

# CORPORATE PLAN

2015-16



# FROM THE CHAIR

Education is the great leveller of society. Armed with a comprehensive curriculum, a valid and reliable assessment program, and capable teachers, Australia's schools will give all children, regardless of their family circumstances, an opportunity to live up to their full potential. The mission of the Australian Curriculum, Assessment, and Reporting Authority (ACARA) is to improve the learning of all young Australians. We do this by providing schools with the tools, techniques, and information they require to fulfil their vital social role.

ACARA's work begins with the Australian Curriculum, which sets out the knowledge and skills that all students need to learn to participate in modern society. For the first time in history, all schools in Australia will be teaching the same curriculum. This offers many advantages. It ensures that what a child learns is not determined by where he or she happens to live, and prevents students from being disadvantaged should their families relocate interstate. And most important of all, a national curriculum permits the sharing of best practice and resources across state and territory borders.

To track progress, provide accountability and identify good teaching practices, ACARA conducts the National Assessment Program, which includes the tests of literacy and numeracy known as NAPLAN and sample testing in Science Literacy, ICT Literacy and Civics and Citizenship. ACARA also produces the National Report on Schooling in Australia and provides information about schools through the *My School* website.



In future years, ACARA will continue to improve the Australian Curriculum, ensuring that it meets the needs of all students and is accessible to teachers, parents, and the broader community.

In addition to work on the curriculum, ACARA will significantly improve the National Assessment Program, by moving it online. Online testing will allow more precise measurement, earlier reporting of results, and it can be adapted to meet the needs of all children including those with disabilities. By aligning the assessments with the Australian Curriculum, the results will provide valuable diagnostic data for teachers to use in the classroom. ACARA will add further information to the *My School* website while also making it more accessible to parents and educators.

The ACARA plan is ambitious but achievable. It is designed to produce a return on the investment already made in curriculum development, assessment, and reporting by tying the three areas of work together. The curriculum specifies the knowledge and skills we expect students to acquire; the national assessment program reveals whether students are learning what we want them to learn and reporting allows us to identify good teaching ideas and share them nationally. Taken together, they provide a powerful mechanism for improving education for the benefit of all Australians.



**Emeritus Professor Steven Schwartz AM, Chair of the Board of ACARA**

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*“Education is the most powerful weapon  
which you can use to change the world.”*

**Nelson Mandela**

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# INTRODUCTION

ACARA's corporate plan has been prepared for the 2015-16 reporting period in accordance with the *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013* (paragraph 35(1)(b)). It covers the period from 1 July 2015 to 30 June 2020.

It has been informed by the *ACARA Act 2008*, which sets out ACARA's purposes, and by the Charter for ACARA, endorsed by the Education Council in August 2012, which provides its strategic directions.

In 2015, ACARA was reviewed by the Australian Government, as required under a provision in its enabling legislation and its 2016-17 to 2019-20 work plan and budget was endorsed by the Education Council. Following these developments, ACARA's corporate plan (first published 31 August 2015) was updated to reflect endorsed work.

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SECTION ONE:

Who we are

# WHO WE ARE

The Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) is an independent statutory authority

ACARA has been operational since 28 May 2009 and was established under Section 5 of the *Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority Act (Cth)* on 8 December 2008.

ACARA executes policy directions determined by the Education Council regarding curriculum, assessment, data and reporting at a national level and operates in accordance with the following principles:

- **Consultative** – consulting with and taking into consideration advice from jurisdictions, systems, Ministerial companies and authorities and other relevant stakeholders so that ACARA's work is fit-for-purpose
- **Efficient and effective** – delivering high quality, creative and effective products and services in an efficient and timely manner and within agreed budgets as well as actively assisting jurisdictions in the implementation of the broader education reform agenda
- **Transparent and accountable** – providing assurance to all stakeholders that ACARA's work is in the national interest, with planning and reporting clearly linking activities to ministerial decisions.



SECTION TWO:

What we do



# WHAT WE DO

ACARA's mission is to improve the learning of all young Australians through world-class school curriculum, assessment and reporting.

