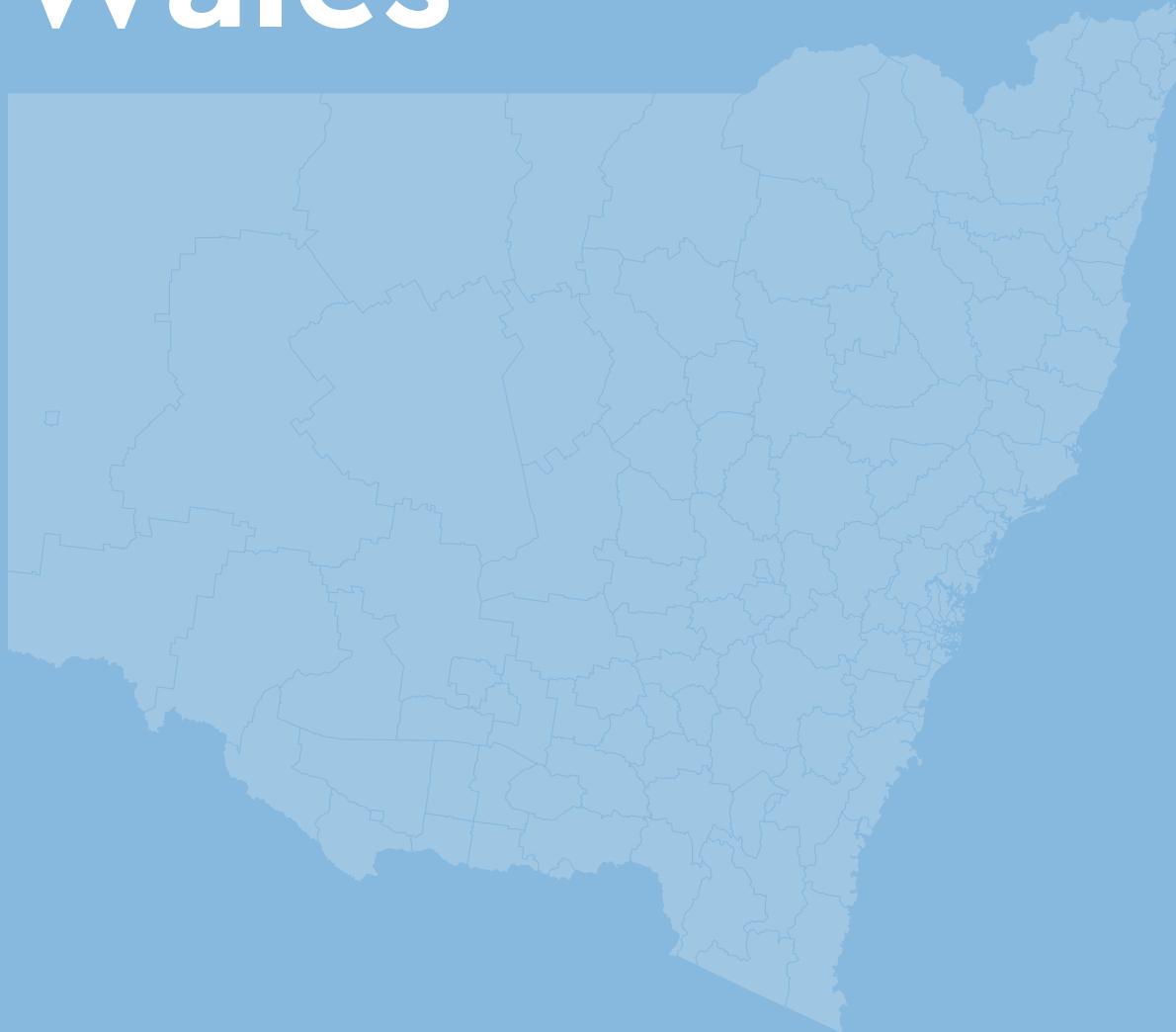


# Australian School Millennials and the Common Good: A State-by-State Analysis of the Cardus Education Survey Australia Project

Commissioned by Associated Christian Schools

# New South Wales



mccrindle

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# Contents

Preface	04
Background: The Cardus Education Survey Australia Project	06
Executive Summary: New South Wales Millennial Graduates: Contributing to the Common Good	07
New South Wales: A state analysis of the Cardus Education Survey Australia Project	08
Introduction: New South Wales State Representative Sampling, Data Collection, and Analysis	10
Overview of Schooling in New South Wales	11
New South Wales Millennial Graduates and Formation: Schools and Educational Experiences	15
New South Wales Millennial Graduates and Work: Employment, Vocational Pathways and Income	20
New South Wales Millennial Graduates and Belonging: Associations, Groups and Causes	29
New South Wales Millennial Graduates and Generosity: Volunteering and Giving	33
New South Wales Millennial Graduates and Family: Marriage and Relationships	39
New South Wales Millennial Graduates and Religion: Faith Commitments and Spiritual Practices	41
Conclusion	44
Bibliography	45

# Preface

The Cardus Education Survey Australia Project (2020)<sup>1</sup> and its landmark findings highlighted that the formation practices that occur across Australian school sector types, in partnership with the family and local community, have a significant impact on graduates' contribution to the common good across contemporary Australian society. The Cardus Education Survey (CES) Australia findings identified the contribution to the common good of graduates from Government, Catholic, Independent, and Christian schooling sectors to the academic, vocational, social and civic development of a nationally representative sample of 4913 graduates who completed secondary school between 1998 and 2011. The CES Australia reports contributed to the expanding corpus of other Cardus Education Survey reports from North America that have been compiled since 2011.<sup>2</sup> The CES has become a significant benchmark for measuring academic, cultural and spiritual outcomes of secondary school graduates.

Whilst the recent CES Australia project findings were noteworthy, Australia's federated education system necessitates a more nuanced and detailed analysis of this landmark data. There is wide ranging diversity of school types and educational emphases within each state and territory in Australia and this diversity fundamentally impacts on the type of education and formation that graduates receive across the nation. To better understand these contextual differences, Associated Christian Schools (ACS) commissioned a project to explore a detailed state-by-state analysis and evaluation of the CES Australia project data sets, paying particular attention to the geographical, socio-cultural, metropolitan/ non-metropolitan, and demographic profiles and dimensions that are contextualised within each Australian state and territory.

1 Cheng, A. and Iselin, D. (2020). *Australian Schools and the Common Good*. Ontario: Canada.

2 Pennings, R., Sikkink, D., Wiens, K., Seel, J., & Van Pelt, D.A. (2011). *Cardus Education Study: Do the motivations for private religious Catholic and Protestant schooling align with graduate outcomes?* Hamilton, Canada: Cardus; Pennings, R., Sikkink, D., & Van Pelt, D.A., Van Brummelen, H., & von Heyking, A. (2012). Pennings, R., Sikkink, D., Berner, A. (2014). *Cardus Education Survey 2014: Private Schools for the Public Good*. Hamilton, Canada: Cardus. *Cardus Education Survey: A rising tide lifts all boats: Measuring non-government school effects in service of the Canadian public good*. Hamilton, Canada: Cardus. Green, B., Sikkema, D., Sikkink, D., Skiles, S., & Pennings, R. (2016). *Cardus Education Survey 2016: Educating to Love your Neighbour*. Hamilton, Canada: Cardus; Green, B., Sikkema, D., Sikkink, D. (2018). *Cardus Education Survey 2018: British Columbia Bulletin*. Hamilton, Canada: Cardus; Green, B., Sikkema, D., Sikkink, D. (2018). *Cardus Education Survey 2018: Ontario Bulletin*. Hamilton, Canada: Cardus; Casagrande, M. Pennings, R., & Sikkink, D. (2019). *Cardus Education Survey 2018: Rethinking Public Education*. Hamilton, Canada: Cardus.



Specifically, the project investigated and analysed five of these state jurisdictions: New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland, South Australia and Western Australia. Whilst an important part of the CES Australia nationally representative data collection, the very small sampling sizes of the Australian Capital Territory, Tasmania and the Northern Territory unfortunately did not allow for statistically reliable data sets within these more detailed state/territory-based analyses and therefore these have not been included in the final suite of state-based reports. The five state-based analyses and summaries have been presented separately in accessible bulletin formats that explore trends, strengths and points of interest relating to graduates' contribution to the common good across all sectors with a specific state-based emphasis. Through this suite of documents, The ACS State-by-State Analysis of the Cardus Education Survey Australia Project specifically seeks to:

- Identify how schools contribute to the common good within contemporary Australian society according to state/ territory breakdowns and analyses.
- Explore possible reasons and hypotheses for specific state-based findings that are supported by the data and related research.
- Compile a clear, succinct and well synthesised publication for policy makers, government officials and law makers regarding the transformative outcomes of schools within and state/territory boundaries and to what extent these state-based findings have impacted upon graduates' contribution to the common good.
- Promote further conversations on how Australian schools in different regions and geographical areas contribute to the common good in unique, nuanced and heavily contextualised ways.
- It is hoped that the analysis of these state-based findings will assist educational leaders and policy makers (at both state and federal levels) to consider ways to improve and promote equity and access; school and community engagement; employment and training, university enrolments, family cohesion, and civic, social and religious engagement across every state and territory in Australia.

# Background: The Cardus Education Survey Australia Project

The Cardus Education Survey Australia Project was undergirded by a set of assumptions about what type of people are needed for our shared life to flourish. People who are employed, intelligent, and capable of developing various skills are good, but our common life also needs people whose disposition is one of service, who give of their time, resources, and skills; who belong and are involved with religious communities, local political and environmental groups, and are committed to their families and their communities; and who, ultimately, are capable of loving their neighbours.<sup>3</sup>

For nearly a decade, Cardus, a Canadian independent think tank with hubs located across North America dedicated to the renewal of social architecture, has gathered data about the ways secondary school graduates contribute to the common good. The Cardus Education Survey (CES) has been administered multiple times across the USA and Canada since 2011.

Convinced of the importance of the CES findings and the robustness of the survey instrument, a consortium of Australian Christian school associations came together in 2019 to implement the CES in Australia, leading to the formation of the CES Australia Project. Whilst the project was overseen and licensed through Cardus, the Australian implementation of the CES was entirely funded and coordinated by a consortium project team consisting of 6 Australian Christian School Associations: Adventist Schools Australia (ASA), Associated Christian Schools (ACS), Australian Association of Christian Schools (AACS), Christian Education National (CEN), Christian Schools Australia (CSA) and Swan Christian Education Association (SCEA).

The CES was adapted for the Australian context and administered in 2019 by ORIMA Research to a nationally representative sample of 4913 adults ages 25 to 39 (Millennials) who attended secondary school

in Australia. In all, 3913 respondents completed the survey online and another 1000 respondents completed it via computer assisted telephone interviewing (CATI) technology. Access to the methodological report can be founded here: <https://carduseducationsurvey.com.au/research/>

The findings highlighted that the formation practices that occur across Australian school sector types, in partnership with the family and local community, have a significant impact on graduates' contribution to the common good across contemporary Australian society. The CES Australia identified six major themes relating to how Millennials from Government, Catholic, Independent and Christian schools contribute to the common good:

- Formation: The influence of school and educational experiences
- Work: Employment, vocational pathways and income
- Belonging: Involvement in associations, groups and causes
- Generosity: Giving through donations and volunteering
- Family: Marriage and relationships
- Religion: Faith and spiritual commitments and practices

The findings, though presented separately by sector, are not intended as competitive claims between sectors within Australian education. Whilst the study has been financially supported by six Christian school associations, the CES Australia project was conducted in a manner to ensure independent analysis that will be of benefit for the common good of all Australians. Access to each of the CES Reports is available here <https://carduseducationsurvey.com.au/research/>

<sup>3</sup> Cheng and Iselin, 2020

# Executive Summary: New South Wales Millennial Graduates: Contributing to the Common Good

The findings of this state-based report of the CES Australia data reveal that, across all sectors within New South Wales (NSW) education, millennial graduates contribute to the common good and sustain civic life in varying degrees across a range of civic outcomes. These graduates were employed, actively contributing to their chosen careers and work, whilst also displaying a commitment to service and public life.<sup>4</sup> These dispositions were evidenced in membership of a variety of associations and groups, volunteer work in their communities, financial giving to a range of causes and organisations and expressed in their commitments to families and others within their wider community.<sup>5</sup>

NSW schools, to varying degrees across sectors, effectively prepare graduates for career and university success, promote community service initiatives within their school communities and have a proportionally very high level of graduates employed and earning high incomes than other states. NSW had very high levels of bachelor and postgraduate completions in metropolitan areas but there was a marked disparity with the levels of completions in non-metropolitan areas of the state. Levels of involvement in associations, particularly sporting, leisure and cultural groups and involvement in political parties, trade unions and environmental groups were strongly evident within Independent/ Christian graduates

– especially from non-metropolitan locales. Non-metropolitan NSW graduates from across all sectors were also generous with their time and money often giving at greater levels than their metropolitan counterparts to political and environmental causes. Graduates who were married and never divorced were consistent across Government, Catholic and Independent sectors, whilst NSW Christian school graduates were more likely to be married and not divorced and regularly attending church or other religious services. Due to the complex interrelationships and demographic characteristics of family, community and schooling, these findings should be treated with caution and direct association of schooling sector alone should not be assigned without considering these important formative elements shaping each graduate.

The findings arising from this detailed state analysis of the Cardus Education Survey Australia data reveal that NSW graduates are distinctive in their contribution to the common good across a range of civic, social, religious, vocational and educational categories. It is hoped that these findings stimulate further conversation, reflection and analysis regarding the role all NSW schools play, in partnership with the family and local community, in forming active, public facing citizens who are contributing to the common good within contemporary Australian communities.

<sup>4</sup> Cheng and Iselin, 2020

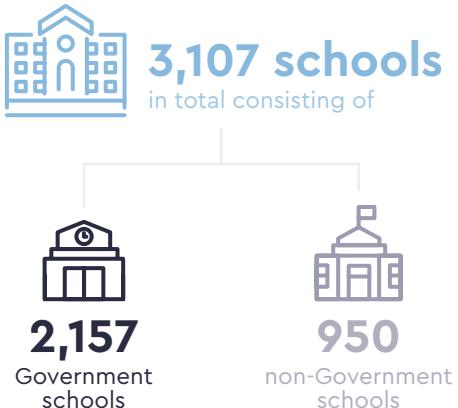
<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

# New South Wales: A state analysis of the Cardus Education Survey Australia Project

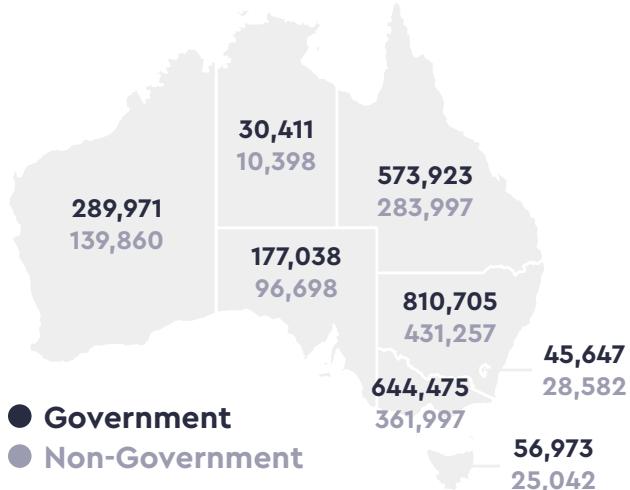
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## Demographic Snapshot<sup>i</sup>

In New South Wales there are currently



Student enrolments by state and territory and Government/Non-Government school affiliation, 2020



## Millennial graduates from New South Wales contribute to the common good through:

### Formation

New South Wales schools prepare graduates for university and career success.



**Two in three** New South Wales graduates (67%) felt prepared for university success  
(cf. 71% VIC, 66% QLD, 64% WA, 63% SA).



**Three in five** New South Wales graduates (58%) felt prepared for career success  
(cf. 60% VIC, 59% SA, 58% QLD, 53% WA).

### Work

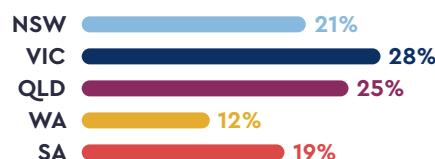
Professional skills, employment and having a stable income are important both for individuals and communities to flourish. These are important in profiling a graduate who contributes to the common good.

#### Graduates with bachelor degrees across metro and non-metro regions

##### METRO



##### NON-METRO



## Belonging

Membership of associations, groups and causes promote a sense of belonging within communities, expand social networks, and encourage broader civic engagement.

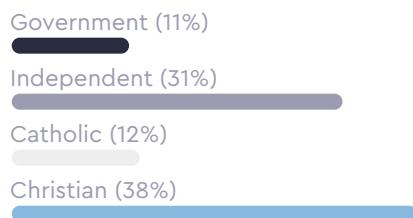


**34%** of New South Wales graduates are involved in a sport, leisure, or cultural group having the second highest involvement in the nation.

**16%** of New South Wales graduates in non-metro areas are involved in a trade union, having the highest involvement across the nation.



### New South Wales graduate involvement in political groups across school type:



## Generosity

Giving of one's time and money is a civic value that enhances community, assuming individuals cannot flourish if their neighbours cannot.

### New South Wales Christian graduates' level of volunteering compared to all other states



### New South Wales graduates' level of giving compared to all other states



## Faith commitments and spiritual practices

Faith and belief not only provide a sense of purpose, and the associated benefits of good mental health and wellbeing, but also provide places of belonging and community connection.



**One in five** New South Wales graduates attend church at least monthly (21%).



New South Wales Christian school Graduates are the **most likely** to attend church at least monthly than graduates from other schools (42% cf. 28% Independent, 23% Catholic, 14% Government).

## Building flourishing communities of the future

To increase the wellbeing and flourishing of Australian communities and graduates New South Wales schools could focus on:



Promoting holistic profiles of New South Wales graduates that measure what is of value across educational, vocational, civic and social measures.



Cultivating the importance of membership and involvement in a variety of civic associations and groups.

## METHODOLOGY

In 2021 Associated Christian Schools (ACS) commissioned a project to explore a detailed state-by-state analysis and evaluation of the CES Australia project data sets. Data from the Cardus Education survey Australia project was collated from a nationally representative sample of 4,913 graduates, conducted in March and April 2020, who completed secondary school between 1998 and 2011. 31% of the total sample was from New South Wales.

<sup>i</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), 2020.

CARDUS

CHRISTIAN  
EDUCATION NATIONAL  
Value communis per partem



Adventist  
Education  
Australia



AUSTRALIAN  
ASSOCIATION OF  
CHRISTIAN  
SCHOOLS



CHRISTIAN  
SCHOOLS  
Australia



Swan Christian  
EDUCATION ASSOCIATION



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# Introduction: New South Wales State Representative Sampling, Data Collection, and Analysis

This detailed state analysis of the CES Australia project data concentrates on New South Wales graduates and their responses as part of a representative sample of 25–39-year-olds (Millennials) who graduated from New South Wales Government, Catholic, Independent and Christian school secondary schools from 1998–2011. In most Australian survey data collections related to schools, three dominant sectors are represented: Government (state or public) schools and two major groups within the non-Government (private) sector, namely, Catholic schools and Independent schools.

For the purposes of the CES Australia inquiry, we also explored a fourth category, Christian schools, which have historically been represented as a range of Protestant denominational sub-categories within the Independent schools' sector.

The current project investigated and analysed the CES Australia data across five state jurisdictions: New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland, South Australia and Western Australia. Whilst an important part of the CES Australia nationally representative data collection, the very small sampling sizes of Tasmania and the Northern Territory unfortunately did not allow for statistically reliable data sets within these more detailed state/territory-based analyses and therefore these have not been included in the final suite of state-based reports.

Furthermore, whilst the Australian Capital Territory (ACT) is also a distinct education system with well-established ministerial oversight, for the purposes of this standalone report, ACT data has been included into the New South Wales data sets due to the extremely small sampling of ACT respondents within the national representative sample.

Data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics was utilised to derive population profiles for the 25–39 age cohort by gender and state (metropolitan/non-metropolitan). These general population profiles formed the basis of nationally representative targets for the data collection of the survey.

