

Ministerial Council for Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs

THIRD MCEECDYA MEETING

15 April 2010, Sydney

COMMUNIQUÉ

The Ministerial Council for Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs held its first meeting for 2010 today at the Sutherland North Public School in Sydney. Ministers met in the school's new hall which was recently completed under the Building the Education Revolution program.

Commonwealth, State and Territory Ministers were joined during the meeting by the Chairs of the three national bodies that have been established as part of a major restructure of the national education architecture to ensure the delivery of the substantial reforms underway in school education.

The Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA), the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) and Education Services Australia Ltd (ESA) are working under the direction of the Council to deliver national priority outcomes in curriculum development, assessment and transparent reporting, quality teaching and learning and educational leadership and program and service support. Ministers emphasised the importance of the three organisations working closely together to deliver the reform agenda.

The Chair of ACARA, Professor Barry McGaw, provided Ministers with an update on progress for the next stages of the My School website. Ministers noted the overwhelming response to the website following the launch and that work is progressing on publishing new information on school income and resources, and parental satisfaction with their school, and improvements being made in literacy/numeracy over time.

All Ministers restated their firm commitment to implement NAPLAN testing in all schools in May and the importance of these tests in providing value added information on student performance. Ministers agreed they would consider a range of approaches to ensure the NAPLAN tests are carried out in the face of threatened industrial action by the Australian Education Union.

Ministers discussed the implementation and role of the new Building the Education Revolution Implementation Taskforce. All Ministers noted the importance of the new taskforce and agreed to work constructively with it to investigate issues and ensure value for money in all projects.

Ministers endorsed a revised draft Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Action Plan for 2010–2014. In July 2009, the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) asked that MCEECDYA prepare the plan for its endorsement early in 2010. The Plan will be publicly released following final endorsement by COAG.

Ministers acknowledged the extensive contribution to the development of the Plan from Indigenous leaders with educational expertise, Indigenous education consultative bodies, and the broader public through a submission process. The Plan includes national, State and local-level action in six priority areas that evidence suggests will contribute to improved outcomes for Indigenous children and young people.

Ministers noted the substantial progress being made in the implementation of the National Quality Agenda for Early Childhood Education and Care that was agreed by COAG in December 2009, Ministers agreed to the governance arrangements for and name of the new statutory authority -the Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA) - as the new national body to provide oversight of the National Quality Standard. Regulatory arrangements for the new system will be formalised in national applied laws legislation that is currently being developed and is expected to be introduced into the Victorian Parliament later this year.

Professor Barry McGaw also provided Ministers with advice from the ACARA Board in relation to the scope of the Australian *K–10 curriculum, its development and implementation timelines and associated achievement standards and reporting of students' achievement. The Board also provided advice in relation to the development of senior secondary curriculum development.

Ministers agreed that curriculum development should cover all eight learning areas listed in the Melbourne Declaration and that the curriculum will define the core knowledge, skills and understanding that all students should learn across particular years of schooling.

The Australian Curriculum in English, mathematics, science and history for kindergarten to Year 10 - currently the subject of public consultation – will be phased in from 2011. Substantial implementation will be completed by the end of 2013. All phases of K–10 curriculum development will be completed by the end of 2012.

Ministers agreed that achievement standards will describe the quality of learning (depth of understanding, extent of knowledge and sophistication of skill) expected for each year of schooling or band of years. The standards will also describe and illustrate growth and development in the learning area. Each K-10 standard will describe achievement that aligns with a C level grade within an A–E reporting scale. Descriptors will be developed for each of the five A–E reporting levels.

Ministers also agreed to the prioritisation of Health and Physical Education (HPE) within phase three of the curriculum development plan; the inclusion of HPE as a core learning requirement for all students in each year from K–10; and to maximise within the overall package of required school learning the number of school hours that students participate in quality physical education and sport each week.

ACARA has developed 14 courses as part of the first phase of senior secondary years curriculum (four in English, four in Mathematics, four in Science and two in History). Draft content for these courses will be available for public consultation later in April which will enable the public to see the continuum of curriculum from years K to 12.

Ministers considered the first work plan from the Chair of Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership Ltd (AITSL), Mr Tony Mackay, and noted the five immediate priority areas of work for the company - teacher and school leader standards, teacher certification, pre-service teacher education programs, professional learning and stakeholder engagement and communication.

Ministers also provided AITSL with additional guidance on the standards that should apply to pre-service teacher education courses. Pre-requisites for entry into teacher courses will require applicants to meet minimum standards in relation to English and Mathematics achievement and have appropriate English language proficiency. All teachers will be expected to have training in areas such as special education, supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, classroom/behaviour management and ICT. Primary and secondary school teachers will be trained in the Australian curriculum, with secondary teachers expected to have a sound grounding in their subject area. Ministers are also seeking significant improvements in the system of professional experience placement to ensure that newly graduated teachers are confident and competent.

Ministers received their first report from the Chair of the Education Services Australia Board, Dr Tom Stubbs. Ministers affirmed their expectation that the company, which commenced operation on 1 March 2010 from the merger of two pre-existing companies -Curriculum Corporation and *education.au.limited* - will build on the existing expertise and reputations of the two former companies to provide efficient education services to meet the future needs of all education sectors, particularly in relation to the implementation of national initiatives such as the Australian Curriculum and the Digital Education Revolution.

Ministers agreed to a reporting framework for the Smarter Schools National Partnerships. The reports provide important information on what is happening on the ground under the national partnerships, highlighting the impact of reforms on participating schools and students. The agreed arrangements for reporting will capture implementation progress twice a year, including State and

Territory performance against agreed targets and indicators. The first of these reports is due by 30 April and will be made available to the public on the DEEWR website.

Building on research conducted in Western Australia into the relationship between classroom behaviour and academic performance, Ministers agreed to share promising approaches to increasing student engagement as part of the Smarter Schools National Partnerships.

Recognising that body image is a significant concern among young Australians and that the school environment provides a key opportunity to foster a positive body image, MCEECDYA Ministers committed to working collaboratively to address negative body image as part of the wider government efforts to support the health and wellbeing of young people. This includes agreement to undertake research on national and international efforts to address negative body image among young people to strengthen the evidence base to inform future government initiatives in this area. Ministers also noted that the Australian Government Minister for Youth intends to progress work on the development of practical resources to support schools in relation to this important issue.

Ministers noted the release of the National Strategy for Young Australians (the Strategy) by the Australian Government Minister for Youth, the Hon Kate Ellis MP on 14 April 2010, and provided in-principle agreement to support the Strategy's implementation. The Strategy outlines the Australian Government's aspirations for young people, and provides an important guide for the Australian Government's substantial and ongoing investment in young people. The Strategy also acknowledges that State and Territory governments play an important role and commit significant resources supporting Australian young people.

Note:

* Kindergarten in NSW, Tas, the ACT; Preparatory in Vic and Qld; Reception in SA; Transition in NT; Pre-primary in WA.