



11 April 2014

### COMMUNIQUÉ

The Standing Council on School Education and Early Childhood (SCSEEC)\* met in Canberra today for its first meeting of 2014. Ministers discussed a variety of significant policy matters related to education and early childhood development.

#### **National Quality Framework regulations**

Ministers have agreed to a number of reforms to the Education and Care Services National Regulations, to improve the operation of the National Quality Framework. These amendments relate to staffing arrangements, the physical environment of early childhood services and transitional provisions to deal with workforce shortages for early childhood teachers in remote and very remote areas.

Ministers requested that their senior officials continue important policy work in relation to further more complex amendments to reduce regulatory burden on the sector, to be progressed at the earliest opportunity. Further amendments to the National Regulations and the National Law will be considered in the context of the outcomes from the Productivity Commission Inquiry into Child Care and Early Childhood Learning and the 2014 Review of the National Partnership Agreement on the National Quality Agenda for Early Childhood Education and Care.

#### **National Quality Framework Assessment and Rating**

Council agreed to work with ACECQA to review the Guide to Assessment and Rating for Regulatory Authorities to develop a more streamlined assessment and rating process for implementation by 1 July 2014.

#### **Vocational Education and Training in Schools Framework 2001**

Ministers agreed to update the existing *Vocational Education and Training in Schools Framework 2001* to ensure it reflects the current context. Council agreed to establish a working group with representation from states and territories, other education authorities, the training sector and industry to develop a new national framework for consideration by Ministers in August 2014.

#### **Student attendance**

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

Ministers agreed to an approach to assist implement this decision, subject to the consideration of further advice on outstanding policy matters, including amendments to existing standards, protocols for the use of data, impact on schools, sector readiness and privacy thresholds. The Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) will report to the Education Council in October.

Ministers acknowledged that publication of this data should be a simple and timely snapshot of attendance, including at the national, state/territory and sector level, and facilitate reporting progress towards the closing the gap targets. Attendance data will be published either through a new stand-alone report, or on the *My School* website.

\* Note: The Council of Australian Governments (COAG) met in December 2013 and agreed to new Council arrangements, including the establishment of an Education Council. SCSEEC will transition to the new Education Council throughout 2014.

### **Australian Curriculum**

Council today noted that ACARA has developed the Australian Curriculum content and achievement standards for Languages – Chinese, French, Indonesian and Italian – and agreed that the curricula be made available for use on the Australian Curriculum website.

### **Faster NAPLAN turnaround**

Council agreed on changes to decrease the turnaround time of NAPLAN results to parents and teachers. Ministers agreed to accelerate several administrative processes from 2014, including reducing the time taken for central analysis and preparation of national summary information, in order to more efficiently provide individual student reports and national summary information. Council agreed that further work should be undertaken to get important analytic information back to schools earlier.

### **Online assessment for NAPLAN**

Ministers were provided with an update on progress towards online delivery of NAPLAN tests. The Council considered advice on work undertaken to date on this project, an analysis of risks inherent to the project, and underlying resourcing implications in moving from a pen and paper testing regime to NAPLAN online. In order to carefully examine and respond to a range of transitional issues, Ministers agreed to further work being undertaken by senior officials to identify the costs and benefits of alternative implementation models for Council's consideration.

The transition to NAPLAN online is part of a broader strategy to improve online assessment capability across subject domains and education systems.

### **Review of Indigenous Education in the Northern Territory**

Ministers heard an update on Indigenous Education matters from the Northern Territory Minister for Education, the Honourable Peter Chandler MLA. Minister Chandler provided a summary of an independent review of Indigenous education commissioned by the Northern Territory government in 2013.

The review, which will be finalised in May 2014, will challenge communities and governments to consider a different approach to delivering education services in remote and very remote settings. Ministers heard that targeted and mandated literacy and engagement programs from the very early years through pre-school and the primary years of schooling have been identified as critical to preparing Indigenous children for school and improving their educational opportunities throughout school.

### **Centenary of First World War – Australian War Memorial Programs**

Ministers agreed to promote two Australian War Memorial projects, which focus on enabling school children to participate in the commemoration of the centenary of the First World War: Commemorative Crosses and the Roll of Honour Soundscape.

## **Evaluation of Australian Professional Standards for Teachers**

The Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) provided the Council with an update on the Evaluation of the implementation of the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers. The three-year evaluation commenced in April 2013 and will conclude in December 2015, and aims to determine the effectiveness of implementation and the impact of the Standards as a contributor to teacher quality in Australian schools.

Experts from the Centre for Program Evaluation, situated within the Melbourne Graduate School of Education at the University of Melbourne, in partnership with the Australian College of Educators and the Melbourne Education Research Institute, are undertaking the evaluation in collaboration with AITSL.

## **Cross-border education**

Ministers discussed how states and territories can work together to explore opportunities for sharing resources, including professional development and networking, for schools operating near borders. State boundaries can limit teachers' opportunities to work collaboratively with nearby colleagues, undertake professional development and build professional networks. This is particularly difficult in rural and remote areas where teacher professional development is already a major issue. Ministers agreed to seek to work together with their Health Council Ministerial colleagues to support further collaboration between health and education services in border communities, and asked senior officials to report back on priority areas for future action.

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