



Government of South Australia

Office of the Guardian
for Children and Young People

***Children and Young People in State Care
in South Australian Government Schools
2007-2013***

June 2014

Office of the Guardian for Children and Young People

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Contents

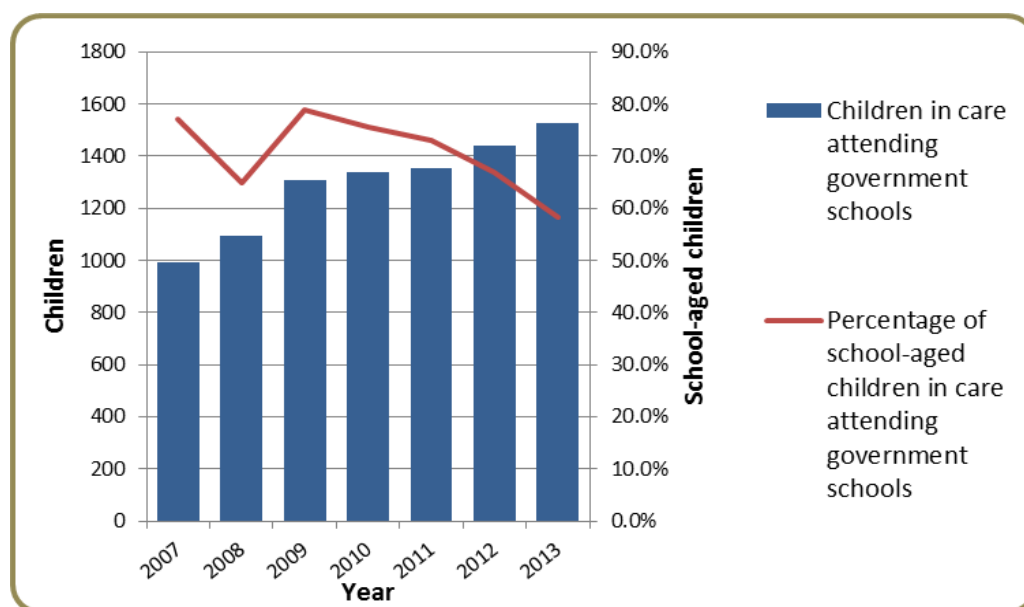
1.	Introduction	1
2.	Profile	3
3.	Suspensions and exclusions	6
4.	Absence	8
5.	Literacy and numeracy	9

1 Introduction

This report is about participation and NAPLAN results for children and young people under the guardianship of the Minister from data provided by the Department for Education and Child Development (DECD). Comment focuses on areas of significant difference between, or change in, results for children in [state] care¹ and results for all children in government schools.

The *number* of children in care ‘located in and actively attending’² government schools continues to rise, but the *proportion* of all school-aged³ children in care attending government schools is declining. At the end of Term 3 2013, there were 1,525 children in care in government schools which is an increase of 5.8 per cent on the 2012 figure (1,441) and an increase of 54.5 per cent since 2007 (993). In 2007, 77 per cent of school-aged children in care were identified in government schools. This figure has since dropped and in 2013 was 58.4 per cent (see *Chart 1* below).

Chart 1: Children in care attending government schools – total number and proportion of all school-aged children in care



¹ For the purposes of this report the terms “in state care” or “in care” refer to those children and young people under guardianship, or in the custody, of the Minister for Education and Child Development.

² The phrase ‘located in and actively attending’ is used by DECD in their report to the Office of the Guardian.

³ School-aged is 5 to 17 years.

