

Communique

The Education Council convened on Friday 4 September 2020 by Videoconference. Ministers noted at the time of this meeting the Northern Territory was observing caretaker conventions following its 22 August election, and as such any policy-related or appointment matters need to be considered by the Territory's incoming government before becoming formal decisions of the Education Council.

As Education Council operates on the basis of consensus decision-making, this Communique details the scope of these discussions and operational decisions taken by the Council.

National evidence institute

Ministers discussed the new national evidence institute that will focus on strengthening the national education evidence base for school and early childhood education, including through:

- collaborating with government, the school and early childhood education sectors, the vocational education and training, higher-education and research sectors, and philanthropic organisations;
- developing and implementing a national agenda for research;
- mobilising high-quality tools for school and early childhood education; and
- supporting teaching and learning in school and early childhood education.

The institute will be formally established and named, and an inaugural Board will be appointed, in the coming weeks.

National Education Architecture Review

Education Council considered a Review on the national architecture for schooling in Australia to better support high quality teaching and learning across Australian schools.

The national architecture comprises the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA), Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL), Education Services Australia (ESA), and the new national evidence institute which will be established in 2020, as well as Education Council subcommittees. Ministers acknowledged the central role of the national architecture agencies in delivering significant reforms and administering key national functions for schooling in Australia.

Ministers discussed progressing reforms through a staged approach, with an immediate focus on resolving process and governance issues to improve the strategic coherence, effectiveness and efficiency of the national architecture. Further information will be released in coming weeks.

Senior Secondary Pathways Review

Education Council considered the findings of the *Review of Senior Secondary Pathways into work, further education and training*. Ministers identified potential priority actions relating to recommendations on:

- literacy, numeracy and digital literacy;
- agreeing a common language for skills and capabilities;
- developing a *Learner Profile*, including work to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students;
- improving career guidance and education; and
- a national strategy on vocational education and training delivered to secondary students.

Education Ministers will work with their Skills Council colleagues to consider the review recommendations, and will determine the scope, timing and budget for agreed priority recommendations in December 2020.

Universal Access National Partnership

Education Council received an update on the 2021 extension of the National Partnership on Universal Access to Early Childhood Education (UANP), announced on 2 April 2020 to ensure continuity of preschool arrangements through the COVID-19 pandemic. It is expected the extension will be finalised by the Council on Federal Financial Relations.

Ministers also tasked officials with considering the UANP Review's findings and accompanying contextual comments to develop advice for Education Council's consideration at its second meeting of 2021, to assist with future planning for early childhood education.

Impact of border closures on school students and staff

Ministers considered the impact of border closures and travel restrictions on school students, boarding students, and school staff, and agreed that advice be sought from the Australian Health Protection Principal Committee, subject to National Cabinet consideration of the issues.

Note from Education Council Secretariat regarding National Cabinet and Ministerial Councils

Subject to the National Cabinet review of the current Ministerial Council structure, the Education Council continues to meet and exercise its functions as a Ministerial Council in accordance with its agreed protocols, and as defined under various legislative instruments.

The situation will be reviewed pending advice as to its form and role under a revised Ministerial Council and Forum structure.

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