

CORPORATE PLAN



FROM THE CHAIR

Education underpins the development of our society, it enables us to fulfil the aspirations we hold for ourselves and our children. Education is the cornerstone of building a just, democratic society, where every child has the opportunity to excel in his or her chosen field.

My position as the new Chair of ACARA's Board allows me to guide the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority through the next chapter of Australia's education journey – and in doing so, improving the learning of all young Australians.

“Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world.”

Nelson Mandela

ACARA does not work alone – we bring together and work closely with all stakeholders and partners across jurisdictions and school sectors, consulting widely using available technologies. The national education conversation enables teachers and students across Australia to hear from one another, innovate, discuss, share ideas and collaborate about effective practices in the classroom. It is about enabling sharing of resources, strategies and practices to ensure that we are all working to improve the education outcomes for all young Australians as effectively and efficiently as possible.



In developing the Australian Curriculum, the National Assessment Program and the national reporting framework, ACARA is at the front of the national approach to Australian schooling. This means that, regardless of where they live or their socio-educational background, every school student can be provided with similar opportunities and assistance to be their best.

Looking forward, ACARA has a key role in monitoring and enhancing the Australian Curriculum and ensuring it remains world-class, meets the needs of all students and is accessible to teachers, parents and the broader community. ACARA will continue to strengthen the National Assessment Program, including supporting the transition to online NAPLAN testing from 2017, and aligning the program with the Australian Curriculum as this is implemented across Australia. ACARA will also continue to maintain and enhance the framework for measuring and reporting on schools in Australia, including adding further data to the *My School* website and making it easier to use.

Over the course of the following five years, I am confident that the Australian public will see significant progress in relation to each of the authority's programs of work, as well as the growing connections between them, and that these efforts will in turn make an important contribution to improving educational outcomes across Australia.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Steven Schwartz', with a stylized, flowing script.

Emeritus Professor Steven Schwartz, AM, Chair, ACARA

INTRODUCTION

ACARA's corporate plan has been prepared for the 2015–16 reporting period in accordance with the *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013* (paragraph 35(1)(b)) and covers the period from 1 July 2015 to 30 June 2020. It has been informed by the *ACARA Act 2008*, which sets out ACARA's purposes, and by the Charter for ACARA, endorsed by the Education Council in August 2012, which provides its strategic directions.

ACARA has recently been reviewed by the Australian Government, as required under a provision in its enabling legislation, and is developing its 2016–17 to 2019–20 work plan and budget for consideration by the Education Council. The review and four-year work plan and budget will inform a revised Charter for ACARA.

The *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013* requires that a corporate plan be published by the end of August each year. Given the Education Council is yet to respond to recommendations of the review and to update ACARA's charter, this Corporate Plan is by necessity an interim plan, which will be updated later in 2015.

Once a new Charter for ACARA is endorsed by the Education Council (in 2015–16), an approved variation of the corporate plan will be published in accordance with 16E (6) of the *PGPA Amendment (Corporate Plans and Annual Performance Statements) Rule 2015*.

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SECTION ONE:

Who we are

WHO WE ARE

The Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) is an independent statutory authority with a mission to improve the learning of all young Australians through world-class school curriculum, assessment and reporting.

Curriculum: We take a national approach to education through developing and delivering a robust and comprehensive national curriculum.

Assessment: We run the National Assessment Program – the national tests students sit in school – including NAPLAN. We are undertaking a range of research activities to effectively and fairly deliver NAPLAN tests in an online environment in the future.

Data collection and reporting: We are responsible for collecting and publishing information on *My School* about the performance and resources of more than 9,500 schools around the country. We publish a range of reports, including the National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) national report and the National Report on Schooling in Australia.

ACARA has been operational since 28 May 2009 and was established under Section 5 of the *Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority Act* (Cth) on 8 December 2008.

ACARA executes policy directions determined by the Education Council regarding curriculum, assessment, data collection and reporting at a national level. We focus on collaboration and engagement with government and non-government partners and all key stakeholders.



