

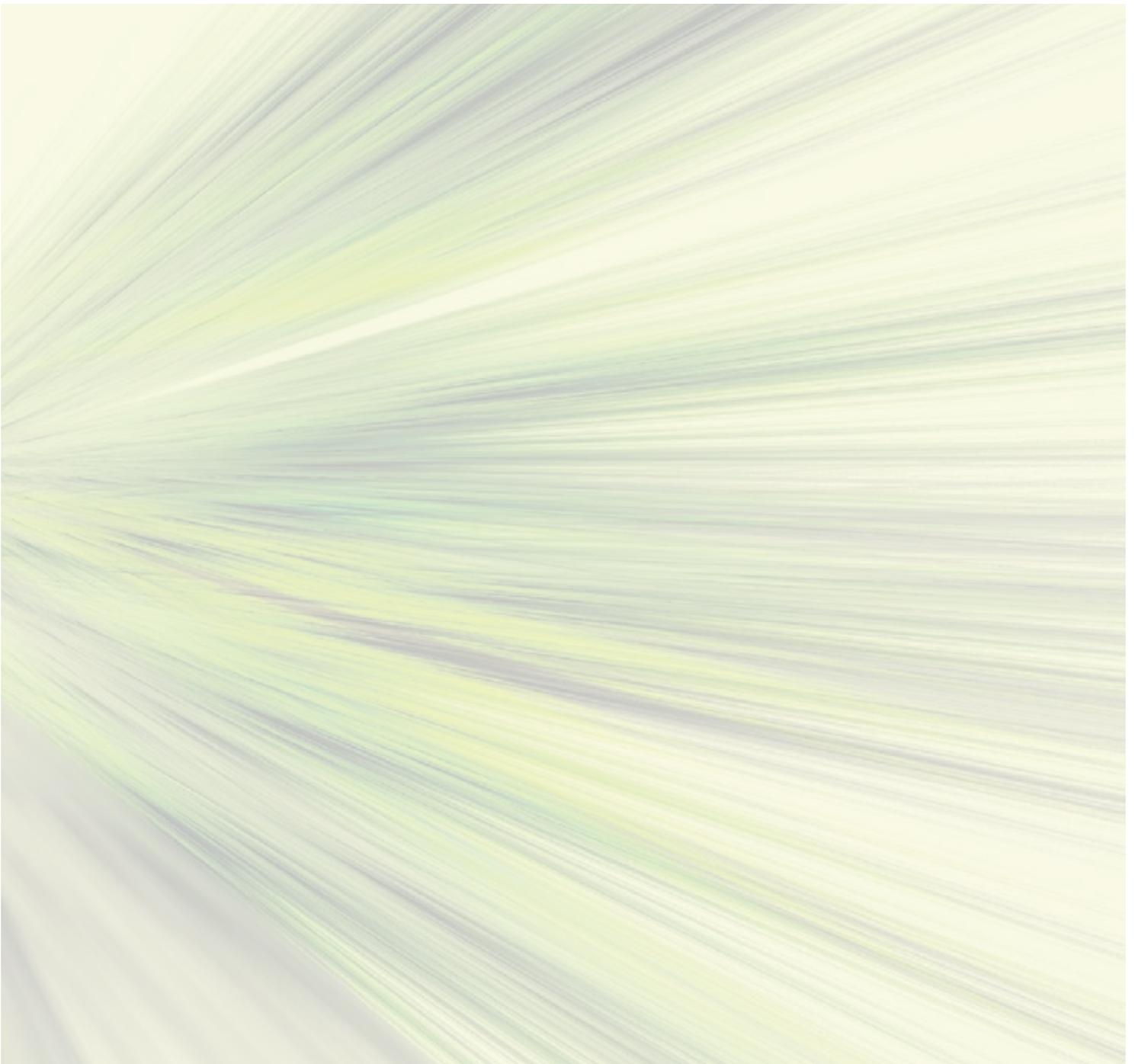
FEDERALIST PAPER 2 THE FUTURE OF SCHOOLING IN AUSTRALIA

A REPORT BY THE STATES AND TERRITORIES
APRIL 2007



FEDERALIST PAPER 2 THE FUTURE OF SCHOOLING IN AUSTRALIA

A REPORT BY THE STATES AND TERRITORIES
APRIL 2007





	Foreword by First Ministers	4
	Preface by Review Steering Committee	5
	Executive Summary	6
1	Introduction: Progress since the Hobart and Adelaide Declarations	7
	The Hobart and Adelaide Declarations	7
	The achievements of federal collaboration	7
2	The performance of Australian schools: International benchmarking	9
	The quality of Australian school education	9
	Equity in Australian school education	11
	Completion rates in Australian secondary education	14
	Australia's challenges	15
3	Schooling in 2007: Dealing with new challenges	16
	Priorities for the new statement	17
	A new statement on Australian schooling	24
4	A Statement on the Future of Schooling in Australia by the States and Territories	25
	A commitment to the future of Australia	25
	A commitment to parents and the community	26
	A commitment to students	26
	A commitment to rigorous curriculum standards	28
	A commitment to developing outstanding principals and a high-quality teacher workforce	29
	A commitment to equality of opportunity	29
	A commitment to collaborative federalism	30



TABLE OF CONTENTS



5	An action plan	31
1	Working towards a national curriculum	31
2	Testing student achievement	31
3	Reporting on performance	32
4	Supporting workforce reform	32
5	Harmonising teacher registration	33
6	Reducing red tape	33
7	Convening a national forum	34
	References	35



FOREWORD BY FIRST MINISTERS

On 13 October 2006, the Council for the Australian Federation established a steering committee, chaired by Professor Peter Dawkins, Secretary of the Victorian Department of Education, to review the *Adelaide Declaration on National Goals for Schooling in the Twenty-First Century*.

In April 2007 the report of the steering committee was received. The Council endorses the findings of the report, *The Future of Schooling in Australia*, and hereby is pleased to publicly release it. The Council believes that the report provides an excellent basis for a collaborative approach to promote high quality schooling across Australia.

We have asked the steering committee to undertake a process of consultation on the *Statement on the Future of Schooling in Australia* (Chapter 4) with relevant organisations, including representatives of the Catholic and Independent school sectors, for further refinement if necessary.

We have also asked the steering committee to oversee consultation on, and implementation of, the twelve-point action plan (Chapter 5).

We call upon the Commonwealth to commit to the collaborative agenda as outlined in this report.

24 April 2007

PREFACE BY REVIEW STEERING COMMITTEE



On 13 October 2006, the Council for the Australian Federation established a steering committee to review the *Adelaide Declaration on National Goals for Schooling in the Twenty-First Century*, which the States, Territories and the Commonwealth jointly signed in 1999. The committee comprised the senior official from each of the State and Territory education departments, a representative from the senior officials of State and Territory Premiers' and Chief Ministers' departments, a representative from the Australasian Curriculum Assessment Certification Authorities and Professor Barry McGaw.

In reviewing the Adelaide Declaration, the committee addressed the following questions:

- 1 What have been the achievements of cooperative federalism in the area of school policy since the Adelaide Declaration?
- 2 How do Australian schools perform by international standards?
- 3 Is the time ripe for a new statement on the future of schooling in Australia and, if so, what should it include?
- 4 In the light of a new statement, what actions should the States and Territories take, collaboratively, to further promote high-quality schooling across Australia?

Our deliberations have resulted in a new *Statement on the Future of Schooling in Australia* by the States and Territories (Chapter 4), and a twelve-point action plan (Chapter 5). We commend the new statement and action plan to First Ministers.

We recommend that First Ministers endorse this report and agree to a process of consultation with relevant organisations, including representatives of the Catholic and Independent school sectors, on the new statement and action plan, with a view to further refinement if necessary. We also recommend consultation with the Commonwealth Government, with a view to the Commonwealth also committing to the collaborative agenda of the statement and action plan.

Professor Peter Dawkins
Chair
Review Steering Committee

Secretary
Department of Education
Victoria



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The *Adelaide Declaration on National Goals for Schooling in the Twenty-First Century* was jointly signed by States, Territories and the Commonwealth in 1999. It was a significant agreement that committed all Australian governments to a national framework for schooling and established cooperation between governments as the means to achieve the best possible results for all Australian students.

Eight years on, the States and Territories believe it is time to reassert the importance of national collaboration to promote high-quality schooling for all Australian students, whatever jurisdiction, school system or individual school is involved.

Chapter 1 of this report outlines significant educational reforms of the last decade achieved through collaboration between the States, Territories and Commonwealth. These include the development of national statements of learning and increased availability of data on student performance.

The evidence that Australian students perform well at an international level is detailed in Chapter 2. Evidence is also provided that the Australian school system is, however, less equitable than the systems of some other similarly high-performing countries.

The key challenges facing schooling in 2007 are discussed in Chapter 3. Among these are an increased awareness of the importance of schooling to future economic prosperity, the ever-increasing environmental and technological challenges and the need for students to reap the benefits of globalisation.

Chapter 4 comprises a new statement on the future of schooling in Australia. It proposes a new national framework for schooling and is based on the axiom that the quality and performance of teachers, schools and jurisdictions are central to the life prospects of every student and to national prosperity.

A twelve-point action plan is set out in Chapter 5, to be used by the States and Territories in consultation with relevant organisations, including representatives of the Catholic and Independent school sectors.

INTRODUCTION: PROGRESS SINCE THE HOBART AND ADELAIDE DECLARATIONS



The 1999 *Adelaide Declaration on the National Goals of Schooling* has fostered a considerable amount of cooperative effort to promote the national goals of schooling across Australia. With a clear awareness of the importance of schooling for the future prosperity of the economy and to maximise the opportunities for young people to reap the benefits of globalisation, the States and Territories believe that it is time to reassert the importance of national collaboration. The aim is to promote high-quality schooling for all Australian students whatever jurisdiction, school system or individual school is involved.

