

Communiqué

The Education Council met via videoconference on Friday 31 October to discuss a range of matters of national significance.

National Quality Framework – Consultation Regulation Impact Statement

Ministers today agreed to release a Consultation *Regulation Impact Statement* (RIS) to test options for potential proposed changes to the National Quality Framework (NQF). In agreeing in December 2009 to a National Partnership Agreement on the National Quality Agenda for Early Childhood Education and Care (NP NQA), a commitment was made to review the NP NQA in 2014.

In broad terms, the NP NQA review has identified opportunities to reduce unnecessary regulatory and administrative burden for providers whilst retaining a commitment to quality early childhood education and care. The Consultation RIS presents policy options for public feedback, and will be released in early November 2014, with face-to-face consultation taking place for 4–5 weeks from mid-November and submissions remaining open until 16 January 2015.

A micro-site (<http://www.deloitteaccesseconomics.com.au/our+services/nqfconsultationris>) has been established with further information regarding the consultation process.

Online Assessment

The Education Council noted the significant work undertaken to date by all jurisdictions to assess the feasibility of moving to national online assessment. Ministers reaffirmed that moving national assessments online, including NAPLAN, will have significant educational benefits for Australian students. These include faster turnaround of results for parents and teachers and more accurate assessment of each child's strengths and weaknesses, which will give NAPLAN even greater effectiveness as a diagnostic tool in classrooms. Notwithstanding these benefits, Council noted the need for a carefully planned transition from paper-based testing to address the risks and costs associated with this move.

Ministers acknowledged that a successful transition to NAPLAN online requires a robust central testing platform, the technical readiness of individual schools, and the engagement of teachers, families and students. Substantial development, trialing, testing and refining will continue over the next eighteen months to ensure that the full implementation of NAPLAN online will be a success for all.

State and territory Ministers acknowledged the Australian Government's commitment to fund the development of the central testing platform for use in National Assessment Program sample assessment of civics and citizenship in 2016, with Council agreeing that NAPLAN online will be implemented from 2017 on an opt-in basis over two to three years (no later than 2019). Implementation will be determined by jurisdictions, school systems and schools, based on readiness, to ensure an effective and efficient transition.

Ministers agreed to the process to bring NAPLAN online.

Improving student attendance reporting

In December 2013, COAG agreed that a range of measures, including the establishment of minimum school attendance benchmarks and twice-yearly publication of school attendance data be undertaken to improve educational outcomes for indigenous students.

The Education Council agreed new measures for student attendance for national and school level reporting to assist in implementing the COAG decision. These measures will reflect the proportion of students in Years 1–10 attending school for 90 per cent or more of the time, disaggregated by indigenous status. Attendance data will be published at school level on a new attendance page on the *My School* website from December 2014.

Ministers noted the ongoing work to review the *Measurement Framework for Schooling in Australia* and amendments to the *National Standards for Student Attendance Data Reporting* to facilitate the collection and reporting of the new attendance measure at national and school level from 2015.

Future Funding for Students with a Disability

Ministers reaffirmed their commitment to ensure that students with disability are supported to fully participate at school. Council agreed on the importance of ensuring that funding for students with a disability is based on data that is robust, reliable and accurately reflects the diversity of needs of students with disability. To help achieve this, all Australian Governments, Catholic and independent education authorities have progressively implemented the Nationally Consistent Collection of Data on School Students with Disability (NCCD) to find out how many students with disability attend Australian schools, their locations and the support provided to them.

Ministers noted that 2015 will be the first year that all Australian schools will participate in the NCCD. Although substantial progress has been made, data collected so far is not yet of sufficient quality to provide the information required to inform funding arrangements for students with a disability. State and territory eligibility criteria for the distribution of Australian Government funding for students with disability will continue in 2015 while Ministers work to ensure that the NCCD is of the necessary quality to accurately inform future funding, with the aim of utilising NCCD data from 2016.

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