**Centre for Educational Measurement & Assessment**

**Management Discipline Group**
**UTS Business School**

# Submission to the Review to Inform a Better and Fairer Education System

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## Who we are

We make this submission on behalf of the University of Sydney, **Centre for Educational Measurement and Assessment (CEMA)** in collaboration with Prof Rachel Wilson, affiliate of CEMA, at UTS Business school.

CEMA are an extensive community of educational experts and researchers dedicated to empowering educators and Higher Degree by Research students to work productively with educational data. We are committed to working with educational partners, government, private and not-for-profit organisations to strengthen a confident teacher voice helping to assure the technical veracity and impartiality of public commentary on educational assessment, evaluation, measurement and reporting.

## What focus we take

We **respond to questions in Chapters 2 and 4** of the review discussion paper. We first summarise our **thinking**, then present some **recommendations**, based on a holistic analysis of what is required to facilitate a coherent and productive education system.  In addition, we later provide brief, specific **feedback on the questions**. Much of our thinking, recommendations, and discussion around questions, is based upon **Table 1**(see page XX).

## Here to help

We hope our submission is of use to the review panel. Please note, **CEMA staff are ready and willing to assist further (**CEMA  Ph: 0412 100 301) in answering queries, presenting the material in this submission and relevant research evidence. Contact author: rachel.wilson@uts.edu.au (Ph:0402 829588)

The review's discussion paper highlights many key and critical issues within Australian education, we take a **system analytic approach** to understand the current context, including the rising educational inequity, school segregation and other structural challenges that Australia faces. In particular, as experts on educational assessment and data, we note the **poor alignment between system data and our national educational goals.** This misalignment **extends into system strategy (NSRA) and annual national reporting (NRSinA)** where a **lack of transparency and accountability is also notable**, see **Table**.1

Our analysis results in this logic:
- **Systematic Alignment is a critical** for efficient organisational, and system, performance.
- Systemic alignment is a **strong explanatory concept** for current Australian educational performance.
- Analysis shows extremely low systemic alignment between educational goals, data and policy.
- Even where there is some potential alignment there is **poor transparency and inadequate reporting.**
- Poor transparency and alignment allow our **system to go unchecked**, **preventing effective problem analysis and due attention** in research, media, public discourse and political action.

| GOALS | DATA | STRATEGY | REPORTING |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Mparntwe National Goals** | **Measurement Framework for Schooling in Australia** MFSA | **National School Reform Agreement** NSRA | **National Report on Schooling** NRSinA |
| **1.A. Excellence** | Not clearly defined or operationalised. | Not defined or explicitly targeted | Not defined, limited indirect reporting |
| **1. B. Equity** | Defined as monitoring of social equity groups | Defined but not targeted | Defined, but extremely limited reporting |
| **2. A.i. Confident learners** | X | X | X |
| **2. A.ii. Creative learners** | X | X | X |
| **2. B. Lifelong learners** | X | X* | X |
| **3.C.i. Active citizens** | X | X | X |
| **3. C.ii. Informed citizens** | NAP sample Civics & citizenship sample assessment | X | 53% Yr 6 & 38% Yr 10 students at/or above proficient standard |
| *"life success" targeted poorly as: "Increase the proportion of young people who have completed year 12 or equivalent or gained a qualification at AQF Certificate III or above." | | | |
| **X** = no data | | | |

*Table 1:Misalignment in Australian system architecture*

# Recommendations

Develop **a coherent systemic framework** for educational monitoring, data collection and priority setting, that specifies how progress towards meeting the educational goals in the Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration (the Goals) will be supported, monitored, evaluated and reported.

The **Measurement Framework for Schooling (MFSA) and The National School Reform Agreement (NSRA) should be based on the national goals** and a **system monitoring framework developed by a shared and collaborative stakeholder proces**s (see also Rec 2). Priorities for system and school improvement should be derived from monitoring of progress towards the Goals; data collection should be purposeful to seek answers to key questions about how we are tracking against our goals, and how we can do better (rather than the other way round developing policy around data that happen to be available).

The monitoring framework should:
- **be guided by program theory/logic analysis** to identify the measures, indicators and data needed to collect to monitor education system success (Kellogg Foundation, 2004; Alkin, 2011; Stegemann et al, 2018);
- include **key components of system evaluation** (e.g., student assessment, teacher/teaching appraisal, school and whole system evaluation) (OECD, 2013) and **articulations among components** to generate complementarities and promote consistency of objectives (Savage & O'Connor, 2019);
- be **informed by stakeholders'** (students, teachers, school leaders, parents/carers) **needs** and perspective;
- **guide systemic alignment** between educational goals, data and strategic policy;
- present development of **measures/indicators and collection of data** not as end in themselves but as **tools** to achieve improved student learning outcomes;
- specify how information will be **effectively and accessibly communicated to the public** on how the education system is working, and how data collected, and the evaluation of results will be used to improve educational processes and outcomes in collaboration with all key stakeholders.

