



Review of the Melbourne Declaration

Discussion paper

THE REVIEW OF THE MELBOURNE DECLARATION

Questions:

1. What are your expectations of a national aspirational declaration on Australian education?
2. Who should the national declaration inspire and/or guide?
3. How has the *Melbourne Declaration* impacted or influenced you?

1. For the last three decades, Australia's national school education system has been guided by a series of separate joint declarations of Commonwealth, State and Territory Governments that each set a vision for schooling in Australia.
2. Following the [Hobart Declaration on Schooling](#) (1989) and the [Adelaide Declaration on National Goals for Schooling in the 21st Century](#) (1999), the [Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians](#) (the *Melbourne Declaration*) was agreed in 2008.
3. The *Melbourne Declaration* recognises that '*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*' and set two goals:
 - Goal 1:** Australian schooling promotes equity and excellence
 - Goal 2:** All young Australians become successful learners, confident and creative individuals, and active and informed citizens.
4. The *Melbourne Declaration* is focused on school education, but also acknowledges the impact of early childhood education on school outcomes, as well as the need for successful transitions to further study and work.
5. The *Melbourne Declaration* remains a touchstone for decision-makers and educators.

"From an educational perspective we often talk about the importance of starting with the end in mind and from a leader's perspective the Melbourne Declaration has given us the cornerstone to be able to do just that. It describes the goals and the broader vision that we have for our young people as they move through varying chapters of school."

Susie Randal-Kniepp – Principal, Kedron State School, Queensland
at the National Forum, 22 February 2019

6. Australia's education ministers, through the Council of Australian Government's (COAG) Education Council, have agreed to review the *Melbourne Declaration* and to develop a contemporary national declaration on educational goals for all Australians, to guide national collaborative efforts over the coming years.
7. To initiate the review of the *Melbourne Declaration* in partnership with sector stakeholders, 11 Ministers met with 54 delegates at a [national forum](#) in Melbourne on 22 February 2019. A broad range of stakeholders including, parents, schools, industry representatives, and leaders from early childhood, school and tertiary education discussed the important role the *Melbourne Declaration* has played in the sector and in shaping their aspirations for education reform. Delegates supported a refresh of the *Melbourne Declaration*, rather than a full rewrite.

8. The Education Council is now seeking your views on refreshing the national declaration. Stakeholders are invited to make a submission via the [Education Council website](#). This discussion paper has been written to help inform submissions and provides a number of questions to help inform the review. Submissions can be made until **midnight on Friday, 14 June 2019**.
9. Submissions will help inform future consultations and the development of a refreshed Declaration that will be considered by Education Council in late 2019.

CHANGES SINCE THE MELBOURNE DECLARATION WAS AGREED

Questions:

4. What do you consider are the **three most important** economic, social and technological changes that will shape the future of education in Australia?
5. How can a national declaration best reflect that Australians need to continue to participate in learning throughout their lifetime?

10. The *Melbourne Declaration* has provided the backdrop for significant national reform over the last decade. Some of the achievements during this period have included the introduction of:
 - the [Australian Curriculum](#)
 - the [National Quality Framework](#) for Early Childhood Education and Care
 - [Australian Professional Standards for Teachers](#)
 - [Australian Professional Standard for Principals](#).
11. At the same time, major economic, technological and social changes are shifting the nature of work, skills, teaching and learning.
12. Digital literacy has become critically important to all Australians, with greater access via mobile devices to more information than ever before. This means our education system has an increasing role to help students use technology in a way that enhances their social and civic participation.
13. Technology is also changing the nature of teaching and supporting teachers with more sophisticated data, evidence and targeted resources to support learning in their classrooms.

"I've been filming videos of my classroom lessons for about six years now and these videos have been watched for over 110 million minutes now. The average Australian high school teacher spends about 750 hours in the classroom annually. So those 110 million minutes are roughly equivalent to me standing in front of a classroom teaching for 2400 years! That's how technology is changing learning today."

