

## Communiqué

With the release of the Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration on 12 December, Australia's Education Ministers have committed to national educational goals and actions for the coming decade.

High quality education is essential not only for individual lives to flourish, but to make our communities stronger and more resilient, and our economy robust and competitive. Education remains the most powerful tool to overcome socio-economic disadvantage and build a more cohesive society. Through the Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration and in decisions made at their meeting yesterday, Australia's Education Ministers will progress a number of important national policy initiatives.

The Declaration recognises that early childhood education is critical in giving every child the best possible start in life. The Declaration reinforces the importance of literacy and numeracy mastery in the early years of school as foundations for future learning. It also commits to ensuring the development of creative and critical thinking skills. These skills are best developed drawing on deep content knowledge, which needs to continue as a feature of the school curriculum.

State and Territory Ministers will continue to work with their own teachers, principals and education stakeholders on solutions that work best within their own jurisdictions. Ministers will report publicly on progress on this national education agenda throughout 2020 and beyond.

### Programme for International Student Assessment

The results of the 2018 Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) demonstrate we have much progress to make in educating our young people, ensuring they are prepared for a competitive and fast-changing world. PISA is a triennial assessment of 15-year-old students in three core domains of reading, mathematical and scientific literacy and is administered by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). Around 14,300 15-year-old Australian students from 740 schools sat the PISA tests between July and September 2018.

Council discussed the latest results, which highlight challenges faced by a number of nations around the world in lifting education standards. Like a number of OECD countries, Australia's results suggest that education outcomes have fallen over the past two decades, and lifting the performance of Australian students will continue to be a prime focus for education systems across the nation. The results raise questions about what students are learning at school, and how carefully we are monitoring progress to ensure we identify and overcome learning gaps for every child. They also question whether we are doing enough to ensure our high performing students are extended to achieve their best, as well as to lift outcomes for our disadvantaged students.

The report is available at [www.acer.org/au/ozpisa/publications-and-data](http://www.acer.org/au/ozpisa/publications-and-data).

Ministers have committed to developing co-operative strategies to address long term challenges facing Australian education systems, including the shortage of qualified teachers, the quality of initial teacher education graduates, the promotion of STEM subjects in senior high schools, encouraging students to study advanced mathematics and science (including through university pre-requisites) and to reduce red tape that distracts from teaching time. The review of senior secondary pathways, addressing

particularly the learning needs of high school students of the age assessed by PISA, will also report in the first half of 2020 with reform proposals for the senior years of high school.

## Review of the Foundation to Year 10 Australian Curriculum

Ministers agreed to immediately bring forward a review of the Australian Curriculum for Years Foundation-10 to ensure it is meeting the needs of students. Education Council agreed that ACARA develop Terms of Reference for the review to the first Education Council meeting in 2020.

Ministers noted that it is now timely to undertake a review, which will commence with mathematics in 2020, alongside conceptual work on science. There will be extensive consultation including with the profession and key stakeholder groups.

## Learning Progressions and Online Formative Assessment

Ministers received an update and endorsed further work on the Learning Progressions and Online Formative Assessment initiative. Learning progressions and online formative assessment are resources to assist teachers in making evidence-informed judgements about student learning and in tailoring their teaching so that each student progresses in their learning.

This initiative will commence with a focus on literacy and numeracy, and will highlight existing and produce new tools teachers can use in classrooms at any time, to help determine where each student is at with their learning, and support every student's mastery of skills and knowledge.

Education Council agreed that the initiative will proceed with strengthened engagement with the profession and their representative bodies, so that the views and experiences of teachers, school leaders and their representatives guide the next phase of this initiative.

## Reporting of NAPLAN Data on *My School*

Ministers agreed that the focus of NAPLAN reporting will move from school averages to reporting on the gains made by students at the school. Gain measures will tell us if students are making the progress that they should – and tell us if Australia's education system is on track. A number of complex terms will be better explained, and colour-coding and other visual changes will be made to improve transparency and assist parents and carers interpret data.

The changes incorporate feedback from parent focus groups held in October 2019 across cities and regional centres throughout Australia. Further advice regarding specific changes will be provided to parents and school communities ahead of the March 2020 My School Release.

## Review of NAPLAN

Education Council received an update on the progress and next steps of the review of NAPLAN being jointly undertaken by New South Wales, Queensland, Victoria and the ACT. Ministers received an interim report of the review, which outlines areas for further investigation by the panel.

Participating states and territories will provide the review's final report for Education Council consideration in June 2020.

## Review of the Measurement Framework for Schooling in Australia

Education Council approved the updated Measurement Framework for Schooling in Australia.

## International Promotion of Australian Senior Secondary Education

Education Council noted that the Australian Government will consult with states and territories and report back on the possible scope of a national brand for the offshore marketing of senior secondary certificates. The Australian Government will report back to Education Council at its first meeting in 2020 on this matter.

## National Education Architecture

Ministers are considering how national education bodies can best support high quality teaching and learning across Australian schools.

Education Council considered a report outlining proposed reforms of Australia's national architecture for schooling so that it is robust, fit for purpose and able to deliver on the objectives of the Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration, the National School Reform Agreement, and other priorities identified in the future.

Senior officials will oversee consultations on reform options informed by the Review of the national architecture for schooling before providing Council with advice and recommendations in mid-2020.

## National Evidence Institute

To ensure all schools have access to high quality research to underpin key decisions about teaching and learning practice, Ministers committed to establish the new National Evidence Institute as a joint Ministerial Company. This model will ensure there is an appropriate balance between operational independence and accountability to Council. This institute will translate research into practice in a way that supports teachers in the classroom.

