



**Ben Blackburn Racing
submission to the Productivity
Commission's Review of the
National School Reform
Agreement**

Acknowledgement of Country

Ben Blackburn Racing acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the lands that we live and work on across Australia.

We recognise that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have made and will continue to make extraordinary contributions to all aspects of Australian life.

We acknowledge the tens of thousands of years of continuous custodianship and placemaking by First Nations peoples and their proud role in our shared future together.

We thank them for their custodianship of Country – land, seas and skies.

We acknowledge the diversity of First Nations cultures, histories and peoples, and we pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging.

A collaborative National approach

Ben Blackburn Racing values the opportunity to contribute to the Productivity Commission's Review of the National School Reform Agreement.

We should of course be focussing on options and forward-thinking ideas which maximise our ability as a country to achieve nationwide, quality education for all students whilst supporting schools to adapt to and cater for the specific needs of their individual collection of students and local communities.

We know that 'one-size-fits-all' policy approaches do not work and have failed in the past as has also been encapsulated in the WA Government's own submission to this review.

Students and teachers need to be at the very heart of any school education improvement efforts underpinned by a strong focus on improvement drivers such as:

- Providing every student with a pathway to a successful future.
- Strengthening support for teaching and learning excellence in every classroom.
- Building the capability of our principals, our teachers and our allied professionals.
- School autonomy within a connected and unified public school system.
- Partnering with families, local school communities and relevant agencies.
- Using evidence to drive decision-making at all levels of the education system.

National collaboration is most effective when it:

- o is mutually beneficial.
- o is evidence-informed.
- o focuses on key drivers and enablers of improvement in educational outcomes.
- o allows for jurisdictional and sectoral flexibility in implementation.
- o is realistically achievable with respect to scope and stakeholder support.
- o is cost-effective and efficient.
- o considers impacts on workloads of teachers and school leaders.
- o leverages and articulates with existing education systems, processes, school infrastructure and commitments.
- o forms a coherent reform package or strategy rather than fragmented or ad-hoc changes and initiatives.

Key priorities need to include:

A strong focus on quality teaching and school cultures that support the professional growth of teachers through collaboration, clear expectations and feedback for teachers about their classroom performance based on evidence.

Professional support is to be available in areas teachers need and a focus on understanding and using student achievement data to examine the impact of different teaching strategies on student progress.

There has been significant progress made in relation to national collaboration in recent times including:

- The recent revision to refine, reduce and better align the Australian Curriculum.
- Successfully transitioning to online National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) assessments nationally from 2022.
- Recently announced improvements to the National Assessment Program, including conducting NAPLAN tests earlier in the year from 2023 to enable faster return of results to parents and teachers, to better inform their teaching and learning programs.
- Annual national data collections through the Australian Bureau of Statistics, such as the National School Statistics Collection, National Early Childhood Education and Care Collection, Nationally Consistent Collection of Data on School Students with Disability, and school financial and attendance reporting through the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority.
- Work to combat bullying and cyberbullying, including through the annual National Day of Action against Bullying and Violence.
- Progressing national implementation of recommendations of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse.
- Supporting the collection and sharing of data regarding teaching workforce characteristics and supply and demand trends, such as through the Australian Teaching Workforce Database initiative coordinated by the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership.
- National reforms in the Preschool Reform Agreement.

This Productivity Commission review

This Productivity Commission review of the National School Reform Agreement is an important and welcome first step in an ongoing conversation with States and Territories, students, schools, parents, academics, local communities and other valued stakeholders as we work towards the next national school funding agreement.

Ben Blackburn Racing considers this review as an excellent opportunity to establish a new paradigm for improved national collaboration that achieves outcomes for students, teachers, schools and the wider education and academic community.

Scope of this review

The National School Reform Agreement 2019-2023 (the agreement) and the National Policy Initiatives were developed based on the twin principles of *equity* and *excellence* in Australian schooling.

The NSRA and the NPIs within it were developed largely in response to the 2018 Report, ***‘Through Growth to Achievement: Report of the Review to Achieve Educational Excellence in Australian Schools’***, chaired by Mr David Gonski AC.

