



Australian Government

Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations

Australian Government Response to
Realising Potential: Business Helping Schools to
Develop Australia's Future

the report of the Business-School Connections Roundtable

May 2011



CONTENTS

Introduction	3
Overview of Response	4
Government Response by Recommendation	6
Increasing capacity	6
Recommendation 1	6
Recommendation 2	7
Recommendation 3	7
Recommendation 4	7
Recommendation 5	8
Strengthening the context	8
Recommendation 6	8
Recommendation 7	8
Recommendation 8	9
Engaging business as strategic partners	9
Recommendation 9	9
Recommendation 10	10
Recommendation 11	10
Supporting implementation	10
Recommendation 12	10
Recommendation 13	11

INTRODUCTION

The Australian Government welcomes the report of the Business-School Connections Roundtable, *Realising Potential: Businesses Helping Schools to Develop Australia's Future*, and supports the Roundtable's strategy to harness business as a partner in the achievement of improved educational outcomes.

Education of our young people is not just the responsibility of our schools and teachers. In an increasingly complex world, it is essential that the whole community takes responsibility for the learning and development of the next generation of Australians. Business is an important part of our community and we need them to be actively involved. The establishment of the Business-School Connections Roundtable reflected the Australian Government's belief that business is uniquely placed to support schools and teachers to prepare the students of today for the challenges of tomorrow.

In the 2008 Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians, Ministers for Education recognised the important contribution that school-business relationships can make to the learning and development of our young people. Such relationships can enrich student learning experiences and help young people to develop the confidence, skills and knowledge they need to live active and productive lives.

School-business relationships can also help schools with the reforms currently being implemented across education. Some schools and businesses have already developed successful relationships in areas such as improving literacy and numeracy, teacher quality and schools in disadvantaged communities. The Australian Government believes that many more schools could benefit from similar relationships, and that there is much goodwill among business to get involved. The new *Empowering Local Schools* initiative will also create opportunity for businesses to help schools by contributing their advice and expertise to school governance, financial management, strategic planning and administrative operations.

The Government recognises the importance of a collaborative approach to fostering school-business relationships. The benefits of this approach are clear in the outcomes of the Roundtable's work, and in the recommendation that this approach be continued through the creation of an Alliance for School-Business Relationships. The Alliance will support a cooperative and inclusive approach to implementation, and provide a valuable mechanism for harnessing resources and gaining commitment from all levels within organisations so that the Roundtable's vision can be realised. The Government welcomes this recommendation.

Through their personal commitment and networks, the members of the Roundtable have built a groundswell of support for harnessing business as a strategic partner in education, and delivered a practical strategy to ensure that all schools can benefit from a connection with business. It is now time for business, schools, industry peak bodies, education authorities and other stakeholders to work together to implement the Roundtable's recommendations. The Australian Government is ready to play its part.

OVERVIEW OF RESPONSE

Increasing capacity

The Government believes that increasing the capacity of schools and business to enter into and maintain relationships with each other is key to developing a widespread culture of effective school-business relationships. The recommendations build on and complement initiatives that are already underway, and highlight the need for a specific focus on the role of business within the broader community support for schooling. The Australian Government endorses recommendations 1, 2, 3 and 5, and supports recommendation 4 in principle.

Embedding relationship management skills in the professional standards for teachers and principals is an important step towards building the capacity of schools to develop effective relationships with business and the broader community. Supporting teachers and principals to develop these skills through professional learning acknowledges the changing demands on the schooling workforce and the important role each teacher and each principal plays in connecting with the community to maximise student engagement and achievement. Within this context, the Government supports the creation of an industry-led program that will support the next generation of school and business leaders to develop skills, share experiences and provide an example for others to follow.

The Government acknowledges the important role that brokers play in supporting the development of effective school-business relationships and has committed funding for the School Business Community Partnership Brokers program until December 2013. This program is being implemented in collaboration with state and territory governments under the Youth Attainment and Transitions National Partnership. Decisions about the provision of brokerage services beyond 2013 will therefore be considered within the context of the National Partnership review and evaluation.