Eddie Woo, Teacher, Mathematician and creator of 'WooTube'
at the National Forum, 22 February 2019

14. Technology, and unprecedented innovation in areas such as science, is also changing the nature of the economy. This is transforming industries and workplaces, creating a greater need for adaptable, resilient workers whose skills complement and integrate with emerging technologies. Education will increasingly need to accentuate skills like creativity, communication and critical thinking to support Australians to succeed in an increasingly global economy and automated world.

“Research shows that some kids at school with behavioural problems often have the same traits as an entrepreneur in a small business. The education system we need has to be agile. We need disruptors in the education system – maybe that should become part of the next declaration we make.”

Peter Strong – Chief Executive Officer, Council of Small Business of Australia
at the National Forum, 22 February 2019

15. The nature of our society is also changing rapidly. Australia’s population is growing, diversifying and getting older. Our population has increased by 1.4 – 1.8 percent per annum every year since 2010.¹ In 2017, 29 percent of Australians were born overseas, up from 25.1 percent in 2007.² By 2054-55, the number of Australians aged 65 and over is projected to more than double.³
16. These trends are affecting infrastructure and services provision – including education – and have major implications for Australia’s future economic output and labour supply. An ageing population could see higher rates of retirement than entry into the workforce, while demographic changes affect the number of workers and their mix of skills. This makes supporting and encouraging life-long learning essential if we are to maximise workforce participation and productivity.
17. There are also changes in the Australian school education system. More students attend and complete school today than in previous generations: from 1988 to 2017, the share of Australian students who completed Year 12 rose from 58 percent to 85 percent⁴ and schools need to accommodate the learning needs of increasingly diverse students, who will pursue a range of post-school pathways into further learning and work.
18. In addition, since 2008 there has been significant reform of early childhood education and care in Australia. This has led to greater integration of these services, increases in participation in early childhood education in the year before school, and improvements in the quality of early learning services. More recently, in line with international experience, there is an emerging trend in Australia towards expanding the provision of early childhood education to children for two years before school.

¹ ABS (2019), *3101.0 - Australian Demographic Statistics, Sep 2018*, <https://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/Latestproducts/3101.0Main%20Features2Sep%202018?opendocument&tabname=Summary&prodno=3101.0&issue=Sep%202018&num=&view=>

² ABS (2018), *3412.0 - Migration, Australia, 2016-17*, <https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Latestproducts/3412.0Main%20Features32016-17?opendocument&tabname=Summary&prodno=3412.0&issue=2016-17&num=&view=>

³ Australian Treasury (2015), *Intergenerational Report 2015*, https://treasury.gov.au/sites/default/files/2019-03/04_Chapter_1.pdf

⁴ Australian Government (2018), *Through Growth to Achievement: Report of the Review to Achieve Educational Excellence in Australian Schools*, https://docs.education.gov.au/system/files/doc/other/662684_tgta_accessible_final_0.pdf

19. The average Australian currently completes more than 80 percent of their total lifetime hours of learning before the age of 21.⁵ By 2040, it is expected that more than 40 percent of our education will be delivered after the age of 21.
20. Australians today need to learn more continuously than any generation before them. Instead of aiming to provide students with all the skills they need for life in the first twenty years, schools need to prepare students for a lifetime of learning and effective social and economic participation. It will be important to embed and complement academic knowledge with skills such as critical and creative thinking, intercultural capability and personal and social capability to prepare young people for lifelong learning.
21. Students are now far more actively engaged in their own learning and our education system needs to encourage student voice and agency. In reviewing the *Melbourne Declaration* Education Ministers are keen to hear from students.

EDUCATIONAL GOALS FOR YOUNG AUSTRALIANS

Questions:

6. How could the concepts of equity, excellence and the attributes for young Australians in the *Melbourne Declaration* be updated to ensure they are still contemporary over the next decade?

22. Education ministers and stakeholders who attended the February forum believe the two goals of the *Melbourne Declaration* remain relevant. The purpose of the goals is to provide a long-term vision on education for young Australians. While it is not the role of the declaration to specify how the goals will be achieved, ambitions influence actions.