The responding sample for New South Wales was representative across gender and state sampling means and included a total of 25% of respondents from New South Wales metropolitan areas (1% below the general population in the State's metropolitan areas) and 6% of respondents from non-metropolitan areas (the mean for general population in non-metropolitan areas in New South Wales).

# Overview of Schooling in New South Wales

New South Wales (NSW) is the oldest and largest jurisdiction of schooling in Australia, dating back to early European settlement and the early Church of England schools of the colony that focussed on character development and rudimentary skills in reading, writing and arithmetic.<sup>6</sup>

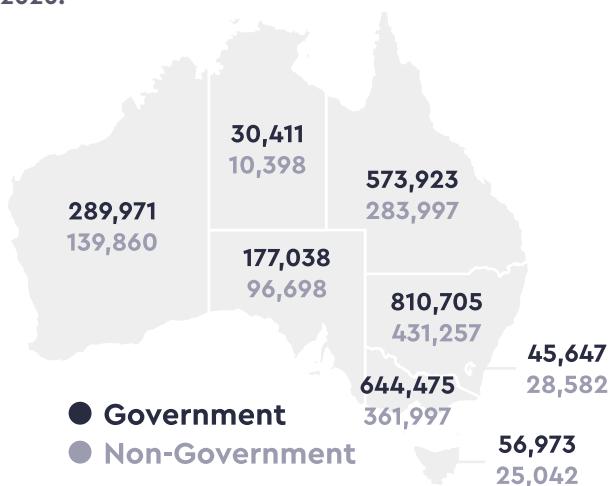
Some have laid claim that the current NSW Government education system prides itself on being 'The largest education system in the western world' and having 'The gold standard (of assessment).'<sup>7</sup> There are currently 3107 NSW primary and secondary schools, which is nearly 1000 schools larger than Australia's second largest education system in Victoria (VIC). These include 2157 Government schools and 950 non-Government schools.

**Table 1 Australian Schools by Sector 2020<sup>8</sup>**

	NSW	VIC	QLD	SA	WA	TAS	NT	ACT	Australia
<b>GOVERNMENT</b>	<b>2157</b>	<b>1537</b>	<b>1241</b>	<b>510</b>	<b>799</b>	<b>191</b>	<b>152</b>	<b>88</b>	<b>6675</b>
Primary	1608	1130	913	352	540	125	65	57	4790
Secondary	369	244	190	66	112	37	15	19	1052
Combined	67	83	93	74	82	25	67	8	499
Special schools	113	80	45	18	65	4	5	4	334
<b>NON-GOVERNMENT</b>	<b>950</b>	<b>717</b>	<b>529</b>	<b>205</b>	<b>309</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>2867</b>
Primary	494	434	222	96	145	30	10	28	1459
Secondary	140	96	77	20	30	5	7	6	381
Combined	254	160	186	81	119	31	20	13	864
Special schools	62	27	44	8	15	5	1	1	163
<b>ALL SECTORS</b>	<b>3107</b>	<b>2254</b>	<b>1770</b>	<b>715</b>	<b>1108</b>	<b>262</b>	<b>190</b>	<b>136</b>	<b>9542</b>
Primary	2102	1564	1135	448	685	155	75	85	6249
Secondary	509	340	267	86	142	42	22	25	1433
Combined	321	243	279	155	201	56	87	21	1363

Across these 3107 schools, NSW also has by far the largest number of student enrolments with 1 241 962, representing 31% of all Australian student enrolments. In 2020, the proportion of students enrolled in non-government NSW schools was 35% behind VIC (36%) and the ACT (39%) (see map 1).

**Map 1: Student enrolments by state and territory and Government/ Non-Government school affiliation, 2020.<sup>9</sup>**



<sup>6</sup> Barcan, 1980; Shellard, 1983.

<sup>7</sup> Yates, L. 2011, p. 5

<sup>8</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), 2020. Australian Schools by Sector <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/people/education/schools/2020>

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

Yates proposes that NSW has historically been unapologetic about the competitive nature of schooling, citing that a clear hierarchy and meritocracy are generally accepted, with a textbook emphasis often being a key component of the curriculum.<sup>10</sup> NSW is renowned for its exceptionality and firm convictions about the quality and standards expected for learning within the state and the importance of offering a 'centralised provision' that undergirds all curriculum policy and development.<sup>11</sup> NSW educational policy is also shaped by assumptions relating to the knowledge and institutions that have been built in the past – which finds expression in constant debates regarding core subjects like history.<sup>12</sup> In state comparative terms, NSW is perceived to focus on "what happens at the top end – the opportunities given to the talented and gifted; and the high standard of the HSC".<sup>13</sup> This was evidenced in a recent Sydney Morning Herald article entitled: 'Sydney's favourite question': Where the city's powerbrokers went to school'.<sup>14</sup>

The student population of NSW schools has become highly diverse as a result of a recent surge in immigration, particularly in the greater Sydney area. According to a recent review,

"Western Sydney is now the most diverse large urban area in Australia, with 35 per cent of its residents born outside Australia. In 2016, one third of students in NSW Government schools were from homes in which a language other than English was spoken. In some regions of Sydney, languages other than English are spoken in more than 40 per cent of homes, and in Parramatta, Southwest, and Inner Southwest regions, the percentages increase to more than 60 per cent".<sup>15</sup>

It has been argued that NSW educational policy and curriculum development initiatives typically hold fast to core academic subjects and content classification and often treat with suspicion and scepticism any radical changes to traditional ways of organising curriculum content – especially in the senior years of schooling.<sup>16</sup> NSW schools are also perceived historically as being underpinned by educational policies of selecting and distributing positional opportunities that are in essence highly competitive and are evidenced in the highest provision of selective and specialised government schools of any state in the nation and a perceived more robust discourse regarding "excellence" and "standards", compared to other states. Such provision of curriculum is often framed in the context of "allowing talent to flourish with a strong academic underpinning (and different vocational options for those who are not academic), and a belief in this as a valuable selective mechanism both in schooling and beyond".<sup>17</sup> Murdoch has referred to the virtue of this model as the promotion of an egalitarian meritocracy.<sup>18</sup>

10 Yates, 2011, p.

11 Ibid.

12 Ibid.

13 Ibid.

14 Baker, J. (2021). 'Sydney's favourite question': Where the city's powerbrokers went to school Sydney Morning Herald 14th June <https://www.smh.com.au/national/nsw/sydney-s-favourite-question-where-the-city-s-powerbrokers-went-to-school-20210611-p580ec.html?btis>

15 NSW Education Standards Authority (NESA). (2020). Nurturing Wonder and Igniting Passion, designs for a new school curriculum: NSW Curriculum Review. NSW Education Standards Authority: Sydney. P. 5.

16 Yates, Collins and O'Conner 2011, p. 301

17 Ibid.

18 Murdoch, 2013, Annual Lowy Lecture Address <https://www.lowyinstitute.org/publications/annual-lowy-lecture-2013-address-rupert-murdoch-ac>

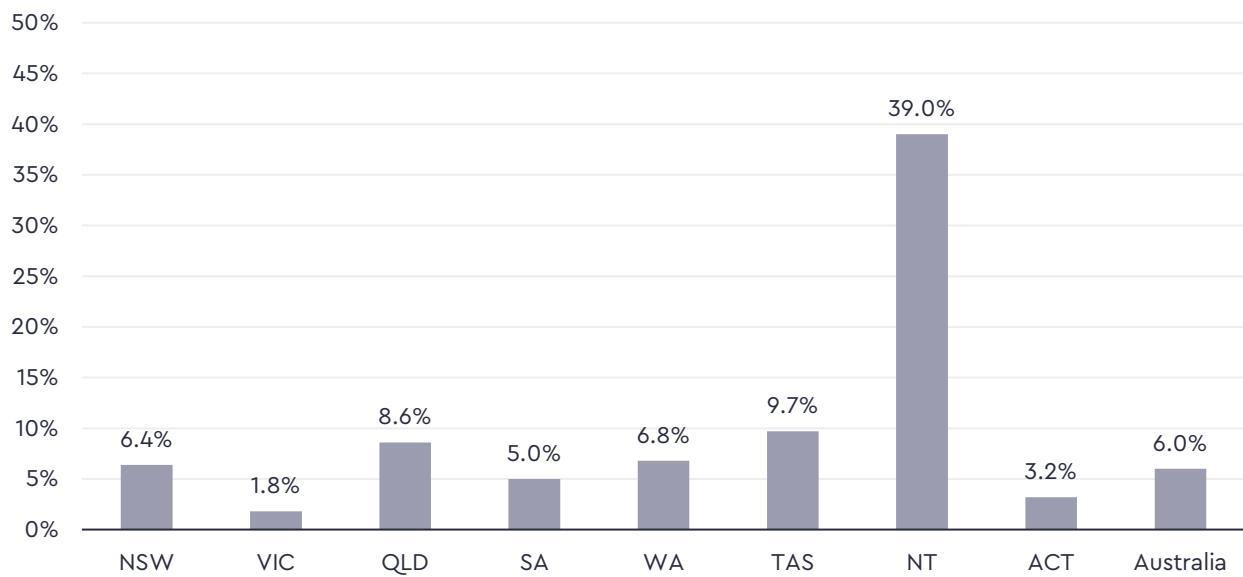
## Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA)

NSW also has a broad and quite disparate range of local areas of advantage, which reveal extremely high areas of advantage from those living in NSW major metropolitan areas and large regional centres. Proportionally high levels of disadvantage are evident across the state but are not as extreme as the

disparities evident in other jurisdictions, particularly the Northern Territory (NT) and Queensland (QLD).<sup>19</sup> Furthermore, NSW has the fourth largest percentage of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student enrolments (6%) of any State or Territory in Australia (see Table 2) which exceeds the national average (6%).

**Table 2: Proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Student Enrolments by State and Territory, 2020.<sup>20</sup>**

### Proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student enrolments by state and territory, 2020



19 Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2018 [https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Lookup/by%20Subject/2033.0.55.001~2016~Media%20Release~Census%20shows%20our%20most%20advantaged%20&%20disadvantaged%20areas%20\(Media%20Release\)~25](https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Lookup/by%20Subject/2033.0.55.001~2016~Media%20Release~Census%20shows%20our%20most%20advantaged%20&%20disadvantaged%20areas%20(Media%20Release)~25)

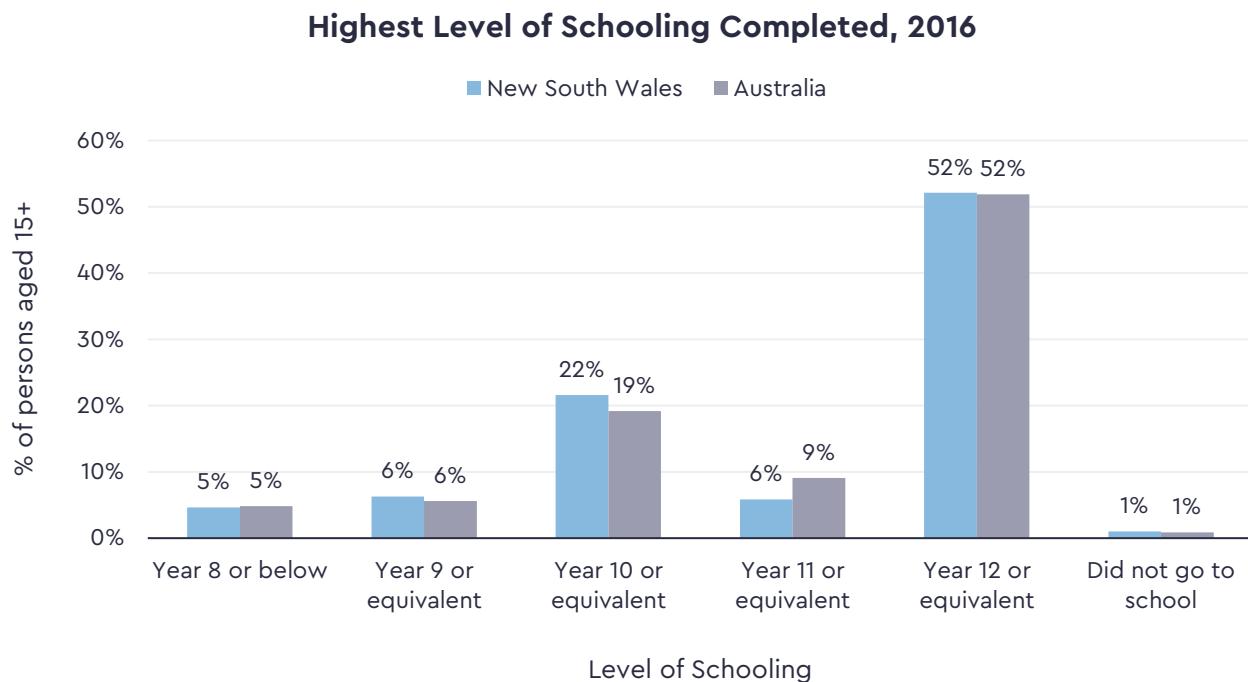
20 Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2020 <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/people/education/schools/2020>

## New South Wales Year 12 Completion Rates

Analysis of the highest level of schooling attained by the population in NSW in 2016 compared to the rest of Australia reveals that 52% of NSW students completed Year 12 or equivalent compared to the national average of 52%. These levels are slightly below VIC

Year 12 completion rate of 54%. A higher proportion of NSW students had also left school at an earlier level (Year 10 or less) (22%) than the national average of 19% (see table 3).

**Table 3: Highest Level of Schooling Completed, 2016<sup>21</sup>**



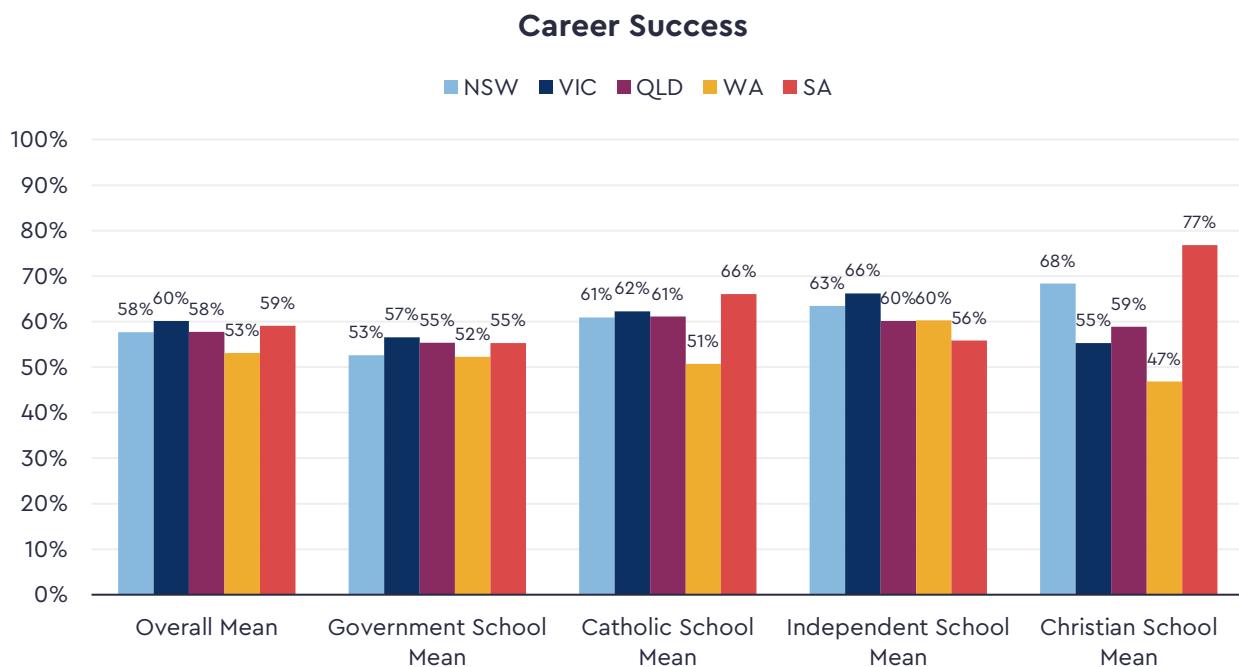
<sup>21</sup> ID Demographic resources <https://profile.id.com.au/australia/schooling?WebID=110&BMID=40>

# New South Wales Millennial Graduates and Formation: Schools and Educational Experiences

The CES Australia investigated a range of formation practices in Australian schools. Formation refers to the way that schools shape the values and character of young people throughout their schooling experience. It is important to note however that schools are part of complex moral ecosystem, including family and community, where shared commitments are formed and practiced. The survey asked respondents to reflect on their school's cultural emphases and distinctives, their levels of satisfaction with their school and how well they felt their school prepared them for life within contemporary Australian society. Within this state specific analysis, we have used this data to examine graduate perceptions of their schooling experiences in order to consider how these experiences might have influenced their lives and contribution to the common good.

As an overall mean, NSW<sup>22</sup> schools' preparation for career success was statistically similar to other states (58% see figure 1). Whilst NSW Government graduates (53%) were statistically lower than most other Government graduates from across the nation, Independent graduates (63%) and Christian school graduates (68%) from NSW felt most prepared by their schools for career success when compared to graduates of the same schooling sector from other states (these were proportionally higher than all other states except South Australia (SA 77% – see figure 1).

**Figure 1 Percentage of respondents who felt prepared by their school for career success**

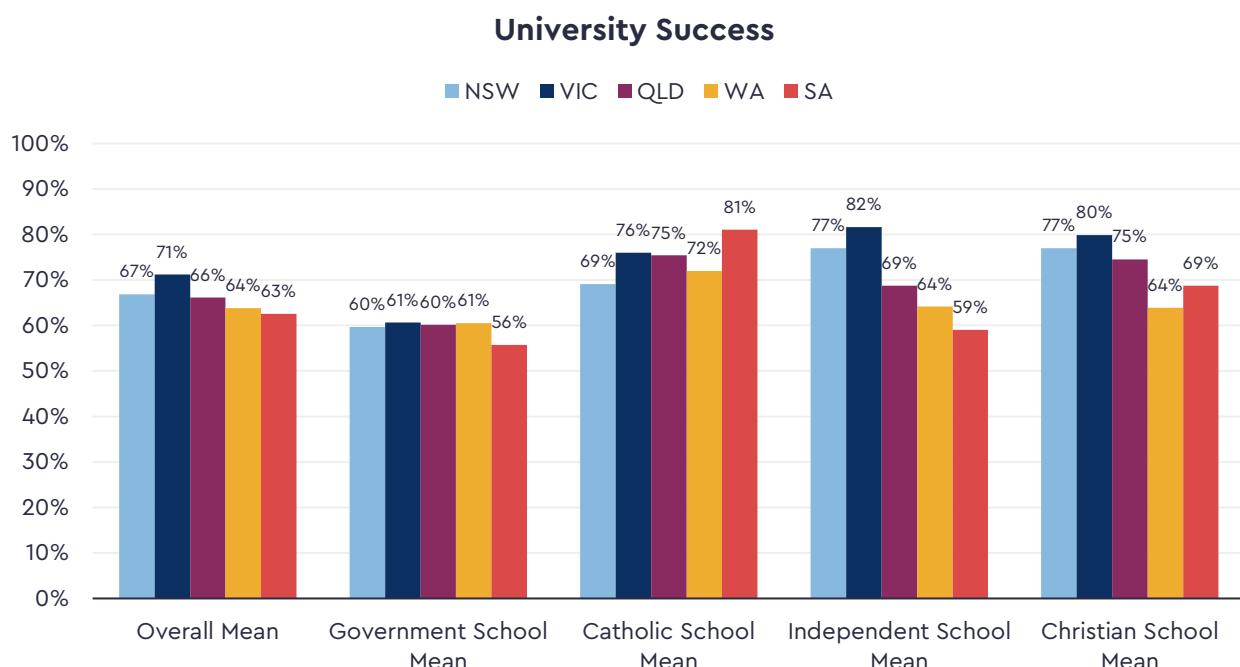


<sup>22</sup> For the purposes of this report, NSW data sets include both NSW and ACT respondents. This is due to the ACT national representative sampling size being extremely small and not being statistically significant to analyse separately.

