

OPENING STATEMENT

Stephen Gniel, ACARA Chief Executive Officer

4 December 2025

Thank you Chair.

As this is my first appearance before this Committee for the Parliamentary term, I would like to begin by welcoming the new Committee members to their roles – I look forward to supporting the Committee in its work.

I would like to take the opportunity to briefly update the Committee on two aspects of ACARA's work.

My School release

Yesterday ACARA released its latest update of the My School website.

This free website at myschool.edu.au provides information that supports national transparency and accountability of Australia's schools through the publication of nationally consistent school-level data.

This is in line with ACARA's role to provide detailed, accessible, timely and meaningful school performance information.

It has now been updated with 2025 NAPLAN data, providing nationally consistent information about Australian schools for use by parents, school communities and governments.

Parents can search any school to read information about matters including the principal, how many students and teachers are at the school, and attendance rates, as well as financial information for 2024, including funding levels and sources.

Teachers, parents and carers and the wider community can view average NAPLAN student results at each school in 2025 compared to students with a similar background and all Australian students.

New for this year – the update includes data on student progress, which shows how much the same students at the same school have improved since their previous NAPLAN assessment 2 years ago.

This important data provides the information to celebrate improvement in a fairer way that considers the individual circumstances of a school, as well as to better identify areas for renewed or continued focus.

Latest school attendance data

As part of the latest National Report on Schooling, also released yesterday, I am pleased to report that the latest data shows an increase in student attendance during Semester 1 2025.

Overall, the national attendance rate was 88.8% - up slightly from 88.3% - and the national attendance level – the proportion of students in Years 1–10 whose attendance rate is equal to or greater than 90% – was 62.1%, up from 59.4%.

Encouragingly, this is showing student attendance heading in the right direction, while also reinforcing the need for continued focus and prioritisation.

Australian Curriculum

Another important update to provide the Committee is that in October 2025, all education ministers approved changes to the Australian Curriculum review process.

As members will be aware, the Australian Curriculum is an explicit statement of the priorities and aspirations we hold for our young people. It makes clear to teachers and schools the key knowledge, understanding and skills our young people need to be successful in life and this is at the heart of these changes.

Based on ACARA's expert advice – and reflecting extensive consultation with the education community, including teachers, principals and subject associations, alongside evidence gathered on international best practice – ministers have agreed to the inclusion of provision for an iterative review of the Australian Curriculum.

This balances the need for stability of curriculum with the ability to respond rapidly when required. This process – which is led by ministers and with advice from ACARA – will ensure that our curriculum remains relevant and responsive to educational needs.

Most importantly, the iterative review process provides the guardrails to put teacher workload at the heart of any change, as well as protecting the overall integrity of the Australian Curriculum.

Linked to this, again based on ACARA's advice, education ministers have commissioned ACARA to work with jurisdictions, sectors and stakeholders to look at an iterative review of Foundation to Year 2 Mathematics in the Australian Curriculum.

This is in light of latest NAPLAN results and the national focus on numeracy improvement, and ahead of the Year 1 Numeracy Checks coming into effect later next year.

ACARA is currently consulting with key stakeholders – including teachers – and return with advice, including the scope, for Ministers to consider in February 2026.

This is a two-staged approach – the decision to proceed with this iterative review will depend on the outcomes of ACARA's scoping work with jurisdictions, sectors, and other key stakeholders to further understand the challenges in implementing Mathematics in these foundational years and identify where action might need to be taken.

Given these changes to the Australian Curriculum review process, the approval of the next version of the Australian Curriculum is now scheduled for 2032.

This change reflects the extensive work each state and territory undertakes with teachers and the wider school community to implement the Australian Curriculum to their context and bring it to life in classrooms.

Extending the period from the current 6-year cycle also recognises the significant work required by teachers and principals to engage in the review process.

Implementation plans set by states and territories indicate that full implementation of the Australian Curriculum V9.0 will be in place in 2027.

Feedback from teachers and teacher groups such as teachers' unions and principal associations supported the change as it reduces pressure on teacher workloads and reduces stress and destabilisation caused by shorter full review cycles.

Extending the review cycle from six to ten years is in line with international best practice, as seen in countries such as Finland and Japan, which are frequently cited in OECD research for their longer, stable curriculum cycles – typically around ten years or more, with flexibility for iterative updates.

In concluding, I would like to reiterate that ACARA remains steadfast in its commitment to ensuring we inspire improvement in the learning of all young Australians through world-class curriculum, assessment and reporting.

Thank you.

[ENDS]