THE HOBART AND ADELAIDE DECLARATIONS

State, Territory and Commonwealth Ministers for Education met as the Australian Education Council in 1989 and committed to a framework for national cooperation in education. The *Hobart Declaration on Common and Agreed National Goals for Schooling* was recognised as the pivotal statement by which education authorities and schools understood the requirements for delivery of better educational outcomes and for differences across Australia to be reduced through the pursuit of explicit, common goals. In 1999, the *Adelaide Declaration* reinforced and extended this commitment with jurisdictions endorsing a new set of goals that identified additional priority areas (for example, vocational education, information technology, literacy and numeracy, civics and citizenship); gave clear recognition to the particular learning needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students; and sharpened the focus on students and their learning outcomes.

THE ACHIEVEMENTS OF FEDERAL COLLABORATION

The ongoing collaboration between States, Territories and the Commonwealth, supported by the strength and benefits of Australia's federal structure, has helped produce student results that are recognised as among the highest in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). It has also facilitated significant educational reform.

The evidence, which is outlined in Chapter 2, suggests that supporting diverse provision through national agreements serves us well. The OECD's Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) demonstrates that Australian 15-year-olds perform well (on average) when it comes to careful reading, logical thinking, and the application of reading skills and mathematical and scientific understandings to everyday problems.

Significant examples of the collaboration between States, Territories and the Commonwealth include:

- National statements of learning for English, mathematics, science, civics and citizenship, and information and communication technologies (ICT). These statements outline important learning opportunities for students in Years 3, 5, 7 and 9.
- Data-driven accountability for student results. The National Assessment Program includes annual full cohort literacy and numeracy testing in Years 3, 5, 7 and 9; science, ICT, civics and citizenship sample testing and participation in the OECD's Programme for International Student Assessment and the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study.
- A measurement framework for key performance measures that ensures national comparability of benchmark literacy and numeracy standards for Years 3, 5, 7 and 9; and reporting at a higher achievement standard in science, ICT and civics and citizenship learning areas. Better literacy and numeracy testing in 2008 will enable reporting of student performance across a range of achievement levels.
- Annual production of the National Report on Schooling in Australia to ensure that the outcomes of schooling in Australia are publicly available. This commenced in 1999. Reports reflect student cohorts and are disaggregated by gender, indigenous status, language background, geographic location and socio-economic background.
- International recognition and adaptation of Australian jurisdiction curricula across nations including Singapore, Hong Kong and the United Arab Emirates.
- Establishment of the Curriculum Corporation of Australia by all Australian Education Ministers to work with jurisdiction education systems in improving student learning outcomes.

These examples of collaboration between States, Territories and the Commonwealth are achieving significant results for Australian students. The National Goals for Schooling have been a beacon for this collaboration. Through recognising the importance of each student in all Australian schools, the Hobart and Adelaide Declarations established some key milestones to drive quality improvement.

In reasserting the importance of this national collaboration, the States and Territories have agreed on the new statement detailed in Chapter 4 and the action plan outlined in Chapter 5, which put even more emphasis on high-quality teaching and personalised learning. Our schools must commit to providing every student with an opportunity to learn, and fully develop their particular capabilities. Schooling provides pathways to success for individuals and is the base from which nations prosper, consistent with the Council of Australian Governments' endorsement of the National Reform Agenda.

THE PERFORMANCE OF AUSTRALIAN SCHOOLS: INTERNATIONAL BENCHMARKING¹



The OECD provides statistics and indicators with which it compares member countries in a wide range of areas to inform policy discussion. In education, these comparisons have been published in statistical collections and annually, for more than a decade, in OECD's *Education at a Glance*. Initially, comparisons were primarily of inputs (expenditure, personnel and so on) with comparison of outputs limited to completion and graduation rates and some labour market outcomes. The member countries have now extended the coverage to direct measurements of student learning through the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), reflecting the same shift in focus from inputs to outcomes evident in Australian policy developments.

THE QUALITY OF AUSTRALIAN SCHOOL EDUCATION

OECD's PISA results paint a good picture of the overall performance of Australian 15-year-olds. In PISA 2000, the main domain assessed was reading literacy with mathematics and science as minor domains with less assessment time. In PISA 2003, the main domain assessed was mathematics with reading, science and problem solving as minor domains. In PISA 2006, the main domain was science, with reading and mathematics as minor domains, though the results are not yet available.

Comparisons of the average performances of students are provided in Table 2.1. The Netherlands was excluded from the results in PISA 2000 and the United Kingdom was excluded in PISA 2003 because their samples of 15-year-olds failed to satisfy the student numbers required for the sampling criteria. Countries with results not significantly different from Australia are grouped together with Australia. They can be said to have tied with Australia in the place immediately behind those countries with mean performances significantly better than Australia's. Australia ranked 2nd in reading with eight others, 5th in mathematics with eight others, 5th in science with seven others and 5th in problem solving with seven others. While they are good rankings, Australia should be challenged by those ahead and not comforted by those around or behind if we are to be a prosperous community in the future.

01 This Chapter was prepared by Professor Barry McGaw and Associate Professor Stephen Lamb of the Melbourne Education Research Institute at the University of Melbourne. Professor McGaw was previously Director for Education in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the Executive Director of the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER).

TABLE 2.1 > RANKINGS OF COUNTRIES² BY MEAN PERFORMANCES IN PISA ASSESSMENTS

	READING PISA 2000 ³	MATHEMATICS PISA 2003 ⁴	SCIENCE PISA 2003 ⁵	PROBLEM SOLVING PISA 2003 ⁶
BEHIND	FINLAND	<i>HONG KONG-CHINA</i> FINLAND KOREA NETHERLANDS	FINLAND JAPAN <i>HONG KONG-CHINA</i> KOREA	KOREA <i>HONG KONG-CHINA</i> FINLAND JAPAN
AUSTRALIA'S RANK	2ND	5TH	5TH	5TH
TIED WITH	CANADA NEW ZEALAND AUSTRALIA IRELAND <i>HONG KONG-CHINA</i> KOREA UNITED KINGDOM JAPAN SWEDEN	<i>LIECHTENSTEIN</i> JAPAN CANADA BELGIUM <i>MACAO-CHINA</i> AUSTRALIA NEW ZEALAND CZECH REPUBLIC	<i>LIECHTENSTEIN</i> AUSTRALIA <i>MACAO-CHINA</i> NETHERLANDS CZECH REPUBLIC NEW ZEALAND CANADA SWITZERLAND	NEW ZEALAND <i>MACAO-CHINA</i> <i>LIECHTENSTEIN</i> AUSTRALIA CANADA BELGIUM SWITZERLAND NETHERLANDS
AHEAD OF	AUSTRIA BELGIUM ICELAND NORWAY FRANCE UNITED STATES DENMARK SWITZERLAND SPAIN CZECH REPUBLIC ITALY GERMANY <i>LIECHTENSTEIN</i> HUNGARY POLAND GREECE PORTUGAL <i>RUSSIAN FED</i> LATVIA ISRAEL LUXEMBOURG <i>THAILAND</i> BULGARIA ROMANIA MEXICO ARGENTINA CHILE BRAZIL FYR MACEDONIA INDONESIA ALBANIA PERU	ICELAND DENMARK FRANCE SWEDEN AUSTRIA GERMANY IRELAND SLOVAK REPUBLIC NORWAY LUXEMBOURG POLAND HUNGARY SPAIN LATVIA UNITED STATES <i>RUSSIAN FED</i> PORTUGAL ITALY GREECE SERBIA TURKEY <i>URUGUAY</i> THAILAND MEXICO INDONESIA TUNISIA BRAZIL	FRANCE BELGIUM SWEDEN IRELAND HUNGARY GERMANY POLAND SLOVAK REPUBLIC ICELAND UNITED STATES AUSTRIA <i>RUSSIAN FED</i> LATVIA SPAIN ITALY NORWAY LUXEMBOURG GREECE DENMARK PORTUGAL <i>URUGUAY</i> SERBIA TURKEY THAILAND MEXICO INDONESIA BRAZIL TUNISIA	FRANCE CZECH REP DENMARK GERMANY SWEDEN AUSTRIA ICELAND HUNGARY IRELAND LUXEMBOURG SLOVAK REP NORWAY POLAND LATVIA SPAIN <i>RUSSIAN FED</i> UNITED STATES PORTUGAL ITALY GREECE <i>THAILAND</i> SERBIA <i>URUGUAY</i> TURKEY MEXICO BRAZIL INDONESIA TUNISIA

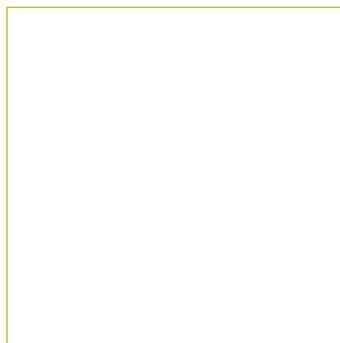
02 Non OECD countries are shown in italics.

03 OECD/UNESCO Institute for Statistics (2003) *Literacy skills for the world of tomorrow: Further results from PISA 2000*, Figure 2.5, p.76.

04 OECD (2004) *Learning for tomorrow's world*, Figure 2.16b, p.92.

05 OECD (2004) *Learning for tomorrow's world*, Figure 6.10, p.294.

06 OECD (2004) *Problem solving for tomorrow's world*, Figure 2.3, p.42.



PISA will provide evidence on trends in quality levels in the different countries as it continues with its three-yearly cycle of assessments. For the present, PISA 2000 and PISA 2003 provide two data points for each country.

In reading, PISA 2000 provided full assessment as a major domain. PISA 2009 will repeat this assessment. PISA 2003 provides evidence on reading performance with the more limited assessment undertaken in a minor domain but it does afford comparisons of performance between 2000 and 2003. Australia was among 17 countries with the same average performance levels on the two occasions. There were significant improvements in five countries (including Korea which was similar to Australia in 2000) and significant drops in performance in nine (including Ireland, Hong Kong-China and Japan which were similar to Australia in 2000).

In mathematics, PISA 2003 provided assessments in four areas whereas in PISA 2000 when mathematics was a minor domain, only two were assessed: 'space and shape' and 'change and relationships'. On both scales, Australia's results in 2000 and 2003 were statistically the same, as were those of 18 countries on the first of these scales and 17 on the second. Among the countries that improved significantly on both scales were Korea, Belgium and the Czech Republic and among those that improved significantly on one of the two scales were Hong Kong-China, Finland and Canada. These countries were all better than or equal to Australia in overall mathematics performance in 2003.