These results were mirrored in NSW graduates' perceptions on how well they felt prepared for university success with Independent (77%) and Christian school graduates (77%) feeling most prepared for university success across all NSW graduates (see figure 2). These perceptions also translated well into actual bachelor completions for

NSW Christian school graduates (42% – equal highest in the nation across Christian school graduates) and for NSW Independent graduates (49% – the second highest in the nation across all states and sectors only behind VIC Independent school graduates). These will be discussed in more detail in the next section.

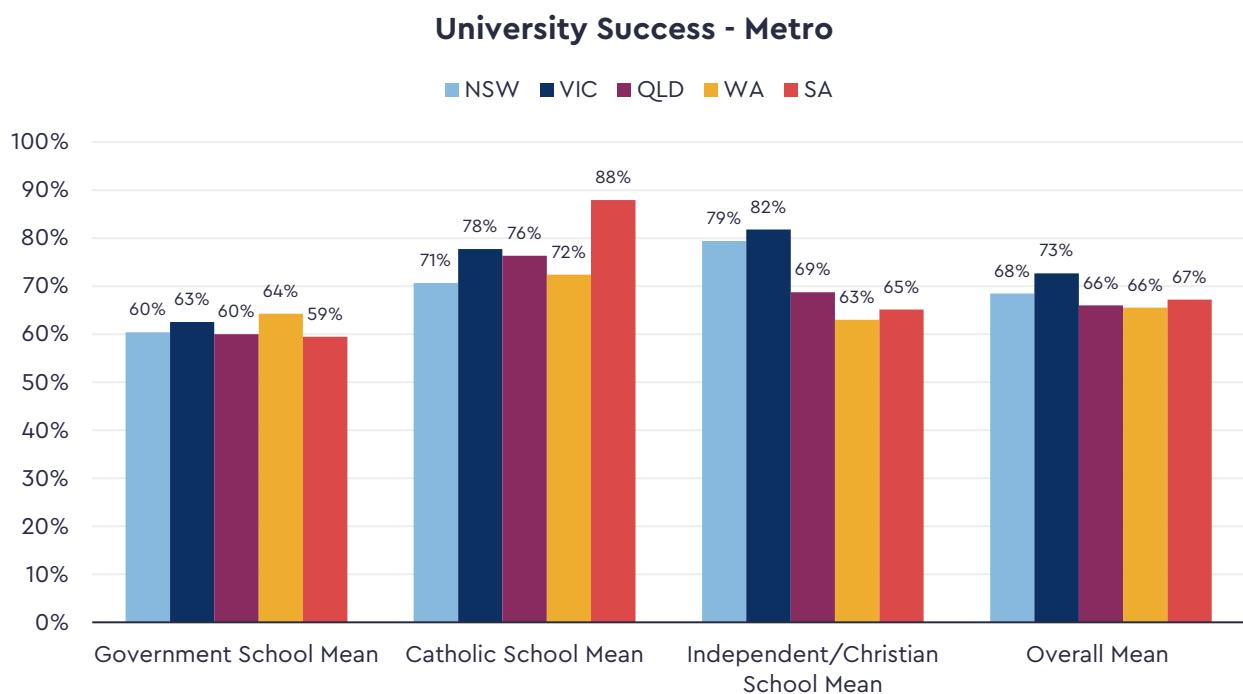
**Figure 2 Percentage of respondents who felt prepared by their school for university success**



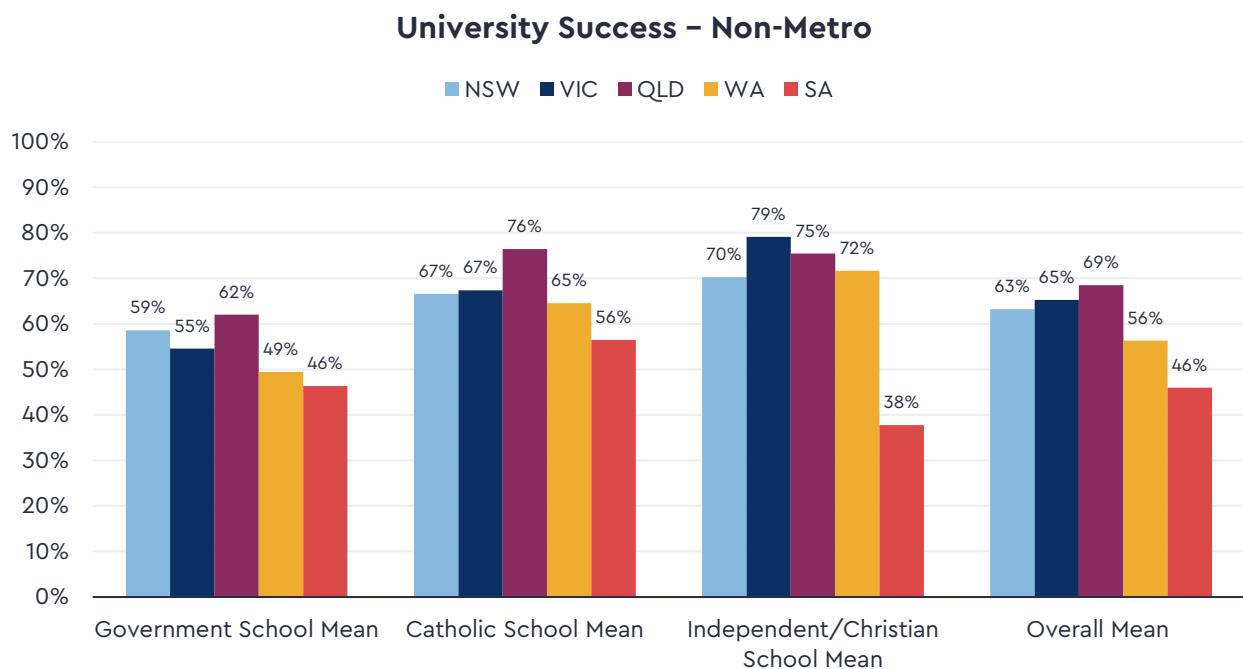
When metropolitan and non-metropolitan responses are analysed, NSW graduates overall were most likely to have felt prepared for university success in metropolitan areas (68%) although these rates were consistently lower than VIC graduates across all sectors (see figure 3). NSW graduates from metropolitan Independent/ Christian schools (79%) felt most prepared for university success whilst NSW Government school graduates from non-metropolitan

areas were second most likely to have felt prepared for university success across all Government graduates across the nation – unfortunately this perception of preparedness did not correlate with high levels of Government graduates bachelor completions in NSW non-metropolitan areas (18%) which will be highlighted in the next section relating to work (see figure 4).

**Figure 3 Percentage of respondents who felt prepared by their school for university success – Metropolitan areas\***



**Figure 4 Percentage of respondents who felt prepared by their school for university success Non-metropolitan**

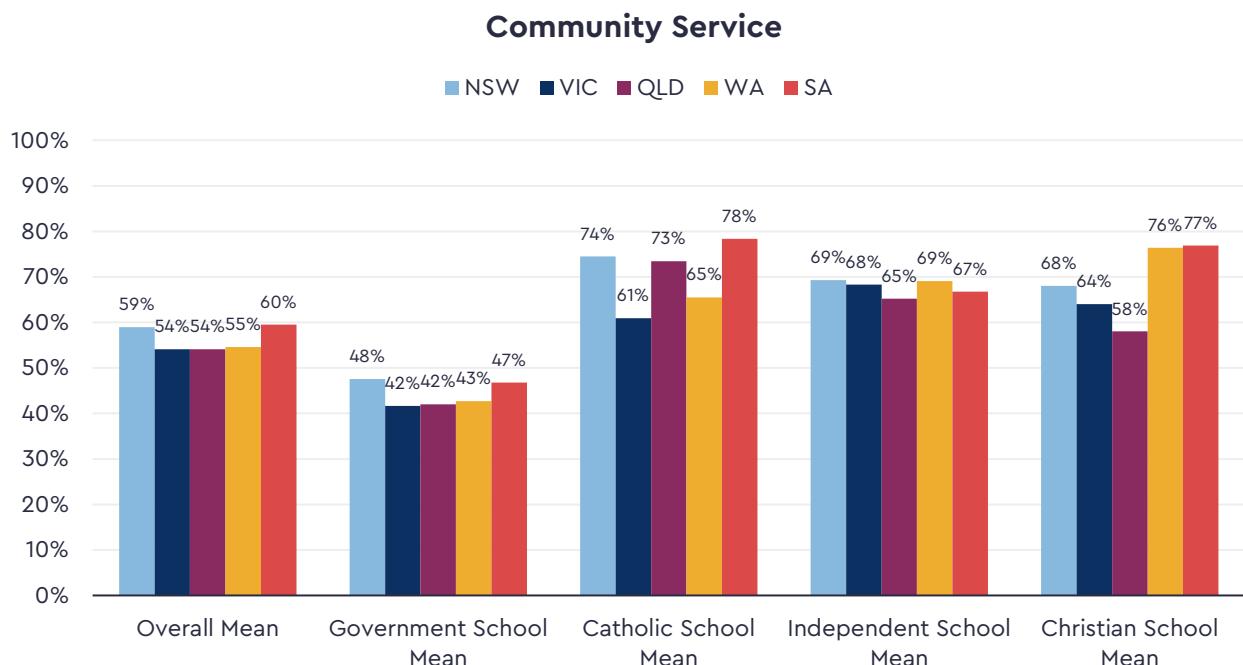


\* Due to very small Christian school sampling responses in non-metropolitan areas across all states, all metropolitan and non-metropolitan analyses used within this report will merge Independent and Christian data sets.

The emphasis on community service within NSW schools was comparatively quite high across NSW schools overall (59%), and this emphasis was strong within each sector (see figure 5). The public facing emphasis cultivated through community service initiatives within NSW Government graduates was the

highest of all Government school graduates across the nation and the NSW Catholic graduate also had high levels of community service engagement across that sector when compared to other states (74% see figure 5).

**Figure 5 Percentage of respondents who felt there was an emphasis on community service in their school**

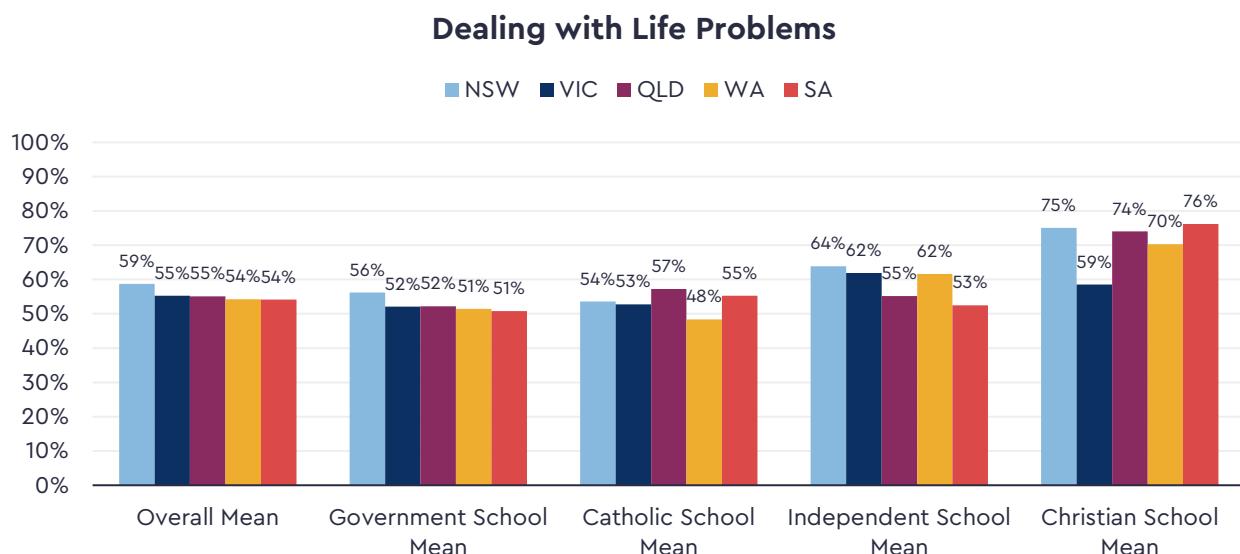


NSW graduates overall felt well prepared for dealing with life's problems by their school (59%) which was higher than any other state in the nation. NSW Government school graduates were more likely than other Government graduates in the nation to feel prepared to deal with life's problems (56%) and NSW Independent graduates also were more likely than any other Independent graduate in the nation to feel prepared to deal with life's challenges (64% see figure 6). Whilst these results were noteworthy, NSW Christian school graduates were also significantly more likely to feel prepared to deal with life's problems by their school (75%) than almost any other sector and any other state (except SA 76% see figure 6).

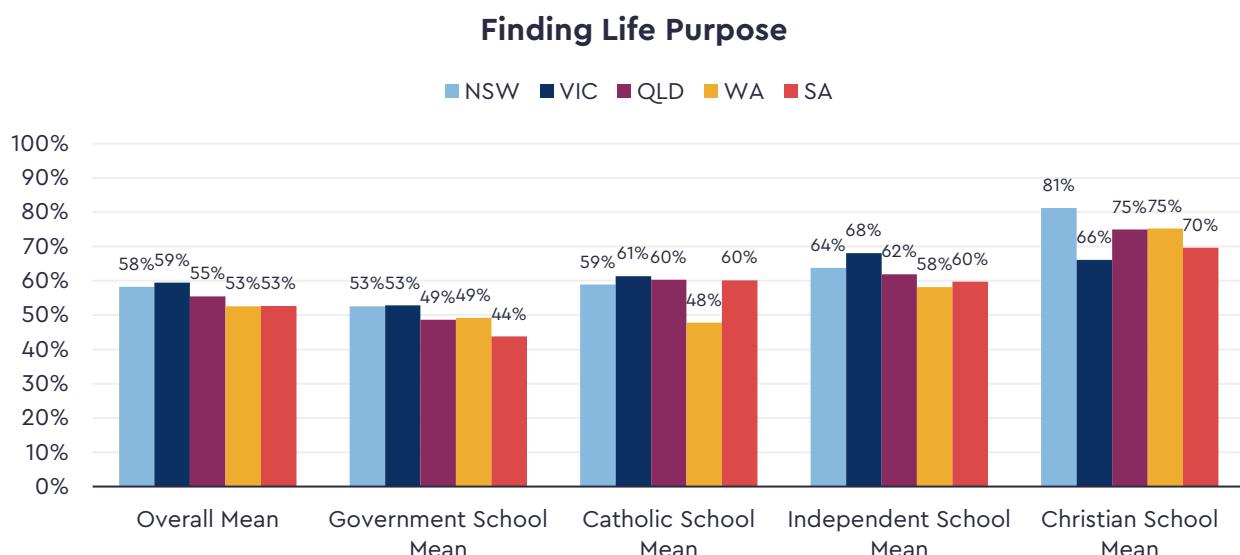
Furthermore, NSW Christian school graduates were more likely than any other graduate in the nation across all sectors to have felt prepared to find a sense of meaning, purpose, and direction in life (81% see figure 7). In an age of increasing rates of social isolation, disconnection, mental health challenges and an aching sense of meaninglessness and capacity to deal with problems, these results are noteworthy and highly significant.<sup>23</sup> These NSW Christian school graduates were more likely to feel prepared than graduates from any other sector across all states in Australia (see figure 7). These results were also significantly higher than VIC Christian school graduates (66%) and it is recommended that further investigations regarding the reasons for these high levels of preparedness in key areas relating to resilience and wellbeing of NSW Christian school graduates are undertaken.

<sup>23</sup> Holt-Lunstad et al., 2010; Shankar et al. 2015.

**Figure 6 Percentage of respondents who felt prepared by their school to deal with life's problems**



**Figure 7 Percentage of respondents who felt prepared by their school to find meaning and purpose in life**



On a variety of other perceived levels of satisfaction, emphasis and preparedness across a range of concepts including academic excellence, character development, discipline, teacher relationships, spiritual values and interaction with society and culture, NSW school graduates were generally not different to other states in any statistically significant way.

These findings on formation through graduate schooling experiences reveal levels of engagement, satisfaction and perceived feelings of preparedness shape and inform a graduate's contribution to the common good later in life. Whilst a school's focus

on measures relating to economic productivity, job preparedness and social efficiency are important and constitutive of flourishing, a quality and holistic education must also seek to form good citizens through social, civic and even religious dimensions. In the results presented, NSW schools are preparing graduates for academic learning, career preparation and university preparation but also resilience, wellbeing and a disposition that is others focussed and community minded. As evidenced in these findings, schools prepare their graduates for the common good, in a variegated range of ways that are not merely economic but most importantly are holistic.

# New South Wales Millennial Graduates and Work: Employment, Vocational Pathways and Income

This section of the CES Australia report explored whether different perceptions across school sectors translate into different career and employment pathways. Specifically, do the different perceptions of how well schools prepared graduates for career, university and work have an impact on actual outcomes related to educational attainment, employment, and income? The acquisition of professional skills, employment and having a stable income are unquestionably important to flourishing both for individuals and the communities in which they live, however, they are only one important element in the profiling of a graduate who contributes to the common good.<sup>24</sup> Questions within this section sought to glean the highest post-secondary qualification, employment and work-related information and income levels of each respondent.

NSW graduates overall bachelor's degree completions were second highest in the nation across all school sectors (38% see figure 8) and only slightly lower than the overall mean for VIC graduates (39%). NSW Government graduates were most likely of any Government school graduate across the nation to have completed a bachelor's degree (32%) and far

more likely than Government school graduates from SA (23%), QLD (22%) and WA (21%) (see figure 8). NSW Independent graduates were most likely of any sector in NSW to have completed a degree (49%) with both Catholic (41%) and Christian school (42%) graduates also having significantly high levels of bachelor's completions when considering the OECD averages for Australian graduate completions of 24–35 year olds is 24 percent.<sup>25</sup> Key factors driving such increases in Australia overall and NSW specifically have been the Bradley Review,<sup>26</sup> which explicitly promoted increasing access and completion rates for higher education degrees in Australia. Coupled with robust pathways and retention programs, these degree completions should also be viewed in light of the excellent post-school qualification rates that are evident in NSW (57%) and the ACT (66%).<sup>27</sup> The findings suggest that pathway options and post school opportunities are driving qualifications across all levels of NSW education, a factor that may also contribute to higher income levels as will be discussed in later in this section.

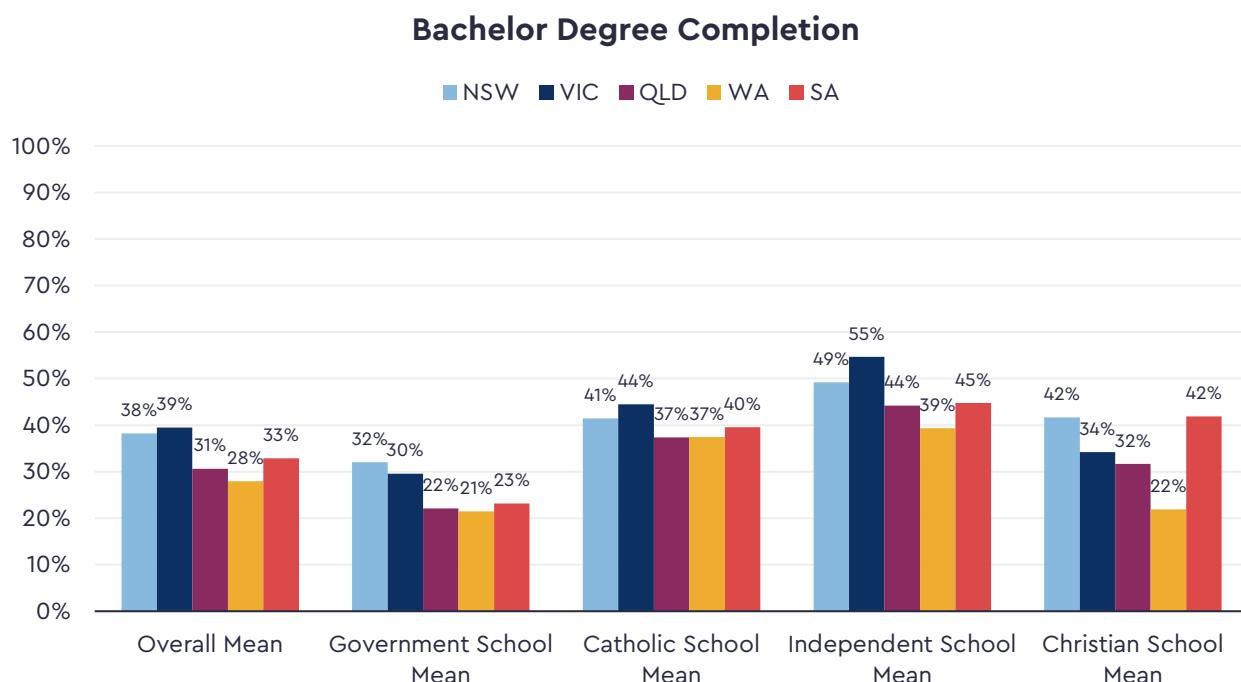
24 Cheng and Iselin, 2020

25 OECD, 2019

26 Bradley, D., Noonan, P., Nugent, H., & Scales, B. (2008). Review of Australian Higher Education: Final Report. Canberra.