## **The key purposes (strategic directions) of the authority are:**

### **Curriculum**

- maintain a world-class curriculum from Foundation to Year 12 in specified learning areas which is fit for purpose, accessible and available for implementation
- assemble the evidence base required to both evaluate the current curriculum and develop the next generation of the national curriculum
- provide expert advice on curriculum practice nationally and internationally

### **Assessment**

- provide a quality, comprehensive and cohesive suite of assessments (including NAPLAN and NAP Sample) based on the national curriculum and delivered online, to improve the understanding of educational outcomes for Australian students
- provide expert advice on educational assessment

### **Data and Reporting**

- provide and apply a comprehensive and reliable national measurement framework including high-quality performance indicators
- facilitate the use of data for research and policy development
- deliver detailed, accessible, timely and innovative school-education information.

### **Collaboration and leadership**

- be a leading expert body in curriculum practice, educational assessment and national reporting in close collaboration with government and non-government partners in education and other key stakeholders.

These purposes acknowledge the commitment to promoting world-class curriculum and assessment and to strengthening accountability and transparency as identified within the *Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians* (the *Melbourne Declaration*) as agreed by all education ministers in December 2008.

A young boy with dark hair, wearing a maroon sweater over a white collared shirt, is smiling and looking towards the camera. He is in a classroom setting. In the background, a teacher is gesturing with their hand, and another student with blonde hair is sitting at a desk, both out of focus.

SECTION THREE:

# Our environment

# OUR ENVIRONMENT

## Context

The rationale for an Australian curriculum centres on improving the quality, equity and transparency of Australia's education system. In particular, a national curriculum ensures that every child in Australia, regardless of where they live or the school they attend, has access to a world-class curriculum.

National assessment provides school education leaders, teachers and parents with the means to assess students against previous performance, national benchmarks and their peers using an objective measure. The National Assessment Program, NAPLAN and NAP Sample, is used in combination with other forms of assessment to diagnose learning and inform priorities for students, cohorts and schools. New digital technologies are transforming assessment.

Public reporting promotes accountability and engagement in school education. Provision of quality information on schooling is important for schools and their students, for parents and their families and for the community and governments.

## Direction setting

The ACARA Act stipulates that ACARA must perform its purposes in accordance with directions given to it by Education Council in writing, and in accordance with a Charter. ACARA's Charter is agreed to by the Council and sets the strategic direction for ACARA. The Charter affirms ACARA's role as an independent statutory authority and provides guidance about the nature of the activities ACARA is expected to undertake in fulfilling its functions and executing the policy directions set by Council.

ACARA prepares a quadrennial work plan and budget for endorsement by the Council in accordance with the ACARA Charter. In addition, under current arrangements, each financial year ACARA submits a detailed annual work plan for endorsement by the Council. ACARA reports its progress against its annual work plan at meetings of the ACARA Board, the Australian Education Senior Officials Committee (AESOC) and the Council.

## National education landscape and ACARA's impact

ACARA has reshaped the education landscape over the past six years through the introduction of the national curriculum, continuation and enhancement of national testing and initiation of public reporting on schools through *My School*. The next period represents an opportunity to further enhance these areas, including bringing national assessments online and further aligning assessment to the Australian Curriculum as this is implemented across Australia.

ACARA's highest priority under its current Charter is to shift the balance of the available resources and attention to its assessment function and collaborate with Education Services Australia and all Australian governments to ensure successful implementation of NAPLAN online.

## Stakeholders

ACARA's partners are Commonwealth, state and territory departments of education and national non-government school sector peak bodies. ACARA's stakeholders include teachers, principals, parents and students as well as the broader community.

ACARA has a range of advisory and expert groups that provide advice to support ACARA's work and ensure it takes account of input from partners, stakeholders and relevant experts. The advisory structure is reviewed regularly to ensure advice provided is fit for purpose. ACARA works closely with its Council counterparts, the Australian Institute of Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) and Education Services Australia (ESA).

## Funding

Funding for ACARA is allocated by states and territories and the Australian Government under the Council's funding formula – with half of ACARA's funding provided by the Australian Government and the other half provided by states and territories.

A close-up photograph of two young people smiling. In the foreground, a young man with short, light brown hair is smiling broadly, showing his teeth. He is wearing a light blue polo shirt and has a black backpack strap visible over his shoulder. In the background, slightly out of focus, is a young woman with dark, curly hair, also smiling. She is wearing an orange polo shirt. The background is a soft, out-of-focus green, suggesting an outdoor setting like a park or school grounds. The lighting is bright and natural, likely from the sun.