In science, both PISA 2000 and PISA 2003 provided assessments as a minor domain. There were 14 countries with no change in performance between 2000 and 2003 (among them Australia). Among countries better than or equal to Australia in 2003, Korea and Canada had significantly declined from their 2000 level while Finland, Liechtenstein, Belgium and Switzerland had significantly improved from their 2000 level.

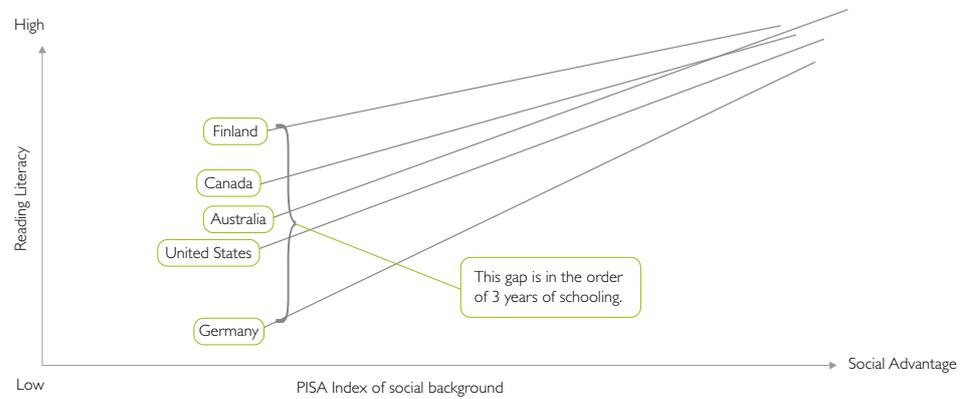
The clear message is that the competition is not standing still. Australia will need to improve if it is to maintain its current high rating and it will need to improve even further if it is to become one of the highest performing countries. Meeting this challenge is a significant element of the National Reform Agenda.

EQUITY IN AUSTRALIAN SCHOOL EDUCATION

There are two ways in which questions of equity can be addressed in the international comparisons provided by the PISA data. One is to examine the relationship between students' social backgrounds and their performances on the tests. In all countries, social advantage is generally associated with higher educational performance but there are marked differences in the nature of the relationship. These regression lines are shown for five countries in Figure 2.1: the steeper the slope, the less equitable the results.

The lines for Finland and Canada are significantly less steep than those for the OECD as a whole, while those for Australia, the United States and Germany are significantly steeper. There are some differences between the countries in the performances of students from advantaged backgrounds though they are not large, as indicated by the tendency of the lines to converge in the top-right of the figure. The differences in performance levels of similarly disadvantaged students, at the left of the figure, are not trivial. Those in Germany are about three years of schooling behind their counterparts in Finland. Disadvantaged students in Australia do better than those in Germany but they are significantly behind their counterparts in Finland and Canada.

FIG. 2.1 > RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SOCIAL BACKGROUND AND ACHIEVEMENT IN PISA 2000 READING⁷



Australia's results in reading are high-quality but they are low-equity. The challenge for Australia is to match the performances of countries like Finland and Canada (and Japan, Korea and Hong Kong-China) which are high-quality and high-equity.

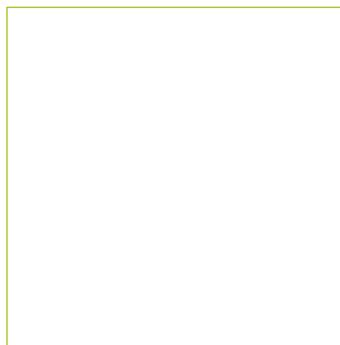
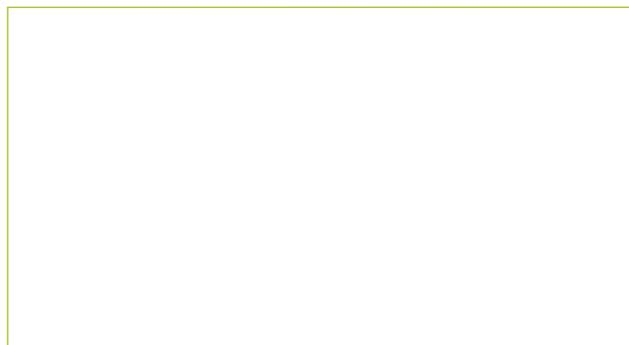
In mathematics, the equity picture revealed in PISA 2003 was not quite so marked. In those data, the slope of the regression line for Australia was not significantly different from the OECD overall slope. Those for Finland and Canada were again significantly less steep. They continue to be high-quality, high-equity countries that Australia should aspire to match.

The other way in which equity questions can be addressed using PISA data is to make comparisons of the source of variation among student performance. This involves partitioning the variation in performance among students in the OECD countries into a component due to differences among students within schools, and a component due to differences between schools. This type of analysis has been performed using mathematics data from PISA 2003,⁸ and has shown that there are a small number of OECD countries, including Iceland, Finland and Norway, where there is very little variation in performance between schools. Consequently choice of school is not overly important for parents in those countries.

The countries in which there is a large component of variation between schools, include those in which this occurs by design. In Belgium and Germany, for example, students are sorted into schools of different types according to their school performance as early as age 12. Students are differentiated by the academic or vocational emphasis in their curriculum. This is intended to minimise variation within schools in order to provide the curricula considered most appropriate for particular student groups. It has the corresponding result of maximising the variation between schools.

07 OECD/UNESCO Institute for Statistics (2003) *Literacy skills for the world of tomorrow: Further results from PISA 2000*, Table 6.10, p.355.

08 OECD (2004) *Learning for tomorrow's world*, Table 4.1a, p.383.



In some other countries, the grouping of students is less deliberate but still results in substantial between-school variation. In Japan, for example, 53% of the overall variation is between schools and in Korea, 42% is between schools. In Australia, the variation between schools is 20%.

A further way in which to examine equity involves subdividing the variation between schools into three components:

- variation between schools that can be explained in terms of the social backgrounds of the individual students in the schools
- variation between schools that can be explained in terms of the average social background of the students in the schools
- variation between schools that cannot be accounted for in terms of the social backgrounds of the students.

The first indicates the impact of students' own social backgrounds on their educational outcomes, the second the impact of the company they keep in school. In Australia, 70% of the variation between schools can be accounted for in terms of differences between schools in the social background of their students – 40% individual social background and 30% the average social background of students in the schools.

Where differences in social background account for a large percentage of the between-school variation, this suggests that the educational arrangements in the country are inequitable. While this variation derives from the social background of other students in the school, it suggests that there is a benefit for advantaged students in keeping company with similarly advantaged students but a compounded disadvantage for disadvantaged students keeping company with others like themselves. Additional analyses of the PISA 2000 data for Austria, however, suggest that this effect might not be uniform. They show that in Austria socially advantaged students gain little additional advantage from being in the company of other socially advantaged students while disadvantaged students suffer a significant additional disadvantage from being in the company of other disadvantaged students. The Austrian authors conclude 'Social heterogeneity, moreover, has no big adverse effect on academic outcomes. These results imply considerable social gains of reducing stratification in educational settings'.⁹

Domestic evidence shows that Australia has not been making any progress on this front. Data from the 1975 survey of literacy and numeracy levels of Australian students, and subsequent Longitudinal Surveys of Australian Youth (LSAY), show that differences in social background had as much impact on differences in educational achievement in 1998 as they did in 1975.¹⁰ This should be of concern to all Australian governments as well as to the Catholic and Independent school sectors.

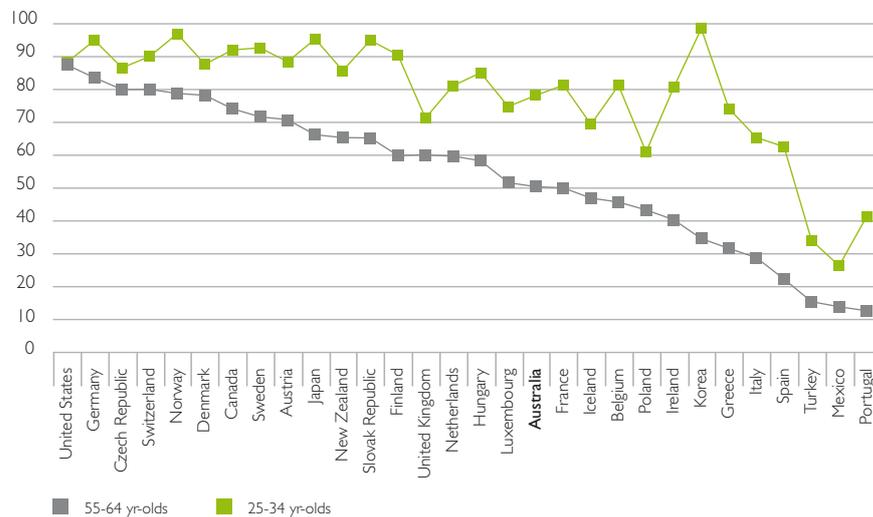
09 Schneeweis, N & Winter-Ebmer, R. (2005). *Peer effects in Austrian schools*. Economics Working paper 2005-02, Department of Economics, Johannes Kepler University Linz, Austria, p.2.

10 Rothman, S. (2002) *Achievement in literacy and numeracy by Australian 14-year-olds, 1975-1998*. Melbourne: Australian Council for Educational Research.

COMPLETION RATES IN AUSTRALIAN SECONDARY EDUCATION

Participation rates in upper secondary education in Australia rose rapidly from around 35% in 1980 to around 75% by 1992. Since then, they have scarcely shifted. That has not been the case in many other OECD countries. International comparisons of changes in completion rates for upper secondary education or equivalent can be obtained by comparing different age cohorts. Figure 2.2 gives the rates for 55-64-year-olds and 25-34-year-olds in the OECD countries. For 55-64-year-olds, Australia ranks 18th among the OECD countries with 49%. For 25-34-year-olds, Australia ranks 20th with 77% and is one of only 12 countries for which the figure is below 80%. Over the same 30-year period represented by the gap between these two age groups, South Korea moved from 24th to 1st and Japan from 10th to 3rd.

