

Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians

December 2008



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Ministers would like to acknowledge
the members of the Working Group
responsible for developing this
Declaration, and thank them for
their valuable contribution.



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Preamble

As a nation Australia values the central role of education in building a democratic, equitable and just society—a society that is prosperous, cohesive and culturally diverse, and that values Australia’s Indigenous cultures as a key part of the nation’s history, present and future.

In the 21st century Australia’s capacity to provide a high quality of life for all will depend on the ability to compete in the global economy on knowledge and innovation. Education equips young people with the knowledge, understanding, skills and values to take advantage of opportunity and to face the challenges of this era with confidence.

Schools play a vital role in promoting the intellectual, physical, social, emotional, moral, spiritual and aesthetic development and wellbeing of young Australians, and in ensuring the nation’s ongoing economic prosperity and social cohesion. Schools share this responsibility with students, parents, carers, families, the community, business and other education and training providers. In recognition of this collective responsibility, this declaration, in contrast to earlier declarations on schooling, has a broader frame and sets out educational goals for young Australians.

In the 1989 Hobart Declaration and the 1999 Adelaide Declaration, the State, Territory and Commonwealth Education Ministers committed to working together to ensure high-quality schooling for all young Australians. The Melbourne Declaration acknowledges major changes in the world that are placing new demands on Australian education:

- Global integration and international mobility have increased rapidly in the past decade. As a consequence, new and exciting opportunities for Australians are emerging. This heightens the need to nurture an appreciation of and respect for social, cultural and religious diversity, and a sense of global citizenship.
- India, China and other Asian nations are growing and their influence on the world is increasing. Australians need to become ‘Asia literate’, engaging and building strong relationships with Asia.
- Globalisation and technological change are placing greater demands on education and skill development in Australia and the nature of jobs available to young Australians is changing faster than ever. Skilled jobs now dominate jobs growth and people with university or vocational education and training qualifications fare much better in the employment market than early school leavers. To maximise their opportunities for healthy, productive and rewarding futures, Australia’s young people must be encouraged not only to complete secondary education, but also to proceed into further training or education.

– Complex environmental, social and economic pressures such as climate change that extend beyond national borders pose unprecedented challenges, requiring countries to work together in new ways. To meet these challenges, Australians must be able to engage with scientific concepts and principles, and approach problem-solving in new and creative ways.

– Rapid and continuing advances in information and communication technologies (ICT) are changing the ways people share, use, develop and process information and technology. In this digital age, young people need to be highly skilled in the use of ICT. While schools already employ these technologies in learning, there is a need to increase their effectiveness significantly over the next decade.

Australia has developed a high-quality, world-class schooling system, which performs strongly against other countries of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). In international benchmarking of educational outcomes for 15-year-olds in the 2006 OECD Programme for International Student Assessment, Australia ranked among the top 10 countries across all three education domains assessed. Over the next decade Australia should aspire to improve outcomes for all young Australians to become second to none amongst the world's best school systems.

In striving for both equity and excellence, there are several areas in which Australian school education needs to make significant improvement. First, Australia has failed to improve educational