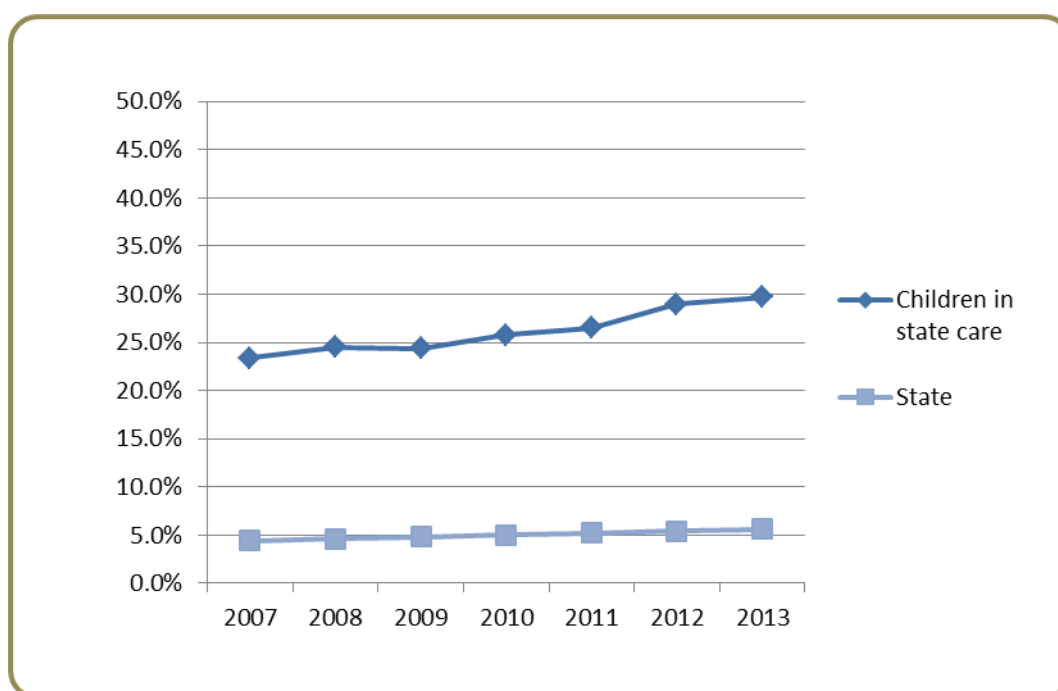
The proportion of children in care but not identified in government schools includes those who:

- are enrolled in non-government schools;
- students over the age of compulsion who have left school; and
- data quality issues, including the ability to match records due to the use of alias names.

2 Profile

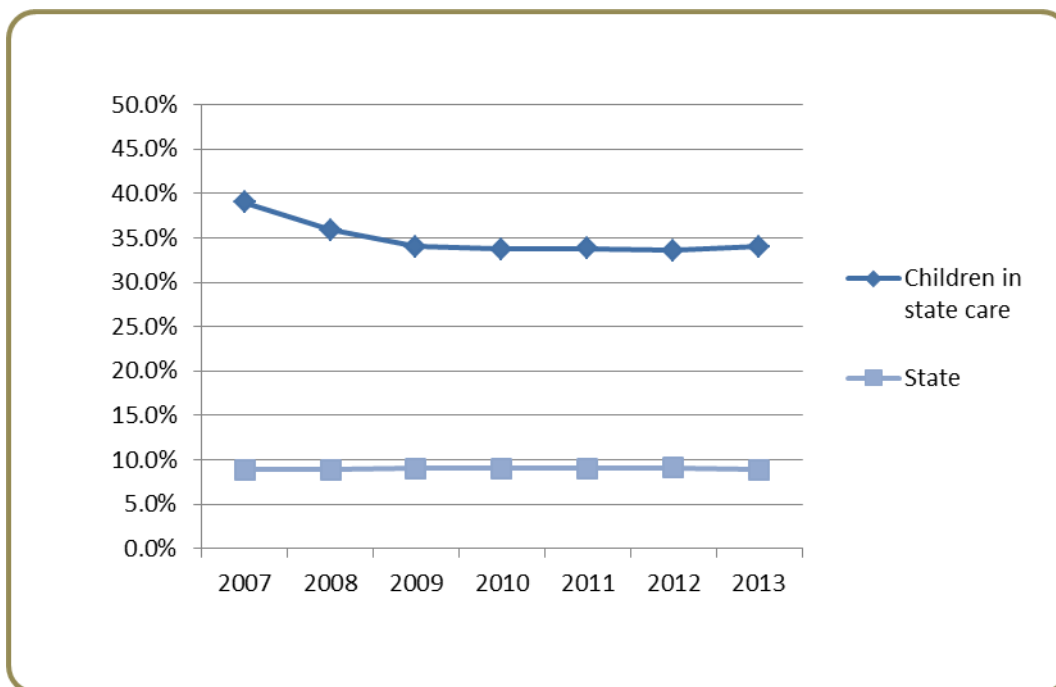
The proportion of children in care in government schools who identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander is significantly higher than the state average (see *Chart 2* below). The disproportion, though, is consistent with the profile of children and young people in care.