It is important that schools and businesses are aware of existing brokerage services and know how to access them. The Government agrees with the Roundtable that education authorities and industry peak bodies should encourage improved connections between business and schools, and promote existing brokerage services as a way to support greater collaboration. Brokerage services are an important part of the support that is available to assist schools to implement the Government's education reform agenda.

Strengthening the Context

Under the 2008 Melbourne Declaration, the Australian, state and territory governments agreed that partnerships between schools, business and the broader community are necessary to achieve our educational goals. The Australian Government agrees with the Roundtable that there is room to strengthen the context which supports implementation of the Declaration in the areas of policy guidelines, practical guidance, and evaluation. The Government endorses recommendations 6, 7 and 8.

Consistent with the Roundtable's findings, the Government believes there are opportunities for education authorities to strengthen the message to schools that

partnerships with business and community are not only allowed but necessary. Embedding this message at a systemic level within policy and planning documentation will encourage schools to view partnerships as an integral part of their operations.

As the number and quality of partnerships grow, it is important that schools and business have guiding principles to support them to develop effective relationships that maximise the outcomes for young people. It is equally important that schools and business develop a stronger culture of evaluation to measure the outcomes of their relationship, identify areas for improvement and recognise success factors. This will also contribute to the broader knowledge base and culture of school-business relationships.

Engaging Business as Strategic Partners and Supporting Implementation

The Roundtable's report illustrates the importance of engaging business as a partner to work alongside education authorities, schools and young Australians, if we are to meet our educational goals. The Government also recognises the important role business will play in the implementation of a number of recommendations within the Roundtable's report. The Government endorses recommendations 9, 10, 11, 12 and 13.

The Roundtable's report recognises and values the broad range of school-business relationships that are supporting young people across Australia. The Government's education reform agenda provides an opportunity to complement what is already happening by engaging large businesses and education authorities in strategic partnership arrangements at a system level. The Roundtable challenges education authorities and business to commit to developing innovative, large-scale partnerships aligned to education priorities. The Government encourages education authorities and key business stakeholders to engage in this process, supported by approaches that promote information sharing, contribute to improved understanding between business and education and celebrate successful partnerships.

The Government recognises that many stakeholders see potential for technology, through a social media community, to provide access to information and resources, and to build a community where schools and businesses can share their experiences and explore partnership opportunities. It will be important that an industry-led solution is designed to complement existing infrastructure developed by educational authorities.

The Government supports the establishment of a business-led Alliance for School-Business Relationships to drive the implementation of the Roundtable's recommendations, to explore other opportunities and to continue the momentum for change created by the Roundtable. The Alliance should have broad representation in recognition that support for young people is the responsibility of the whole community and collaboration is the key to success.

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE BY RECOMMENDATION

Increasing capacity

Recommendation 1:

To encourage, recognise and support teachers and school leaders to develop the skills needed for effective and sustainable school-business relationships, the Roundtable recommends that the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership ensure that:

- *the support material to be developed for the National Professional Standards for Teachers include recognition of the role of teachers in benefiting students by building relationships with business and the broader community*
- *the professional learning which is developed to support the National Professional Standards for Teachers include components through which teachers can develop their knowledge of and competency in benefiting students by building relationships with business and the broader community*
- *the final National Professional Standard for Principals retain an explicit focus on engaging and working with the community, with specific reference to the potential for relationships with business to enrich the learning experience of students and the broader operations of the school*
- *the professional learning and support materials which are developed to support the National Professional Standard for Principals include components through which principals can develop their knowledge of and competency in building relationships with business and the broader community.*

Government Response:

School-business relationships—alongside relationships with other members of the community—can make an important contribution to schools. The Australian Government recognises the importance of teachers having the skills to build relationships with business, and of principals understanding the need for, and having the capacity to, build relationships with business. The Minister for School Education has asked the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) to consider how best to implement this recommendation.

Recommendation 2:

To encourage, recognise and support teachers and school leaders to develop the skills needed for effective and sustainable school-business relationships, the Roundtable recommends that the Productivity Commission, in undertaking its study of the schooling workforce, take into account the need for teachers and school leaders to be able to build relationships with business and the community that benefit students.

