

COMMUNIQUÉ

The Standing Council on School Education and Early Childhood (SCSEEC) met on Friday 20 April 2012 in Perth. This was the first full face-to-face meeting of SCSEEC, following the meeting of school education ministers on 5 April in Sydney. The Standing Council welcomed the opportunity to discuss a broad range of school education and early childhood matters.

Throughout the meeting there was confirmation of the different responsibilities of each level of government, and identification of educational matters that benefit from collaboration.

Early Childhood Development

Standing Council received a report from the Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA) on the commencement of the National Quality Framework for early childhood education and care (NQF). Both ACECQA and the NQF officially commenced from 1 January 2012. The introduction of the NQF marks the implementation of the National Law and National Regulations, the National Quality Standard, including the transition to nationally consistent educator-to-child ratios and the transition to educator qualification requirements, and the assessment and rating of services which will provide families with more information on the education and care that best suits their families' needs. Legislation to enact the National Law in Western Australia is before the Western Australia Parliament.

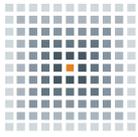
Ministers heard that a focus for ACECQA since 1 January has been building relationships and developing knowledge of the education and care sector and regulatory environment in each Australian state and territory. ACECQA reported that the implementation progress report card is a positive one with significant progress made by the education and care sector, Regulatory Authorities, the Australian Government and ACECQA in implementing the NQF.

Digital teaching and learning resources

Ministers viewed a presentation from Education Services Australia (ESA) showcasing the collection of digital resources now available to all teachers nationally to support the implementation of Australian Curriculum. This presentation is available at ESA's website at <http://www.esa.edu.au/scootle>.

National Assessment Program

Ministers noted the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority's (ACARA) initial work to investigate bringing NAPLAN and the National Assessment Program (NAP) sample tests online, and agreed that NAP Civics and Citizenship tests will be delivered electronically in 2013 using a new onscreen delivery platform. Ministers discussed concerns over practices such as excessive test preparation and the potential narrowing of the curriculum as a result of the



publication of NAPLAN data on My School. Ministers requested that ACARA provide the Standing Council with an assessment of these matters.

Australian Curriculum

The Standing Council noted ACARA's progress on curriculum development for 15 courses of the senior secondary curriculum across English mathematics, science, history and geography. ACARA will submit Australian Curriculum for all 15 courses for Standing Council endorsement in December 2012.

Biennial National Education Forum

Ministers announced that the third National Biennial Education Forum is scheduled to be held on 2 August 2012, prior to the SCSEEC meeting on 3 August. The previous Forum was held on 15 October 2010 in Canberra.

The Forum is an initiative under the *Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians*, which is designed to showcase innovation and best practice in schooling across the country.

Online access will be utilised to maximise participation and engagement for schools, teachers and parents. The Forum will include synchronous meetings in each capital city with live and online keynote speeches, panel sessions and presentations of innovative practice and teacher interviews. These will be accessible to educators and the public throughout Australia via the web.

The theme for this year's Forum is the promotion of excellence and equity.

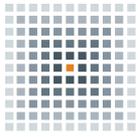
Safe and Supportive School Communities

Standing Council confirmed its commitment to the Safe and Supportive School Communities (SSSC) project until 2015. Ministers agreed a range of measures, including the "*Bullying. No Way!*" and "*Take a Stand Together*" websites, to help raise community awareness of the importance of school safety, including assistance to schools in selecting anti-bullying programs, training of teachers in recognising and responding to students' help seeking behaviours, and further work on supporting students and parents at key education transition points.

Closing the Gap

The Standing Council agreed to have officials undertake further work to demonstrate progress towards the early childhood education Closing the Gap target. Ministers have previously committed to ensuring that all Indigenous four year olds in remote communities have access to quality early childhood education by 2013.

All states and territories have outlined planned actions and strategies to improve the participation of Indigenous children in early childhood education. Additional state and territory strategies and actions are outlined in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Universal Access Strategy that was endorsed by Ministers in February 2011.



Certification of Highly Accomplished and Lead Teachers

Ministers further cemented their commitment to teacher quality by approving Principles and Processes for the Certification of Highly Accomplished and Lead Teachers against the National Professional Standards for Teachers.

The nationally consistent approach to certification is designed to recognise and promote quality teaching, to present an opportunity for teachers to reflect on their practice and to provide a reliable indication of quality teaching that can be used to identify, recognise and/or reward Highly Accomplished and Lead teachers.

The principles and processes have been developed by the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL), working closely with key education stakeholders. AITSL will continue to work with jurisdictions and stakeholders to support implementation, including a range of activities and materials for the initial training for assessors, a guide to certification and an online self-assessment tool.

Ministers also noted a progress report from AITSL on the development of a draft Australian Teacher Performance and Development Framework. The draft framework will now be subject to wide consultation with all education stakeholders.

Two year graduate entry requirements

Ministers affirmed their support for the two year graduate entry requirements for accreditation of initial education programs, as an important mechanism to further lift teacher quality. As well, Ministers discussed the most flexible and effective ways to support the transition to this new standard.

Students with Disability

The Standing Council accepted the revised descriptors for collecting nationally consistent data on school students with a disability. Ministers agreed that the business case and implementation strategy for this model will have the objective of a full national data collection in 2013, informed by a trial of the revised descriptors in the second half of 2012.

The model will aim to enable the collection of nationally consistent data on students with disability for the first time, which would provide a new level of transparency and an evidence base of the numbers and distribution of students with disability that are currently being supported in schools and the level of adjustment provided for them.