Chart 2: Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander, children in care compared with state school population, 2007-2013



Similarly, the proportion of children in care in government schools who have an identified disability is significantly higher than the state average (see *Chart 3* over page). The disproportion is similar to the disproportion for children in care as a whole, though the criteria for disability used within education are wider than those used for disability services.

Chart 3: Children with a disability, children in care compared with state school population, 2007-2013



From 2007 to 2010, the percentage of children in care in government schools with a disability dropped steadily, from 39 per cent in 2007, to 33.7 per cent in 2010. Since then the percentage has remained almost constant. In 2013 this figure was at 34 per cent compared to the state figure of 8.9 per cent.

Table 1 below shows the categories of disability. The numbers are too small in most categories to compare children in care with state totals. However, in the categories of Language and Communication, Intellectual Disability and Speech and/or Language, children in care feature much more remarkably. For example, the proportion of children in care in government schools in 2013 with an intellectual disability is over eight times that of the state average.

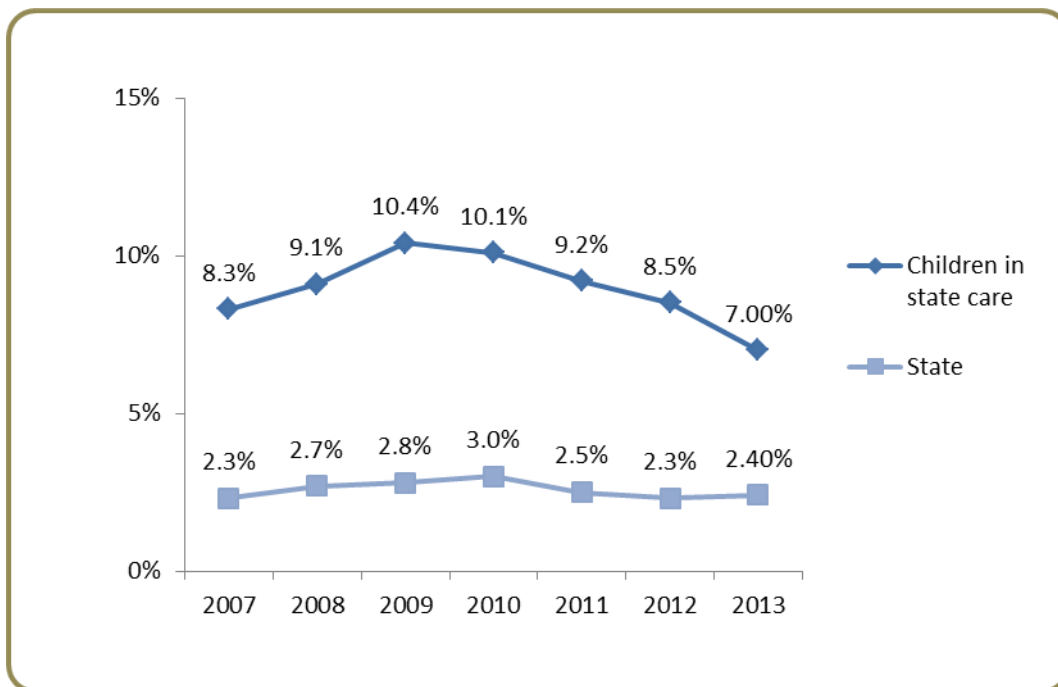
Table 1: Category of disability, children in care compared with school population, 2013

Primary Disability	Children in Care		State %
	Number	% of Children in Care	
	2013	2013	2013
Language and Communication	116	7.6	3.2
Intellectual Disability	167	11.0	1.3
Speech and/or Language	120	7.9	2.2
Global Developmental Delay	43	2.8	0.3
Autistic / Asperger's Disorder	45	3.0	1.1
Physical Disability	13	0.9	0.3
Sensory Disability (Hearing)	12	0.8	0.4
Sensory Disability (Vision)	3	0.2	0.1

3 Suspensions and exclusions

Data from term 2, 2007 to 2013 show that suspension of children in care has dropped from 2009 and state totals have remained much the same since 2007 (see *Chart 4*).⁴ The disparity between children in care compared with the state totals is narrowing, but remains significant.

