA</td>
<td>Programme for International Student Assessment</td>
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<td>TIMSS</td>
<td>Third International Mathematics and Science Study</td>
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The main purpose of this discussion paper is to develop a common definition of language background, culture and ethnicity to be used for reporting of nationally comparable outcomes of schooling within the context of the statement of National Goals for Schooling in the Twenty-first Century.

This report:

• discusses the concepts of language background, culture and ethnicity;

• provides a summary of the literature on the relationships between language background, culture and ethnicity and educational outcomes;

• discusses the ABS standards for the measurement of language and cultural diversity;

• describes and summarises the measures of language background, culture and ethnicity currently used by educational researchers and Australian education authorities;

• describes the data collected on language background, culture and ethnicity in New Zealand, the United Kingdom and United States; and

• provides some empirical data on a measure of language background, culture and ethnicity and its relationship with numeracy.

The major proposals of this report are as follows:

1. That for monitoring purposes language background, culture and ethnicity is best measured by data on country of birth of student/parents, main language other than English spoken at home and Indigenous status. We argue that these measures are most appropriate because:

   ▪ they have been commonly used by educational authorities; similar measures are already collected on enrolment forms and for other purposes;

   ▪ they are generally accepted by the research community;

   ▪ they provide the flexibility required for reporting purposes; and

   ▪ they follow the standards already established by the Australian Bureau of Statistics.

2. That education authorities work towards:

   ▪ adopting these standard measures;

   ▪ adopting a common approach to the collection and coding of these data; and

   ▪ adopting a common approach to the classification of ethnic groups for reporting purposes.

3. That procedures for such reporting require appropriate piloting.
1 BACKGROUND

1.1 Objectives

In April 1999 the Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA) endorsed a new set of National Goals for Schooling in the Twenty-First Century. The goals state that:

- schooling should be socially just, so that … students’ outcomes from schooling are free from the effects of negative forms of discrimination based on sex, language, culture and ethnicity, religion or disability and of differences arising from students’ socioeconomic background or geographic location;
- the learning outcomes of educationally disadvantaged students improve, and over time, match those of other students; and
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students have equitable access to, and opportunities in, schooling so that their learning outcomes improve and, over time, match those of other students (MCEETYA 1999:4).

The main purpose of this project is to develop a common definition and approach to data collection on the language background, culture and ethnicity of students to be used for nationally comparable reporting of outcomes within the context of National Goals for Schooling in the Twenty-first Century. The specific objectives of this paper are to:

1. identify and describe the definitions and sources of data currently used by school systems and authorities, researchers, and national and international agencies for reporting language background, culture and ethnicity;
2. examine and evaluate each of the definitions and data sources in terms of its usefulness for nationally comparable reporting on students’ educational outcomes;
3. assess data for national and international consistency;
4. propose an appropriate definition or definitions, and, if the definition(s) are based on country of birth or language spoken at home, provide an appropriate classification of countries/languages for national reporting purposes; and
5. assess the costs and benefits to school systems and school authorities of implementing the proposed definition(s) and standardised data collection and reporting processes.

1.2 The Importance of Language Background, Culture and Ethnicity

It is intended that student achievement is monitored over a wide range of outcomes such as performance in state-wide tests of literacy and numeracy, participation at various levels of education (including higher education and vocational education), and attainment in Year 12. A variety of social background factors, including language background, culture and ethnicity, are associated with differential educational outcomes. It is important to collect accurate data on these factors in order to monitor their influence on the educational outcomes of students. Such monitoring will lead to a better understanding of which policies reduce the influence of social background on educational outcomes.
1.3 Structure of the Report

This report comprises nine sections. The following section discusses conceptual issues. The third section describes current approaches adopted by the Australian Bureau of Statistics, educational researchers, and educational authorities, to the measurement of language background, culture and ethnicity. Section 4 sets the framework for the common definitions applicable to Australian schooling. The next two sections (5 and 6) canvass data collection and reporting options. A summary of the conceptual framework developed in this report and its links with data collection and reporting are presented in Section 7. The costs and benefits of adopting a common approach are discussed in Section 8. The final section provides a series of recommendations to enable nationally comparable reporting of schooling outcomes in regard to language background, culture and ethnicity.
2 CONCEPTUAL ISSUES

This section examines the concepts of language background, culture and ethnicity, with particular emphasis on the Australian schooling context. The first part of this section discusses the concepts ‘culture’ and ‘ethnicity’. The next two parts concentrate on language background and Indigenous status. The final part of this section reviews the literature describing the relationship between language background, culture, ethnicity and schooling.

2.1 Culture and Ethnicity

*Culture* refers to the set of ideas, beliefs and practices whereby people in different times and places negotiate the conditions of their existence (Bottomley 1997). The term generally refers to particular ways of life which may characterise particular social groups. Language, race, ethnicity or religion may play a role in distinguishing a culture.

*Ethnicity* involves some form of metaphorical ties of kinship, especially the notion of common ancestry and blood relationships. It involves some form of identification: individuals identify themselves as belonging to a particular ethnic group and/or the group recognises an individual as belonging to that group. Specific cultural practices such as language and religion commonly define the particularities of different ethnic groups (Bottomley 1997). When a country like Australia is described as multicultural, it generally means that it is made up of a number of more or less culturally distinct ethnic groups.

It is important to recognise the unique and special situation of Australia’s *Indigenous* minority, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and to consider them separately from other ethnic minorities.

Ethnicity comes onto the public agenda mainly because of its association with social inequality and social disadvantage. Members of minority ethnic groups often occupy distinctive social and geographical locations, and may face prejudice and discrimination from the members of other groups. It is this association between ethnicity and social disadvantage that has motivated much of the existing research into ethnic differences in contemporary Australian society, reflecting a formal commitment to social equity.

Although the concepts ‘culture’ and ‘ethnicity’ are commonly found in social and political discussions in Australia, there are no generally accepted operational definitions of these terms. In contrast ‘language background’ has been more rigorously defined.

2.2 Language Background

Since the English language is the official language of Australia and the language of instruction and commerce, English fluency is necessary for full participation in Australian society. Therefore, a major distinction is made between persons from English-speaking backgrounds, and those from language backgrounds other than English.

In Australia, a variety of definitions have been used to describe language background.

Until recently, the most commonly used acronym has been:
NESB relates to both cultural and linguistic aspects of ethnicity and is considered to be a permanent characteristic (Martin 1995). It has been defined both broadly and narrowly. For example, Martin (1995:viii) specified the following hierarchy of definitions:

Level 1 - those who speak or understand a heritage language¹ other than English used in the home; or
   - those who identify themselves as being of non-English speaking background; or
   - those who were born or have one or both parents born in a non-English speaking country.

Level 2 - those who speak or understand a heritage language other than English used in the home; or
   - those who were born or have one or both parents born in a non-English speaking country.

Level 3 - those who speak or understand a heritage language other than English used in the home.

Although widely used, the term NESB has come into disfavour in recent years. It has been criticised for having conflicting definitions and grouping people who are relatively disadvantaged with those who are not. Consequently, the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) does not recommend the use of the term NESB (1999a:3). Similarly, the Council of Ministers of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs (COMIMA) have agreed to move away from using the term.

The currently preferred term is:

LBOTE language background other than English

LBOTE students have been defined in a similar manner as NESB students. That is, persons from a language background other than English are:

either born in a non-English speaking country, or in Australia with one or both parents born in a non-English speaking country, or are Indigenous students for whom English is a second or other language (MCEETYA 1997:78).

Related terms include CBOTE (cultural background other than English) and MLOTE (main language other than English).

Narrower terms relating to subsets of NESB/LBOTE groups include:

ESL English as a second language; and
ESLL English as a second language learner.

ESL students are students whose first language is not English and who speak a language other than English in the home. ESL students who are still in the process of learning English are known as ESL learners (ESLL). ESLL is not a permanent characteristic.

¹ Heritage language is used to include Aboriginal languages, Kriol and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander creoles and distinguishes ownership of the language from languages learning for other purposes (Martin 1995:10)
Overseas, a number of other terms have been used to refer to these groups. For example, in England they are known as ‘English as an additional language’ students and in the United States they are known as ‘speakers of other languages’.

It must be emphasised that ESL and ESLL students form a subset of LBOTE (or NESB) students. These broader categories also include students who are proficient in English.

2.3 Indigenous Status

The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) has established a standard definition of Indigenous status:

An Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander is a person of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent who identifies as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander and is accepted as such by the community in which he or she lives (ABS 1999a:35).

Ministers at the Eleventh Meeting of MCEETYA in March 2000 endorsed this definition for the reporting of nationally comparable outcomes of schooling.

As indicated earlier in this report, some Indigenous students may be classified as LBOTE, ESL and/or ESLL students.

2.4 The Relationship between Language Background, Culture, Ethnicity and Schooling

When developing a common definition for students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, two major issues need to be addressed:

- what is to be gained from reporting separately on these students; and
- which aspects of a student's language background, culture, or ethnicity are both relevant to, and likely to affect their educational outcomes?

This section provides a brief overview of the literature that relates language background, culture and ethnicity to schooling outcomes. The literature on ethnic minorities is discussed first, followed by a description of research on Indigenous people.

2.4.1 Ethnic Minorities and Educational Outcomes

Generally and as an aggregate, there is little evidence that students with language backgrounds other than English have poorer educational outcomes. Recent research based upon data from the Longitudinal Surveys of Australian Youth (LSAY) shows that between 1989 and 1998 young people with a father born in a mainly non-English speaking country were more likely than young people with a father born in Australia to complete Year 12 and to enter higher education (Long et al. 1999; Marks et al. forthcoming). Earlier work on the participation of students in post-compulsory secondary education and their entry into higher education also support this conclusion (eg. Birrell and Seitz 1986; Bullivant 1988).
However, it needs to be acknowledged that there is a great diversity in the educational outcomes of students from ethnic minorities. Students from some ethnic or language backgrounds perform better than others and the use of aggregated data conceals these differences. Consequently, it is important to collect detailed data on the cultural and language background of students.

For example, an analysis of the LSAY data revealed that performance in literacy and numeracy varies widely among students from language backgrounds other than English. When ethnic background was measured by nine categories relating to father’s country of birth, some categories performed better than those whose fathers were born in Australia, while the performance of others was worse (Marks and McMillan 2000). Similarly, diversity in the IT skills of ethnic groups has been reported in a national study (Meredyth et al. 1999).

Recent qualitative research has examined factors influencing the educational outcomes of specific ethnic groups, including Maltese-Australians (Terry et al. 1993), Dutch-Australians (Bureau of Immigration and Population Research 1993), and second generation Turkish-Australians (Keceli and Cahill 1998). This research has revealed both positive and negative influences on educational outcomes that pertain to ethnic groups.

There are many positive characteristics commonly attributed to migrant groups which can play an important role in supporting migrants and their children adapting to and participating in the education system in a new country. These factors include resilience, determination to be successful in their new lives, initiative, adaptability, respect for education and hard work. For example, Birrell and Seitz (1986), and Bullivant (1988) have attributed the high academic attainment of students from immigrant families to family support systems, ethnic pride and the ‘ethnic success ethic’.

However, there are also negative influences especially among recent arrivals. The degree to which new arrivals are proficient in English has an obvious and immediate impact on the degree to which they are able to access and participate in schooling. The culture of Australian schooling may be quite different to the education they experienced in their home country (eg. differences in teacher-student interaction, learning expectations and curriculum content). Some children, particularly those from refugee groups, may have little or no experience of formal schooling and may also have experienced great hardship and trauma. Some migrant groups experience financial difficulties and downward mobility in terms of socioeconomic status. Students may also have to confront racism in the school environment.

It must be emphasised that LBOTE students are not a homogeneous group; some are likely to face a number of barriers to schooling, while others are more likely to experience positive factors. These are reflected in the educational outcomes of different ethnic groups. Consequently, it is essential that data on the cultural and language diversity of students be sufficiently detailed to allow the identification of educationally disadvantaged groups.

2.4.2 Indigenous Students and Educational Outcomes

In 1995 the National Review of the Aboriginal Education Policy stated that Indigenous peoples were the most educationally disadvantaged group in Australia. This continues to
be the case. A summary of statistics on educational outcomes for Indigenous students in the *National Report on Schooling in Australia 1997* (MCEETYA 1997) noted that while there had been some improvement in educational outcomes for Indigenous students, there was still a significant gap between the achievement of Indigenous students and non-Indigenous students. The increase in school participation rates for Indigenous students has been less than the corresponding increase in school participation for non-Indigenous students (Long and Frigo 1998). In the *National School English Literacy Survey* (NSELS), a special Indigenous sample, drawn mainly from schools in rural and remote areas, had substantially lower levels of English literacy achievement than other students (Masters and Forster 1997).

A number of factors may influence the educational outcomes of Indigenous people. Many Indigenous children come from rural and isolated areas, from families with low socioeconomic status. Family members may be unemployed or in custody, or may suffer from health, drug and alcohol problems. The students may also experience health problems (especially hearing loss), may speak a non-standard dialect at home or have parents with low literacy levels. Discrimination and racism may also influence their educational outcomes.
3 CURRENT APPROACHES

In this section, current approaches to defining and measuring cultural and language diversity are discussed. The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) has recently released its Standards for Statistics on Cultural and Language Diversity (1999a), which describes a wide range of indicators. The section begins with an assessment of the suitability of each of these indicators for the national reporting of schooling outcomes. Other research and administrative approaches to defining and measuring cultural and language diversity are then discussed, before turning to a description of the data currently collected by educational systems in Australia and overseas.

3.1 The Australian Bureau of Statistics

In recognition of the need for a nationally consistent framework for the collection and dissemination of data on cultural and language diversity, the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) recently published its Standards for Statistics on Cultural and Language Diversity (1999a). The standards are based on the premise that the use of a single indicator such as country of birth or a non-standard composite concept such as NESB is an inadequate measure of culturally related need or disadvantage. Analyses by the ABS have indicated that while population groups from particular countries and who speak certain languages have a relatively high correlation with socioeconomic disadvantage, there is diversity within groups, confirming the need for a range of indicators.

The ABS recommends that a minimum core set of four indicators be included in all data collections that require information on cultural and language diversity. These indicators are:

• Country of Birth of Person;
• Main Language Other Than English Spoken at Home;
• Proficiency in Spoken English (for those who speak a language other than English);
  and
• Indigenous Status.

The ABS also specified eight non-core indicators, any of which can be added to the minimum core set depending on particular information requirements. The full standard set includes the minimum core indicators and the following non-core indicators:

• Ancestry;
• Country of Birth of Father;
• Country of Birth of Mother;
• First Language Spoken;
• Languages Spoken at Home;
• Main Language Spoken at Home;
• Religious Affiliation; and
• Year of Arrival in Australia.

The minimum core set of indicators has been recommended by the Council of Ministers of Immigration and Cultural Affairs (COMIMA) for use in all national, State and Territory statistical and administrative collections that require information on cultural and
language diversity. COMIMA also recommended that the full standard set be used when a wider range of information is required.

The existence of standards for the collection, processing and dissemination of cultural and language data, and their endorsement by COMIMA, builds a strong argument for considering the ABS indicators when developing a framework for the reporting of nationally comparable outcomes of schooling. The adoption of one or more of these indicators would ensure comparability with data collected by the ABS and other national, State and Territory data collected in accordance with the ABS guidelines.