SECTION TWO:

What we do

OUR PURPOSES

The key purposes of the authority are to provide:

- **national curriculum** – from Foundation¹ to Year 12 in specified learning areas.
- **national assessment program** – aligned to the national curriculum, it measures students' achievement and progress.
- **national data collection and reporting** program that supports:
 - i. analysis, evaluation, research and resource allocation, and
 - ii. accountability and reporting on schools, and broader national achievement.
- **national collaboration and leadership** – with government and non-government partners in education and other key stakeholders, to maximise high-quality curriculum, assessment and reporting.

These purposes acknowledge the commitment to promoting world-class curriculum and assessment and to strengthening accountability and transparency as identified within the *Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians (the Melbourne Declaration)* as agreed by all education ministers in December 2008.

¹ Kindergarten in New South Wales, Tasmania and the Australian Capital Territory; Preparatory in Victoria and Queensland; Reception in South Australia; Transition in the Northern Territory, Pre-primary in Western Australia.

A young boy with dark, spiky hair and freckles is smiling at the camera. He is wearing a white collared shirt under a maroon V-neck sweater. In the background, a classroom setting is visible with a teacher in a light pink shirt gesturing with their hand, and another student with blonde hair sitting at a desk, also in a maroon sweater.

SECTION THREE:

Our environment

OUR ENVIRONMENT

Direction setting

The ACARA Act stipulates that ACARA must perform its purposes in accordance with directions given to it by the Education Council in writing, and in accordance with a Charter. ACARA's Charter is agreed to by the Council.

ACARA's current charter setting out ACARA's priorities was endorsed in August 2012. A review of ACARA was undertaken by the Commonwealth Department of Education and Training between December 2014 and June 2015 in accordance with Section 44 of the ACARA Act. One of the outcomes of the review is a recommendation to the Education Council that it revises the Charter, taking into consideration ACARA's quadrennial work plan, as agreed by ministers.

Endorsement of plans

ACARA prepares a quadrennial work plan and budget for endorsement by the Council in accordance with the ACARA Charter. In addition, under current arrangements, each financial year ACARA submits a detailed annual work plan for endorsement by the Council. ACARA reports its progress against its annual work plan at meetings of the ACARA Board, the Australian Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs Senior Officials Committee (AEEYSOC) and the Council.

In 2015–16, the Council will consider ACARA's quadrennial work plan, following the publication of the Review of ACARA. ACARA's corporate plan will be revised accordingly and republished.

National education landscape and ACARA's impact

ACARA has reshaped the education landscape over the past six years through the introduction of the national curriculum, continuation and enhancement of national testing and initiation of public reporting on schools through *My School*. The next period represents an opportunity to further enhance these areas, including bringing national assessment online and further aligning these areas to the Australian Curriculum as this is implemented across Australia.

Stakeholders

ACARA's partners are Commonwealth, state and territory departments of education and national non-government school sector peak bodies. ACARA's stakeholders include teachers, principals, parents and students as well as the broader community. ACARA has a range of advisory and expert groups that provide advice around ACARA's functions to support ACARA's work and ensure it takes account of input from partners, stakeholders and relevant experts. ACARA works closely with its Education Council counterparts, the Australian Institute of Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) and Education Services Australia (ESA).

Funding

Funding for ACARA is allocated by states and territories and the Australian Government under the Council's funding formula – with half of ACARA's funding provided by the Australian Government and the other half provided by states and territories.



SECTION FOUR:

Our performance

OUR PERFORMANCE

National collaboration and leadership to maximise high-quality curriculum, assessment and reporting 2015–16 to 2019–20.

ACARA will work in a transparent and collaborative manner with Commonwealth/state/territory departments of education and, government and non-government school authorities.

ACARA will share its proposals and work with a range of advisory groups to enable all stakeholders to provide input. ACARA will provide consistent and structured opportunities for engagement and will listen to advice.

