

16 December 2016

## Communiqué

The final Education Council meeting for 2016 was held in Melbourne today. A range of early childhood and education matters were discussed by Ministers.

### Online Assessment

The Education Council received an update on progress regarding the transition to NAPLAN Online in 2017, which is commencing in approximately 10% of Australian schools across the Australian Capital Territory, South Australia, Victoria, Queensland and Western Australia.

Significant progress has been made in refining and testing the Online Assessment platform and test items to ensure a smooth transition from pen and paper to online testing. Ministers emphasised the importance of ensuring public confidence, as well as technical readiness, as this transition commences from 2017.

Ministers noted the public demonstration site that has been made available online to all schools and the Australian public at: <http://www.nap.edu.au/online-assessment/naplan-online/naplan-online-public-demonstration-site>. The site provides sample 'mini-tests' to cover all domains for each NAPLAN year level. Council were also informed that a number of parent focus groups have been held in all states and territories, and the findings of this research will inform strategies to support the transition to NAPLAN Online.

Ministers also discussed the suitability of conducting Year 3 writing assessment through the online platform. The Education Council agreed that all states and territories will continue to conduct Year 3 writing using pen and paper, including those transitioning to NAPLAN Online. Further research will be undertaken in 2017 regarding the effect of conducting Year 3 writing online.

Further information for parents, schools and school communities regarding the transition to NAPLAN online has been prepared by the Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) and is available at <http://www.nap.edu.au/online-assessment/naplan-online>.

### School funding and reforms

The Education Council engaged in a discussion regarding the processes for settling school funding and national schooling reform arrangements from 2018. Council acknowledged the importance of stable and effective needs-based funding. Council requested senior officials consider the terms of a potential new national schools reform agreement and provide Ministers with advice on high-priority actions early in 2017.

### Nationally Consistent Collection of Data on School Students with Disability

The Education Council agreed in principle that the Nationally Consistent Collection of Data on School Students with Disability (NCCD) should be one of a range of factors to inform policy and funding decisions for students with disability and to continue to work collaboratively to improve data quality and consistency.

### **National Initial Teacher Education and Teacher Workforce Data Strategy**

The Education Council approved a proposal from the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) to develop the first phase of the National Initial Teacher Education and Teacher Workforce Data Strategy. The strategy will help governments to improve their collective understanding about the teaching workforce: providing critical information about who is being prepared to teach and how effectively, who is teaching, where they are teaching, what they are teaching, and any gaps. The data collection will in turn assist governments to better focus investment and drive improved educational outcomes for students. Ministers recognised that privacy, legislative and cost issues should be considered throughout the implementation of the strategy and will be key to the initial phase of this work.

### **Initial Teacher Education Implementation update**

Education Council received an update from AITSL on the implementation of key national reforms in response to the recommendations outlined in the *Action Now: Classroom Ready Teachers report*, and next steps for implementation. Ministers noted that work to date has included endorsement of selection guidelines for entrants into initial teacher education (ITE), *Graduate to Proficient: Australian guidelines for teacher induction into the profession* and training for the experts who comprise the accreditation panels. During 2016 and 2017, the focus has shifted to accrediting programs under the new Standards and Procedures.

AITSL will continue to work closely with key stakeholders including state and territory Teacher Regulatory Authorities and the Australian Council of Deans of Education to support robust and nationally consistent accreditation of ITE programs.

### **Australian Curriculum: Languages – Australian Sign Language (Auslan) and Classical Languages**

Education Council endorsed the *Foundation to Year 10 Australian Curriculum Languages: Auslan and the Years 7 to 10 Australian Curriculum: Classical Languages*. The Auslan curriculum recognises the significance of Auslan in the linguistic landscape of Australia, and the study of classical languages allows students to enter and explore ancient worlds that have shaped contemporary life and societies.

### **Sustainable Funding Arrangements for Early Childhood**

Education Council discussed future early childhood funding arrangements and the importance of quality early childhood education and care for all Australian children. Ministers welcomed the recent decision by the Council of Australian Governments to prioritise early childhood education, and agreed to write to COAG urging them to maintain universal access to at least 600 hours per annum of a quality preschool program in the year before full-time school (beyond December 2017), and to ensure the continued high quality service enshrined through the National Quality Agenda (beyond June 2018).

### **National Quality Framework**

Ministers discussed finalising the outcomes of the review of the National Quality Agenda for Early Childhood Education and Care. It is expected that the Review will be endorsed, and associated materials published, early in 2017.

### **Family Day Care**

Ministers received an update on collaborative work being progressed by senior officials regarding family day care (FDC). Ministers discussed key issues being explored as part of this work, including ensuring unscrupulous and unsuitable FDC providers are prevented from entering the sector, and imposing serious sanctions for fraud and non-compliance.

Education Council emphasised that FDC offers a valued choice for Australian parents, and encouraging high quality FDC providers to remain in the sector is critical moving forward. The Australian Government, states and territories are committed to continuing to work together and requested that a final report on FDC, with further actions to address systemic issues and non-compliance, be provided to Education Council for consideration at its first meeting in 2017.

### **Appointment of ACECQA Chair and Deputy Chair**

Ministers congratulated Ms Judy Hebblethwaite on her recent appointment to the role of Chair of the Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA) Board, and appointed Ms Catherine Hudson as ACECQA Deputy Chair.

### **International Education**

Victoria led a discussion on the activities that the International Education and Training Forum (IETF) is undertaking to drive national collaboration on international education, noting that the IETF will focus its initial work in 2017 on data capture and monitoring. Ministers also received an updated on exhibitions and events that have generated increased interest in Australian education amongst emerging and growth markets, including China, Japan, Korea, Taiwan and Myanmar. Further advice will be provided to Education Council in 2017.