Detailed descriptions of the ABS indicators and a discussion of their advantages and disadvantages are provided in Appendix A. The main point to note is that no indicator is stands out as the one best indicator. However some indicators are more appropriate than others for the reporting of schooling outcomes, in particular, the indicators relating to country of birth, language and Indigenous status.

When selecting indicators for the reporting of nationally comparable outcomes of schooling, it is also necessary to consider comparability with existing educational data collections. Current approaches being used in educational research and by educational authorities are discussed below, with particular emphasis on their comparability with the ABS standards for cultural and linguistic diversity.

### 3.2 Educational Research

The type and detail of information collected on language background, culture and ethnicity varies across a range of major Australian and international educational studies (see Appendix B for examples).

Country of birth of the student and also of the father and mother are commonly collected. In some studies this information is recorded as a dichotomous variable (eg. Australia/other country), while in other studies actual country names are recorded.

Information on language is also commonly collected. The wording of language indicators varies across studies but questions usually refer to main language spoken at home. Again the level of detail recorded varies from dichotomous response options (eg. English/other) to a listing of specific languages.

In the case of several important studies, for example TIMSS, LSAY and PISA, the wording of questions is not consistent with the ABS (1999a) *Standards for Statistics on Cultural and Language Diversity*.

### 3.3 Educational Authorities

#### 3.3.1 Australian School Systems and Boards of Studies

In Australian school systems, data on country of birth, language background and Indigenous status are often collected. However, the methods for collecting and classifying these data differ between systems, States and Territories.
The type and detail of information collected by Boards of Studies also varies.

Data are collected by school systems and Boards of Studies for a variety of purposes: enrolment; school Census; state-wide assessment; Year 12 certification; and other regular data collections.

An examination of the standard enrolment forms used in government schools shows that most collect:

- Country of birth of student, parents/caregivers;
- Main language spoken at home; and
- Indigenous background.

However, States and Territories use different question wording on their enrolment forms, differ in the level of detail of data that is collected, and have different policies for updates. Standard enrolment forms may or may not be used by Catholic schools. There are no standard enrolment forms for Independent schools.

Data collected by school systems for other purposes (eg. Census data, state-wide assessment at Years 3, 5 and 7, and Year 12 certification) also varies.

A detailed description of the data collected by Australian school systems and Boards of Studies is reported in Appendix C.

### 3.3.2 Vocational Education and Training in Australia

The National Centre for Vocational Education and Training (NCVER) undertakes the national collection of data on behalf of the Australian National Training Authority (ANTA). Data are collected on:

- Country of birth of student;
- Main language spoken at home; and
- Indigenous background.

The question used to measure Indigenous status is consistent with ABS standards, but the questions used to collect the other data differ from ABS standards. Details are provided in Appendix E.

### 3.3.4 International Approaches

As in Australia, a range of indicators of language background, culture and ethnicity are collected by overseas school systems. For example, the New Zealand Ministry of Education collects indicators of ethnicity and language background, following the standards specified by Statistics New Zealand. In the United States a range of data are collected, including racial/ethnic categories. Appendix F describes approaches adopted in New Zealand, the United Kingdom and the United States.
4 TOWARDS A COMMON DEFINITION

In this section we raise a number of issues associated with the selection of a common definition of language background, culture and ethnicity. In recent years, MCEETYA and the ABS have adopted quite different definitional approaches. In 1997, MCEETYA endorsed a broad, overarching definition of language background other than English. In contrast the ABS (1999a) has developed ten narrower operational definitions, each referring to a different aspect of language background, culture and ethnicity. We begin this section by contrasting the two approaches, and argue that both have a place in the reporting of schooling outcomes. We then present two general definitions. In Section 5, we provide five narrower operational definitions related to aspects of these broad definitions.

4.1 General definitions versus operational definitions

MCEETYA adopted a single broad inclusive definition of language background other than English in 1997. Its purpose is to distinguish between two groups of people: those who do and those who do not have a language background other than English. Such definitions can be useful as a basis for finer conceptual distinctions. However, broad definitions also have a number of limitations. For example:

• The use of a broad definition (without also specifying a series of more detailed sub-definitions) can mask the complexity of language background, culture and ethnicity and its effects on schooling outcomes

• The existing MCEETYA definition of language background other than English was endorsed before the publication of the ABS standards. The continued use of this definition, without reference to the new ABS standards, ignores the move by the ABS, COMIMA and other organisations away from classifying people into two broad groups. The use of measures based upon definitions that categorise people into one of two groups ignores diversity within groups. This may be problematic when reporting schooling outcomes. Since there is great diversity within the LBOTE group, a broad measure can provide only limited guidance to policy makers.

• Due to the broadness of the 1997 MCEETYA definition, and a lack of accompanying standard operationalisation procedures, it has been subject to a range of interpretations. This has led to a lack of consistency within Australia in the manner in which students are classified.

As indicated above, the ABS (1999a) has signalled the need to move away from broad classifications such as LBOTE when describing cultural and language diversity. In its standards, the ABS does not provide one broad definition. Rather, it provides ten operational definitions relating to specific, narrow aspects of language background, culture and ethnicity. These ten definitions, when taken together, provide a more detailed and in-depth description of cultural and language diversity, and provide greater guidance for data collection and reporting.

It is not necessary to choose between a broad definition and several operational definitions. The preferred approach that capitalises on the advantages of each, is to adopt both a broad overarching definition and an associated set of related sub-definitions.
The Measure of Language Background, Culture and Ethnicity

(operational definitions). The 1997 MCEETYA definition can be used to signal in a very simple manner the broad parameters of language background, culture and ethnicity. For implementation purposes, an associated series of operational definitions can provide unambiguous guidelines for the measurement of the specific aspects of language background, culture and ethnicity which are pertinent to the reporting of schooling outcomes.

4.2 General Definitions

Two broad definitions relating to language background, culture and ethnicity, and applicable to educational contexts are provided below. They are intended as broad, general and inclusive descriptions of language background, cultural and ethnic groups, setting the context for reporting in this area. Narrower operational definitions are provided in Section 5 where we discuss the specific aspects of language background, culture and ethnicity which are most appropriate for the reporting of schooling outcomes. The operational definitions are intended to provide guidance on how to measure and report on aspects of language background, culture and ethnicity relevant to schooling outcomes.

The first broad definition is:

**Language background other than English (LBOTE):** These persons were either born in a non-English speaking country, or in Australia with one or both parents born in a non-English speaking country, or are Indigenous students for whom English is a second or other language (MCEETYA 1997:78).

The advantages of adopting this definition are:

- The definition was endorsed by MCEETYA in 1997.
- The definition is closely related to the core set of indicators of cultural and language diversity recommended by the ABS and endorsed by COMIMA.
- Country of birth and language background (central to the LBOTE definition) are good general indicators of ethnicity (see Appendix A for details). Operational definitions for each of these aspects of LBOTE are available in the ABS standards and are reproduced in the following section.

A separate definition for Indigenous students is necessary (see Section 2.4.2 for details). Thus, our second broad definition relates to Indigenous status.

**Indigenous status:** An Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander is a person of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent who identifies as an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander and is accepted as such by the community in which he or she lives (ABS 1999a:35).

It is important to emphasise that Indigenous students may also be classified as having a language background other than English.

The advantages of adopting this definition are:
It is drawn from the ABS (1999a) *Standards for Statistics on Cultural and Language Diversity*.

Ministers at the 11th Meeting of MCEETYA in March 2000 have already endorsed this definition for the purpose of nationally comparable reporting of outcomes within the context of the National Goals for Schooling in the 21st Century.

A third definition, referring to proficiency in English, time spent learning in English and/or English as a second language (ESL) learners, may also be useful for purposes such as the identification of students who should be exempted from achievement tests administered in English. ESL learners are a subset of LBOTE students who may experience particular disadvantage in the Australian education context where curriculums are generally in English. While the definition, measurement and reporting of such students are important, it is outside the scope of this report.
5 DATA COLLECTION OPTIONS

The range of data relating to LBOTE and Indigenous status that is collected in the Australian States and Territories is similar, in many instances, in intent. However approaches to collecting these data vary. The adoption of a common approach to data collection is essential for nationally comparable reporting. The following example relating to the collection of data on Indigenous status underlines this point. A comparison of data on Indigenous students from the National Schools Statistics Collection (NSSC) and the 1996 population census revealed that while there is a close correlation between the two data sets for primary school aged children, the correlation between the data sets is lower for secondary school aged students. The discrepancy suggests either an under-enumeration of older Indigenous students in the NSSC or an over-enumeration in ABS census data. Discrepancies varied between States and Territories, as did the practices for gathering Indigenous status data (Barnes et al. 1997).

In this section, issues relating to the selection of indicators, operational definitions, question wording and the collection and classification of data are addressed.

5.1 Indicators

To identify (and subsequently report on) LBOTE and Indigenous students requires the use of a standard set of questions. The ABS (1999a) standards on cultural and language diversity include ten indicators which, when taken together, provide a comprehensive description of language background, culture and ethnicity. However, it would be impractical to adopt all of these measures for the national reporting of educational outcomes. Some of the ABS indicators are not central to operationalisation of the LBOTE and Indigenous status definitions specified in the previous section. Of the remaining indicators, some are more appropriate than others for identifying instances of advantage and disadvantage in educational contexts (see Section 3.1 and Appendix A for details). Consequently, while the recommended definition of LBOTE students is broad and inclusive, the LBOTE indicators recommended below are designed to identify aspects of LBOTE status potentially related to educational advantage or disadvantage.

To measure LBOTE, four indicators are recommended. A fifth indicator is required to measure Indigenous status. The five indicators are:

- country of birth of student;
- country of birth of father;
- country of birth of mother;
- main language other than English spoken at home; and
- Indigenous status.

These indicators are recommended for nationally comparable reporting of educational outcomes for the following reasons.

General

- Standards have been established: The indicators relating to country of birth of the student, the main language other than English spoken at home, and Indigenous status comprise three of the four items included in ABS’s Minimum Core Set of Cultural and Language Indicators. These indicators were recommended by the Council of...
Ministers of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs (COMIMA) as measures of cultural and language diversity for statistical and administrative collections across the States and Territories (ABS 1999a:7). The questions relating to country of birth of father and country of birth of mother are non-core items included in the larger ABS Standard Set of Cultural and Language Indicators.

- **Continuity:** Information on country of birth, language background and Indigenous status is currently included on all government (and some Catholic and Independent) school enrolment forms (see Appendix C for details). The adoption of a standard approach would not alter the type of data currently collected by schools (although it would lead to a standardisation of question wording).

### Country of birth of student/father/mother

- The definition of LBOTE students recommended in this report includes persons ‘born in a non-English speaking country’ and persons ‘with one or both parents born in a non-English speaking country’. Consequently, indicators of countries of birth of students, fathers and mothers are crucial for the operationalisation of the LBOTE definition.

- Country of birth of student is a general indicator of ethnic status for students born overseas. Data on parents’ birthplace allows for the identification of ethnic minority students who are born in Australia (see Appendix A for further details).

### Main language other than English spoken at home

- The definition of LBOTE students recommended in this report includes reference to ‘non-English speaking’ countries of birth and to Indigenous students for whom ‘English is a second or other language’.

- Unlike the country of birth indicators, a language indicator will allow for the identification of Indigenous LBOTE students.

- Language use is also a more precise indicator than country of birth of the difficulties associated with the ability to speak and comprehend the English language faced by some migrant students and some children of migrants.

- The ABS (1999a) *Standards for Statistics on Cultural and Language Diversity* include four language indicators. The advantages and disadvantages of each of these indicators are discussed at length in Appendix A. We recommend the use of the ‘main language other than English spoken at home’ as the preferred language indicator for the purposes of nationally comparable reporting of educational outcomes for the following reasons:

  - **This is the only language indicator included in the ABS Minimum Core Set of Cultural and Language Indicators, and in the population Census.**

  - **The ‘first language spoken’ indicator is not a direct measure of current language use.**
• The ‘main language spoken at home’ indicator underestimates current community language usage amongst longer standing migrant groups who now mainly use English in the home.

• The ‘languages spoken at home’ indicator may overestimate the number of LBOTE students by capturing languages which are spoken infrequently and/or with limited proficiency. (To a lesser degree, this disadvantage also applies to the recommended ‘main language other than English’ indicator.)

Indigenous status

• Indigenous students have been repeatedly identified as a group that is disadvantaged in the educational context. Consequently, it is important to have a standard method of identifying these students in order to monitor their progress for the purposes of national reporting.

Other potential indicators:

• The ABS variable ‘proficiency in spoken English’ is not comprehensive enough for use in educational contexts where proficiency in listening, speaking, reading and writing in English is required. A number of other problems related to the use of this indicator for the national reporting of schooling are outlined in Appendix A. It is not within the brief of this project to examine how the issue of English language proficiency ought to be handled nationally, although this is a critical issue that needs attention.

• Data relating to the ABS variable ‘Year of arrival in Australia’ are currently collected by a number of school systems. This information, like proficiency in English, is potentially useful when attempting to understand how and why language background, culture and ethnicity are related to educational outcomes. Consequently, systems may wish to (continue to) collect year of arrival data. By itself, however, year of arrival is not a measure of LBOTE as defined in this report, and it excludes a consideration of those Indigenous students born within Australia who have a language background other than English.

• The remaining two indicators from the ABS Standard Set of Cultural and Language Indicators (Ancestry, Religious Affiliation) can be problematic and are rarely used in the assessment and reporting of educational outcomes by language background, culture and ethnicity (see Section 3 for details). They are not seen as essential for national reporting although some educational jurisdictions may find them useful for other purposes.

If resource constraints preclude the collection of data on the five recommended indicators, the country of birth of father indicator may be omitted. The ABS recommends the retention of the country of birth of mother variable in preference to the country of birth of father variable, because ‘people are more likely to know their mother’s country of birth with a greater degree of certainty than their father’s country of birth’ (ABS 1999a:44).
5.2 Operational Definitions

In Section 4 we provided two broad definitions: LBOTE and Indigenous status. In this section, we have identified five indicators of these broad definitions. Operational definitions for each of the indicators are specified below. These operational definitions are drawn from the ABS (1999a) Standards for Statistics on Cultural and Language Diversity.

*Country of Birth of Person* identifies the country in which a person was born. The variable is primarily used to determine whether or not someone is a migrant to Australia, the country from which they originated, and the community group to which they are likely to be attached. … Country of Birth of Person is defined as the country the respondent identifies as being the one in which they were born (ABS 1999a:20).

*Country of Birth of Father* identifies the country in which a person’s father was born … [It] is defined as the country the respondent identifies as being the one in which the person’s father was born (ABS 1999a:45).

*Country of Birth of Mother* identifies the country in which a person’s mother was born … [It] is defined as the country the respondent identifies as being the one in which the person’s mother was born (ABS 1999a:49).

*Main Language Other Than English Spoken at Home* is the main language, other than English, spoken by a person in his or her home, on a regular basis, to communicate with other residents of the home and regular visitors to the home. If more than one language is spoken, the respondent is asked to report the language other than English which the person speaks at home most often (ABS 1999a:26).