**Derive measures in the NFSA from national education goals**: map existing measures against the goals, repurpose appropriate measures aligned to goals, and develop new ones to fill gaps. **Strengthen analysis, reporting and transparency on educational equity, reporting on all groups, against all measurement framework data/indicators.**

Progress towards many of the national goals is currently not measured or measured only partially. For example, there are no measures for students becoming confident or creative individuals successful lifelong learners. There is a need to evaluate the validity and limitations of current measures, identify key gaps in data availability and map out a comprehensive set of measures aligned to the Goals.

The Alice Springs Declaration outlines conceptions of excellence, equity, confidence, creativity, and lifelong learning that can guide systematic definition of constructs and corresponding measures and indicators. For example, confidence in young adults includes having a sense of self-worth, self-awareness and personal identity that enables management of wellbeing; being resilient with skills and strategies needed to tackle challenges, adapt and manage change; having a sense of optimism about the future. However, definitions could be sharpened and need to be shared across all system documents; including state and territory jurisdiction documents.

Collecting evidence on a broader set of measures that align with the goals will build a richer picture of how we are tracking towards a better and fairer system. Moreover, there are different approaches to collecting evidence beyond standardised testing, such as sample-based student surveys, other surveys

seeking stakeholder feedback (see also Recommendation 4), moderated school-based curriculum-aligned assessments, or research-based thematic reviews.

In order to evaluate progress towards goals such as confident, life-long learners it is important to select the most appropriate, valid, reliable, cost and time effective measures for inclusion in the Measurement Framework. Data that recognises student agency and assessments that include student voice must be considered. Selecting the right measures is key to their effectiveness when measuring system-wide success.

For national goals to be monitored and pursued equity data need to be collected and reported for all social equity groupings, nationally and for state and territories jurisdictions. There is currently inadequate reporting on equity, although 'excellence and equity' are our dual foremost education goals in the Mparntwe statement and equity has been a clear national educational goal since the 1998 Hobart Statement. Currently, data available on the ACARA data portal are lacking, there is not a single indicator for which disaggregation by all 6-equity groupings is possible. Outcomes for 'students with disability' have been neglected, with no reporting of any data for this group in recent reports. There is potential to improve reporting of outcomes for students with disability with integration of the NCCD database and the MFAS data.

It is important that equity data remain aggregated at a high level, and that the reporting is dealt with sensitively so as to avoid further marginalisation of disadvantaged equity groups. Development and reform of equity measures should be in partnership with advocates for equity groups and every effort made to ensure measures are socially and culturally appropriate to students across those groups. Measures on educational attainment should be critically reviewed for measurement bias and a student centred, strengths-based approach taken to any assessment or evaluation designs.

For effective monitoring and strategic management of educational funding, resources and supports, data for equity groups needs to be reported longitudinally, over at least 10 years. Compounding disadvantage may need to be examined in a more extended reporting cycle.

Inequity is also complicated by Australia's high levels of school choice/competition, growing school segregation and the compositional, or peer, effects that produces. The recent rapid growth in school segregation means these effects are likely to be contributing to Australia's educational malaise (Chesters & Daly, 2017; Bonnor, 2021). Volckmar (2019) concluded that Australian educational inequity was compounded by "a lack of federal governance, diverse and unfair school funding, and extensive use of school choice is a hindrance in promoting equality in education." (p.629). We would add 'inadequate monitoring and reporting' to that list. Without full transparency on educational inequity, policy is uninformed.


<span style="color:red">Recommendation 3</span>

<span style="color:red">Prioritise simple **low budget, actions to improve alignment, transparency and strategic management in the short term,** while working on strengthening alignment through reform of the MFAS to address current systemic structural problems (rising inequity, school segregation, stagnant and declining performance [Some principles for this are **outlined in Table 2.**</span>

