

7 December 2012

## COMMUNIQUÉ

The Standing Council on School Education and Early Childhood (SCSEEC) met today in Adelaide. Ministers welcomed the opportunity to discuss a variety of school education and early childhood policy matters of national importance.

### **Assessment and rating process for the National Quality Standard**

Ministers today noted an update regarding the assessment and rating process for the National Quality Standard (NQS). The NQS was developed as part of the National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education and Care, which commenced nationally on 1 January 2012 (1 August 2012 in Western Australia). The Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) was engaged by SCSEEC to undertake an evaluation of 491 assessments and ratings of early childhood education and care services to confirm the validity and reliability of the assessment and rating process.

Standing Council welcomed the ACER evaluation, the findings of which included that the assessment and rating process is valid and reliable, the instrument is fit for purpose and a clear majority of participating services considered their rating and assessment experience a positive one. Council agreed that the ratings be published as soon as possible.

### **National Early Childhood Development Strategy (NECDS)**

Standing Council today endorsed the National Early Childhood Development Strategy (NECDS) Implementation Plan and Progress Report. The NECDS, endorsed by the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) in 2009, is a long-term strategy that aims to improve the outcomes of all children by building a better early childhood development system. Ministers were pleased to note that the NECDS Implementation Plan will support:

- better use of data and evidence to ensure appropriate access to services;
- better service integration to ensure the appropriate level of early intervention, referral and support for children and families and ensure that they are accessing the services that are available; and
- better workforce capability to deal with children and families' needs.

### **National Partnership Agreement on Early Childhood Education**

Ministers noted the Australian Government's proposed offer of a new three year National Partnership Agreement on Early Childhood Education, including funding of up to \$1 billion over three years to support State and Territory Governments to embed universal access to early childhood education; take concrete actions to further increase the participation of vulnerable children in quality early childhood education and for national projects relating to the development of data, research and evaluation on early childhood education and development. Ministers noted that the National Partnership has not yet been endorsed and that it is subject to ongoing negotiation.

### **The availability of child care in Australia**

The Standing Council today agreed that each Minister, in consultation with their planning Minister, would review issues of supply-side barriers in the child care sector in their jurisdiction and report back to Standing Council via the next early childhood senior officials meeting in March 2013.

### **National Plan for School Improvement**

The Australian Government thanked Education Ministers and their officials for their collaborative work on developing initial advice to the Council of Australian Governments on the National Plan for School Improvement, and welcomes the opportunity to continue working closely on these issues in 2013.

### **NAPLAN Online**

Ministers today agreed on the strong rationale for online delivery of NAPLAN tests and that NAPLAN should transition from paper-based to online delivery at an agreed point in the future. This follows from a previous commitment to trial the electronic onscreen delivery platform for the NAP - Civics and Citizenship test in 2013. Ministers noted that Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) will carefully examine and respond to a range of transition issues, with 2016 provisionally targeted as the year for NAPLAN online to commence.

### **Senior Secondary Curriculum**

The Standing Council today endorsed the senior secondary Australian Curriculum for English, Mathematics, Science and History as the common base for development of state and territory senior secondary courses.

ACARA will work with states and territories during 2013 to explore the curriculum content that will be integrated into their respective courses, the timelines and processes for this integration, and details related to the validation of achievement standards, and report back to Ministers.

### **National Trade Cadetships**

Ministers noted that ACARA is developing the National Trade Cadetship senior curriculum in association with selected Industry Skills Councils, business, industry and education stakeholders. ACARA will build on the F-10 Australian Curriculum, including the NTC Years 9-10 Curriculum, will consider the newly developed Core Skills for Work Framework in the development of the curriculum and will also consider work being undertaken by organisations such as Group Training Australia to identify good practices for work placements.

### **National School Improvement Tool**

Standing Council endorsed the *National School Improvement Tool*, developed collaboratively by the Australian Government, states and territories, non-government sectors and other education stakeholders during 2012. The tool is intended to help schools review and reflect on their efforts to improve the quality of classroom teaching and learning, and student performance. The tool consists of nine inter-related 'domains' that have been shown through evidence to be characteristics of highly effective schools.