*An Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander* is a person of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent who identifies as an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander and is accepted as such by the community in which he or she lives. That is, there are three components to the definition: descent, self-identification and community acceptance… In practice respondents are asked if they are of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander origin. This question is considered to measure descent and for some, but not all, cultural identity (ABS 1999a:35).

5.3 Question Wording

Standard question wording is required for the measurement of LBOTE and Indigenous status. It is recommended that the questions specified in the Standards for Statistics on Cultural and Language Diversity (ABS 1999a) for country of birth (of person, father and mother), main language other than English spoken in the home, and Indigenous status be adopted\(^2\). These questions are:

\(^2\) The ABS standards for identifying Indigenous status for the purposes of nationally comparable reporting of outcomes within the context of the national Goals for Schooling in the 21st Century have already been endorsed by Ministers at the 11th Meeting of MCEETYA in March 2000.
The response options provided for the Indigenous status question are standard. However, there are a number of ways of presenting response options for the questions relating to country of birth and main language other than English spoken at home. The type of response options provided will have implications for the level of detail of the elicited responses and the costs associated with processing these responses. Three methods of presenting response options for country of birth and language questions are suggested by the ABS.

The first method, illustrated in the box below, is to provide a set of tick boxes and an additional ‘other – please specify’ option for writing in a country/language not specified in the tick box list. This method is designed to elicit names of countries/languages. The ABS’s recommended lists of countries/languages account for approximately 85 per cent of all country of birth of person responses, over 80 per cent of country of birth of father/mother responses, and approximately 90 per cent of main language responses recorded in the 1996 Census (ABS 1999a). It should be noted that the recommended lists for person (student), father and mother differ and this may cause confusion for some respondents. If this method is adopted for eliciting LBOTE data, the countries listed in the response options for students’ and parents’ country of birth should be adapted so as to be identical, and the composition of the country/language lists should be developed in consultation with the ABS so as to capture the main countries/languages for the appropriate age ranges of students and their parents.
The second method, which is also designed to elicit detailed LBOTE data, is to provide two response options: a tick box for ‘Australia’ plus an ‘other – please specify’ write-in category in the case of the country of birth questions; and a tick box for ‘English’ plus an ‘other – please specify’ write-in category for the language question. This method would take up less space on enrolment or student survey forms, but would incur greater coding costs, as all non-Australian country of birth and all non-English language responses would require coding.

The third method also entails the use of two response options: tick boxes labelled ‘Australia’ and ‘Other country’ for the country of birth questions; and tick boxes labelled ‘English’ and ‘Other language’ for the language question. This method would take up minimal space on enrolment or student survey forms and would not incur coding costs. However, it is not recommended due to the level of detail it would elicit. Reporting based upon data collected using this method would always be limited to a comparison of students who were born in Australia with those born overseas, of students whose mothers/fathers were born in Australia with those parents were born overseas, and of students who mainly speak English at home with other students. It is not possible to disaggregate data collected via this method in order to compare the outcomes of specific country of birth or language groups.

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3 Slightly different lists are provided for questions relating to fathers and mothers. The categories specified for fathers are: Australia; England; Italy; New Zealand; Scotland; Greece; Netherlands; Germany; Viet Nam; Lebanon; Other—please specify (ABS 1999a:45). The categories specified for mothers are: Australia; England; Italy; New Zealand; Scotland; Greece; Viet Nam; Netherlands; Lebanon; Philippines; Other—please specify (ABS 1999a:50).
In summary, it is recommended that response options designed to elicit specific country or language names be adopted. This will permit greater flexibility in reporting; in particular, specific subgroups can be compared. There are two methods of eliciting detailed data. Each has both advantages and disadvantages. Both methods are easy for parents and/or students to answer. The provision of a carefully selected set of tick boxes plus an ‘other-please specify’ write-in category will require more space on enrolment or student survey forms but will minimise coding costs. Conversely, the use of one tick box (Australia/English) plus an ‘other – please specify’ write-in category requires minimal space on enrolment or student survey forms but will incur significant coding costs.

5.4 Data Collection

The data on LBOTE and Indigenous status must be collected from either parents or students, depending upon the age of the student. It is not possible to obtain all of the required information from other sources. For example, teachers may not know the country of birth of students/parents, the languages spoken at home by students, nor students’ Indigenous status.

Data on students of primary school age could be obtained from parents at the time of enrolment. It is essential that the questions included on all enrolment forms have standard wording, such as that suggested earlier in this report.

In the case of Year 7 and later year students, information could also be obtained directly from the student at the time of state-wide testing. A short survey form accompanying the state-wide test booklet could include standard questions on LBOTE and Indigenous status. Again, it is essential that the questions included on these forms have standard wording.

Alternatively, data collection could be by sample surveys. However, care must be taken in the design of the sample so as to ensure adequate numbers of Indigenous students and particular LBOTE subgroups. For example, the number of Indigenous students included in a sample may be too small to provide reliable estimates of educational participation or to enable further analysis. Consequently, it may be necessary to over-sample Indigenous students. This occurred in the National School Literacy Survey and is planned for the Australian component of the OECD’s Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) project which is currently being undertaken by ACER.

5.5 Classification of Data

The ABS has established standard procedures for the coding of country of birth, language and Indigenous status data.

The recommended method of coding detailed country of birth data is specified in the Standard Australian Classification of Countries (SACC) (ABS 1998). The SACC is an hierarchical classification: at the most detailed level 244 countries are listed; at the next level 27 minor groups (of neighbouring countries with similar social, cultural, economic and political characteristics) are specified; and at the most general level, nine major groups (of geographically proximate minor groups) are provided. In order to maintain
flexibility for reporting options, it is recommended that country of birth data be coded at the most detailed level of the SACC. A coding index is available from the ABS.

The *Australian Standard Classification of Languages* (ASCL) (ABS 1997) provides guidelines for the coding, aggregation and reporting of detailed language data. The classification consists of three levels. The most detailed level is comprised of 193 base units (languages). The next level is comprised of 48 narrow groups of languages that are similar in terms of genetic affinity and geographic proximity. The most general level is comprised of 9 broad groups that consist of geographically proximate narrow groups. In order to maximise reporting options, it is recommended that language data be coded at the most detailed level of the ASCL. A coding index is available from the ABS.

The recommended standard question for collecting data on Indigenous status provides a set of pre-coded response options and allows the respondent to mark more than one response. Procedures for coding multiple responses are specified in the *Standards for Statistics on Cultural and Language Diversity* (ABS 1999a:37).

### 5.6 Storage and Transferral of Data

Where possible, LBOTE and Indigenous status data should be stored electronically for ease of transmission to a central body for national reporting purposes. In those cases where data are not held electronically, alternative arrangements would be necessary so as to ensure the consistent provision of information in a standard format.
6 REPORTING OPTIONS

6.1 General Comments

There is national agreement to develop key performance measures as the basis for national reporting in:

- Literacy;
- Numeracy;
- Student participation, retention and completion;
- Vocational education in schools;
- Science; and
- Information technology.

When reporting on these educational outcomes for cultural and language groups, a number of options are available. The option that would present the most detailed information on language background, culture and ethnicity is to report the educational outcomes of specific country of birth and language groups, and by Indigenous status. The option that would present the least detailed information is to report the educational outcomes by a dichotomous measure of LBOTE and a dichotomous measure of Indigenous status.

A detailed approach to reporting is advocated for the following reasons:

- With the introduction of the Standards for Statistics on Cultural and Language Diversity, the ABS signalled the need to move away from the use of dichotomous LBOTE/NESB indicators which group people from diverse country/language backgrounds into one category.

- Research examining the relationship between ethnicity and education has demonstrated that LBOTE students are not a homogenous group. Some cultural and language groups perform better than average, while the performance of other subgroups is much worse (see Section 2.4 for details). If a dichotomous measure which groups all LBOTE students into one category is used for reporting purposes, instances of advantage or disadvantage of particular subgroups will be masked. Reporting based upon disaggregated LBOTE indicators will be more meaningful.

- The use of multiple measures rather than a composite index will also provide a greater understanding of the characteristics of the groups who are most advantaged or disadvantaged in the Australian educational context. Furthermore, multivariate analysis based upon these multiple measures will allow an assessment of the relative effects of, for example, country of birth and language on schooling outcomes.

These issues are considered in more detail below.

6.2 Country of Birth

As already indicated, for reporting purposes disaggregated variables are preferable to dichotomous variables. Migrants and their children do not form a homogeneous group; some migrant students are more likely to experience factors conducive to high educational outcomes, while some are more likely to experience negative factors. This is reflected in
the differential schooling outcomes of these groups. For example, some perform better on literacy and numeracy tests than students with Australian born parents, while others perform worse than students with Australian born parents (Marks and McMillan 2000). Consequently, a dichotomous variable will have limited utility for national reporting purposes. Disaggregated measures will provide more meaningful results by permitting the identification and monitoring of groups experiencing the most disadvantage.

If country of birth data have been collected and coded at the most detailed level specified by the *Standard Australian Classification of Countries* (SACC) (ABS 1998), reporting options are extremely flexible. The ABS has established standards for the reporting of country of birth data, and these can provide guidelines for the number and composition of country of birth categories used for the national reporting of educational outcomes. For example, reporting (when using detailed country of birth data) can be at the SACC major group, minor group or country level, or particular countries can be presented separately while the remaining countries remain aggregated (at the minor or major group level). The specific groupings should be decided after appropriate analysis of data on the educational outcomes of migrant students.

While reporting student outcomes by several country of birth categories is strongly advocated, the collection and coding of detailed country of birth data does not preclude reporting at the dichotomous level. This is relatively simple in the case of the ‘born in Australia born/born overseas’ dichotomy, but is more problematic if an ‘English speaking country/non-English speaking country’ dichotomy is required. While the ABS does report statistics using the latter dichotomy, it has not published standards for the classification of countries as English speaking/non-English speaking due to the problems associated with the allocation of some countries.

### 6.3 Main Language Other Than English Spoken at Home

As with the case of the country of birth indicators, reporting can be based upon two LBOTE categories or a more disaggregated measure can be used. Disaggregated measures are preferred. Students who speak a main language other than English at home do not form a homogeneous group and this is reflected in the differential schooling outcomes of these groups. Because of this, a dichotomous variable will have limited utility for national reporting purposes. Disaggregated measures will provide more meaningful results by permitting the identification and monitoring of language groups experiencing the most disadvantage.

The collection and classification of specific language names permits flexibility in reporting options and allows the comparison of educational outcomes of particular language groups. Data can be presented at the broad group level, narrow group level, or the language level as specified in the *Australian Standard Classification of Languages* (ASCL) (ABS 1997). Significant languages or narrow groups can be presented separately, while the remaining data can be presented at the more aggregated (narrow group or broad group) levels. Reporting categories should be agreed upon following the detailed analysis of appropriate educational data.
6.4 Indigenous Status

In its *Standards for Statistics on Cultural and Language Diversity*, the ABS provides standard output categories for use when reporting on Indigenous status. If any of the categories (‘Aboriginal’, ‘Torres Strait Islander’ or ‘Both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander’) have too few people to be released separately, the data should be aggregated to form an ‘Indigenous’ category for reporting purposes. The ABS standards specify procedures for aggregating categories. If even the aggregated group is still too small (which may lead to a large measurement error in the reported results and/or the possibility of being able to identify the individuals that make up the group) then no reporting should be undertaken. This also applies when reporting on other language background, cultural and ethnic groups.

6.5 ESL Students, Achievement Testing and Exemptions

When developing procedures for the reporting of nationally comparable outcomes of schooling, it is important to have consistent guidelines specifying who is eligible to be tested (in the case of state-wide assessments), and who should be included in national reports. Some students may be excluded from both testing and reporting. Others may be included in testing, but their results excluded from national reports. Exclusions may be for a range of reasons such as disability. Here we address exclusions specific to LBOTE students.

LBOTE students are not a homogenous group, as has been stressed throughout this report. In the context of achievement testing and reporting, it is important to recognise that for a subgroup of these students, namely ESL learners, assessment outcomes may reflect English language proficiency and literacy, and consequently lead to an underestimate of a student’s actual achievement level (La Celle-Peterson and Rivera 1994).

In Australia, guidelines concerning exemptions from assessments and reporting need to be standardised so as to ensure national comparability. At present the guidelines for state-wide assessment exemptions are based on the number of years learning English or the number of years in Australia, and vary from less than 12 months to less than 2 years. In Queensland exemptions also make reference to English proficiency scales. Research as to what is the appropriate ‘minimum language’ for testing at any particular year level needs to be undertaken. This is a significant issue which requires attention, but is beyond the scope of this report.

For the purposes of inclusiveness, national reports should make reference to the number of exempted students. This will ensure that ESL learners do not become ‘invisible’.

6.6 Reporting Examples

Below are some examples of the types of tables which could be used for reporting nationally comparable outcomes of schooling. The examples are based upon data from the 1998 Year 9 cohort of the Longitudinal Surveys of Australian Youth (LSAY).

Table 1 reports the percentage of students who would be classified as LBOTE or Indigenous, using each of the five recommended indicators. A comparison of the
percentages demonstrates that the five indicators are not interchangeable. For example, 20 per cent of the 1998 Year 9 cohort had a father who was born in a non-English speaking country, but only 7 percent were themselves born in a non-English speaking country. Reports using each of these indicators separately will provide information on some of the dimensions of language background, culture and ethnicity leading to educational advantage or disadvantage. An assessment of the effects of these separate dimensions would not be possible with the use of a composite index.

Table 1: Percentage of students classified as LBOTE or Indigenous, using five different indicators, Year 9 students, 1998.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Per cent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Country of birth of student is a non-English speaking country</td>
<td>6.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Country of birth of father is a non-English speaking country</td>
<td>20.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Country of birth of mother is a non-English speaking country</td>
<td>17.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speaks a language other than English at home</td>
<td>10.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indigenous person</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The next two tables illustrate two different options for reporting on the educational outcomes of cultural and language groups, by taking the example of the numeracy achievement of students according to the country of birth of their mother. Numeracy test scores could range from 0 to 20. In Table 2, the country of birth of mother indicator is represented by three categories. The results suggest that LBOTE students have similar numeracy levels to those whose mothers were born in Australia or in other English speaking countries. In Table 3, the same data are used but this time the country of birth of mother is disaggregated into nine categories. In contrast to the previous table, the results suggest that some LBOTE groups perform worse than students whose mothers were born in English speaking countries, while other LBOTE groups perform better on numeracy tests. These results highlight the value of collecting detailed data, and using disaggregated measures for reporting purposes. By using disaggregated measures to report on LBOTE students, it is possible to acknowledge that they are a heterogenous group with variable levels of educational participation and achievement.

With the availability of suitable data, similar tables could be produced for reporting on literacy, Year 12 completion, and so forth. These data could be further broken down in order to make, for example, State and Territory comparisons. With the availability of suitable data, exemptions from state-wide testing should also be included in the appropriate tables.

