

# Recommendations and findings

**Commented [u1]:** Most comments in the column below are on Draft Report readability.

- I found this *Recommendations and and Findings* section confusing – gappy and convoluted. I almost gave up reading but persisted having admired commissioners’ insight and frankness in the *Key Points* section.

So, below I offer a layout solution.

**Commented [u2]:**

**Layout**

I suggest it is important to:

- a. List ‘Findings’ to correlate exactly with each sub heading listed on the Content page of the Chapter 1. [Aid reading this complex document, by presenting a fluency pattern that readers might routinely observe throughout the text.

I suggest a format such as:  
(1<sup>st</sup>) Findings’;  
(then 2<sup>nd</sup>) ‘Recommendations’;  
and (3<sup>rd</sup>) ‘Information request’.

- b. Make clear what the “Information Request” category means or calls for.

Specify if readers are being asked to respond to the draft; or if the statement is about a matter the commissioners will be pursuing.

**Commented [u3]:**

There are five subsections in Chapter 1 (1.1 to 1.5) but only two “Draft findings”.

I suggest

- Note every subsection draft finding
- or note their absence with such as: “1.3 - No draft finding prepared yet for ‘What has been happening to student outcomes?’

**Commented [u4]:**

Use the above suggested pattern to make text correlate exactly with the Chapter 2 findings; and to make clear what response is sought from readers.

Follow that pattern for each Chapter. i.e. Include the three elements every time, in order.

## Chapter 1: About this review



**Draft finding 1.1**

**Student achievement has stagnated, while attainment has improved and engagement has declined**

Over the past decade, the performance of Australian school students in national and international assessments of literacy and numeracy has stagnated.

Although the proportion of students completing school has increased since 2015, the proportion attending school regularly has declined, with much of this decline predating COVID-19.



**Draft finding 1.2**

**Persistent gaps in education outcomes for some student cohorts point to systemic problems**

Australia has long aspired to provide a high quality and equitable education for all students.

Outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, students in outer regional and remote areas, and students with parents with low educational attainment are consistently below the outcomes of the broader student population.

## Chapter 2: High-level assessment of the National Policy Initiatives



**Information request 2.1**

**Realising the full potential of evidence-based research through the Australian Education Research Organisation**

What steps could governments take to realise the full potential of evidence-based research through the Australian Education Research Organisation?



#### Draft finding 2.1

**To date, the National Policy Initiatives have had little impact on Australian students' outcomes, with some initiatives stalled or incomplete**

Some National Policy Initiatives have only recently delivered outputs, while others have stalled or fallen short.

- The design of the unique student identifier and the online formative assessment tool still need to be settled.
- The National Review Projects have not yet been followed by substantial national reforms.
  - There is no clear plan on how jurisdictions will implement the National Workforce Strategy to plan for future workforce needs.
  - It is equally unclear how aspects of the Senior Secondary Pathways Review will be progressed.
- National data projects have met with delays.
- The Australian Education Research Organisation is just beginning its work and will need to develop effective relationships and systems to realise its potential.

#### Commented [u5]:

The intricacy of detail in the total document calls for stipulation of ties within the text, to counteract information overload effects on previously-uninformed-readers'.

e.g.

a. As presented, the "National Workforce Strategy" reference could be made clearer through such as "see on page 6 for Figure 2", reminding/telling the reader where it fits within the "National Policy Initiatives"; and the same with the "Senior Secondary Pathways" reference. i.e., help readers identify the detail within the bigger picture

b. The third and fourth dot-points [bottom two in the frame] to me seem better placed if placed as explanatory comments put before the points on "jurisdiction" and "equally unclear".

c. Further, the last of the final two dot-points written in the present format, seems to be a combination of explanation and recommendation, not a finding: it may more logically be better placed as part of Draft recommendation 2.1.

In summary, I suggest each Chapter's *Recommendations and findings* section in the final Report should come from scrutinising the Draft Report, to then rewrite each section, to offer readers a unified concept/picture. Categorically tie each 'Information request' (or noted absence in the instance) to 'Recommendations' (or noted absence in the instance), as a follow-on for each (prior) 'Finding'.



#### Draft recommendation 2.1

**Parties to the National School Reform Agreement should fulfil their commitments to deliver key National Policy Initiatives**

Recommended actions include:

- agreeing the design and privacy protections of a Unique Student Identifier (USI). If parties cannot deliver a national USI, they should, at a minimum, explain why they have been unable to do so
- developing the national online formative assessment tool in a way that enables jurisdictions to adapt the tool to their needs and preferences (including using content and features from their own formative assessment tools)
- developing a national model of the teacher workforce to support workforce planning.