Ben Blackburn Racing notes that the three priority areas identified in that report are broadly reflected in the agreed outcomes within the National School Reform Agreement, namely:

- Academic achievement improves for all students, including priority equity cohorts;
- All students are engaged in their schooling; and
- Students gain the skills they need to transition to further study and/or work and life success.

Ben Blackburn Racing strongly believes that the principles of equity and excellence and outcomes are fundamental and need to be maintained as the over-arching measures of how effectively and efficiently the national education reform agenda is being delivered for Australian schools and students.

The National Measurement Framework underpins national reporting of school data, including data reported on the ACARA My School website, the ACARA National Report on Schooling data portal and the Report on Government Services released by the Productivity Commission.

The framework supports the Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration which states that:

“...Australian Governments commit to continuing to provide public reporting that:

- focuses on improving performance and student growth and outcomes for all students***
- provides parents with information on their child’s performance, progress and outcomes***
- is locally, nationally, and internationally relevant***
- is accessible, timely, consistent and comparable.”***

Key performance measures in the National Measurement Framework cover participation, student achievement and student attainment.

A fresh new round of national education reforms and strategic roadmap effort should be underpinned by the following common goals:

- Mutually beneficial – leveraging areas of shared responsibility, with a clear rationale for why national collaboration will lead to better efficiency or outcomes than acting alone.
- Evidence-informed.
- Focused on key drivers and enablers of improvement in educational outcomes – and are clearly within the education sector’s remit and locus of control.
- Jurisdictional and sectoral flexibility.
- Realistically achievable with regard to scope and stakeholder support.
- Cost-effectiveness and efficiency.
- Consider impacts on workloads of teachers and school leaders.
- Leverage and articulate with existing systems, processes, school infrastructure and commitments.
- Form a coherent reform package or strategy rather than fragmented or ad-hoc changes and initiatives.

National Measurement Framework for Schooling in Australia

The National Measurement Framework for Schooling in Australia (NMF) provides the basis for Australia’s Education Ministers to report to the community on the performance of schooling, in line with the Education Goals for Young Australians as expressed in the Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration.

Although the National Measurement Framework's key performance measures correspond with some of the targets and sub-outcomes specified in the National School Reform Agreement, the National Measurement Framework contains a wider array of nationally agreed key performance measures for school education than the National School Reform Agreement.

Some of the National Measurement Framework's key performance measures reflect intermediary factors, such as school attendance, that are forerunners to quality educational outcomes. Such measures provide early indications of likely improvements or declines in performance outcomes that take longer to manifest such as NAPLAN results, Year 12 achievement and Australia's performance on international assessments.

The key performance measures include:

- Strategic measures that provide nationally comparable data on aspects of performance critical to achieving the Education Goals for Young Australians and monitoring progress against the Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration.
- Student centred, focusing on student participation, achievement, attainment and equity.
- Based on sound and reliable practice, including for student assessment.
- Supportive of valid, consistent and transparent reporting.
- Relevant and of interest to the public.
- Cost effective, practical to collect and take account of the burden and impact that data collection may place on students, schools and schooling systems.

