

# Student Attendance & Roll marking Procedures

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# Presentation Overview

- Nationwide trends
- Who's responsibility is it?
- Education Act 1990
- Home School Liaison Program
- Typology of absences...let's talk the same language



# Why is regular attendance so important?

- Children who attend regularly are usually more **successful** than those who are absent frequently
- Regular attendance makes **learning easier**
- Regular attendees establish and maintain **friendships** with other children and develop a sense of belonging and being cared for
- School is the **safest place** for children to be

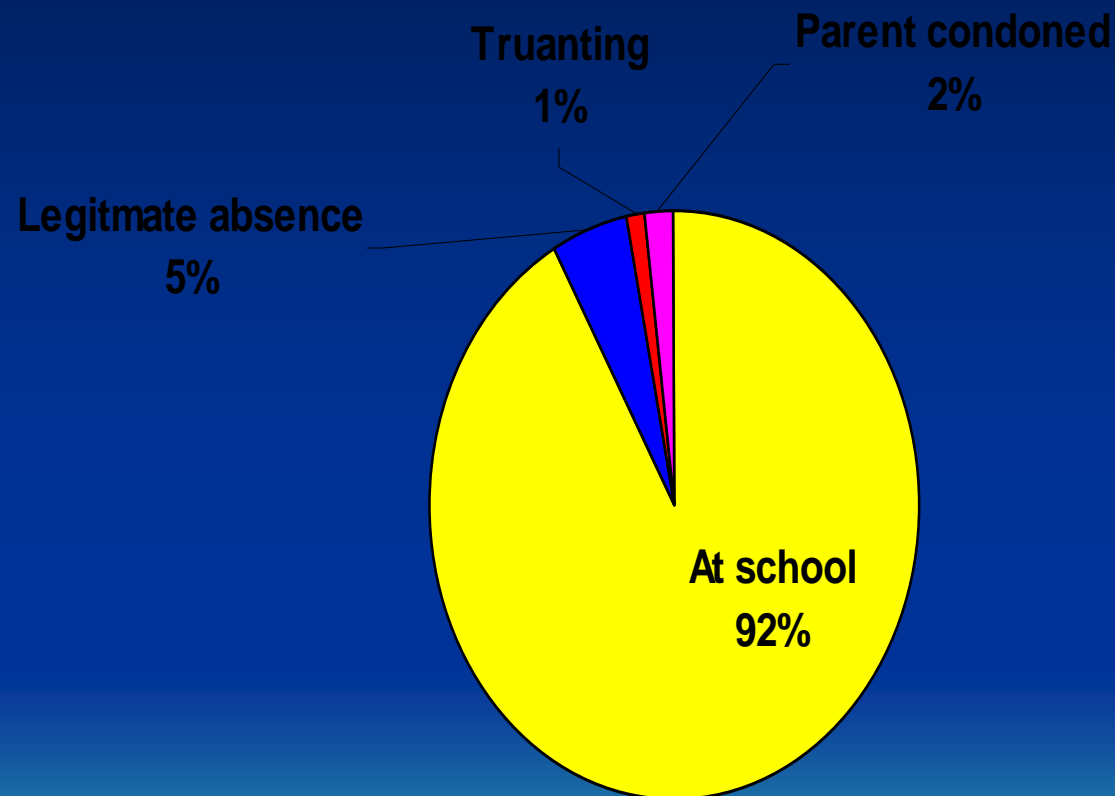


# Nationwide trends

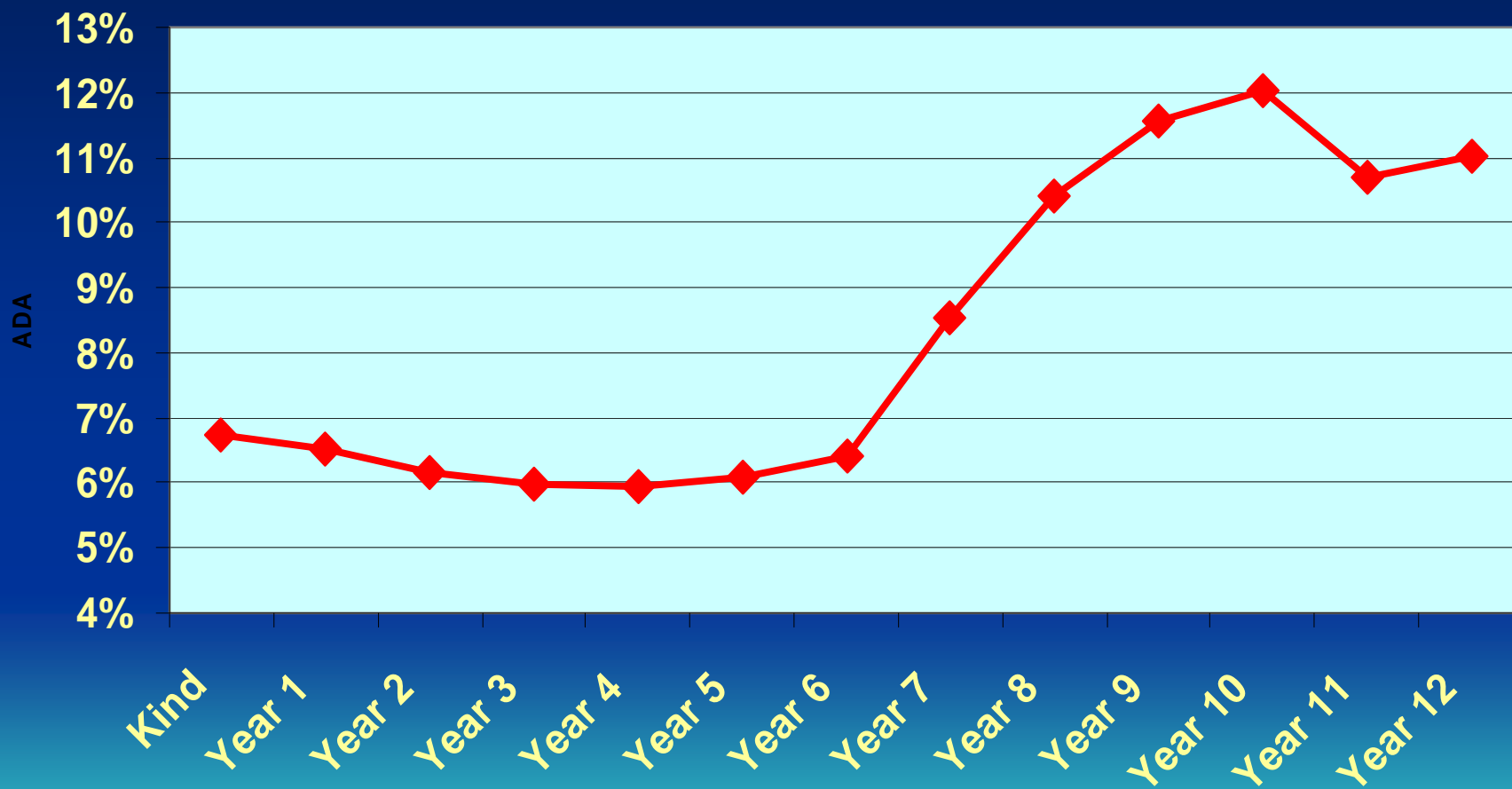
- The average daily absence (ADA) rate for all students in Government schools is approximately 8%
- Long term absences (4 weeks +) involves fewer than 1% of students, but 3% of 14 year olds
- Indigenous students have higher absence rates than other students
- Average Daily Absence (ADA) for all students has risen slightly since 1996



