

# Draft Declaration on Education Goals

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### Preamble

As Australia's education ministers we are responsible for improving Australia's education system. Education has the power to transform the lives of all Australians, and is key to our nation's social cohesion and economic prosperity. We have heard from young people, parents, educators and the education sectors and listened to what is important to them in developing this Declaration.

This Declaration sets out our vision for education in Australia and our commitment to improving educational outcomes for young Australians. It builds on past declarations signed in Hobart, Adelaide and Melbourne, which have guided our journey over three decades. In engaging with the sectors and young people, we have heard that the previous declaration has stood the test of time. We acknowledge the work of previous ministers, and have updated the Declaration to meet the future needs of young people.

A quality education is more important than ever before. Rapid social and technological change means young Australians need solid foundation skills in literacy and numeracy, and broad and deep knowledge across a range of curriculum areas, as well as knowledge and experiences unimagined by past generations. They need flexibility and resilience, the capacity to learn throughout their lives, and the ability to deal with information abundance to take hold of their future opportunities. Critical thinking skills are also becoming more important – including questions about authenticity, trust and the ability to distinguish between diverse and often contradictory sources.

Complex environmental, social and economic pressures such as climate change that extend beyond national borders continue to pose unprecedented challenges, requiring countries to work together in new ways. These challenges require Australians to engage with scientific concepts and principles and solve problems in new and creative ways.

It used to be common to acquire a set of skills in childhood and use these skills throughout a working life with only the need to periodically refresh. There is now a growing need to acquire knowledge and skills in fundamentally different fields many times throughout life. The changing nature of education has profound implications for learning and development, from birth to adulthood. Our education system must equip our young people with the knowledge, skills and confidence they need to contribute to the community, a well-developed sense of self, and the capacity to participate in the workforce and contribute to Australia's economic prosperity.

Our education system needs to meet these challenges and provide safe, supportive and nurturing learning environments. This is the vision set out in this Declaration.

Our best efforts will translate into opportunities for every young Australian and ensure no one is left behind. More than this, through education, and through working towards and achieving the goals in this Declaration, young Australians from all backgrounds will have the opportunity to fulfil their potential and pursue their dreams.

By achieving the goals in this Declaration we will ensure that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledge, histories and experiences are known and valued and that young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are supported to imagine, discover and unlock their potential.

It is also important to note that Australia is a huge nation with significant geographic diversity. We must ensure that our education systems support learners from rural and remote areas so that everyone has high quality educational opportunities regardless of where they live.

Excellence in education means all students are challenged to extend themselves by a world class education system. We must set the highest expectations and aspirations for every student, no matter the barriers

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they face, and support them to learn and challenge themselves. Literacy and numeracy skills must remain the non-negotiable foundations for every Australians' education. For students to achieve excellence, and for our system to be equitable, students must be able to learn how to read, write and count. Education should challenge, extend and engage our students.

Equity in education means everyone in our community being supported to grow in their learning and achieve their potential. Recognising and addressing that not everyone starts from the same place or must overcome the same challenges allows Australians from all backgrounds and with varying abilities to excel. Our goals and aspirations are the same for every single young person, but the supports required will be different for each individual.

We know that young children are learning all the time, and they are learning quickly, particularly in the years before school. Early learning and development underpin the social, emotional and cognitive, skills that are increasingly important, and when developed early endure throughout life. It is also an opportunity for children who do not have positive home learning environments to acquire the routine skills which facilitate learning. For those who experience disadvantage, early childhood learning is particularly beneficial. All children, no matter what their background, should have the opportunity to benefit from play-based teaching and supported home learning environments. We have made great national progress in the provision and regulation of early childhood care and education and we must continue to build on these strengths.

As the importance of education grows, so does the complexity of being an educator. We entrust Australia's teachers and school leaders with delivering the goals in this Declaration, but they cannot do this alone. Learning is a partnership with parents, carers, families and communities who all have a role to play in nurturing the love of learning needed for success at school and in life. Learners themselves must also be supported to take an active role in their learning throughout life.

We will ensure we place young Australians at the centre of our education system as they navigate their learning and write their own story.

### **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 Education Declaration.

The Declaration has two distinct but interconnected goals:

Goal 1: The Australian education system promotes excellence and equity

Goal 2: All young Australians become:

- confident and creative individuals
- successful learners
- active and informed community members

Achieving these educational goals is the collective responsibility of Australian Governments and education sectors as well as teachers, school leaders, parents and carers, young Australians, families, business, industry and the broader community.