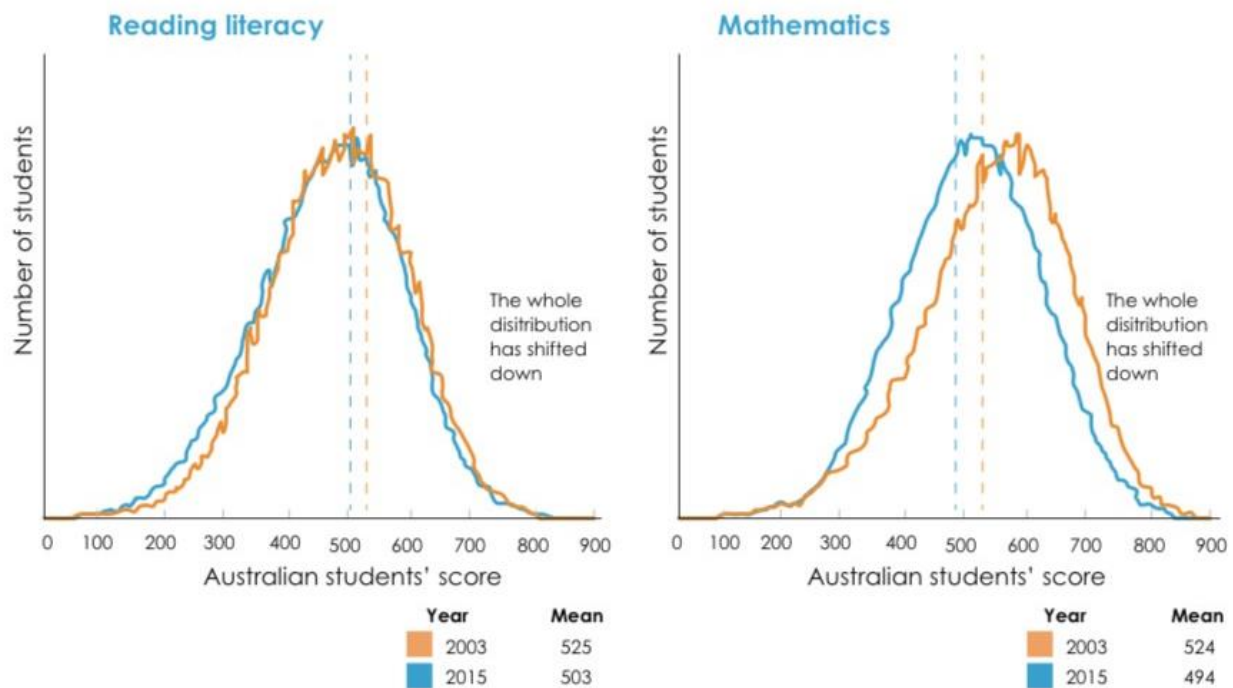
Ben Blackburn Racing supports the proposition that the principles that underpin the key performance measures in the National Measurement Framework for Schooling in Australia continue to guide any potential new measures that may be considered into the future.

In July 2017, the previous Australian Government established the *Review to Achieve Educational Excellence in Australian Schools* ('the Review') to provide advice on how to improve student achievement and school performance.

The final report '***Through Growth to Achievement Report of the Review to Achieve Educational Excellence in Australian Schools***' was published in March 2018.

The Review Panel was chaired by **Mr David Gonski AC** and also included Mr Terrey Arcus AM Dr Ken Boston AO Ms Valerie Gould Ms Wendy Johnson Dr Lisa O'Brien Dr Lee-Anne Perry AM Mr Michael Roberts.

Table 1 below highlights Australia's poor performance in absolute terms from 2003-2015 in reading literacy and mathematics.



Source: Derived from Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER), National PISA data 2003; and ACER, National PISA data 2015.

As was highlighted in the 2018 Final report:

“...In a world where education defines opportunity, schooling must support every one of Australia’s 3.8 million school students to realise their full learning potential and achieve educational excellence.

“...Australian students should receive a world-class school education, tailored to individual learning needs, and relevant to a fast-changing world. They should be challenged and supported to progress and excel in learning in every year of school, appropriate to each student’s starting point and capabilities.

“...Schooling should enrich students’ lives, leaving them inspired to pursue new ideas and set ambitious goals throughout life.

“...Australia has a strong educational heritage and committed educators. Since 2000, however, academic performance has declined when compared to other Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries, suggesting that Australian students and schools are not improving at the same rate and are falling short of achieving the full learning potential of which they are capable.

“...As a nation, we need to act now to raise our aspirations and make a renewed effort to improve school education outcomes”.



The David Gonski final report's detailed 23 recommendations and 17 findings are listed here in full below.

All Recommendations included:

Recommendation 1

Embed a focus on individual student achievement through continuous learning progress in the policies and practices of all schools and systems, with the expectation that each student should achieve at least one year's growth throughout each year of schooling.

