

Communiqué

School funding and reforms

Education Council discussed Commonwealth funding arrangements under the *Australian Education Act 2013*. Ministers discussed, but did not agree in their current form, the Commonwealth's proposed School Funding and Reform Principles that could form the basis of an interim national agreement to allow Commonwealth funding in the 2018 school year. States and territories agreed to provide further feedback on the Principles.

Ministers agreed that the Commonwealth Government will seek agreement from Education Council about national school funding processes and reforms, recognising the significant impact of new Commonwealth funding arrangements on state and territory investment.

The Education Council further discussed the membership, composition and operations of the National School Resourcing Board and the Terms of Reference for its first review.

NAPLAN Online

The Education Council received an update on the key events to take place in the lead up to the implementation of NAPLAN Online from 2018.

Ministers confirmed their commitment to ensuring the integrity of the marking of NAPLAN writing as the transition to an online environment commences, with in-principle agreement that in 2018, all NAPLAN writing scripts undertaken online will be double scored (by both computer and a human assessor), with a detailed proposal provided to Education Council in December outlining expected costs and funding options for double scoring. The Education Council also agreed that the Year 3 writing assessment will continue to be conducted using pen and paper tests.

Ministers will consider at their December meeting ways to maximise the diagnostic value of NAPLAN, advice regarding test development and quality assurance, the readiness of the online assessment platform, and the outcome of School Readiness Tests to inform the number of schools states and territories have identified as eligible to commence the transition to NAPLAN Online in 2018.

Year 1 check

Ministers noted a report from the Commonwealth Minister's Year 1 Literacy and Numeracy Check Expert Advisory Panel. This report included advice and recommendations around the development and implementation of a national Year 1 literacy and numeracy check and an overview of what early years' literacy and numeracy activities are already implemented at the jurisdictional level.

Council agreed that such checks are best utilised as diagnostic tools for teachers, and should not be used for the purposes of national assessment or reporting. Ministers further agreed to discuss existing jurisdictional activities and initiatives and the findings of the Panel as part of a broader discussion at the December 2017 Education Council meeting, which will include the Chair of the Panel and other panel members as appropriate.

Review of teacher registration

Education Council noted that the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership, in consultation with states, territories and other key stakeholders, would undertake a national review of teacher registration to consider its rigour and quality, with a view to improving national consistency. The final review report will be provided to Education Council for agreement.

Child immunisation

Ministers considered advice on a range of options to implement a consistent national approach to increase immunisation rates in early education and care services and to publish service level immunisation rates as set out in the COAG Communiqué of 9 June 2017.

The Education Council acknowledged the important work currently being undertaken to raise immunisation rates more broadly, particularly under the National Immunisation Strategy. Given the initiatives already in play in the early education and care sector, Ministers noted the immunisation rates of children attending approved child care are already likely to be high and further actions should improve herd immunity and further consolidate this strong result.

Ministers discussed options to meet COAG's request and noted detailed further development work would be required to support future decision making including privacy, regulatory and cost considerations and arrangements for vulnerable and excluded children so the educational outcomes of these children are not compromised from a lack of access to early childhood education.

This advice will be considered by the Health Council before being provided to the Council of Australian Governments later in the year.

Education and Care Services National Amendment Regulations

Council made the Education and Care Services National Amendment Regulations 2017 (Amendment Regulations), which give effect to a number of recommendations arising from the 2014 Review of the National Partnership Agreement on the National Quality Agenda for Early Childhood Education and Care. The Amendment Regulations will be published at: <https://www.legislation.nsw.gov.au/>

The Amendment Regulations, coupled with previously agreed changes to the Education and Care Services National Law, will commence from 1 October 2017 in all states and territories (except Western Australia, where changes will commence no later than 1 October 2018). Working with all jurisdictions, the Australian Children's Education & Care Quality Authority has published, and will continue to publish, a suite of guidance materials to support sector stakeholders to understand and prepare for the changes. Further advice can be found at: <http://www.acecqa.gov.au/nqf-changes>

The Education Council also intends to extend several transitional provisions in the Education and Care Services National Regulations primarily relating to staffing and qualifications arrangements in the children's education and care sector before the end of 2017. Extending the provisions to 2020 will allow for sector continuity and certainty, and support the availability of qualified educators to maintain current quality safeguards for children's education and care. The relevant Regulations are: 239A, 240, 242, 264 and 300. These provisions are not being extended in Victoria in recognition of the progress made in developing the qualifications of the early childhood workforce.