FIG 2.2 > PERCENTAGES OF ADULTS WHO HAVE COMPLETED UPPER SECONDARY EDUCATION OR EQUIVALENT¹¹



Failing to complete upper secondary education, or its equivalent, has an impact on individuals. Those who do not complete are at a disadvantage in the labour market in all OECD countries. The disadvantage is generally less in countries where there is a relatively high proportion of the population which does not complete this level of education, but Australia is an exception. The non-completion rate in Australia is relatively high, as shown in Figure 2.2, but the disadvantage is greater than all but one OECD country, as Figure 2.3 shows.

¹¹ OECD (2006) *Education at a Glance*, Table A1.2a, p.38.

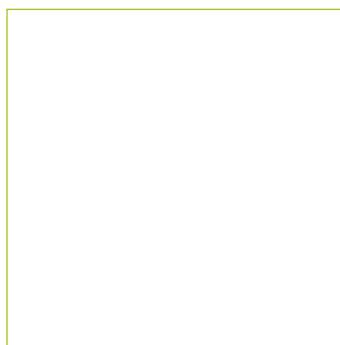
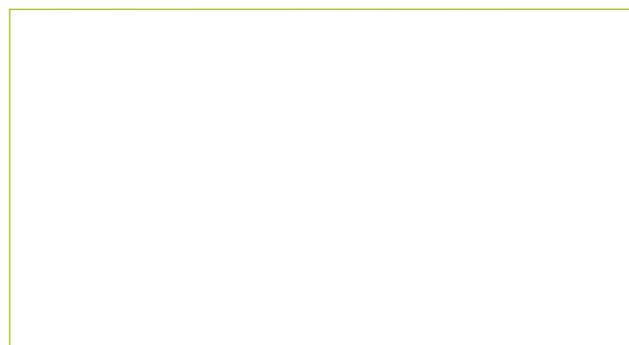
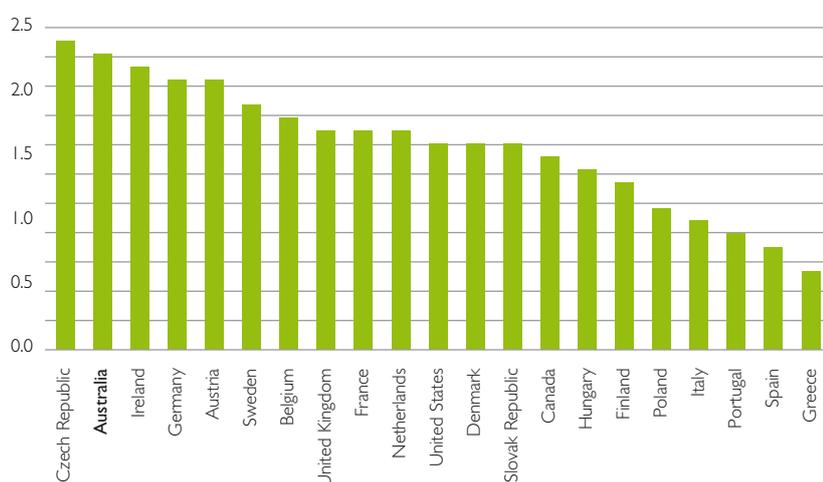


FIG 2.3 > RATIO OF UNEMPLOYMENT RATES FOR 24-YEAR-OLDS WITHOUT AND WITH UPPER SECONDARY EDUCATION¹²



In Australia, 24-year-olds who have not completed upper secondary education or its equivalent are more than twice as likely to be unemployed as 24-year-olds who have completed that level of education. Only in the Czech Republic is the ratio higher:

AUSTRALIA'S CHALLENGES

Australia has grounds for satisfaction in the relatively high level of the educational performances of its 15-year-olds in the domains that OECD assesses but it cannot avoid two substantial challenges.

One is to match those other high-performing countries that have more equitable educational systems than exist in Australia. These countries ameliorate the effects of differences in social background to an extent that much Australian debate in education predicates as unimaginable. While Australian public debate is often about whether a concern for equity requires abandoning a concern for quality, with 'dumbing down' the consequence, other countries pursue and achieve both, with levelling up the consequence. It is not that these countries remove differences among individual students in educational performance. Those differences will always be there. What they have done is to weaken the link between those differences and differences in the social background of students.

The other challenge is to improve the overall level of educational performance in Australia. As in all aspects of international competition, other nations are not standing still and seek consistently to improve student performance through high-quality teacher training programs, increased investment and establishing education as a central priority of public policy.

¹² Sweet, R. (2006) *Education, training and employment in an international perspective*. Paper presented at Brotherhood of St Laurence Seminar; *New Transitions: Challenges Facing Australian Youth*, August 2006.



SCHOOLING IN 2007: DEALING WITH NEW CHALLENGES

The late twentieth century saw an economic revolution in the management and application of information. The implications of a globalised society were also beginning to emerge. The Adelaide Declaration in 1999 reflected these developments, but the last eight years have seen a marked and continuing acceleration in the pace of change. This is apparent not only in the transformation of economies and technology, but also in evolving understanding about the environment and the nature of society, culture and values. There have been a number of key developments that deserve special mention.

i More than ever, education is crucial to secure Australia's future economic prosperity and meet changing workforce demands

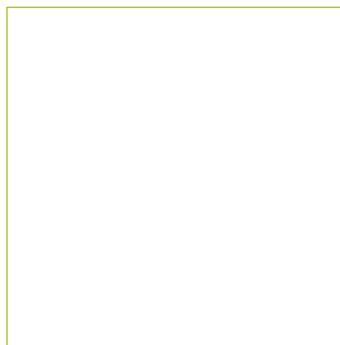
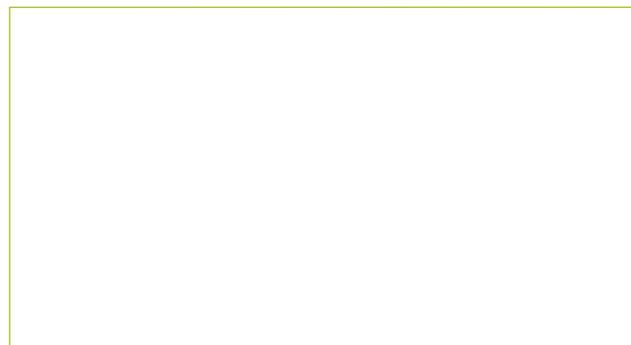
It is now accepted across the OECD that education and training underpin a nation's economic growth. Productivity and labour force participation are key economic drivers and research suggests that educational attainment is the single largest positive influence on workforce participation. Developed nations recognise that the generation of new knowledge and the practical application of this knowledge will be the next wave of competitive advantage. There also exists a growing need for advanced technical skills, recognising the increasing sophistication of traditional industries (for example, manufacturing and mining). Services to support the domestic economy continue to be critical. The challenge presented by these workforce demands will be compounded by a forecast decline in the proportion of working-age Australians. Schooling must take a clear role in positioning Australia's response.

ii Young people need the right skills and knowledge to thrive in an information-rich world

There has been strong growth in awareness of the implications of globalisation. Advances in technology, greater mobility and more frequent and diverse communication affect our everyday lives. Companies now operate in a global context. An estimated one million Australians work overseas, governments cooperate internationally on an ever greater range of issues (for example, the environment, health epidemics, economics and security), and investment and performance (particularly in education) are benchmarked at an international level. Not only do people now require a base amount of technological and scientific knowledge to understand the world around them, but there is a critical need for skills to prioritise and interpret the proliferation of information. There is an expectation that young adults will leave school with the capacity to communicate and learn in this context.

iii Education is critical to both understand and address emerging environmental challenges

There is a global awakening to the complexities and implications of environmental and societal sustainability. This represents a challenge for all nations. There is pressure to reconcile economic development with complex issues of sustainability and this has significant ramifications for developed and developing economies. This focus requires innovation through scientific progress and sophisticated development of market-based policy instruments (for example, carbon trading). Global focus on sustainable development reinforces the need for current and future citizens to have the knowledge to make informed and responsible decisions, as well as the problem-solving capacity to participate in a sustainable society.



iv Education can promote social cohesion by skilling students to relate their own values with the experience of others

Across OECD countries, globalisation has stirred debate about the nature of society, culture and values, and community tensions since 9/11 appear to have exacerbated this phenomenon. This has seen a renewed focus on citizenship and civics education as nations, including Australia, seek greater social cohesion. The promotion and reconciliation of global and local citizenship is important as globalisation increasingly requires an ability to relate our own values and traditions to the experience of others. Skills for future participation in society must include intercultural engagement, communication and understanding, recognising the diversity in the Australian workforce and the significant number of Australians employed in companies operating globally.

v Education is a critical driver for delivering equality of opportunity in society

While the developments discussed above have changed the context of schooling, the need for schools to be inclusive of children of diverse socio-economic (and cultural and linguistic) backgrounds remains paramount, especially given the increasing representation of Indigenous children and the forecast growth of the Indigenous population. All Australian children must be given a 'fair go'; it is no longer acceptable or affordable to have 15% of school-aged children not achieving benchmark standards in a country that has a proportionally smaller population than its major competitors. Chapter 2 indicates socio-economic background is more substantially related to education achievement than in the OECD as a whole; this highlights the needs for reforms to improve the quality of teaching and learning so that all Australian children have the opportunity to achieve their potential.

The Adelaide Declaration is a model of national collaboration that has assisted jurisdictions and schools to both develop and share best practice, and address ongoing change. It is clear in 2007, however, that the collective challenges of increasingly advanced skill demands, almost universal reliance on information technologies for communication, and growing environmental and social complexity requires a response that can harness the original intent of the Adelaide Declaration. This response must recognise the importance of the student-teacher relationship to performance and identify the principles and actions that States, Territories, the Commonwealth and the Catholic and Independent school sectors should commit to in delivering high-quality school education to all students.