27 Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2016, Stories from the census <https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Lookup/by%20Subject/2071.0~2016~Main%20Features~Educational%20Qualifications%20Data%20Summary%20~65>

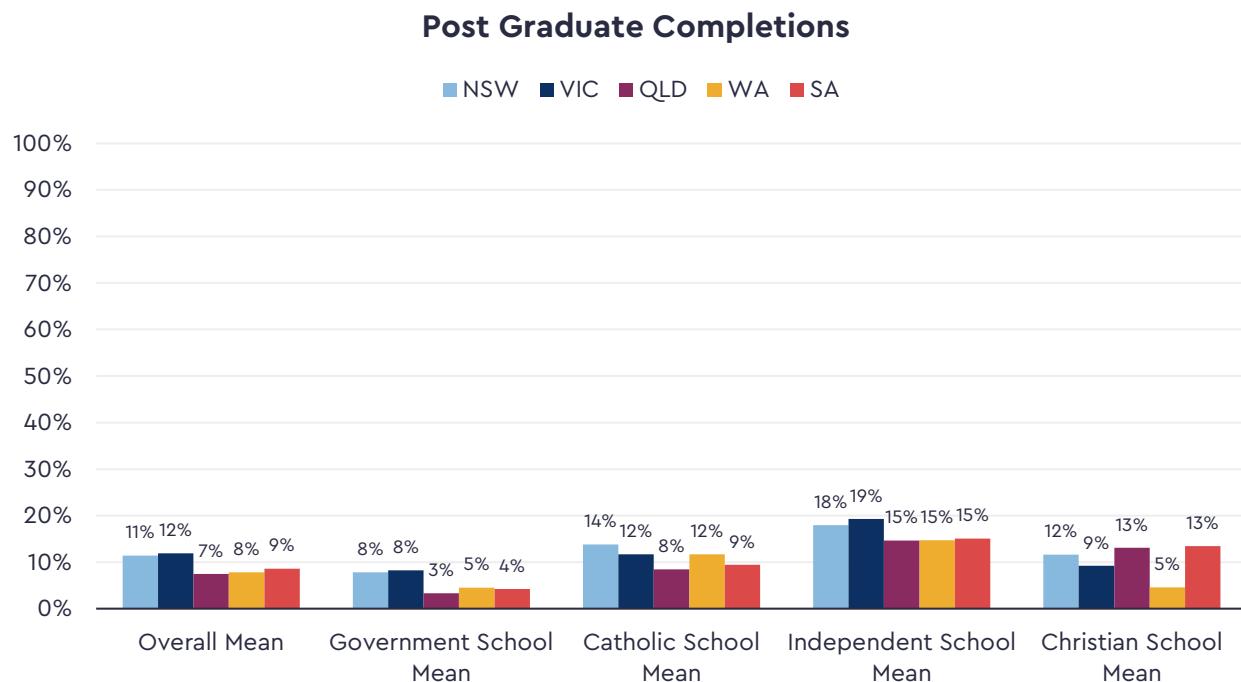
**Figure 8 Percentage of respondents who have completed a bachelor's degree**



NSW Independent school graduates were also more likely than most other graduates across the nation to have completed postgraduate degrees (18%) just slightly below VIC Independent graduates at 19%

(see figure 9) and were more than twice as likely to have completed postgraduate studies than NSW Government school graduates (8%).

**Figure 9 Percentage of respondents who have completed a postgraduate degree**



## NSW Graduate Metropolitan / Non-Metropolitan Analyses

When further analysis is undertaken that differentiates responses from metropolitan and non-metropolitan areas, it is revealed that NSW graduates overall in metropolitan areas were most likely to have completed a bachelor's degree than any other state (see figure 10). NSW Government graduates in metropolitan areas were the most likely of any Government graduate from across the nation to have completed a bachelor's degree (38%), significantly higher than any other state (see figure 10). Independent/ Christian graduates in NSW in metropolitan areas are most likely of any NSW sector to have completed a bachelor's degree (53% see figure 10), a rate only slightly behind VIC Independent/ Christian graduates who were the highest in the nation (55% see figure 10). NSW Catholic graduates in metropolitan areas were second most likely of any other Catholic graduate in the nation to have a bachelor's degree (45% see figure 10).

However, unlike VIC, where non-metropolitan bachelor's degree completions were significantly high across most sectors, the overall mean for NSW graduates in non-metropolitan areas is significantly lower than their VIC counterparts. Specifically, the lower completion levels of NSW Independent/ Christian (23%) and Government school graduates (18%) and overall, relatively low non-metropolitan degree completions for NSW (21%) are worthy of further consideration. Whilst these findings may suggest that the larger geographical spread of rural,

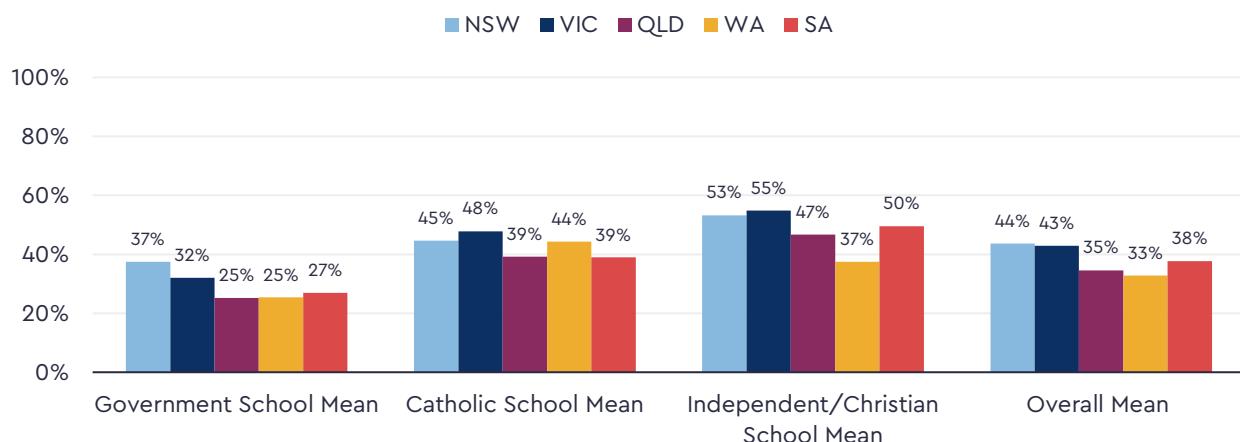
regional, and remote communities in NSW when compared to VIC may be a factor, and the greater disparity in areas of advantage and disadvantage between the two states may also negatively impact on these findings, the NSW Catholic graduates do not appear to have been as negatively impacted to the same extent as these other sectors in NSW non-metropolitan areas. Furthermore, the assumptions regarding wider and more dispersed non-metropolitan geographic locales, with subsequently higher levels of economic disadvantage, is more acute in QLD and yet degree completions across every sector in non-metropolitan areas in QLD exceed those of NSW graduates (although these gaps are less pronounced in Government and Catholic sectors). The findings recommend more analysis in regard to the provision and resourcing of university pathway options in NSW non-metropolitan areas and whether these have been ameliorated in more recent times through higher education reform initiatives and key seminal report recommendations arising from John Halsey's Independent Review into Regional, Rural and Remote Education.<sup>28</sup>

There may also be an association between these lower levels of bachelor completions for NSW Independent/ Christian graduates in non-metropolitan areas (23%) and how well they perceived schools prepared them for university success (70% see figure 11) – this level is proportionally much lower than most other states except SA for Independent/ Christian graduates in non-metropolitan areas (see figure 11).

28 Halsey, J. (2017). Independent Review into Regional, Rural and Remote Education Commonwealth of Australia. Flinders University, Adelaide.

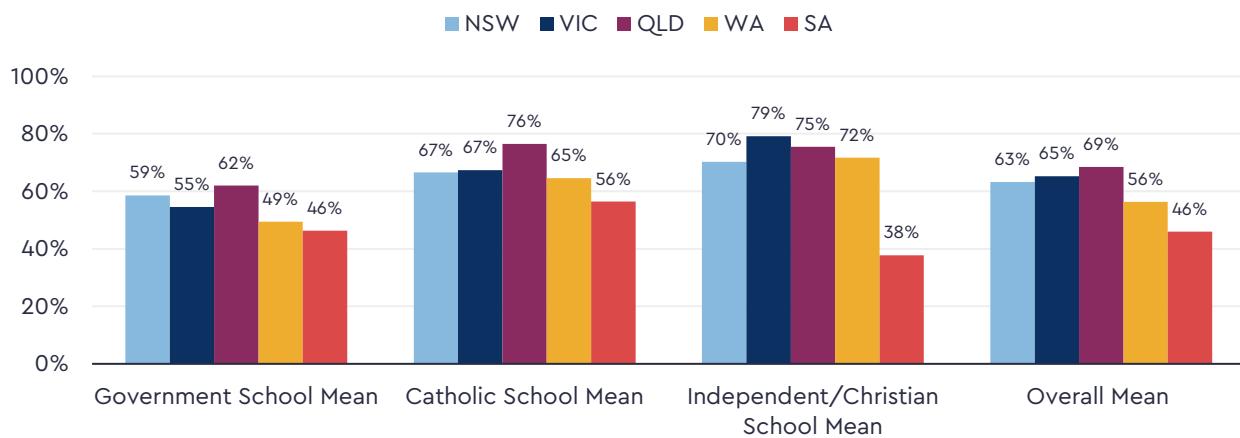
**Figure 10 Percentage of respondents who have completed a bachelor's degree – metropolitan**

### Bachelor Degree Completion - Metro



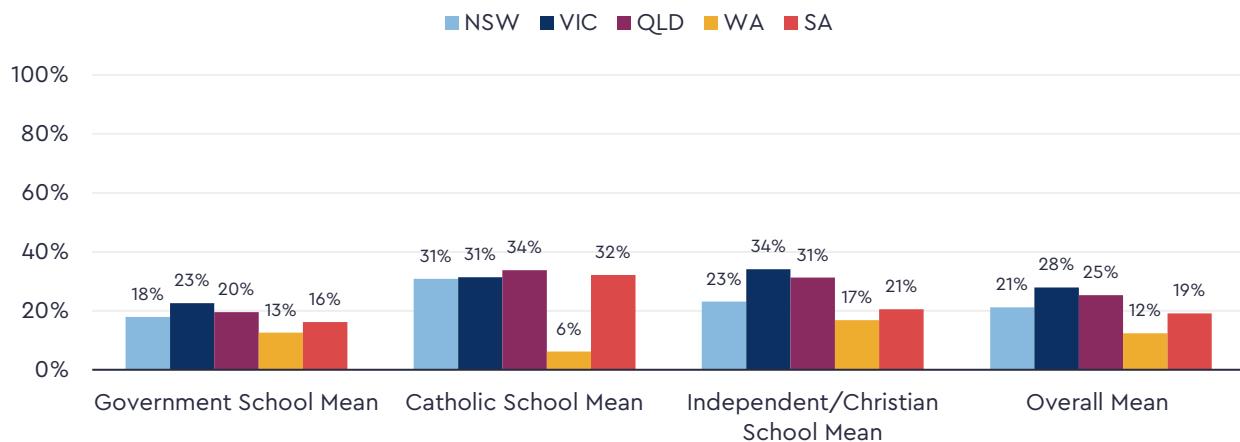
**Figure 11 Percentage of respondents who felt prepared by their school for university success – non-metropolitan areas**

### University Success - Non-Metro



**Figure 12 Percentage of respondents who have completed a bachelor's degree – non-metropolitan**

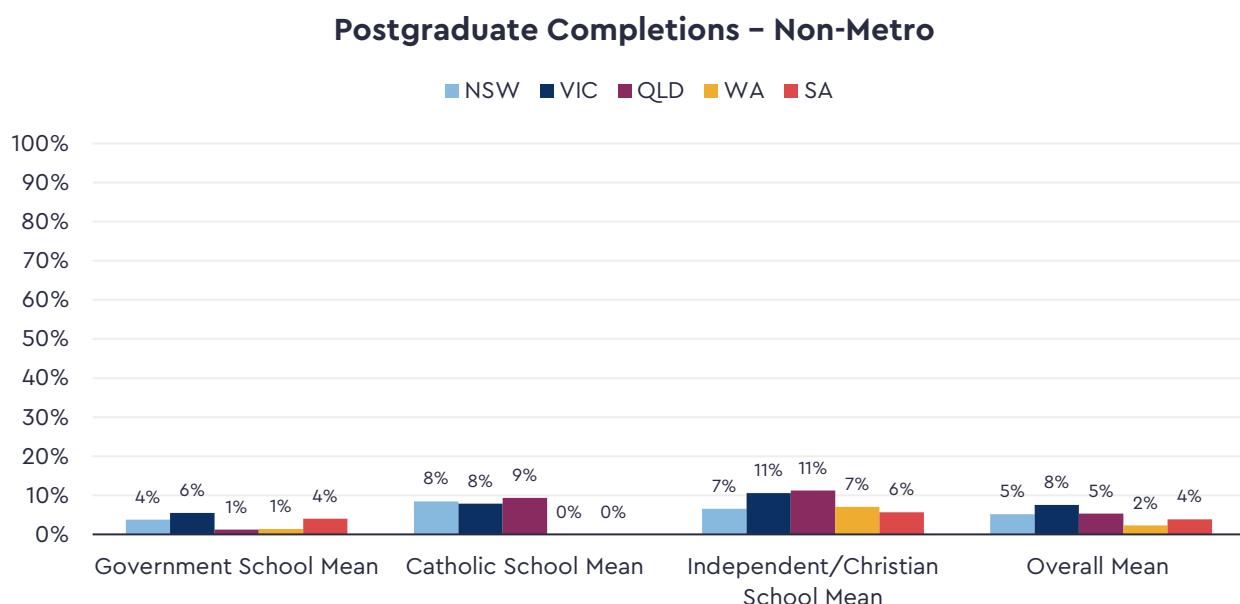
### Bachelor Degree Completion – Non-Metro



The pattern of disparity between NSW metropolitan and non—metropolitan areas was further evidenced in postgraduate degree completions (see figure 13), especially when compared to nearly every other state's postgraduate completion rate in non-metropolitan areas within this study with QLD being an interesting exception for the significantly high

postgraduate completion rates for Catholic (9%) and Independent/ Christian graduates (11%). Again, Independent/ Christian school graduates completing postgraduate study in NSW non-metropolitan areas were much lower than both VIC (11%) and QLD (11%) and the highest of any sector in any Australian state (see figure 13).

**Figure 13 Percentage of respondents who have completed a postgraduate degree – non-metropolitan**



The NSW non-metropolitan data nevertheless confirms the disparity that still exists between metropolitan and non-metropolitan bachelor's degree completions. This is further reinforced in recent comparative reports by the ABS (2018)<sup>29</sup> and Universities Australia (2019).<sup>30</sup>

These trends necessitate that equitable and accessible pathway for all Australian students, irrespective of their postcode or region, is a key area to address in ensuring shared commitments to the common good are worked out within all communities and regions. Longitudinal nationally benchmarked data on educational attainment consistently shows that there is a clear relationship between rural, regional, and remote geographic location and lower educational outcomes when data across a range of variables is aggregated.<sup>31</sup>

A number of other salient factors could help further explain the consistently high results for NSW graduates in metropolitan areas. NSW, like VIC, has a high migrant population, that is predominantly located in greater Sydney,<sup>32</sup> and these family influences contribute to an aspirational goal of university pathway options for their children over many decades. Such communities highly value these options and for many these pathways are seen to ensure success and security for succeeding generations. High proportions of migrant populations are located in key metropolitan areas and these ethnic groupings and their desire for university degree completions may impact in part on these proportionally much higher levels of bachelor's degree completions in metropolitan NSW.

29 ABS, 2018

30 Universities Australia, 2019

31 Halsey, J. (2017). Independent Review into Regional, Rural and Remote Education Commonwealth of Australia. P. 8

32 Angus. C. (2020). Regional NSW: A demographic and economic snapshot briefing paper NSW Parliamentary Research Services.

Within the NSW Independent sector, the age, maturity and socio-cultural and socio-economic locales of numerous well established independent schools, especially in gentrified urban centres, also may contribute to these high bachelor's degree completion rates from their graduates in metropolitan areas. Furthermore, these high completion rates may also be due to the diverse range of highly selective

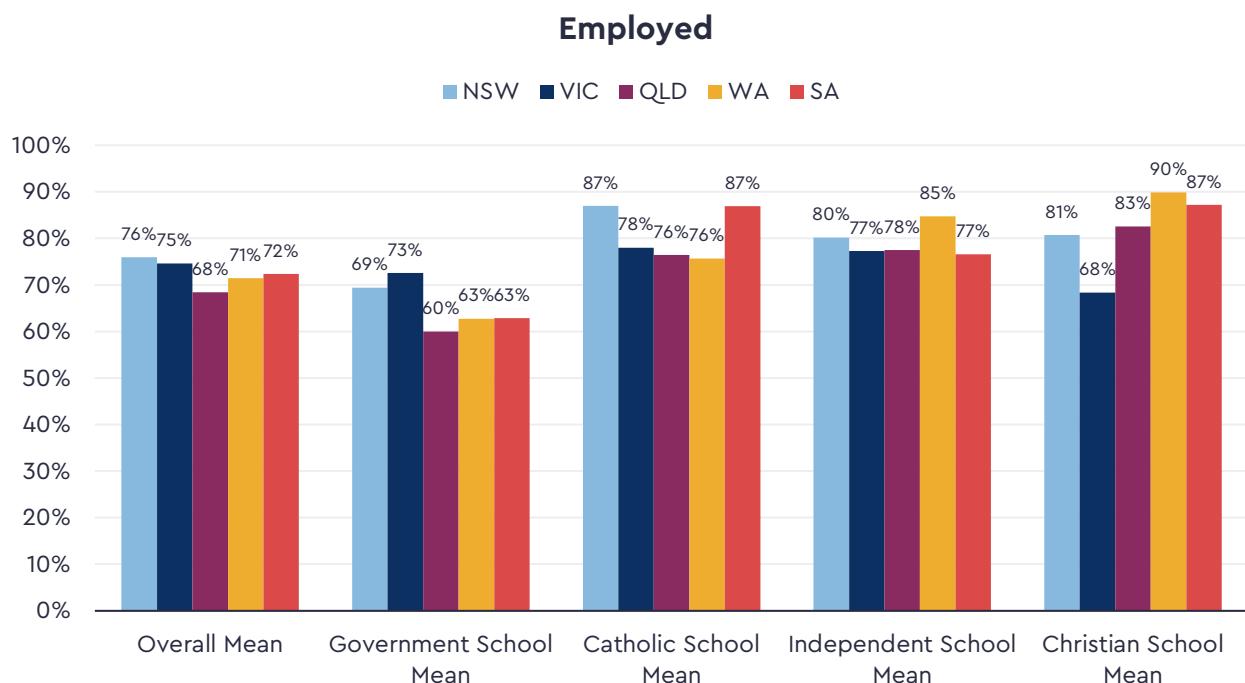
Government schools, including flagship schools like James Ruse Agricultural High School<sup>33</sup>, that contribute to the proportionally high Government school results in NSW. The state boasts one of the largest and most diverse range of selective and special needs schools in the nation<sup>34</sup> and these selective schools regularly outperform most other NSW schools across all sectors.

