



## Public submission made to the Review to Achieve Educational Excellence in Australian Schools

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Submitting as a: Peak body  
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### Summary

Each child MUST count—schools need to know each child's story, knows a lot about what captures their imagination and interest—school should nurture that natural inclination. Schools are called to focus on the growth of the child in every area of development. Pastoral and educational needs should be equals. "Who is watching the children" - every child needs to be known-academically, pastorally and all points around those two key performance areas. Schools should be places where learning is wide ranging, exciting and a mixture of activity. Many of our local schools have stopped participating in important learning as it cuts in to NAPLAN learning, stopped going to swimming due to time out of learning, stopped participating in eisteddfods. In some socially disadvantaged areas this was a child's only participation in such organised activities. These opportunities for fun and perhaps just as important for leisure, community and funtime activities have been cut. Growing financial and social disadvantage and dysfunction in households and families is part of the issue. Based on forty years as an educator: swimming is great for the brain and the body but usually only affluent families can afford learn to swim. Actually learning to swim with technique and finesse is only in the realm of the richest families. Research, I am sure, will show be a high correlation to swimming ability and learning. As example: the local school swimming competition here schools are grouped for carnivals based on a promotion and relegation system. Over many years only the high ICSEA schools make it to the A Grade Carnival-these same schools are the Top Naplan performers. Social standing and affluence are key drivers to academic and so school success as is being measured. A balance of academic and pastoral counselling in a supportive environment at each and every school is important.

### Main submission

Students need to be able to leave school being able to co-operate and work collectively. The skill set should be broad. I recently heard of some business leaders commenting on how every child is being engaged in Coding when the fact is we will

need limited numbers of people who can do that—we will need skill team players who can set themselves or be set a task and solve/resolve it. Problem solving trumps Coding ... and the list of narrow focus government knee jerk reactions continues to flavour the educational agenda.

In terms of funding the first point is to focus on each child—their full story. It does take a village to raise a child so parents and school personnel need to really know each child and be working together. Pastoral and educational needs should be equals. Our children are living in a frenetic world—many of them are stressed. This stress can be brought on by a range of factors: time poor parents, over-indulged children; diet; family breakdowns etc. Trained professionals and parent education which focus on quality, empathetic yet challenging feedback should be a major driver. This approach includes attention to resilience and to putting some pressure around higher expectations. Build confidence, push students a little more. Part of this every child has a story is their data profile—where are their gaps in learning—how can we close or fill those gaps. Some children, particularly disadvantaged children, need some champions on their side. A wholistic approach to their success. Such an approach needs to include slow down opportunities (in our system meditation and quiet time are used). Barriers include an obsession with testing including the ridiculous emphasis on PISA Testing which is a waste of time given the disparity and who is tested, what each country's context is etc. I agree our Literacy standards are in decline but homegrown issues—many listed above—are part of the problem. Deep thinking especially around social issues would perhaps raise interest.