The data can also be presented graphically for the purposes of reporting nationally comparable outcomes of schooling. Graphical output examples have previously been prepared for NEPM Taskforce (Marks and McMillan 2000).
Table 2: Mean numeracy test scores by country of birth of mother (3 category indicator), Year 9 Students, 1998.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country of birth of mother</th>
<th>Mean test score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>12.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other English speaking country</td>
<td>12.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-English speaking country</td>
<td>12.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3: Mean numeracy test scores by country of birth of mother (9 category indicator), Year 9 students, 1998.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country of birth of mother</th>
<th>Mean test score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>12.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other English speaking country</td>
<td>12.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southern Europe</td>
<td>11.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Europe</td>
<td>12.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asia</td>
<td>13.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle East and North Africa</td>
<td>10.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Africa</td>
<td>13.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central and South America</td>
<td>11.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pacific</td>
<td>10.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
7 SUMMARY OF CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

In this section, an overview of the links between the broad definitions, operational definitions/indicators, and reporting options discussed in this report are provided.

Two broad definitions of language background, ethnicity and culture were proposed in Section 4 for the purpose of developing a common measure for the nationally comparable reporting of outcomes within the context of National Goals for Schooling in the 21st Century. They were language background other than English (LBOTE) and Indigenous status.

In order to measure each of these broad definitions, five indicators, each with its own operational definition, were identified in Section 5. They are country of birth of student, country of birth of father, country of birth of mother, main language other than English spoken at home and Indigenous status.

Each of these indicators can be reported in varying amounts of detail. Taking country of birth of student as an example, reporting could range from individual countries of birth to a simple dichotomy contrasting those born in Australia with those born elsewhere. Options for reporting each of the five indicators were discussed in Section 6, and we argued in favour of a middle range approach. That is, the grouping of individual countries into several country categories, and the grouping of individual languages into several language categories is the preferred approach. The collection of data on individual countries of birth and languages ensures a high degree of flexibility in the manner in which countries/languages can be grouped for reporting purposes. Furthermore, the collection of detailed data does not preclude reporting at a very general level (eg. Australian-born versus other, or English speaking background versus other).

Figure 1 presents a summary of the links between the broad definitions, operational definitions/indicators, and possible categories for reporting.
Figure 1: Link between broad definitions, operational definitions and categories for reporting.
8 COSTS AND BENEFITS

This section discusses the costs and benefits associated with data collection, processing and reporting on language background, culture and ethnicity. The costs relate to data collection and data processing, while the benefits relate to reporting.

8.1 Costs

The implementation of standard definitions for language background, culture and ethnicity would incur the following costs.

- *Revision of enrolment forms and/or design of a short survey form to accompany statewide testing:* Many government systems already collect data on country of birth, language spoken in the home and Indigenous status. The situation is more variable in Catholic and Independent systems. Therefore for some systems the adoption of a standard approach would mean the collection of new data. In contrast, for many systems the adoption of a standard approach would not alter the number (or intent) of currently collected data items, but would necessitate the adoption of standard question wording.

- *Data processing costs:* A standard approach to data processing would also be essential. Those responsible for collecting and collating the data at the school level would need to adopt standard coding practices. These changes would be more onerous in schools where there is a significant ethnic and cultural mix.

- *School computerised administration systems:* Most schools have computerised administration systems. These will require changes to reflect new data collection and data coding requirements. Costs for modifying computerised administration systems may be substantial. However, such modifications are a one-off cost and can be minimised by careful planning.

- *Comparability with existing State and Territory data:* The adoption of a standard approach could mean that some States and Territories will lose the opportunity to build on their trend data collected over several years. However, it may be possible to either collect background data in a format which will allow the use of the nationally agreed definitions for national reporting and State/Territory definitions for State/Territory reporting, or have a phasing in period where both forms are used.

8.2 Benefits

There are a number of benefits from adopting a standard approach. These include:

- Providing a more accurate picture of how LBOTE and Indigenous students are distributed across Australia.
- The ability to monitor performance of these students over time.
- A student identified as belonging to one group in one State would be given the same classification in another State.
- State and Territory comparisons (whether on test results, initiatives or other issues) would be made on the basis of the same definitions and interpretations.
Additional benefits will be received if reporting is based upon a number of indicators of language background, cultural and ethnicity, and if the indicators relating to country of birth and language are comprised of a number of detailed categories. These benefits include:

- A greater understanding of the dimensions of language background, culture and ethnicity that are related to educational outcomes.
- An ability to identify and monitor the progress of the subgroups of LBOTE students which are most disadvantaged in educational contexts.
9 RECOMMENDATIONS

‘Language background, culture and ethnicity’ is not a unidimensional concept and therefore a single indicator cannot be used to measure all (or the important) dimensions of language background, culture and ethnicity. Two definitions (and associated indicators) have been identified in this report for the purpose of developing common measures of language background, culture and ethnicity for nationally comparable reporting of outcomes within the context of National Goals for Schooling in the 21st Century. The definitions relate to language background other than English (LBOTE) and Indigenous status.

As the NEPM Taskforce has recently presented recommendations on the identification of Indigenous students to MCEETYA, the emphasis in this section is on recommendations relating to the identification of LBOTE students (which includes a subset of Indigenous students).

We propose that LBOTE measures can best be obtained by collecting data on countries of birth (of student, father and mother), and main language other than English spoken by the student in the home. Such data will allow the construction of a series of categorical variables for the reporting of the relationship between language background, culture and ethnicity, and student outcomes. A standard approach to question wording, data collection and data processing is essential in order to yield suitable data for the reporting of educational outcomes.

Specific recommendations relating to definitions, indicators and reporting are outlined below. A number of implementation issues relating to data collection, data processing and reporting need to be addressed in a feasibility study. These are outlined in Appendix G.

9.1 Recommendations

DEFINITIONS

1. That language background other than English (LBOTE) students be broadly defined as:

   Either born in a non-English speaking country, or in Australia with one or both parents born in a non-English speaking country, or are Indigenous students for whom English is a second or other language (MCEETYA 1997:78).

CONSISTENCY ISSUES IN NATIONAL REPORTING

2. That the proficiency in English (of English as a second language (ESL) students) is a related concept that is essential for determining exemptions from achievement tests conducted in English, and for the analysis and reporting of the LBOTE group. A common approach to the measurement and reporting of proficiency in English is beyond the scope of this discussion paper, but needs to be addressed by an appropriate subcommittee of the NEPM Taskforce.
INDICATORS

3. That data on a range of narrow and detailed indicators designed to measure specific aspects of the LBOTE definition are required. The four recommended indicators are:
   Country of birth of student;
   Country of birth of father;
   Country of birth of mother; and
   Main language other than English spoken at home.

4. That data on each of these indicators be collected and coded in accordance with the standards established by the ABS.

REPORTING

5. That several LBOTE indicators be used separately for the reporting of educational outcomes.

6. That when using the country of birth measures to report educational outcomes, countries be grouped into several categories. That the actual categories used for reporting be determined by the NEPM Taskforce following the feasibility study and consultations with the ABS.

7. That when using the language measure to report educational outcomes, languages be grouped into several categories. That the actual categories used for reporting be determined by the NEPM Taskforce following the feasibility study and consultations with the ABS.
APPENDIX A: OVERVIEW OF THE ABS STANDARDS FOR STATISTICS ON CULTURAL AND LANGUAGE DIVERSITY

This Appendix provides a detailed description of the indicators included in the Standards for Statistics on Cultural and Language Diversity (1999a), and an assessment of their appropriateness for national reporting on educational outcomes. Two particular concerns are addressed when evaluating the indicators. First, the indicators were designed in order to measure generalised needs or disadvantage arising from cultural and language diversity, rather than more specific educational disadvantage. Their appropriateness as indicators of educational disadvantage will be discussed. Second, the indicators were developed for administration to adults in various settings (for example, on hospital admission forms completed by adults), but in educational settings information on cultural and language background may be asked of children (students) as well as adults (teachers, parents or guardians). Consequently, the ability of young people to accurately respond to the recommended ABS questions needs to be addressed.

To avoid repetition, the three indicators relating to country of birth (of person, father, and mother) are discussed under one heading. The four indicators concerning language type (main language other than English spoken at home, first language spoken, languages spoken at home, and main language spoken at home) have also been grouped together. Further details can be found in the Standards for Statistics on Cultural and Language Diversity (ABS 1999a).

COUNTRY OF BIRTH

Country of Birth of Person forms part of the ABS minimum core set of indicators.

Country of Birth of Person identifies the country in which a person was born. The variable is primarily used to determine whether or not someone is a migrant to Australia, the country from which they originated, and the community group to which they are likely to be attached. … Country of Birth of Person is defined as the country the respondent identifies as being the one in which they were born (ABS 1999a:20).

Country of Birth of Father and Country of Birth of Mother are additional non-core indicators which form part of the full standard set. Questions relating to Country of Birth of parents are generally asked together, with the question about fathers preceding the question about mothers. When space constraints permit only one question about parents’ Country of Birth, the ABS recommends asking about mothers because ‘people are likely to know their mother’s country of birth with a greater degree of certainty than their father’s country of birth’ (ABS 1999a:44).

Standards for the reporting and coding of Country of Birth data are provided in the Standard Australian Classification of Countries (SACC) (ABS 1998). The SACC is an hierarchical classification: at the most detailed level 244 countries are listed; at the next level 27 minor groups (of neighbouring countries with similar social, cultural, economic and political characteristics) are specified; and at the most general level, nine major groups (of geographically proximate minor groups) are provided. In order to maintain flexibility for reportion options, it is recommended that country of birth data be coded at the most detailed level of the SACC. A coding index is available from the ABS.
Advantages for the national reporting of schooling outcomes

- Country of birth of student is a general indicator of ethnic status for students born overseas. Data on parents’ birthplaces allow for the identification of ethnic minority children who are born in Australia (ABS 1995; Cahill et al. 1996).

- Country of birth of parents, when used in conjunction with indicators such as First Language Spoken and Religious Affiliation, can be used as a measure of the extent to which second generation Australians retain their parents’ culture, ethnicity or language.

- Country of birth questions are easy to both ask and answer.

- Data processing costs vary, depending upon the amount of detail required. If only a dichotomous variable (eg. Australia/other or English-speaking country/other) is required, two pre-coded response options can be provided and manual coding is unnecessary. If, on the other hand, the names of specific countries are required, manual coding will be necessary. In these instances, coding costs can be minimised through the use of a short list of pre-coded response options and an additional ‘other – please specify’ write-in category when collecting data. The ABS’s recommended list of ten countries accounts for approximately 85 per cent of all Country of Birth of Person responses and over 80 per cent of all Country of Birth of Father/Mother responses recorded in the 1996 Census (ABS 1999a:21,45,50). For the remaining countries, a coding framework is provided in the Standard Australian Classification of Countries (ABS 1998).

- Detailed data containing country names are recommended. These provide flexibility in reporting options and allow the comparison of educational outcomes of particular groups. In contrast, reporting based upon data collected at the dichotomous level (eg. Australia/other) is limited to a comparison of persons/fathers/mothers born in Australia with those born overseas. It is not possible to disaggregate data collected via the minimum data approach in order to compare the outcomes of specific cultural and language groups.

- The countries of birth of students and their parents are regularly collected on school enrolment forms, and are consistent with the data collection recommendations of others. For example, the Office of Multicultural Affairs national guidelines for the collection of ethnicity data specify birthplace as the best single measure of ethnicity (Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet 1990:18).

Disadvantages for the national reporting of schooling outcomes

- A common immigration pattern is for arrivals to be in their mid-twenties and to produce most of their children after arrival. Country of birth of the student, when used alone, cannot identify the ethnic background of those who were born in Australia.

- There are very few sources of Australian immigrants that are not ethnically mixed, while some ethnic or linguistic groups are spread across countries. Consequently, birthplace data (of student and parents) can be an unsatisfactory surrogate for ethnicity. A better indicator of ethnic status may be provided by questions on language or ancestry.
Furthermore, research has shown that country of birth is an imprecise indicator of the difficulties immigrant children, including the children of recent immigrants, face in educational systems. More critical factors are the amount of time students have been in Australia, their ability to speak and comprehend the English language, and the economic status of their parents (Jones 1992a, 1992b; Sloniec 1992).

Country of birth data also exclude a consideration of Indigenous Australian students.

**LANGUAGE**

The ABS standards include four language indicators. ‘Main Language Other Than English Spoken at Home’ forms part of ABS’s minimum core set while ‘First Language Spoken’, ‘Languages Spoken at Home’ and ‘Main Language Spoken at Home’ are included in the standard set. The ABS definitions for each of these terms are provided below.

*Main Language Other Than English Spoken at Home* is the main language, other than English, spoken by a person in his or her home, on a regular basis, to communicate with other residents of the home and regular visitors to the home. If more than one language is spoken, the respondent is asked to report the language other than English which the person speaks at home most often (ABS 1999a:26).

*First Language Spoken* is defined as the first language an individual masters during the language acquisition phase of intellectual development. This is generally the language spoken in the home by the people who have raised the individual from infancy. In practice, First Language Spoken is defined as the language the respondent identifies, or remembers, as being the first language which they could understand to the extent of being able to conduct a conversation (ABS 1999a:54).

*Languages Spoken at Home* is defined as the language or languages spoken by a person in his or her home, on a regular basis, to communicate with other residents of the home and regular visitors to the home. There is no restriction on the number of languages reported by the respondent as being spoken in the home (ABS 1999a:60).

*Main Language Spoken at Home* is defined as the main language spoken by a person in his or her home, on a regular basis, to communicate with other residents of the home and regular visitors to the home. If a person reports that he or she speaks more than one language at home, they are asked to report the language spoken most often (ABS 1999a:64).

Standards for the reporting and coding of language data are provided in the *Australian Standard Classification of Languages* (ASCL) (ABS 1997). The classification consists of three levels. The most detailed level is comprised of 193 base units (languages). The next level is comprised of 48 narrow groups of languages that are similar in terms of genetic affinity and geographic proximity. The most general level is comprised of 9 broad groups that consist of geographically proximate narrow groups. In order to maximise reporting options, it is recommended that language data be coded at the most detailed level of the ASCL. A coding index is available from the ABS.
Advantages for the national reporting of schooling outcomes

• Main Language Other Than English is an indicator of active ethnicity and language use. It maximises numbers for the more established migrant communities where the main language spoken outside the home is English but a language other than English is spoken in the home. When combined with Proficiency in Spoken English, it can be used to identify the potentially disadvantaged (ABS 1999a:26).

• First Language Spoken is regarded as a good surrogate measure of ethnicity because of its connection with a person’s origins and the origins of his or her parents. It also provides a good surrogate measure of current language use. Over 95 per cent of Australians whose first language is other than English, are still able to use their first language (ABS 1999a:54-55).

• Languages Spoken in the Home provides a fuller description of the diversity of home language usage in Australia than the other three language indicators. It is an indicator of active ethnicity (ABS 1999a:60).

• Main Language Spoken at Home, by identifying the language most frequently used by a person at home, provides a good indicator of the language in which an individual is likely to be most at ease. It is also an indicator of active ethnicity (ABS 1999a:64).

• Language use (first and current) provides a more valid basis for defining specific cultural groups than country of birth data, because countries of origin are rarely ethnically homogeneous. In the context of national reporting of schooling outcomes, country of birth is an imprecise indicator of the difficulties faced by some immigrant children, such as their ability to speak and comprehend the English language.

• The use of a language indicator allows for the identification of Australian Indigenous languages.