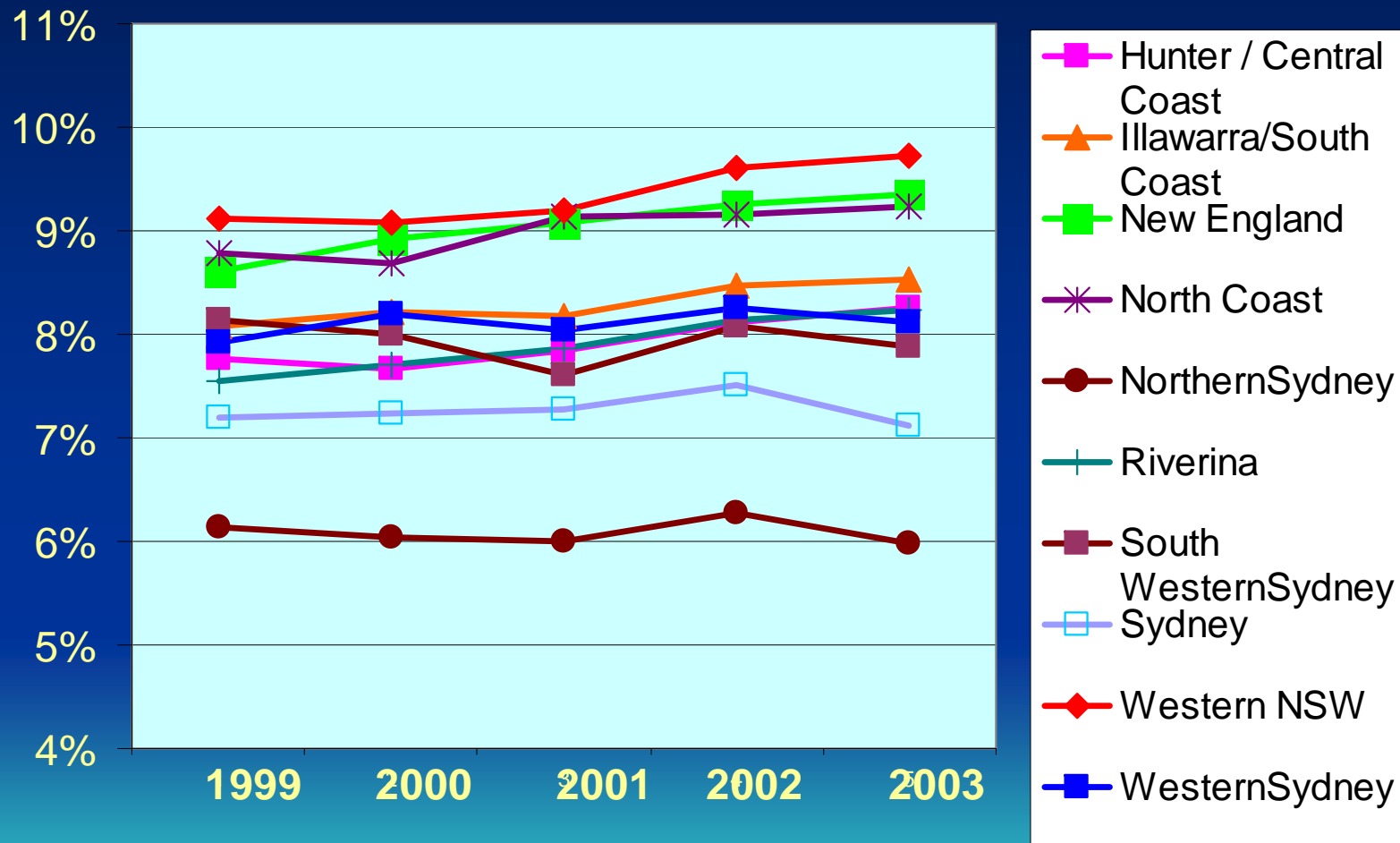
# On a typical school day.....



