Review to Inform a Better and Fairer Education System

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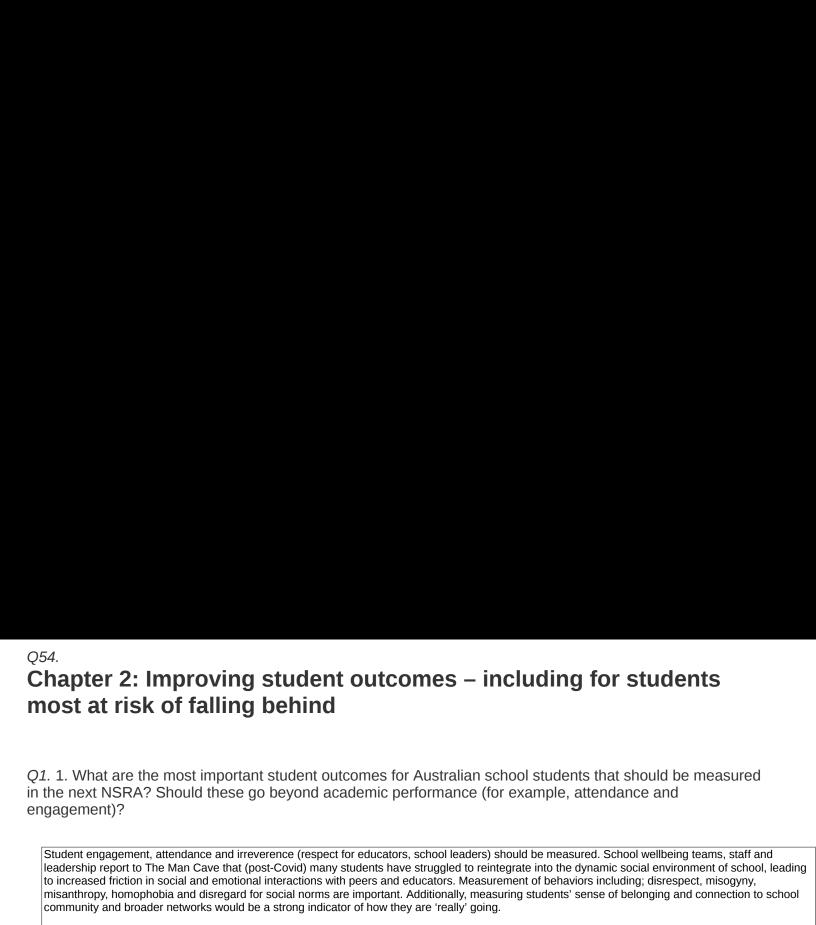Your personal information may be disclosed to third parties, including but not limited to:

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Chapter 2: Improving student outcomes – including for students most at risk of falling behind

Q1. 1. What are the most important student outcomes for Australian school students that should be measured in the next NSRA? Should these go beyond academic performance (for example, attendance and engagement)?

Student engagement, attendance and irreverence (respect for educators, school leaders) should be measured. School wellbeing teams, staff and leadership report to The Man Cave that (post-Covid) many students have struggled to reintegrate into the dynamic social environment of school, leading to increased friction in social and emotional interactions with peers and educators. Measurement of behaviors including; disrespect, misogyny, misanthropy, homophobia and disregard for social norms are important. Additionally, measuring students' sense of belonging and connection to school community and broader networks would be a strong indicator of how they are 'really' going.

Q2. 2. What are the evidence-based practices that teachers, schools, systems and sectors can put in place to improve student outcomes, particularly for those most at risk of falling behind? Are different approaches required for different at-risk cohorts?

Broadly, school should look to adopt a wellbeing centred approach above academic performance. It must be comprehensive in its implementation i.e. staff must first be trained and embody the learning which will then be shared with students. Preventive mental health and emotional intelligence programs that include whole school wellbeing strategies that build common language, skills and practices for communication, collaboration and socialisation. Group agreement and alignment on acceptable social norms and behaviors within and between; cohorts of students, educators, mentors, parents and carers and whole school communities. Simply - students will not learn from people they don't like. They will also not have an entry to social-emotional learning (SEL) if that the person role modelling to them does not believe DNRin it first.

Q3. 3. How can all students at risk of falling behind be identified early on to enable swift learning interventions?

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Q4. 4. Should the next NSRA add additional priority equity cohorts? For example, should it add children and young people living in out-of-home care and students who speak English as an additional language or dialect? What are the risks and benefits of identifying additional cohorts?

Yes. The additional priority equity groups to consider should be those living in out-of-care home, EAL students and those who live rurally.

Q5. 5. What should the specific targets in the next NSRA be? Should the targets be different for primary and secondary schools? If so, how? What changes are required to current measurement frameworks, and what new measures might be required?