Priority 1 (short-term): A **graduated long-term plan to improve transparency,** with more aligned and comprehensive reporting, is a critical first step.   This requires clarifying shared understandings and definitions of key constructs and committing to full and transparent reporting. Excellence and equity could be more effectively monitored with current data and improved reporting. Additional summary reporting on excellence and equity goals needs be done with "report cards" that provide a clear synopsis of trends in educational equity for the identified equity cohorts/groups. Full report, of course, should be provided in the NSRinA. There is also potential to improve alignment with the lifelong learning goal, with currently available data, see suggestions in orange in Table 2.
- Effective monitoring through full reporting transparency is an immediate priority and requires annual reporting on all MFAS indicators (see Rec 2 for specifics)
    - For all equity cohort groups (currently promised but not delivered)
    - For national, state/territory, school levels, and school sectors
    - Longitudinally, rolling 10-year trends

- Ensure new NSRA targets funding and resources to strategically promote the goals, especially equity, which has been neglected
- Excellence and equity reporting should also be summarised in 2-4 pager annual "report cards"

| GOALS | DATA | STRATEGY | REPORTING |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Mparntwe National Goals**<br>Goals | **Measurement Framework for Schooling in Australia**<br>MFSA | **National School Reform Agreement**<br>NSRA | **National Report on Schooling in Australia**    NRSinA |
| **1.A. Excellence** | 1. **Define** excellence<br>2. **Operationalise** excellence<br>3. **Commit to report** in NRSinA annual report & summary | 1. **Define** excellence<br>2. **Endorse** MFSA<br>3. **Strategise** for excellence<br>4. **Target, fund and resource** for excellence | 1. **Define** excellence<br>2. **Report** on MFSA & NSRA<br>3. **Publish** annual report with all major cohort decadal trends, including equity groups<br>4. **Publish** 'Excellence' annual summary report card |
| **1.B. Equity** | 1. **Define** equity<br>2. **Operationalise** equity<br>3. **Commit to report** in NRSinA annual report & summary | 1. **Define** equity<br>2. **Endorse** MFSA<br>3. **Strategise** for equity<br>4. **Target, fund and resource** for equity | 1. **Define** equity<br>2. **Report** on MFSA & NSRA<br>3. **Publish** annual report with all major cohort decadal trends, including equity groups<br>4. **Publish** 'Equity' annual summary report card |
| **2.A.i. Confident learners** | 1. **Define** Confident learners<br>2. **Develop** indicators<br>3. **Commit to report** in NRSinA annual report | 1. **Define** Confident learners<br>2. **Endorse** MFSA<br>3. **Strategise** for confident learners<br>4. **Target, fund and resource** for confident learners | 1. **Define** confident learners<br>2. **Report** on MFSA & NSRA<br>3. **Publish** annual report with all major cohort & equity group trends in learner confidence |
| **2.A.ii. Creative learners** | 1. **Define** Creative learners<br>2. **Develop** indicators<br>3. **Commit to report** in NRSinA annual report | 1. **Define** Creative learners<br>2. **Endorse** MFSA<br>3. **Strategise** for creative learners<br>4. **Target, fund and resource** for creative learners | 1. **Define** confident learners<br>2. **Report** on MFSA & NSRA<br>3. **Publish** annual report with all major cohort & equity group trends in learner creativity |
| **2.B. Lifelong learners** | 1. **Define** Lifelong learners<br>2. **Utilse** USI & reframe participation & completion data<br>3. **Commit to report** in NRSinA annual report | 1. **Define** Lifelong learners<br>2. **Endorse** MFSA<br>3. **Strategise** for lifelong learners<br>4. **Target, fund and resource** for lifelong learners | 1. **Define** Lifelong learners<br>2. **Report** on MFSA & NSRA<br>3. **Publish** annual report with all major cohort & equity group trends in lifelong learning |
| **2.C.i. Active citizens** | 1. **Define** Active citizens<br>2. **Utilse** NAP-CC sample data Aspect 3: Affective processes for CC. Aspect 4: CC participation<br>3. **Commit to report** in NRSinA annual report | 1. **Define** Active citizens<br>2. **Endorse** MFSA<br>3. **Strategise** for lifelong learners<br>4. **Target, fund and resource** for active citizens | 1. **Define** Active citizens<br>2. **Report** on MFSA & NSRA<br>3. **Publish** annual report with full sample and & sample equity group trends in active citizenship |
| **2.C.ii. Informed citizens** | 1. **Define** Informed citizens<br>2. **Utilse** NAP-CC sample data Aspect 1: CC content Aspect 2: Cognitive processes for understanding CC<br>3. **Commit to report** in NRSinA annual report | 1. **Define** Informed citizens<br>2. **Endorse** MFSA<br>3. **Strategise** for lifelong learners<br>4. **Target, fund and resource** for informed citizens | 1. **Define** Informed citizens<br>2. **Report** on MFSA & NSRA<br>3. **Publish** annual report with full sample and & sample equity group trends in informed citizenship |
| green - focuses on defining and reporting only | | | |
| orange - reframes and utilises existing data | | | |
| blue- develops, trials, evaluates new indicators | | | |

