

IEUA  
Independent Education Union of Australia

**Submission to the Productivity Commission on  
Education Evidence Base**

May 2016



## **Introduction**

1. The Independent Education Union of Australia (IEUA) is pleased to have the opportunity to make a submission to the Productivity Commission on Education Evidence Base
2. The IEUA is the federally registered union that represents workers, including teachers, principals, and school support staff, in Catholic, other faith-based and community independent schools across all the states and territories of Australia. While the majority of members of the IEUA are teachers, the membership of the IEUA also consists of workers engaged as teacher aides, administrative staff, gardeners, cleaners and caterers.
3. Membership of the IEUA is also diverse in respect to the types of workplaces included in its coverage. These range from very large schools with significant resources to extremely small rural schools with very limited resources. The variety of schools represents great diversity. These include a wide variety of faith based and non-denominational schools, including, Catholic schools, Independent schools, Islamic schools, Anglican schools, Jewish schools, Steiner schools, Lutheran schools, Montessori schools, and privately run post-secondary providers. The union currently has a membership of over 75,000.

## **Commentary**

4. The IEUA does not accept the underlying propositions in the Treasurer's "Terms of reference" for the Inquiry.
5. The IEUA does not, for instance, accept the proposition that "Improving the collection and management of education data in Australia will assist to create a more robust national education evidence base for effective policy and program development to meet our national education objectives and lift our national productivity" is fundamentally correct.
6. Indeed, the IEUA would argue that there is already considerable education data available to governments, school systems, school authorities and

schools; to monitor, evaluate and inform the teaching-learning opportunities for students.

7. The IEUA contends that the two fundamental issues, neither of which are addressed in the scope of this inquiry, are 1) capacity and skills to analyse current data and 2) resources, and in particular time, for teachers to analyse current data, collaborate with colleagues and utilise the data to inform the development of learning programs.
8. The IEUA would argue that the “terms of reference” assumes that what is required is more data and more centrally controlled/reported data.
9. The IEUA does not believe that there is evidence to support the need for such assumptions.
10. Fundamentally, the inquiry’s “terms” even fail to identify for consideration what is done with the current evidence base, including the plethora of examples of failure of successive governments to act on evidence already available and in particular the under-utilisation of significant data collections, including that from multiple education inquiries over the decades.
11. Further, the IEUA would argue that significant resources are already committed to international data collection programs, such as PISA and TIMSS, that provide no direct “in classroom” information for teachers and learning support staff to inform their practice. Indeed, such data seems almost solely to be collected for the purpose of creating international league tables and invariably the detailed consideration of underlying data is ignored.
12. By way of example the following list of student assessment data is already collected nationally in Australia:
  - NAPLAN year 3
  - NAPLAN year 5
  - NAPLAN year 7
  - NAPLAN year 9
  - NAP science literacy
  - NAP civics and citizenship
  - NAP ICT
  - PISA – mathematics, reading, science
  - PISA – problem solving, financial literacy
  - TIMSS – mathematics and science

- PIRLS – reading literacy
- Australian Early Development Census

...and of course with a proposal by the Federal Government to introduce a Year 1 national assessment process in reading, phonics and numeracy.

13. Schools are also required to provide data to the Australian Government Department of Education and Training in relation to student demographics, background, financial receipts and expenditure, staffing details, and VET engagement.
14. Schools are also trialing, with an expectation on all schools to implement, nationally consistent processes to assess student learning adjustment needs for Students with a Disability.
15. All of the data outlined above is collected and assessed on a nationally consistent basis. This data provides a current wealth of information about the operation of schools in Australia.
16. In conclusion, the IEUA is unconvinced that further, additional or 'more consistent' data collection is required by any jurisdiction or authority. Indeed, the IEUA would request specific detail on the areas in which alleged inadequate or inconsistent data exists.
17. It is clearly evident from the monumental growth in data collection, required by governments (invariably tied to school funding), has resulted in significant increases in workload and red-tape in schools with major work intensification issues being faced by IEUA members as a consequence.
18. Due to the IEUA's grave concerns about the structure and assumptions underpinning the inquiry we will not comment on individual questions as commentary would only confer legitimacy to those very assumptions.

**Chris Watt**  
**Federal Secretary**  
**Independent Education Union of Australia**  
**May 2016**