

7 April 2017

Communiqué

Family Day Care

The Education Council committed to a range of immediate actions to further address fraud and systemic issues in the Family Day Care (FDC) sector, to ensure that FDC continues to remain a high-quality, robust and valuable option for Australian families.

Ministers acknowledged the significant progress made to date, and endorsed actions including reforms designed to: align entry-level processes and approvals; address existing unscrupulous and unsuitable providers by, for example, increasing the scope of penalty infringement notices under the National Law; and enhance the focus on training providers for Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) qualifications working collaboratively with the Australian Skills Quality Authority (ASQA).

Officials will commence these and other initiatives during 2017 and report back to Ministers later in the year on trends in the FDC sector.

School funding and reforms

Education Council discussed future universal access funding arrangements and school funding arrangements. State and territory Ministers emphasised the urgency for resolution of funding arrangements, the importance of achieving long-term certainty, and emphasised a commitment to needs-based, sector-blind arrangements for the distribution of funding as well as reforms to continually improve school performance. Ministers agreed to both further bi-lateral discussions and an additional Education Council meeting ahead of First Ministers meeting at COAG in June. Ministers further agreed to discuss future funding arrangements for universal access for pre-school concurrently.

Online Assessment

Education Council received an update on progress towards the transition to NAPLAN online. The proposed transition will result in enhanced assessment, more precise results and faster turnaround of information for students, their parents, teachers and school communities.

Council noted the substantial progress and significant work that has already been undertaken in schools in preparation for the move online, and thanked all involved for their efforts. Ministers instructed education officials to continue working closely with all stakeholders to ensure the steady transition of all schools by 2019.

Ministers requested further exhaustive testing of the NAPLAN online platform in coming days to confirm readiness to proceed. After receiving this advice, Ministers from states and territories will make final determinations as to the participation of their schools in 2017. Schools not completing NAPLAN Online in 2017 will continue with pen and paper based tests this year ahead of transitioning to online testing in 2018 and 2019.

Nationally Consistent Collection of Data on School Students with Disability

The Education Council agreed that it will shortly release 2016 data from the Nationally Consistent Collection of Data on School Students with Disability (NCCD). 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. Through participating in the collection, schools are embedding better support for all students with disability in their routine day-to-day practice.

Ministers noted there have been some changes in the overall reported numbers of students with disability receiving adjustment within states and territories since 2015. These movements may be explained by factors including: schools' experience with, and understanding of the NCCD; differences in teacher judgement and experience, which is expected for a new collection like NCCD; increased use of data moderation processes at the school and in education systems; and changing student numbers.

Although there continues to be variability in the results reported across jurisdictions in the 2016 NCCD, this is a smaller range than was reported in 2015. The reasons for the variability in results reported across jurisdictions are considered in the companion report titled '2016 Continuous Quality Improvement Project' which Ministers have also agreed will be released in the coming weeks.