*Table 2: Strategies for strengthening alignment in education system architecture*

<u>Priority 2 and 3 (medium term):</u> A second, efficient and economical, step is to **develop currently available data into better indicators** of active and informed citizenship and the lifelong learning goal. Participation and retention data, and the USI, can be reconceived to monitor lifelong learning in the short term. Attitudes toward life-long learning and sense of belonging may be useful additional indicators. Active and informed citizenship can be monitored and reported more effectively using the NAP-CC sample data, again additional indicators, particularly of attitudes and actual civic participation, may be helpful additions in the longer term.

A third step is to develop new definitions and indicators for the national goals of confident and creative learners. New indicators should be developed based on new definitions and shared understandings to monitor and report against the remaining goals. These should be piloted, trialled

and evaluated before full adoption in the MFAS. Sample data may be adequate for national monitoring purposes.

Importantly, definitions of success against improved and better aligned indicators should also be reviewed and move away from unrealistic targets, instead defining success as stable or improving indicator trends over time. These should be examined for each indicator, and indicator data disaggregated and reported for all 6 identified priority equity cohorts. Intersectionality of equity categories needs to also be reported and additional equity cohorts can be researched and identified.


## Recommendation 4

**Educational stakeholders should be more widely consulted and represented within policy development,** including the development of new NSRA, and documentation. Stakeholder data should be integrated into review and strengthening of the MFAS.

Stakeholder perspectives should be highly influential in future development and reviews of the NSRA and MFAS (see Recommendation 3). This requires strong student and teacher voice in the co-creation of the measurement framework, it is apparent that this is not the case with the current MFAS; indeed the document does not include any reference to 'teacher/s'.

Logic and system management approaches (see Recommendation 1) focus heavily on stakeholder needs assessment and utilise stakeholder data (Kellogg Foundation, 2004; Alkin, 2011; Stegemann et al, 2018), education should be no different. There have been many recent initiatives in the collection of stakeholder data, however these have not been integrated in the MFAS and are not highly visible in national policy frameworks.

Data collected for MFAS are currently limited to data educational tests/assessment. Stakeholder data should be valued, and where appropriate included as indicators for the national goals.  For example, when measuring confidence in learners, indicators may include:
  o Students hold high expectations – linking to student report data
  o School culture builds confidence – linking to student, teacher report data
  o Barriers to learning are dismantled by effective adaption to local environments and communities – reporting on assessment differentiation/adaptions/modification.

The current measurement framework data (NAPLAN, PISA, TIMMS, PIRLS, participation and attainment) are not well aligned with national goals and are not highly valued by teachers who report valuing work activities that are oriented to the 'equity' goal of education (McGrath-champ, Wilson et al., 2018). The lack of alignment between the measurement framework and teachers' work values have been a source of growing frustration. Reform must exercise more respect, consultation, and partnership with the profession if we are to avoid repeating the mistakes of the past.

A productive partnership with teachers, and also students and parents/carers, in the redevelopment of the MFAS would serve many purposes:
  o choice or, or development of, the most appropriate indicators – in terms of construct face validity, logistical and efficiency considerations;
  o development of a shared sense of purpose that is established in classrooms and reflected up through system data and architecture;
  o amelioration of teachers' current frustrations;
  o development of data utilisation systems that would enable deeper engagement and integration with productive teaching and learning;
  o potential to address current excessive teacher workload related to data and administrative work (McGrath-Champ, Wilson et al. 2018).

Modern perspectives on educational measures and indicators promote a broad perspective on what data is and can be. The current MFSA has a heavy focus on test data across literacy (10/32 measures) and numeracy (8/32 measures), this should be balanced with data that assesses other curriculum areas covered in the Australian Curriculum (AC) as well as stakeholder data from school leaders, teachers,

student and parent/carers. Sampling data would enable covering breadth in learning outcomes across greater breadth of curriculum areas and may also be appropriate to monitor national goals.

## Recommendation 5

**In redeveloping the NSRA and the MFAS, and educational systems and policies more broadly, consideration must be granted to the work of teachers and the context in which they operate.**

The MFAS ought to be positioned as a working document that is central to the endeavour of every teacher and school leader. To this end, it must consider the context it exists to serve and the work conditions of those charged to enact it. It is only by empowering educators with relevant and reliable data that is fit for purpose and easily accessible that schools, and education systems, can achieve the improvement they seek.