Recommendation 2

Develop and disseminate evidence-based tools and resources to assist early childhood education providers, primary, and secondary schools to implement best practice approaches to supporting parents and carers to engage in their children's learning throughout their education.

Recommendation 3

Ensure all students have the opportunity within schools to be partners in their own learning.

Recommendation 4

Introduce new reporting arrangements with a focus on both learning attainment and learning gain, to provide meaningful information to students and their parents and carers about individual achievement and learning growth.

Recommendation 5

Revise the structure of the Australian Curriculum progressively over the next five years to present the learning areas and general capabilities as learning progressions.

Recommendation 6

Prioritise the implementation of learning progressions for literacy and numeracy in curriculum delivery during the early years of schooling to ensure the core foundations for learning are developed by all children by the age of eight.

Recommendation 7

Strengthen the development of the general capabilities, and raise their status within curriculum delivery, by using learning progressions to support clear and structured approaches to their teaching, assessment, reporting and integration with learning areas.

Recommendation 8

Strengthen school-community engagement to enrich student learning through the establishment of mechanisms to facilitate quality partnerships, including engagement in mentoring, volunteering and extra-curricular activities, between schools, employers, members of the community, community organisations and tertiary institutions.

Recommendation 9

Establish a comprehensive, national and independent inquiry to investigate and review the objectives, curriculum, assessment provisions and delivery structures for senior secondary schooling, to report within 12 months.

Recommendation 10

Accelerate the development of contemporary pedagogy through the use of collaboration, mentoring, observation and feedback, including from colleagues and students, by incorporating these practices into the core role of teachers and creating the conditions to enable teachers to engage in them.

Recommendation 11

Develop a new online and on demand student learning assessment tool based on the Australian Curriculum learning progressions.

Recommendation 12

Create the conditions necessary to enable teachers to effectively engage and benefit from professional learning in the use of the Australian Curriculum learning progressions, the new online formative assessment tool and tailored teaching practices to maximise student learning growth.

Recommendation 13

Create a continuously improving profession through the provision of high-quality professional learning for teachers; appropriate to their career stage, development needs and the changes rapidly occurring in society.

Recommendation 14

Develop a comprehensive national teacher workforce strategy to better match supply with workforce demands, including skill and capability requirements.

Recommendation 15

Create the conditions to enable teachers to engage in effective induction practices aligned with the nationally endorsed Graduate to Proficient: Australian guidelines for

teacher induction and monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the practices implemented by schools.

Recommendation 16

Create and provide opportunities for implementation of structured career pathways for teachers with clearly defined roles and development streams that allow for accelerated progression and provide the opportunity for remuneration, recognition and allocation of responsibilities based on expertise.

Recommendation 17

Review and revise the Australian Professional Standard for Principals to prioritise leadership of learning and make maximising the learning growth of every student every year the key focus.

Recommendation 18

Ensure principals have the professional autonomy and accountability required to lead their school on the improvement journey most relevant to their starting point.

Recommendation 19

Create and provide opportunities to implement a structured career pathway for school leaders which articulates clearly defined roles and development streams for middle leaders through to experienced principals and provides the opportunity for remuneration, recognition and allocation of responsibilities appropriate to the role.

Recommendation 20

Provide school leaders with access to a variety of professional learning opportunities appropriate to their career stage and development needs and recognise and harness the skills and experience of high-performing principals by enabling them to share their expertise across schools and throughout the system.

Recommendation 21

Enhance school and system internal self-review and external quality assurance processes, for the purposes of monitoring and reviewing student learning gain and achievement.

Recommendation 22

Accelerate the introduction of a national Unique Student Identifier for all students to be used throughout schooling.

Recommendation 23

Establish an independent institution to coordinate the strategic development of a national research and evidence base through the sourcing and generating of research, and the synthesising and promotion of educational evidence that can be easily accessed and implemented to improve student outcomes.

All Findings included:

Finding 1

Achieving educational excellence in Australian schools will require a focus on achievement through learning growth for all students, complemented by policies which support an adaptive, innovative and continuously improving education system.

