

## 2. NATIONAL ASSESSMENT, PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT AND REPORTING

This section outlines the national assessment, performance measurement and reporting requirements as of 2012. Note these requirements may have changed or been updated since publication of this manual.

### 2.1 Council of Australian Governments (COAG) reform agenda

All Australian Education Ministers have previously agreed that consistent and comparable data are essential to improving the quality and accuracy of national monitoring and reporting of progress towards the achievement of national goals and targets at various points of schooling. The nationally comparable data will better meet the needs of parents, schools and school systems, and the wider community for information on the performance of students and schools; and assist governments in identifying where resources are most needed to lift attainment.

In 2008 the Council of Australian Governments (COAG), which comprises the Prime Minister, State Premiers and Territory Chief Ministers, agreed to a new reform agenda to ensure that all Australian school students acquire the knowledge and skills to participate effectively in society and employment in a globalised economy. (For further information, see [www.coag.gov.au](http://www.coag.gov.au))

In order to advance its reform agenda, COAG has produced a framework of agreed outcomes, indicative progress measures, targets and policy directions. These include a commitment to ensuring that schooling promotes the social inclusion and reduces the educational disadvantage of children, especially Indigenous children.

The availability of information which allows disaggregation of data by student background characteristics, particularly by Indigenous status and socio-economic background, is essential to measuring and reporting progress towards achieving COAG agreed outcomes. The manual is a key document for improving the quality and national comparability of data available for this purpose.

### 2.2 Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians

The *Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians*, which was developed by State, Territory and Commonwealth Education Ministers in collaboration with the Catholic and independent school sectors, was released in December 2008, following consultation with the broader community. The Melbourne Declaration supersedes the 1999 *Adelaide Declaration on National Goals for Schooling in the Twenty-First Century* that provided the framework for nationally comparable reporting of students' outcomes for over a decade.

The Melbourne Declaration sets the direction for Australian schooling for the next ten years. A 'Four-Year Plan' to support the Declaration, developed in parallel with work undertaken through COAG and aligned with relevant COAG activities, was endorsed by all Australian Education Ministers in March 2009. The Melbourne Declaration and the Four-Year Plan can be found on the Standing Council on School Education and Early Childhood (SCSEEC) website at [www.mceecdya.edu.au](http://www.mceecdya.edu.au). (SCSEEC replaced the Ministerial Council for Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs (MCEECYDA))

### 2.3 Commonwealth–State financial arrangements for 2009–2012

#### ***National Education Agreement***

Australian Government funding for government schools is currently being provided through the Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA) on Federal Financial Relations agreed in the COAG forum. The IGA is accompanied by a rationalisation of the number of payments to the states and territories for specific purpose payments and the creation of associated national agreements. The *National Education Agreement* (NEA), which came into effect on 1 January 2009 with the latest update on 25 July 2012, contains agreed objectives, outcomes, outputs and performance indicators, and clarifies the roles and responsibilities that guide the Commonwealth and the states and territories in delivering school education services.

The NEA provides the states and territories with increased flexibility in determining how education services, including services for students with special needs, which previously received funding support through the Commonwealth's targeted programs for schools are best delivered. It also provides an improved focus on the accountability and transparency of all schools for students' outcomes.

### ***Schools Assistance Act 2008***

Australian Government funding for non-government schools for 2009–2013/2014 will continue to be appropriated through the *Schools Assistance Act 2008*. Funding for non-government schools provides for recurrent and capital funding as well as targeted programs.

### ***National Partnership Agreements and 'Closing the Gap'***

The commitment of all governments to reducing disadvantage is being given effect through the additional National Partnership Agreements (on Low Socio-economic Status Communities, Literacy and Numeracy, and Improving Teacher Quality) and COAG reform directions to 'Close the Gap' in education outcomes between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students.

## **2.4 2012 performance reporting requirements**

As parties to the NEA, all states and territories have agreed to a performance reporting framework, which includes collecting and publishing student and school data for the following three purposes:

- accountability to students, parents, carers and the community
- public accountability in support of COAG outcomes and targets
- providing an evidence base to support future policy reforms and system improvements, including directing resources to areas of greatest need.

In order to meet the mutually agreed outcomes within the NEA, supporting performance benchmarks will be monitored, assessed and reported publicly on an annual basis by the COAG Reform Council.

The COAG Reform Council was established to monitor, assess and report on the performance of the Commonwealth and the states and territories in achieving mutually agreed outcomes and performance benchmarks. In addition to providing annual performance reports to COAG, the COAG Reform Council highlights examples of good practice and innovative reforms. The Council is independent of individual governments and reports directly to COAG.

Each year, the COAG Reform Council reports publicly and to COAG on the performance of government against the objectives and outcomes of the NEA. The reports can be accessed at [www.coag.gov.au](http://www.coag.gov.au).

The *Schools Assistance Act 2008* sets out the transparency and accountability requirements for non-government schools and school systems, including requirements relating to collecting and publishing student and school data. The accountability framework for the non-government sector is consistent with that set out in the NEA for government schools.