Government Response:

The Australian Government endorses the contribution that school-business and school-community relationships can make to maximising student engagement and achievement, and therefore the importance of teachers and school leaders having the skills to build relationships with business and the community. The Minister for School Education has asked the Productivity Commission to consider this recommendation as part of its study of the schooling workforce.

Recommendation 3:

To create a cohort of school and business leaders who are experienced advocates for school-business relationships, the Roundtable recommends that industry, principal associations and education authorities explore the development of a new national program, led by business, that brings together aspiring and emerging principals and business leaders in structured partnerships with the aims of developing skills, sharing experience, creating networks, showcasing successful examples and spreading good practice.

Government Response:

The Australian Government endorses the benefits of the proposed program, and supports the collaborative, industry-led model recommended by the Roundtable. In the first instance, implementation of this recommendation should be explored by the Alliance for School-Business Relationships.

Recommendation 4:

To provide support to schools and businesses and meet the ongoing demand for brokerage services, the Roundtable recommends that the Australian Government continue to fund and support the provision of a network of brokers that can assist all schools and businesses who need support to form school-business relationships, and has the capacity to broker large-scale strategic partnerships.

Government Response:

The Australian Government acknowledges the importance of a network of independent brokers who can support schools and business to develop effective relationships, and the value of the characteristics specified in the Roundtable's report. Under the Youth Attainment and Transitions National Partnership, the Australian Government has committed to the provision of the School Business Community Partnership Broker program, implemented in collaboration with state and territory governments, until December 2013. The Australian Government will consider this recommendation further towards the end of these arrangements, in the light of evaluation findings and in the context of normal budget processes.

Recommendation 5:

To help schools and businesses take advantage of the broker services that are already available to them, the Roundtable recommends that industry peak bodies and education authorities promote awareness of existing broker organisations through their own networks and communication channels.

Government Response:

The Australian Government endorses the recommendation as a way for industry peak bodies and education authorities to meet the needs of their members/schools for information about the broker services that are already available to them. The Minister for School Education has asked DEEWR to work with industry peaks and education authorities to identify strategies to raise awareness of brokering organisations and promote how they can support schools and business to enter into effective partnering arrangements. The Australian Government encourages community-driven broker organisations to also provide industry peak bodies and education authorities with information on the services they can provide to businesses and schools.

Strengthening the context

Recommendation 6:

To develop a sustainable culture which sees relationships with business as a key part of achieving core educational outcomes, the Roundtable recommends that education authorities, over time, embed relationships with business in the policies, programs, planning and reporting processes and operational requirements within which schools operate.

Government Response:

The Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians identifies stronger partnerships as a key area for action by governments. The Australian Government endorses stronger and broader recognition of the contribution that school-business and school-community relationships can make to all areas of education, including current areas of reform. The Minister for School Education has asked DEEWR to explore opportunities to promote recognition of this contribution, and to encourage the formation of such relationships.

Recommendation 7:

To encourage and guide partners in school-business relationships, the Roundtable recommends that the Australian Government initiate a stakeholder-driven process to develop guiding principles for school-business relationships that are voluntary and supportive, encourage good practice and emphasise mutual benefit.

Government Response:

The Australian Government endorses the development of voluntary guiding principles to provide guidance to both schools and businesses, make the purposes of school-business relationships clear to all stakeholders, and encourage good practice. The Minister for

School Education has asked DEEWR to commission a consultancy to develop these principles through the three-stage process recommended by the Roundtable:

- develop and test draft guiding principles with on-the-ground experts from business and school communities who have had direct involvement in school-business relationships—including school councils, principals, teachers, young people, parents, and brokers—and researchers familiar with national and international evidence on good practice
- build support and ownership of national organisations that represent businesses, schools, principals, teachers, young people, parents and brokers
- seek endorsement from representative organisations, large businesses, and the Ministerial Council of Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs.