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Acknowledging the critical importance of parents, carers and families as first and ongoing educators, Australian Governments will support them to help young Australians to achieve the goals of the Declaration.

### **Goal 1: The Australian education system promotes excellence and equity**

Australian Governments, in collaboration with all education sectors commit to promoting equity and excellence in Australian education.

This means that all Australian Governments and all education sectors must:

- provide all young Australians with access to high-quality education that is inclusive and free from any form of discrimination
- ensure that Australia's education system creates world class learners and educators
- encourage young people to hold high expectations for their educational outcomes, supported by parents, carers, families, and the broader community and empower learners to realise their individual potential
- prioritise recognition of the individual needs of all young Australians, identify barriers that can be addressed, and empower learners to overcome barriers
- ensure that education promotes and contributes to a socially cohesive society that values, respects and appreciates cultural, social and religious diversity and different points of view
- ensure that learning is built on and includes local, regional and national cultural knowledge and experience of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and works in partnership with local communities
- ensure that young Australians of all backgrounds are supported and encouraged to achieve their full educational potential
- promote personalised learning and provide support that aims to fulfil the individual capabilities and needs of learners
- promote a culture of excellence in all learning environments, by providing varied, challenging, and stimulating learning experiences and opportunities that enable all learners to explore and build on their individual gifts, talents, interests, and experiences.

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

Australian Governments commit to working in collaboration with all education sectors to support all young Australians to become:

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

#### **Confident and creative individuals who...**

- have a sense of self-worth, self-awareness and personal identity that enables them to manage their emotional, mental, cultural, spiritual and physical wellbeing
- develop personal values and attributes such as honesty, empathy, loyalty, responsibility and respect for others
- have the resilience to cope when things go wrong or are uncertain
- are able to recognise, adapt to, and manage change
- have a sense of optimism about their lives and the future
- show initiative, use their creative abilities, and are enterprising

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- have the imagination, knowledge, skills, understanding and values to establish and maintain healthy, satisfying lives
- have the confidence and capability to pursue learning throughout life, leading to enjoyable, fulfilling and productive employment
- relate well to others and form and maintain healthy relationships
- are well prepared for their potential life roles as friends, family, community and workforce members
- embrace opportunities, make rational and informed decisions about their own lives and accept responsibility for their own actions
- have a sense of belonging, purpose and meaning that enable them to thrive in their learning environment.

### Successful learners who...

- develop their ability and motivation to learn and play an active role in their own learning
- have the essential skills in literacy and numeracy as the foundation for learning
- are willing to respect and debate a diverse range of views and ideas
- are productive and informed users of technology, especially information and communications technology (ICT), as a foundation for information sharing and adapting to emerging technologies
- are able to think deeply and logically, and obtain and evaluate evidence 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 and deep content knowledge
- are inquisitive and experimental, and have the ability to test different sources and types of knowledge
- are responsive and adaptive to new ways of thinking and learning
- are able to plan activities independently, collaborate, work in teams and communicate ideas
- are resilient and can self-evaluate and self-regulate
- continue to improve through formal and informal learning in further education, and training or employment, and acquire the skills to make informed decisions throughout their lives
- are able to make sense of their world and think about how things have become the way they are
- are confident and motivated to reach their full potential.

### Active and informed community members who...

- act with moral and ethical integrity
- have empathy for those less fortunate than themselves and work for the common good, in particular sustaining and improving natural and social environments
- appreciate and respect Australia's rich social, cultural, religious and linguistic diversity and embrace opportunities to communicate and share knowledge and experiences
- have an understanding of Australia's system of government, histories and culture
- understand, acknowledge and celebrate the value of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures and possess the knowledge, skills and understanding to contribute to, and benefit from, reconciliation between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and non-Indigenous Australians
- are committed to national values of democracy, equity and justice, and participate in Australia's civic life through connection with community
- are informed and responsible global and local citizens who value and celebrate cultural differences, and engage in the global community, particularly with our neighbours in the Indo-Pacific
- have a clear understanding of their role and ability to contribute to local and national conversations.

### A Commitment to Action

Together, all Australian Governments commit to working with all education and school sectors and the broader community to achieve the educational goals for young Australians. In doing so, all Australian Governments acknowledge the critical importance of parents, carers, families, business, industry and communities.

This commitment will be supported by ten inter-related areas for action:

- developing stronger partnerships
- supporting quality teaching and leadership
- strengthening early childhood education
- enhancing middle years development
- supporting senior years of schooling
- embedding pathways for learning throughout life and supporting effective transitions
- promoting world-class curriculum and assessment
- supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander learners to reach their full potential
- supporting young Australians at risk of educational disadvantage
- strengthening accountability and transparency via ongoing measurement and tracking.