Goal 1: Australian schooling promotes equity and excellence

23. While Australia has made some progress toward this goal since 2008, and our system overall continues to deliver quality education services, we have not yet achieved equity in education access and outcomes for all Australian students. The National Assessment Program includes a range of domestic and international assessments used to track student performance in key learning areas such as literacy and numeracy. Each year, Education Council releases the [National Report on Schooling in Australia](#) to report to the Australian community on progress towards the *Melbourne Declaration* goals.
24. Results of the National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) assessments, demonstrate that Standard Australian English Literacy outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students require further support to ensure equity in education outcomes. In addition, students from low socio economic background, students living in regional, rural and remote locations and students with a disability continue to face barriers in education access and achievement.

⁵ AlphaBeta (2019), *Future Skills*. Available at: <https://www.alphabeta.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/google-skills-report.pdf>

25. This trajectory starts early. In 2018, one in five children across Australia started school behind. This rate increases significantly for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, children living in very remote areas and in socio-economically disadvantaged communities. As a result, students enter school with different starting points and capabilities.
26. There has been a decline in the proportion of students in the top levels of achievement since 2003, as demonstrated in Australia's results in the international Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA)⁶.
27. A focus on excellence in teaching practice and student achievement is critical in driving the science, technology, engineering and mathematics skills (known as STEM) that we know will be important for the future.
28. The *Review to Achieve Educational Excellence in Australian Schools*⁷, chaired by David Gonski AM released its report *Through Growth to Achievement* in 2018. It found that top-performing education systems support the individual learning growth of each student, in each year of schooling.
29. Education needs to maximise individual learning growth each year, to give every student the best chance of reaching their full potential and contributing to our country's growth. Personal development and learning growth continue throughout the lives of every Australian, in ways that are unique to them and their circumstances.
30. Australia's prosperity and social cohesion will continue to rely on improving educational outcomes for all young Australians.
31. Evidence from the Organisation of Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) is clear that simply providing more funding does not in itself improve student outcomes. The OECD has found that for high-income countries like Australia it matters more *how* money is spent, than *how much* is spent.

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

32. With more learning occurring before students enter and after they leave school, less structured and more varied career paths, increasing globalisation and the rise of social media, this goal is more important than ever before.
33. While there will always remain a need for students to acquire fundamental knowledge, particularly foundational literacy and numeracy, increasingly the mark of educational success will not be the ability to reproduce content knowledge. Rather, it will be the ability to extrapolate from what we know, to analyse and apply learned knowledge and skills to complex real-world issues and situations.

⁶ Australian Government Department of Education and Training (2018), *Through Growth to Achievement – Report of the Review to Achieve Educational Excellence in Australian Schools*, chaired by Mr David Gonski AM, pg 6. Available at: <https://docs.education.gov.au/node/50516>

34. There is increasing emphasis on the capabilities and skills that best prepare students for future work. The *Melbourne Declaration* calls for such capabilities and skills to be developed but does not include ones we now know to be important to future success, such as entrepreneurialism, problem solving, and creativity.

“What are employers looking for? They're not looking for students to emerge with the ability to do high end work straight away, but they are looking for skills around adaptability, resilience, teamwork and curiosity. That's what they're looking for more than anything else.”

Innes Willox, Chief Executive Officer, Australian Industry Group
at the National Forum, 22 February 2019

35. How young Australians relate to the world and society is evolving. Social media and smartphones have become a part of modern lifestyles. These tools connect young people across different communities, provide broad access to news, data and cloud-based learning, enabling new forms of civil engagement and social participation. Education has an increasing role in helping young Australians to use this technology positively and to augment opportunities for critically aware social and civic participation. As adults we have an ongoing responsibility to learn and adapt to meet new challenges as they arise and a collective responsibility for civic, social and economic life in Australia.

36. As the world and society evolve, education will have a continuing role in developing a student’s health and wellbeing. Helping students develop a balanced set of cognitive, social and emotional skills will help them prepare for life as productive community members and embrace opportunities.