SECTION FOUR:

Our performance

# OUR PERFORMANCE

## Our performance: National curriculum - 2015-16 to 2019-20

The rationale for an Australian curriculum centres on improving the quality, equity and transparency of Australia’s education system. In particular, a national curriculum ensures that every child in Australia, regardless of where they live or the school they attend, has access to a world-class curriculum.

Ongoing responsibilities:	Key actions:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• delivering the Foundation - Year 10 and Senior Secondary Australian Curriculum through the Australian Curriculum website</li> <li>• strengthening assessment of student learning of the Australian Curriculum through provision of student work samples and illustrations of practice and NAP development and data analysis</li> <li>• monitoring the effectiveness of the Australian Curriculum by collecting, analysing and reporting annually on feedback</li> <li>• reviewing and reporting on recent developments in research and international curriculum practice to inform national policy and practice and to further improve the Australian Curriculum</li> <li>• providing authoritative Australian Curriculum advice to stakeholders and facilitate information-sharing and collaboration in support of the Australian Curriculum.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• complete agreed actions arising from the review of the Australian Curriculum</li> <li>• finalise the development and publication of the Australian Curriculum: Languages</li> <li>• maintain the accuracy and quality of all information and resources provided on the Australian Curriculum website</li> <li>• provide learning area expertise and advice to support the alignment of the National Assessment Program to the Australian Curriculum</li> <li>• complete monitoring processes each year and publish reports</li> <li>• benchmark the Australian Curriculum against top-performing school systems/ nations</li> <li>• provide expertise and advice, on request, to support implementation of the Australian Curriculum</li> <li>• liaise with Commonwealth/state/territory departments of education and non-government school authorities in the development and implementation of additional actions to support the delivery of the Australian Curriculum.</li> </ul>

<b>Performance criteria</b>	<b>Measures</b>	<b>Reporting period</b>
Monitoring activities around the national curriculum undertaken	Report published by end of January	Annually
<p>Education Council approves ACARA's proposed amendments to the Australian Curriculum following on from the Review of the Australian Curriculum and the following curricula are endorsed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>arts, languages (Chinese, French, Indonesian, Italian, Arabic, German, Japanese, Korean, Modern Greek, Vietnamese and Spanish), health and physical education, technologies, civics and citizenship, and economics and business, as well as work studies (Years 9 and 10)</li> <li>the Aboriginal languages and Torres Strait Islander languages framework.</li> </ul>	Proposed amendments endorsed and curricula endorsed and published on the ACARA website	2015-16
Actions (in addition to those relating to the Curriculum Review) undertaken to improve accessibility for students with disability	Actions finalised and published	2016-17
Level of satisfaction with the Australian Curriculum website	Strong satisfaction recorded by end of June 2018	2017-18
Portfolios of work samples for all published curriculum available	Portfolios of work samples finalised and published by end of June 2019	2018-19
Completion of and reporting on at least eight comparisons between the Australian Curriculum and top performing school systems-nations	At least eight comparisons undertaken and reported on by end of June 2020	2019-20

## Our performance: National Assessment – 2015-16 to 2019-20

National assessment provides school education leaders, teachers and parents with the means to periodically assess students against previous performance, national benchmarks and their peers using an objective measure. The National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) is used in combination with other forms of assessment to diagnose learning and inform priorities for students, cohorts and schools. New digital technologies are transforming assessment.

<b>Ongoing responsibilities:</b>	<b>Key actions:</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• researching, developing and supporting activities required for online assessment</li> <li>• managing the planning and development and overseeing the delivery and reporting for the National Assessment Program Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN), managing the transition from pen and paper form to online delivery</li> <li>• managing the development and overseeing the delivery of assessments and reporting for the National Assessment Program (NAP) sample assessments</li> <li>• responding to agreed national assessment policy and providing evidence-based advice to AESOC and Education Council.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• undertake and complete research to support the move of NAPLAN online</li> <li>• engage in test development for the delivery of NAPLAN online</li> <li>• collaborate with Education Services Australia and all Australian governments to support the transition to NAPLAN online from 2017 over a two - three year period.</li> <li>• annually deliver NAPLAN, transitioning from pen and paper to online assessment.</li> <li>• annually deliver NAP sample assessment as agreed by the Council, and provide options for the future of the NAP sample assessment</li> <li>• ensure all Council directives relating to national assessment are undertaken in a timely manner.</li> </ul>