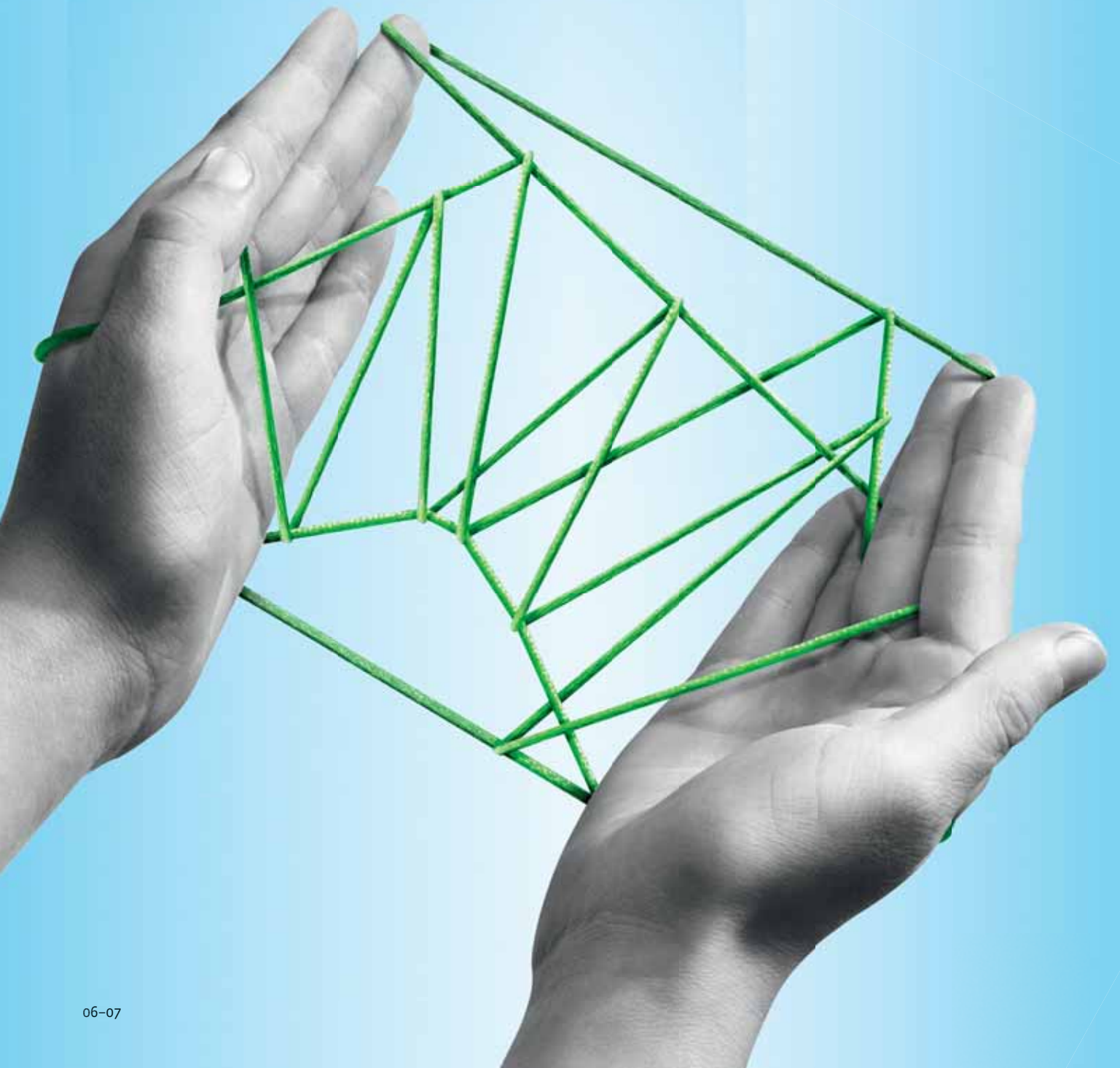
outcomes for many Indigenous Australians and addressing this issue must be a key priority over the next decade. Second, by comparison with the world's highest performing school systems, Australian students from low socioeconomic backgrounds are under-represented among high achievers and over-represented among low achievers. Third, there is room for improvement in Australia's rate of Year 12 completion or equivalent.

Literacy and numeracy and knowledge of key disciplines remain the cornerstone of schooling for young Australians. Schooling should also support the development of skills in areas such as social interaction, cross-disciplinary thinking and the use of digital media, which are essential in all 21st century occupations. As well as knowledge and skills, a school's legacy to young people should include national values of democracy, equity and justice, and personal values and attributes such as honesty, resilience and respect for others.

As signatories to the Melbourne Declaration, Australian Education Ministers seek to achieve the highest possible level of collaboration with the government, Catholic and independent school sectors and across and between all levels of government. Australian Education Ministers also seek to achieve new levels of engagement with all stakeholders in the education of young Australians.



The Educational Goals for Young Australians



Improving educational outcomes for all young Australians is central to the nation's social and economic prosperity and will position young people to live fulfilling, productive and responsible lives.

Young Australians are therefore placed at the centre of the Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals.

These goals are:

**Goal 1:
Australian schooling promotes equity and excellence**

**Goal 2:
All young Australians become:**

- **successful learners**
- **confident and creative individuals**
- **active and informed citizens**

Achieving these educational goals is the collective responsibility of governments, school sectors and individual schools as well as parents and carers, young Australians, families, other education and training providers, business and the broader community.

Goal 1: Australian schooling promotes equity and excellence

Australian governments, in collaboration with all school sectors, commit to promoting equity and excellence in Australian schooling.

