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. EW0319_13

Senator Mason asked on 30 May 2012 , Hansard page 10

Question

ACARA - Test Result Averages

Senator MASON: But as you mentioned, and Maralyn Parker's article states this, that the test result averages for small schools are not so meaningful due to the size of the student body participating. That is true—is it not? Where do you draw the line? Mr Randall: Mr Adams can remind me of the numbers but, as we look at the size, on our website we have the numbers where we are saying that you need to be careful about the comparisons. It is on a statistical basis and our confidence in those. So, again, rather than recall them here now, and we are happy to share them with you if you like, we could direct you to the points on the website because they are there. Senator MASON: Perhaps you could take that on notice for the committee. Mr Randall: Yes. We will report back to you the basis of those.

Answer

ACARA has provided the following response.

The *My School* website does not display NAPLAN means scores where less than five students sat a given NAPLAN test (e.g. numeracy) at a particular year level (e.g. Year 9) in one school. While this threshold is set primarily for privacy reasons, it also means that *My School* does not report on very small student cohorts.
To assist users to make judgments about the meaningfulness of reported NAPLAN mean scores for their purpose, the website displays the associated level of statistical certainty, i.e., the smaller the number of students, the larger the confidence interval reported around that mean. [1]

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[1] Definition of confidence interval - the figures reported on the *My School* website can be subject to different kinds of error, including measurement and sampling error. The possible size of that error is estimated and used to create a confidence interval around many of the figures. That confidence interval indicates a range that is likely to capture the true value of the figure (i.e. if there were no error), to a specific level of confidence. Unless otherwise specified, that level of confidence is 90%. In other words, one can be 90% confident that the error-free figure would fall within the range of the confidence interval.

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