

PREFACE

Maximising our investment in our schools is of paramount importance to all Australians: the quality of education each student receives has important consequences for the student, his or her family and, ultimately, the Australian economy.

Australia has maintained its level of performance against its international peers, yet the data reveals that the current education policies and funding models continue to fail our most disadvantaged students. In particular, students from a low socio-economic background, students with a disability, Indigenous students and students living in rural, remote and regional areas.

Many other factors also influence student achievement. Chief among these are parental engagement, parent and teacher expectations, effective behaviour management, teacher quality, ongoing professional learning, appropriate support for students with special needs and school autonomy.

The committee has approached this inquiry with the firm belief that each child, regardless of his or her background, is entitled to a quality education and appropriate support to reach his or her full potential. The outcomes may be different for different students, however, the quality of education must be excellent in all instances.

A number of submitters and witnesses advised the committee that there have been more than thirty inquiries into education in the past three decades. The inference to be drawn from this observation is that this report will inevitably join the pile of reports heavy with recommendations oft repeated. The committee acknowledges this concern. However, until we get it right education will remain a key interest for members of Parliament, governments, academics and the Australian community.

While this report builds upon the conclusions reached by previous inquiries, the following pages also provide fresh perspectives on how to improve teaching and learning in our schools.