Ultimately, education policy changes and improvements are enacted in the classroom and the investment of teachers in the process is crucial to their effectiveness. Strong alignment between the data teachers need to drive the continual improvement of our education system towards shared goals of excellence and equity is needed in the development of a new MFAS.

A national approach to consistent data visualisation and tracking could assist teachers greatly in actively engaging with data to improve practice. Consistency in the representation of data will make multiple sources easy to access, read and action in the classroom. This approach will also assist in reducing teacher data and administrative workload enabling more time for teaching and learning with students.

The inclusion of an increased focus on data and assessment literacy and active engagement with the MFAS during Initial Teacher Education will also further support the inclusion of such measures as central to all teaching and learning practice in the classroom.

The manner means and motivation with which teachers enact the MFAS in their schools will determine its effectiveness. Therefore, conscious understanding and acceptance of the context in which teachers operate is essential. Any reforms need to be done in partnership with the profession, and highly cognisant of the need to develop trust in the system, authentic goal-oriented data, whilst recognising low teacher morale, heavy workload of teachers and the diverse challenges in different school contexts. Any development of measures should take account of the burden and impact that data collection may place on students, schools and schooling systems. Special attention should be given to the voice of Indigenous stakeholders and teachers and students from diverse backgrounds.

## Recommendation 6

Appoint a **single independent national body to oversee the educational system,** including the development of the national measurement framework, ongoing associated data collection, management, reporting and communication to stakeholders, and use of data for monitoring, planning, policy development and evaluation to improve educational outcomes.

The effectiveness of the Australian schooling education rests on confidence in the stewardship of the sector. Transparency in the collection, analysis and reporting of appropriate, reliable and valid data that accurately monitors national educational goals is critical. The system accountability rationale, committed to in the Mparntwe statement, has not been fulfilled through current arrangements.

The fragmentation and misalignment in the current system requires reform led by an expert body, providing leadership for a **coherent education system**. This group would provide **overarching stewardship** for the system and strong evidence-based advice on progress toward goals for the Education Council.

Fragmented data and agencies make an **independent, coordinating body** necessary. In addition to goal-data misalignment, serious structural failures have been identified (Bonnor, 2021, Reid, 2019) and policy misalignment between educational jurisdictions has been identified (Savage & O'Connor,

2019). The extensive misalignment and poor transparency outlined in this submission testifies to the need for a new overarching body.

The remit of the body would be to protect education stakeholder interests by coordinating data and reporting to ensure full transparency on educational progress, including by equity groups.
Such a body would enable the strong, long-term planning required to address Australia's current education challenges. In particular, an independent and long-tenured statutory body is needed to:
- advise on reform, and ongoing evaluation and review of the MFAS
- protect stakeholder interests, particularly those of teachers, who must be vocal and respected partners in effective policy development
- design and work with teachers and partner organisations to provide more aligned and comprehensive national reporting against national education goals
- coordinate and monitor system accountability through appropriate and transparent analysis and reporting
- provide strategic advice on system trends to support long-term policy that extends beyond political terms
- provide a strategic and proactive approach that can allow the collection of data to enable evaluation of system factors, in order to improve student and school outcomes and long-term impact

Unlike the newly formed Australian Educational Research Organisation (AERO) which is designed as "an institute to position Australia's educators at the forefront of education research"; this independent body will focus on Australia's education system, and its data architecture, in order to **inform system improvement.**

AERO has committed to the principles of: ambition, collaboration, rigour, diversity and inclusivity, and transparency and integrity. They have recognised the need to "build trust by being honest, sharing our work and supporting new ideas. We welcome scrutiny to enhance the integrity of our processes." Similar principles could apply to the new independent body and help **rebuild trust in educational system frameworks.** This is an issue internationally (Richardson, 2022), but of particular concern in Australia where the current arrangements are inadequate for effective steering of school education to meet educational goals.

In addition, the body, or the Education council they report to, should commit to a series of principles for developing and dealing with data:
- Data aligned with goals
- Diverse data types – including stakeholder data
- Student centred design
- Customised design to minimise logistical and workload burdens on stakeholders
- Joined up (e.g. integrating MFAS + ATWD + ITE + NCCD + curriculum data + school funding + longitudinal studies + stakeholder data)
- Comprehensively reported with transparent analysis against goals
- Concise and informative reporting on excellence and equity (disaggregated against all specified equity groups and reported longitudinally in each annual report)
- Data access for independent analysis

# Response to review Questions

These are our thoughts on discussion paper questions for Chapters 2 and 5, in note form. We can expand upon these in consultation.