• Data processing costs vary, depending upon the amount of detail required. If a dichotomous variable (eg. English/other) is required, two pre-coded response options can be provided and manual coding is unnecessary. If, on the other hand, the names of specific countries are necessary, data processing costs are higher as some manual coding is required. Coding costs can be minimised through the use of a short list of pre-coded response options and an additional ‘other – please specify’ write-in category when collecting data. The ABS’s recommended list of ten languages accounts for approximately 90 per cent of all responses to the Main Language Other Than English question in the 1996 Census (ABS 1999a:28). For the remaining languages, a coding framework is provided in the Australian Standard Classification of Languages (ABS 1997).

• The collection of specific language names permits flexibility in reporting options and allows the comparison of educational outcomes of particular language groups. In contrast, reporting based upon data collected at the dichotomous level (English/other) will always be limited to a comparison of ‘English’ and ‘Other’ groups. It is not possible to disaggregate data collected via the minimum data approach in order to compare the outcomes of specific cultural and language groups.
• Main Language Other Than English has been collected in the Australian Census since 1986.

• Schools commonly collect language data. However, there is a need to standardise the wording of language questions and agree as to how that data are coded and reported. It appears that the same definition and question wording is not used in all data collections, even within the same State or Territory (see Section 3.3 and Appendix C for details).

Disadvantages for the national reporting of schooling outcomes

• Main Language Other Than English Spoken in the Home will underestimate other language use in instances where another language is spoken by a person outside the home, but only English is spoken in the home. It may also lead to the classification of people whose main and preferred language is English but who have learnt another language, which is occasionally but not normally spoken at home, as ‘other than English’ (ABS 1999a:26).

• First Language Spoken is not necessarily the main language a person speaks, and consequently could be considered an overestimate of the size of the ‘Other than English’ category (ABS 1999a:55).

• Languages Spoken in the Home may not reflect complete language use as it does not capture languages only spoken outside the home. Conversely, it may capture languages which are spoken infrequently and/or with limited proficiency (ABS 1999a:60).

• Main Language Spoken in the Home underestimates current community language usage amongst longer standing migrant groups who now mainly use English in the home (ABS 1999a:64).

PROFICIENCY IN ENGLISH

Proficiency in spoken English is one of the four indicators included in ABS’s minimum core set. It is defined as:

The ability to speak English in every day situations. In practice, the variable measures the self-assessed level of ability to speak English, asked of people who speak a language other than English (ABS 1999:32).

Advantages for the national reporting of schooling outcomes

• Some students from a language background other than English are as proficient in English as others who come from an English speaking background. On the other hand, some students who come from similar backgrounds are learning English as second or subsequent language. With the increased emphasis on including as many students as possible in national literacy and numeracy assessments, there are arguments to include some measure of English language proficiency to highlight this particular subgroup. Similarly students who have been exempted from achievement tests need to be
accounted for in national reporting, and comparability of the basis on which they have been exempted is essential. A discussion of the definition and measurement of proficiency in English is beyond the scope of this report. However some disadvantages of the ABS standard, in the context of national reporting on educational outcomes, are listed below.

**Disadvantages for the national reporting of schooling outcomes**

- Two problems limit the suitability of the ABS language proficiency indicator for use in the national reporting of schooling outcomes. First, proficiency in *listening, speaking, reading and writing* English is essential for successful school learning and for students to communicate what they know. However, the ABS question on proficiency in English is used primarily in the Australian census to identify those who lack competence in *spoken* English. It does not assess proficiency in listening, reading and writing.

- Second, while judgement on the level of English language proficiency is appropriate in the case of students who speak a language other than English at home, a *self-assessment* by the student would be neither reliable nor useful in an educational context. Furthermore, some English proficiency is required to understand and answer these questions, thus excluding some students. An estimate of English proficiency needs to be standardised and used by trained professionals. Otherwise estimates will be neither reliable nor comparable.

- However, in a review of allocative measures for equity programs, Quin *et al.* (1994) argued that the direct collection of data on English proficiency would be ‘impractical and expensive’ and dependent on the schools’ capability to make an assessment. Instead the review recommended that the main criteria to determine funding should be that the main home language is not English. Similarly, in their review of immigration and schooling outcomes, Cahill *et al.* (1997:47) argue that students should be asked ‘what is the main language spoken by the parents to each other and to the child’.

**INDIGENOUS STATUS**

Indigenous status is one of the four indicators comprising the ABS minimum core set. An Indigenous person is defined as:

a person of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent who identifies as an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander and is accepted as such by the community in which he or she lives. That is, there are three components to the definition: descent, self-identification and community acceptance… In practice respondents are asked if they are of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander origin. This question is considered to measure descent and for some, but not all, cultural identity (ABS 1999a:35).

**Advantages for the national reporting of schooling outcomes**

- Data about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander descent are currently collected by school systems at enrolment and for state-wide assessment. Standardisation of question wording is necessary but this should not be difficult to achieve as the definition is standard throughout Australia.
• Recently, the Indigenous Administrative Collections Unit of National Centre for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Statistics (NCATIS) recommended the use of the standard ABS Indigenous Status question.

Disadvantages for the national reporting of schooling outcomes

• This ABS indicator measures self-identification. Between 1986 and 1996 Census estimates show a 55 per cent increase in the Indigenous population. Much of this increase can be explained by a greater willingness in recent years of people to report their Indigenous status (ABS 1999a:35).

ANCESTRY

Ancestry forms part of ABS’s full standard set of indicators. It is defined as:

… the ethnic or cultural heritage of a person, that is, the ethnic or cultural groups to which a person’s forebears are or were attached. In practice, Ancestry is the ethnic or cultural groups which the person identifies as being his or her ancestry. (ABS 1999a:39)

Standards for the coding and reporting of Ancestry will be provided in the forthcoming Australian Standard Classification of Cultural and Ethnic Groups (ASCCEG) (ABS 2000).

Indigenous status is a separate variable which measures a specific element of ancestry (Aboriginal or Torres Strait origin).

Advantages for the national reporting of schooling outcomes

• An important aspect of cultural and language diversity in Australia is the extent to which persons retain the language, culture and ethnicity of their parents. The retention of cultural and language diversity is measured by indicators such as country of birth in conjunction with indicators such as Indigenous status, first language spoken, religious affiliation and ancestry. Ancestry provides a self-assessed measure of ethnicity and cultural background (ABS 1999a:39).

• Ancestry allows the identification of ethnic and culture groups which do not correspond directly with countries or languages (eg. the lack of fit between ancestry and country of birth for persons of Polish, French, Chinese, Indian and Jewish origin (Jones 1991)).

• The ABS plans to include the Ancestry question in the 2001 Census. It was asked in the 1986 census but not in the 1991 or 1996 Censuses.

Disadvantages for the national reporting of schooling outcomes

• Ancestry involves measures of self-identification of ethnic or cultural group affiliation as well as descent. It is identified by the ABS as problematic in the Australian context as there are many Australians from cultural heritages who do not relate to their current ethnic identity. Furthermore, many Australians have a variety of language backgrounds and many do not relate to a single or ethnic group (ABS 1999a:40).
• With the exception of questions on Indigenous status, questions about ancestry are not usually included in data collections.

RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION

Religious affiliation is a non-core indicator provided by the ABS. It is defined as:

The religious beliefs and practices to which a person adheres or the religious group to which a person belongs (ABS 1999a:68).

The standard question wording is provided in the Standards for Statistics on Cultural and Language Diversity. Coding and reporting procedures are provided in The Australian Standard Classification of Religious Groups (ASCRG) (ABS 1996).

Advantages for the national reporting of schooling outcomes

• Religious affiliation can assist in indicating a person’s cultural and language diversity. Some agencies have found data on religious affiliation helpful in delivering more relevant services to individuals or groups based on their religion.

Disadvantages for the national reporting of schooling outcomes

• This may be appropriate data to gather at school level but is not required for national reporting.

YEAR OF ARRIVAL IN AUSTRALIA

Year of arrival in Australia is a non-core indicator provided by the ABS. It is only asked of those persons born in another country and is defined as:

The year in which a person, born outside of Australia, first arrived in Australia from another country with the intention of living here for one year or more (ABS 1999a:73).

For most immigrants the year of their first arrival is the year of their only arrival in Australia. However, there may be some who have had multiple arrivals. A second optional question which aims to identify significant absences since the first arrival can be used to improve the accuracy of estimates of period of residence in Australia.

Advantages for the national reporting of schooling outcomes

• The year of arrival in Australia is an indicator for students born overseas of how long they may have been receiving an education in English.

• Some school systems currently ask about the date of arrival (rather than year of arrival in Australia) and standardisation of the wording of this indicator should be easy to achieve.

Disadvantages for the national reporting of schooling outcomes

• The year of first starting to learn in English would be a better indicator of disadvantage in the context of national reporting of educational outcomes. The major
disadvantage of ‘year of arrival’ is that it completely excludes Indigenous students for whom English is a second or subsequent language. For migrants, the length of time learning in English is more relevant than time spent in Australia as it is proficiency in English that gives access to education.

- The second question is likely to be appropriate to only a minority of students and as such it is not recommended for inclusion.
APPENDIX B: CURRENT RESEARCH APPROACHES

LONGITUDINAL SURVEYS OF AUSTRALIAN YOUTH (LSAY)

The Longitudinal Surveys of Australian Youth (LSAY), conducted by the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER), include four questions about the cultural and language background of respondents:

1. Are you an Aboriginal person or a Torres Strait Islander person? Yes/No.
2. Where were you and your parents born? Separate responses are collected for the respondent, father and mother. The country of birth is recorded. Respondents born outside Australia are asked their year of arrival.
3. What language does your family mostly speak at home? The language is recorded.
4. How often do you speak English at home? Always/almost always; Sometimes; Rarely or never.

Results are reported using combinations of these variables as required by the analyses and as sample size permits.

The four questions are very similar to those used by Australian school systems (Appendix C) but the wording does not match the questions specified in the ABS Standards for Statistics on Cultural and Language Diversity (1999a).

PROGRAMME FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENT ASSESSMENT (PISA)

The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) is currently undertaking an international assessment of the reading, mathematics and science skills and knowledge of 15 year olds in over 30 countries. Questions on the student’s cultural and language background include whether they and their parents were born in the country of the test or ‘another country’ and whether the test language is the language spoken at home ‘most of the time’.

Countries are given the option of collecting more detailed information (eg. names of countries of birth, names of languages spoken) but the OECD is only interested in collecting the level of data described above. Individual countries may also insert language options, for example, other official national languages. There are no items which specifically ask about students proficiency in the test language although students are asked if they have attended remedial courses in the test language.

THIRD INTERNATIONAL MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCE STUDY (TIMSS)

The International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA) has conducted international comparative studies on a range of subjects including literacy, numeracy and science. In the Third International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) information collected regarding students’ cultural and language backgrounds included the students’ main home language (‘What language does your family MOSTLY speak at home?’) and whether they were born in the country where they undertook the test.
(eg. ‘Were you born in Australia?’). Individual countries had the option of requesting additional background information from students but this information is used for national reporting only.

In Australia, students were asked to identify the country where they were born, their age when they arrived in Australia and the frequency of speaking English at home.

More specific questions on students’ ethnicity are generally excluded as the IEA considers this too difficult to categorise meaningfully in an international context. Ethnicity is also seen as a controversial topic particularly in the European context. To identify immigrant status, IEA is now asking test takers whether or not their parents were schooled in the country of the test.

OTHER AUSTRALIAN APPROACHES

The MCEETYA Schools Taskforce commissioned a sample study to determine a common definition for non-English speaking background (NESB) for the 1994 annual National Report on Schooling in Australia (ANR). The study found that the various definitions used by systems were mainly concerned with the provision of ESL support and thus were more likely to be concerned with collecting data for this particular subgroup of NESB students (Martin 1995).

The report established the following common indicators in the collection of data across systems: country of birth of the student; country of birth of the student’s parents; and main language spoken at home. In some instances, date of arrival in Australia was also collected.

Consultations which occurred in the course of writing that report established that the States and Territories agreed that the term non-English speaking background related to both cultural and linguistic aspects of ethnicity. Non-English speaking background was considered to be a permanent characteristic (while need for ESL support was considered to be more temporary).

The National Report on Schooling in Australia 1997 (MCEETYA 1997) reported educational outcomes for students who come from a language background other than English. These were students who were ‘either born in a non-English speaking country, or in Australia with one or both parents born in a non-English speaking country, or are Indigenous students for whom English is a second or other language’ (p. 78).

The Council of Ministers of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs (COMIMA) have agreed to move away from using the term NESB as it is no longer considered to be an appropriate measure of culturally related disadvantage. In April 1999 COMIMA accepted the minimum Core Set of Cultural and Languages Indicators and the Standard Set of Cultural and Language Indicators. These indicators are designed to replace NESB and to collect a wide range of cultural and language data.
APPENDIX C: CURRENT PRACTICES IN AUSTRALIAN SCHOOL SYSTEMS AND BOARDS OF STUDY

Australian school systems and Boards of Study regularly collect information about language background, culture and ethnicity for a variety of purposes. This appendix reports the results of two surveys e-mailed to school systems and Boards of Study, respectively, in late 1999/early 2000. The appendix begins with a description of the content of the survey instruments, before moving to a summary of the results.

SURVEY OF APPROACHES TO DATA COLLECTION

The questionnaire, which was e-mailed to school authorities, asked them to provide the following information on data currently collected on cultural and language diversity:

- Section 1: Enrolment at school entry;
- Section 2: Data collected regularly including census data;
- Section 3: State-wide assessment at Years 3, 5 and 7 (if applicable); and
- Sections 4A/4B: Other regular data collection.

The questionnaire e-mailed to Boards of Study asked them to provide the following information on data collected on cultural and language diversity:

- Section 1: State-wide assessment at Years 3, 5 and 7 (if applicable); and
- Section 2: Year 12 Certification.

Examples of the two survey instruments are provided in Appendix D.

TERMS USED TO DEFINE A STUDENT WHO COMES FROM A LANGUAGE BACKGROUND OTHER THAN ENGLISH.

School authorities and Boards of Studies were asked the following question:

*What is the term used to define a student who comes from a language background other than English?*

The responses are summarised in Table 4 and discussed below.
Table 4: Frequency of responses to the question ‘What is the term used to define a student who comes from a language background other than English?’

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Data collected regularly including census data</th>
<th>State-wide assessment at Years 3, 5 and 7</th>
<th>Other data collection</th>
<th>Year 12 Certification</th>
<th>Total</th>
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<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>14</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
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<td>Speaker of other languages</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data Collected Regularly by School Systems including Census Data

NESB is the most common term used by school systems for the purpose of regular data collection. LBOTE is also commonly used. Other terminology used to seek information or further classify students includes:

- LBOTE and English main language spoken at home;
- LBOTE and English not the main language spoken at home;
- Students in whose home a language other than English is spoken by parents, guardians, grandparents, siblings, other relatives and or students themselves;
- Students who have a first language other than English (normally a language other than English is spoken at home); and
- Non-English speaking origin.

Government systems tend to use either the term LBOTE or NESB to define a student who comes from a language background other than English, while the Catholic systems are more likely to prefer the term NESB.

The Associations of Independent Schools referred to the DETYA and Government Census forms as their source for defining a student who comes from a language background other than English. In the DETYA Census of Non-Government schools, schools are asked for the number of students requiring ESL assistance. These students are defined as students whose first language is not English and who require, though may not be receiving, ESL tuition. Indigenous students requiring ESL assistance are recorded as ESL students. Reference is not made in these documents to LBOTE or NESB terminology.