PRIORITIES FOR THE NEW STATEMENT

Students and teachers are the focus of the new statement on Australian schooling. The primary purpose of schooling is for students to learn, and a key source of their learning is their teachers. Teachers must be given every opportunity to use their skills, knowledge and experience to address the unique learning needs of each student and help maximise each student's life chances. Schooling should never seek to make every student the same. Schools, through principals and teachers must ensure a high-quality education for each student; it should also be recognised that building partnerships between schools, families and the community enhances student learning, values and aspirations.

Governments, education authorities and schools must recognise the priorities outlined below and commit to providing a high standard of schooling for all students in all States and Territories of Australia. Governments have an additional responsibility to ensure social and economic barriers do not impede the opportunity for any student to learn.

1 The quality of teaching and school leadership

The quality of teaching is the largest in-school determinant of variation in student achievement. High-quality teaching links the knowledge and skills to be learnt, the values to be acquired, and the needs and prior understanding of the learner. It is affected by the calibre of candidates entering teaching and the rigour of pre-service training, including the quality and length of practicum placements during pre-service education.

The quality of teaching can be enhanced through strategies to recruit, retain and reward high-performing teachers, performance-focussed evaluation and ongoing, school-centred professional development. The importance of high-quality teaching has been identified as part of the third wave of reform under the National Reform Agenda of the Council of Australian Governments.

Governments, school systems and individual schools all have a responsibility to attract and retain high-quality professionals in the teaching workforce. School principals have the critical role of establishing and driving the school culture and are the primary focus for high-quality performance and continuous improvement in all schools. School principals need to lead and inspire professional learning. Principals also lead and shape the relationship between students, parents and the broader community and their expertise is central to delivering high-quality programs in all schools.

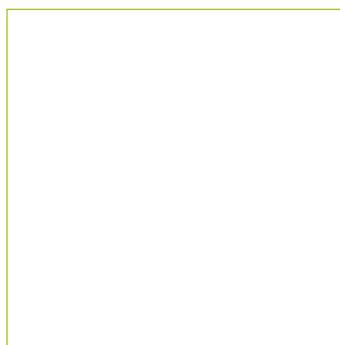
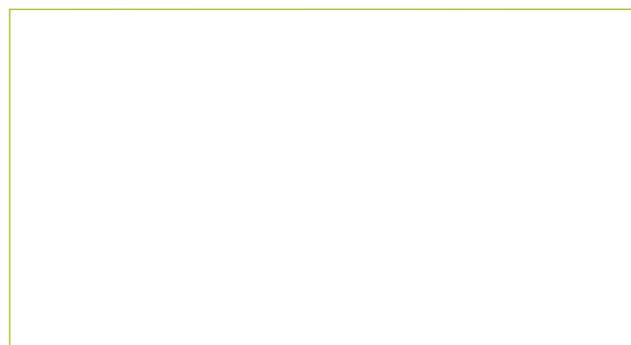
2 Early childhood

The States and Territories have committed to early childhood development and the transition to formal schooling as critical to their human capital agenda through the Council of Australian Governments. The current National Goals for Schooling focus on the 'compulsory years' of schooling. A young child's preparation for schooling is recognised as a key element in the learning cycle and is identified as such in the new statement.

High-quality early childhood experiences yield significant benefits for children, their families and society, and play an important role in determining children's attitudes and aptitude for schooling. The benefits of such experiences are especially strong for children from low socio-economic backgrounds.

3 School retention and transitions from school

The Council of Australian Governments has recognised that the transition from school to work or further study is a significant step in a student's life and that schooling needs to equip young people with the skills to succeed in their chosen post-school pathway. The Adelaide Declaration recognised the importance of access to the high-quality education necessary to complete Year 12 or vocational equivalent as a pathway to employment and further education and training.



Evidence across OECD nations demonstrates that completing Year 12 or its equivalent is critical to subsequent economic opportunities and engagement in life-long learning. Contemporary practice across education jurisdictions also recognises that learning occurs within phases and that the needs of students differ across these phases. As indicated in Chapter 2 the way in which teaching and learning maximises retention to Year 12 differs between and within schools. Differences relate both to the community the individual school serves and the variation in quality between teachers within an individual school.

4 Curriculum

A solid foundation to enable advanced learning

In school education, the curriculum must achieve three important objectives for students. It is critical that every student:

- **achieves a solid foundation in skills and knowledge on which further learning and adult life can be built**

Skills in literacy and numeracy for all students must continue to be a strong focus since so much further learning and much of adult life depends crucially on these skills. Basic competence should be achieved in the early years of primary school but the skills must be developed to higher levels in the middle and later years of schooling. Students also need to develop competence in a range of other areas as well. Much public policy, for example, involves debates about science. To engage productively in these debates, citizens need to understand what determines a scientific question and what counts as evidence in dealing with such questions, and they must be able to use such evidence to reach informed conclusions. Young people also need to develop a well-formed knowledge of the history and culture they are inheriting and which they, in turn, will shape. This should include an understanding of Australia's diversity of culture and history and an ability to relate and communicate across cultures. Competence in, and appreciation of, the creative arts also provides an important foundation for adult life.

- **develops deep knowledge and skills that will enable advanced learning, and an ability to create new ideas and translate them into practical applications**

Alongside the important broad competencies referred to above, students need to develop expertise in more focused areas. Expertise requires deep knowledge of a particular subject discipline that shapes the way in which experts represent problems in the discipline as well as how they solve them. Expertise does not readily transfer across disciplines and skills such as high-level problem-solving are not disembodied competencies that can be used independent of a deep knowledge of a particular subject discipline.

In the creation of new knowledge, people work across disciplinary boundaries, often creating new sub-disciplines, but their capacity to do so typically rests on deep expertise in one or more of the disciplines.

- **develops general competencies that underpin flexible thinking, a capacity to work with others and an ability to move across subject disciplines to develop new expertise**

Working in teams is a feature of many contemporary work environments. To contribute productively and to enjoy their working lives individuals need to think flexibly and work with others. They also need problem-solving capacity of the kind that helps them move into what are, for them, new subject disciplines and to begin to build new expertise. The ability to synthesise, create and apply new information is important. Multi-disciplinary capabilities will be crucial in meeting major national and global challenges into the future, for example, climate change, genetic engineering and cultural difference.

Towards a national curriculum

Collaboration between the States, Territories and the Commonwealth over the last decade has put in place a number of agreements that provide a framework for a national curriculum including:

- The Adelaide Declaration which outlined agreement on eight common areas of learning, a socially just approach to schooling and a focus on the outcomes of the learning process in schools – what children learn. Curricula in all States and Territories up to the start of Year 11, broadly follow the Adelaide Declaration.
- The National Statements of Learning in English, mathematics, science, civics and citizenship and ICT which have been endorsed by all governments. They outline what every child should have the opportunity to learn. School authorities have agreed to align their curriculum with these statements by 2008.

Research also indicates that there is the opportunity to develop a national curriculum. The recent Australian Council for Educational Research report, *Year 12 Curriculum Content and Achievement Standards*¹³, highlighted the similarity across jurisdictions of the core curriculum in senior secondary subjects, particularly in mathematics and the sciences. There is also strong community consensus on what students should study in these areas.

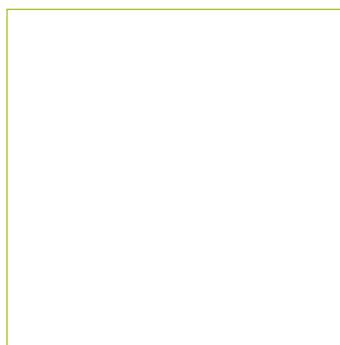
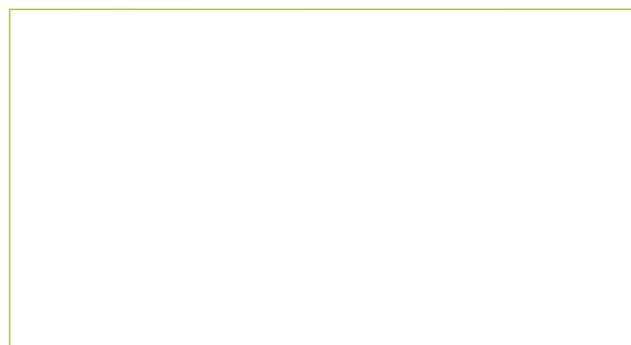
The rapid rate of change in the world demands that a national curriculum must be able to respond and adapt. High-quality curriculum has built-in processes to accommodate improvement over time. An agreed common core curriculum could promote equity for all students. However a national curriculum will benefit if there is flexibility for states and schools to innovate and adapt and to share their experiences of what approaches achieve the best results. A level of autonomy for individual schools and teachers to make professional decisions about curriculum drives the high performance level of a large number of government, Catholic and Independent schools across jurisdictions.

In moving towards a national curriculum it should be emphasized that the findings outlined in Chapter 2 demonstrate that Australian school students, in general, perform at high standards by comparison with other countries. The major caveat to this relates to the tail of the distribution and the association between low-performing students and their socio-economic backgrounds. It is not the standards embodied in the curriculum that are the problem; rather it is the challenge of getting the lower performers to meet the standards. Reforms and investments that can enhance the quality of teaching and learning of students are the remedy here, rather than prescribing curriculum from one source.

Furthermore, whatever common curriculum standards (that is, what students are expected to achieve in mathematics, science etc.) are adopted by jurisdictions, it is important to allow for flexibility in schools catering for different groups of students to achieve these standards in different ways. This is not an argument for lower standards for some students. On the contrary, it is an argument for flexibility in teaching approach and, in some cases, content in order to reach the standards in different settings.

With high-quality course material, excellent teaching and flexible organisation, it is possible to support each student to progress along a personalised pathway that reflects their specific goals, strengths and motivations, and harnesses other opportunities for learning. This process of personalisation is increasingly recognised as being an essential part of increasing retention and attainment rates.

13 Matters, G. & Masters, G. (2007) *Year 12 Curriculum content and achievement standards*. Report prepared by the Australian Council for Educational Research for the Department of Education, Science and Training.



