

PREFACE

In April 1989 the State, Territory and Commonwealth Ministers responsible for education, meeting as the Australian Education Council (AEC), made a historic decision in relation to the provision of information on the expenditure of public money on education. Previously, States and Territories had reported individually to the Commonwealth Government through a plethora of resource agreements. It was now agreed that educational accountability requirements would be better met by an annual national report. This report would provide, in an accessible and readable form, a comprehensive account of schooling to the nation. A single audit certificate would suffice to meet specific Commonwealth financial accountability requirements.

This reporting arrangement was conditional upon the development of an agreed national framework. The framework, as it has evolved through the pilot report for 1989 and subsequent reports, has placed particular emphasis on progress towards the achievement of the national goals for schooling, with reporting on selected priority areas. Participation in national sample studies of key schooling initiatives is likewise an important contribution to the national reporting exercise. The development of national statistical data is a key feature of national reporting.

Initially, reporting by the non-government sector was negotiated by the Commonwealth, with the expectation that ultimately such schools would meet educational accountability requirements through the *National Report on Schooling in Australia*. In 1991, for the first time, Catholic schools and independent schools in South Australia, participated fully in the *National Report* by providing information against the Agreed Information Framework. In 1992, all independent schools participated for the first time, with the result that all sectors of schooling in Australia now meet the Commonwealth's educational accountability requirements through this process.

In January 1994, the AEC amalgamated with two other Ministerial councils—the Council of Ministers of Vocational Education, Employment and Training (MOVEET) and the Youth Ministers Council (YMC)—to form the Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA).

The commitment to national reporting on schools, established by the AEC, has continued under MCEETYA and the eighth annual national report provides commentary on the operation of school systems, priority objectives, the participation of students in schooling including equity initiatives, areas of student learning, student outcomes, teaching and learning and the application of financial resources to schools. Important new national, State, Territory and Commonwealth initiatives in schooling are highlighted. A major aim of the report is to raise public awareness of schooling in Australia by providing a comprehensive and authoritative source of information. At the same time, the contents of the report provide an avenue for satisfying the legal requirements for the Commonwealth Government to account for the expenditure of Commonwealth funds on schooling.

State and Territory and Commonwealth Ministers with responsibilities for schooling in 1996 were:

New South Wales	The Hon. John Aquilina, MLA
Victoria	The Hon. Phillip Gude, MP
Queensland	The Hon. Bob Quinn, MLA
South Australia	The Hon. Rob Lucas, MLC
Western Australia	The Hon. Colin Barnett, MLA
Tasmania	The Hon. Sue Napier, MHA
Northern Territory	The Hon. Fred Finch, MLA
Australian Capital Territory	Mr Bill Stefaniak, MLA
Commonwealth	Senator the Hon. Amanda Vanstone
	The Hon. Dr David Kemp, MP

The Chair of MCEETYA in 1996 was the Hon. Bob Quinn, MLA.