## Employment

Employment of NSW graduates across all schooling sectors (76% see figure 15) aligns with OECD findings and is the highest of any state in the nation.<sup>35</sup> NSW Catholic sector graduates are the most likely all NSW graduates to be employed (87% see figure 15) which is the second highest rate of employment across all sectors and all states (only behind WA Christian

graduates 90% see figure 15). NSW Catholic graduates were also most likely of any other graduate across all sectors and states to be employed full time from metropolitan areas (88% see figure 16) and were also most likely to be employed full-time in non-metropolitan areas across all sectors and all states (69% see figure 17).

**Figure 15 Percentage of respondents employed**

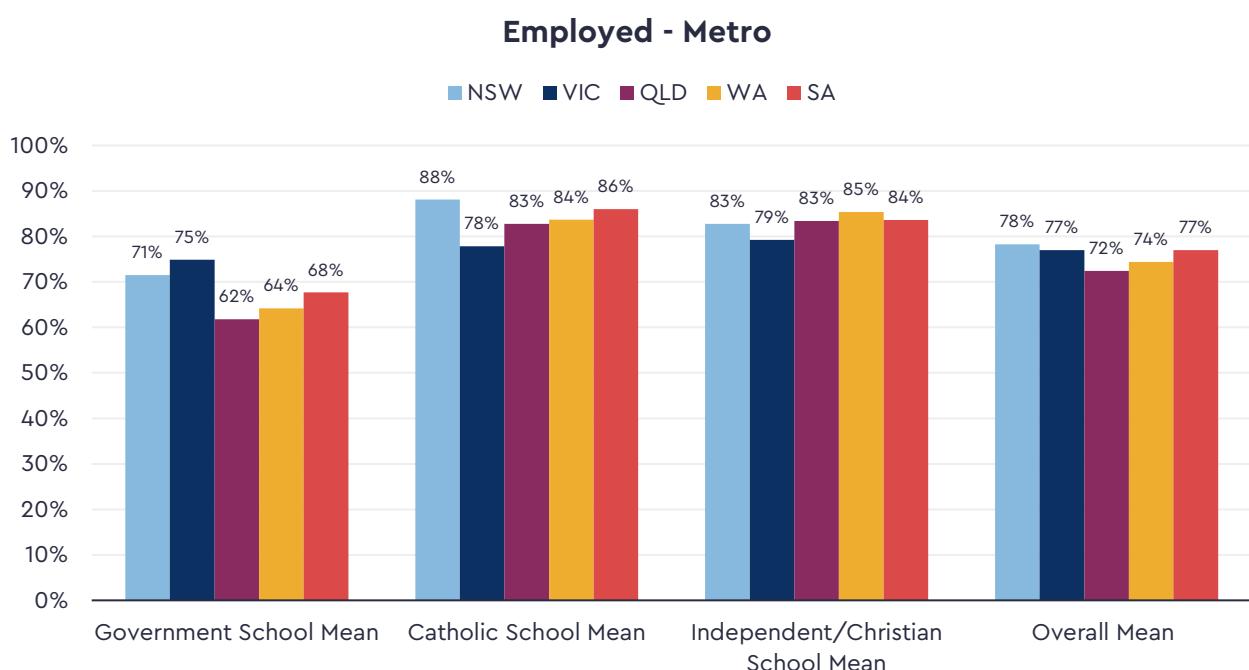


33 Baker, J. (2018) Inside the genius factory: the secrets to James Ruse high school's success Sydney Morning Herald <https://www.smh.com.au/national/nsw/inside-the-genius-factory-the-secrets-to-james-ruse-high-school-s-success-20181011-p5092i.html>

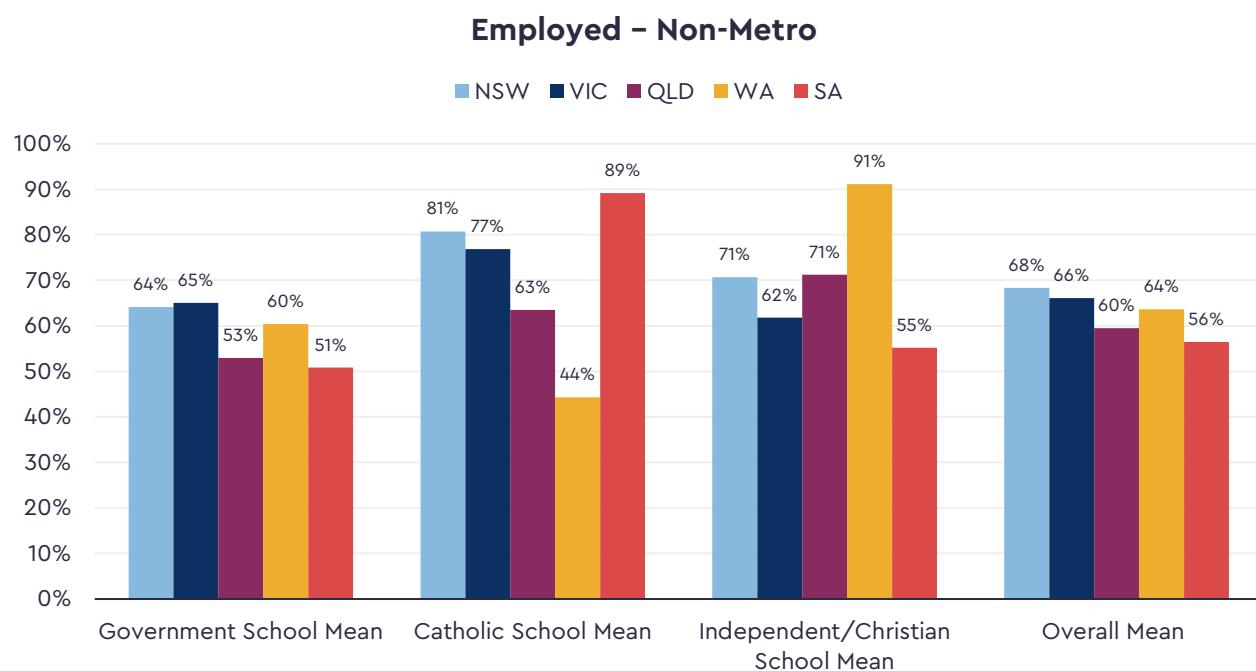
34 Yates, 2011.

35 OECD, 2019.

**Figure 16 Percentage of respondents who are employed fulltime – Metropolitan areas**



**Figure 17 Percentage of respondents who are employed fulltime – Non-metropolitan areas**

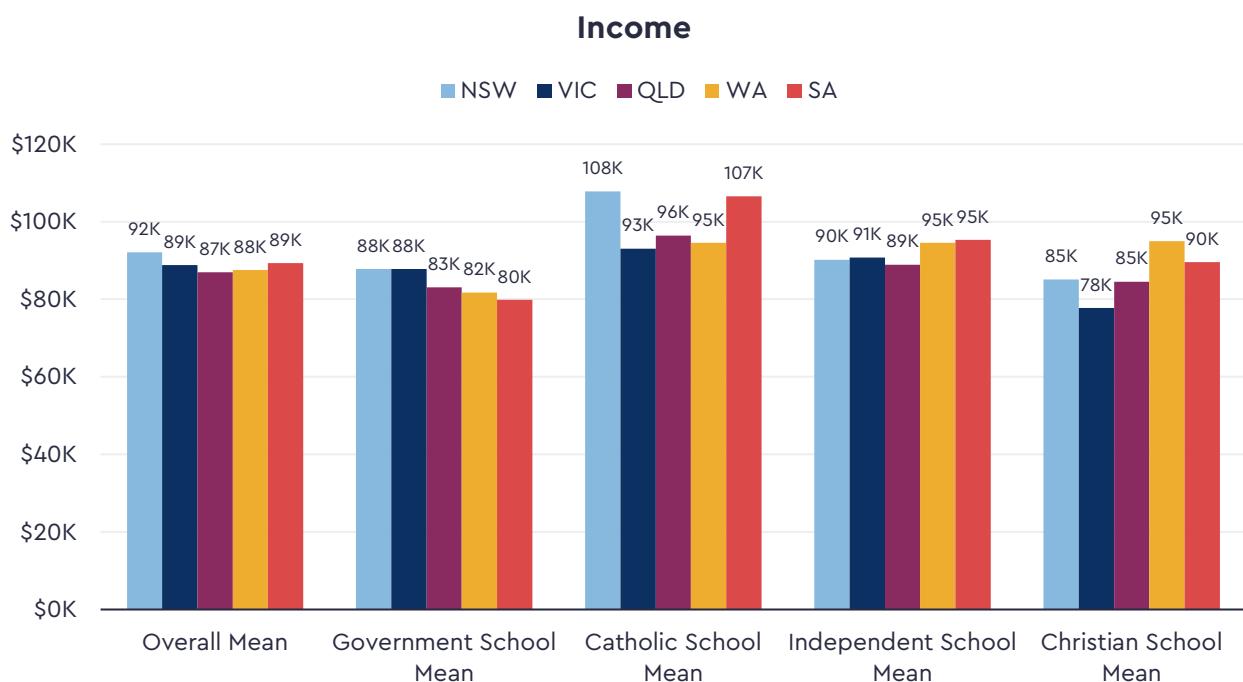


## Income

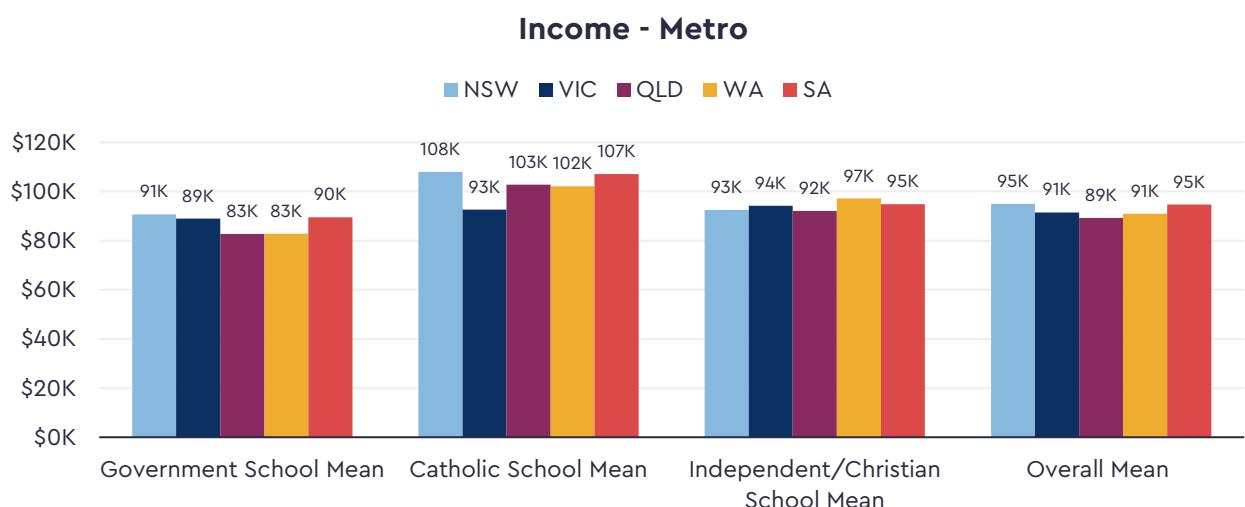
NSW graduate income levels overall were the highest of all states (\$92,000) and specifically NSW Catholic graduates were the highest paid of any graduate from any sector and any state (\$108,000 see figure 18). NSW Government school graduates were the equally highest paid graduates from Government schools (\$88,000) in the nation (with VIC see figure 18). When analysed further according to both metropolitan and non-metropolitan locales, NSW Catholic graduate's income levels in both metropolitan (\$108,000 see figure 19) and non-metropolitan (\$103,000 see figure 20) areas are the highest of any graduate from any sector and state in Australia. NSW Government school graduate incomes are also the highest of any government graduate in the nation in metropolitan areas. These results are linked closely to the high employment levels evidenced in the NSW graduate

data across the sector in both metropolitan and non-metropolitan locales. The NSW Independent/ Christian income levels are proportionally similar to other Independent/ Christian graduates from other states in metropolitan areas, but caution is recommended when comparing these metropolitan/ non-metropolitan splits due to the merging of Independent and Christian sectors due to small Christian school sampling sizes in non-metropolitan areas. Furthermore, the overall mean income for Christian school graduates in NSW (\$85,000 see figure 18) is the lowest in the nation and this, inevitably, will impact upon the combined mean incomes when merged with the Independent sector for metropolitan and non-metropolitan comparisons (see figure 19 and figure 20).

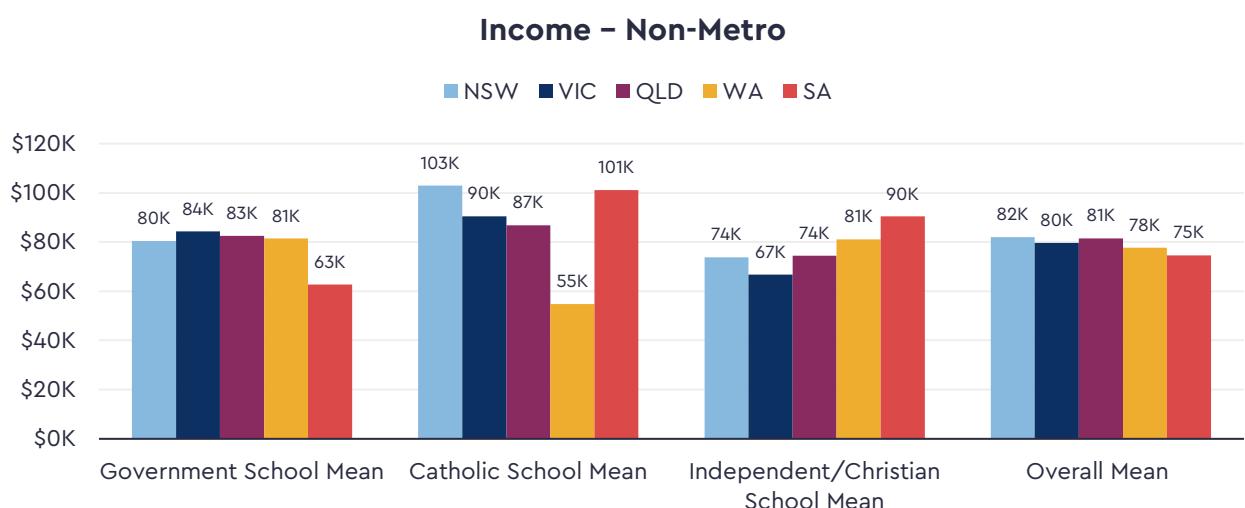
**Figure 18 Respondents household income**



**Figure 19 Respondents household income – Metropolitan**



**Figure 20 Respondents household income non-metropolitan**



In this section we presented findings relating to graduates of Government, Catholic, Independent and Christian schools in terms of their educational attainment, employment and income. These findings revealed some significant differences between sectors and revealed the very high levels of income from Catholic graduates across both metropolitan and non-metropolitan areas in NSW. Graduates from across all sectors in both NSW metropolitan and NSW non-metropolitan areas were in stable employment and these rates were not significantly lower than their metropolitan counterparts. Moreover, whilst there was a higher level of income from NSW graduates in

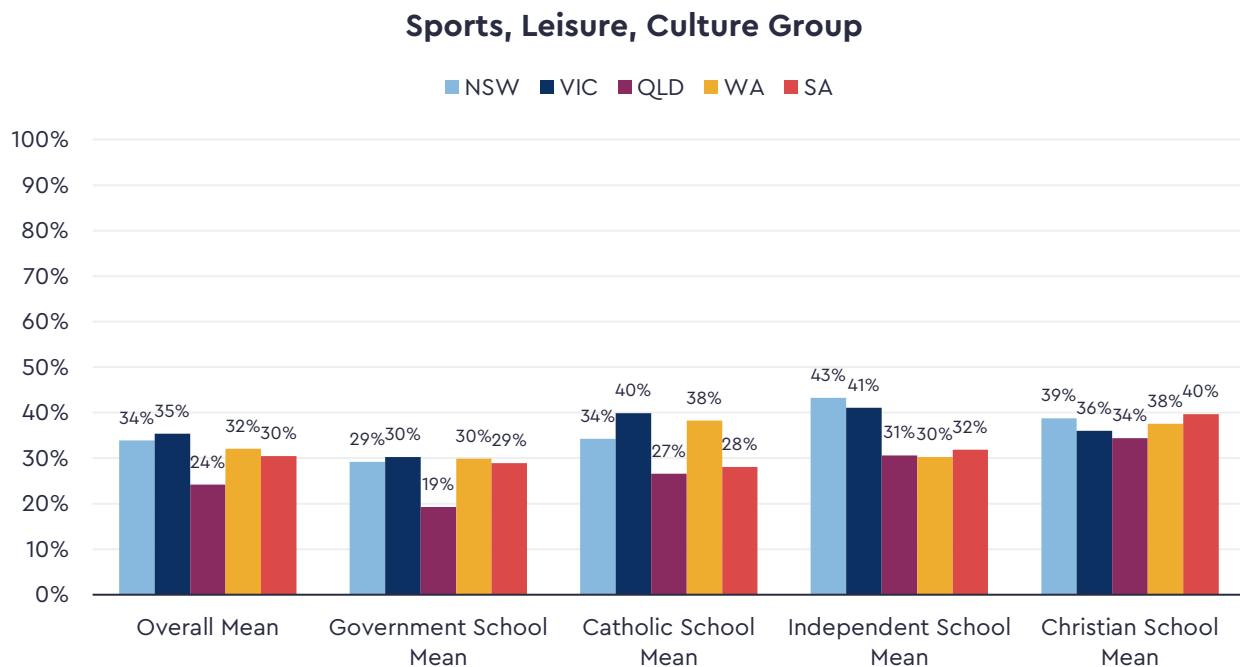
metropolitan areas, the difference must be cautiously analysed as household income estimates were not adjusted for different costs of living across urban and regional centres. Unlike VIC, bachelor's degree completions from NSW graduates were significantly higher in metropolitan areas than in non-metropolitan areas and this demands further investigation. In analysing the findings from this section, we hope this data raises more conversations about how to pursue the flourishing of individuals and their communities in both non-metropolitan and metropolitan locales.<sup>36</sup>

# New South Wales Millennial Graduates and Belonging: Associations, Groups and Causes

In this section, the CES Australia sought to identify whether a graduate's formative experiences at school impacted on their engagement in a diverse range of associations and community groups that nurture commitment, service, and care for others. Membership of associations, groups and causes promote a sense of belonging within communities, expand social networks, and encourage broader civic engagement. To investigate these important agencies for engagement and contribution to the common good, respondents were asked whether they had formed civic ties to associations including political parties, church or religious groups, trade unions, sports, leisure or cultural groups, and business and professional organisations.<sup>37</sup>

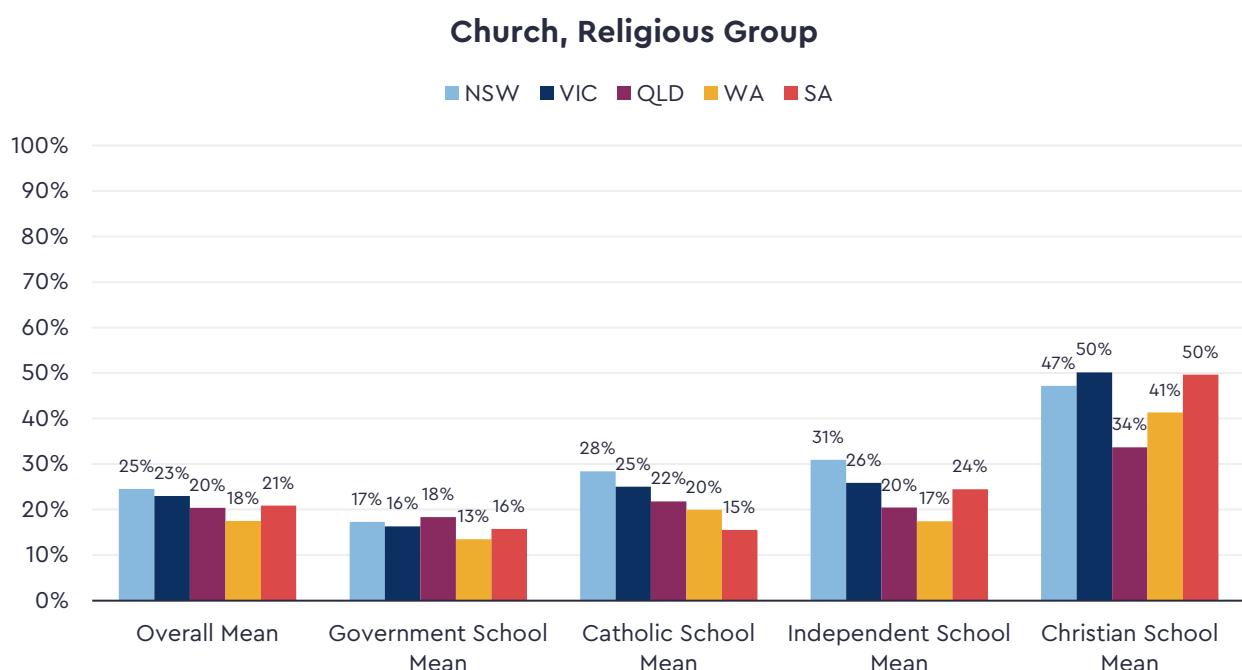
Overall, NSW graduates were most likely to be involved in a sports, leisure or cultural group (34% see figure 21) with NSW Independent graduates (43% see figure 21) the more likely of all NSW graduates to be involved in these groups and associations that build strong social networks and community. NSW graduates from across all sectors overall were more likely to be a member of a church or religious group (25%), a rate higher than any other sector from any other state in Australia. NSW Catholic (28%) and Independent graduates (31%) were the most likely of all graduates from these sectors to be involved in church religious groups across the nation. NSW Christian graduates were the most likely of all NSW sector graduates to be involved in church or religious groups (47%) and are nearly twice as likely to be involved as the graduates overall from all sectors in NSW (see figure 22). These findings were also relatively consistent across both metropolitan and non-metropolitan communities.