This means that all Australian governments and all school sectors must:

- provide all students with access to high-quality schooling that is free from discrimination based on gender, language, sexual orientation, pregnancy, culture, ethnicity, religion, health or disability, socioeconomic background or geographic location
- ensure that schools build on local cultural knowledge and experience of Indigenous students as a foundation for learning, and work in partnership with local communities on all aspects of the schooling process, including to promote high expectations for the learning outcomes of Indigenous students
- ensure that the learning outcomes of Indigenous students improve to match those of other students
- ensure that socioeconomic disadvantage ceases to be a significant determinant of educational outcomes
- reduce the effect of other sources of disadvantage, such as disability, homelessness, refugee status and remoteness
- ensure that schooling contributes to a socially cohesive society that respects and appreciates cultural, social and religious diversity
- encourage parents, carers, families, the broader community and young people themselves to hold high expectations for their educational outcomes
- promote a culture of excellence in all schools, by supporting them to provide challenging, and stimulating learning experiences and opportunities that enable all students to explore and build on their gifts and talents
- promote personalised learning that aims to fulfil the diverse capabilities of each young Australian.

The Educational Goals for Young Australians

Goal 2:
All young Australians become successful learners, confident and creative individuals, and active and informed citizens

Australian governments commit to working in collaboration with all school sectors to support all young Australians to become:

- successful learners
- confident and creative individuals
- active and informed citizens.

Successful learners...

- develop their capacity to learn and play an active role in their own learning
- have the essential skills in literacy and numeracy and are creative and productive users of technology, especially ICT, as a foundation for success in all learning areas
- are able to think deeply and logically, and obtain and evaluate evidence in a disciplined way as the result of studying fundamental disciplines
- are creative, innovative and resourceful, and are able to solve problems in ways that draw upon a range of learning areas and disciplines
- are able to plan activities independently, collaborate, work in teams and communicate ideas
- are able to make sense of their world and think about how things have become the way they are
- are on a pathway towards continued success in further education, training or employment, and acquire the skills to make informed learning and employment decisions throughout their lives
- are motivated to reach their full potential.

Confident and creative individuals...

- have a sense of self-worth, self-awareness and personal identity that enables them to manage their emotional, mental, spiritual and physical wellbeing
- have a sense of optimism about their lives and the future
- are enterprising, show initiative and use their creative abilities
- develop personal values and attributes such as honesty, resilience, empathy and respect for others
- have the knowledge, skills, understanding and values to establish and maintain healthy, satisfying lives
- have the confidence and capability to pursue university or post-secondary vocational qualifications leading to rewarding and productive employment
- relate well to others and form and maintain healthy relationships
- are well prepared for their potential life roles as family, community and workforce members
- embrace opportunities, make rational and informed decisions about their own lives and accept responsibility for their own actions.

Active and informed citizens...

- act with moral and ethical integrity
- appreciate Australia's social, cultural, linguistic and religious diversity, and have an understanding of Australia's system of government, history and culture
- understand and acknowledge the value of Indigenous cultures and possess the knowledge, skills and understanding to contribute to, and benefit from, reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians
- are committed to national values of democracy, equity and justice, and participate in Australia's civic life
- are able to relate to and communicate across cultures, especially the cultures and countries of Asia
- work for the common good, in particular sustaining and improving natural and social environments
- are responsible global and local citizens.

A Commitment to Action

Together, all Australian governments commit to working with all school sectors and the broader community to achieve the educational goals for young Australians.

This commitment will be supported by action in eight inter-related areas:

- developing stronger partnerships
- supporting quality teaching and school leadership
- strengthening early childhood education
- enhancing middle years development
- supporting senior years of schooling and youth transitions
- promoting world-class curriculum and assessment
- improving educational outcomes for Indigenous youth and disadvantaged young Australians, especially those from low socioeconomic backgrounds
- strengthening accountability and transparency.