Chart 4: Rate of suspensions, children in care compared with school population, 2007 to 2013, Term 2



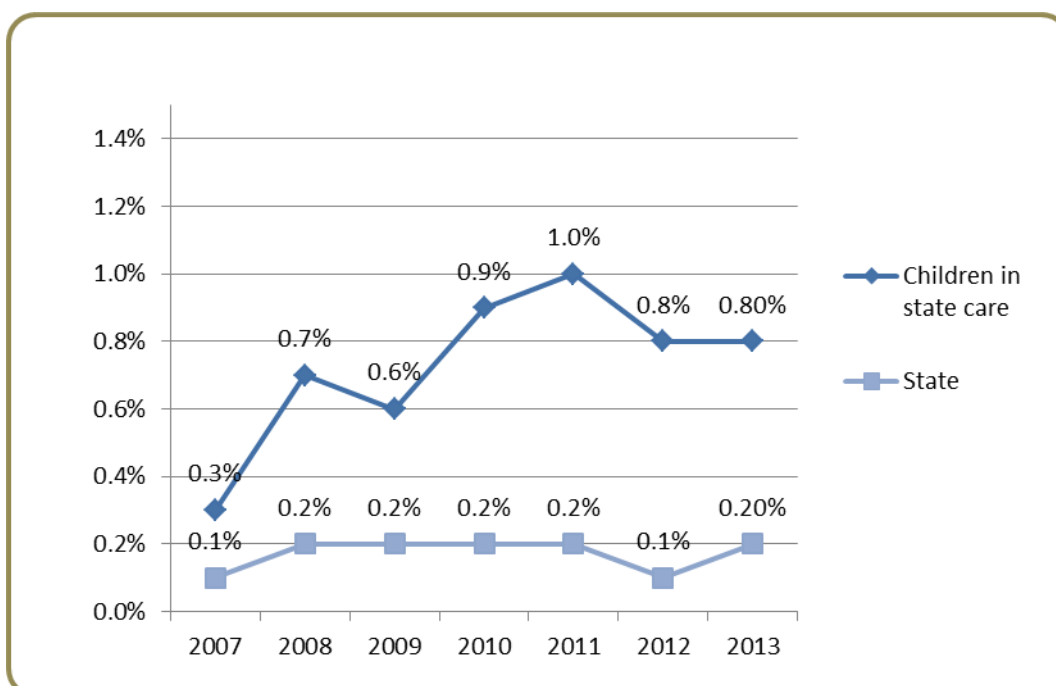
⁴ The figures in *Graph 3* represent individual children suspended in Term 2, 2012, not the number of episodes of suspension.

Table 2: Main reasons for suspension, children in care and school population, 2013

	Children in care	State
Violence – threatened or actual	43.9%	36.1%
Threatened good order	20.6%	31.8%
Threatened safety or wellbeing	16.1%	14.7%

Similar to suspensions, children in care in government schools are more likely to be excluded from school. However, little can be concluded from this data as the actual numbers are very low. In Term 2, 2013, for example, there were 13 exclusions for children in care (see *Chart 5*).

Chart 5: Rate of exclusions, children in care compared with school population, 2007 to 2013, term 2



4 Absence

There is little difference in absence rates for children in care in government schools compared with the school population. When comparing absence rates for children who have a disability the absence rate for children in care with a disability is lower, that is, they are more likely to be attending than those who have a disability but are not in care. This is also the case for Aboriginal children who are in care (see *Table 3*).

Table 3: Absence rates for children in state care and school population group, Semester 1, 2013

Cohort	Semester 1, 2013		
	Children in care		State rate
	Number	Absence rate	
Total	1483	10.5	9.5
Males	801	11.5	9.5
Females	682	9.4	9.5
NESB	266	14.2	7.6
Disability	510	11.2	12.8
ATSI	439	13.7	20.6
Country Schools	578	10.7	10.2
Metro Schools	905	10.4	9.1

5 Literacy and numeracy

National Assessment Program - Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) testing is carried out each year for children in years three, five, seven and nine. According to the NAPLAN website the *National Minimum Standard* represents the 'minimum acceptable standard of knowledge and skills without which a student will have difficulty making sufficient progress at school'⁵. It also states that students who do not reach this minimum standard are 'likely to need focused intervention and additional support to help them achieve'.⁶

In each of these year levels figures showing percentages *at or above the National Minimum Standard* demonstrate that the results for children in care continue to rate significantly lower than totals for the state (see *Charts 6-9* over page).