#### Draft finding 2.2

**The National School Reform Agreement has weaknesses that undermine its effectiveness in facilitating collective, national efforts to lift student outcomes**

- Relying too much on NPIs that are a single solution to common issues has delayed reform outcomes.
- A lack of transparent, systematic, independent and meaningful reporting means there is little effective accountability.
- Outcomes do not adequately capture non-academic domains such as wellbeing.
- Insufficient prominence has been given to lifting outcomes for students from priority equity cohorts or a core of students who do not meet minimum standards.
- There is a poor connection between policy making and implementation in the classroom.



#### Information request 2.2

##### Options for enhancing accountability in the next agreement

The Commission is seeking stakeholder views on:

1. the benefits, costs and risks of proposed enhancements to accountability mechanisms for the next intergovernmental agreement, including:
  - a. jurisdictions specifying the outcomes that they expect to achieve (and related indicators) over the life of the agreement in public 'implementation plans' and reporting on progress annually. This would be in addition to identifying what measures they pursue in each priority reform area (as per current practice for bilateral agreements)
  - b. aligning the design of outcomes and indicators across jurisdictions to allow comparability
2. ways of ensuring groups representing school systems (Independent, Catholic), teachers, principals and students have effective input into policy formation (such as requiring jurisdictions to receive and publish input from affected parties as part of preparing implementation plans).

## Chapter 3: Lifting outcomes for all students



#### Draft finding 3.1

##### Many students have additional needs that do not directly relate to culture, disability or remoteness

- A significant number of students do not meet minimum standards — often year after year. Around one third of students who do not meet national minimum literacy and numeracy standards in their early years of schooling do not meet national minimum standards in later school years.
- Most underperforming students do not belong to the priority cohorts named by the National School Reform Agreement. Around 85 per cent of these students do not belong to any of the priority equity cohorts identified in the National School Reform Agreement. Low educational performance needs a different approach.



#### Information request 3.1

##### Intensive, targeted support for students who have fallen behind

Would programs that provide intensive, targeted support to students who have fallen behind lend themselves to being a national policy initiative under the next intergovernmental agreement on schools?



#### Draft finding 3.2

##### Governments are yet to achieve outcomes for students who have specific educational needs related to their culture, their disability or remoteness, as set out in the National School Reform Agreement

- Gaps in learning outcomes for priority equity cohorts identified in the National School Reform Agreement



**Draft finding 3.2**

**Governments are yet to achieve outcomes for students who have specific educational needs related to their culture, their disability or remoteness, as set out in the National School Reform Agreement**

have not closed.

- There can be multiple factors that increase the challenges of providing high quality education for some students. Where these factors intersect, the effects can be compounding.



**Draft finding 3.3**

**Governments have failed to adequately demonstrate how reforms under the National School Reform Agreement are addressing specific educational needs related to students' culture, disability or remoteness**

- There is significant diversity in students' learning needs and educational aspirations, both across and within cohorts, reflecting differences in their life experiences, the education outcomes they value, their learning and wellbeing outcomes, and the nature of adjustments and supports they may require.
- The National School Reform Agreement does not adequately include reform actions relating to students from the priority equity cohorts it names.
- Under the National School Reform Agreement, equity issues are to be addressed through the bilateral agreements between the Australian Government and each jurisdiction. However, these agreements often do not identify measures to lift outcomes for students from all priority equity cohorts or, if they do, provide little detail on how measures will lift outcomes, or report any progress being achieved.



**Draft finding 3.4**

**The priority equity cohorts in the National School Reform Agreement do not capture all cohorts of students experiencing educational disadvantage**

- There are some student cohorts not identified as a priority equity cohort in the National School Reform Agreement that face significant educational barriers.
- Children and young people living in out-of-home care face significant disruptions to their schooling and are considerably less likely than their peers to attend school and engage with education. By year 9, children in out-of-home care were four times more likely to be below the national minimum standard in reading, and six times more likely to be below the national minimum standard in numeracy, relative to the general population.
- Students who speak English as an additional language or dialect often require specific support to strengthen English language skills to access the general curriculum.



#### Information request 3.2

##### Priority equity cohorts for the next agreement

Are there student cohorts, not identified as a priority equity cohort in the current National School Reform Agreement, such as children in out-of-home care, that should be a priority in the next agreement? If so, which cohorts and why?