The tool will be made available to schools and systems for optional incorporation within their existing school improvement processes from 2013.

### **Harmonisation of Funding Regulatory Frameworks for Non-Government Schools**

The Standing Council noted the collaborative work between the Australian Government and state and territory officials to progress the harmonisation of funding regulatory frameworks for non-government schools, and endorsed that consultation progress with the non-government schools sector on harmonisation.

Officials, led by the Australian Government, will continue this work and consult with non-government school sectors before bringing final advice back to Ministers in 2013, with the capacity for jurisdictions to further consider.

This is important work that will help ensure that government funds provided to schools are used for the educational benefit of students, and that disruptions to school communities caused by sudden school closure are minimised. There is significant opportunity to streamline regulations and reduce red tape while ensuring good governance.

### **Students with Disabilities Reform: National Disability Strategy**

The National Disability Strategy (NDS) sets out a ten-year national plan for improving life for Australians with disability, their families and carers. The NDS sets out six Areas of Policy Action (APA) to improve the lives of people with disabilities, their families and carers, including APA #5 *Learning and skills—early childhood education and care, schools, further education, vocational education; transitions from education to employment; life-long learning*.

The Victorian Minister for Education, Martin Dixon MP, is the SCSEEC Champion Minister for Disability. Minister Dixon provided SCSEEC with an update on the relationship between current SCSEEC disability reform work and the NDS. Standing Council endorsed the inclusion of the development and implementation of a model for the Nationally Consistent Collection of Data on School Students with Disability and the development of a package of E- Learning resources in relation to the Disability Standards for Education, in the biennial report to COAG.

## **Nationally Consistent Collection of Data on School Students with Disability**

Ministers acknowledged the progress to date on the development of a nationally consistent approach to identifying school students with disability and reaffirmed their commitment to delivering a transparent and evidence-based system.

Ministers welcomed the outcomes and findings contained in the Interim Report on the 2012 Trial of a model for the nationally consistent collection of data on school students with disability.

Ministers provisionally endorsed the revised model for data collection used in the 2012 Trial, subject to the final report on the Trial, due early in 2013, and agreed to the proposed option for phased implementation over three years (2013-2015). Reported data will be available on MySchool from 2016 subject to confirmation of data quality.

## **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Action Plan 2010-2014: Annual Report 2011**

Standing Council today endorsed the content of the 2011 Annual Report for the *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Action Plan 2010-2014*. The *Action Plan* assists education providers to accelerate improvements in the educational outcomes of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people. The *Action Plan* is part of a broader COAG reform agenda for school education that will contribute to closing the gap between the educational outcomes of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and their peers.

## **Australian Awards for Outstanding Teaching and School Leadership**

On 6 December Ministers attended the Australian Awards for Outstanding Teaching and School Leadership hosted by the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL). Winners were recognised for their passion and dedication to the education of young Australians. Each winner received a scholarship to undertake a professional learning experience with recognised experts and practitioners, and engage in research, best practice and innovative developments in teaching and school leadership nationally or internationally.

Winners in the following six award categories were selected from 48 state and territory finalists nominated by Government, Catholic and Independent peak school education bodies in each state and territory:

- Australian Early Childhood Teacher of the Year: Rebecca Andrews, John Brotchie Nursery School, NSW
- Australian Primary Teacher of the Year: Will Davis, formerly at Tom Price Primary School, WA
- Australian Secondary Teacher of the Year: Daniel Buttacavoli, Emmanuel College, VIC
- Australian Primary Principal of the Year: Loretta Hamilton, Courtenay Gardens Primary School, VIC
- Australian Secondary Principal of the Year: Shayne Player, Tuggerah Lakes Secondary College, Tumby Umpi Campus, NSW
- Australian Government Minister's Award for Excellence in Teaching and School Leadership in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education: Michael Hansen, Cairns West Primary School, QLD.