Finland, the country that leads the world in international benchmarks of student outcomes (in the OECD PISA study) is a helpful case study. In their reforms in the 1990s which resulted in them moving to the forefront of student achievement, they abandoned uniformity in curriculum content and moved to basing their teaching and learning on rigorous curriculum standards while allowing schools flexibility in the content of the curriculum in achieving these standards.¹⁴ Strong school leadership and an outstanding quality of teaching is what then delivered the world's best student results.

Such an approach can benefit from the promulgation by education authorities of exemplary curriculum materials and mechanisms that allow high-performing schools to share their curriculum material with other schools.

Key learning areas

The Adelaide Declaration nominated eight key learning areas for the curriculum in the compulsory years of schooling:

- the arts
- English
- health and physical education
- languages other than English
- mathematics
- science
- studies of society and environment
- technology

For the most part this list has served schools well. Several of the key learning areas are fundamentally important disciplines: English, mathematics, science and languages other than English. Health and physical education are increasingly critical for student and community well-being. The arts provide rich experiences and opportunities for all students. Technology is an important cross-disciplinary area for students of the twenty-first century. Studies of society and environment has been criticised by a number of commentators, partly because its focus is not clear from the label. It has become increasingly clear that what should be studied under this label, are the disciplines of history, geography and economics. In the statement about the future of schooling in Australia, in Chapter 4, these disciplines are made explicit under the umbrella of social science/humanities and reflect the important objectives for students outlined at the start of this curriculum section.

In addition to technology, there are two other areas that have become more prominent in the curriculum since the Adelaide Declaration. First, the States, Territories and the Commonwealth have cooperated in the inclusion of civics and citizenship in the curriculum, to nurture citizenship and civic behaviour amongst our students. Second, the study of business and the development of commercial and financial literacy skills can assist students in their middle and later years at school to prepare for work in the twenty-first century.

¹⁴ Harris, J. (2006) *Alignment in Finland*. Educational Alignments: Occasional Paper Number 1.

5 Accountability

Individual teachers, principals, schools, education authorities and governments are accountable for providing a high-quality education to all Australian students.

Assessment

Assessment should provide information on the performance of the individual students, individual schools and school systems. The primary purpose of assessment is for use in providing teachers with the information they need to improve each student's results and parents with information on their child's progress.

Monitoring system performance requires the assessment of a properly designed sample of students. The international comparisons in the OECD PISA study are based on the performances of samples of students in each of the countries; the United States National Assessment of Educational Progress uses samples to monitor changes in performance over time and to compare State performances; and the first Australian surveys of students' levels of literacy and numeracy used samples. Most of the Australian States and Territories developed sample-based assessment programs to monitor system performance.

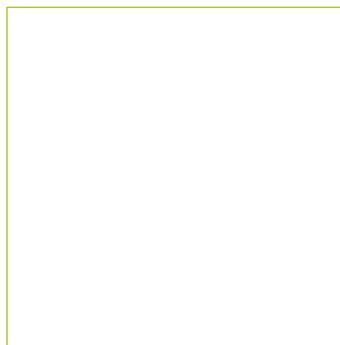
All Australian systems now assess all students at particular year levels and report to parents and students on individual performances. Western Australia has also maintained its cycle of sample-based assessments in a monitoring program that supplements the picture provided by the assessment of all students with sample-based studies of a broader range of subject areas.

Performance standards identified through the Council of Australian Governments' National Reform Agenda and the national testing agreement by the Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA) provide a solid base on which to build when determining the focus of the assessment programs.

Public reporting

Parents and students need reports on progress that help them to understand personal development in a jurisdiction or national context. The external assessments of all students in state and national testing programs provide this kind of information. For each student the report can show what the student knows and is able to do, and what the student should now be moving on to in order to reach a higher standard. This performance reporting must be clear and meaningful, with straightforward language and helpful visual representations.

States and Territories have developed ways in which system-wide data can be used to help schools understand their own performance. Schools can see the distributions of results for their students in comparison with those for all schools and with those for other schools with similar kinds of students. This helps systems to identify schools with best practice from which others might learn. Schools and systems are also using these data to make comparisons among teachers within schools, in order to identify sources of best practice from which all in the school might learn.



Making comparisons among schools is not straightforward. Direct comparison of results can be misleading since it takes no account of differences in school circumstances or student cohort. One response, used in the United States, the United Kingdom and Australia, is to offer comparisons with 'like schools' since these can provide more credible evidence of good and poor performance that cannot be dismissed as failing to take account of a school's circumstances. Another approach being explored is to keep all schools in the comparison but to use statistical adjustments to schools' results to separate the 'value added' by the school from the influence of students' backgrounds.

Reporting on the system provides information on the broad distribution of student performances. It can be helpful to identify thresholds of performance and useful to report on the percentage of students who have not exceeded particular thresholds. It is important also to monitor what is happening at other levels of performance. It would be unsatisfactory to have an increased percentage exceeding a minimum threshold while having a decline in performances at the highest level.

As Australia moves to make its data publicly available, it needs to monitor developments in other countries to ensure that best practice is followed here.

All Australians have an interest in the quality of Australian schooling, particularly as a driver of continued national prosperity, so reports on its quality should be made available to the whole community.

6 A commitment to improving Indigenous student outcomes

While Indigenous student outcomes have improved incrementally over recent decades, marked disparities continue to exist between Indigenous and non-Indigenous student outcomes. Poor results limit the post-school options and life choices of students, perpetuating intergenerational cycles of social and economic disadvantage. A commitment to improving Indigenous student outcomes through equality of opportunity is outlined in the new statement detailed in Chapter 4.

7 A commitment to parents and the community

The partnership between schools, parents and the community is important to high-quality schooling. A commitment to such a partnership is included in the new statement outlined in Chapter 4.

A NEW STATEMENT ON AUSTRALIAN SCHOOLING

Federalism encourages and supports policy diversity and innovation, and enables governments to share areas of best practice and apply these to the local context. This combination of experimentation and cooperation has contributed to the levels of student performance Australia achieves.

The 1989 Hobart Declaration established a framework for much stronger cooperation on education between States and Territories and the Commonwealth than had been achieved before. From this important base, jurisdictions have continued to work together to understand and develop successful education practice.

Cooperation has generated significant reform in the areas of curriculum content, teaching practice and shared understanding about the nature of schooling, for example learning and development phases and the importance of transitions between these phases. Clearly, cooperation that promotes national consistency which emphasises the importance of diversity and innovation must be a key focus for achieving enduring reform.

In this federal context all State and Territory governments commit to work together on core areas where convergence would enhance student results without losing the benefits of experimentation and innovation.

This review of the Adelaide Declaration has identified schooling priorities that reflect the contemporary expectations of society and the evolving needs of Australia's economy. It has signalled the need for a new statement on Australian schooling which is outlined in the next chapter. A plan for action is detailed in Chapter 5 premised on the conviction that cooperation between governments, and the Catholic and Independent school sectors, is critical if the best results for all Australian students are to be achieved.

A STATEMENT ON THE FUTURE OF SCHOOLING IN AUSTRALIA BY THE STATES AND TERRITORIES



In April 1999, State, Territory and Commonwealth Education Ministers, meeting as a Ministerial Council in Adelaide, committed to national goals for schooling in the twenty-first century. This was an historic commitment to improving Australian schooling within a framework of national cooperation.

The Adelaide Declaration maintains much of its original currency. However, the last eight years have seen a marked and continuing acceleration in the pace of change. This is apparent not only in the transformation of economies and technology but also in response to evolving understanding about the environment and the nature of society, culture and values. Through the National Reform Agenda, agreed by States, Territories and the Commonwealth, there is recognition that higher levels of prosperity are increasingly dependent on human capital development.

This statement is based on the axiom that the quality and performance of teachers, schools and jurisdictions is central to the life prospects of every student and to national prosperity. It is also recognised that high-quality early childhood experiences yield significant benefits for children, their families and society, and play an important role in determining children's attitudes and aptitude for schooling. States and Territories are concurrently working through the National Reform Agenda of the Council of Australian Governments to promote investment in early childhood development.

A COMMITMENT TO THE FUTURE OF AUSTRALIA

The provision of high-quality schooling to all students is crucial in Australia in order to:

- deliver equality of opportunity in a democratic society
- secure economic prosperity and meet changing workforce demands
- deliver the necessary knowledge and skills to thrive in an information-rich world
- understand and address current and emerging environmental challenges
- promote social cohesion through sharing values and aspirations underpinned by knowledge and tolerance
- prepare for global citizenship.

High-performing schools provide a foundation for young Australians' intellectual, physical, social, moral, spiritual and aesthetic development. By providing a supportive and nurturing environment, schools contribute to the development of a student's sense of self-worth, enthusiasm for learning and optimism for the future.

Schools are central places of learning. Teachers must use their skills, knowledge and experience to address the unique learning needs of each student and maximise each student's life chances. The quality of teaching has a direct impact on the performance of every individual student in every Australian school. At the same time schools must recognise that families and the community provide the context that underpins learning experiences and shapes values and aspirations. Parents and the broader community have a shared obligation with teachers to be the educators of the next generation.

School principals and senior teachers have the critical role of creating and developing the school culture and the knowledge base of teachers. In particular, school principals must embody a school culture that drives the professional development of the teaching workforce and assists in attracting and retaining the best teachers available. School principals are the key to shaping the relationship between students, parents and the broader community.

A COMMITMENT TO PARENTS AND THE COMMUNITY

In agreeing to this new statement governments and school education authorities commit to parents and the broader community that each school will:

- provide high-quality instruction in fundamental areas of curriculum for all school students
- have the capacity to tailor an education for the individual child
- regularly assess student achievement against expected standards
- provide parents with meaningful and easily understood information that outlines their child's achievement, highlighting strengths and weaknesses
- plan assistance to help a student achieve in areas where they are falling behind, and extend them in areas of strength
- engage parents in planning their child's progress through school and provide them with the necessary information to understand and contribute to their child's achievement and to make informed decisions about future learning and employment
- ensure public availability of data on the value-added performance of schools at key transition points, including student destination post-school.