### ***Performance reporting framework***

The performance reporting framework encompasses the following elements:

- a. streamlined and consistent reports on national progress, including:
  - i. an annual national report to be published within twelve months of the end of the calendar year on the outcomes of schooling in Australia, covering the *Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians* and the *MCEECDYA Measurement Framework for National Key Performance Measures (KPM)*. (now known as the *Measurement Framework for Schooling*.)
  - ii. the biennial COAG report on Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage.

- b. national reporting on the performance of individual schools to inform parents and carers, and for governments to evaluate school performance
- c. schools providing plain language student reports to parents and carers, and making an annual report publicly available to their school community on the school's achievements and other contextual information.

The annual national report specified in (a(i)) above is the *National Report on Schooling in Australia* published by ACARA on behalf of SCSEEC.

The reporting on performance of individual schools specified in (b) above is undertaken through the *My School* website.

The reporting requirements also include a commitment by all government and non-government school systems and schools to report, by school sector, on the number of students who are provided with additional support, specifically students with disability and students with a language background other than English (including newly arrived migrants and refugees).

### **Measurement Framework for Schooling in Australia**

The *Measurement Framework for Schooling in Australia 2010* was endorsed by MCEECDYA. School systems and schools will continue to meet the requirements of the framework, which sets out the basis for reporting progress towards the achievement of the Educational Goals for Young Australians, including through the provision of performance data. The core of the framework is a schedule setting out the key performance measures and an agreed collection and reporting cycle for the period 2010–2015. (The *Measurement Framework for Schooling* can be accessed on the ACARA website at [www.acara.edu.au](http://www.acara.edu.au)).

The Measurement Framework forms the basis for reporting on outcomes of schooling in the *National Report on Schooling in Australia*.

## **2.5 Development of an improved measure of students 'Language background other than English' (LBOTE) status for future use**

Education Ministers have agreed that, as part of its program of developmental work, the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA), working with jurisdictions and the non-government sector, should develop a 'language background other than English' (LBOTE) measure that better identifies students whose language background has a measurable effect on their outcomes. With this in mind, ACARA established the English Language Proficiency Working Group in early 2012, to explore issues of consistent national reporting on the basis of levels of English language proficiency among LBOTE students, rather than simply on the basis of language background alone.

However, at least until such time as that work results in reporting changes which support development of such an alternative measure, the existing LBOTE measure will remain as the default indicator of linguistic background.

## **2.6 National Assessment Program (NAP)**

The National Assessment Program (NAP), as endorsed by all Education Ministers, has both national and international components. It includes:

- annual full cohort literacy and numeracy assessments in Years 3, 5, 7 and 9 (NAPLAN)
- triennial national sample assessments in science literacy (Year 6), information and communication technology literacy (Years 6 and 10), and civics and citizenship (Years 6 and 10)
- participation by samples of 15-year-old students in the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) conducted every three years by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) which assesses students' reading, mathematical and scientific literacy

- participation by samples of Year 4 and Year 8 students in the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) conducted every four years by the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA) which assesses students' performance in mathematics and science.

Further information on both the national and international components of the National Assessment Program can be found on the National Assessment Program website at [www.nap.edu.au](http://www.nap.edu.au).

## 2.7 National reporting on the performance of individual schools

The new agreements governing funding for government and non-government schools include a commitment to national reporting on the performance of individual schools.

The *My School* website contains statistical and contextual information on each school, including the characteristics of the school's student population and the school's capacity, and the numbers of its teaching staff. It also contains information on the performance of each school in the NAPLAN.

Schools have been assigned a value using the Index of Community Socio-educational Advantage (ICSEA) for making reasonable comparisons between schools. ICSEA is a purpose-built index, which places schools on a numerical scale by reference to their relative socio-educational advantage.

In addition to a set of school-level variables, ICSEA draws on student-level demographic variables. These variables can be either parent information data, comprising occupation, school education, and non-school education data provided directly to the school as part of the enrolment process; or census collection data, as provided to the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) as part of the population Census, and taking into account a range of socio-economic factors derived from ABS Census data for the households from which the school draws its students.

It is important to distinguish between the use of ICSEA, as a broad measure used to determine socio-educational similarities between schools where the focus is on the school; and the two individual level measures of socio-economic background used for the monitoring and reporting of individual student outcomes – parental education and parental occupation.

Parental occupation group and parental educational attainment are used as two separate and distinct indicators of socio-economic background. This allows governments and school education authorities to evaluate the influence of socio-economic background on educational outcomes across and within jurisdictions, and to draw valid conclusions about the independent effects of other student background characteristics, such as Indigenous status, language background other than English or geographic location. (Section 4 emphasises the importance of improving the quality of data available on the two socio-economic background variables.)

## 2.8 Principles and protocols for reporting on schooling in Australia

All Education Ministers have agreed to a statement of principles and protocols to guide and inform the use and publication of data generated in the process of measuring the performance of schooling in Australia. The principles encompass such issues as protecting the privacy of individual students and teachers, including publication safeguards where the small size of a school population or of a specific student cohort may compromise individuals' privacy; and protocols to ensure that information on schools contains accurate and verified data, contextual information to aid interpretation of the information, and a range of indicators to provide a fair and balanced view of performance.

The document *Principles and protocols for reporting on schooling in Australia* can be accessed on the MCEECDYA website via [www.mceecdya.edu.au](http://www.mceecdya.edu.au).