

## OPENING STATEMENT

### Mr Stephen Gniel, Acting Chief Executive Officer – ACARA

15 February 2024

As this is ACARA's first appearance before the Committee since I started in the role as acting Chief Executive Officer on 20 November 2023, I'd like to take a few minutes to address the Committee on the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority's work.

In my substantive role as CEO at the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority, as a former ACARA Board Member and having started my career as a primary school teacher and principal, I'm proud and honoured to lead this organisation.

ACARA is a statutory authority accountable to all of Australia's 9 education ministers at federal, state and territory level who jointly fund us, and set and agree on all our work.

ACARA develops and publishes the Australian Curriculum, develops and delivers the national assessment program – including NAPLAN – and reports on schooling in Australia.

Our most recent in-depth, consultative review of the Australian Curriculum – Version 9.0 – ensures we now have a more stripped-back and teachable curriculum that clearly identifies the essential content our children should learn.

Since its launch in May 2022, following endorsement by all Education Ministers, we've had more than 1 million unique visitors to the new Version 9.0 Australian Curriculum website.

We are now focused on supporting teachers to bring it to life in the classroom for students by providing high-quality optional support resources.

We have also produced and published a number of Curriculum Connection resources, on important topics such as mental health and wellbeing, online safety, artificial intelligence, and food and wellbeing.

These resources help teachers plan lessons highlighting the interrelationships across the curriculum, while also supporting schools to consider policies, procedures and partnerships.

Our Professional Learning Hub, which provides resources in each of the 8 learning areas in the Curriculum, is just one of many resources we are delivering to support teachers in their planning practices, with more resources due to be delivered this year.

2023 was the first year in which NAPLAN tests moved from May to March, and we also introduced a new, simpler system for reporting results to parents and carers.

This means schools and parents and carers now get results much earlier in the school year so that the NAPLAN performance information can be used in addition to the school's own assessments and the teacher's knowledge of their students to ensure each student is supported.

As we approach NAPLAN 2024 next month, almost 1.3 million students across the country will take part in the now fully online adaptive assessment over a 9-day test period.

It is a logistical challenge that takes months of planning and testing, working with jurisdictions and partners.

We are focused on making sure the assessment remains one in a range of tools for schools to ensure all young Australians are developing the literacy and numeracy skills that provide the critical foundation for learning and for their adult life.

ACARA is also committed to strengthening accountability and transparency in education through making information more accessible.

Our My School website provides parents, carers and the wider community with a one-stop shop of nationally consistent school-level data about every one of the nearly 10,000 schools in Australia.

Last year was the first time school level data on NAPLAN was available in the same year as testing. The My School website received more than a million visits on launch day in December, reinforcing the value of the My School portal.

In closing, ACARA is leading and adapting to change in the education landscape through a range of ways, including consulting with our diverse stakeholders, acting on recommendations from various committees and inquiries, and working with all jurisdictions to support our teachers, principals, students and their families.

We will continue to do so, as ACARA is committed to ensuring we inspire improvement in the learning of all young Australians through world-class curriculum, assessment and reporting.

**ENDS**