

ISOLATED CHILDREN'S PARENTS' ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA



2023 FEDERAL CONFERENCE CURRICULUM PORTFOLIO REPORT Alana Moller

The Curriculum Portfolio continues to focus on key topics surrounding the National Curriculum, including the roll out of Version 9 of the Australian Curriculum, inclusion of food and fibre production within the curriculum and the National Assessment Program - Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) testing. Federal Council continues to hold a position on the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) Peak Parents and Principals Forum, which provides direct lines of contact with ACARA and the opportunity to raise member's issues.

Australian Curriculum

Version 9 of the Australian Curriculum was released in 2022 and it is noted that the new version aims to be *"more manageable for teachers and clearly identifies the essential content our children should learn"*. Following its release, state governments are now responsible for its implementation in their respective jurisdictions. ACARA designed a dedicated website to support the roll out of the new curriculum across the country, which can be found [here](#).

National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN)

Following on from a motion presented at the 2022 Federal Conference raising concerns about the challenges of accessing NAPLAN testing for some geographically isolated families whose children are educated via distance education, ICPA (Aust) wrote to ACARA and the Federal Government. The case study which accompanied the motion was also sent with this correspondence. The issue was also raised at the ACARA Peak Principal and Parents forums and during delegations in October 2022. Feedback from all discussions indicated that these situations should not occur based on the guidelines for NAPLAN testing, which provide solutions for unique circumstances. Both Federal Government Ministers and ACARA representatives assured Federal Council that efforts will continue to avoid such situations and to ensure that all schools and jurisdictions are adhering to these directives.

Regrettably, despite assurances to the contrary, similar circumstances occurred prior to the 2023 testing window. Federal Council again contacted ACARA and were provided with a guarantee that these concerns would be addressed with the schools and jurisdictions in question. At our May delegations, Federal Council also took the opportunity to raise this with the Assistant Minister for Education, Senator the Hon Anthony Chisholm and he advised he had received a NAPLAN briefing on how this year's testing transpired and this briefing would be examined during May Senate Estimates to establish the efficacy of the testing. The Senator also indicated that NAPLAN topics would be looked at as part of the School Reform Panel Review. ICPA (Aust) will also endeavour to address the topic when taking part in the Review.

Another motion regarding access to testing for geographically isolated students was carried at conference, where members raised concern that as a result of some rural and remote students being unable to participate in both NAPLAN testing and other similar external examinations, their eligibility to enrol in some boarding schools may be impacted due to the possibility of schools having certain



prerequisite requirements for admission. ICPA (Aust) sought assurance from the Australian Boarding Schools Association (ABSA) and other organisations that boarding schools understand that as a result of geographic isolation, some students are unable to complete these prerequisites that due consideration is required in these circumstances. Federal Council were assured that this would be passed on to boarding schools across Australia.

ICPA (Aust) assisted ACARA in sharing a parent survey prior to the testing taking place, seeking feedback on how parents felt about the NAPLAN changes implemented to 2023, including the testing window being moved to March from May, particularly encouraging geographically isolated families to participate to ensure their unique voices were heard. There have also been recent changes to proficiency standards as part of the reporting of NAPLAN results, aiming to make better use of the online adaptive tests to deliver better information for parents, carers and teachers, which may be of interest to members. A media release from ACARA related to this can be found [here](#).

As 2023 results and information are released, Federal Council will ensure members are kept abreast of any developments or important outcomes. Alternatively, members can access the dedicated NAPLAN website [here](#).

ICPA (Aust) continues to advocate that any changes to NAPLAN be made with the unique circumstances of geographically isolated students in mind, particularly in regard to accessibility, now even more pertinent with the move to online testing. In a number of forums Federal Council particularly highlight that considerations need to be made for geographically isolated students who may have difficulty accessing a school for testing due to distance, and others who may have difficulty taking part in NAPLAN in an online format due to being in a remote area without internet access.

Food and Fibre Production in the Curriculum

During our May 2023 delegations, Assistant Minister for Education, Senator the Hon Anthony Chisholm informed us of a recent roundtable he attended in Brisbane organised by Anthony Lee, CEO Australian Country Choice, which focused on expanding agriculture's role in education and specifically food and fibre production education. The Primary Industries Education Foundation of Australia (PIEFA), who ICPA (Aust) has worked with previously, was also a part of this roundtable. Senator Chisholm encouraged ICPA (Aust) to collaborate with other stakeholders in this space and undertook to connect Federal Council with Mr Lee.

Federal Council encourages members to continue to raise any concerns or issues they feel need to be addressed at any time and we will endeavour to ensure these are raised with the appropriate authorities. We also encourage members to engage with the ACARA suite of websites whereby a variety of information and resources related to all curriculum topics is housed [here](#).

Many thanks to my Curriculum Portfolio colleagues, Wendy Hick and Wendy Henning along with all of Federal Council for their support this year.