37. While the *Melbourne Declaration* describes attributes of ‘successful learners’, ‘confident and creative individuals’, and ‘active and informed citizens’, these are difficult to measure or track progress against.

AREAS FOR ACTION

Questions:

7. Are the eight areas for action in the *Melbourne Declaration* still contemporary and how well do they address the goals?
8. Are new priority areas for action needed? And are there areas that should no longer be a priority?

38. The *Melbourne Declaration* identifies a commitment to focus on actions in eight inter-related areas and outlines why each of these are important.

39. It does not set out commitments to any actions as these are in more time-limited documents (refer to below table for some examples), with associated milestones and timelines, as this detail is outside the remit for a document designed to provide a vision over a longer period.

40. There has been significant national activity across many of these action areas since the *Melbourne Declaration* was made. The table below provides a snapshot of national reform activity against each of these areas.

Melbourne Declaration action	Snapshot of reforms and influential reports since 2008
Developing stronger partnerships between all school sectors, young Australians, parents, carers, families, other education and training providers, business and the broader community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Smarter Schools National Partnerships for Education in Low SES School Communities, Teacher Quality • STEM Partnership Forum • School Improvement Models in Queensland and South Australia to support schools to plan evidence-based school improvements in partnership with school communities.
Supporting quality teaching and school leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accreditation of Initial Teacher Education Programs in Australia: Standards and Procedures • Teacher Education Ministerial Advisory Group reforms to initial teacher education • Australian Professional Standards for Teachers • Australian Professional Standard for Principals.
Strengthening early childhood education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education and Care • National Partnership arrangements for universal access to early childhood education • Lifting Our Game - Report of the Review to Achieve Educational Excellence in Australian Schools through Early Childhood Interventions.
Enhancing middle years development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Moving towards more nationally consistent school structures. • NSW Government's Wellbeing Framework for Schools • Northern Territory's Work Like the Best: Middle Years Teaching and Learning Strategy 2016-18.
Supporting senior years of schooling and youth transitions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National Partnership of Youth Attainment and Transitions • Raising the minimum school (or approved equivalent) leaving age • Trade Training Centres in Schools Program.
Promoting world-class curriculum and assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Early Years Learning Framework • Queensland's Curriculum into the Classroom (C2C) planning resources, which help teachers implement the Australian Curriculum • The Australian Curriculum F-10: English, Mathematics, Science, Health and Physical Education, Humanities and Social Sciences, The Arts, Technologies and Languages • National Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics School Education Strategy.

Melbourne Declaration action	Snapshot of reforms and influential reports since 2008
Improving educational outcomes for Indigenous youth and disadvantaged young Australians, especially those from low socioeconomic backgrounds	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Strategy • Closing the Gap Report (2019).
Strengthening accountability and transparency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Measurement Framework for Schooling • National Report on Schooling • My School website.

41. Since the *Melbourne Declaration* was made, new evidence has emerged about effective interventions in education, and therefore what efforts should be prioritised. The *Review to Achieve Educational Excellence in Australian Schools* was commissioned to examine evidence and make recommendations to improve school performance outcomes.
42. The report found that early childhood education makes a significant contribution to school outcomes, and that future reforms lay the foundations in the early years for future learning, and close the learning differential between advantaged and disadvantaged students, are essential. These findings are consistent with the recommendations in *Lifting Our Game – Report of the Review to Achieve Educational Excellence in Australian Schools through Early Childhood Interventions*.
43. The Review to Achieve Educational Excellence in Australian Schools informed the development of the [National School Reform Agreement](#) identifies three reform directions to focus national reform efforts on the areas that will make the biggest difference. The reforms apply to schooling and also to students’ pathways from schooling into tertiary education and the world of work. They are:
- a. Supporting students, student learning and student achievement
 - b. Supporting teaching, school leadership and school improvement
 - c. Enhancing the national evidence base.
44. Under the three reform directions are a number of national policy initiatives. One of these initiatives is a review of senior secondary pathways into work, further education and training. It recognises the importance of seeing education as a continuum and supporting students to make successful transitions.
45. These directions are consistent with the *Melbourne Declaration* and reflect progress in national efforts and changes over the last decade, providing us with the opportunity to build on these developments in the next declaration.