Recommendation 8:

To encourage a stronger culture of evaluation within school-business relationships, the Roundtable recommends that the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) develop a 'Guide to Evaluating School-Business Relationships' that assists partners in all forms of school-business relationship to evaluate and improve their relationships.

Government Response:

The Australian Government endorses the development of a guide to evaluating school-business relationships in order to support partners to review their progress, to develop deeper partnerships, and to strengthen the research base on school-business relationships. The Minister for School Education has asked DEEWR to commission a consultancy to develop this guide, and to ensure that stakeholders have the opportunity to contribute.

Engaging business as strategic partners

Recommendation 9:

To harness business as a partner with education at a strategic level, the Roundtable recommends that business, industry peak organisations and education authorities engage in a process to develop practical partnership opportunities that capitalise on the strategic contributions that large businesses can make to priority areas in education.

Government Response:

The Australian Government endorses the collaborative and practical focus of this recommendation. The Government demonstrated its commitment to partnership approaches by creating the Roundtable, and is keen to continue working with interested stakeholders to develop practical and strategic partnership opportunities that enable large businesses to help education authorities and schools achieve objectives in priority areas of education. In the first instance, implementation of this recommendation should be explored by the Alliance for School-Business Relationships.

Recommendation 10:

To harness business as a partner with education at a strategic level, the Roundtable recommends that business support an annual or biennial event to formalise partnerships, showcase effective school-business relationships, share insights and case studies, and promote good practice.

Government Response:

The Australian Government endorses an event to build awareness of the opportunities developed through the strategic partnering process discussed under recommendation 9, and to encourage more business and school partners to become involved. In the first instance, implementation of this recommendation should be explored by the Alliance for School-Business Relationships as part of the implementation of recommendation 9.

Recommendation 11:

To recognise and encourage the contribution businesses make through relationships with schools, the Roundtable recommends that business, in collaboration with education authorities, establish a national awards scheme to recognise the value of school-business relationships and encourage the development of further relationships.

Government Response:

The Government endorses the importance of celebrating and recognising school-business relationships at all levels, and would be happy (through DEEWR) to be involved in judging if the award scheme recommended by the Roundtable is established. The Government believes that it is up to business to determine the value of such a scheme, and recommends that this be explored through the Alliance for School-Business Relationships.

Supporting implementation

Recommendation 12:

To benefit both schools and businesses wishing to form relationships to improve education outcomes for young people, the Roundtable recommends that business and industry organisations partner with education authorities to develop and support a social media community, sponsored by business, that facilitates collaboration and connection between schools and business.

Government Response:

The Australian Government recognises the strong desire for an interactive, user-driven social media community to enable schools and businesses to find information and resources on school-business relationships, and to find potential partners. The Government sees this as complementing, but not replacing, face-to-face brokerage organisations.

Successful implementation will require a strong collaborative approach involving skilled and experienced people from both business and education to avoid duplication of existing infrastructure. The Government agrees that the project should be driven by

industry in collaboration with education authorities and suggests that it be explored, in the first instance, through the proposed Alliance for School-Business Relationships.

Recommendation 13:

To sustain and build on the momentum created by the Roundtable, the Roundtable recommends that business create an Alliance for School-Business Relationships, with membership invited from industry peak organisations, education authorities, principals, teachers, broker organisations, student organisations, parent groups and researchers, to:

- *champion and assist with implementation of the strategy outlined in the Roundtable's report, and*
- *engage in ongoing collaboration to harness business as a partner in education through school-business relationships which improve education outcomes for young people.*

Government Response:

The Australian Government endorses the creation of an Alliance for School-Business Relationships to explore and drive implementation of many of the Roundtable's recommendations, and to continue to collaborate on harnessing business as a partner in education. Over time, the Alliance could evolve into a powerful advocate encouraging both business and education to form partnerships for the benefit of young people. The Minister for School Education has asked DEEWR to work with Michael Ullmer to facilitate a preliminary meeting of stakeholders to discuss the possible creation of the Alliance. Without pre-empting the outcomes of this meeting, the Australian Government sees the Alliance as open to a broad membership, and would be interested in being actively involved.