



Education Ministers Meeting

26 April 2024

Communiqué

Education Ministers met in person and online at Kelmscott Senior High School in Perth on 26 April 2024.

Ministers continued to progress work across early education, school education and higher education.

Better and Fairer Schools Agreement

Ministers discussed the next Better and Fairer Schools Agreement and agreed to meet further in May 2024 to progress work on the Agreement.

Child Safety Review

Ministers were updated on agreed actions in response to the Review of Child Safety Arrangements under the National Quality Framework.

Ministers approved the release of the draft National Model Code and Guidelines on the use of personal electronic devices in early childhood education and care services for targeted consultation. This draft code will support services to implement child safe practices when taking images or videos of children. Subject to consultation, the National Model Code and Guidelines will be available for adoption from 1 July 2024.

Ministers agreed to initial work proposed by the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership and the Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority to develop or adapt support materials under the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (APST). This will better recognise and support registration arrangements for early childhood teachers operating in non-school settings. The Australian Government will invest \$360,000 to undertake this work.

National Teacher Workforce Action Plan

Ministers received a presentation from the Presidents of the Australian Secondary Principals Association and the Australian Primary Principals Association on the wellbeing of principals and school leaders.

Ministers expressed their continued support for principals and school leaders and acknowledged the work already underway across jurisdictions to support their wellbeing. Ministers asked officials to work with stakeholders and provide advice on further actions that could support principals and school leaders. Ministers will continue discussions on principal and school leader wellbeing at the next meeting of EMM.

Mobile phones and vaping

Ministers discussed actions to address mobile phone use and vaping in schools.

Ministers noted that all states and territories now have policies in place which do not permit the personal use of mobile phones in government schools. Ministers acknowledged, as a result of these

policies, Australia now maintains a nationally consistent approach towards managing mobile phones in schools.

Ministers discussed the progress made towards addressing the prevalence of vaping in schools, including education campaigns that target young people, parents and educators on the harms posed by the marketing and use of e-cigarettes.

Ministers also noted the legislation before Australian Parliament which regulates vaping as a therapeutic good, by banning the importation, manufacture, supply, and commercial possession of disposable single use and non-therapeutic vapes.

Ministers agreed to continue to consider further opportunities for collaboration on both mobile phones and vaping, including with Health Ministers regarding vaping.

Managing disruptive classroom behaviour

Dr Tim McDonald, CEO of YMCA WA, provided a presentation to Ministers on classroom management. Ministers discussed the importance of explicit, whole school approaches, and supporting teachers and school leaders. Addressing disruptive behaviour is of paramount importance to all Ministers and Ministers resolved to continue the discussion at their next meeting.

Initial teacher education reform

Ministers approved the composition and terms of the Initial Teacher Education (ITE) Quality Assurance Oversight Board. The inaugural Board will include:

- Ms Jenny Atta PSM (Chair), Secretary, Department of Education, Victoria
- Emeritus Professor Bill Loudon AM (Deputy Chair), Deputy Chair of Teacher Education Expert Panel (2023)
- Ms Adrienne Nieuwenhuis, TEQSA Commissioner
- Emeritus Professor Joanne Reid, retired Charles Sturt University academic
- Ms Chloe Read, Deputy Secretary, Department of Education, NSW
- Mr Stephen Bell, former Regional Director for Far North Queensland, Department of Education, Queensland
- Professor Ruth Wallace, Pro Vice-Chancellor, Faculty of Arts and Society, Charles Darwin University
- Mr Matthew Johnson, President, Australian Special Education Principals Association
- Professor Elizabeth Labone, Chief Executive Officer, Victorian Catholic Education Office; and
- Mr Douglas Melrose-Rae, Associate Chief Executive, Association of Independent Schools of NSW.

The ITE Quality Assurance Oversight Board will work to improve the national consistency and quality of initial teacher education.

Ministers also noted arrangements to support higher education providers to implement agreed changes to their ITE programs. The Australian Government is also investing in a \$7.1 million fund to assist higher education providers drive improvements in ITE programs and better prepare graduate teachers for the classroom. The Fund is now open and further details are available on the Australian Government Department of Education website.

Universities Accord - Strengthening university governance and industrial relations compliance

In response to priority action 5 of the Australian Universities Accord Interim Report, Ministers considered actions to strengthen university governance and improve workplace relations compliance.

On governance, Ministers agreed to establish an Expert Governance Council, based on a proposal from the University Chancellors Council, to develop new 'University Governance Principles and Recommendations' that responds to 10 priority areas for action and against which universities will be required to report their compliance. The 10 areas include:

1. achieve a balance between higher education and other expertise on the governing body, with at least one non-executive member who has university leadership expertise from outside the institution;
2. improve structures and processes to ensure that high risk and high priority matters reflect consultation and engagement with the university community and have appropriate oversight and reporting to and by the governing body;
3. reflect the diversity of the Australian community, and the specific characteristics of the university community they serve, in making appointments;
4. achieve gender balance on the governing body in line with jurisdictional and Australian Government targets;
5. have First Nations membership on the governing body, and separate, transparent processes to capture First Nations leadership and engagement on university strategy, policies and performance;
6. have one or more student members of the governing body, and separate, transparent processes to capture student input on university strategy, policies and performance;
7. have one or more staff members of the governing body, and separate, transparent processes to capture staff and union input on university strategy, policies and performance;
8. require all new appointments to go through a rigorous and transparent selection process that utilises a formal and regularly updated skills, capabilities, and diversity selection matrix that is in line with their jurisdiction's requirements and directed to the selection of the person best suited to the position;
9. require all governing body members to have, or undertake, training on the specific responsibilities and expectations of their role as governing body members, and separately clarify the way the role of governing body members is described; and
10. demonstrate and maintain a rigorous and transparent process for developing remuneration policies and settings for senior university staff, with consideration given to comparable scale and complexity public sector entities, and ensure remuneration policies and packages are publicly reported.

Ministers agreed that the new 'University Governance Principles and Recommendations', which will replace the current 'voluntary code', will be presented to EMM for endorsement by the end of 2024.

Ministers also agreed that the membership of the Expert Governance Council will be presented to EMM for endorsement.

Ministers also noted the action being taken by the Australian Government to improve university compliance with workplace relations obligations, including:

- The Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA) to issue new guidance and requirements to ensure all higher education providers have adequate governance and management processes in place to meet industrial and workplace obligations, including their readiness to faithfully implement enterprise agreements
- Engaging an independent expert to support the National Tertiary Education Union (NTEU), Universities Australia (UA) and the Australian Higher Education Industrial Association (AHEIA) to assist in identification and resolution of priority issues to ensure universities are exemplary employers; and
- Requiring universities to provide additional data to the Australian Government on casual staff numbers to increase transparency and understanding of workforce patterns and issues.

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