

The effectiveness of the National Assessment Program - Literacy and Numeracy.

Question on Notice - 18

Senator McKenzie:

Please provide an update on the government's implementation of the recommendations made by the Senate References Committee in the 2010 [Inquiry into the administration and reporting of NAPLAN testing](#), noting that the initial [Government Response](#) was tabled in the Senate on 13 October 2011.

ACARA Response:

ACARA carefully considered the recommendations from the 2010 Inquiry into the administration and reporting of NAPLAN testing, including possibilities for further action, and associated policy and resource implications.

ACARA has some legislative discretion to act on certain recommendations, but for those that impact significantly on its work plan, ACARA requires direction from state and territory education ministers through the Standing Council on School Education and Early Childhood (SCSEEC).

The following table summarises ACARA's actions in relation to the Committee's recommendations.

Recommendation	ACARA actions
1. The committee majority recommends that ACARA and MCEECDYA explore and report publicly on ways in which to use below-average NAPLAN test results as a trigger for immediate assistance aimed at helping individual schools and students perform at appropriate levels.	<p>The Australian Government noted this recommendation.</p> <p>ACARA's remit does not extend to working directly with schools.</p>
2. The committee majority recommends that ACARA assess and report publicly on the potential benefits of moving to a system that reports the median rather than the mean school performance.	<p>The Australian Government agreed in part with this recommendation.</p> <p>ACARA recognises the potential for using the median, where appropriate. On the 'Student gain' page of <i>My School</i>, users are able to view the results either as mean or as median values.</p>
3. The committee majority recommends that MCEECDYA and relevant jurisdictional test administration authorities look at and	<p>The Australian Government agreed with this recommendation.</p> <p>ACARA's public document, the <i>National Protocols for Test Administration</i>,</p>

<p>report publicly on ways to ensure that children with disabilities are not discriminated against and denied the right to participate in national testing.</p>	<p>available on the NAP website, outlines ways to facilitate participation by students with disability in NAPLAN. This document references the Disability Discrimination Act and Disability Standards for Education and outlines a range of disability adjustments that support the program. The code of conduct contained in this document reinforces the message that students with disability should be able to participate in the tests.</p> <p>A suite of scenarios on the NAP website further illustrates what disability adjustments might be appropriate to support students with disability.</p>
<p>4. The committee majority recommends that ACARA analyse and report publicly on how NAPLAN tests are serving different groups of Language Background Other Than English (LBOTE) students.</p>	<p>The Australian Government agreed with this recommendation.</p> <p>ACARA has ensured that test development specifications include specific reference to the need for culturally inclusive materials.</p>
<p>5. The committee majority recommends that ACARA investigate and report to MCEECDYA on enhancing NAPLAN to support the diagnostic needs of higher and lower student achievers.</p>	<p>The Australian Government agreed with this recommendation.</p> <p>ACARA is currently undertaking a large body of work to move towards online delivery of NAPLAN assessments. This will allow for greater discrimination at the higher and lower levels of student achievement.</p> <p>As part of this work, ACARA is also seeking ways to decrease the time taken to provide feedback to schools.</p>
<p>6. The committee majority recommends that ACARA and MCEECDYA expand NAPLAN to include annual testing from years 3 to 10 in order to more accurately track student performance and give parents, teachers and policymakers a far better understanding of how students, teachers and schools, are progressing.</p>	<p>The Australian Government did not agree with this recommendation.</p> <p>ACARA notes that a move to annual testing for years 3 to 10 would have significant cost implications and would increase the test burden on schools. No direction has been received to pursue this option.</p>
<p>7. The committee majority recommends that MCEECDYA explore ways for state and territory test administration authorities to more strongly enforce security protocols.</p>	<p>The Australian Government agreed with this recommendation.</p> <p>In 2011 the <i>National Protocols for Test Administration</i> were thoroughly overhauled to ensure they provide</p>

	<p>consistent advice to test administrators and principals. A code of conduct was introduced, and a set of guidelines for managing test incidents in schools has been developed.</p> <p>The Protocols are regularly reviewed to ensure that any additional issues are managed.</p>
<p>8. The committee majority recommends that ACARA prioritises the improvement of the method used to develop like school comparisons and commits to the introduction of a method based on student-level SES data for all schools prior to the reporting of 2011 NAPLAN test results.</p>	<p>The Australian Government agreed with this recommendation.</p> <p>ICSEA (Index of Community Socio-educational Advantage) values are calculated for each school, to enable comparisons with statistically similar schools, and to contextualise the outcomes of each school. The approach ACARA uses takes account of socio-educational advantage rather than socio-economic status. Socio-educational advantage is a measure of the extent to which students in a school possess those characteristics which statistical analysis has shown are highly predictive of NAPLAN outcomes. ACARA continues to work to secure more and higher quality direct student data, to inform the ICSEA calculation process.</p>
<p>9. The committee majority recommends that ACARA and MCEECDYA examine and publicly report on ways to mitigate the harm caused by simplistic and often distorted information published in newspaper league tables.</p>	<p>The Australian Government agreed with this recommendation.</p> <p>ACARA has strengthened the legal and technical protections of the data published on <i>My School</i>, through the requirement that users accept the terms of use and privacy policy, and will continue to actively advocate against league tables based on school performance data.</p>
<p>10. The committee majority recommends that ACARA identify, analyse and report publicly on possible means of strengthening the relationship between NAPLAN tests and the wider curriculum. The committee majority reserves its support for any alignment between the tests and the new national curriculum until the quality of, and community support for, the curriculum become clearer.</p>	<p>The Australian Government noted this recommendation.</p> <p>ACARA is currently reviewing the NAPLAN assessment framework to provide alignment with the new national curriculum.</p>

<p>11. The committee majority recommends that ACARA and MCEECDYA move to include more contextual information about schools on the <i>My School</i> website, reflecting the complex range of factors that affect schools, and acknowledge to users of the website their awareness of the limitations of comparisons based on raw performance data due to extrinsic factors. The committee majority further recommends that ACARA commit to ensuring this contextual information is available ahead of the reporting of 2011 NAPLAN results.</p>	<p>The Australian Government agreed with this recommendation. ACARA's primary means for contextualising schooling outcomes has been, and continues to be, the development and refinement of ICSEA, which is designed to account for the complex range of factors which affect schools and their outcomes. ICSEA aside, ACARA continues to explore the possible inclusion of additional contextual information, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • numbers of teachers at each level of expertise • information on students with a disability • information on students with English as an Alternative Language or Dialect
<p>12. The committee majority recommends that ACARA and MCEECDYA comprehensively revise the type of information available on the <i>My School</i> website to shift the focus from raw school performance data to value-added measurement of school performance.</p>	<p>The Australian Government agreed in part with this recommendation. <i>My School</i> now shows gain between NAPLAN years for students who sat the tests in the same school on each occasion. Furthermore a range of gain comparisons are possible on the site, including comparisons with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • schools with similar students, • students with the same starting scores, and • all schools.
<p>13. Government senators recommend that in the interests of transparency, accountability and facilitating meaningful comparisons, the <i>My School</i> website capture full disclosure of financial assets. Those schools who do not agree to this requirement should not receive public funding.</p>	<p>The Australian Government noted this recommendation. While it has not been possible to capture schools' financial assets in a way that is comparable, the <i>My School</i> 'School finances' page does now provide additional detail on school capital expenditures.</p>