

12 June 2020

Meeting Communique

Senior Secondary Pathways Review

Education Council received an update on the *Review of Senior Secondary Pathways into work, further education and training*. Professor Peter Shergold AC, Chair of the Review Panel, presented Ministers with an overview of the Panel's findings and recommendations, ahead of the finalisation of the report.

The Review Panel was tasked by Education Council with exploring the efficacy of senior secondary education in preparing young people for diverse pathways to work and future learning; investigating current certification and university entrance requirements; considering barriers to equitable access of pathways; and examining best-practice options for the students transitioning between senior secondary years and from school into work, training or further study.

Professor Shergold advised that the Review Panel had identified 30 findings regarding current arrangements and makes 20 recommendations that take a new approach to senior secondary education.

The final report will be presented to Ministers later in June.

National Assessment Program

Education Council discussed the National Assessment Program in the context of disruptions caused by COVID-19.

Ministers announced the decision to postpone the scheduled National Assessment Program - Information and Communications Technology Literacy (NAP-ICTL) sample assessment by 12 months to 2021, to assist school leaders, teachers and support staff focus on the wellbeing of students and continuity of education, as they respond to and recover from the COVID-19 pandemic. The NAP-ICTL is part of a broader sample assessment cycle, alongside NAP Civics and Citizenship and NAP-Science Literacy.

Following the decision by Ministers in March to cancel NAPLAN for 2020 due to the impact of COVID-19, Council received advice from the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) about challenges and opportunities for NAPLAN, including the transition to NAPLAN Online. Council agreed that the cancellation of the 2020 NAPLAN test event means that the full transition to NAPLAN online be deferred from 2021 to 2022.

Education Council agreed to the continuation of current governance arrangements for NAPLAN through 2021.

Review of the Foundation to Year 10 Australian Curriculum

Late last year, Education Council tasked ACARA with undertaking a review of the Foundation to Year 10 Australian Curriculum. The review is an important step forward in addressing an overcrowded curriculum and in lifting Australia's performance in literacy, numeracy and science. The overall aim of the review should be to improve the Australian Curriculum F-10 by refining, realigning and decluttering.

In endorsing the Terms of Reference and timelines for the review today, Ministers have asked that ACARA consider how to:

- refine and reduce the amount of content across all eight learning areas of the Australian Curriculum F-10, with a priority on the primary years, to focus on essential content or core concepts;
- improve the quality of content descriptions and achievement standards by removing ambiguity and unnecessary duplication, and ensuring consistency and clarity of language and cognitive demand;
- rationalise and improve content elaborations, ensuring they are fit for purpose and they suggest to teachers the most authentic ways to treat general capabilities and cross curriculum priorities when teaching the learning area content; and
- improve the digital presentation of the Australian Curriculum in line with agreed content changes and user experience

The Terms of Reference for the review and accompanying support documentation are published on the [ACARA website](#).

Universal Access National Partnership

Education Council considered the final report on the review of the Universal Access National Partnership (UANP). The review was established by Education Council as a collaborative process to assess: the degree to which the objectives, outcomes and outputs of the UANP have been achieved since 2014; broader benefits for the community and economy; and the efficiency, effectiveness and equity of current funding, measurement and performance arrangements.

The review, conducted by the Nous Group, was informed by extensive public submissions, survey responses, webinars and a discussion paper.

Among its key findings, the review has found that the UANP has successfully delivered on its objectives and has made a substantial contribution to the provision of preschool in all states and territories. All jurisdictions – state, territory and federal - remain strongly committed to the delivery of quality early childhood education and the objectives of this agreement. The UANP has also been found to have brought about a massive lift in preschool participation across Australia in less than 10 years.

Some jurisdictions noted however that the report does not adequately address questions of equity in national preschool funding arrangements. They consider that there is more to do to develop equitable preschool funding arrangements and to encourage vulnerable and disadvantaged cohorts to engage in early childhood education.

The report will inform Education Council's consideration of future early childhood funding and policy arrangements from 2021, including future funding of universal access to quality early childhood education.

Ministers agreed to release the final report on the Education Council website later this month.

National Evidence Institute

Education Council agreed in-principle to collectively invest \$50 million over four years to establish the national evidence institute. The institute will work with teachers and researchers to:

- Curate and translate evidence of what works in the classroom.
- Mobilise this evidence to ensure it can be easily and freely accessed.
- Generate new evidence of effective teaching and learning practices.

Education Council endorsed the appointment of Dr Jenny Donovan as the inaugural Director of the national evidence institute. Dr Donovan has significant experience in the teaching, academic and government sectors. Dr Donovan is currently serving as the Managing Director of the Online Formative Assessment Initiative under the National Schools Reform Agreement. Prior to this, she served as the Executive Director of the Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation in the New South Wales Department of Education. Dr Donovan will commence in the role on 1 July and her first priorities will be to consult with stakeholders, establish the institute's key relationships, and begin developing its initial research agenda.

The institute will be launched by the end of 2020.

Note from Education Council Secretariat regarding National Cabinet and Ministerial Councils

National Cabinet has advised of its intention to review the current Ministerial Council structure. The Education Council continues to meet and exercise its functions as a Ministerial Council, for the time being, in accordance with its agreed protocols, and as defined under various legislative instruments. The situation will be reviewed pending advice as to its form and role under a revised Ministerial Forum structure.

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