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### Developing stronger partnerships

Parents, carers, families and communities are the first and most important influence in a child's life, as carers and educators. They equip children with optimal early development, including social, emotional, intellectual and physical wellbeing. They instil attitudes and values that support young people to access and participate in education and training, and contribute to local and global communities.

Collaboration and partnerships between learners, parents, carers and families, the broader community, business, industry, schools, other education and training providers, and Australian Governments are essential to ensure all learners can benefit from a quality, inclusive, diverse and equitable education. They should be used to maximise learner engagement, progress, and achievement.

Partnerships support the development and wellbeing of young people and their families and create opportunities for young Australians to connect with their communities, business and industry. These connections and associations can facilitate development, training and employment opportunities, promote a sense of responsible citizenship and encourage lifelong learning.

In particular, the development of partnerships and connections between parents, carers and families, educators, schools and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities will greatly improve learning outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and benefit all young Australians. Effective partnerships are based on culturally supportive and responsive learning environments.

**Australian Governments commit to ensuring education sectors engage with young Australians, parents, carers, families, other education and training providers, business, industry and the broader community to support learners' progress through the education system, and to provide them with individualised, high quality learning opportunities and experiences, and personal development. Further, Australian Governments commit to fostering these partnerships to support young Australians as they continue their learning throughout their lifetime.**

### Supporting quality teaching and leadership

Teachers, educators and leaders who educate young people are of fundamental importance to achieving these educational goals for young Australians.

Highly skilled educators, working in partnerships with young people, have the ability to transform the lives of young people and inspire and nurture the personal and academic development of young Australians as learners, individuals and citizens. They provide an additional source of encouragement, advice and support for learners outside the home, shaping teaching to nurture the unique abilities of every child.

School principals and other educational leaders at all levels and in all learning environments across the profession play a critical role in supporting and fostering quality teaching and learning. This happens through coaching and mentoring teachers to find the best ways to facilitate learning, and by building and promoting a culture of high expectations and professional growth. Educational leaders are responsible for creating and sustaining high quality learning environments and conditions under which quality teaching and learning takes place.

All Australian Governments, education sectors, and other education and training providers, including universities, have a responsibility to work together to enable high-quality teaching and leadership. This includes providing the opportunity and resources for ongoing professional learning, equipping teachers with high-quality evidence and data, and developing well-prepared pre-service teachers. In an information and digital rich society we must ensure that teachers and educators are supported to continually develop,

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in order to teach young Australians the essential skills and core knowledge needed for a modern society and economy.

**Australian Governments commit to working with all education sectors to attract, develop, support and retain high-quality teachers, educators and leaders in Australian education. Excellence in teaching, educating and leadership will be celebrated and valued.**

### Strengthening early childhood education

The early years of life are an unparalleled period of growth and development including the acquisition of language, social, emotional and physical skills, and foundational cognitive development. This builds an essential foundation for learning from birth throughout school and beyond. The key to children's earliest learning and development is the quality and depth of interaction they experience; the interactions between adult and child and between child and child. These interactions take place both within and outside formal early learning settings. Growth during this formative stage can be maximised by providing age appropriate structures and supports for learning and development.

The importance of the early years has been recognised through collaborative national efforts and state and territory reforms to lift quality and improve participation and access. World leading regulation focused on improving quality has been established through the National Quality Framework which emphasises lifting process and structural quality across all early childhood settings. Australian Governments have implemented the Early Years Learning Framework which provides guidance to the early childhood education workforce to enable them to support young children to learn and develop through play-based learning.

Australian Governments have worked together to provide access to 15 hours of early learning per week to all Australian children in the year before school. This provides a solid foundation of development and learning. However, there is still work to do to meet these universal access targets consistently across all locations, particularly regional and remote areas, and to increase participation by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander learners and disadvantaged children, who stand to gain the most. We need to build on the success of the collective efforts of governments and stakeholders to ensure sustainable ongoing outcomes.

The important link between educators and quality early learning experiences is recognised through the National Quality Framework, including through professional qualification requirements and educator to child ratios. Increasing the capability of the early childhood education workforce remains a priority to build quality, as does providing parents, carers and the community with advice and support to help children learn and develop wherever they are and regardless of their circumstances.