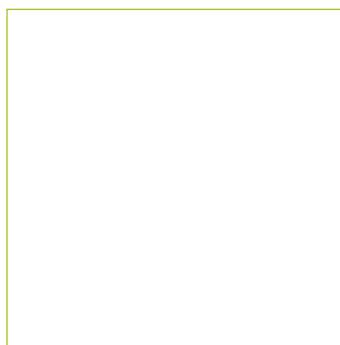
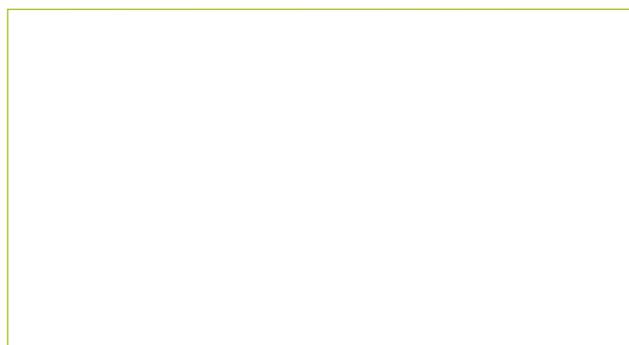
These commitments underpin the vital importance of community learning and of building partnerships with the community that extend and enhance the learning students undertake in school.

A COMMITMENT TO STUDENTS¹⁵

It is critical that every student achieves a solid foundation in skills and knowledge. This means focusing on literacy and numeracy, particularly in the early years. This must be followed with a focus on, and commitment to, the key subject disciplines as students move through secondary school. It is also essential that students attain a level of technological skills/literacy to participate effectively in Australian society and the broader global economy. Further, students need to understand Australia's diversity of culture and history and be able to relate and communicate across cultures.

It is equally critical that all students can build on that foundation to develop the knowledge and skills that will actively enrich their lives and meet the needs of new business and industry. Skills such as problem-solving and the ability to synthesise, create and apply new information enable students to think and act across traditional disciplines. Attainment of skills and deep knowledge ensures a pathway for every student and the opportunity for individuals to learn across a life span. This requires near universal completion of Year 12 or equivalent across all Australian jurisdictions.

15 This section of the statement draws heavily on the Adelaide Declaration.



As well as a core academic program with an increasing range of electives as students progress through year levels with the aim of near universal completion of Year 12, all schools should also have the capacity to offer co-curricular programs for all their students such as school camps and excursions. It is desirable that all students, through extra curricular programs, can opt to play a sport or participate in artistic activities, noting that performing and visual arts and physical education are also important parts of the core curriculum.

As the Adelaide Declaration's goals made clear, when students leave school they should:

- have the capacity for, and skills in, analysis and problem solving and the ability to communicate ideas and information, to plan and organise activities and to collaborate with others
- have qualities of self-confidence, optimism, high self-esteem, and a commitment to personal excellence as a basis for their potential life roles as family, community and workforce members
- have the capacity to exercise judgement and responsibility in matters of morality, ethics and social justice, and the capacity to make sense of their world, to think about how things got to be the way they are, to make rational and informed decisions about their own lives, and to accept responsibility for their own actions
- be active and informed citizens with an understanding and appreciation of Australia's system of government and civic life
- have employment-related skills and an understanding of the work environment, career options and pathways as a foundation for, and positive attitudes towards, vocational education and training, further education, employment and life-long learning
- be confident, creative and productive users of new technologies, particularly information and communication technologies, and understand the impact of those technologies on society
- have an understanding of, and concern for, stewardship of the natural environment, and the knowledge and skills to contribute to ecologically sustainable development
- have the knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary to establish and maintain a healthy lifestyle, and for the creative and satisfying use of leisure time.

This is the result that should be achieved for **all** Australian students.

A COMMITMENT TO RIGOROUS CURRICULUM STANDARDS

The mix of curriculum offered at a school depends partly on educational philosophy, partly on the community and year levels the school serves and partly on the human and financial resources available to the individual school. However, it is expected that learning in the early years of schooling will have a focus on literacy and numeracy as well as social, emotional and physical development. Learning in the middle years will build on the emphases in the early years, with an increasing focus on disciplines within the science and social sciences/ humanities areas of learning. In the senior secondary years, students will engage in specialised programs of learning, with a greater focus on subject disciplines.

All students in Australian schools should have access to a broad and comprehensive curriculum that details the knowledge, understandings, skills and values to be achieved, and provides a basis for the attainment of high standards of achievement. This will include a focus on the following learning areas, with breadth and balance across the areas of learning being appropriate to students' phases of development:

English

Maths and science

- mathematics
- science (including physics, chemistry and biology)

Languages

Humanities and social sciences

- history
- geography
- economics

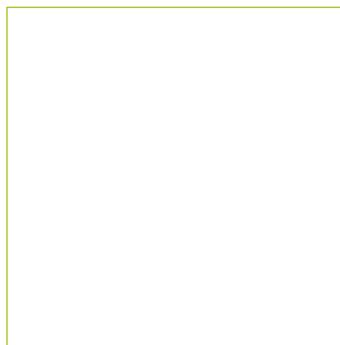
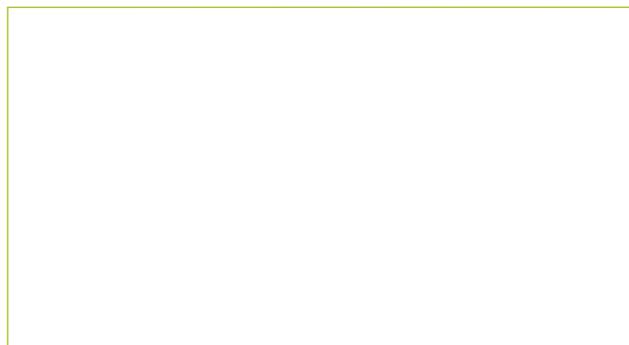
The arts (performing and visual)

Health and physical education

Cross disciplinary learning areas

- technology (including ICT and design)
- civics and citizenship
- business

Learning in the disciplines will be connected with the skills and knowledge required for students to prosper and participate in the information-rich world of the twenty-first century. Students should also participate in learning that applies specific discipline-based knowledge and skills across disciplines to encourage thinking and working in new ways.



To maximise opportunities for their future, senior students should have access to a range of school-based and non-school based options, such as vocational education and training, business, industry and higher education. These programs should foster and develop enterprise skills, including those that will allow them maximum flexibility and adaptability in the future. Programs should provide students with the skills required by Australian and international business and industry.

Expected rates of student progression and curriculum standards will be set in a rigorous way. All jurisdictions will ensure that the curriculum standards set will enable teachers to work with their students to deliver results that further improve Australia's OECD ranking.

A COMMITMENT TO DEVELOPING OUTSTANDING PRINCIPALS AND A HIGH-QUALITY TEACHER WORKFORCE

High-quality teaching is a key driver of student performance. It links the knowledge and skills to be learnt, the values to be acquired, and the needs and prior understanding of the learner. School principals mentor and develop those who have the greatest impact on student achievement, teachers. They also establish and drive the context and culture in which students strive to perform.

In agreeing to this statement governments and school education authorities commit to provide to school principals and teachers:

- clear and appropriate expectations and standards for teachers and school leaders that focus on the components of effective teaching and development of student performance
- pre-service teacher training and ongoing professional development that meets each teacher or school leader's needs and focuses on the tools and skills required to improve student, classroom and/or school performance
- performance review processes that are valid and consistent, so that evaluation of teachers and school leaders focuses on improved student, classroom and/or school performance
- career opportunities, acknowledgement and incentives to reward high-quality teaching and leadership.

A COMMITMENT TO EQUALITY OF OPPORTUNITY

A functioning Australian democracy must provide all students with a chance to succeed. This is both right in principle and crucial for the future of our society. Students must have access to and the opportunity to participate in high-quality schooling that is free from any discrimination based on sex, language, culture and ethnicity, religion or disability, and of differences arising from students' socio-economic background or geographic location.

Furthermore, there is a need to ensure that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students have equality of opportunity to access and participate in high-quality schooling. This has been explicitly recognised by the Council of Australian Governments and also by State, Territory and Commonwealth Education Ministers.

Early childhood education, student retention and the transition a student makes from school to work or further study are key elements of the learning cycle. It is recognised that gains in these areas increase the educational and life opportunities for the individual and their family and provide a significant benefit to society.

Governments, school authorities and the broader community must ensure each school has access to the leaders, teachers, facilities and curriculum products required to provide a high-quality education. In the interests of each individual and the economic and social prosperity of the nation, this opportunity must be available not just to some, but to all young Australians. Governments must fund schools so that the achievement of these common goals is a realistic expectation for every child.

State and Territory governments commit to working together with the Catholic and Independent school sectors and the broader community to improve the quality of schooling for all young Australians. This means a set of public policies must be developed that foster the pursuit of excellence, enable a diverse range of educational choices and aspirations, safeguard the entitlement of all young people to high-quality schooling, promote the economic use of public resources, and uphold the contribution of schooling to a socially cohesive and culturally rich society.

A COMMITMENT TO COLLABORATIVE FEDERALISM

To improve results for students there must be renewed commitment to collaborative federalism that encourages and supports the development of best practice through rigorous innovation and enables governments to share and apply these practices.

In this federal context, all governments must work together on core areas where convergence would enhance student results without losing the benefits of experimentation and innovation. The importance of this is recognised by the Council of Australian Governments' National Reform Agenda which identifies the benefits of human capital reform for the economy and the importance of a collaborative approach to federalism to achieve this reform. Such an approach includes ensuring that all governments, States, Territories and the Commonwealth, share the costs and benefits of reforms to give every student a realistic chance of meeting the national goals for schooling.



AN ACTION PLAN

The States and Territories consider that cooperation between governments is critical in achieving the best results for students. Seven proposed areas of work, and twelve actions, are outlined below.

1 WORKING TOWARDS A NATIONAL CURRICULUM

The States and Territories commit to working together to share high-quality curriculum material. It is envisaged that this process would include relevant organisations, including representatives of the Catholic and Independent school sectors. It will result in the development of a national curriculum (**Action 1**) that will:

- set core content and achievement standards that are expected of students at the end of their schooling and at key junctures during their schooling, starting with English, mathematics and science
- provide flexibility for jurisdictions, systems and schools to implement a curriculum for students to achieve these standards
- establish the standards as the basis for the national testing and measurement program already agreed by governments, to measure student progress
- broaden options for students considering different futures, preparing students for further study in all areas of future employment across the trades and technical and professional fields and in new and emerging areas of knowledge
- ensure that student achievement is reported on the same scale and in a similar way nationally.

