

Introduction

The purpose of the National Report

In April 1989, State and Territory Ministers for Education, together with the Commonwealth Minister, agreed to a set of Common and Agreed National Goals for Schooling in Australia. At the same time the Ministers determined that there should be an annual National Report on Schooling in Australia, which would inform the Australian people on progress towards the achievement of these national goals. It was envisaged that the report would also:

- provide a commentary on the operation of school systems and participation of students in schooling
- report on the school curriculum
- describe student outcomes
- summarise the application of financial resources to schools
- report on school topics of national interest
- highlight important national and state initiatives in schooling
- provide an authoritative source of information and a sound basis for informed comment on various aspects of schooling.

Hence, the purpose of the *National Report on Schooling in Australia: 1998* is to report to the Australian people on the progress made during 1998 towards the achievement of the national goals for schooling in the approximately 10,000 schools in Australia's States and Territories.

The structure of the report

As from 1998, the National Report on Schooling has been re-structured to give a clearer picture of the achievements of Australia's schools and school systems against the Common and Agreed National Goals for Schooling. The report describes developments in schooling during 1998, including in areas of special interest previously agreed to by Ministers. It also provides analysis of and comment on achievements in schools during the year, notes where progress needs to be made and highlights prospects for the near future. An appendix presents contextual information on schooling in Australia, along with detailed tables of data.

The report consists of three parts, including appendices.

Part 1: National overview

This part begins with a brief summary of the key developments, achievements and matters of national significance, and provides the reader with a summary and overview of the major issues of 1998. It then provides a national perspective on the performance of schools and education authorities in 1998. It is structured to provide particular attention to the topics of special importance, or focus areas agreed to by the Ministers. The last chapter in this part is national in its perspective and provides a summary of progress in Australian schooling in 1998 against the national goals for schooling, describing both achievements and under-achievements, and offering some analysis of, and commentary on, prospects and opportunities for the near future.

Part 2: State/Territory and Commonwealth reports

This part presents a brief account of schooling in each State and Territory during 1998. It provides comment on the

context, structure, responsibilities, objectives and financing in both the government and non-government sectors of schooling.

The Commonwealth chapter explains the Commonwealth's role in, and objectives for, Australian schooling, as well as providing an outline of its policy and program initiatives in 1998. Included in this section is an account of the Commonwealth funding arrangements for schools that pertained in 1998.

Part 3: Appendices

This part contains two appendices. Appendix 1: Statistics presents contextual information on schooling in Australia together with the statistics which underpin the information provided in the text. It is organised under the following headings:

- context
- statistical tables:
 - schools and students
 - teachers and teaching
 - resourcing
 - equity.

Appendix 2: Publications provides a list of the major publications relevant to school education in Australia that were released by education authorities during 1998.

Responsibility for the report

The report is published under the authority of the Ministerial Council for Education, Employment, Training

and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA). To facilitate the preparation of the National Report, Council has established a

Taskforce with representation from each State and Territory, as well as from the National Council of Independent Schools and the National Catholic Education Commission. The Taskforce has the responsibility to prepare recommendations for Council concerning the content and structure of the report. As well, together with the MCEETYA secretariat, the Taskforce is required to oversee the production of the report once the content has received Ministerial approval.

State, Territory and Commonwealth Ministers with responsibility for schooling in 1998 were:

New South Wales	The Hon. John Aquilina, MP
Victoria	The Hon. Phillip Gude, MP
Queensland	The Hon. Bob Quinn, MLA (to June 1998) The Hon. Dean Wells, MLA (from June 1998)
South Australia	The Hon. Malcolm Buckby, MP
Western Australia	The Hon. Colin Barnett, MLA
Northern Territory	The Hon. Peter Adamson, MLA
Tasmania	The Hon. Sue Napier, MHA (to September 1998) The Hon. Paula Wriedt, MHA (from September 1998)
Australian Capital Territory	Mr Bill Stefaniak, MLA
Commonwealth of Australia	The Hon. Dr David Kemp, MP Senator the Hon. Chris Ellison (to October 1998)

The Chair of MCEETYA in 1998 was The Hon. Sue Napier, MHA, until September, and The Hon. Paula Wriedt for the remainder of the year.