



**AUSTRALIAN PARENTS COUNCIL Inc.**  
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**Submission to the Education Council of COAG review of the current approach to the presentation of NAPLAN data including information published on the My School website**

**March 2019**

The Australian Parents Council has provided parents and governments with a trustworthy voice in education policy for over 55 years. We are a non-denominational, non-party political organisation that advocates for parents with children in non-government schools (Catholic and independent) and for Australian parents more generally. Our interests and activities extend down to early learning and up to post-school transitions, and to the ongoing support of Parents Australia Incorporated, which we established as a national charity and deductible gift recipient in 2011.

The work of the Australian Parents Council over many years, and of Parents Australia Incorporated more recently, has contributed to the improvement of children's educational experiences and outcomes, progressive reforms in schooling, and the social capital of school and Indigenous communities throughout Australia.

On numerous occasions over the last twelve months, the APC has publicly supported NAPLAN and the transition to NAPLAN Online. Parents in general understand the point-in-time nature of the assessment and appreciate the independent source of information on how their child is going. Of course, there is always need for review and improvement.

We welcome this opportunity to contribute our views on the presentation of NAPLAN data including information published on the My School website, from the parent perspective and thank you sincerely.

Mrs Shelley Hill

**APC Chair**

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## 1. PERCEPTIONS OF NAPLAN REPORTING AND MY SCHOOL DATA

*Does the NAPLAN data currently available on the My School website provide an appropriate balance between the right to high quality information and the possibility of misinterpretation or misuse?*

- There are a number of issues raised by this question and there are undoubtedly some situations where there is a possibility of misuse of the information on My School. Situations where league tables are published and students, teachers and parents at 'lowest' performing schools are approached by media for example are damaging to the interests of families and staff.
- APC supports the access to and publication of NAPLAN data providing it is done under strict agreed guidelines in all external publications that protect the interests of students.
- It is important to consider that it is parents who will lose access to the data if it is not published publicly, as proposed by some other stakeholders. APC believes that it is better to manage the use of the data, than to deprive parents of information about their child's school. Parents are the biggest stakeholders in education and, as such, should be able to access NAPLAN data about their child, their child's school and their child's prospective school.

*Is there anything you find difficult to understand or is there any different NAPLAN information you would like to see included on My School?*

- APC would like to see a greater emphasis on the 'value-add' of their child's school reported, to give a perspective on how well the school is performing in terms of effective teaching.
- APC would also like progression for individual students between years demonstrated on individual reports so that parents can see growth on a single report, rather than having to compare multiple reports.

*Is the explanatory material on My School around "statistically similar schools" sufficiently explained, easy to understand and does this support fair comparisons for schools?*

- This is not well explained for parents. While parents are generally accepting that the schools displayed would be a 'fair comparison' of their school, the "interpreting this graph" page within the NAPLAN results for a particular school doesn't adequately explain how the similar schools have been chosen. Information on the NAP website is difficult to find on this topic as it sits under both "Information for parents" and "FAQs".

*What consideration should be given to comparisons over time and between schools while schools progressively transition to NAPLAN online?*

- Whether a school has transitioned to NAPLAN online should be clearly stated and made very obvious for everyone using My School, for schools and on the individual student reports. How these comparisons are treated is problematic, given the differences in student performances due to mode of assessment. An option to only show 'like' schools where students have used the same mode of assessment could help parents make better comparisons.



## 2. HOW MY SCHOOL AND NAPLAN CONTRIBUTE TO UNDERSTANDING OF STUDENT PROGRESS AND ACHIEVEMENT

*To what extent do schools and school systems use NAPLAN student progress and achievement data, including comparisons with statistically similar schools, to inform their school improvement strategies?*

- Parents generally have limited oversight of this process, with experience limited to school board level, where the results are presented and discussed.

*To what extent is whole-population assessment data necessary to meet school systems' and governments' need for sound information to support school improvement?*

- Most parents understand the value of whole-population assessment data and expect that it would drive changes in teaching and pedagogy to achieve growth for the students in their school, and at a system level.

## 3. HOW SCHOOLS USE ACHIEVEMENT DATA, INCLUDING NAPLAN, TO INFORM TEACHING

*To what extent are NAPLAN data and the My School website used to inform teaching?*

- Parents are not usually involved in this process, but anecdotal reports of NAPLAN results not being provided to the next year level teacher and assessment starting all over again, worry parents.

*Which assessment tools, approaches and data analytics services do schools and school systems use to inform teaching?*

- This question is not applicable to parents.

*What opportunities are there to improve the timeliness of NAPLAN reporting?*

- Parents would like to see NAPLAN results reported within days rather than months, to aid schools, and to enable parents to have timely discussions with their child's teacher about any issues.

## 4. HOW MY SCHOOL DATA AND NAPLAN DATA ARE REPORTED TO STUDENTS AND PARENTS

*To what extent do schools communicate individual, whole school and comparative NAPLAN data to students, parents and families?*

- This varies across schools, but in most cases the school's NAPLAN results are summarised in a newsletter to parents. At the individual level, it is often left to the parent to initiate a conversation with the teacher about NAPLAN results.



*To what extent do parents and families use NAPLAN data on My School to make informed judgements, make choices and engage with their children's education?*

- Again this varies, but most parents understand that it is one assessment among many that their children do during the year. Many parents appreciate the value of a standardised assessment that indicate where their child is in relation to expected levels and other students, both at the school and national level.
- Only 5% of parents in APC's 2018 national survey reported using NAPLAN results when choosing a school for their child. NAPLAN data on My School is most likely to be considered by parents not familiar with the school, eg International and inter-state families who may look at results and also for high SES government primary schools and high SES non-government high schools, for example.
- Many parents feel very aggrieved when their child is not accepted into a school when they perceive the decision was based on their child's NAPLAN results. There are actually many situations where schools ask parents for NAPLAN results as a criteria for accepting students, including in the government sector. APC believes that secondary schools should not be able to use NAPLAN to determine enrolment. The report should only be provided after acceptance of a place at a school. School reports over a number of years provide a more holistic picture of a child's abilities and are more appropriate than a point-in-time assessment.

*What NAPLAN reporting information do students need in order to contribute to their own education?*

- There needs to be a method of contextualising the feedback for students about what the results mean for their learning, as this is not a test like others so the student/parent/teacher conversation around it needs to be foregrounded. Doing this properly would reduce the stress for students at all year levels.
- Students should only be given information in consultation with parents in Year 3 and 5.
- Students at Year 7 and 9 should receive all questions and responses so they have the opportunity to self-evaluate and reflect, and discuss with their teachers and parents.