Fluctuations from year to year for children in care can partly be explained by it being a different group of children sitting the tests and the number being relatively small.

Across the board, the percentages of children in care exempted from NAPLAN testing are significantly higher than the state figures, although this disparity is diminishing.

⁵ Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority 2013, *NAPLAN Achievement in Reading, Persuasive Writing, Language Conventions and Numeracy: National Report for 2013*, Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority, Sydney, viewed 30 May 2014, <<http://www.nap.edu.au/>>, p. v.

⁶ *Ibid.*

Chart 6: NAPLAN results for Year 3 - Percentage of children at or above the National Minimum Standard comparing total state with children in care

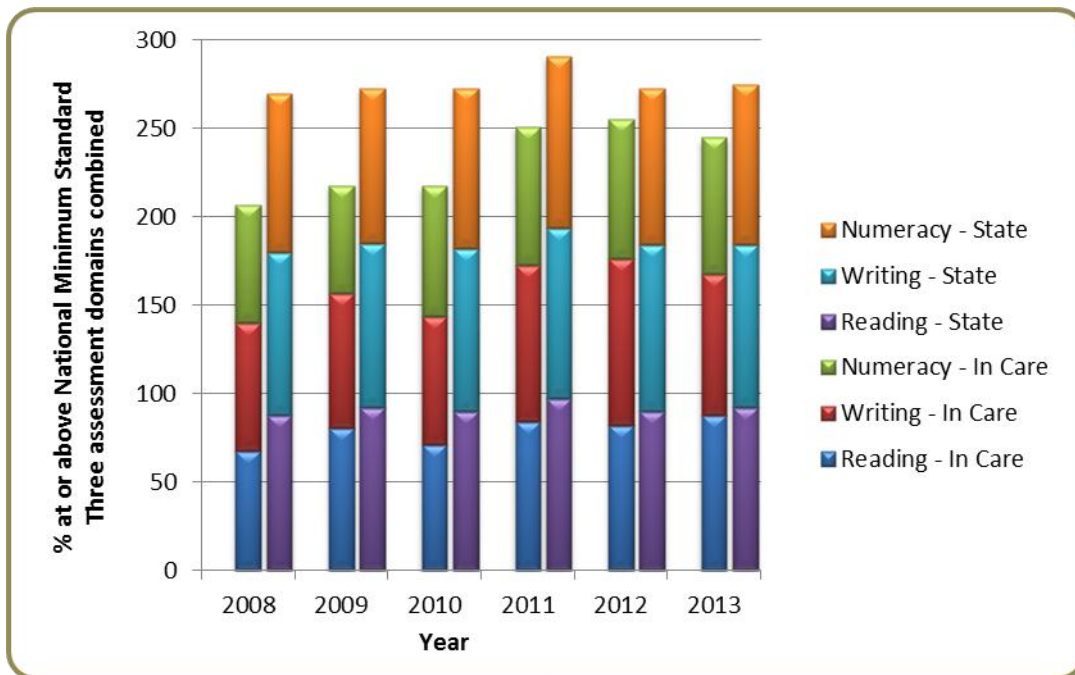


Chart 7: NAPLAN results for Year 5 - Percentage of children at or above the National Minimum Standard comparing total state with children in care