**Figure 21 Percentage of respondents involved in sports, leisure or cultural associations**



<sup>37</sup> Cheng and Iselin, 2020

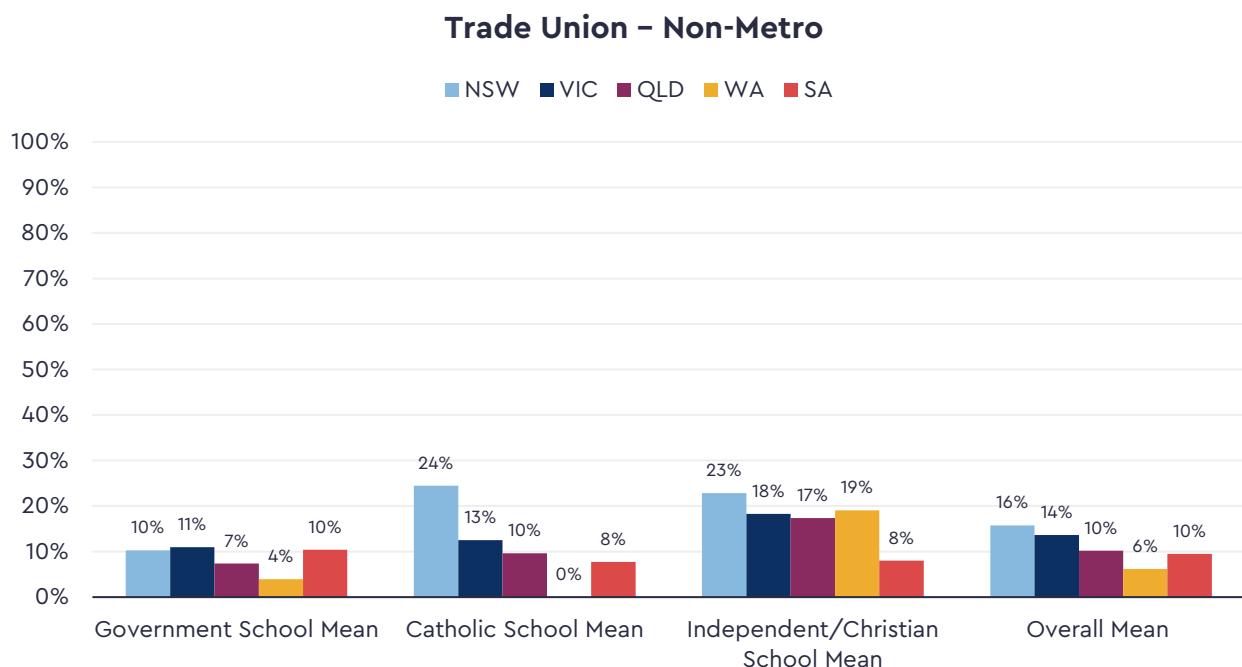
**Figure 22 Percentage of respondents involved in church or religious groups**



The overall mean for NSW graduates in non-metropolitan areas revealed they were most likely to be members of a trade union (16% see figure 23) than any other graduate from any other state. NSW Catholic graduates in non-metropolitan areas were the most likely of any Catholic graduate in non-metropolitan areas across Australia to be members of

a trade union (25% see figure 23) which is twice more likely than any other Catholic graduate from non-metropolitan regions in the nation. Furthermore, NSW Independent/ Christian graduates in non-metropolitan areas were also most likely to belong to a trade union than any other Independent graduate from any other state in non-metropolitan regions (23% see figure 23).

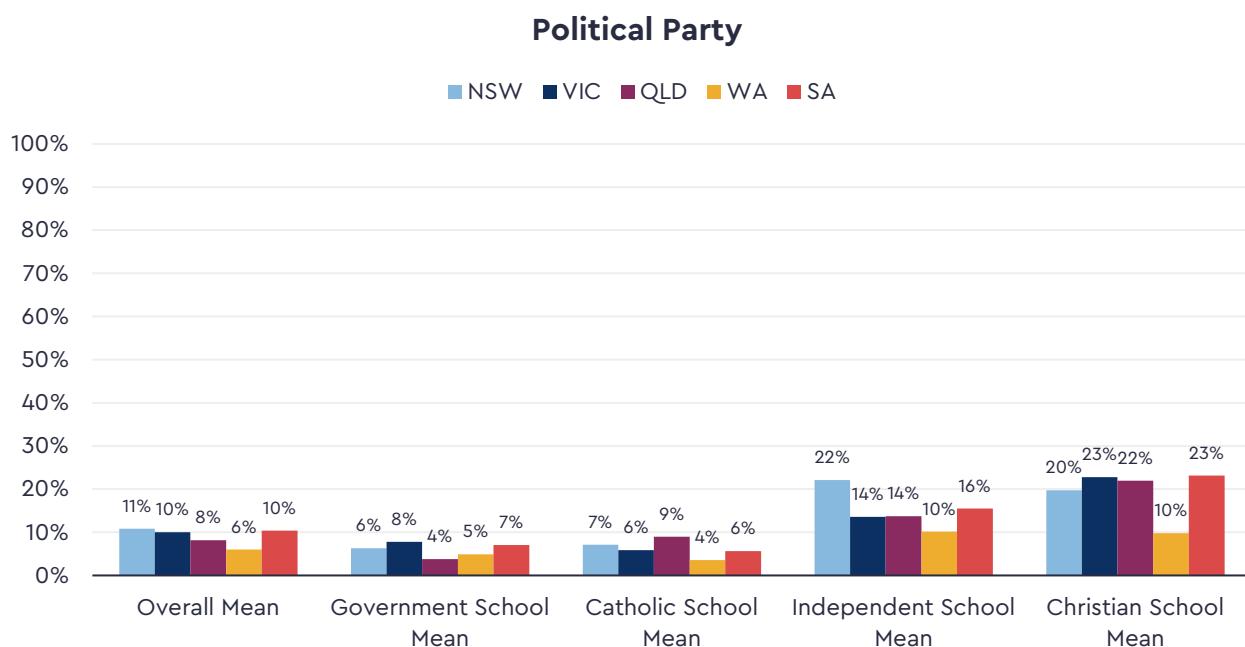
**Figure 23 Percentage of respondents involved in trade union – Non-metropolitan**



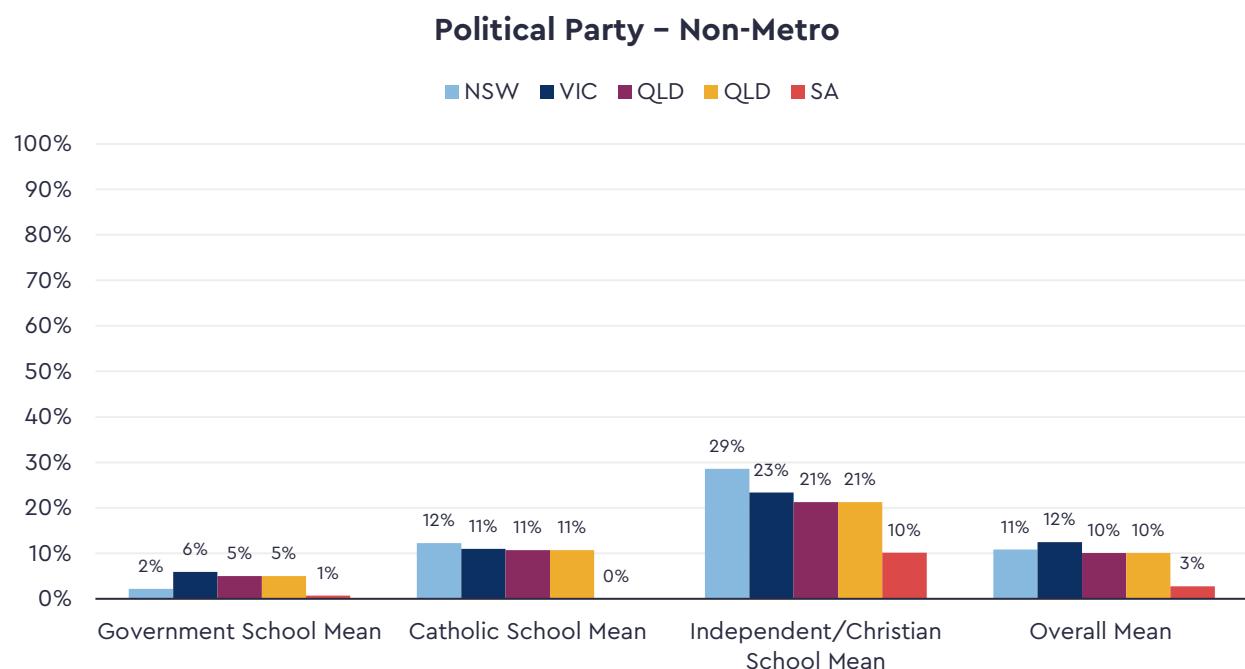
Furthermore, NSW Independent school graduates had the highest level of political membership and involvement of all Independent graduates across the nation (22% see figure 24) and similar to the high political involvement of Christian graduates from VIC (23%), SA (23%) and QLD (22%). Whilst there is no specific data on the type of political party these

graduates were involved in, there was a proportionally very high participation rate in political groups for NSW Independent/ Christian graduates in non-metropolitan areas (29% see figure 25). Further analysis of these results in non-metropolitan areas is therefore recommended.

**Figure 24 Percentage of respondents involved in political parties**



**Figure 25 Percentage of respondents involved in political parties – non-metropolitan**



These findings suggest that, in partnership with family and community, NSW schools play some role in enriching the social fabric and cultivating rich networks for membership and involvement in a variety of civic associations. Participation in political parties, trade unions and church and religious groups was noteworthy across NSW Independent/Christian school graduates, whilst membership of sporting leisure and cultural groups was the most popular association engaged by NSW graduates across all sectors. However, the findings of the CES Australia would reinforce that whilst NSW graduate involvement

in associations was comparatively high compared to most other states in Australia, these overall lower rates of association as evidenced in these findings reflect broader trends of decreasing social connectedness, engagement and belonging in their local communities and there may be value in considering how schools — whether Government, Catholic, Independent or Christian — might better foster the kinds of social bonds students need in adulthood. These bonds are both necessary and critical for the future wellbeing and flourishing of Australian communities at large.<sup>38</sup>

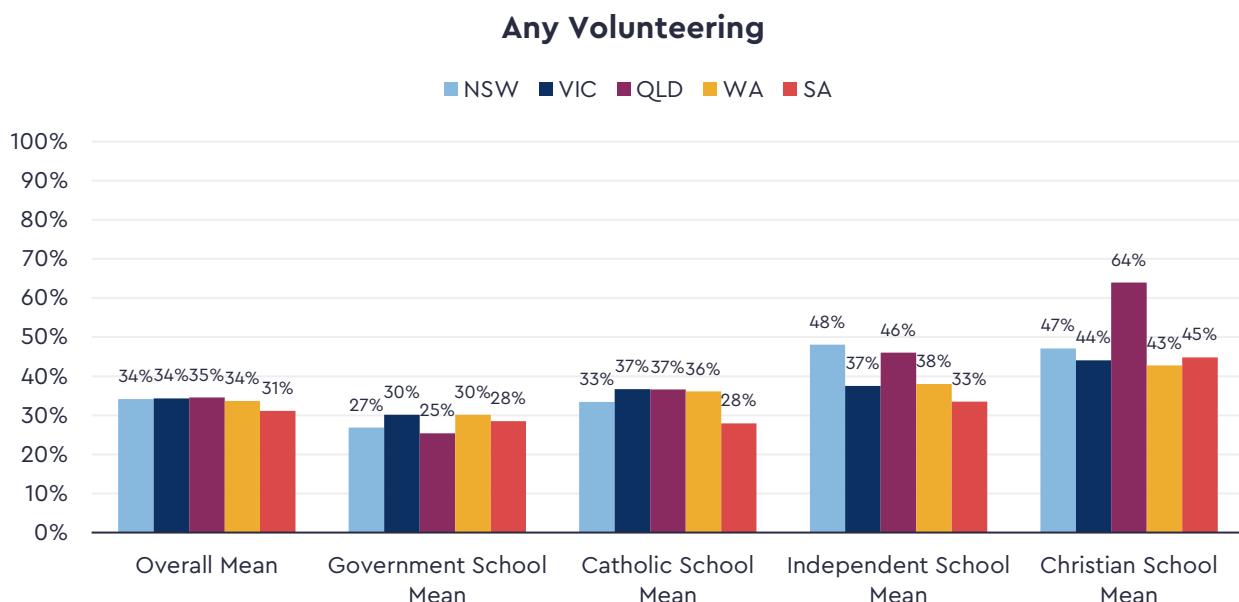
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38 Cheng and Iselin, 2020

# New South Wales Millennial Graduates and Generosity: Volunteering and Giving

This section explores how respondents from each state of Australia were cultivating the civic virtues of generosity which actively promote the common good. Giving to the community, whether through time or money, is how individuals find meaning and seek the good of others. The CES Australia sought to investigate how prevalent volunteering and giving are among graduates from Government, Catholic, independent, and Christian schools. The questions in this section investigated what levels of generosity were evident across graduates and if there were any differences in giving of time and resources according to each state and in what areas of civil society they contribute to.

**Figure 26 Percentage of respondents who volunteer**



NSW Christian graduates (46%) were equal most likely (with VIC Christian graduates 46%) to volunteer for environmental causes across all graduates from all states and were twice more likely than SA Christian school graduates to volunteer for these types of causes (see figure 24). NSW Independent school graduates were also most likely to volunteer for environmental causes than any other Independent graduate in the nation (41% see figure 27). Similarly, Independent/ Christian school graduates from NSW

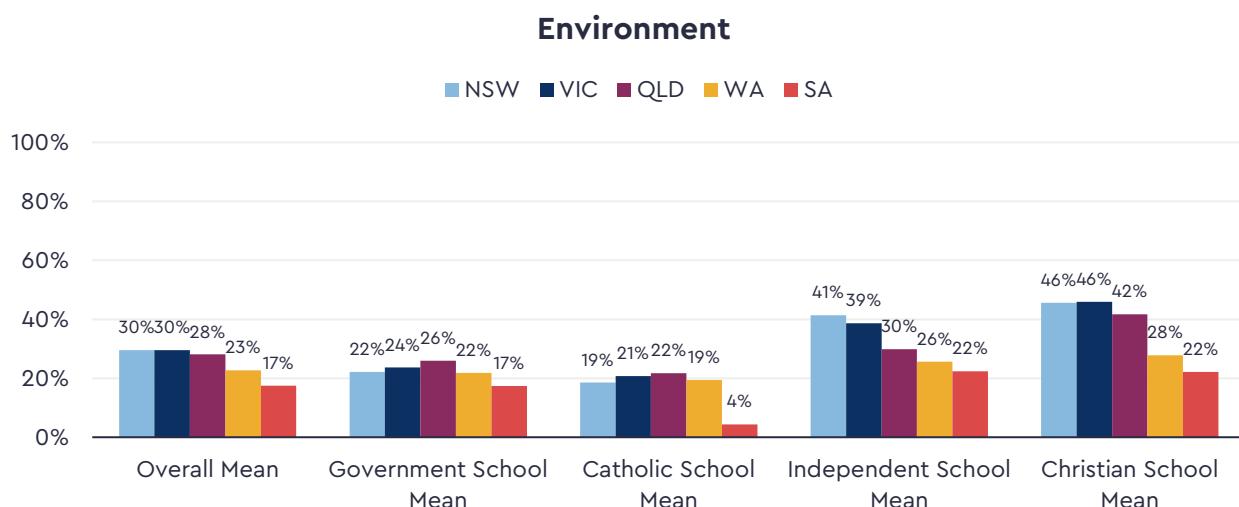
According to 2020 research, a third of all Australians have volunteered (33%) while more than one in five have been involved with fundraising for a specific charity (23%) or advocating and raising awareness (21%). Almost half of those who volunteer (48%) do so at least once a month, while more than a quarter (26%) volunteer at least once every few months.<sup>39</sup>

The overall means for the levels of volunteering from graduates across all sectors and states aligns closely with these findings from this state analysis revealed that the number of NSW graduates who were volunteering in some way in their community was 34% (see figure 26).

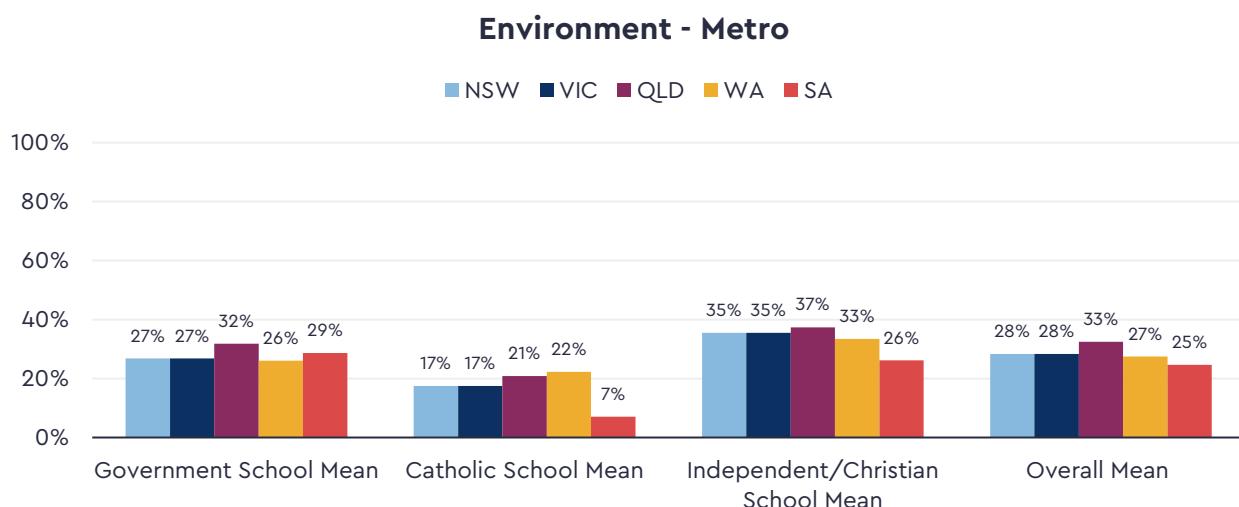
non-metropolitan areas were significantly more likely to volunteer for environmental causes (62% see figure 29) and nearly twice more likely to volunteer for these causes than their NSW metropolitan counterparts (36% see figure 28). Similar to the VIC findings, these results suggest regional areas are actively concerned and engaged in their local communities regarding a range of environmental issues and are willing to give of their time to volunteer for these causes.