**Australian Governments commit to continuing to build quality and access to early years learning and development in formal settings that meets the needs of all Australian families. Australian Governments also commit to providing support and advice on how to support children to develop and flourish through a range of channels, including partnering with families, the broader community and other services for children.**

### Enhancing middle years development

The middle years are an important period of individual growth and learning when a balanced set of cognitive, social and emotional skills are developed. Students are finding a sense of self and require investment in their emotional wellbeing, and this is also a time when students are at the greatest risk of disengagement from learning. Through directly addressing student's range of needs, schools must focus on



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enhancing student motivation and engagement. Student voice should also be taken into account so they have influence over their learning.

Real-world learning that supports emotional learning and the development of entrepreneurial skills is important. Developing healthy peer relationships should be encouraged, including a focus on student engagement and wellbeing. Literacy and numeracy must also be assessed to ensure learning growth is understood, tracked and further supported.

Improved and effective transitions must be established throughout the middle years, not limited to transitions between primary and secondary school. Students will be supported to consider and prepare for future pathways and transitions as part of efforts to ensure student engagement and success.

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

### Supporting senior years of schooling

The senior years of schooling are a critical transition point for young people – emotionally, socially, and educationally. These years should provide all students with the high-quality, relevant and engaging education and support necessary to complete their secondary school education. The senior years of schooling should provide all students with high quality advice and support to make the initial transition to further education, training or meaningful employment.

Schools need to provide high-quality information, advice, and experiences to students so that they can make informed choices about their future. All Australian Governments and education sectors need to support students' transition from schooling into further study, training or employment and enable them to acquire the necessary cognitive and social skills, including the desire and skills to remain engaged in learning throughout life. This support requires effective partnerships with education and training providers, employers, industry and the broader community. 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 education sectors to provide a senior secondary education that equips young people with the skills, knowledge, values and capabilities to succeed in employment, personal and civic life.**

### Embedding pathways for learning throughout life and supporting effective transitions

The changes to society and the economy mean that now more than ever, the ability to learn and grow beyond the compulsory years of education and training is essential.

The skills and knowledge that young people acquire are critical to their success and happiness. The scale and pace of change means that these capabilities will need to be renewed and updated repeatedly throughout life. It is fundamental that young people are actively engaged in shaping and directing their own learning and that they have the drive, skills and disposition to continue to learn and grow throughout their lives.

It is important that young people have a clear understanding of, and influence over, how they learn and can contribute in society in a meaningful way. Being able to see a clear link between theory and practice instils a thirst for knowledge and skills. Relevant and engaging educational and work experiences in youth are important to lay the foundations to continue to engage and build knowledge and skills throughout life.

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At key developmental periods in each young person's life they transition between education sectors – from early childhood to primary school, from primary to secondary school and from secondary school to further education, training and employment.

These transitions involve a move from familiar and personal surroundings to usually much larger and more complex learning environments and systems. Students have to adapt to new routines, changes and pressures in social environments, a broader range of curricula, larger numbers of teachers and different teaching styles, new educational demands, and a fast-changing labour market.

**Australian Governments commit to helping young Australians navigate choices they will need to make for their education, training and employment by providing guidance and streamlining transitions.**

### Delivering world-class curriculum and assessment

In recognition that students have different strengths, needs and backgrounds, the Australian Curriculum sets clear and challenging learning goals while having the flexibility to support students to progress in their learning regardless of their starting point.

The Australian Curriculum enables students to develop knowledge and understanding in the learning areas of English, Mathematics, Science, Humanities and Social Sciences, Health and Physical Education, Technologies, Languages, and the Arts. The learning areas in the curriculum support the development of deep knowledge within a discipline and allow for a depth of learning appropriate to students' phases of development. These learning areas along with general capabilities are critical to equip students with the knowledge, skills and confidence to actively contribute to society and Australia's economic prosperity.

Science, Technologies (including Engineering) and Mathematics make up the STEM learning areas, and are a key national focus for school education in Australia and critical to equip students to engage productively in a world of rapidly changing technology.

Students have the opportunity to learn about Australia's rich Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures. This cross-curriculum priority provides Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students with the ability to see themselves, their identities and cultures reflected in the curriculum and allows all students to engage in reconciliation, respect and recognition of the world's oldest continuous living cultures.

The curriculum supports students to become responsible local and global citizens in an interconnected world and to engage with complex ethical issues and concepts such as sustainability. As a foundation for further learning and adult life, the curriculum includes practical skills development in areas such as ICT, critical and creative thinking and problem solving. These skills support imagination, discovery, innovation and creative solutions to complex problems. They are central to contributing to Australia's knowledge based economy.