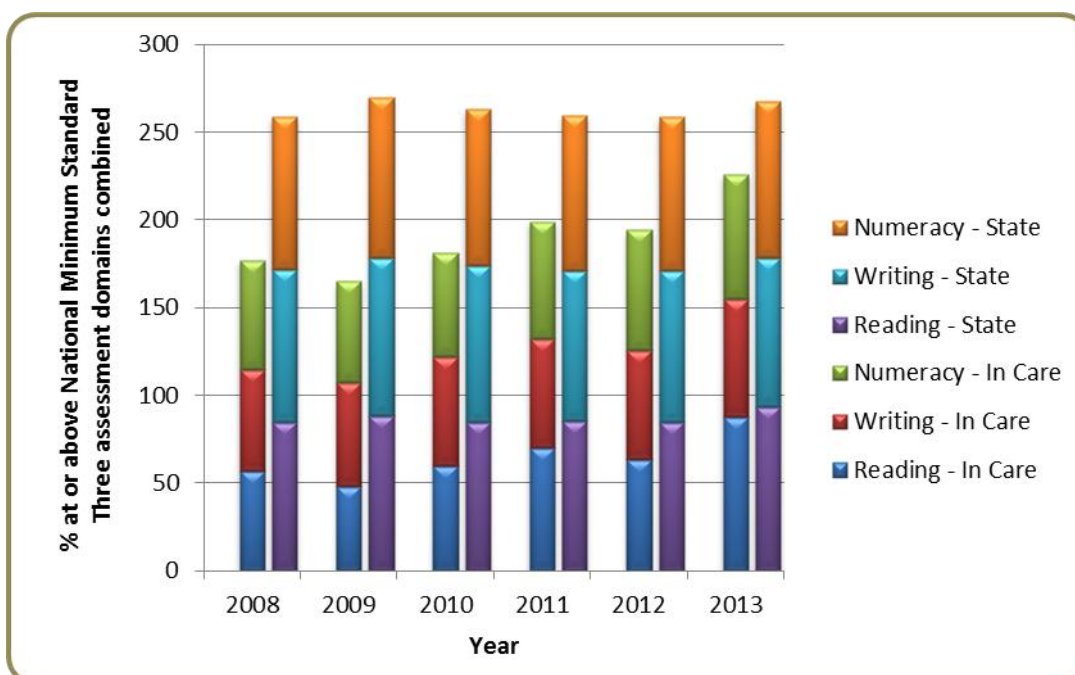


Chart 8: NAPLAN results for Year 7 - Percentage of children at or above the National Minimum Standard comparing total state with children in care

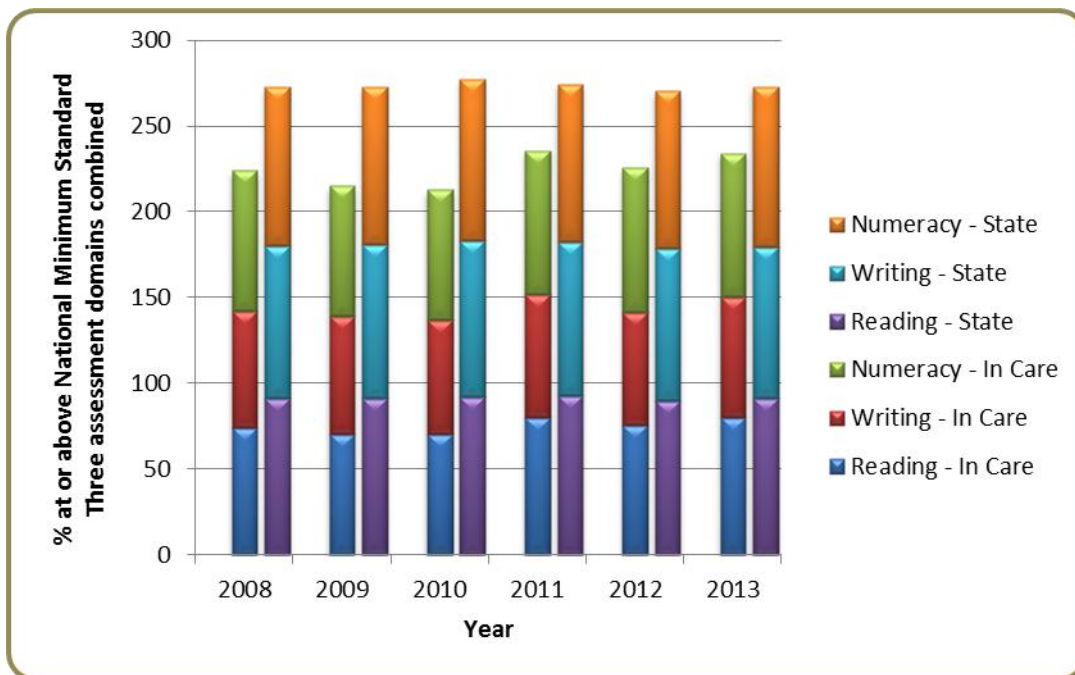


Chart 9: NAPLAN results for Year 9 - Percentage of children at or above the National Minimum Standard comparing total state with children in care