<b>Performance criteria</b>	<b>Measures</b>	<b>Reporting period</b>
<b>National Assessment Program (NAP) - NAPLAN and NAP sample assessments delivered</b>	<b>NAP successfully delivered and reported on (including delivery of NAPLAN online in 2017 and successfully transitioned to fully online in 2019)</b>	<b>Annually</b>
<b>NAPLAN and NAP – Sample assessment results are analysed accurately and meaningfully for reporting against common scales</b>	<b>NAPLAN (pen and paper assessment) and NAP – Sample assessment (delivered online) results are analysed accurately and meaningfully</b>  <b>Strong awareness of the National Protocols for Test Administration within schools, leading to greater consistency in national test administration and minimal test incidents and NAPLAN online test items are trialled</b>	<b>2015-16</b>
<b>NAPLAN online proficiency standards and reports (student, school, national) developed</b>	<b>NAPLAN proficiency standards and reports finalised, agreed to and communicated</b>	<b>2016-17</b>
<b>ACARA research relating to online assessment completed</b>	<b>All agreed research completed and findings communicated</b>	<b>2017-18</b>
<b>Evaluation of NAPLAN online processes undertaken and potential enhancements identified</b>	<b>NAPLAN online processes reviewed (including the potential addition of gain scores to Individual Student Reports (ISRs))</b>	<b>2018-19</b>
<b>Level of stakeholder satisfaction with online assessment</b>	<b>Strong level of satisfaction with online assessment</b>	<b>2019-20</b>

## Our performance: National Data Collection and Reporting – 2015-16 to 2019-20

Public reporting promotes accountability and engagement in school education.

Provision of quality information on schooling is important for schools and their students, for parents and their families and for the community and governments.

Ongoing responsibilities:	Key actions:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• monitoring and, where necessary, reviewing the existing national key performance measures for schools</li> <li>• producing a comprehensive and authoritative national report on schooling in Australia related to national key performance measures</li> <li>• managing the collection and quality assurance of data and providing national school information through the <i>My School</i> website and national reports</li> <li>• managing the sharing and dissemination of data with government and non-government school authorities and with other applicants in accordance with agreed protocols</li> <li>• responding to agreed national data collection and reporting policy and provide evidence-based advice to AEEYSOC and Education Council.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• enhance the <i>My School</i> website in accordance with the Education Council's agreed actions</li> <li>• develop, pilot and implement a more interactive and timely format for the presentation of the National Report on Schooling in Australia (ANR)</li> <li>• review, update and modify the Measurement Framework for Schooling in Australia, where appropriate, for the Council's endorsement</li> <li>• provide data to jurisdictions, ACARA's reporting advisory groups and systems, and to approved research applicants in accordance with agreed protocols</li> <li>• ensure ACARA's contribution to the successful implementation of national initiatives such as the Australian Schools List</li> <li>• undertake a review of content and processes for all reports to ensure comprehensiveness and enhanced user access.</li> </ul>

<b>Performance criteria</b>	<b>Measures</b>	<b>Reporting period</b>
The National Report on Schooling in Australia is published before the end of the subsequent calendar year	A concise national report, reporting key information published by the end of December of the following year and a related data portal available, allowing public access to the various national data sets for schooling	Annually
Data continues to be materially accurate	An additional year's data on the <i>My School</i> website is provided, including any specific new measures approved by Ministers	2015-16
Australian Schools List finalised and an agreed process for regular updating in place	Australian Schools List integrated into the <i>My School</i> data collection by end of June 2017 and refreshed quarterly	2016-17
A review and revision of the Measurement Framework for Schooling in Australia, in consultation with stakeholders and advisory groups undertaken	Review finalised and suggested modifications endorsed by the Education Council	2017-18
Level of stakeholder satisfaction with the <i>My School</i> website	Strong level of satisfaction with the <i>My School</i> website recorded	2018-19
Enhancements to <i>My School</i> considered and agreed to by the Education Council in September 2015 progressed	All enhancements consulted on with key stakeholders and progressed and/or implemented as agreed (with consultation around a nationally consistent indicator on <i>My School</i> for Students with Disability beginning in 2015-16)	2019-20

## Our performance: National collaboration and leadership - 2015-16 to 2019-20

ACARA will work in a transparent and collaborative manner with Commonwealth/state/territory departments of education and government and, non-government school authorities.

ACARA will share its proposals and work with a range of advisory groups to enable all stakeholders to provide input.

ACARA will provide consistent and structured opportunities for engagement and will listen to advice.