To ensure that student progress and achievement is measured in meaningful ways Australian 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 about student progress to inform their teaching
- assessment as learning - enabling students to reflect on and monitor their own progress to inform their future learning goals

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- assessment of learning - assisting teachers, educational leaders, parents, the community, researchers and policy makers to use evidence of student learning to assess student achievement against recognised goals and standards and drive improvements in student outcomes.

**Australian Governments commit to ensuring that all education sectors deliver world-class curriculum and assessment in Australian schools.**

### **Supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander learners to reach their potential**

All Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people must be empowered to achieve their full learning potential, shape their own futures, and embrace their cultures and identities as Australia's First Nations peoples. Across Australia, education sectors should focus on imagining what is possible and promoting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leadership, knowledge and learnings.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, knowledge and experiences are fundamental to Australia's social, economic and cultural wellbeing. However, educational outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people remain behind those of other learners in key areas of enrolment, attendance, participation, literacy, numeracy, retention and completion. Meeting the needs of young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and fostering access, engagement, progress, and achievement for their educational performance requires strategic effort and investment.

Australia's education system needs to engage Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander learners, their families and communities in all aspects of education, increase Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples participation in the education workforce at all levels, and support coordinated community services for learners and their families to increase productive participation.

**Australian Governments commit to ensuring all education sectors work to 'close the gap' for young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.**

### **Supporting young Australians at risk of educational disadvantage**

For Australia's education system to promote excellence and equity, governments and all education sectors must improve educational outcomes for educationally disadvantaged young Australians and encourage them, their families and their communities to hold high expectations for their education.

Learners experiencing disadvantage are more likely than their peers to start school developmentally vulnerable and less likely to have attended early education in the year before school. Targeted support can help learners such as those from low socioeconomic backgrounds, those from regional, rural and remote areas, migrants and refugees, learners in out of home care, homeless young people, and children with disability to reach their potential.

Australian Governments must provide all young Australians with equality of opportunity that enables them to reach their potential and achieve their highest educational outcomes.

**Australian Governments commit to ensuring all education sectors work to provide equality of opportunity for students at risk of educational disadvantage.**

### **Strengthening accountability and transparency via ongoing measurement and tracking**

Good-quality data and information on early childhood education and schooling and student benchmarking and progress is important for educators and their students, parents and families, the community and governments.

Good quality data supports educators to effectively identify learners' progress and growth, and design individualised and adaptive learning programs. It also informs programs, policies, allocation of resources, relationships with parents and partnerships and connections with community and business.

Reliable and appropriate information about the performance and progress of individuals and education providers helps parents and families make informed choices and engage with their children's education.

Parents, carers and families should have access to:

- data on learner progress and outcomes
- data that allows them to assess an education provider's performance overall and in improving learner progress and outcomes
- contextual information about the philosophy and educational approach of education providers, and their facilities, programs and extra-curricular activities
- information about an education provider's enrolment profile.

For schools, Australian Governments provide assessment results that are publicly available at the school, sector and jurisdiction level to ensure accountability and provide sufficient information to parents, carers, families, the broader community, researchers, policy makers and governments to make informed decisions based on evidence. They deliver national reform activity contributing to the ten areas for action. Building on national reform, each jurisdiction delivers state reform activities specific to local contexts to support student learning and improve student outcomes. This information provides the community with 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.

Good quality data enables governments to:

- analyse how well schools are performing against each other and internationally
- identify schools with students with particular needs
- determine where resources are most needed to support student learning needs and 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 education sectors and stakeholders to continue to provide public reporting that:**

- focuses on improving performance and student growth and outcomes
- provides parents with information on their child's performance, progress and outcomes
- is both locally, nationally, and internationally relevant
- is accessible, timely, consistent and comparable.

### **Achieving the Educational Goals for Young Australians**

With commitment and hard work—from young people, their parents, carers and families, from education providers, teachers, communities, business, industry and all Australian Governments—all young Australians will be provided with the opportunity to unlock their full potential.

#### **Commitment to Action**

This Education Declaration is supported by a commitment to action, with national policy initiatives outlined in national agreements, with national data collection and reporting by all Australian Governments to track the progress towards achievement of the educational goals for young Australians.

Australian Governments will collectively invest in national reforms to give every young Australian equal access and opportunity to become a confident and creative individual, a successful learner, and an active and informed citizen.

#### **Biennial Forum**

There continue to be many innovative and collaborative educational reforms developed across education sectors and at a national level, and there is potential for these ideas to be shared and adapted across the nation.

Education Council will convene a national forum biennially with education stakeholders to showcase best practice and progress against the goals outlined in the Declaration. The forum will also discuss the critical barriers to achieving the goals and the actions outlined in the Declaration and how these barriers can be overcome.