# Chapter 2: Improving student outcomes – including for students most at risk of falling behind

1.  What are the most important student outcomes for Australian school students that should be measured in the next NSRA? Should these go beyond academic performance (for example, attendance and engagement)?

    1.1.  A long-term approach to reform in this area should be taken.

    1.2.  Reform in monitoring and management of the NSRAs, and the education system more broadly, is needed; however, a staged approach, with transitions to greater transparency and use of current data, alongside planning for development of new indicators is needed.

    1.3.  Literacy and numeracy are important indicators of Australia's educational "excellence" goal, but excellence needs to be better defined in NSRA agreements. Longitudinal monitoring needs to be done and a positive trend toward excellence should be target.

    1.4.  Importantly, equity must also be monitored. There is scope to lift reporting of equity in the NSRA and NRSinA. Longitudinal monitoring for ALL six currently identified groups is needed, with the addition of the new equity cohorts recommended by the recent PC review of NSRA (Productivity Commission 2022) – students living in out-of-home care, students with English as an additional language or dialect background, students in youth detention, and refugee student) and clear analysis of students with intersectional disadvantage (e.g. those in 2, 3, 4 equity cohorts).

    1.5.  Comprehensive reporting on "excellence and equity" will be difficult, especially for cohorts with disability, until outcomes data are joined up with NCCD data and appropriate work is undertaken to disaggregate cohorts of students with different types and degrees of disability. A start needs to be made on this work.

    1.6.  An annual **equity report card summarising** progress against our "equity" goal, nationally and for each state/territory, should provide clear, graphical summary of trends for each equity cohort. Any positive trends, or stabilising of negative trends, should be defined successful.

2.  **What are the evidence-based practices that teachers, schools, systems and sectors can put in place to improve student outcomes, particularly for those most at risk of falling behind? Are different approaches required for different at-risk cohorts?**

    2.1.  Whilst there is work that can be done here, disseminating and supporting evidence-based practice, we argue that an evidence-based policy approach is just as important.

2.2. System evidence-based policy in providing funding, resources and support to students most at risk is desperately needed to improve our national educational outlook. This can be improved by tightening alignment and transparency in monitoring of student outcomes, especially for student equity cohorts (see above).

**3. How can all students at risk of falling behind be identified early on to enable swift learning interventions?**

3.1  Lift national, and other jurisdictional, reporting for transparent monitoring of students at risk, i.e. those in priority equity cohorts.

3.2.  Expand and report on equity cohorts. Currently there are 6 identified cohorts (although some documents list only 5). The Productivity Commission recommends another 4 (students living in out-of-home care, students with English as an additional language or dialect background, students in youth detention, refugee students).

3.3.  Focus on intersectionality in disadvantage and report systematically for those students meeting two, three, four, five or more equity cohort criteria. Orient policy to fund, resource, staff and support them.

3.4. Commission monitoring and research to identify and finesse identification of cohorts most at risk.

3.5. Completion of the USI is critical for provision of appropriate support to individual students; but again, we argue that system level reform is critical here. Reporting that is clearly aligned to goals and strategy, and that is fully transparent, is needed for the identification of clusters and schools in need of systemic support.

**4. Should the next NSRA add additional priority equity cohorts? For example, should it add children and young people living in out-of-home care and students who speak English as an additional language or dialect? What are the risks and benefits of identifying additional cohorts?**

4.1. Yes, the Productivity Commission recommends another 4 (students living in out-of-home care, students with English as an additional language or dialect background, students in youth detention, refugee students).

4.2.  Focus on intersectionality in disadvantage and report systematically for those students meeting two, three, four, five or more equity cohort criteria. Report their outcomes and adjust/orient policy to fund, resource, staff and support them.

4.3. Commission monitoring and research to identify, and finesse identification, of cohorts most at risk.

**5. What should the specific targets in the next NSRA be? Should the targets be different for primary and secondary schools? If so, how? What changes are required to current measurement frameworks, and what new measures might be required?**

5.1. Primary focus should be on shifting to a transparent system and strengthening alignment between measures, data and national goals.

5.2. See earlier recommendations 1-5 regarding the MFSA and Table 1

5.3. Measurement targets should be defined in terms of:

– excellence – benchmark standards, against which stability or upward trend would be considered  "success"
– equity – gap reduction, where gap stability or upward trend would be considered "success"

**6. How can the targets in the next NSRA be structured to ensure that evidence-based approaches underpin a nationally coherent reform agenda while allowing jurisdictions and schools the flexibility to respond to individual student circumstances and needs?**

6.1. See Table 2

6.2. Strengthen systemic alignment and system transparency.

6.3. Strategically allocate funding, resourcing and staffing toward students, cohorts and schools, at disadvantage. Incentivise all jurisdictions to do the same.