# Daily absence rate by grade



# NSW Average Daily Absence by Region 1999 - 2003



# Student Attendance

*Who's responsibility is it?*



# The Education Act (1990)

The act states that it is an offence for a **parent** of a child between the ages of 6 and 15, not to:

- Enroll the child in a registered school or be registered for home schooling; or
- Fails to cause the child to attend any such school when the school is open

MAXIMUM PENALTY \$1100 per unit



# School's Responsibilities

- Maintain accurate records
- Ensure that rolls are marked correctly
- Have procedures in place to monitor attendance
- Inform parents of attendance requirements at the beginning of each year
- Develop strategies for encouraging good attendance



# Principal's responsibilities

- Ensure that the school has a Student Welfare Policy which includes a section on school attendance.
- Maintain an accurate attendance register, in an approved form for inspection.
- Initiate an absentee notice: compulsory school attendance to parent/caregiver within two days of an unexplained absence.
- Investigate all cases where a student has been absent without a satisfactory explanation for more than three days in a school term.



# Teacher's responsibilities

- Be conversant with the school welfare policy
- Record student absences according to departmental and school policy
- Contact parent/carer within 2 days of an unexplained absence
- Keep a written record of verbal explanations given by parents/carers
- Decide, when evidence is available, whether an absence should be noted as S,L,A, M, B, F or E
- Notify Principal or delegate of no explanation
- Notify Principal or delegate of all cases where a student's absences or pattern of absences gives rise for concern.



# The Student Roll is an important legal document

- Rolls are frequently subpoenaed as evidence in court cases
  - \* Custody issues
  - \* Criminal cases
  - \* Child neglect and abuse cases
  - \* School attendance proceedings
  - \* Rolls are vital in our duty of care to all students eg: evacuation of the school



# HSLO positions

- Currently 84 positions across the state
- Attendance data and isolation determine the allocation of HSLOs to Areas
- HSLOs provide service to 10 – 65 schools
- Work as a part of a Regional Team to improve attendance rates
- Work with students (< 15), their families and schools



# Home School Liaison Officers (HSLO)

- Teachers
- Appointed for 3 years after merit selection
- Specially trained as Authorised Attendance Officers (Education Act Section 122 1990)
- Manage a caseload of up to 30 students on an attendance improvement plan, roll checks, policy and procedures, training & development, Joint anti-truancy operations with police



# HSLOs are not

- Truancy officers
- Counsellors
- Police
- Social workers
- Health workers
- Sole conduits between home and school



# Possible strategies before application to HSLO Program

- Absence letters sent to family
- Parent meeting/s
- Learning support team plans
- IEP developed
- Attendance monitoring card
- Attendance contract with student
- Mentor program established
- Address bullying & harassment issues
- Referral to DSC

# STUDENT CASES for HSLO

- Application is made to the Student Welfare Consultant, after all strategies tried by the school have failed to restore regular attendance
- Attendance Improvement Plan (AIP) – 20 days
- AIP expects compliance from parent/carer
- 100% attendance including justified reasons for absence
- Director decides if case is forwarded for possible prosecution after the 20 day period



# Attendance prosecutions for June/July 2008 – a snapshot

- 79 cases
- 66% were fined
- 25% were withdrawn
- 5% Section 10 – found guilty but conviction not recorded
- 4% good behaviour bond



# Explanations from parents have to be consistent with the provisions of the Education Act (1990)

- Explanation should be provided by the parent within 7 days of the occurrence of the absence.
- Written, electronic or verbal explanation is acceptable.
- If not, an “A” should be recorded in the roll.



# Explained Absence

- An absence that has been explained by the parent verbally, electronically or in writing AND
- The principal accepts the reason provided as a legitimate reason for the absence



# **Education Act, Section 23:**

## **The child was prevented from attending school due to:**

- Sickness, risk of infection, incapacity
- “Some accident or unforeseen event”



# Reasons should be accepted as explained when:

- The child is sick (S) including medical and para-medical appointments
- Or there is some unforeseen or pressing family matter (L)



# ENTRIES ON MANUAL ROLLS

- a = student absent on that day  
*“W” in the electronic register*
- P = Student was late or was absent for part of a day  
*Reason entered within 7 days or PA*
- A = Student’s absence is unexplained or unjustified after 7 days



