

SECOND MCEECDYA MEETING

6 November 2009, Adelaide

COMMUNIQUÉ

Meeting today in Adelaide, Ministers have agreed to take forward reforms that will provide better information to governments, parents and the wider community; improve the quality of early childhood, school and Indigenous education; and contribute to the development, wellbeing and educational outcomes of all Australia's young people from their earliest age.

Ministers today agreed on a draft Indigenous Education Action Plan that will be circulated first to Indigenous education leaders and Indigenous education consultative committees. The draft plan will then be released publicly for further consultation. The Action Plan will guide the national effort towards closing the gaps in early childhood and school education outcomes for Indigenous Australians.

The Action Plan has been informed by a review of the past four years of activity in Indigenous education under Australian Directions in Indigenous Education. The report of the review is available on the MCEECDYA website.

The draft Action Plan will provide a basis for the community to comment on a range of actions to bring about both systemic and local-level improvements across six domains of activity that evidence has shown will make the most impact on closing the gap. They are:

- readiness for school;
- engagement and connections;
- attendance;
- leadership, quality teaching and workforce development;
- literacy and numeracy;
- pathways to real post-school options.

The draft Plan was developed by a national working group of senior officials, many of whom are Indigenous Australians. The consultations to be undertaken will ensure that the final document reflects the experience and expertise of Indigenous Australians, educators and others.

Ministers see this consultation process as an important part of their continued commitment to consult with Indigenous Australians in the development of policy in support of achieving the closing the gaps targets being pursued by all governments.

Ministers also agreed to write to Health and Community Services Ministers' Councils seeking their support for a high-level taskforce to identify the additional effort required to complement and reinforce the school-based interventions and strategies under the IEAP

The final document will be presented to the Council of Australian Governments early next year.

Ministers considered the preliminary results from the 2009 Australian Early Development Index (AEDI) data collection. The AEDI is a population measure designed to provide community-level data to help communities and governments understand how children are developing by the time they reach school. Data was collected on physical health and wellbeing, social competence, emotional maturity, language and cognitive development, and communication skills and general knowledge.

Ministers welcomed this rich resource of information which will be used by governments and communities to pinpoint the types of services, resources, infrastructure and support young children and their families need to give children the best possible start in life.

The results from the AEDI will be released by the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister Ellis in December 2009.

Ministers were pleased with the progress made by all jurisdictions on the reform of early childhood education and care through the National Quality Agenda. These reforms comprise of national standards, a ratings framework and enhanced regulatory arrangements to develop a unified national system for consideration by COAG in December 2009

Ministers today also agreed to the location and Chair of the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership. The Institute will support the implementation of the teacher quality reform agenda, including increasing the positive impact of school leadership agreed by COAG in November 2008. This new Institute will collaborate with government and non-government school systems.

The AITSL will be located in Brisbane and Melbourne, following a joint proposal by Victoria and Queensland to co-host a national institute dedicated to achieving new levels of excellence in teaching standards and in support of effective school leadership.

The Board will include nominees from all jurisdictions and a range of important stakeholders including the Catholic and Independent education sectors, education unions and professional associations.

Its Chair, nominated by the Deputy Prime Minister and agreed by Education Ministers, will be Tony Mackay, Executive Director of the Centre for Strategic Education and currently Deputy Chair of ACARA. Tony has widespread experience and authority in the fields of school leadership and professional development in Australia and overseas, and will play a crucial role in establishing the new Institute in a way that maximises its positive impact on Australian Education

Ministers welcomed the progress being made towards a new professional standards framework for teachers. The new national framework is a keystone of the National Partnership on Improving Teacher Quality. It will replace the 2003 MCEETYA framework and outline what teachers, at all levels of responsibility, know and do across the domains of professional knowledge, professional practice and professional engagement. This will in turn define an architecture within which generic, specialist and subject-area standards can be developed.

The draft framework is expected to go to consultation later in 2009, with the final framework to be agreed and released in 2010.

Ministers will support the development of the Australian Government's National Strategy for Young Australians, as announced recently by the Prime Minister. The aim of the Strategy is for all young Australians to grow up safe, healthy, happy and resilient, and to have the opportunities and skills they need to learn, work, engage in community life and influence the decisions that affect them.

The Australian Government has committed to develop the Strategy in consultation with young people, their parents and families, the broader community and experts in the field. Through its Youth Working Group, MCEECDYA will collaborate on the development of the Strategy, utilising State and Territory youth networks. The findings of the recently released *State of Australia's Young People* report, considered today by Ministers will also inform the National Strategy.

Ministers were provided with information on Victoria's approach to promoting respectful relationships and responding to bullying in schools, including cyber-bullying, and agreed to extend current collaborative approaches to promote student safety and prevent all forms of bullying by sharing successful approaches and best practice.

Ministers noted that work under the Smarter Schools National Partnerships is progressing well, as Implementation Plans are finalised over the next few weeks and are translated into action at the school level.

Reforms under the National Partnerships are aimed at lifting literacy and numeracy achievement and teacher capacity, focussing on those students that are most disadvantaged, including Indigenous students. The reforms implemented through the National Partnerships will work in tandem with the Indigenous Education Action Plan.

Specific details of these reforms will be included in School Level Plans for participating schools that will be made publicly available progressively from the beginning of next year. A national evaluation strategy is also being developed to identify and share the most effective reforms in lifting student outcomes.