Developing stronger partnerships

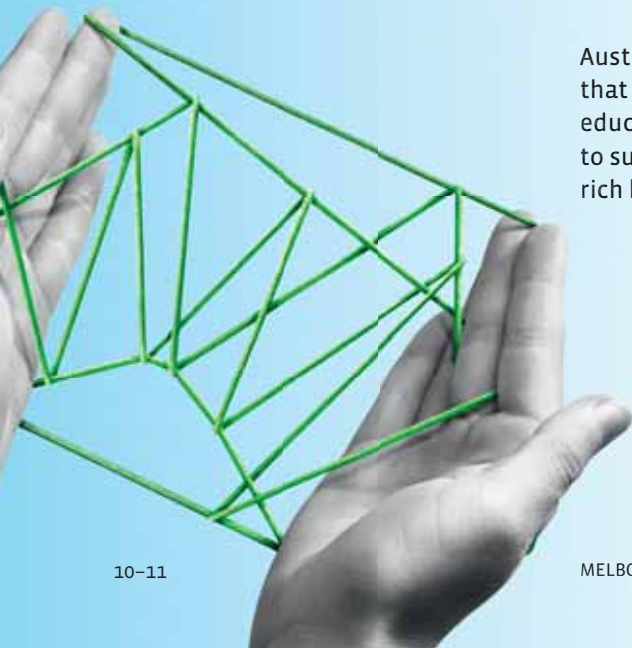
Parents, carers and families are the first and most important influence in a child's life, instilling the attitudes and values that will support young people to participate in schooling and contribute to broader local and global communities.

Partnerships between students, parents, carers and families, the broader community, business, schools and other education and training providers bring mutual benefits and maximise student engagement and achievement. Partnerships engender

support for the development and wellbeing of young people and their families and can provide opportunities for young Australians to connect with their communities, participate in civic life and develop a sense of responsible citizenship.

In particular, the development of partnerships between schools and Indigenous communities, based on cross-cultural respect, is the main way of achieving highly effective schooling for Indigenous students.

Australian governments commit to working with all school sectors to ensure that schools engage young Australians, parents, carers, families, other education and training providers, business and the broader community to support students' progress through schooling, and to provide them with rich learning, personal development and citizenship opportunities.



Supporting quality teaching and school leadership

The teachers and leaders who work in Australia's schools and educate young people are of fundamental importance to achieving these educational goals for young Australians. Excellent teachers have the capacity to transform the lives of students and to inspire and nurture their development as learners, individuals and citizens. They provide an additional source of encouragement, advice and support for students outside the home, shaping teaching around the ways different students learn and nurturing the unique talents of every student.

School principals and other school leaders play a critical role in supporting and fostering quality teaching through coaching and

mentoring teachers to find the best ways to facilitate learning, and by promoting a culture of high expectations in schools. School leaders are responsible for creating and sustaining the learning environment and the conditions under which quality teaching and learning take place.

All Australian governments, universities, school sectors and individual schools have a responsibility to work together to support high-quality teaching and school leadership, including by enhancing pre-service teacher education.

Australian governments commit to working with all school sectors to attract, develop, support and retain a high-quality teaching and school leadership workforce in Australian schools.

Strengthening early childhood education

Governments have important roles to play in ensuring that children receive quality early childhood education and care. The period from birth through to eight years, especially the first three years, sets the foundation for every child's social, physical, emotional and cognitive development. Early childhood education and care provides a basis for life and learning, both within and beyond the home, and is supported by healthy, safe and stimulating environments.

Children who participate in quality early childhood education are more likely to make a successful transition to school, stay longer in school, continue on to further education and fully participate in employment and community life as adults. Support for Indigenous children in the early years before school is particularly important to ensure a successful transition to schooling, which may involve a culturally different learning environment.

Australian governments commit to supporting the development and strengthening of early childhood education, to provide every child with the opportunity for the best start in life.

A Commitment to Action

Enhancing middle years development

The middle years are an important period of learning, in which knowledge of fundamental disciplines is developed, yet this is also a time when students are at the greatest risk of disengagement from learning. Student motivation and engagement in these years is critical, and can be influenced by tailoring approaches to teaching, with learning activities and learning

environments that specifically consider the needs of middle years students. Focusing on student engagement and converting this into learning can have a significant impact on student outcomes. Effective transitions between primary and secondary schools are an important aspect of ensuring student engagement.

