

29 November 2013

## COMMUNIQUÉ

The Standing Council on School Education and Early Childhood (SCSEEC) today met in Sydney for their final meeting of 2013. Ministers with responsibility for school education and early childhood from around Australia and New Zealand took the opportunity to discuss a broad range of significant policy issues.

### **Australian Curriculum**

The Standing Council today noted that ACARA has developed the Australian Curriculum content and achievement standards for civics and citizenship, economics and business, health and physical education and technologies according to its current curriculum development processes.

Ministers noted that the Australian Government will be undertaking a review of the Australian Curriculum, and will bring forward recommendations from the review to the Standing Council in 2014.

### **Participation in international tests**

Ministers today agreed that Australian students should participate in the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) 2016. The PIRLS assessment requires students to demonstrate their understanding of a wide variety of texts. Students are asked to use a broad range of reading skills and strategies in the assessment including focusing on and retrieving specific information, making straightforward inferences, interpreting and integrating ideas and examining or evaluating text features.

Australia's participation in PIRLS 2016 will assist in monitoring and evaluating reading literacy performance over time, with comparisons able to be made with PIRLS 2011 results.

### **Independent Public Schools**

The Standing Council today noted that the Australian Government will write to members inviting them to participate in its Independent Public Schools initiative

### **Key Priorities in New Zealand Education**

The Standing Council welcomed the Hon. Hekia Parata MP, New Zealand Minister of Education, to the meeting. Minister Parata presented information to SCSEEC on changes in the New Zealand education system, the status of the teaching profession, and provided advice regarding the forthcoming *International Summit on the Teaching Profession*, which New Zealand is hosting in March 2014.

### **National Quality Framework operational changes**

Ministers today agreed to a number of measures designed to improve the operation of the National Quality Framework (NQF). SCSEEC endorsed some relatively simple changes to the Education and Care Services National Regulations (National Regulations) and noted that in 2014 it will receive further advice regarding more complex matters that will require changes to legislation, to reduce regulatory burden on the sector. Ministers also agreed to senior officials undertaking further work to explore transitional provisions to deal with workforce shortages, especially with early childhood teachers and educators in rural and remote locations.

Changes to the National Regulations will be developed as quickly as practicable, and relate to a range of operational matters including supervisor certificates, staffing requirements for Early Childhood Teachers, short-term replacement of absent educators, fencing and safety-glass requirements at centres and first aid requirements on school sites.

The Standing Council agreed that officials will develop strategies to streamline the assessment and rating process to meet the 2015 timetable. Officials will report back in early 2014. All jurisdictions will work with ACECQA to progress this matter.

### **Post National Partnership on Universal Access to Early Childhood Education Arrangements**

Ministers noted the significant collaborative work between the Commonwealth, States and Territories on early childhood reforms over the last five years. They noted the achievements in quality and access to universal access to early childhood education that have been implemented throughout Australia.

All states and territories emphasised that Commonwealth funding is critical for the continuation of universal access to quality early childhood education, and the importance of certainty for providers in 2015. Standing Council agreed that the 2014 review be progressed as quickly as practicable, noting that this will rely on information being provided expediently.

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Media enquiries: Greg Donaghue, SCSEEC Secretariat, 0423 748 320 or [greg.donaghue@scseec.edu.au](mailto:greg.donaghue@scseec.edu.au)