#### Commented [u6]:

In the style I am suggesting, this Information request 3.2 would appear earlier, immediately after a 'Finding 3.2'

Attention to correction of what I read as further misplacements of elements below, seems advisable: I've not used my precious time to write notes to identify all cases: the 'Information request 3.2' being sandwiched between 'Draft Findings 3.4' and 'Draft finding 3.5' is an example of what I see as problematic.



#### Draft finding 3.5

##### There are a range of educational barriers experienced by students from priority equity cohorts

- Compounding problems arise from equating Indigeneity with educational disadvantage.
- Cultural recognition by schools, and the value placed on Indigenous knowledges by them, are key in responding to the distinct educational needs and aspirations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. Culturally responsive curriculum and pedagogies increase inclusion and engagement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, and enrich the learning of non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students too.
- Indigenous knowledges, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, and how to include and empower students may be poorly understood by teachers and school leadership.
- There is now a mandate for consultation and shared decision-making in relation to the design of educational outcomes and sub-outcomes (and how they shape reform) under the Key Priority Reforms of the 2020 Closing the Gap Agreement.
- Children and young people with disability experience unique barriers to engagement and inclusion at school that affect wellbeing, engagement and school success.
- Initial Teacher Education may not sufficiently empower teachers to recognise and respond adequately to disability.
- Families in regional, rural and remote areas can have limited choice in where and how they educate their children.

#### Commented [u7]:

I have written no more margin review comments past this point, but offer the complete section (up to what the Interim Report lists as page 41), so readers have my comments in context. It's a work in progress!



#### Draft recommendation 3.1

##### Implementation plans, developed in consultation with affected groups, should be used to improve the transparency of reform actions and to hold parties to account for the outcomes they commit to achieve

In the next intergovernmental agreement, Australian, State and Territory Governments should ensure:

- there are reforms directly addressing the unique barriers and ambitions of students from priority equity cohorts
- bilateral agreements, developed in consultation with stakeholders, identify how jurisdictions will lift outcomes for students in each of the priority equity cohorts identified in the agreement, recognising their specific learning needs
- progress reporting contains sufficient information (and has sufficient oversight) to provide the public with confidence that measures to lift outcomes for students in priority equity cohorts are being implemented and achieving their intended outcomes.



### Information request 3.3 Implementation plans

1. What would be the costs, benefits, and implementation issues associated with the Commission's proposed enhanced accountability mechanisms (draft recommendation 3.1) for bilateral agreements and associated reporting arrangements (in general and as they relate to students in priority equity cohorts)? What would be the costs and benefits of having people with lived experience involved in shared decision making in relation to reporting arrangements?
2. Are there ways parties could reduce the costs (for example, reporting burdens) and increase the benefits of implementation plans by integrating, aligning or linking them with existing government reporting processes (for example, reporting under Closing the Gap and Australia's Disability Strategy)?



### Information request 3.4 Transparency of funding for students from priority equity cohorts

What would be the benefits, costs and risks of greater national reporting of schools funding and expenditure data to support transparency around state and territory efforts to lift outcomes for students from priority equity cohorts? If there is a case for providing such information, how could it be collected cost-effectively?



### Information request 3.5 Embedding the perspectives of priority equity cohorts in national education policy and institutions

1. What specifically could be done to embed the views of priority equity cohorts in national education policies and institutions, including outcomes, targets and policy initiatives in the next intergovernmental agreement on school education?
2. What are the merits of establishing a national Indigenous consultative body on education? How might such a body be structured? If pursued, would this best occur through a successor national school reform agreement or some other avenue?
3. Does the current education and research evidence base capture a representative range of cultural and community perspectives, including those of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, teachers and researchers? If not, what actions could be taken to support this?

## Chapter 4: Student wellbeing



### Draft finding 4.1 Many students experience poor wellbeing, but some do not receive effective support

A significant proportion of children and young people experience poor social and emotional wellbeing. Poor wellbeing directly affects students' capacity to learn. Poor wellbeing can be particularly acute for students who experience challenges to engagement and inclusion at school, for example, children and young people in out-of-home care, those with disability and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.



#### Draft finding 4.1

##### Many students experience poor wellbeing, but some do not receive effective support

While wellbeing is often influenced by factors outside the school gate, poor wellbeing can be exacerbated by responses from schools.

Australian, State and Territory Governments have implemented initiatives to support student wellbeing with varying degrees of success.

Successful support of student wellbeing relies on teacher education and the culture of school leadership.



