



25 March 2019

**National Catholic Education Commission
Submission to the NAPLAN Reporting Review 2019
Education Council of the Council of Australian Governments**

Emeritus Professor Bill Loudon AM,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input into the review of the current approach to the presentation of National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) data.

The National Catholic Education Commission (NCEC) is the national representative body of Australia's Catholic schools. Working closely with the state and territory Catholic Education Commissions, the NCEC's advocates for and develops policy at the national level for Australia's Catholic schools.

Australia's Catholic schools have a proud history. Today, Australia's network of over 1,740 Catholic schools educate more than 764,000 students and employ over 94,600 teaching and non-teaching staff (75,000 (full-time equivalent)). Australia's Catholic schools continue to educate students from disadvantaged backgrounds, growing proportions of Indigenous students and students with disabilities. The Church has sought universal reach for Catholic schooling and more than 40 per cent of Catholic schools are located outside major metropolitan areas and in many remote Indigenous communities, a Catholic school is the only local school.

The NCEC welcomes this limited NAPLAN review. After a decade of NAPLAN, it is prudent and timely to review its effectiveness to allow an assessment of the current approach to the presentation of NAPLAN data including on My School.

In this review, the NCEC recommends that consideration be given to whether the presentation of NAPLAN data:

- Aligns with the purposes of NAPLAN more broadly, that is does it drive improvements in educational outcomes and increase transparency and accountability of schools?
- Complies with the 2009 principles and protocols agreed by Education Ministers for reporting on schooling.

The NCEC is aware that this recommendation raises bigger questions which may be beyond the scope of this review. However, it is prudent to consider these questions. The NCEC recommends that a broader review into all aspects of NAPLAN be established which ideally should consider:

- the purpose, the intention and utility of national assessment in all schools;
- the form of that assessment;
- the ability of national assessment to drive actual improvements in student learning; and
- the aim of increased accountability and transparency in school education.

To assist the inquiry, the NCEC makes the following general points. These comments are provided to supplement and support the submissions of state and territory Catholic education commissions.

General points

1. The NCEC supports a national co-ordinated approach to measuring student performance which benefits schools and provides valid, reliable and contextualised feedback for parents and families.
2. The assessment and reporting processes of Australia's Catholic schools are transparent and accountable to parents, families and the broader community.
3. NAPLAN is only one form of student data (among many) which enable schools, families and the broader community to reflect on student and school performance and target areas for improvement. There are limitations to the utility of NAPLAN.
4. Australia's Catholic schools, like all school sectors, utilise a range of useful diagnostic tools and assessment to determine educational achievement and identify areas for intervention and improvement. This occurs at the student, school and system level.
5. Australia's Catholic schools utilise student data to encourage excellence, identify student need and improve student outcomes.
6. The NCEC is concerned that NAPLAN is undermined by the making of simplistic comparisons about educational achievement and school performance and the use of NAPLAN results to market schools. Consideration should be given to countering the effects of these simplistic comparisons particularly when made in the media.
7. For parents and the broader community, NAPLAN is only a 'snapshot' of a student's performance on a given day which can be affected by many and various factors. These factors can cloud the reality of a student's performance. Parents and families can misunderstand what NAPLAN is presenting about their child's learning and misinterpret what NAPLAN results say about a particular school and other schools.
8. While the data on My School purports to be a means of comparing 'like schools' with 'like schools', the Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage (ICSEA) measure does not always enable proper comparisons to be made. ICSEA is inadequate in that it fails to take into account a range of additional variables about a student's background that may impact on NAPLAN performance. The use of ICSEA should be reviewed.
9. The NCEC would support measures to reduce the misinterpretation and misuse of NAPLAN and My School.
10. Further information should be provided to parents, families and the broader community about what NAPLAN presents in terms of student attainment, learning progression and school

performance. This information should be simple and accessible. Consideration should be given to whether complex analysis and multiple presentations of data, such as that provided on My School, actually assists parents with the timely information they need that is relevant and practical for supporting their child's learning progression.

11. Australia's Catholic schools seek to support students and families to better understand how to use NAPLAN and other assessment tools to support their child's learning journey.

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