6.4 New national and state/territory jurisdictional policy initatives must be required to include, and address, recent tertiary sources providing international evidence bases (e.g. for teacher shortage initiatives :  See, B. H., Morris, R., Gorard, S., Kokotsaki, D., & Abdi, S. (2020). Teacher recruitment and retention: A critical review of international evidence of most promising interventions. *Education Sciences*, *10*(10), 262; Peña-López, Ismael. "Effective teacher policies. Insights from PISA." (2018)) Such evidence has been ignored in the past.

6.5 Strengthen relationships between academic and policy makers

**7. How should progress towards any new targets in the next NSRA be reported on?**

7.1. See earlier recommendations 2 and 3 regarding fully transparent reporting against national goals.

 7.2 Minimum reporting requirements should include:

- o Longitudinal national and jurisdictional cohort reporting
- o Longitudinal school sector cohort reporting
- o Longitudinal reporting for ALL identified priority equity cohorts
- o Report card summary reporting for excellence and equity for national and state/territory jurisdiction outcomes

# Chapter 5: Collecting data to inform decision-making and boost student outcomes

**26. What types of data are of most value to you and how accessible are these for you?**

26.1 Data should be aligned to the national goals

26.2 The goals, and their measurement, should be periodically reviewed by stakeholders, including teachers, parents, students, and critically reviewed and evaluated to ensure appropriateness, effectiveness, currency, ease and efficiency.

**27. Is there any data not currently collected and reported on that is vital to understanding education in Australia? Why is this data important?**

27.1.  Currently there is a lack of system alignment between goals and data. See Table 1 for the large GAPS in data and reporting.

27.2.  Systematic Alignment between goals, data, strategy  is a critical for efficient organisational, and system, performance. Australia's low-level systemic alignment is a strong explanatory concept for current educational performance.

27.3 Even where there is some potential alignment there is poor transparency and inadequate reporting.

27.4 Poor transparency and alignment allow our system to go unchecked, preventing effective problem analysis and due attention in research, media, public discourse and political action.

27.5 Failure to report effectively on educational equity is particularly costly, and has allowed inequity to grow.

**28. Should data measurement and reporting on outcomes of students with disability be a priority under the next NSRA? If so, how can this data be most efficiently collected?**

28.1.  Yes, merging of NCCD and ACARA data bases should be a priority.

28.2.  Initial reporting should identify the types of disability within schools and examine them in relation to

- 1.2.1.Retention and completion rates
- 1.2.2.Participation rates for NAPLAN- a priority given the slowness to offer test adjustments and adaptations for these tests.
- 1.2.3.Attainment, where  appropriate, in NAPLAN and PISA/TIMPS/PIRLS data.

28.3 Students with disability should be monitored in accordance with their rights to education. The current system commits to examining them as a priority equity group but

there is not data or reporting to satisfy this commitment. Current reporting in the NRSinA is limited to only counting students with disability.

**29. Is there a need to establish a report which tracks progress on the targets and reforms in the next NSRA? Should it report at a jurisdictional and a national level? What should be included in the report?**

29.1 Yes, see previous arguments for systematic alignment and transparency.

29.2 See introduction and Table 2 for details on reporting requirements

**30. Is there data collected by schools, systems, sectors or jurisdictions that could be made more available to inform policy design and implementation? What systems would be necessary to make this data available safely and efficiently**?

30.1. We note that data collected for MFAS are currently limited to data educational tests/assessment. Current state/territory jurisdictional data should be explored for its potential to provide useful national indicators aligned to national goals.

30.2. Stakeholder data should be valued, and where appropriate to the national goals privileged. For example, when measuring confidence in learners, indicators may include:

- o Students hold high expectations – linking to student report data
- o School culture builds confidence – linking to student, teacher report data
- o Barriers to learning are dismantled by effective adaption to local environments and communities – reporting on assessment differentiation/adaptions/modification.