<sup>39</sup> McCrindle, 2020; Cheng and Iselin, 2020

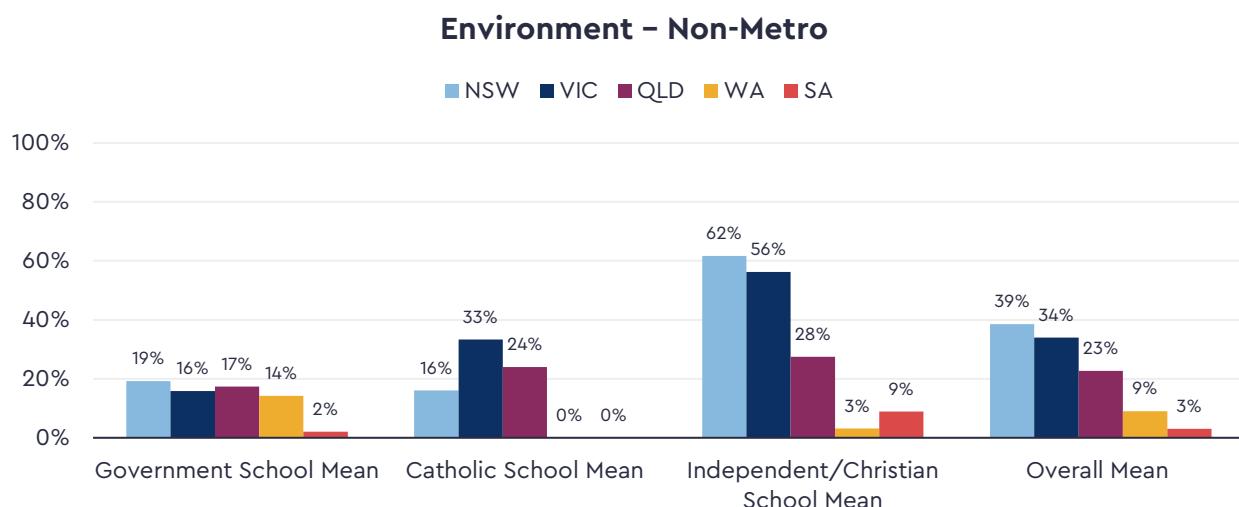
**Figure 27 Percentage of respondents who volunteer for environmental groups**



**Figure 28 Percentage of respondents who volunteer for environmental groups – metropolitan**



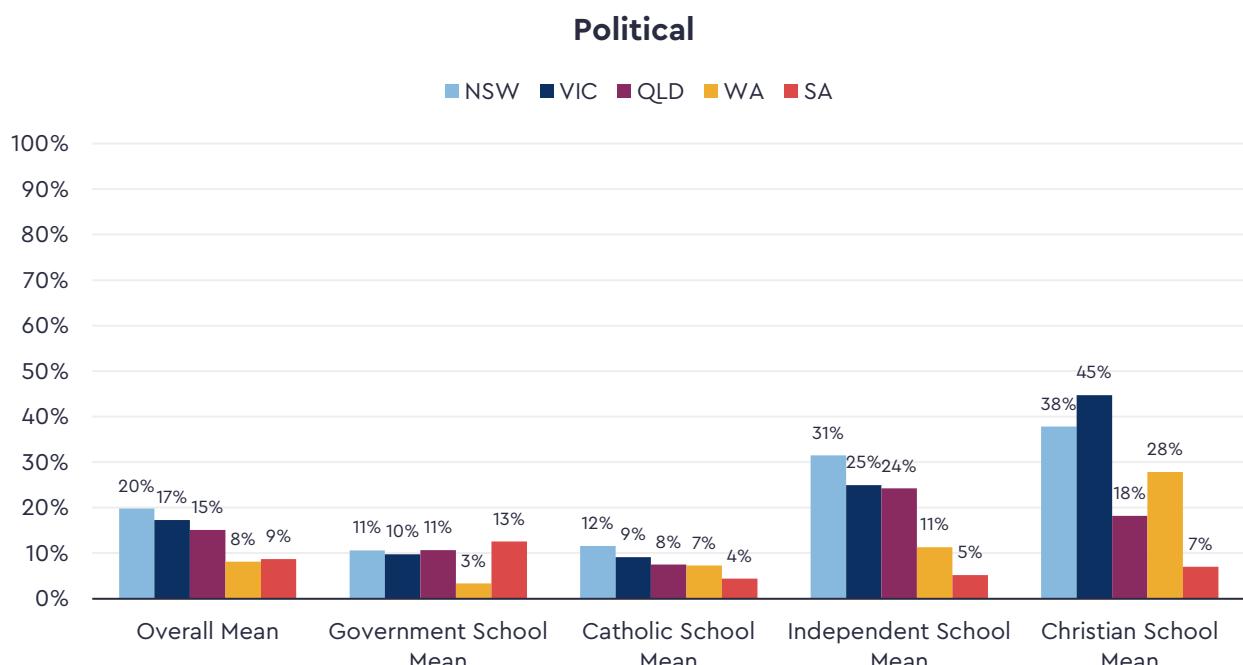
**Figure 29 Percentage of respondents who volunteer for environmental groups – non-metropolitan**



NSW graduates overall were more likely to volunteer for political parties (20% see figure 30) than graduates from any other state with NSW Catholic and Independent graduates more likely to volunteer for these groups than any other graduate from their respective sectors in the nation (see figure 30). NSW Christian graduates (38%) were the second most

likely of any graduate from any sector and state, only behind VIC Christian graduates (45%), to volunteer for political parties and political causes (see figure 30). These graduates were three times more likely than NSW Catholic and Government graduates to volunteer for political parties.

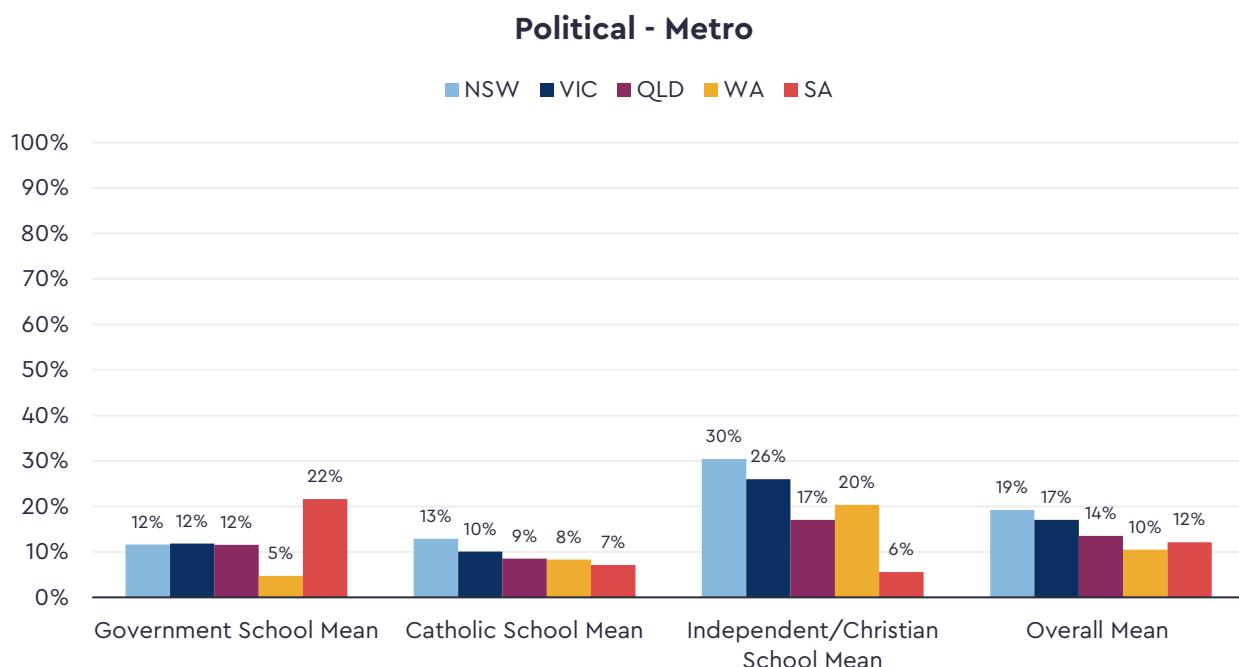
**Figure 30 Percentage of respondents who volunteer for political groups**



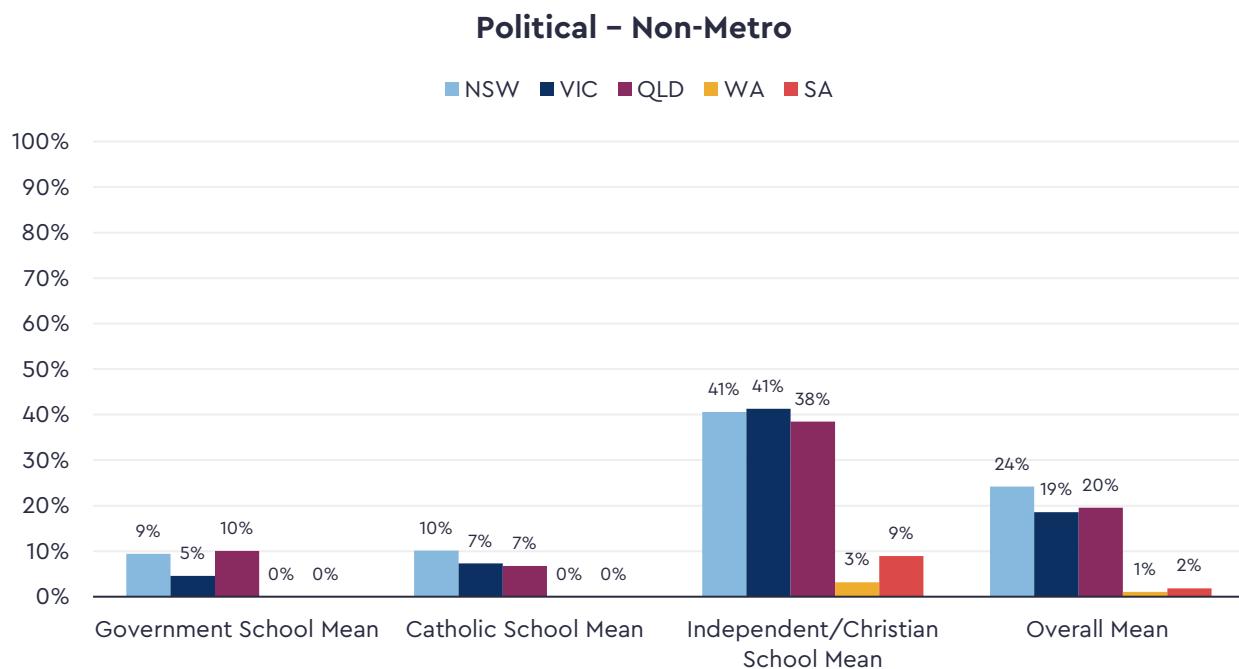
When analysed further, NSW Independent/ Christian graduates in a non-metropolitan areas were significantly more likely to volunteer for political groups and causes (41%), a finding strikingly similar to the VIC Independent/ Christian graduates (41%) which are both higher than any other graduate in any other non-metropolitan area across the nation and over 10 times more likely than graduates from NSW Government (9%) or Catholic (10%) schools from a non-metropolitan area (see figure 32). These high levels of volunteering for political causes by

NSW Independent/ Christian graduates were also significantly higher than NSW Independent/ Christian graduates from metropolitan areas (30% see figure 31) which was also the highest of any graduate and any sector across the nation in metropolitan areas. The factors driving these high levels of volunteering for political parties in NSW are worthy of further consideration and caution would be advised on assuming involvement in a particular political party leaning without evidence.

**Figure 31 Percentage of respondents who volunteer for political groups – metropolitan**



**Figure 32 Percentage of respondents who volunteer for political groups – non-metropolitan**



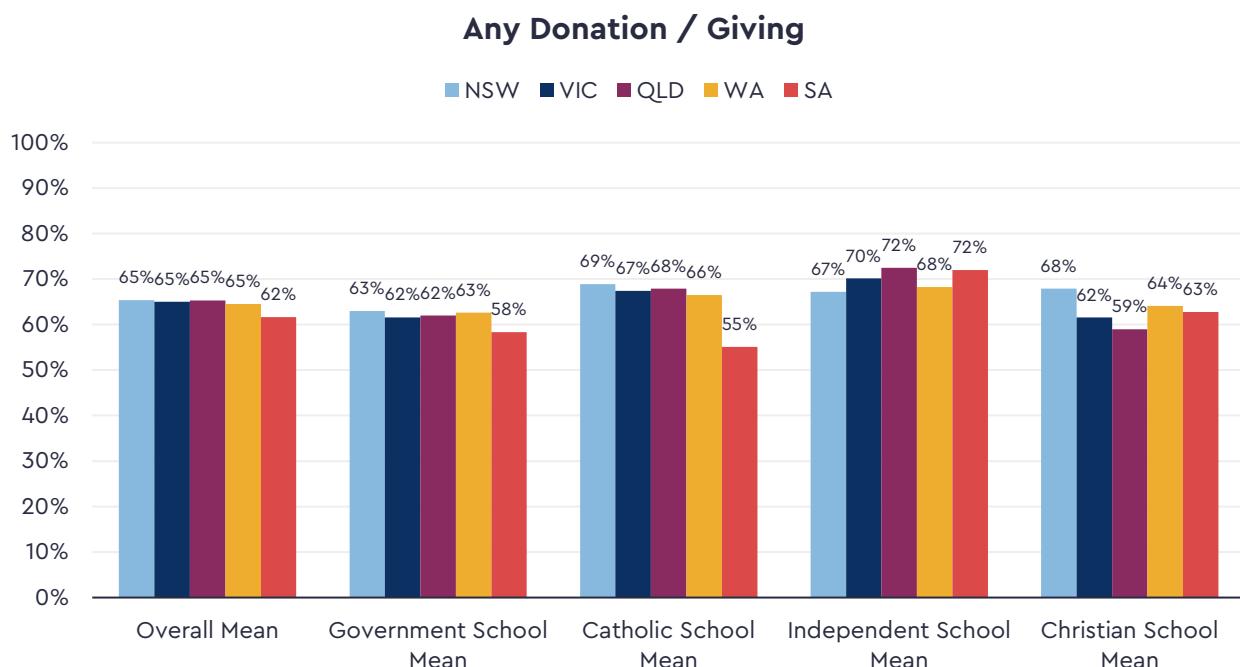
In the remaining types of organisations in which respondents reported volunteering, such as groups that assist children, the poor, elderly, youth, and sporting and cultural organisations we did not find statistically noteworthy differences in participation across the various school sectors in NSW.

## Giving

Levels of active civic engagement and service are not just limited to volunteering. A 2020 McCrindle report identified that approximately seven in 10 Australians give annually. Whilst this rate is high, it does represent a five percentage-point drop since 2019.<sup>40</sup> The overall means for each state involved in the CES Australia study would support these findings<sup>41</sup> and there was a general consistency of giving across all NSW graduates (65% see figure 33). For NSW graduates, giving to political causes was more likely than any other graduate from any other state with NSW Independent/ Christian graduates in metropolitan

(24% see figure 34) and non-metropolitan (52% see figure 35) areas most likely to give to these causes. Whilst the levels of giving to political causes for NSW Catholic graduates in non-metropolitan areas (20%) was significant – four times higher than any other Catholic graduate's level of giving to political causes in these locales across all states (6% see figure 35), these levels are still less than half of what NSW Independent/ Christian graduates gave to these political causes in non-metropolitan areas (52% see figure 35).

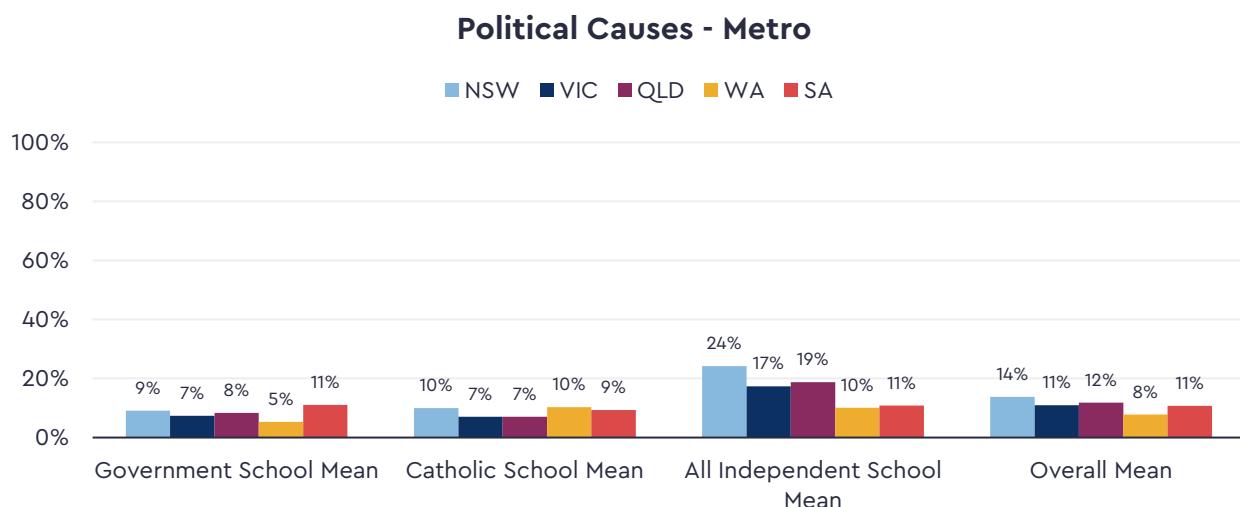
**Figure 33 Percentage of respondents who give**



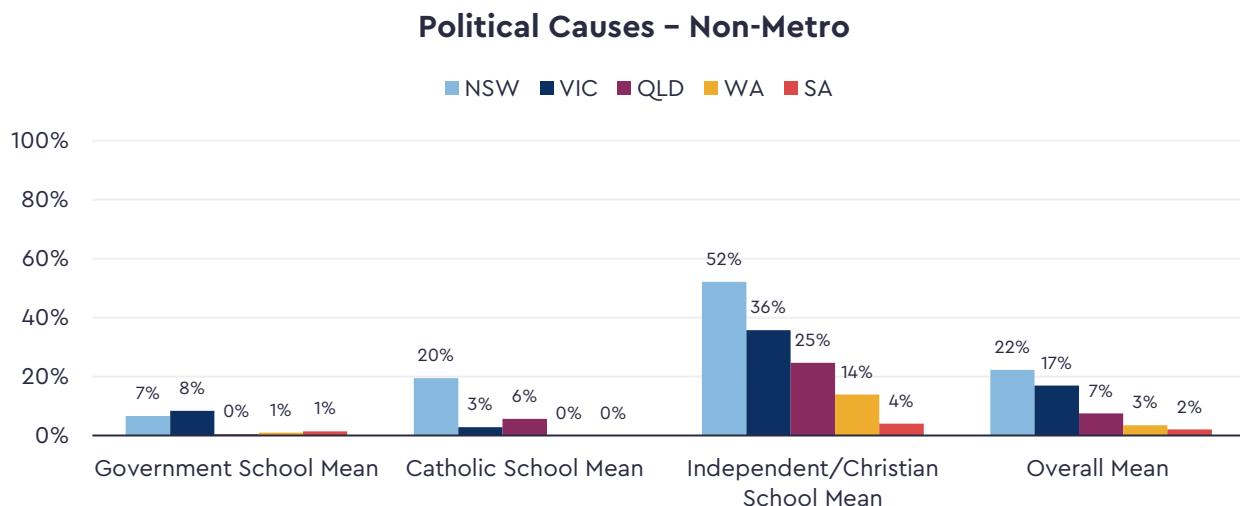
40 McCrindle, 2020; Cheng and Iselin, 2020

41 Cheng and Iselin, 2020.

**Figure 34 Percentage of respondents who give to political causes – metropolitan**



**Figure 35 Percentage of respondents who give to political causes – non-metropolitan**



These findings complement the high level of civic engagement that was evidenced by the results for volunteering of NSW graduates for political causes and also aligns with similar results identified in the VIC state analyses.