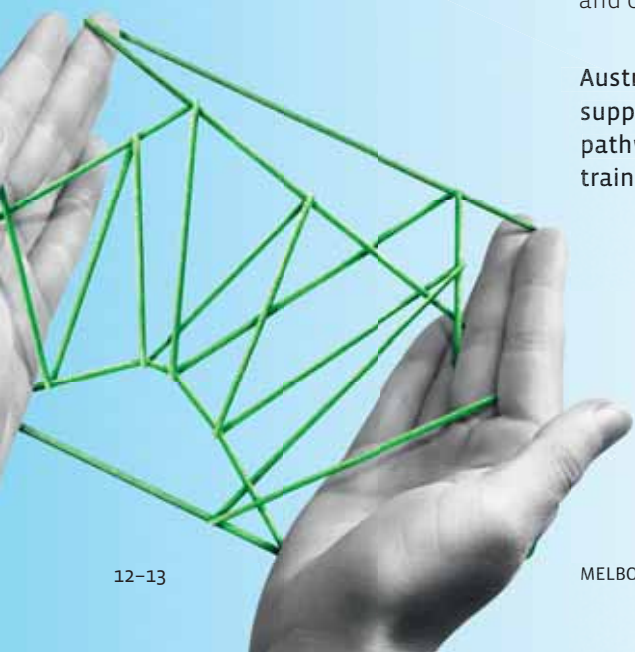
Australian governments commit to working with all school sectors to ensure that schools provide programs that are responsive to students' developmental and learning needs in the middle years, and which are challenging, engaging and rewarding.

Supporting senior years of schooling and youth transitions

The senior years of schooling should provide all students with the high-quality education necessary to complete their secondary school education and make the transition to further education, training or employment. Schooling should offer a range of pathways to meet the diverse needs and aspirations of all young Australians, encouraging them to pursue university or post-secondary vocational qualifications that increase their opportunities for rewarding and productive employment. This requires effective partnerships with other education and training providers, employers and communities.

Schools need to provide information, advice and options to students so that they can make informed choices about their future. All governments and school sectors need to support young people's transition from schooling into further study, training or employment and enable them to acquire the skills that support this, including an appetite for lifelong learning. Support may also be needed for young people returning to education and training after a period of employment.

Australian governments commit to working with all school sectors to support the senior years of schooling and the provision of high-quality pathways to facilitate effective transitions between further study, training and employment.



Promoting world-class curriculum and assessment

Curriculum

Curriculum will be designed to develop successful learners, confident and creative individuals and active and informed citizens.

State, Territory and Commonwealth governments will work together with all school sectors to ensure world-class curriculum in Australia. Together the national curriculum and curriculum specified at the State, Territory and local levels will enable every student to develop:

A solid foundation in knowledge, understanding, skills and values on which further learning and adult life can be built

The curriculum will include a strong focus on literacy and numeracy skills. It will also enable students to build social and emotional intelligence, and nurture student wellbeing through health and physical education in particular. The curriculum will support students to relate well to others and foster an understanding of Australian society, citizenship and national values, including through the study of civics and citizenship. As a foundation for further learning and adult life the curriculum will include practical knowledge and skills development in areas such as ICT and design and technology, which are central to Australia's skilled economy and provide crucial pathways to post-school success.

Deep knowledge, understanding, skills and values that will enable advanced learning and an ability to create new ideas and translate them into practical applications

The curriculum will enable students to develop knowledge in the disciplines of English, mathematics, science, languages, humanities and the arts; to understand the spiritual, moral and aesthetic dimensions of life; and open up new ways of thinking. It will also support the development of deep knowledge within a discipline, which provides the foundation for inter-disciplinary approaches to innovation and complex problem-solving.

General capabilities that underpin flexible and analytical thinking, a capacity to work with others and an ability to move across subject disciplines to develop new expertise

The curriculum will support young people to develop a range of generic and employability skills that have particular application to the world of work and further education and training, such as planning and organising, the ability to think flexibly, to communicate well and to work in teams. Young people also need to develop the capacity to think creatively, innovate, solve problems and engage with new disciplines.

A Commitment to Action

Promoting world-class curriculum and assessment

Learning areas

The learning areas below will be incorporated into the curriculum with breadth, balance and depth of learning appropriate to students' phases of development. Schools and school systems are responsible for delivering curriculum programs that reflect these learning areas, with appropriate flexibility to determine how this can best be achieved in a local context.

The learning areas are not of equal importance at all year levels. English and mathematics are of fundamental importance in all

- English
- Mathematics
- Sciences (including physics, chemistry, biology)
- Humanities and social sciences (including history, geography, economics, business, civics and citizenship)
- The arts (performing and visual)
- Languages (especially Asian languages)
- Health and physical education
- Information and Communication Technology and design and technology

Assessment

Assessment of student progress will be rigorous and comprehensive. It needs to reflect the curriculum, and draw on a combination of the professional judgement of teachers and testing, including national testing.