#### Draft recommendation 4.1

##### Governments should incorporate wellbeing in the next intergovernmental agreement

In the next intergovernmental school reform agreement, the Australian, State and Territory Governments should:

- add improved student wellbeing as an outcome
- include local actions that would improve student wellbeing and indicators of progress in bilateral agreements or implementation plans
- collect data on student wellbeing from all schools to enable annual reporting on a national measure of student wellbeing.



#### Information request 4.1

##### Should there be National Policy Initiatives to improve student wellbeing?

1. Are there common steps that the Australian, State and Territory Governments could take in the next intergovernmental agreement to improve student wellbeing, or programs that could be implemented nationally?
2. Is knowledge in recognising and responding to poor wellbeing and trauma sufficiently covered in Initial Teacher Education and Teacher Performance Assessments? If not, how might this be improved?

## Chapter 5: Supporting teachers



#### Draft finding 5.1

##### Improving teacher effectiveness is associated with large lifetime economic benefits for students

Improving the effectiveness of teaching would generate sizable lifetime benefits for students. Commission analysis suggests a one standard deviation increase in teacher effectiveness would raise average classroom lifetime earnings by several hundreds of thousands of dollars each year.



#### Information request 5.1

##### Teaching Performance Assessment

1. Does the Teaching Performance Assessment (TPA) process ensure pre-service teachers are sufficiently



#### Information request 5.1 Teaching Performance Assessment

classroom ready?

2. Should TPAs meet a national minimum standard? If so, how might this be achieved?
3. Do TPAs ensure that pre-service teachers are well placed to respond to the needs of students from priority equity cohorts? If not, how might this be improved, and what trade-offs might this involve?



#### Information request 5.2 Induction and mentoring programs

Would measures for improving early career teachers' access to induction and mentoring programs lend themselves to being a national policy initiative under the next intergovernmental agreement on schools?



#### Information request 5.3 The prevalence of teacher attrition

1. Is teacher attrition more or less of a problem than in other professions?
2. Are the drivers of attrition amenable to government policy? How could government policy address high teacher attrition?
3. Do the drivers of attrition vary across the course of a teacher's career?



#### Draft finding 5.2 There are local shortages of teachers and shortages of trained teachers in key subjects

There are teacher shortages in regional, rural and remote areas, and in subjects such as mathematics, science, English and design and technology. There is also a lack of teachers from diverse backgrounds.

Factors such as changes in initial teacher education enrolment trends, an ageing workforce and growing student enrolments may contribute to teacher shortages in the future.

Improving labour demand and supply data collection and developing a national model of the teacher workforce, would help Governments better manage local shortages and out-of-field teaching.



#### Draft recommendation 5.1 Governments should improve teacher workforce demand and supply data

The Australian, State and Territory Governments should commit to continued development of the Australian Teacher Workforce Data initiative, with a priority placed on achieving full participation by all States and Territories. Governments should also improve workforce demand data. This data could be used to underpin the national model of the teacher workforce (draft recommendation 2.1).





**Draft recommendation 5.1**  
**Governments should improve teacher workforce demand and supply data**



**Draft finding 5.3**  
**Teachers work long hours and their workload is increasing**

Australian teacher workload is greater than the OECD average. Australian teachers spend more time on non-teaching tasks, and less time on teaching tasks, than their international counterparts.

Teacher workload has increased over time. Many teachers cite heavy workload as a reason for wanting to leave the profession.

At the same time that teacher workload has been increasing, the number of teaching assistants and other support staff has grown.



**Draft recommendation 5.2**  
**Reducing teacher workload should be a focus of the next agreement**

In the next agreement, the Australian, State and Territory Governments — in consultation with teachers and school leaders — should develop a new National Policy Initiative that commits all jurisdictions to undertake an assessment of teacher and principal time use. This could involve a four-step process, whereby Australian, State and Territory Governments:

- commit to an assessment of teacher and principal time use across school sectors, with a focus on identifying how teachers and principals spend their time, and what tasks they rate as low or high value
- specify how they will remove low-value tasks, duplicate tasks and regulatory inefficiencies
- specify how teaching assistants can be best deployed, including to reduce teacher workload
- monitor the compliance and administration burden on teachers and principals over time.



**Information request 5.4**  
**Teaching assistants and support staff**

How are teaching assistants and support staff being deployed in schools and classrooms?

- What are the primary functions of teaching assistants and support staff in Australia?
- Could deployment and use of teaching assistants and support staff be improved to help reduce teacher workload? If so, should this be pursued through national collaboration?



