

**Senate Standing Committee on Education Employment and Workplace
Relations**

**QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Budget Estimates 2012-2013**

Agency - Australian Curriculum, Assessment & Reporting Authority

DEEWR Question No. EW0113_13

Senator Boyce provided in writing.

Question

ACARA - newspaper article: Strategies for principals to lift student performance

I refer to a report in the Herald Sun (16/5/12) in which it is reported that education officials outlined strategies for principals to lift student performance. These strategies included setting practice NAPLAN tests for homework and basing class learning specifically around NAPLAN. This is in direct contradiction to ACARA and every State and Territory education department. Why are these strategies being encouraged by department officials?

Answer

ACARA has provided the following response.

ACARA consistently promotes the message that schools and teachers should adopt appropriate test preparation strategies that familiarise students with the test process, but do not excessively rehearse students and reduce the breadth of curriculum offered to students.

Regarding the Herald Sun report, ACARA has been advised by the Victorian Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (the Department) as follows:

- the Herald Sun media report misrepresented the policy and implementation of NAPLAN in Victoria's Western Metropolitan Region. The Region has a clear and well documented policy with regards to the way schools should approach NAPLAN. The policy is as follows:
 1. teachers do not teach to test but they do teach children to be literate, numerate and curious and that if this is done well then students will perform well on NAPLAN.
 2. students need to be confident and competent in tackling tests if they are going to show what they know and this applies to all tests, including NAPLAN.
- Both aspects of this policy are regarded as good teaching practice by the education community and supported by research. As a consequence, Western Metropolitan Region has been able to demonstrate steady improvement in student achievement on NAPLAN precisely because teachers do not teach to the test.

- The Herald Sun article refers to documentation which arose from a Principals' Forum where principals were asked to share strategies that they had used in their schools to improve student performance. These responses were not outlined by *education officials* as stated by the Herald Sun. The responses were unedited responses by principals. They are the view of some principals, not the view of the Region nor of the Department.