To ensure that student achievement is measured in meaningful ways, State, Territory and Commonwealth governments will work with all school sectors to develop and enhance national and school-level assessment that focuses on:

- assessment for learning—enabling teachers to use information
- assessment as learning—enabling students to reflect on and monitor their own progress to inform their future learning goals
- assessment of learning—assisting teachers to use evidence of student learning to assess student achievement against goals and standards.

years of schooling and are the primary focus of learning in the early years. However, humanities and social sciences, for example, take on greater scope and increasing specialisation as students move through the years of schooling. Each learning area has a specific discipline base and each has application across the curriculum. In addition, a focus on environmental sustainability will be integrated across the curriculum and all students will have the opportunity to access Indigenous content where relevant.

about student progress to inform their teaching

Australian governments commit to working together with all school sectors to ensure world-class curriculum and assessment for Australia at national and local levels.

Improving educational outcomes for Indigenous youth and disadvantaged young Australians, especially those from low socioeconomic backgrounds

For Australian schooling to promote equity and excellence, governments and all school sectors must improve educational outcomes for Indigenous youth and disadvantaged young Australians and encourage them, their families and their communities to hold high expectations for their education.

Educational outcomes for Indigenous children and young people are substantially behind those of other students in key areas of enrolment, attendance, participation, literacy, numeracy, retention and completion. Meeting the needs of young Indigenous Australians and promoting high expectations for their educational performance requires strategic investment. Australian schooling needs to engage Indigenous students, their families and communities in all aspects of schooling; increase

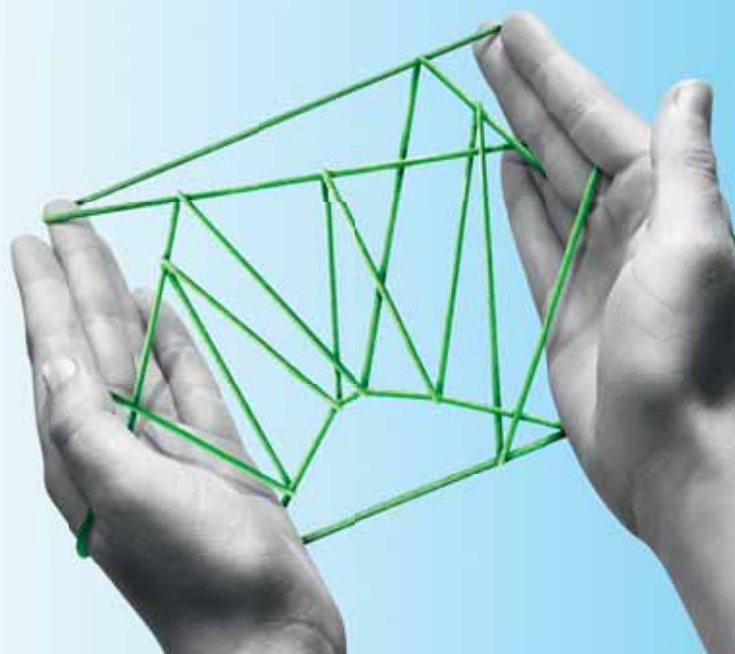
Indigenous participation in the education workforce at all levels; and support coordinated community services for students and their families that can increase productive participation in schooling.

Students from low socioeconomic backgrounds, those from remote areas, refugees, homeless young people, and students with disabilities often experience educational disadvantage. Targeted support can help disadvantaged young Australians to achieve better educational outcomes.

Australian governments must support all young Australians to achieve not only equality of opportunity but also more equitable outcomes.

Australian governments commit to working with all school sectors to:

- 'close the gap' for young Indigenous Australians
- provide targeted support to disadvantaged students
- focus on school improvement in low socioeconomic communities.



A Commitment to Action

Strengthening accountability and transparency

Good-quality information on schooling is important for schools and their students, for parents and families, for the community and for governments.

For schools and their students

Schools need reliable, rich data on the performance of their students because they have the primary accountability for improving student outcomes.

Good quality data supports each school to improve outcomes for all of their students. It supports effective diagnosis of student progress and the design of high-quality learning programs. It also informs schools' approaches to provision of programs, school policies, pursuit and allocation of resources, relationships with parents and partnerships with community and business.

For parents and families

Information about the performance of individuals, schools and systems helps parents and families make informed choices and engage with their children's education and the school community.