Ongoing responsibilities:	Key actions:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• providing national leadership in curriculum, assessment, data collection and reporting directly and in collaboration with the Commonwealth, states, territories, non-government sector, AITSL, ESA and other stakeholder groups, and ensuring liaison with key stakeholders across all matters relating to curriculum, assessment and reporting</li> <li>• communicating information about ACARA's work and achievements to partners, stakeholders and the broader community</li> <li>• collaborating with international education bodies to ensure ACARA's work and advice to ministers are informed by leading research and better practice, and provide support services internationally where this aligns with ACARA's core areas of work.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• inform, strengthen and promote general community understanding of the significance of national curriculum, assessment and reporting processes</li> <li>• lead national communications initiatives for the move to NAPLAN online</li> <li>• support ACARA's key areas of work through communications planning and stakeholder engagement for curriculum, assessment and reporting activities</li> <li>• provide quality advice that facilitates effective decision-making by AEEYSOC/ Council</li> <li>• maintain a system of review of ACARA's advisory structure to ensure it is fit-for-purpose</li> <li>• complete the work around the provision of services to support development of national curriculum in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia</li> <li>• build on ACARA's reputation for world-class curriculum, assessment and reporting programs by supporting learning opportunities requested by international delegations.</li> </ul>

<b>Performance criteria</b>	<b>Measures</b>	<b>Reporting period</b>
<b>An advisory structure that is fit-for-purpose is in place</b>	<b>Advisory structure published and communicated to partners (with strong level of satisfaction received as measured through surveys in 2017 and 2019)</b>	<b>Annually with survey conducted in 2017 and 2019</b>
<b>A transparent and timely reporting process and structure is maintained</b>	<b>Progress reports against the annual work plan submitted to the Education Council and/or AESOC twice a year and at each meeting of the ACARA Board and all advice provided on time and of high quality</b>	<b>Annually</b>
<b>Collaboration with partners (government and non-government school sectors) and national stakeholders and international education bodies clearly maintained</b>	<b>Evidence of collaboration through: scheduled meetings of ACARA's key advisory groups; ACARA's attendance at key working groups and peak bodies and evidence of communication with international education bodies</b>	<b>Annually</b>



SECTION FIVE:

*Our capability*

# OUR CAPABILITY

ACARA will recruit, develop and retain high-performing staff and will foster a positive and agile work culture. Its people will reflect the diversity and dynamism of the education community and have the skills and values needed to support its ongoing responsibilities as well as advance the authority's strategic proposals.

Five values uphold our work:

- Respect
- Integrity
- Collaboration
- Professionalism
- Passion

ACARA will maintain organisational efficiency through:

- strong frameworks of planning and reporting
- a framework of internal and external audits
- fit-for-purpose and sustainable ICT management systems.

<b>Performance criteria</b>	<b>Measures</b>	<b>Reporting period</b>
<b>Staff turnover rate</b>	<b>Staff turnover rate consistent with turnover and retention benchmarks</b>	<b>Annually beginning in 2016/17</b>
<b>Level of staff satisfaction and/or engagement</b>	<b>Strong level of staff satisfaction and/or engagement</b>	<b>2017/18 and 2019/20</b>



SECTION SIX:

*Our accountability*



# OVERSIGHT OF RISK

ACARA will maintain a risk framework and policy aligned with *AS/NZS ISO 31000:2009 Risk management - Principles and guidelines* that are compliant with the *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013*.

These documents acknowledge that risk management is a fundamental tool to support ACARA to achieve ACARA's strategic objectives in a complex stakeholder environment.

ACARA's Board, Audit and Risk Committee and executive, as well as staff, will be actively involved in risk management for ACARA. This work will be supported by an internal audit program that tests ACARA's compliance framework and controls.

The ACARA Board will have oversight of ACARA's risk management framework and policy, and will regularly review ACARA's corporate risk register.

The Audit and Risk Committee will provide recommendations on operational capacity, accountability frameworks, budget, compliance and risks associated with meeting the requirements of the ACARA Charter. It will continue to hold an important role in ACARA's risk management framework.

ACARA's senior management group, inclusive of ACARA's executive, will consider operational matters, and will review risk and management controls on a regular basis.

ACARA will maintain its project management policy. This policy applies across its key activities and highlights project related risk, ensuring that risk management is pivotal within ACARA's operations.

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