This section explored how generous NSW graduates are with their time and money and how they are seeking to serve through volunteering or donating to charitable organisations. According to the findings, giving of money or donations was more common than giving of one's time to volunteer. When these levels of volunteering and giving were further differentiated by school sector, there are some significant findings for NSW graduates, especially from the Independent/

Christian sector in non-metropolitan areas. We also acknowledge that there are other forms of civic engagement beyond volunteering and giving which were not investigated in the CES Australia data. Furthermore, many of the cross-sector differences must also consider demographic characteristics. Such a pattern highlights the important role that the family plays alongside the schools in nurturing civic dispositions of service and generosity. It is hoped that these findings will stimulate wider conversations on how schools and communities can better play a role in shaping graduates to be even more generous with their time and money in community enhancing and hospitable ways.<sup>42</sup>

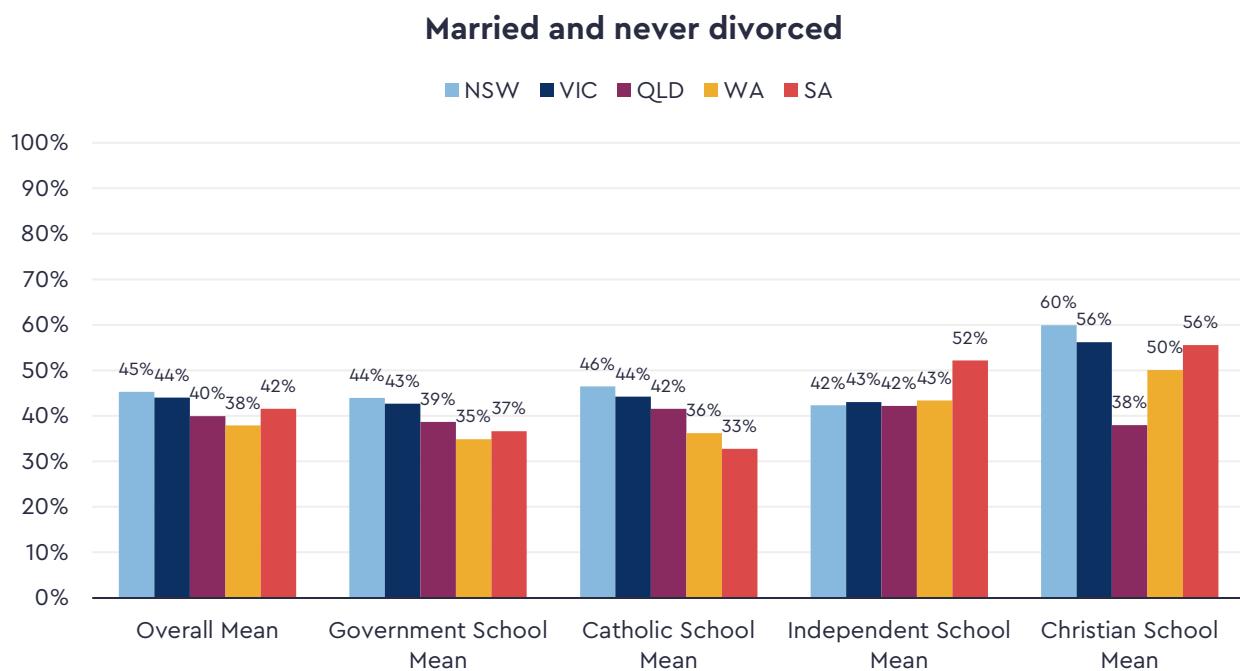
42 Ibid.

# New South Wales Millennial Graduates and Family: Marriage and Relationships

Marriage is an established tradition that serves an important part in personal happiness and is a core foundation for a flourishing society. Schools and families represent two parts of a broader moral ecosystem in which young people are formed. Conceptions of the good and the practices that embody those ideals are taught and reinforced within schools, families and other communities. Importantly, the school and family structures are mutually supporting; healthy schools need healthy families and vice-versa.<sup>43</sup> Young people need these reciprocal relationships for their formation, growth and development into adulthood. In this section, we consider the potential role of schools in family formation. That is, what are the marital outcomes among graduates from Government, Catholic, Independent and Christian schools?

The findings revealed that overall, NSW graduates were more likely to be married and not divorced than any other state in Australia (45% see figure 36) and there were consistent rates of graduates who were married across NSW Government (44%), Catholic (46%) and Independent schools (42%) but there was a much higher rate of graduates who are married by the NSW Christian school graduate (60% see figure 36). These rates were the highest in the nation across any sector and any state. Whilst we cannot ascertain the quality of these marriage relationships, it is worth considering if certain values have been shaped through both family and NSW school communities in these responses.

**Figure 36 Percentage of respondents who are married and never divorced**

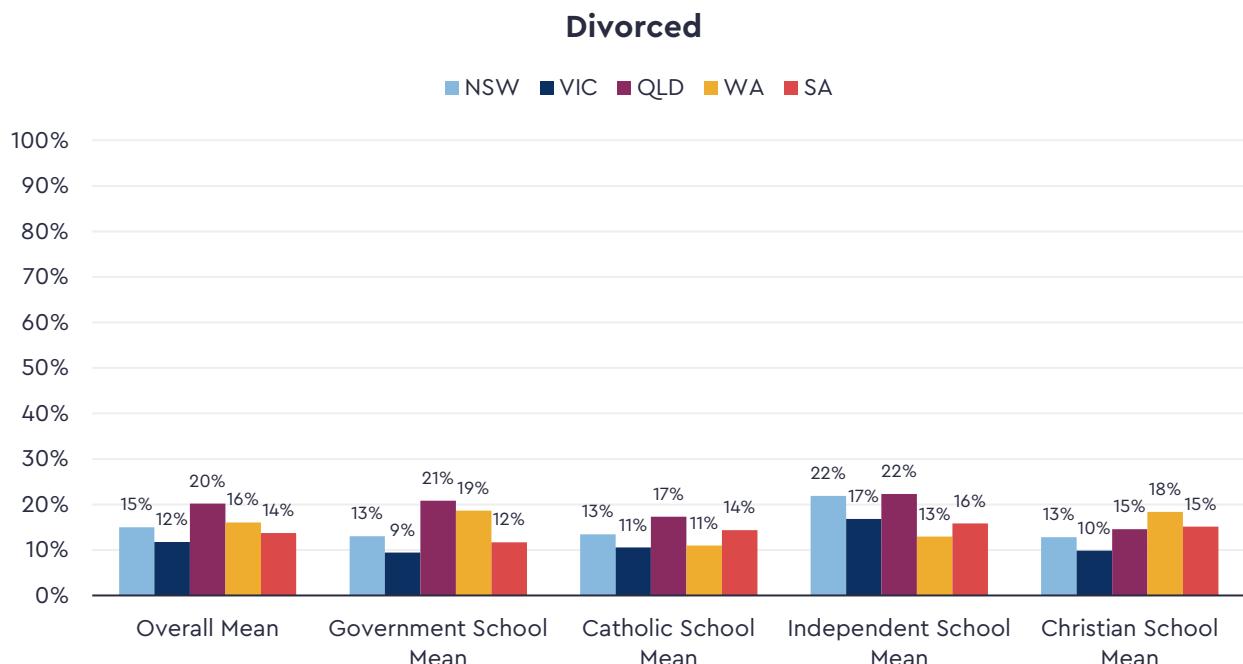


<sup>43</sup> Cheng and Iselin, 2020.

The findings also revealed that NSW graduates were less likely to be divorced (15% see figure 37) but were higher than the proportionally low rates of divorce evidenced with VIC graduates overall (12% see figure 37). There was no major statistical difference between the rates of divorce from graduates of NSW Government (13%), Catholic (13%), or Christian

schools (13%) but there was a significantly higher rate of divorce for graduates of NSW Independent schools (22%) who had the equal highest levels of divorce rates across all sectors and all states with QLD Independent graduates (22% see figure 37). Rates of divorce were not statistically different in NSW metropolitan and non-metropolitan areas.

**Figure 37 Percentage of respondents who have been divorced**



Whilst the findings indicate that Catholic, Independent and Government school graduates do not differ significantly from one another on marital outcomes, there is a higher prevalence of being married and never divorcing amongst NSW Christian school graduates. However, it is important to reiterate that many of the differences among NSW Christian school graduates were likely attributable to differences in the kinds of families that select Christian schools for their children. Once adjusted for these background characteristics in the CES Australia data analyses, the Christian-school difference

decreased but was still nevertheless significant. Such a result underscores the importance of sustaining healthy families in which the kinds of virtues that are conducive to greater civic responsibility can be nurtured and promoted. Cultivating a strong connection between home and school is, therefore, vital as both spheres make large imprints in the kinds of citizens that are ultimately formed.<sup>44</sup> It is a reminder that all schools — Government, Catholic, Independent and Christian — can consider and reflect upon as they seek to serve the common good.

<sup>44</sup> Cheng and Iselin, 2020.

# New South Wales Millennial Graduates and Religion: Faith Commitments and Spiritual Practices

Australia's religious profile has shifted considerably in the past two decades and is perceived as one of the most religiously diverse nations in the world.<sup>45</sup> Australians are identifying less as Christian, and an increasing number do not identify with any religion at all. Furthermore, religion remains a contested construct within Australia's public square.<sup>46</sup> This is reflected in the CES Australia data, with only about one in five respondents reporting that they grew up in families who thought religion was important.<sup>47</sup> In this section, we consider whether schools play a role in fostering hearts that are sensitive to a sense of the transcendent. In the CES Australia, we asked a variety of questions about beliefs about God, moral reasoning and religious practice. The questions were focussed primarily on whether schools instil religious beliefs and practices and a sense of the transcendent, not specifically whether they instil beliefs and practices of religious traditions.<sup>48</sup>

Consistent with the findings earlier in this report regarding civic engagement, belonging, volunteering and giving, NSW Christian school graduates are most likely of any NSW graduate to attend a church/religious service at least monthly (42% see figure 38) and are nearly twice as likely as NSW Catholic school graduates (16%) and 3 times more likely than NSW Government graduates to attend a church or religious service (14%). These proportionally higher rates of church and religious service attendance from NSW Christian school graduates (and VIC Christian school graduates) are worthy of further investigation and may also be the result of large pockets of migrant populations, especially European and Dutch migrant populations that established many Christian schools especially within VIC and NSW over the past 60 years.<sup>49</sup>

The overall means for NSW graduates also reveal that across all sectors 21% of respondents are attending a church or religious service at least every month (see figure 38) which is higher than any other state in the nation. NSW Catholic graduates are also most likely than any other Catholic graduate across Australia to attend church or a religious service regularly and are almost twice more likely to attend than Catholic graduates from QLD (12%) and four times more likely than Catholic graduates from SA (6%).

45 Bouma, 2016.

46 Keddie, A., Wilkinson, J., Howie, L. et al. '...we don't bring religion into school': issues of religious inclusion and social cohesion. *Aust. Educ. Res.* 46, 1-15 (2019). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s13384-018-0289-4>

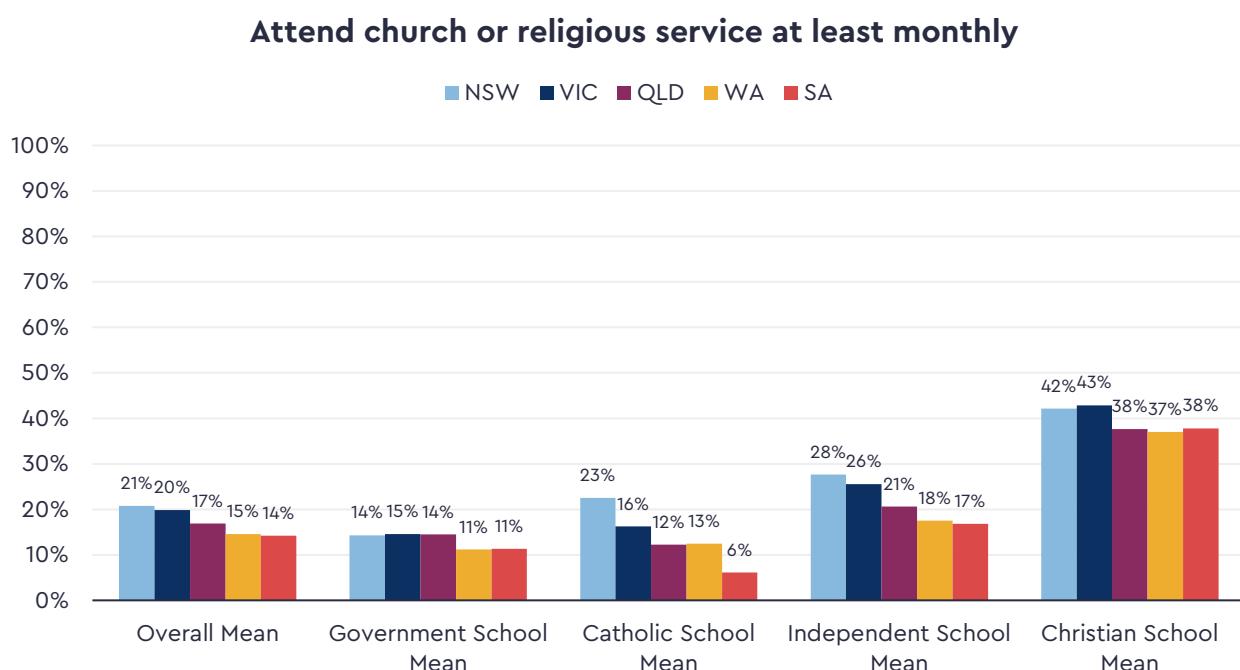
47 Cheng, A. and Iselin, D. (2020). *Australian Schools and the Common Good*. Ontario: Canada.

48 Ibid.

49 Justins, C. F. R. (2002). *Christian parent-controlled schools in Australia: A study of the*

relationship between founding values and prevailing practices. PhD Thesis, Australian Catholic University, Fitzroy: Victoria.

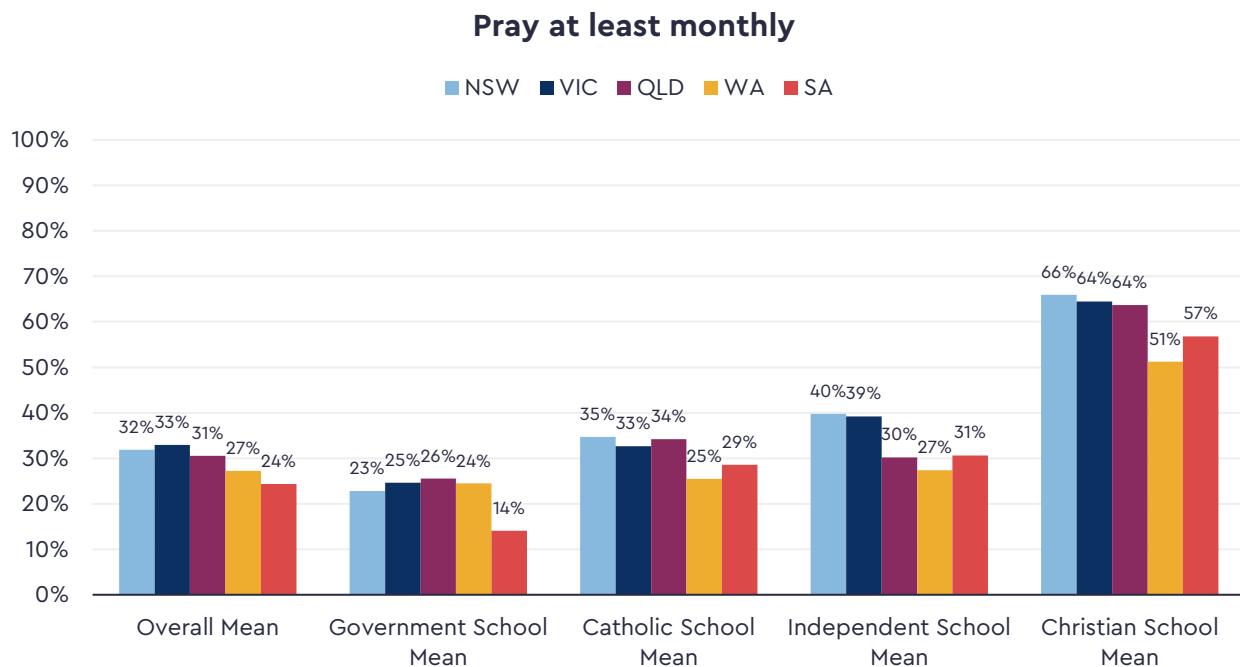
**Figure 38 Percentage of respondents who attend church/ religious service monthly**



These findings are further reinforced for NSW Christian school graduates who are more likely to pray at least monthly (66% see figure 39), than any other graduate from any other state. Again, the integral role of family

religious background does have a significant impact on these outcomes and caution is required when interpreting these results solely from a school sector perspective.

**Figure 39 Percentage of respondents who pray monthly**



Contemporary Australia has been reported as one of the most religiously diverse nations in the world.<sup>50</sup> NSW schools take different approaches and place different emphases on the importance of fostering a sense of the transcendence in students. This, alongside family background and other variables, is likely to play an important role in how graduates relate to religion or spirituality.<sup>51</sup> Rather than dismissing religion, we intentionally included this section to raise the question of how religion might be constitutive of the common good<sup>52</sup> in contemporary Australian society and how a reframing of religious ideas and values towards a concept of transcendence may promote better dialogue on this important area from across all schooling sectors.

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50 Bouma, 2016.

51 Cheng and Iselin, 2020.

52 Korrt, Dollery & Grant, 2014; VanderWeele, 2017b.

# Conclusion

The findings of the NSW state-based analysis of the CES Australia data reveal that, across all schooling sectors in NSW, Millennial graduates contribute to the common good and sustain civic life in a plethora of ways. The results both describe and reinforce the particular ways each Australian school sector within each state jurisdiction, educates for the common good. Schools of all types — Government and non-Government, religious and secular — provide a public education, that is, an education that seeks to shape and form graduates for active participation and engagement in and for the good of society. These contributions are vitally important to our social fabric and integral to sustaining and promoting goods we might share in common.<sup>53</sup>

Whilst there are a number of noteworthy differences across sectors within NSW education, we hope these comparisons will activate thoughtful reflection and discussion on how the distinctive characteristics in any given school sector might better inform policy decision making and discussion within and across the Government, Catholic, Independent and Christian sectors in Australian education.

NSW schools, to varying degrees across sectors, effectively prepare graduates for career and university success, promote community service initiatives within their school communities and have a proportionally very high level of graduates employed and earning high incomes than other states. NSW had very high levels of bachelor's and postgraduate completions in metropolitan areas but there was a marked disparity with the levels of completions in non-metropolitan areas of the state. Levels of involvement in associations, particularly sporting, leisure and cultural groups and involvement in political parties, trade unions and environmental groups were evident within Independent/ Christian graduates – especially from non-metropolitan locales. Non-metropolitan NSW

graduates from across all sectors were also generous with their time and money often giving at greater levels than their metropolitan counterparts to political and environmental causes. Graduates who were married and never divorced were consistent across Government, Catholic and Independent sectors, whilst Christian school graduates were more likely to be married and not divorced and regularly attending church or other religious services. Due to the complex interrelationships and demographic characteristics of family, community and schooling, these findings should be treated with caution and direct association of schooling sector alone should not be assigned without considering these important formative elements shaping each graduate.

Due to the intended purpose and design of this study, it is important to recognise the retrospective nature of measuring graduate outcomes from respondents who graduated secondary school between 1998 and 2011. Seismic changes have impacted on Australian education since this time including the adoption of a national curriculum, national testing, an increasing reliance on digital technology and a significant spike in mental health and wellbeing concerns amongst our secondary students. The schools represented in this report have also matured and developed in significant ways so care needs to be taken to use the data prudently to inform current practice and policy making without imposing assumptions that may have shifted in the decade since these graduates left our schooling communities. Educators and educational leaders are encouraged to reflect upon these state-based and across sector results, and to consider how their schools are shaping the current generation of Australian secondary students to better contribute to the common good in the ever-changing socio-cultural milieu that is contemporary Australian society.

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53 Cheng and Iselin, 2020.

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