State-wide Assessment by School Systems at Years 3, 5 and 7

The terms used by Government systems to define a student who comes from a language background other than English for state-wide assessment at Years 3, 5 and 7 are LBOTE and NESB. There is no indication that one term is preferred over the other.

The Western Australian Government system also uses the term Aboriginal to define a student who comes from a language background other than English. An Aboriginal
student is defined by the WA system as a person of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent who identifies as an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander.

Other Data Collection by School Systems

The most frequently listed purpose for collecting data on language background, culture and ethnicity for purposes other than Census Data and State-wide Assessment was for the ESL and New Arrivals collection to satisfy Commonwealth criteria for ESL or Special Needs funding.

The terms used for the purpose of other data collection were either LBOTE or NESB. Table 4 shows that NESB is the more frequently used term.

Two states offered more detailed information on how they further sub-categorise LBOTE or NESB students.

The Northern Territory Department of Education identifies students who come from a language background other than English as students whose home language is an Indigenous language, Kriol or Torres Strait Creole.

The South Australian Department of Education indicated that the term NESB was further segmented into the following definitions:

- **Definition 1**: Students born overseas with at least one parent/guardian being from non-English speaking background. This includes children adopted by English speaking families and who have maintained a cultural or linguistic link with their country of origin.

- **Definition 2**: Students born in Australia and with at least one parent/guardian being from non-English speaking background.

- **Definition 3**: Students not included in definitions 1-2 who have maintained an identity and family link with a non-English speaking culture.

- **Definition 4**: Aboriginal or Torres Islander (ATSI) origin who identify as ATSI and who speak an ATSI language. Exclude students who do not speak an ATSI language.

Year 12 Certification by the Boards of Study

Table 4 shows that three Boards of Studies prefer the term NESB to define a student who comes from a language background other than English; two Boards use the term LBOTE; one Board uses Speaker of Other Languages; and one Board indicated that it does not identify students who come from a language background other than English in this way. The data suggests that collectively, the Boards of Studies do not have a preferred way of defining a student who comes from a language background other than English.

Information Collected About LBOTE Students

School authorities and Boards of Studies were also asked:

*What information is collected about Language Background Other than English (LBOTE) students?*

A summary of the responses to this question is provided in Table 5, and described in more detail below.
Table 5: Frequency of responses to the question ‘What information is collected about LBOTE students?’

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Information</th>
<th>Regularly Collected</th>
<th>State-wide Assessment</th>
<th>Other Data Collection</th>
<th>Year 12 Certification</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Language/s other than English</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>spoken at home</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language/s other than English</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>spoken by father</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language/s other than English</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>spoken by mother</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Place of birth of parents</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Place of birth of student</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Enrolment on School Entry

Government systems use a standard enrolment form. However, in most cases there are no guidelines sent to schools to assist in the completion of the standard enrolment form and there is no coding manual supplied to schools for the coding of responses.

The enrolment forms are paper-based. Parents and caregivers have the responsibility for filling in the enrolment form. The data on the enrolment form are aggregated when reported centrally. One Government system indicated that unique identifiers were allocated to track students during their school years.

State Government systems differ in how the enrolment data are expected to be updated as students progress through school. Some systems require that the data be updated annually, others systems leave it up to the parents to change details, others have no system in place to update the information on a regular basis.

There is no standard enrolment form used by Catholic systems. The Catholic Education Office in each state sends a suggested format to schools but the schools can adapt and change the form to suit their needs. The enrolment data are generally for school use and are not usually reported centrally except in three Catholic systems. Two Catholic systems indicated that disaggregated data were reported and one system indicated that aggregated data were reported. In the Catholic system, there is no standardised process; each school has its own process for updating the enrolment data as students progress through school.

With one exception, unique identifiers are not allocated by the Catholic system to students to enable the system to track them during their school years.

There is no standard enrolment form or suggested format used by the Association of Independent Schools. Individual schools manage issues dealing with enrolment forms and the updating of enrolment data. Schools may choose to allocate individual identifiers to each student but the choice is up to individual schools. The identifiers are not used by the Associations to track students but could be used by individual schools.
All Government and most Catholic systems indicated that data were collected on the language background culture and ethnicity of students as part of the standard enrolment process as presented in Table 6.

**Table 6: Information on language background, culture and ethnicity of students collected as part of the standard enrolment process in State Government and Catholic systems**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Main indicators</th>
<th>Variations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Country of birth of parents/guardians and student is most commonly used.</td>
<td>Some systems ask for the nationality or whether the student and parents identify with a specific culture. For example: Does the student/parent/guardian identify with a non-English speaking culture? Which one?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language spoken at home is usually followed by support questions about other languages used in the home. The most common support question is: Other language spoken at home?</td>
<td>Main language spoken at home? What language do you use often to speak in your family home? What other languages do you use most often? Other language in which the student can function? Please indicate the language normally spoken. Student’s main language. Other language(s) spoken (at home) Is the student English speaking? Is English the main language spoken at home?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date of arrival in Australia</td>
<td>Visa details and residential status. Schooling outside Australia. How many years of primary and/or secondary? Australian school entry date?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is the student an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent?</td>
<td>Is the student Koorie or Torres Strait Islander? Cultural background?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is interesting to note that the suggested enrolment forms sent out by the Catholic Education Office in most states ask three of the same questions as the state Government systems. These are:

- Country of birth of parents/guardians and student;
- Main language spoken at home; and
- Is your child of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent?

There is an absence of common data across the systems on:

- Length of time in Australia;
- Number of years spent in an Australian School; and
- Level of English proficiency.

*Data Collected Regularly by School Systems including Census Data*

School systems collect information about the following:

- Language(s) other than English spoken at home;
- Place of birth of students; and
• Place of birth of parents.

A range of other information is also collected by some systems, including:

• Koorie and/or Torres Strait Islander.
• Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander origin.
• A student who identifies as an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander.
• Student’s first language.
• Identify or a family link with a non-English speaking culture.
• With whom the student speaks other/another language(s).
• Children who have one or both parents born in an overseas country where the main language of the country is a language other than English.
• Mother tongue. The language spoken on a preferred basis by the mother or primary caregiver.
• Aboriginal or Creole Languages. One of the Indigenous languages spoken by the Aboriginal communities in Australia. It does not include Aboriginal English.
• Residency status.
• How long students have been enrolled in an Australian school. (Less than 1 year, 1 to 3 years, 3 to 7 years, More than 7 years).
• Date of first enrolment in Australian school.

These data are provided from school records. The data are transmitted from school/student to central records through electronic as well as paper copy means.

*State-wide Assessment at Years 3, 5 and 7*

The most common information collected about LBOTE students by the Government and Catholic systems as well as the Boards of Study relates to:

• Language/s other than English spoken at home.

A range of other information is also collected by some systems and these are outlined in Table 7.

Most government systems indicated that the Boards of Studies manage data collection for Years 3, 5 and 7. In the government systems the information is provided by the students and/or by teachers, usually on the front of the assessment booklet. Data transmission from school/student to central records may be via electronic copy but is usually via students’ answer booklets. The Catholic Education Offices and Associations of Independent Schools did not indicate how their data are managed for this purpose.
**Table 7:** Other information collected about LBOTE students at Years 3, 5 and 7 state-wide assessment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>System</th>
<th>Information</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DEET Victoria</td>
<td>Is the student of non-English speaking background? Born in a non-English speaking country or has a home language other than English.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education Department of WA</td>
<td>Does anyone usually speak to you in a language other than English in your home? Yes/No? How often do you speak English in your home? Always/usually/sometimes but not usually/never or almost never. How many years have you lived in Australia?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SA DETE</td>
<td>How many years have you lived in Australia? 1 or 2, 3 or 4, 5 or 6, more than 6, born in Australia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NT Department of Education</td>
<td>None at the moment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CEO Canberra Goulburn</td>
<td>As per Commonwealth Definitions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CEO Sydney</td>
<td>How often do you speak English in your home? Never/sometimes/usually/always How many years have you lived in Australia? 1 or 2, 3 or 4, 5 or 6. More than 6. Born in Australia. Are you an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander person?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Other Data Collection by School Systems*

The most common information collected about LBOTE students through other data collection by school systems relates to:

- Language/s other than English spoken at home; and
- Place of birth of student.

Other information collected about LBOTE students is presented in Table 8.

**Table 8:** Other information collected by school systems about LBOTE students through other data collection

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>System</th>
<th>Other data</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NSW DET</td>
<td>Visa. Date of arrival in Australia. Date of enrolment. First language spoken.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CEO Sydney</td>
<td>Date of arrival in Australia. Visa details.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AIS QLD</td>
<td>First language spoken by student.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAIIBS</td>
<td>What language/s are spoken with significant others by the student. English language proficiency using ESL Scales. Permanent resident or visa. Country of birth. Date of arrival in Australia. Did the student attend a language school for New Arrivals?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NT Department of Education</td>
<td>Level of English Proficiency on the NT ESL Outcomes Profile (Speaking Strand) at beginning and end of program.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
School systems specified that the information for other data collection purposes is provided mostly from school records and by parents or caregivers. The most common method of transmitting data from school to central records is through paper copy means or electronic and paper copy means.

**Year 12 Certification by the Boards of Study**

The Boards of Studies were asked to provide the wording used to define Language Background Other than English for Year 12 Certification. The most common wording was:

- Language/s other than English spoken at home; and
- Place of birth of student.

Other wording used by the Boards of Study to define Language Background Other than English is summarised in Table 9.

The collection of student background data by the state Board of Studies at the Year 12 level is generally paper based. Paper based guidelines accompany the forms to assist schools and students with the completion of student background data. Two states have developed a coding manual to assist in the recording of student background data.

The data are provided from school records and from students. Schools have the option to transmit this data on line or through paper based means.
### Table 9: Other wording used by Boards of Study to define language background other than English for Year 12 Certification

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Board of Study</th>
<th>Wording</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tasmanian Secondary Assessment Board</td>
<td>Have you attended school where the language of instruction was not English? Are you an Australian Citizen?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victorian Board of Studies</td>
<td>Date of arrival in Australia. A student is eligible for ESL status if he/she has been a resident in Australia for no more than seven calendar years immediately prior to 1 January of the year in which the study is undertaken at Units 3 and 4. English has been the student’s major language of instruction for a total period of no more than seven years prior to the year in which the study is undertaken at Units ¾. Both conditions need to be met to be granted ESL status. The provision is also available to Aboriginal students whose first language is not English and who meet criterion 2 above. Other special circumstances: Minimal or no primary school education. Interruption to schooling during primary years, particularly if there were changes to language of instruction. Interruptions to schooling after arrival in Australia particularly if there were extended visits to non-English speaking countries.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SSABBSA</td>
<td>The student is an immigrant whose first language is a language other than English and whose knowledge is restricted. The student was born in Australia, has restricted knowledge of English, and comes from a home where English is not used, or is not the only language used, or where English is used as a common language between parents who do not have the same first language. The student is an Aboriginal student whose first language is a language other than English or a variety of Aboriginal English. The student is a resident in an overseas country, and has a first language other than English.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Office of the Board of Studies NSW</td>
<td>Identity and citizenship. I am an Aboriginal. I am a Torres Strait Islander. I am an Australian South Sea Islander. I am an Australian citizen. I am a permanent resident of Australia but not an Australian Citizen. If you were not born in Australia what year did you first arrive in Australia? If a language (or languages) other than English is spoken in your home, please indicate the languages. In which country were you born?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Criteria used to define English as a second language (ESL) learners

School authorities and Boards of Studies were also asked a third common question:

*What criteria are used to define English as a second language (ESL) learners?*

A summary of the responses to this question is provided in Table 10, and described in more detail below.

### Table 10: Frequency of responses to the question ‘What criteria are used to define English as a second language (ESL) learners?’

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Data collected regularly including census data</th>
<th>State-wide assessment at Years 3, 5 and 7</th>
<th>Other data collection</th>
<th>Year 12 Certification</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participation in an ESL program</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Receiving ESL support in the classroom</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years in Australia</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years learning English</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years in which the main language of instruction has been English</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level of proficiency in English</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English is not the main language spoken at home</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Data Collected Regularly by School Systems including Census Data**

The criteria used most often by the systems to define ESL learners for data collected regularly by school systems including census data are:

- Level of proficiency in English;
- Participating in an ESL Program;
- Receiving ESL support in the classroom; and
- English is not the main language spoken at home.

No system identified the following categories as criteria used to define ESL learners:

- Years learning English; and
- Years in which the main language of instruction has been in English.

**State-wide Assessment at Years 3, 5 and 7**

The most frequently used criteria to define an ESL learner by the systems and Boards of Study are:

- English is not the main language spoken at home; and
- Receiving ESL support in the classroom.
**Other Data Collection by School Systems**

In the case of other data collections, the criteria most frequently used to define ESL learners are:

- Level of proficiency in English;
- Participation in an ESL program;
- Years in Australia, and
- English is not the main language spoken at home.

Most school systems indicated that they used more than one criterion to define ESL learners for other data collection.

No school systems indicated that they used data on years in which the main language of instruction has been English. Some systems provided other criteria to define ESL learners. These criteria are presented in Table 11.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>System</th>
<th>Criteria</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DEET Victoria</td>
<td>Time of enrolment in an Australian school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Have a first language that is not English and require intensive English instruction in ESL. Students recently arrived in Australia who have minimal or no English language skills.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AIS QLD</td>
<td>English as a second language/New arrivals: Students whose first language is not English or whose language commonly spoken in the home is not English and whose proficiency in the English Language is determined to require intensive assistance to enable them to participate fully in the mainstream classroom. This includes students whose first language is an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander language or Creole.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Year 12 Certification by Boards of Study**

The three most commonly used criteria to identify ESL learners are:

- Years in Australia;
- Years in which the main language of instruction has been English; and
- English is not the main language spoken at home.

**Cultural and Ethnic Background**

School systems were also asked how they defined students’ cultural and ethnic background at state-wide assessment at Years 3, 5 and 7 and for Year 12 Certification. The responses are summarised below.

There is no common wording used by the systems or the Boards of Studies to define a student’s cultural background or a student’s ethnicity for state-wide assessment at Years 3, 5 and 7 other than the student indicating whether he or she is an Aboriginal person or Torres Strait Islander person.
Western Australia, South Australia and the Northern Territory state systems indicated that the question “Are you an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander person?” is the only question used to collect background and ethnicity data.

There is no common wording used to define a student’s cultural and ethnic background for Year 12 Certification, perhaps for the following reason which was pointed out by the Queensland Board of Secondary Studies.

It is not a condition for students to receive their certificates that they provide this information to schools and consent to its being transmitted to the Board of Studies.

Two Boards of Study ask students if they wish to be identified as an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander. One Board of Study seeks information about the language which is spoken at home and the country of birth of the student. One Board seeks information about whether the student has attended school where the language of instruction was not English, and if so what was the language of instruction?

The Western Australian Curriculum Council plans to collect data on ethnicity in 2000.

**General Comments**

School systems were given the opportunity to provide comments about the definitions of language background, culture and ethnicity as used in state-wide assessment in 1999 or planned for 2000.