Parents and families should have access to:

- data on student outcomes
- data that allows them to assess a school's performance overall and in improving student outcomes
- contextual information about the philosophy and educational approach of schools, and their facilities, programs and extra-curricular activities
- information about a school's enrolment profile.

For the community

The community should have access to information that enables an understanding of the decisions taken by governments and the status and performance of schooling in Australia, to ensure schools are accountable for the results they achieve with the public funding they receive, and governments are accountable for the decisions they take. The provision of school information to the community should enhance community engagement and understanding of the educational enterprise. This includes access to national reporting on the performance of all schools, contextual information and information about individual schools' enrolment profile.

Parents, families and the community should have access to information about the performance of their school compared to schools with similar characteristics. Australian governments will work together to achieve nationally comparable reporting about schools.

In providing information on schooling, governments will ensure that school-based information is published responsibly, so that any public comparisons of schools will be fair, contain accurate and verified data, contextual information and a range of indicators. Governments will not themselves devise simplistic league tables or rankings and privacy will be protected.

For governments

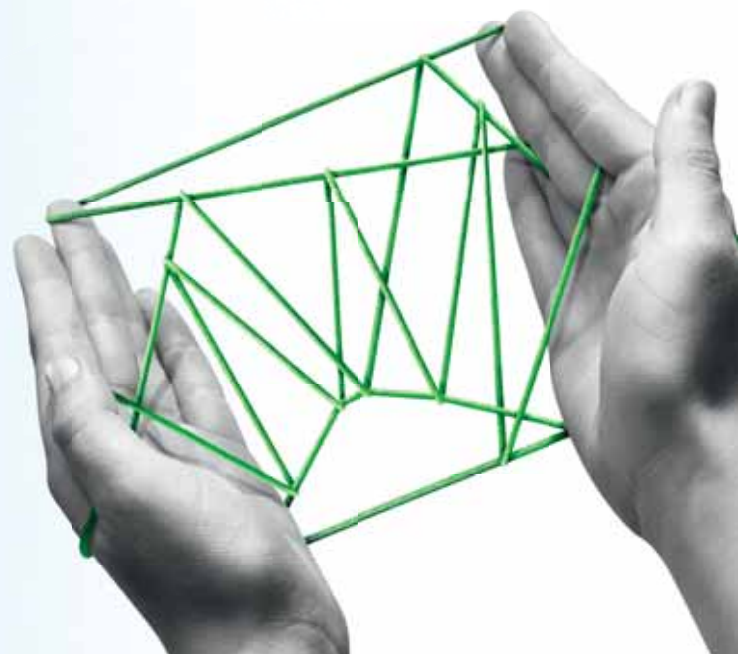
Governments need sound information on school performance to support ongoing improvement for students, schools and school sectors.

Good quality data enables governments to:

- analyse how well schools are performing
- identify schools with particular needs
- determine where resources are most needed to lift attainment
- identify best practice and innovation
- conduct national and international comparisons of approaches and performance
- develop a substantive evidence base on what works.

Australian governments commit to working with all school sectors to ensure that public reporting:

- focuses on improving performance and student outcomes
- is both locally and nationally relevant
- is timely, consistent and comparable.



Achieving the Educational Goals for Young Australians

Action Plan

The Melbourne Declaration will be supported by a series of action plans, commencing with an action plan for 2009–12. The action plans will outline the strategies and initiatives that Australian governments will undertake, in collaboration with all school sectors, to support the achievement of the Educational Goals for Young Australians.

The action plans will be supported by and based on a renewed commitment to federalism that encourages best practice in education and enables governments to share and apply their knowledge. With such an approach all governments will share the costs and benefits of reforms to give every young Australian a real chance of becoming a successful learner, a confident and creative individual and an active and informed citizen.

Biennial Forum

There are many innovative educational reforms developed in individual schools and sectors, and there is potential for the best of these to be adapted and shared across the nation. All Australian governments will jointly convene a biennial national forum to support the achievement of the educational goals and to showcase best practice across Australian States and Territories, the Commonwealth and government, Catholic and independent school sectors.

With commitment and hard work—from children and young people and their parents, carers and families, from schools, teachers, communities, business and all Australian governments—all young Australians will be provided with the opportunity to reach their full potential.

Acknowledgements

Ministers would like to acknowledge the members of the Working Group responsible for developing this Declaration, and thank them for their valuable contribution:

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Mr Bill Burmester (Australian Government), Ms Norma Jeffrey (Western Australia) and Ms Leslie Loble (New South Wales).