2 TESTING STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

The States and Territories commit to measuring student performance in a meaningful way. This includes assessment for learning (often described as formative or diagnostic) and assessment of learning (often described as summative). Both are necessary. Formative assessment informs teachers and students about strengths and weaknesses and to assist in the development of personalised plans for learning. Summative assessment takes stock of the performance of students, teachers, schools and systems.

In terms of national testing, the Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs has agreed to national testing in Years 3, 5, 7 and 9, and convergence on Year 12 assessment.

States and Territories commit to:

- working together to develop a plan and associated timetable for improving the capacity of schools to assess student performance, for formative and summative purposes, in relation to national standards of performance (**Action 2**)
- continuing to work together to ensure that high-quality national tests are developed and used as intended and exploring the possibility of a cycle of sample-based surveys of performance in areas not covered by the full cohort testing or international sample-based surveys in order to minimise any risk that the focus of assessment might limit the scope of the curriculum in schools. (**Action 3**)

3 REPORTING ON PERFORMANCE

States and Territories commit to reporting on performance in a more meaningful way. This commitment extends to reporting on performance at the individual, school and system level.

Reports to students and their parents should make clear in substantive terms what students know and are able to do, including how this relates to what is expected of their age group, and what they need to work on next as they further develop their performance. Some reports will be based on school-level assessments which will be linked to the standards of performance set out in the curriculum. Others will be based on the national tests which will provide strong evidence on where students stand in relation to the population of students as a whole.

Reports on school performance levels should, as far as is technically possible, disentangle the influence of the school from the influence of the social backgrounds of the students whom the school enrol. This involves making comparisons of a school with schools serving similar socio-economic groups or making statistical adjustments to schools' data to remove effects due to the nature of the student cohort and to estimate the value added by the school.

States and Territories commit to working together to:

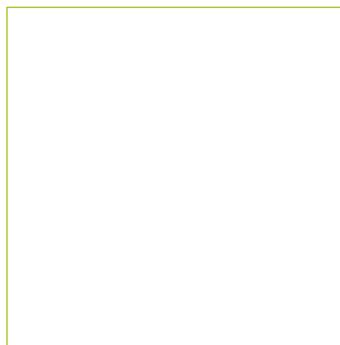
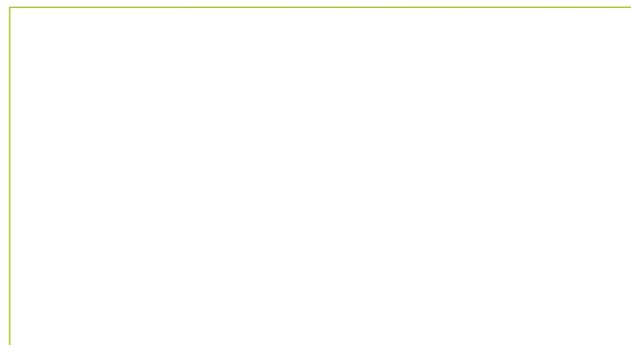
- develop a plan and associated timetable for improving the capacity of schools to report in clear language to students and parents in ways that relate a student's performance to the national standards expected for students of that age (**Action 4**)
- establish reporting at three benchmark levels of minimum, medium and high achievement, in the new national test at Years 3, 5, 7 and 9 (building on the idea embodied in the Council of Australian Governments' National Reform Agenda which has so far committed to just two benchmark levels); reporting on the distribution of results for the whole student cohort and on any shifts in the nature of that distribution over time (**Action 5**)
- develop a plan and associated timetable for fair, public reporting on school performance, with a focus on 'value added', paying attention to developments overseas. (**Action 6**)

4 SUPPORTING WORKFORCE REFORM

States and Territories recognise that it is the quality of the workforce (principals, teachers and non-teaching staff) that is a key driver of educational results within schools.

The importance of teacher quality in improving educational outcomes is uncontested. Similarly, the importance of attracting and retaining high-quality people in the teaching profession is clear. Principals are critical in driving a culture of high performance and continuous improvement in Australian schools. School leaders have a major influence on the capacity of their teachers and the quality of the teacher student relationship.

States and Territories will undertake a review of school leadership development programs across Australia and overseas and develop guidelines to promote best practice. (**Action 7**)



In focusing on workforce reform to drive school improvement, the States and Territories recognise that they must explore innovative approaches to teaching and personalised learning, with a view to using their education budgets in the most strategic way to support high performance. This includes the effective use of non-teaching staff in the school workforce as well as teachers and principals. As part of this endeavour, States and Territories commit to recognising and rewarding high-performing principals and teachers and note that different approaches will be adopted in doing this across the States and Territories, and between and within government and Catholic and Independent schools and systems. States and Territories, in discussion with relevant organisations, including representatives of the Catholic and Independent school sectors, will further develop their respective policies in this area and learn from each others' experience. **(Action 8)**

5 HARMONISING TEACHER REGISTRATION

Considerable progress has been made in recent times in relation to the harmonisation of teacher registration in Australia. For example, all but one jurisdiction has aligned, or is in the process of aligning, their registration and accreditation requirements with the MCEETYA National Framework for Professional Standards of Teaching, and except in two jurisdictions arrangements are in place for the mutual recognition of registration. Further, all jurisdictions have developed standards for graduate teachers aligned to the MCEETYA National Framework.

It is noted that related work is currently being progressed on a number of fronts and that a cooperative approach would assist to further progress national harmonisation, the next stage of which will focus on national recognition of all state-based approved pre-service teacher education courses against the MCEETYA framework.

Recently, the Australian Education Senior Officials Committee established a joint project involving the Australasian Forum of Teacher Registration and Accreditation Authorities, Teaching Australia, the Australian Council of Deans of Education and the Commonwealth Department of Education, Science and Training, to better connect the work of these groups and to foster an agreement on a national approach to the accreditation of pre-service teacher education courses.

The States and Territories support this co-operative approach and commit to continue working with the Commonwealth and relevant organisations to ensure that this issue is satisfactorily resolved. **(Action 9)**

6 REDUCING RED TAPE

Regulation is an important tool for achieving policy objectives in education, particularly those concerning the health and safety of students. However, unnecessary administrative burdens resulting from regulation (red tape) can have significant cost implications for schools by diverting time and resources away from the core business of teaching and learning.

In addition to regulation, schools are also required to comply with operational or non-regulatory requirements that also add to the red tape burden.

The level of red tape imposed by governments is often described by schools as onerous, excessive and duplicative, particularly as a result of the increasing overlap between State and Commonwealth requirements.



The Council of Australian Governments has committed to a program of addressing unnecessarily burdensome regulation that is impeding economic activity. A similar commitment extended to the education sector could have significant benefits for parents, schools and communities.

States and Territories commit to identifying ways in which their own regulation unnecessarily adds an administrative or compliance burden to schools, and to reduce this burden. The States and Territories ask the Commonwealth Government to make a similar commitment. **(Action 10)**

It is proposed that the next quadrennial funding agreement be used as a vehicle whereby States and Territories work together with the Commonwealth to reduce any unnecessary reporting burden and move the funding agreement towards a performance focus rather than one based on monitoring of inputs. **(Action 11)**

7 CONVENING A NATIONAL FORUM

There is a substantial body of evidence to suggest that there are many innovative educational reforms developed at the level of individual schools and jurisdictions, and that potential exists for the best of these to be adapted and shared across the nation.

States and Territories will convene a national forum to showcase best practice across Australian States and Territories and will invite the active participation of the Catholic and Independent school sectors. **(Action 12)**

The forum would showcase innovation and excellence at the school and jurisdiction level and, where appropriate, feature internationally recognised educational reforms to ensure that Australia is well abreast of international best practice. It is envisaged that this would be a biennial event with the venue rotating among the States and Territories.

Examples of issues that could be covered in such a forum include:

- leadership development
- teacher professional development
- teacher preparation
- use of technology to support high-performing schools and spread best practice
- curriculum standards and content

The Commonwealth Government will be encouraged to participate.

REFERENCES

AEC (1989). *Common and agreed national goals for schooling in Australia (The 'Hobart Declaration')*. Australian Education Council (The AEC has since been subsumed into MCEETYA). Available at: <http://www.mceetya.edu.au/mceetya/default.asp?id=11577>.

Harris, J. (2006) *Alignment in Finland*. Educational Alignments Pty Ltd: Occasional Paper No 1.

Matters, G. & Masters, G. (2007) *Year 12 curriculum content and achievement standards*. Report prepared by the Australian Council for Educational Research for the Department of Education, Science and Training. Canberra: Australian Government.

MCEETYA (1999). *The Adelaide Declaration on National Goals for Schooling in the Twenty-First Century*. Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs. Available at: <http://www.mceetya.edu.au/mceetya/nationalgoals/natgoals.htm>

OECD (2004) *Learning for tomorrow's world*. Paris: OECD.

OECD (2004) *Problem solving for tomorrow's world*. Paris: OECD.

OECD (2006) *Education at a glance*. Paris: OECD.

OECD/UNESCO Institute for Statistics (2003) *Literacy skills for the world of tomorrow: Further results from PISA 2000*. Paris/Montreal: OECD/UNESCO-UIS.

Rothman, S. (2002) *Achievement in literacy and numeracy by Australian 14-year-olds, 1975-1998*. Melbourne: Australian Council for Educational Research.

Schneeweis, N. & Winter-Ebmer, R. (2005) *Peer effects in Austrian schools*. Economics Working Paper 2005-02, Department of Economics, Johannes Kepler University Linz, Austria.

Sweet, R. (2006) *Education, training and employment in an international perspective*. Paper presented at Brotherhood of St Laurence Seminar, New Transitions: Challenges Facing Australian Youth, August 2006.

ONLINE

www.dpc.vic.gov.au

PUBLISHED BY

Department of Premier and Cabinet
1 Treasury Place, Melbourne
April 2007

ISBN 978-1-921337-03-1