The Catholic Education Office in Sydney expressed serious concerns and reservations about the collection of data on ethnicity, culture and language background in the context of nationally comparable reporting of outcomes.

In contrast, four systems commented about the necessity to make the definitions of language background, culture and ethnicity consistent between states.

The Department of Education and Training in New South Wales uses two definitions for students from non-English speaking backgrounds on which they have a ten year trend data on the reporting scales for their state assessment.

The Association of Independent Schools in the Northern Territory considered it important to identify the proficiency of students’ English language skills in regard to their cultural and language backgrounds. This identification needs to include some form of identification of the children’s Indigenous background when they are largely exposed to and speak Aboriginal languages in their homes and community. This is also deemed to be true of other language backgrounds.
APPENDIX D: QUESTIONNAIRES SENT TO SCHOOL AUTHORITIES AND BOARDS OF STUDY

The Survey of Approaches to Data Collection on Language and Cultural Diversity was conducted in 1999/2000 by the Australian Council for Educational Research. It was part of a project commissioned by the NEPM Taskforce aimed at developing a common definition and approach to data collection on the language background, culture and ethnicity of students to be used for nationally comparable reporting of outcomes. Self-completion questionnaires were used to collect data via e-mail.

Two survey instruments were used: one was designed to elicit responses from school authorities; the other was designed for Boards of Studies. Sample questionnaires are reproduced in this Appendix.
THE NATIONAL EDUCATION PERFORMANCE MONITORING (NEPM) TASKFORCE

SURVEY OF APPROACHES TO DATA COLLECTION

BY

SCHOOL AUTHORITIES

ON

LANGUAGE AND CULTURAL DIVERSITY

This document is designed to gather information on what and how the data collected on language background, culture and ethnicity are coded and used by education authorities for reporting student outcomes with respect to achievement, participation, retention and completion.

The document refers to data gathered and coded:
1. on enrolment at school entry;
2. data collected regularly including school census;
3. state-wide assessment at Years 3, 5 and 7 (if managed by school authority); and
4. regularly about language and cultural diversity.

This project has been commissioned by the National Education Performance Monitoring (NEPM) Taskforce of the Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA).

The purpose of this project is to develop a common definition of and approach to data collection on the language background, culture and ethnicity of students to be used for nationally comparable reporting of outcomes within the context of the National Goals for Schooling in the Twenty-first Century.

If you have any queries about the survey please contact me at ACER on (03) 9277 5596 prior to 23 February or define@acer.edu.au. From the 23 February please contact Tracey Frigo on (03) 9277 5688 or define@acer.edu.au

Please return all documentation listed above together with completed questionnaire by Friday 25 February 2000.

Details of person completing this document:

Name: __________________________________________

School Authority/Institution: ________________________________

Position: ________________________________

Email: __________________________________________

Phone: (0 ) __________________________ Fax: (0 ) __________________________

Date: ________________________________
RETURN OF DATA COLLECTION MATERIALS

The collection of documentation is essential to this survey. Please provide as much of the following documentation as possible.
Please ✔ enclosures you are forwarding to ACER and complete the questionnaire that follows.
Thank you.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DOCUMENTATION</th>
<th>Electronic copy</th>
<th>Paper copy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Section 1</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard enrolment form</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guidelines sent to schools to assist with the completion of standard enrolment form</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coding manual for enrolment form</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Section 2</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Form for data collected regularly including census data</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guidelines sent to schools to assist with the completion of data collected regularly including census data</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coding manual for data collected regularly including census data</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Section 3 (if state-wide assessment is managed by school authority)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Form / copy of cover page used for the collection of student background data for state-wide assessment at Years 3, 5 and 7 in 1999</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guidelines sent to schools/students to assist with the completion of student background data of state-wide assessment at Years 3, 5 and 7 in 1999</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coding manual for student background data in state-wide assessment at Years 3, 5 and 7 in 1999</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Section 4A</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Form for the collection of other data about language and cultural diversity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guidelines sent to schools to assist with the completion of other data about language and cultural diversity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coding manual for other data about language and cultural diversity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Section 4B</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Form for the collection of other data about language and cultural diversity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>Guidelines sent to schools to assist with the completion of other data about language and cultural diversity</td>
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<tr>
<td>Coding manual for other data about language and cultural diversity</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Please return all documentation listed above together with completed survey by Friday 25 February 2000 to: Dr Susan Zammit

ACER
Private Bag 55,
CAMBERWELL VIC 3151
define@acer.edu.au
Section 1

STATE/TERRITORY: _____________________________________________________________

Education Authority (Please ✓)
- State
- Catholic
- Independent

ENROLMENT AT SCHOOL ENTRY

1. Is a standard enrolment form used?
   - Yes
   - No

2. If yes, is any explanatory information sent to schools to assist with the completion of the standard enrolment form?
   - Yes
   - No

3. Who provides the information to complete the enrolment form?
   - Parents/caregivers
   - Pre-school
   - Other: Please specify:

4. Is information on the language background, culture and ethnicity of students collected as part of the standard enrolment process?
   - Yes
   - No

   Is the collection of information on the language background, culture and ethnicity of students mandatory?
   - Yes
   - No

5. How is the data reported centrally?
   - disaggregated
   - aggregated

6. What provisions are made for updating student information provided on enrolment forms as students progress through school?

________________________________
________________________________
________________________________
________________________________

7. Are students allocated a unique identifier to enable the education authority to track them during their school years?
   - Yes
   - No
SECTION 2

DATA COLLECTED REGULARLY INCLUDING CENSUS DATA

1. The information for the data collected annually is provided from:
   - School records
   - Parents/care givers
   - Student
   - Other: Please specify:

2. How is the data transmitted from school to central records?
   - Electronically
   - Paper copy only
   - Electronically and paper copy

3. What is the term used to define a student who comes from a language background other than English?
   - Language background other than English (LBOTE)
   - Non English speaking background (NESB)
   - Speaker of other languages
   - Other: Please specify:

4. What information is collected about LBOTE students? (✓ more than one box if necessary)
   - Language/s other than English spoken at home
   - Language/s other than English spoken by father
   - Language/s other than English spoken by mother
   - Place of birth of parents
   - Place of birth of student
   - Other: Please specify:

5. What criteria are used to define English as a second language (ESL) learners? (✓ more than one box if necessary)
   - Participation in an ESL program
   - Receiving ESL support in the classroom
   - Years in Australia
   - Years learning English
   - Years in which the main language of instruction has been English
   - Level of proficiency in English
   - English is not the main language spoken at home
   - Other: Please specify:
SECTION 3

STATE-WIDE ASSESSMENT AT YEARS, 3, 5 AND 7 IN 1999

If the data collection is managed by the Board of Studies please ✔ box and proceed to question 5 in this section.

If the data collection is managed by your school authority/institution please answer all the questions in this section.

1. The information for the data collected is provided from:
   - School records
   - Teachers
   - Students
   - Other: Please specify:

2. How is the data transmitted from school to central records?
   - Electronically
   - Paper copy only
   - Electronically and paper copy

3. What is the term used to define a student who comes from a language background other than English?
   - Language background other than English (LBOTE)
   - Non English speaking background (NESB)
   - Speaker of other languages
   - Other: Please specify:

4. What criteria are used to define English as a second language (ESL) learners? (✔ more than one box if necessary)
   - Participation in an ESL program
   - Receiving ESL support in the classroom
   - Years in Australia
   - Years learning English
   - Years in which the main language of instruction has been English
   - Level of proficiency in English
   - English is not the main language spoken at home
   - Other: Please specify:

5. What information was collected by your education authority to define language background other than English for state-wide assessment at Years 3, 5 and 7 in 1999? (✔ more than one box if necessary)
   - Language/s other than English spoken at home
   - Language/s other than English spoken by father
   - Language/s other than English spoken by mother
   - Place of birth of parents
   - Place of birth of student
   - Other: Please specify:
6. What wording was used by your education authority to define a student’s cultural background for state-wide assessment at Years 3, 5 and 7 in 1999?

- None or

________________________________

________________________________

________________________________

7. What wording was used by your education authority to define a student’s ethnicity (eg. Indigenous, Chinese) for state-wide assessment at Years 3, 5 and 7 in 1999?

- None or

________________________________

________________________________

________________________________

8. Do you have any comments about the definitions of language background, culture and ethnicity as used in state-wide assessment in 1999 or planned for 2000?

________________________________

________________________________

________________________________

________________________________
SECTION 4A

OTHER DATA COLLECTION: do you regularly collect information about language background, culture and ethnicity (eg. ESL survey, transition from primary to secondary, or curriculum outcomes)?

Name of program/s and purpose of data collection (If different sets of data are collected for the programs listed, please complete one for each program. Sections 4A and 4B are provided for this purpose. Make additional copies of this section if required.)

______________________________________
______________________________________

1. The information for the other data collected is provided from:
   - School records
   - Parents/care givers
   - Students
   - Other: Please specify:

2. How is the data transmitted from school to central records?
   - Electronically
   - Paper copy only
   - Electronically and paper copy

3. What is the term used to define a student who comes from a language background other than English?
   - Language background other than English (LBOTE)
   - Non English speaking background (NESB)
   - Speaker of other languages
   - Other: Please specify:

4. What information is collected about LBOTE students? (✔️ more than one box if necessary)
   - Language/s other than English spoken at home
   - Language/s other than English spoken by father
   - Language/s other than English spoken by mother
   - Place of birth of parents
   - Place of birth of student
   - Other: Please specify:

5. What criteria are used to define English as a second language (ESL) learners? (✔️ more than one box if necessary)
   - Participation in an ESL program
   - Receiving ESL support in the classroom
   - Years in Australia
   - Years learning English
   - Years in which the main language of instruction has been English
   - Level of proficiency in English
   - English is not the main language spoken at home
   - Other: Please specify:
SECTION 4B

OTHER DATA COLLECTION: do you regularly collect information about language background, culture and ethnicity (eg. ESL survey, transition from primary to secondary or curriculum outcomes)?

Name of programs and purpose of data collection (If different sets of data are collected for the programs listed, please complete one for each program. Sections 4A and 4B are provided for this purpose. Make additional copies of this section if required.)

___________________________________________________________

1. The information for the other data collected is provided from:
   - School records
   - Parents/care givers
   - Other: Please specify:

2. How is the data transmitted from school to central records?
   - Electronically
   - Paper copy only
   - Electronically and paper copy

3. What is the term used to define a student who comes from a language background other than English?
   - Language background other than English (LBOTE)
   - Non English speaking background (NESB)
   - Speaker of other languages
   - Other: Please specify:

4. What information is collected about LBOTE students? (✔️ more than one box if necessary)
   - Language/s other than English spoken at home
   - Language/s other than English spoken by father
   - Language/s other than English spoken by mother
   - Place of birth of parents
   - Place of birth of student
   - Other: Please specify:

5. What criteria are used to define English as a second language (ESL) learners? (✔️ more than one box if necessary)
   - Participation in an ESL program
   - Receiving ESL support in the classroom
   - Years in Australia
   - Years learning English
   - Years in which the main language of instruction has been English
   - Level of proficiency in English
   - English is not the main language spoken at home
   - Other: Please specify:

Thank you

Please return to page 2 of this document for details on what documentation is requested for forwarding with this survey.
This document is designed to gather information on what and how the data collected on language background, culture and ethnicity are coded and used for reporting student outcomes with respect to achievement, participation, retention and completion. The document refers to data gathered and coded:
1. for year 12 Certification; and
2. state-wide assessment at Years 3, 5 and 7 in 1999 (if managed by Board of Study).

This project has been commissioned by the National Education Performance Monitoring (NEPM) Taskforce of the Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA).

The purpose of this project is to develop a common definition of and approach to data collection on the language background, culture and ethnicity of students to be used for nationally comparable reporting of outcomes within the context of the National Goals for Schooling in the Twenty-first Century.

If you have any queries about the survey please contact me at ACER on (03) 9277 5596 prior to 23 February or definet@acer.edu.au. From the 23 February please contact Tracey Frigo on (03) 9277 5688 or define@acer.edu.au. Please return all documentation listed above together with completed questionnaire by Friday 25 February 2000.

Details of person completing this document:

Name: __________________________________________
School Authority/Institution: ____________________________
Position: ____________________________
Email: ____________________________________________
Phone: (0   )   Fax: (0   )
Date: ____________________________
RETURN OF DATA COLLECTION MATERIALS

The collection of documentation is essential to this survey. Please provide as much of the following documentation as possible.

Please enclosures you are forwarding to ACER and complete the questionnaire that follows.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DOCUMENTATION</th>
<th>Electronic copy</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Section 1</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Form for the collection of student background data of Year 12 Certification</td>
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<tr>
<td>Guidelines sent to schools/students to assist with the completion of student background data of Year 12 Certification</td>
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<tr>
<td>Coding manual for Year 12 Certification student background data</td>
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**Section 2- If the Board of Study is involved in state-wide assessment then please provide:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Form/ copy of cover page used for the collection of background data of state-wide assessment at Years 3, 5 and 7 in 1999</td>
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<td>Guidelines sent to schools/students to assist with the completion of background data of state-wide assessment at Years 3, 5 and 7 in 1999</td>
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<tr>
<td>Coding manual for background data in state-wide assessment at Years 3, 5 and 7 in 1999</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Please return all documentation listed above together with completed questionnaire by Friday 25 February 2000.

Dr Susan Zammit  
Australian Council for Educational Research  
Private Bag 55  
CAMBERWELL VIC 3151  
Email: define@acer.edu.au
SECTION 1

DATA COLLECTED FOR YEAR 12 CERTIFICATION

1. The information for the data collected annually is provided from:
   - School records
   - Students
   - Other: Please specify:

2. How is the data transmitted from school/student to central records?
   - Electronically
   - Paper copy only
   - Electronically and paper copy

3. What is the term used to define a student who comes from a language background other than English?
   - Language background other than English (LBOTE)
   - Non English speaking background (NESB)
   - Speaker of other languages
   - Other: Please specify:

4. What criteria are used to define English as a second language (ESL) learners? (✔️ more than one box if necessary)
   - Participation in an ESL program
   - Receiving ESL support in the classroom
   - Years in Australia
   - Years learning English
   - Years in which the main language of instruction has been English
   - Level of proficiency in English
   - English is not the main language spoken at home
   - Other: Please specify:

5. What wording was used by your education authority to define language background other than English for Year 12 certification in 1999? (✔️ more than one box if necessary)
   - Language/s other than English spoken at home
   - Language/s other than English spoken by father
   - Language/s other than English spoken by mother
   - Place of birth of parents
   - Place of birth of student
   - Other: Please specify:
6. What wording was used by the Board of Studies to define a student’s cultural background for Year 12 certification in 1999?

- None

7. What wording was used by the Board of Studies to define a student’s ethnicity (e.g., Indigenous, Chinese) background for Year 12 certification in 1999?

- None

8. Do you have any comments about the definitions of language background, culture and ethnicity background for Year 12 certification in 1999 or plans for 2000?

-
SECTION 2

STATE-WIDE ASSESSMENT AT YEARS, 3, 5 AND 7 IN 1999

If the data collection is managed by your school authority/institution please ✔ box □ and return to page 2.

If the data collection is managed by the Board of Study, please answer all the questions in this section.