The development of the Melbourne Declaration was supported by a Secretariat and Project Team based in the Victorian Department of Education and Early Childhood Development.

The goals were informed by extensive national and jurisdictional consultation over two stages. Initial input and feedback based on the *Future of Schooling in Australia* report helped shape the first draft of the new Declaration, which was then the basis for a second round of targeted consultations and public submissions. All feedback was considered in developing the final document.

The Working Group also drew on a range of international literature and particularly benefited from the United Kingdom Qualifications and Curriculum Authority's *Futures in action: Building a 21st century curriculum*, which informed the drafting of Goal No. 2.

Published by the Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs
Melbourne
December 2008

ISBN 978-0-7594-0524-0

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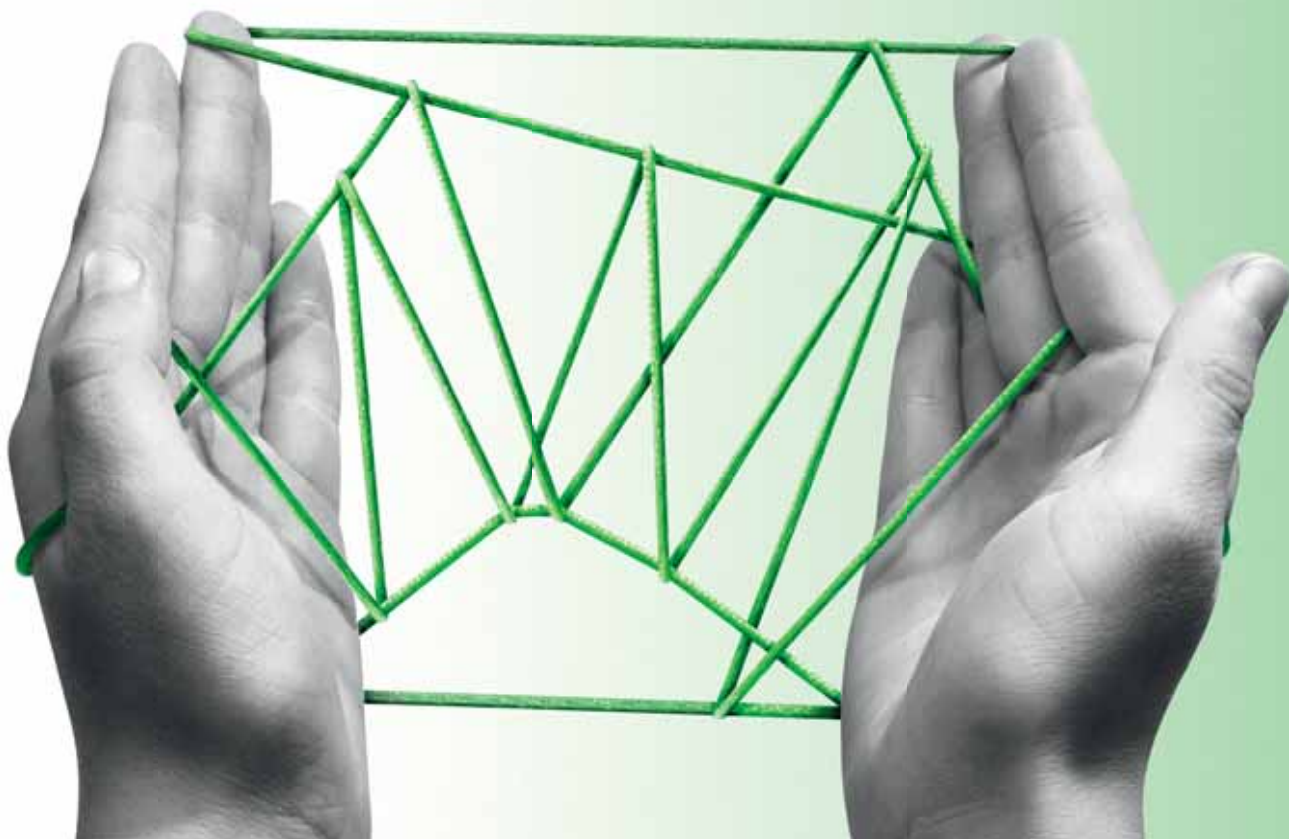
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