MECHANISMS TO ACHIEVE THE EDUCATIONAL GOALS

Questions:

9. Are there better ways to measure and share progress toward achieving the declaration's goals?
10. How can we ensure the education sector works together to achieve the goals of the Declaration?

46. The last section of the *Melbourne Declaration* sets out how the goals will be actioned and supported. It proposed a series of action plans, commencing with one for 2009-12. The intention was to translate the declaration into impact through these action plans and then evaluate effectiveness in achieving the goals of the *Melbourne Declaration* at a biennial forum.
47. The first action plan was released in March 2009. However the action plans were, in effect, superseded by a series of national agreements and Education Council work plans:
 - a. the National Education Agreement 2008-2017
 - b. the National Education Reform Agreement (and National Plan for School Improvement) 2013-2017
 - c. the National School Reform Agreement 2019-2023
 - d. a series of National Partnership Agreements on universal Access to Early Childhood Education
 - e. National Partnership Agreements on the National Quality Agenda.
48. The *National School Reform Agreement* sets a national objective informed by the *Melbourne Declaration* goals, that 'Australian schooling provides a high quality and equitable education for all students'. The agreement further commits to three outcomes, which collectively articulate the ambition for Australian school education:
 - a. Academic achievement improves for all students, including priority equity cohorts
 - b. All students are engaged in their schooling
 - c. Students gain the skills they need to transition to further study and/or work and life success.
49. The first biennial forum on the *Melbourne Declaration* was held on 15 October 2010 and a second on 2 August 2012. Ongoing monitoring and reporting against progress has been implemented through the following mechanisms:
 - The [Measurement Framework for Schooling in Australia](#) underpins reporting to the community on progress towards the *Melbourne Declaration* goals. The measurement framework details national key performance measures, outlines the annual assessment and reporting cycle and underpins the *National Report on Schooling in Australia*. The framework also informs the annual [Report on Government Services](#) released by the Productivity Commission on behalf of COAG
 - The [National Assessment Program](#) that is run at the direction of Education Council and samples assessments, including NAPLAN, PISA, Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study, Progress in International Reading Literacy Study and Teaching and Learning International Survey

- [My School](#) that presents school level information for parents and the broader community on school finances, attendance and NAPLAN results.

SUBMISSIONS

Education Council is calling for written submissions to inform their review of the *Melbourne Declaration*. You can make your submissions on the issues raised in this discussion paper via the [Education Council website](#).

Responses to any or all of the questions provided in the discussion paper can be made online by:

1. completing an online submission and/or
2. providing a written submission. Each written submission is limited to 3300 words and could include a summary (up to 300 words) of the key points/ recommendations of your submission. Applications for submissions greater than 3300 words can be made to the National Declaration Working Group Secretariat at Declaration@education.gov.au

All stakeholders are encouraged to complete the online submission, even if choosing to provide a written submission.

Submissions can be made up until **midnight on Friday, 14 June 2019**.

Please note that the Education Council will not treat a submission as confidential unless specifically requested that the whole submission be treated as such.

Publication of submissions in whole or in part will be subject to approval.

Your personal information is protected by law, including the *Privacy Act 1988*, and is collected by the Council of Australian Governments Education Council for the purpose of managing submissions as part of the Review of the Melbourne Declaration (Review), and communicating updates and information regarding the Review. Your personal information will be disclosed to Education Council, and the Australian Government Department of Education and Training.

The submission and information you provide may also be used by the Council or given to other parties for the purposes of coordinating and managing the Review, or where you have agreed or it is required or authorised by law.

Your submission to the Review may be made public, along with your first and/or last name, organisation and state of residence, on the Education Council's website and print publications. For further information about this, please contact Declaration@education.gov.au