- S = Due to sickness or medical appointments
- L = Due to “unforeseen event”, special events not related to the school, short family holidays, domestic necessity, funerals, religious festivals
- E = Suspended
- B = School Business
- M = Exemption from school



# Unjustified Absence

- No legitimate explanation from the parent has been received

*(Note: the parent may have provided an explanation that is not acceptable)*



# Common examples of Unjustified absences

- Tired
- Slept in
- Birthday
- “I decided”
- Minding siblings
- Shopping

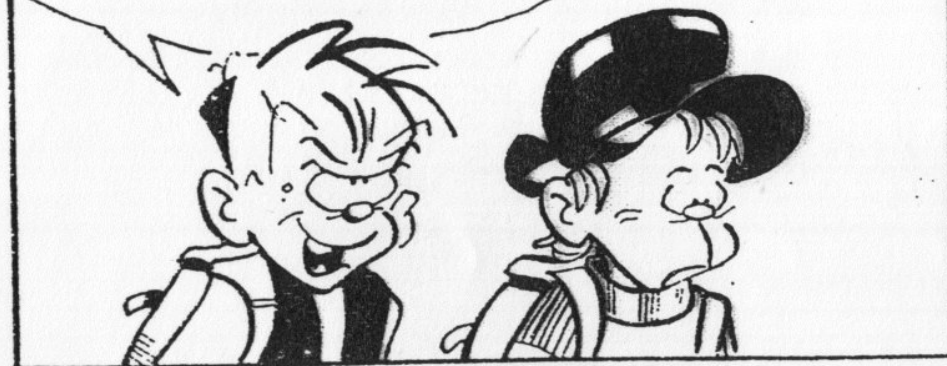


# Unexplained = Unjustified?

- Forget? Mum or Dad too busy? Left note in bag? Lost note?
- Many unexplained absences have legitimate reasons and would have been recorded as Justified if the parent had provided an explanation
- Roll teachers need to be vigilant in reminding students to bring notes/parent phone/email to explain absences



I'M NOT IN THE MOOD TO BE  
EDUCATED AT TODAY.  
WHAT DO Y' RECKON WE DO  
*A RUNNER ?*



# Parent condoned absences

- Absences from school without legitimate reason and with the knowledge and/or permission of parents
- Approximately 60% of unjustified absences are parent condoned (Research 1996)



# Common reasons for parent condoned absences

- Birthdays
- Shopping
- Poor discipline
- Couldn't be bothered
- Uniforms not ready
- No money for lunches
- Minding other children
- Interpreting
- Slept in/late night (child or parent)
- School events considered unimportant



# How should the roll be marked?

◇ *Dear teacher,*

*Donald was absent from school yesterday with  
my permission.*

*Yours truly,*

*Bill Smyth-Jones*



# How should the roll be marked?

Dear Ms Smith,

Please excuse Mary from school on Tuesday because she slept in after we went to "The Big Day Out".

Regards,

Aimee Smith  
(mother)



# How should the roll be marked?

Dear Sir,

Please excuse Tahlia from school 23/8, 24/8, 5/9, 4/10, 25/8, 7/11, 8/11, 9/11 because she was sick so we went shopping.

Regards,

Ms Talbot



## How should the roll be marked?

Dear Sir,

Jamie was absent on Thursday because my car has broken down and I needed help with some urgent shopping, I had quite a number of parcels to get home by bus. He missed Friday as a result of a cold, in Jamie's case this has to be treated with respect, as it may lead to an asthma attack. He was absent on Monday and Tuesday, because he had lost his school bag and books over the weekend and he spent those two days looking for it.

H. Cuda  
26-10-94

# Monitoring student attendance

- When should I be concerned?
  - When total absences exceed 10% of school days.
  - When absences remain unexplained.
  - When there is a pattern of absences (explained or unexplained).
  - When there is frequent lateness or a pattern of lateness or early departure from school.