Irrespective of targets - there must be differentiation between schools. By not doing this it puts undue stress on school communities. Taking into consideration primary vs secondary, residential, rural, remote, metro, high/low SES, ICSEA score - would be necessary to empower schools to achieve targets.

Q6. 6. How can the targets in the next NSRA be structured to ensure evidence-based approaches underpin a nationally coherent reform agenda while allowing jurisdictions and schools the flexibility to respond to individual student circumstances and needs?

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Q7. 7. How should progress towards any new targets in the next NSRA be reported on?

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Q55.

Chapter 3: Improving student mental health and wellbeing

Q8. 8. What does it look like when a school is supporting student mental health and wellbeing effectively? What is needed from school, systems, government and the community to deliver this?

A comprehensive socio-ecological approach is vital for student wellbeing. However, current approaches overlook involving adults or influential figures to support students' social-emotional development. Enhancing emotional literacy of these adult figures is necessary to connect with students effectively, and in turn, support student wellbeing. The lack of confidence in 'wellbeing' and mental health hampers support and perpetuates intergenerational stigma. To bridge this gap, educating the broader community about 'mental ill-health' empowers adults to be proactive supporters.

Q9. 9. What evidence-based wellbeing approaches currently being implemented by schools and communities should be considered as part of a national reform agenda?

Consider the evidence-based Transform wellbeing approach, a collaborative effort by the Rites of Passage Institute and The Man Cave. Unlike generic programs, Transform is tailored to each school, integrating the Rites of Passage Framework into the entire community. Its goal is to foster sustainable, empowering, and impactful change by addressing the absence of healthy rites of passage and essential 21st-century life skills in young people, while also promoting healthy community dynamics. Transform engages students, staff, and parents to achieve holistic community transformation.

Q10. 10. Should a wellbeing target be included in the next NSRA? Could this use existing data collections, or is additional data required?

Yes, the impact of wellbeing on academic success necessitates a wellbeing target. However, implementing such a target requires new efforts to support schools. While existing data can be utilised, new data collection is vital as it often overlooks parents and staff in surveys. To hit wellbeing targets successfully, the entire community's involvement must be included.

Q11. 11. Would there be benefit in surveying students to help understand student perceptions of safety and belonging at school, subjective state of wellbeing, school climate and classroom disruption? Would there be value in incorporating this into existing National Assessment Program surveys such as NAPLAN?

Yes, it would assist teachers to have allocated time for completion during assessment programs like NAPLAN. However, surveying students for wellbeing data is a challenge as they are frequently surveyed but feel their input isn't acted upon. Therefore, survey design and supporting teachers to implement findings are crucial. To enhance student wellbeing, their voices and perspectives must be included in discussions, prevention, and intervention efforts.

Q12. 12. To what extent do school leaders and teachers have the skills and training to support students struggling with mental health?

Teachers and educational support staff naturally care for students, but current training doesn't adequately equip them for preventative or intervention work in mental health. The missing key is self-work, enabling authentic conversations with young people about their wellbeing. A small group of confident, empowered teachers excel in connection, emotion literacy, and support, serving as champions for school programs and trusted by students. However, not all staff possess these qualities, creating a challenge. Holistic training, experiential learning, staff connections, and systematic mindset shifts are essential. Mental health must be culturally valued, not just a reactive subject, to foster more equipped teachers.

13. 13. What can be done to establish stronger partnerships between schools, Local Health Networks and Primary Health Networks?

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Q19. 14. What can be done to ensure schools can easily refer students to services outside the school gate that they need to support their wellbeing? How can this be done without adding to teacher and leader workload?

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Q56.
Chapter 4: Our current and future teachers

Q20. 15. What change(s) would attract more students into the teaching profession?

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Q32. 16. What change(s) would support teachers to remain in the profession?

To improve staff wellbeing and retention in the teaching profession, several key factors should be considered. Firstly, providing more pay for the actual time spent teaching, along with hiring additional teachers to reduce classroom sizes, allowing for time in lieu for those facilitating additional camps/retreats can alleviate the burden on educators. Protecting school holidays from excessive work demands is crucial too. However, the core issue lies in reducing disenfranchisement among teachers. Teaching is the most enjoyable part of the job - and it is rarely actually done as there is overwhelm by administrative tasks. Lightening the administrative and planning workload would greatly assist them. Additionally, offering a more manageable content load in class and creating opportunities for genuine student-teacher connections would foster a positive staff culture and significantly contribute to overall wellbeing, ultimately encouraging teachers to stay in the profession.

Q31. 17. What change(s) would support qualified teachers to return to the profession?