Finding 2

Early childhood education makes a significant contribution to school outcomes. The transition between preschool and school education should be seamless. Ongoing reforms that lay the foundations in the early years for future learning and close the learning differential between advantaged and disadvantaged students, are essential to ensure all children have the best start in life.

Finding 3

There is strong and developing evidence of the benefit of parent engagement on children's learning. This will be further enhanced through the work currently underway to develop an evidence-informed definition of parent engagement, which will allow for a core.

Finding 4

Teaching curriculum based on year or age levels rather than levels of progress leaves some students behind and fails to extend others, limiting the opportunity to maximise learning growth for all students.

Finding 5

Reporting against year-level achievement standards hides both progress and attainment for some students and does not amount to a diagnostic assessment of real learning needs which – if met – would lead to growth in learning.

Finding 6

Fit for purpose school-community engagement undertaken to respond to identified student needs is an effective way to improve the relevance of learning, and to support personal development and student learning growth. School-industry collaboration, mentoring, volunteering and extra-curricular activities are effective forms of engagement to help achieve this.

Finding 7

There is compelling evidence, in Australian schools and internationally, that tailored teaching based on ongoing formative assessment and feedback are the key to enabling students to progress to higher levels of achievement.

Finding 8

Research and experience internationally confirms that ongoing professional development for teachers—some mandated by the school or system, and some through

participation in professional learning communities—is an essential part of a teacher’s workload in high-performing education systems.

Finding 9

To continue to grow student outcomes, we need to attract and retain the best and most effective teachers in the profession. Teaching must become a high-status profession of expert educators.

Finding 10

There has been significant national progress made towards achievement of the Teacher Education Ministerial Advisory Group reforms to improve the quality of Australian initial teacher education. It will be important, however, to maintain an unrelenting focus on the rigour of their implementation to achieve the goal of raising the quality of our initial teacher preparation and improving the classroom readiness of graduate teachers. set of agreed measures aligned to the definition to be established and used to drive improvements in policies and practice.

Finding 11

Implementation of effective induction practices and appropriate conditions are critical to support the transition from initial teacher education into the profession for early career teachers and play an important role in promoting retention and professional growth.

Finding 12

Certification at the Highly Accomplished and Lead levels of the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers recognises and promotes the development of collaborative learning professionals who strive to continually reflect upon and improve their practice and that of their colleagues. Such acknowledgement can play a key role in keeping excellent teachers working with students and helping to improve colleagues’ pedagogical practices.

Finding 13

Aspiring school principals require clear pathways leading to the role, and comprehensive training and preparation to a quality standard before their appointment.

Finding 14

To have an impact, strategies for school leadership development need to be aligned to the nationally endorsed *Australian guidelines for school leadership development* with implementation approaches monitored and evaluated for their effectiveness.

Finding 15

School leaders are called upon to play a variety of roles, including leaders of learning, business administrators, and culture setters. Participation in ongoing quality professional learning is essential to help school leaders to continue to develop across each of these dimensions, with a particular focus on their role as leaders of learning.

Finding 16

As Australian schools transition to diagnostic assessment and differentiated teaching within the framework of learning progressions, there will be increasing opportunities for, and benefits to be gained from, external quality review processes at school and system level. Continuous improvement in Australian education will be supported by the variety of quality assurance processes increasingly utilised by Australian school systems and schools.

Finding 17

To sustain continuous improvement, Australian schools need access to: valid and reliable evidence of effective teaching practice; independent and rigorous evaluations of commercial and other teaching and educational interventions; and the most recent findings on educational innovation and research – in an accessible format that can be readily translated into classroom use.



The urgent need for further education reforms...

There is still a need to develop a comprehensive national teacher workforce strategy to better match supply with workforce demands, including skill and capability requirements.

There is also still a need to prioritise the implementation of learning progressions for literacy and numeracy in curriculum delivery during the early years of schooling to ensure the core foundations for learning are developed by all children by the age of 8.

We also know that teaching curriculum based on year or age levels rather than levels of progress leaves too many socio-economically disadvantaged students behind and fails to extend others, limiting the opportunity to maximise learning growth for all students.