30.3. Data from state and territory jurisdictions and other organisations could be made more available to inform policy design and implementation, for example:

- – NSW's "tell them from me" surveys for measuring student engagement and wellbeing. The surveys can be used "to capture student, parent and teacher voices, providing reliable evidence for schools to use in identifying strengths and areas for improvement."[1]it should be critically review for potential indicator, stakeholder feedback should be prioritised in that process.
- – AITSL's ATWD and ITE data sets. Strengths – potential for efficient management of teacher workforce. Inadequacies – currently on 3 states have substantial participation. Don't yet have teacher specialisation data, or teacher allocation to school factors (SES, geography), needs to be linked to other data.
- – NCCD - disability data
- – School funding data (DEST and PC)- integration and analysis is important for effective provision of school staffing and resourcing.
- – National Centre for Longitudinal studies' data, at the Commonwealth Dept of Social Service- including longitudinal studies of early childhood, Indigenous children, youth.
- – Australian Early Development Census – AEDC
- – PIAC adult literacy data

30.4. These data and bodies are compartmentalised which supports the need for the creation of a national body that manages the process to embed how and

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[1] https://education.nsw.gov.au/student-wellbeing/tell-them-from-me/about-tell-them-from-me-

what needs to be done with the data to improve learning outcomes (see Question 32)

**31. The Productivity Commission and AERO have identified the need for longitudinal data to identify the actual students at risk of falling behind based on their performance (and not on equity groups alone) and to monitor these students' progress over time. Should this be the key data reform for the next NSRA?**

31.1. The national goals should be fully reported, and monitored over time, in the National Report of Schooling in Australia (NRSinA). This should be priority and undertaken immediately.

31.2. The commitment to the national goals needs to be matched by carefully monitoring of progress against them. As "equity" is one of the national goals, there should be full reporting, and longitudinal trends, addressing the 6 equity cohorts/groups in the national report. We feel this should not be left to AERO as a special project but should be routine and transparent in the National Report on Schooling in Australia (NRSinA).

31.4. There is potential to extend the current 6 identified "equity cohorts" to include others identified in the PC NSRA review report; and also engage AERO to run periodic analyses to identify others which should be included in the monitoring of equity.

31.5. We suggest that for fully transparent and well disseminated reporting against this important national goal, that an addition Educational Equity Report Card be produced alongside the national report. This report card with provide a clear synopsis of trends in educational equity for the identified equity cohorts/groups. Full report, of course, should be provided in the NSRinA

**32. Should an independent body be responsible for collecting and holding data? What rules should be in place to govern the sharing of data through this body? 33. Is there data being collected that is no longer required? 34. How could the national USI support improved outcomes for students**

32.1 The effectiveness of the Australian schooling education rests on confidence in the stewardship of the sector. Transparency in the collection, analysis and reporting of appropriate, reliable and valid data that accurately monitors national educational goals is critical.

32.2 The fragmentation and misalignment in the current system requires reform led by an expert body, providing leadership for a **coherent education system**. This group would provide **overarching stewardship** for the system and strong evidence-based advice on progress toward goals for Education Ministers.

32.3 Fragmented data and agencies make an independent, coordinating body necessary. In addition to goal-data misalignment, serious structural failures have been identified (Bonnor, 2021, Reid, 2019) and policy misalignment between educational jurisdictions has been identified (Savage & O'Connor, 2019). The extensive misalignment and poor transparency outlined in this submission testifies to the **need for a new overarching body.**

32.4 The remit of the body would be to protect education stakeholder interests by coordinating data and reporting to ensure full transparency on educational progress, including by equity groups.

32.5 Such a body would enable the strong, long-term planning required to address Australia's current education challenges. In particular, an independent and long-tenured body is needed to:

- advise on reform, and ongoing evaluation and review of the MFAS
- protect stakeholder interests, particularly those of teachers, who must be vocal and respected partners in effective policy development
- design and work with teachers and partner organisations to provide more aligned and comprehensive national reporting against national education goals
- coordinate and monitor system accountability through appropriate and transparent analysis and reporting
- provide strategic advice on system trends to support long-term policy that extends beyond political terms
- provide a strategic and proactive approach that can allow the collection of data to enable evaluation of system factors, in order to improve student and school outcomes and long-term impact

32.6    Unlike the recently formed Australian Educational Research Organisation (AERO) which is designed as "an institute to position Australia's <u>educators</u> at the forefront of education research", this independent body would focus on Australia's <u>education system</u>, and its data architecture, in order to inform system improvement. Through this development the two accountability rationales described within the Mparntwe statement, one on the use of good data for teacher and school accountability and the other focusing on system accountability, will be realised.

32.7 AERO has committed to the principles of: ambition, collaboration, rigour, diversity and inclusivity, and transparency and integrity. They have recognised the need to "build trust by being honest, sharing our work and supporting new ideas. We welcome scrutiny to enhance the integrity of our processes." Similar principles could apply to the new independent body and help **rebuild trust in educational system frameworks.** This is an issue internationally (Richardson, 2022), but of particular concern in Australia where the current arrangements are inadequate for effective steering of school education to meet educational goals.

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