In addition to above… The appeal of not working in a school lies in flexible work hours, making it challenging for qualified teachers to return after a break. While maintaining continuity with teaching staff is beneficial for student connection and learning, the inability to manage life tasks becomes a significant drawback. To address this, having multiple teachers responsible for groups of students could provide more flexibility to handle necessary cover arrangements.

Q30. 18. What additional reforms are needed to ensure that the schools most in need can support and retain highly effective teachers?

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Q29. 19. What can be done to attract a diverse group of people into the teaching profession to ensure it looks like the broader community?

DNR

Q28. 20. What can be done to attract more First Nations teachers? What can be done to improve the retention of First Nations teachers?

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Q26. 21. What reforms could enable the existing teacher workforce to be deployed more effectively?

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Q25. 22. How can teacher career pathways, such as master teachers and instructional specialists, be improved to attract and retain teachers? How should this interact with the Highly Accomplished or Lead Teacher (HALT) certification and the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers?

To enhance teacher pathways, increasing the number and duration of placements is crucial. Placements offer valuable insights into the profession, but currently, there aren't enough opportunities. Extended school placements allow for better understanding of the role, community connections, and stronger student and peer relationships. To accommodate more placements, reducing coursework is essential. Moreover, placements should be PAID, as this is both a barrier to becoming a teacher and vital for developing effective practitioners.

Q24. 23. Are there examples of resources, such as curriculum materials, being used to improve teacher workload or streamline their administrative tasks?

To alleviate teacher workload and streamline administrative tasks, the focus should be on reducing the sheer amount of admin and tasks rather than implementing complex systems. Having multiple reporting streams and communication channels only adds to the burden, especially for staff less comfortable with technology. Regarding curriculum, an efficient solution would be to establish a larger intranet for schools to share learning programs. Instead of thousands of teachers individually writing plans for the same curriculum, they could upload and access resources from a common server. This collaborative approach would prevent unnecessary repetition and allow for more effective knowledge-sharing among educators. Let's leverage our collective knowledge to work together more efficiently.

Q23. 24. How should digital technology be used to support education delivery, reduce teacher workload and improve teacher effectiveness? What examples are you aware of?

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Q22. 25. Are there benefits for the teaching profession in moving to a national registration system? If so, what are they?

Unequivocally yes. It would enable the sharing of curriculum and resources, fostering collaboration and efficiency among educators. Moreover, a unified system would allow teachers to move between states/territories more easily, providing them with broader experience and enhancing their professional capabilities. Additionally, it would lead to more standardized registration requirements, ensuring a fair and consistent process across the nation.

Q57.
Chapter 5: Collecting data to inform decision-making and boost student outcomes

Q27. 26. What data are of most value to you and how accessible are these for you?

From a Man Cave perspective, our focus lies in comprehending two essential aspects: 1. student behavioral data encompassing information from teachers, school, parents, and peers, and 2. performance data. However, it is important to note that at present, the Man Cave lacks access to Student behavioral data, which has led us to develop our own research and evaluation channels in the interim. Our current efforts are directed towards establishing our own mechanism for collecting behavioral data and devising measures to effectively manage and derive insights from it.

Q35. 27. Is there any data that are not currently collected and reported on that is vital to understanding education in Australia? Why is this data important?

Yes. Emotional wellbeing: Assessing the emotional wellbeing of students is essential to comprehending their overall mental health and happiness in the educational environment. Understanding emotional wellbeing can shed light on factors influencing student engagement, academic performance, and overall satisfaction with the learning experience. Behavioral change for pre & post intervention/educational objectives: It is crucial to track behavioral changes before and after implementing educational interventions. Without this data, it becomes challenging to evaluate the effectiveness of various programs and initiatives. Validated guidelines and metrics are necessary to ensure proper assessment and accountability in the allocation of government subsidies and funding for such interventions. Attitudes and beliefs: Gathering data on students' attitudes and beliefs towards their educational experience can provide valuable insights into their motivation, aspirations, and overall commitment to education. Demographic data: Collecting demographic data, including LGBTI+, international status, First Nations (FN) and TSI, and ICSEA is crucial for understanding equity and devising strategies.

Q34. 28. Should data measurement and reporting on outcomes of students with disability be a priority under the next NSRA? If so, how can this data be most efficiently collected?

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Q33. 29. Is there a need to establish a report which tracks progress on the targets and reforms in the next NSRA? Should it report at a jurisdictional and a national level? What should be included in the report?

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Q32. 30. Is there data collected by schools, systems, sectors or jurisdictions that could be made more available to inform policy design and implementation? What systems would be necessary to enable these data are made available safely and efficiently?