This is just not good enough. Australia can and must do better than this moving forward. What is clear is that any new National reform actions and fresh initiatives should also be evidence-based and deliver tangible and measurable outcomes for students, teachers and local school communities.

Governments, Education Ministers and key policy decision-makers should ALL focus on fundamental policy reforms that address disparity of outcomes for students impacted by disadvantage, students from regional and remote areas, students with disability and Indigenous students across Australia.

Policy Recommendations



In terms of implementing Education reforms more broadly, Ben Blackburn Racing makes these additional policy recommendations to the Productivity Commission's Review into the National School Reform Agreement:

- Pursue a collaborative national approach which is focused on key drivers and enablers of improvement in educational outcomes for all students and schools while allowing for jurisdictional and sectoral flexibility during the implementation phase.
- Hit the re-set button on implementing the comprehensive recommendations outlined in the 2018 David Gonski final report.
- Develop a comprehensive national teacher workforce strategy to better match supply with workforce demands, including skill and capability requirements.
- Prioritise the implementation of learning progressions for literacy and numeracy in curriculum delivery during the early years of schooling to ensure the core foundations for learning are developed by all children by the age of eight.
- Commence the implementation and roll-out of the new revised Version 9.0 of the National Curriculum in all Australian schools from 2023.
- Introduce a new priority focus in schools on teaching literacy and numeracy particularly at schools located in regional and remote areas where student attendance rates are declining – based on the 2021 data – and NAPLAN scores continue to be lower.
- Create a National Centre for Teaching Excellence to lead and support improved teaching quality and better teaching standards across the education system.
- Targeting VET subsidies better and encouraging and promoting higher quality training.
- Meet the teacher supply challenge with a strategy that includes evidence-based measures and innovative pilot programs. Broaden the supply of quality teachers by reviewing the requirement for a two-year Masters and piloting employment-based pathways.
- Make schools accountable for implementing best-practice teaching. Reform performance evaluation to give teachers meaningful feedback to keep more teachers in our classrooms and not switching to administrative roles which has also been suggested by the NSW Productivity Commission's white paper *'Rebooting the economy'* (May 2021).
- Create and provide opportunities to implement a structured career pathway for school leaders which articulates clearly defined roles and development streams for middle leaders through to experienced principals and provides the opportunity for remuneration, recognition and allocation of responsibilities appropriate to the role.
- Introduce new pathways to trades qualifications aimed at HSC-holders and mature-aged workers. New pathways should allow trades training outside the commonly used apprenticeship model. Continue the roll out of Trades Skills Pathways Centres to help pilot new pathways in the construction sector.

As outlined by the former Productivity Commissioner Professor Gary Banks in his 2012 'productivity to do list' major speech:

- Re-focus early education programs on disadvantaged children (PC 2011b). It is these children who most need institutional support and for whom empirical studies show the biggest gains from participation in pre-school.
- Make greater use of salary differentials to attract and retain quality teachers in disciplines where there are persistent shortages (maths, science, IT) and in disadvantaged and remote areas (PC 2012a).
- Devolve and enhance performance appraisal for teachers, with principals having the authority to hire the best teachers and fire the worst ones (PC 2012a).
- Modify industrial relations arrangements for schools and VET colleges to allow greater variation in remuneration and conditions, more flexibility in hiring to meet skill needs and more effective management of under-performance (PC 2011e, 2012a).
- Raise required 'threshold scores' for school teachers and qualifications required for VET practitioners (PC 2012a).
- Strengthen the independent validation and auditing of service providers to ensure they deliver to the standards needed for proper skill acquisition and advancement (PC 2011b, c).

References

Banks G, *'Productivity Policies: the 'to do' list'*, Economic and Social Outlook Conference, 'Securing the Future', Melbourne, 1 November 2012.

NSW Productivity Commission White Paper 2021, *'Rebooting the economy'*, 31 May 2021.

Through Growth to Achievement Report of the Review to Achieve Educational Excellence in Australian Schools, David Gonski, Final Report and Recommendations, Parliament House, Canberra, March 2018.