

31 Willoughby Street
Kirribilli NSW 2061

Staff of CEO, ACARA
Level 10, 255 Pitt Street
Sydney NSW 2000

20 May 2014

Dear staff,

Would you be kind enough to pass on congratulations to Mr Rob Randall on his excellent appearance last night on the ABC confirming the importance of NAPLAN testing – and his video on ACARA’s website?

There is such an unthinking current fashion against NAPLAN, often held by people who have never looked at the excellent tests, which have obviously been expertly devised to test perfectly appropriate skills and knowledge for the different ages – to provide a basis for sensible necessary comparisons.

The habit of using anecdotal evidence about “some” children suffering “stress” seldom goes beyond the anecdote. One wants to ask: what percentage of children? what stress? what sorts of children or what sorts of backgrounds or what sorts of schools? and of course the great question – as to whether some stress is necessarily a bad thing.

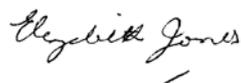
Certainly when children sit for an AMEB exam, or take part in weekly debating, or weekly sport matches or sing in a serious weekly choir, they experience some stress – but for most children this is a good preparation for a busy later life.

Psychologists tell us that the real stress to avoid is separation anxiety in an under-three-year-old, with heightened levels of cortisol, but it’s not so fashionable to care about that stress.

So, congratulations to ACARA for providing such good testing and research. There is no point in politicians talking endlessly about international comparisons if the very instruments to provide comparisons are regarded with such suspicion.

On a personal note, in my role from the Classical Association of NSW in promoting the inclusion of classical languages in the national curriculum, I was part of meetings with Mr Randall and staff, which were very helpful and pleasant.

With best wishes for your continued important work,



Elizabeth Jones