

Communiqué

The Education Council convened in Adelaide today for its first meeting of 2018. Ministers discussed a range of national issues across the early childhood, school education and higher education portfolios.

STEM Industry-Schools Partnerships

The Chief Scientist, Dr Alan Finkel AO presented the final report of the STEM Partnerships Forum. The STEM Partnerships Forum was established in 2017 and brings together leaders from industry and education to facilitate a more strategic approach to school-based partnerships with businesses and industry across Australia in order to develop the engagement, aspiration, capability and attainment of students in STEM. The Report is the result of the Forum's work over the past 12 months, including extensive national consultations with over 150 people attending meetings and 53 written submissions received.

Ministers welcomed the Report, noting it will be an input into discussions of national reforms to be included in a new national agreement, alongside other key reviews.

Education Council agreed that the Report will be published on the Education Council website in coming days. Ministers have requested that senior officials provide advice on the Report, including prioritisation of the Report's recommendations, at the June 2018 Education Council meeting.

Review into Regional, Rural and Remote Education

The Education Council received a presentation by Emeritus Professor John Halsey on his recently completed *Independent Review into Regional, Rural and Remote Education* to improve outcomes for students living in these areas. Professor Halsey provided an update to Ministers on challenges faced by these students and presented innovative solutions to help them succeed at school and beyond.

Ministers have requested that senior officials provide advice on the Report, including initial consideration of the Report's recommendations, at the June 2018 Education Council meeting.

School and early childhood reform

Education Council agreed to convene a special-purpose meeting to discuss school and early childhood education reform in coming weeks. Ministers will invite David Gonski AC to present the findings of the recently completed report on the *Review to Achieve Educational Excellence in Australian Schools*. The Commonwealth Minister has committed to release the Review Report to States and Territories well before the special-purpose meeting.

The Education Council will also invite the authors of the '*Lifting our Game*' review, Susan Pascoe AM and Professor Deborah Brennan, to this meeting to discuss the most effective interventions in early childhood.

Bullying and Cyberbullying

Education Council welcomed the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) announcement on 9 February 2018 to establish a working group of senior officials to help combat bullying and cyberbullying. Education Council agreed that school communities play an important role in both preventing and responding to this behaviour. Education Ministers committed their senior officials to working across governments and portfolios to support this important initiative.

Ministers noted the significant work currently being undertaken in all jurisdictions to address bullying and promote student wellbeing, and committed to continue to work together, including through sharing ideas and best practice approaches, to address bullying and cyberbullying.

NAPLAN Online

Ministers received an update on the transition to online NAPLAN, as the first cohort of schools prepare to commence the transition in May. NAPLAN is an annual national assessment for students in Years 3, 5, 7 and 9 through which governments, education authorities, schools, teachers and parents can determine whether students have the literacy and numeracy skills that provide the critical foundation for other learning and for their productive participation in the community.

Teachers and students around the country, with the assistance of the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) and Education Services Australia (ESA), tested the new online platform and state and territory readiness in late March. The platform's performance was a success and students reported positive experiences with the online format, while the small number of local issues that arose were dealt with at a school and state level.

Approximately 190,000 students in participating jurisdictions will be undertaking NAPLAN Online in May 2018.

Ministers raised the need for clear communication regarding the issue of data comparability during the transition to NAPLAN online.

Review of NAPLAN

Ministers reiterated their commitment to standard and fair student assessment supported by transparent reporting. Noting that NAPLAN assessment has been in place for a decade, Ministers agreed to consider terms of reference for a review of NAPLAN including reporting of NAPLAN results at the June meeting of Council. Ministers have asked the Schools Policy Group to work with the ACT to develop terms of reference.

Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse

The *Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse* was established in 2013 to investigate how organisations have managed and responded to allegations and instances of child sexual abuse. It investigated where systems have failed to protect children and made recommendations on how to improve laws, policies and practices to prevent and better respond to child sexual abuse in institutions.

COAG discussed the Royal Commission's Final Report at its 9 February 2018 meeting, and requested that Education Council provide advice on recommendations relating to schooling and early childhood. The Education Council has created special-purpose working party to develop shared responses to education related recommendations arising from the Royal Commission's Final Report, to provide advice to the Education Council and COAG over the next 12 months.

Nationally Consistent Collection of Data on School Students with Disability

The Education Council agreed to the release of the *2017 data on students in Australian schools receiving adjustments for disability* report of the Nationally Consistent Collection of Data on School Students with Disability (NCCD). The results of the NCCD and associated activity support the development of a high quality, reliable and robust national data collection on school students with disability.

Under the NCCD model, teachers use their professional, informed judgement based on evidence to determine the level of adjustment that students with disability are being provided with and the broad category of disability under which each student best fits.

Supporting Schools to Manage the NDIS Transition

Education Ministers requested that the COAG Disability Reform Council consider the impact on schools and early childhood education and care services of transition to the NDIS, and ensure appropriate support and advice is available to principals and heads of services.

Early Childhood Education

Ministers noted officials are developing the advice sought by COAG on reform principles for Education Council consideration. This advice is to be informed by the recommendations and findings of the recent *Review to Achieve Educational Excellence in Australian Schools through Early Childhood Interventions* ('Lifting Our Game' review) which was published and discussed by COAG in February 2018.

Council noted officials would undertake further work to develop the advice and agreed that this will further incorporate consideration of priorities, including how to improve data to assess performance and how to increase attendance in early childhood education and care.

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