Yes, there is data that could be made more available to inform policy design and implementation, such as NAPLAN results accessible through a USI for a longitudinal approach. Necessary systems could include a Datalake with controlled access through API or download options, ensuring data safety and efficiency.

Q31. 31. The Productivity Commission and Australian Education Research Organisation (AERO) have identified the need for longitudinal data to identify the actual students at risk of falling behind based on their performance (and not on equity groups alone) and to monitor these students' progress over time. Should this be the key data reform for the next NSRA?

Yes, access to longitudinal data using a USI is crucial and should be a key data reform for the next NSRA. The Productivity Commission and AERO have rightly emphasized the necessity for longitudinal data to identify individual students at risk of falling behind based on their performance, not solely on equity group categorizations. Monitoring students' progress over time is essential for understanding their development into adulthood, emotional intelligence, and gender literacy. This data-driven approach will enable us to gain deeper insights into the impacts of preventive and educational programs, and the impacts on performance, ensuring the effective implementation of targeted interventions to support students' performance and overall well-being throughout their educational journey.

Q30. 32. Should an independent body be responsible for collecting and holding data? What rules should be in place to govern the sharing of data through this body?

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Q29. 33. Is there data being collected that is no longer required?

DNR

Q28. 34. How could the national Unique Student Identifier (USI) support improved outcomes for students?

A national USI would correlate independent data points for holistic student outcomes. It enables studying the impact of student well-being on performance and behavior, as well as the influence of intersectionality (e.g., demographics) on well-being, performance, and behavior. This data-driven approach promotes evidence-based decisions, addressing disparities, and fostering an inclusive educational environment.

Q58.
Chapter 6: Funding transparency and accountability

Q36. 35. Are there other objectives for funding accountability and transparency we have missed?

Yes. One such objective is to enhance collaboration and information-sharing among organizations by establishing standard template structures for reporting and analysing their funded work in a communities of practice forum. Additionally, ensuring key data collection points align with the priorities of government entities can improve the overall effectiveness and relevance of the funded projects.

Q39. 36. How can governments make better use of the information already collected and/or published to achieve the objectives?

Governments can improve their use of existing collected information, such as; through the sharing of successful initiatives and their data, previous program reporting made public, and key success points summarised. By sharing this information with external organizations working in the relevant field, there will be a better understanding of where additional efforts are required to ensure a brighter future for young people. This exchange of knowledge and insights can lead to more targeted and effective interventions to address the needs of the youth.

Q38. 37. What other funding accountability and transparency information regarding schools (both your school and the education system more generally) would be useful?

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Q37. 38. What are the priority gaps in the current funding transparency and accountability arrangements from your perspective?

The priority gaps include insufficiencies in funding preventative and intervention programs for those most at risk, hindering proactive efforts to tackle societal challenges. Moreover, clear and specific data requirements from the government is essential, outlining their expectations for external organizations working in the field. Bridging these gaps would contribute to more effective and equitable funding practices, leading to improved outcomes for individuals and communities involved.

Q59. Do you have any additional comments? (2,000 characters)

The problems we seek to address through our work are complex. The intersectional relationship between and underlying drivers of the mental ill-health of boys and young men, gender-based violence and the radicalisation of young men online, requires a whole of government response if we are to effectively address these problems. Suicide is the leading cause of death for men aged 15-44 and 1 in 5 boys are likely to experience depression before they are 18. The COVID-19 global pandemic has exacerbated Australia's mental health crisis, with 74% of young people reporting that their mental health is worse since the outbreak of the pandemic (headspace, 2021). 70% say the pandemic and response has negatively affected their social connectedness (AIHW, 2021). The Productivity Commission report into Mental Health in 2020 states that the economic cost of mental ill-health and suicide ranged from $43 billion to $70 billion. Recommendation 5 in this report included the following: "Governments should update the National School Reform Agreement to include student wellbeing as an outcome for the education system. This would include clear, measurable wellbeing targets". This was reinforced by the Productivity Commission's Review of the National School Reform Agreement (December 2022), which stated that "Government should advance reforms to promote wellbeing: many children and young people struggle with poor well being because of experiences in and outside their schools. Teachers need more support to help students to manage these issues and achieve their potential" (p2). Man Cave programs in schools and online are aligned with these recommendations. Our evaluation data shows that after attending a Man Cave program 83% of boys report being more aware of their own emotions, 80% of boys report having the tools and confidence to manage their mental health and 79% of boys know where to get support if they need it.

Q52. If you have more information you would like to share with the Expert Panel, please send a written response as a .docx or RTF format to NSRA.submissions@education.gov.au. An additional PDF version may also be submitted. Please make sure to note that your email is to be considered alongside your current submission.

If you have any questions about your submission or the submissions process more broadly, please contact NSRA.submissions@education.gov.au