1. The information for the data collected annually is provided from:
   ✔ School records
   ✔ Teachers
   ✔ Students
   ✔ Other: Please specify:

2. How is the data transmitted from school to central records?
   ✔ Electronically
   ✔ Paper copy only
   ✔ Electronically and paper copy

3. What is the term used to define a student who comes from a language background other than English?
   ✔ Language background other than English (LBOTE)
   ✔ Non English speaking background (NESB)
   ✔ Speaker of other languages
   ✔ Other: Please specify:

4. What criteria are used to define English as a second language (ESL) learners? (✔️ more than one box if necessary)
   ✔ Participation in an ESL program
   ✔ Receiving ESL support in the classroom
   ✔ Years in Australia
   ✔ Years learning English
   ✔ Years in which the main language of instruction has been English
   ✔ Level of proficiency in English
   ✔ English is not the main language spoken at home
   ✔ Other: Please specify:

5. What information was collected by your education authority to define language background other than English for state-wide assessment at Years 3, 5 and 7 in 1999? (✔️ more than one box if necessary)
   ✔ Language/s other than English spoken at home
   ✔ Language/s other than English spoken by parents
   ✔ Place of birth of parents
   ✔ Place of birth of student
   ✔ Other: Please specify:

6. What wording was used by your education authority to define a student’s cultural background for state-wide assessment at Years 3, 5 and 7 in 1999?
7. What wording was used by your education authority to define a student’s ethnicity (e.g., Indigenous, Chinese) for state-wide assessment at Years 3, 5 and 7 in 1999?

8. Do you have any comments about the definitions of language background, culture and ethnicity as used in state-wide assessment in 1999 or planned for 2000?

Thank you

Please return to page 2 of this document for details on what documentation is requested for forwarding with this survey.
APPENDIX E: VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING

The National Centre for Vocational Education and Training (NCVER) undertakes the national collection of data on behalf of the Australian National Training Authority (ANTA). In some cases the wording used is identical to that used by the ABS and this is identified through the use of a footnote, in others it is different. The standard enrolment question includes the following questions:

Are you of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander origin?\(^4\)
(tick one box)

- YES □
- NO □

Were you born in Australia? (tick one box)

- YES □
- NO □

If NO, in which country were you born?

[Blank]

Which language do you mainly speak at home?

- ENGLISH □
- OTHER □

If OTHER, please specify the language spoken

[Blank]

The enrolment form does not gather information about English proficiency though it collects information about the highest level of schooling and prior completed qualifications which may or may not have been undertaken in Australia.

---

\(^4\) Wording used in consistent with that used by ABS
APPENDIX F: OVERSEAS SCHOOL SYSTEMS

NEW ZEALAND

The New Zealand Ministry of Education and other government departments follow the protocols and guidelines set down by Statistics New Zealand.

Ethnicity is defined as the ethnic group or groups that people identify with or feel they belong to. Ethnicity is a measure of cultural affiliation, as opposed to race, ancestry, nationality or citizenship. Thus, ethnicity is self-perceived and people can affiliate with more than one ethnic group. An ethnic group is defined as: a social group whose members have the following four characteristics:

- share a sense of common origins;
- claim a common and distinctive history and destiny;
- possess one or more dimensions of collective cultural individuality; and
- feel a sense of unique collective solidarity.

Operationally, ethnicity is the ethnic group or groups reported by respondents in the ethnic group question. The collection of information about ethnic origin in the Population Census is mandatory under the Statistics Act 1975.

Individual ethnic groups are classified into progressively broader ethnic groups according to geographical location or origin, cultural similarities, and size (in New Zealand). At the lowest level of the classification (Level Four) larger groups are disaggregated (as appropriate) according to:

- geographical locality or origin (country, regions within a country or islands within a particular island group);
- cultural differences (which include distinctions such as language and religious belief);
- size; and
- ethnic background identifying separately, where possible, Pacific Island Groups.

The Standard Classification of Language is used whenever statistics are collected on languages spoken by the New Zealand population.

Statistics New Zealand defines cultural statistics as an attempt to measure the means by which commonality is communicated: for example, in the design of items, the performance of music, the telling of a story, the expression of beliefs, or the teaching of the past. Cultural statistics, therefore, measure the activities through which culture is communicated from person to person and from generation to generation. A framework has been developed.

New Zealand reports on ethnicity and language background in its educational reports but data on culture are not collected for use in reporting.
THE UNITED KINGDOM

The Department for Education and Employment’s annual school census includes the collection of student background data, which include a number of ethnic categories. The categories use geographically based terms to describe ethnicity such as Bangladeshi or Pakistani. However, that data collection fails to record the diversity of ethnic groups from these locations.

The extent to which this information is collected by Local Education Authorities (LEAs) and how it is used was commented on in a recent report from the Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED), *Raising the Attainment of Minority Ethnic Pupils*. The report investigated the achievement of four ethnic groups, Bangladeshi, Pakistani, Black Caribbean and Gypsy Traveller, in a sample of English schools. In collecting data for the report, OFSTED noted that minority ethnic attainment is not routinely or consistently conducted by every LEA:

Despite some pockets of sound practice this survey shows that many schools and LEAs are not nearly as effective as they should be in tackling the under achievement of minority ethnic groups. Longstanding obstacle to progress is the reluctance of schools and LEAs to monitor pupil performance by ethnic group… In the absence of such performance data, it is all too easy to turn a blind eye to minority ethnic under achievement and for scarce resources to be dissipated on the wrong priorities. Ignorance of what lies behind under achievement, moreover, fuels prejudice and stereotypical attitudes towards minority ethnic groups.

Some of the LEAs argued that inconsistencies in data collection would continue to be the case in the absence of national guidance on how to collect data with respect to minority ethnic background. The report found there was some confusion about how to categorise students and how to collect data on students from mixed heritage. Some schools did not define students from South Asian backgrounds as from minority ethnic groups if they spoke English fluently. Where data was collected, some schools were unsure how to use the data. Most schools collected information on the English language acquisition of students as this is linked to funding.

In other areas of the United Kingdom, research reports note that data on ethnicity is not routinely collected. For example, Powney *et al.* (1998) stressed the need to enhance the quantity and quality of educational research related minority ethnic groups in Scotland.

THE UNITED STATES

A number of agencies within the US Department of Education are responsible for collecting education statistics which include data on students’ language and racial/ethnic background. Nationally, the National Centre for Education Statistics (NCES) coordinates surveys and publishes annual reports on *The Condition of Education*. In recent years, the report has contained chapters detailing educational progress of Hispanic students and black students.
In 1977, the Office of Management and Budget set federal standards for the racial/ethnic categories to be used throughout the federal government with the minimum categories being four racial categories (American Indian or Alaskan Native, Asian or Pacific Islander, black and white), and one ethnic category (Hispanic). In the 1990s, the standards were criticised for not reflecting the increasing diversity of the population resulting from migration and interracial marriages and a review process was initiated. The proposed changes to the categories included that:

- students designating racial/ethnic status be asked to indicate one or more races as appropriate;
- the Asian/Pacific Islander category be split into two separate categories: Asian and Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander; and
- the American Indian or Alaska Native category be defined to be inclusive of individuals with origins in any of the original peoples of North and South America, including Central America.

The NCES’ Student Data Handbook: Elementary, Secondary and early Childhood Education provides a common language and standard coding options for data collection by education systems and schools in America. The Handbook lists all possible data elements (indicators) which can be collected by schools as well as options for the collection of extra data which they may choose to collect at a local level. Data elements which pertain to ethnic/racial and language background are:

**Country of Birth:** name of the country in which an individual was born

**First Entry Date:** month, day, and year of an individual’s initial arrival into the United States in order to establish residency

**National/Ethnic Origin Subgroup:** national or ethnic subgroup of a person other than “American.” Examples for Asian/Pacific Islanders include: Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Filipino, Hawaiian, Vietnamese, Asian Indian, Samoan, or Guamanian. For Hispanics, examples include: Puerto Rican, Mexican-American, Cuban, Argentinean, Dominican, Columbian, Nicaraguan, Salvadoran, or Spaniard. Tribal background could be listed for Alaskan Natives or American Indians, (eg. Navaho)

**Tribal or Clan Name:** name borne in common by members of a tribe or clan, (eg. the Matai name in Samoa).

**Race/Ethnicity:** the general racial or ethnic heritage category which most clearly reflects the individual’s recognition of his or her community or with which the individual most identifies

The new standards which are to be implemented by 2003 include the following options:

**Options**:

*American Indian or Alaska Native:* A person having origins in any of the original peoples of North and South America (including Central America), and who maintains tribal affiliation or community attachment.
Asian: A person having origins in* any of the original peoples of the Far East, Southeast Asia, or the Indian subcontinent including, for example, Cambodia, China, India, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Pakistan, the Philippine Islands, Thailand, and Vietnam.

Black or African American: A person having origins in any of the black racial groups of Africa. Terms such as “Haitian” or “Negro” can be used in addition to “Black or African American.”

Hispanic or Latino: A person of Cuban, Mexican, Puerto Rican, South or Central American, or other Spanish culture or origin, regardless of race. The term, “Spanish origin,” can be used in addition to “Hispanic or Latino.”

Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander: A person having origins in any of the original peoples of Hawaii, Guam, Samoa, or other Pacific Islands.

White: A person having origins in any of the original peoples of Europe, the Middle East, or North Africa.

In a discussion of the changes to the required data elements it was estimated that institutions would need about 4 years to have consistent racial/ethnic data on all students and staff. This includes 2 years for changes to be made to software and 2 years to attaining and maintaining the data which would involve resurveying all students and staff. During the changeover time, institutions would use the six new race/ethnicity fields and one or more fields to indicate where old data is being imported into the system.

The NCES also collects data on language and English language proficiency:

**Language**: the specific language or dialect that an individual uses to communicate.

**Language Type**: an indication of the function and context in which an individual uses a language to communicate.

Options:

*Correspondence language*: The language or dialect to be used when sending written communication (e.g., letters, facsimiles, or electronic mail) to an individual.

*Dominant language*: The language or dialect an individual best understands and with which he or she is most comfortable. A person may be dominant in one language in certain situations and another for others.

*Home language*: The language or dialect routinely spoken in an individual’s home. This language or dialect may or may not be an individual’s native language.

*Native language*: The language or dialect first learned by an individual or first used by the Parent/Guardian with a child. This term is often referred to as primary language.

*Other language proficiency*: Any language or dialect, other than the dominant language, in which an individual is proficient.

**English Proficiency**: an individual’s adeptness at English as indicated by: a) reading skills (the ability to comprehend and interpret text); b) listening skills (the ability to understand verbal expressions of the language); c) writing skills (the ability to produce

---

* Each individual may select more than one category
written text with content and format); and d) speaking skills (the ability to use oral language appropriately and effectively).

Options:

Fully English proficient: An individual who is able to use English to ask questions, to understand dialogue and reading materials, to test ideas, and to interpret what is being presented. Reading, listening, writing, and speaking all contribute to an individual’s proficiency in the language.

Limited English proficient: an individual with a language background other than English, and whose proficiency in English is such that the probability of the individual’s success in an English-only environment is below that of a successful peer with an English language background.

In its Condition of Education 1999 Report, the NCES offered the following further definition of limited English Proficient:

Limited-English-proficient: A concept developed to assist in identifying those language-minority students (children from language backgrounds other than English) who need language assistance services, in their own language or in English, in the schools. The Bilingual Education Act … describes a limited-English-proficient (LEP) student as one who

1. meets one or more of the following conditions:
   a. a student who was born outside the United States or whose native language is not English;
   b. a student who comes from an environment where a language other than English is dominant; or
   c. a student who is an American Indian or Alaskan Native and comes from an environment where a language other than English has had a significant impact on his/her level of English language proficiency; and
2. has sufficient difficulty speaking, reading, writing, or understanding the English language to deny him or her the opportunity to learn successfully in English-only classrooms.

The report acknowledges that many ways of determining a student’s English proficiency are used by school systems. These include various combinations of home language surveys, informal teacher determination, formal interviews, and a number of types of assessment tests for classification, placement, and monitoring of progress.

The problems associated which collecting accurate and reliable data on English language proficiency due to the variations in definitions and methods of aggregation were considered in the a report by the Council of Chief State School Officers, Recommendations for Improving the Assessment and Monitoring of Students with Limited English Proficiency (1992). The report stressed the need for comprehensive screening of native language background on enrolment, the use of multiple assessment processes and psychometrically sound tests which cover all communication competencies (listening, reading, speaking, writing).
APPENDIX G: IMPLEMENTATION ISSUES TO BE ADDRESSED IN A FEASIBILITY STUDY

The following suggestions relating to data collection, coding and reporting need to be assessed in a feasibility study.

DATA COLLECTION

1. That enrolment forms should include standard questions asked of parents (or guardians) which enable LBOTE measures to be constructed. This information is currently collected by all government (and some Catholic and independent) systems, but it is collected via a variety of questions. Data collection procedures must be made uniform.

2. That data from enrolment records be used to report educational outcomes by LBOTE status in the Year 3 and Year 5 testing.

3. That state-wide testing for Year 7 and later year students be accompanied by a student survey form which collects LBOTE (and other social background) data.

4. That data from the survey form accompanying state-wide testing be used to report educational outcomes by LBOTE status in the Year 7 and later year testing.

5. That data from both enrolment records (senior level) and state-wide testing be used to report on other educational outcomes such as school completion.

6. That the following four questions be used to measure LBOTE on enrolment forms and student surveys accompanying state-wide testing:

   In which country was [the student] [were you] born?

   In which country was [the student’s] [your] father born?

   In which country was [the student’s] [your] mother born?

   [Does the student] [Do you] speak a language other than English at home? (If more than one language, indicate the one that is spoken most often)

7. That the precise nature of the response options provided on enrolment and student survey forms for each of the LBOTE questions be determined in consultation with the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) and educational authorities. The response options should be designed so as to elicit actual countries or languages. Two methods of eliciting responses should be explored:

   • the use of approximately 10 pre-coded country/language response options with an additional ‘other – please specify’ option. The list should be standard across each of the three country of birth questions. This option would minimise coding costs.

   OR
• the use of two response options: ‘Australia’/‘English’ and ‘other – please specify’. This option would take up less space on enrolment forms, but would incur greater coding costs.

DATA PROCESSING

8. That the Standard Australian Classification of Countries (SACC) (ABS 1998) be used for the coding of responses to the country of birth questions. These should be coded at the most detailed (base or country) level of the classification so as to ensure flexibility in reporting options.

9. That the Australian Standard Classification of Languages (ASCL) (ABS 1997) be used for the coding of responses to the main language spoken at home question. These should be coded at the most detailed (base or language) level of the classification so as to ensure flexibility in reporting options. The classification includes Indigenous languages.

10. That where possible, the data be stored electronically for ease of transmission to a central body for national reporting.

REPORTING

11. That the specific groupings of countries of birth/languages used in reports be decided after the analysis of appropriate data on the educational outcomes of LBOTE students.
REFERENCES


Australian Bureau of Statistics. (1999b) Paper presented by ABS to the Taskforce on School Statistics on 24 September 1999. Ref: National Centre for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Statistics (NCATSIS) email: ncatis@abs.gov.au


Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet 1990. (1990) *Access and Equity: Revised Requirements and Guidelines*. Canberra: AGPS.