The institute will commence operations in 2020 and will position the nation's educators at the forefront of education research to improve learning outcomes for all children and young people. Senior officials will undertake further work on implementation taking into account consultations on the Review of the National Architecture to ensure an integrated approach to the future arrangements for the architecture.

## Unique Student Identifier

Education Council agreed on design criteria and a model for the generation and operation of a national USI for the Australian schools sector that will support better understanding of student progression and improve the national education evidence base.

The USI model agreed by Council allows systems and schools to maintain their existing arrangements and map local identifiers to a national identifier. Senior officials will oversee the development of a detailed implementation plan before providing advice back to Council in 2020 on a recommended approach to implementation.

## Child Abuse Royal Commission

Education Council received an update on the 12 education-related recommendations that have been progressed by senior officials with support from ACARA, the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL), the eSafety Commissioner, the National Office for Child Safety (NOCS) and the National Indigenous Australians Agency.

Work to fully implement a number of the Royal Commission recommendations will be ongoing. For example, the Australian Government through the NOCS, will continue work to develop a National Strategy to Prevent Child Sexual Abuse in 2020. This critical work will ensure all learning environments are safe and allow children to thrive.

All governments will continue to report on progress against ongoing recommendations as part of annual reporting mechanisms in each jurisdiction until 2022. Education Council will receive further updates on the implementation of ongoing education-related recommendations in 2020.

## National Review of Teacher Registration: implementation strategy

Ministers endorsed AITSL's implementation strategy for the recommendations of the *One Teaching Profession: Teacher Registration in Australia* (2018) report.

The One Teaching Profession recommendations cover a breadth of policy, process and practice reform areas. They include new work, as well as work to strengthen existing practice. In the light of the recommendations of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, children's safety is a significant focus of the recommendations and has been prioritised by Education Council.

AITSL will work closely with stakeholders and report back to Education Council.

## Reading instruction in initial teacher education

Education Council endorsed a number of amendments to the current *Accreditation of initial teacher education programs in Australia: Standards and Procedures*, including explicit reference to reading instruction, including phonics and an increase in the time component allocated to English and literacy within primary initial teacher education programs.

AITSL will develop guidance materials to support high quality teaching of reading instruction in initial teacher education by mid-2020.

## Reducing red tape for teachers and school leaders

Ministers endorsed terms of reference for AITSL to review the impact of the compliance and regulatory burden faced by teachers and school leaders with a view to sharing best practice. The review will build on existing initiatives and will require AITSL to work closely with state and territory education departments, the National Catholic Education Commission (NCEC) and Independent Schools Council of Australia (ISCA) throughout the review process. The review will produce findings and recommendations by September 2020.

## Universal Access National Partnership (UANP) Review – Interim Report

Education Council considered preliminary findings from the independent UANP Review being undertaken by Nous on behalf of all governments. Preliminary findings suggest the UANP has been successful in achieving its objectives. Nous will deliver a final report for Council's consideration in the first quarter of 2020.

The review will help inform future funding of universal access to quality early childhood education, in line with the Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration, which recognises that early childhood education is critical in giving every child the best possible start in life.

### ACECQA Review

Education Council endorsed the independent Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA) Review report and agreed that the Review key findings and recommendations would be released by March 2020.

The Review found ACECQA plays an integral role in supporting quality early childhood education and care by promoting national consistency and driving continuous quality improvement.

Education Council welcomed the Commonwealth Government's announcement, informed by the Review, that it would fully fund ACECQA on an ongoing basis.

### Children's education and care national workforce strategy

Ministers endorsed the development of a new children's education and care national workforce strategy to support the recruitment, retention, sustainability and quality of the early childhood services workforce. Council acknowledged the need for a national early childhood workforce strategy that acknowledges the shared goals.

Ministers noted that although there has been substantial growth in the number of qualified Early Childhood Teachers and educators since the enactment of the National Quality Framework, workforce shortfalls continue to exist across Australia.

Ministers requested that senior officials report back to Education Council in early 2020 on the scope of a new national strategy, which will be developed as a joint partnership between all governments, the early childhood services sector and other key stakeholders.

### National Quality Framework Review

As part of their ongoing commitment to quality in children's education and care services, Governments are reviewing the National Quality Framework to see how well its objectives are being met.

The 2019 NQF Review builds on the 2014 Review of the National Quality Agenda, to ensure that the NQF is current, fit-for-purpose and implemented through best practice regulation. Nation-wide consultations on the NQF Review Issues Paper were conducted from April to June 2019. Over 2,500 people attended the 79 face-to-face consultation sessions held in all jurisdictions around Australia.

The consultation summary report will be available at [www.educationcouncil.edu.au/EC-Reports-and-Publications.aspx](http://www.educationcouncil.edu.au/EC-Reports-and-Publications.aspx)

A Consultation Regulatory Impact Statement to address issues identified through the consultations in mid-2019 will be released in the first half of 2020. Australia wide consultations will be undertaken in order to ascertain the sector's views on the range of options under consideration.

## Education and Care Services National Amendment Regulations 2019

Education Council made the *Education and Care Services National Amendment Regulations 2019 (Amendment Regulations)*. The Amendment Regulations make time-critical amendments in the National Regulations to extend certain transitional and jurisdiction-specific workforce provisions that are due to expire in 2020. In addition, the Amendment Regulations make consequential amendments to support the implementation of the second early childhood teacher and 'suitably qualified person' requirements; and make other minor technical amendments.

The Amendment Regulations will commence on 31 December 2019 or 1 July 2020 (as applicable) and will be published on the New South Wales Legislation website. Western Australia will prepare corresponding amendment regulations for submission to its Executive Council as soon as possible.

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Media queries: Greg Donaghue, Education Council Secretariat, 0423 748 320 or [greg.donaghue@ec.edu.au](mailto:greg.donaghue@ec.edu.au)