**Draft recommendation 5.3**  
**Encouraging highly effective teachers and maximising their value**

In the next agreement, the Australian, State and Territory Governments should work together, in consultation with teachers and school leaders, to:

- develop and support localised communities of practice across schools, regions and sectors. These should



**Draft recommendation 5.3**  
**Encouraging highly effective teachers and maximising their value**

encompass accessible options for time-constrained teachers as well as subject specific options to support those teaching out-of-field

- ensure that Highly Accomplished and Lead Teachers are trained, and deployed as intended, to lift the quality of teaching across schools and sectors
- streamline processes for becoming a Highly Accomplished and Lead Teacher, including by recognising prior competencies.



**Information request 5.5**  
**Streamlining pathways into teaching**

How can pathways into teaching for mid-career entrants, especially those with skills in critical areas, be streamlined?

- What are the costs and benefits of re-introducing one year graduate diplomas?
- What employment-based pathways could be explored?



**Information request 5.6**  
**Understanding what happens in the classroom**

What (if any) systems do jurisdictions already have in place to understand what is being taught in classrooms, and how it is being taught? What are the options for obtaining more and better data on classroom practice in a way that minimises costs and administrative impost?

## Chapter 6: School leadership



**Draft finding 6.1**  
**Improving school leadership can have large impacts on students' learning**

School leaders are second only to teachers in fostering a positive learning environment. Improving the effectiveness of leaders, especially principals, would generate sizable benefits.



**Draft finding 6.2**  
**More planning is needed to ensure a sustainable supply of school leaders**

Long lead times for teachers to move into leadership roles, and the emergent pressures on the current cohort of school leaders, underscore the importance of effective leadership planning to ensure a sustainable pipeline of future school leaders.



**Information request 6.1**  
**Fostering school leaders**

1. Do principals have the resources, support and professional development opportunities required for their demanding roles?
2. Are policy efforts to identify and prepare potential leaders effective?
3. Are there alternative sources of school leaders, including from outside the teaching profession?
4. What are the relative merits of a nationally coordinated approach to supporting a pipeline of future school leaders?

**Chapter 7: The National Measurement Framework**



**Draft finding 7.1**  
**The Measurement Framework for Schooling in Australia is not appropriate for measuring progress on National School Reform Agreement outcomes**

While reliable, and largely relevant, the Measurement Framework for Schooling in Australia is not a complete means of reporting progress on National School Reform Agreement outcomes. The visibility of Governments' progress against agreement outcomes is further diminished by the absence of a standalone report and the reliance on the broader *National Report on Schooling in Australia* and ACARA dashboard for performance reporting.



**Information request 7.1**  
**Standalone reporting against the National School Reform Agreement**

Would a standalone report on progress against the National School Reform Agreement outcomes and sub-outcomes (separate to the *National Report on Schooling in Australia*) improve the accountability of Governments to the community?



#### **Draft recommendation 7.1** **The performance reporting framework of the next agreement**

In the next intergovernmental school reform agreement, Australian, State and Territory Governments should:

- commit to public reporting on each outcome by jurisdiction for students with disability, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and students in regional, rural and remote areas
- add new sub-outcome measures for learning gain, post-school outcomes and the measure of student wellbeing proposed in draft recommendation 4.1
- update the NAPLAN sub-outcome measure to use proficiency standards rather than learning bands.



#### **Information request 7.2** **Proposed sub-outcomes under the future agreement**

Do the identified outcomes, and proposed additional and modified sub-outcomes, reflect the aspirations of all Australian students, including those from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander backgrounds, students with a disability, and students from other priority equity cohorts (including students from equity cohorts not explicitly identified in the current agreement, such as those in out-of-home care, or who speak English as an Additional Language or Dialect)?



#### **Draft recommendation 7.2** **Review of the Measurement Framework for Schooling in Australia**

ACARA's next review of the Measurement Framework for Schooling in Australia should:

- create a performance indicator framework aligned to National School Reform Agreement outcomes and sub-outcomes to which Key Performance Measures are mapped
- consider the inclusion of system performance Key Performance Measures relating to the teaching workforce
- consider the inclusion of additional contextual information relating to influences on learning based on Australian Early Development Census data and information on English language proficiency
- deliver improved reporting on outcomes for students from priority equity cohorts
- be undertaken in consultation with students, teachers and communities
- document remaining gaps.

The *National Report on Schooling in Australia* should be tabled annually in Parliament.

ACARA should work towards filling reporting gaps by exploring the use of State and Territory Government data that are comparable over time, even if it is not nationally complete or comparable across jurisdictions. Well established State and Territory Government surveys of students, parents and carers, and teachers should be given due consideration.