Ongoing responsibilities	Key actions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing national leadership in curriculum, assessment, data collection and reporting directly and in collaboration with the Commonwealth, states, territories, non-government sector, AITSL, ESA and other stakeholder groups, and ensuring liaison with key stakeholders across all matters relating to curriculum, assessment and reporting. • Communicating information about ACARA's work and achievements to partners, stakeholders and the broader community. • Collaborating with international education bodies to ensure ACARA's work and advice to ministers are informed by leading research and better practice, and provide support services internationally where this aligns with ACARA's core areas of work. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inform, strengthen and promote general community understanding of the significance of national curriculum, assessment and reporting processes. • Lead national communication initiatives for the move to NAPLAN online. • Support ACARA's key areas of work through communications planning and stakeholder engagement for curriculum, assessment and reporting activities. • Provide quality advice that facilitates effective decision-making by AEEYSOC/Council. • Maintain a system of review of ACARA's advisory structure to ensure it is fit-for-purpose. • Complete the work around the provision of services to support development of national curriculum in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. • Build on ACARA's reputation for world-class curriculum, assessment and reporting programs by supporting learning opportunities requested by international delegations.
Measures of success	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ACARA is well-known and respected across Australia's education sector, including schools and parents. At least 65 per cent of partners and stakeholders understand what we do and positively associate ACARA's work with improving the learning of all young Australians through world-class school curriculum, assessment and reporting. • All advice to AEEYSOC and the Council submitted on time and recommendations accepted by the Education Council. 	

National curriculum 2015–16 to 2019–20

The Foundation – Year 10 curriculum has been developed for eight learning areas along with senior secondary curriculum for English, mathematics, science, history and geography, and published on the Australian Curriculum website. All states and territories have commenced implementation of the Australian Curriculum. The Australian Curriculum will continue to set consistent high standards for what all young Australians should learn as they progress through schooling.

ACARA will draw on the best national talent and expertise, and consult widely to deliver and monitor the Foundation – Year 12 Australian Curriculum. ACARA will strengthen assessment of the Australian Curriculum and keep abreast of developments and research in the area of curriculum.

Ongoing responsibilities	Key actions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Delivering the Foundation – Year 10 and Senior Secondary Australian Curriculum through the Australian Curriculum website. Strengthening assessment of the Australian Curriculum through NAP development and data analysis, provision of student work samples and illustrations of practice. Monitoring the effectiveness of the Australian Curriculum by collecting, analysing and reporting annually on feedback. Reviewing and reporting on recent developments in research and international curriculum practice to inform national policy and practice and to further improve the Australian Curriculum. Providing authoritative Australian Curriculum advice to stakeholders and facilitate information-sharing and collaboration in support of the Australian Curriculum. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complete agreed actions arising from the review of the Australian Curriculum. Maintain the accuracy and quality of all information and resources provided on the Australian Curriculum website. Provide learning area expertise and advice to support the alignment of the National Assessment Program to the Australian Curriculum. Complete monitoring processes each year and publish reports. Benchmark the Australian Curriculum against top-performing school systems/nations. Provide expertise and advice to stakeholders, on request, to support implementation of the Australian Curriculum. Liaise with Commonwealth/state/territory departments of education in the provision of advice around proposals for additional key actions such as development of further work samples and support for validation of school-based reporting.
Measures of success	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Satisfaction of key stakeholders with ACARA's consultative processes to monitor the national curriculum as measured through annual surveys Satisfaction of key stakeholders with the Australian Curriculum website as measured through annual surveys. All Foundation – Year 10 learning areas set out in the Melbourne Declaration endorsed by ministers and published on the Australian Curriculum website by the end of 2016. 	

National Assessment 2015–16 to 2019–20

The National Assessment Program (NAP) encompasses tests endorsed by the Education Council including the National Assessment Program Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) and three-yearly sample assessments in science literacy, civics and citizenship, and information and communication technology literacy.

ACARA will continue to manage the development of and oversee the delivery of tests for NAP and will focus on the move to online assessment during the 2015–16 to 2019–20 period

Ongoing responsibilities	Key actions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Researching, developing and supporting activities required for online assessment. Managing the planning and development and oversee the delivery and reporting for the National Assessment Program Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN), managing the transition from pen-and-paper form to online delivery. Managing the development and overseeing the delivery of assessments and reporting for the National Assessment Program (NAP) sample assessments. Responding to agreed national assessment policy and providing evidence-based advice to AEEYSOC and Education Council. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Undertake and complete research to support the move of NAPLAN online. Engage in test development for the delivery of NAPLAN online. Collaborate with Education Services Australia and all Australian governments to support the transition to NAPLAN online from 2017 over a two – three year period. Annually deliver NAPLAN, transitioning from pen and paper to online assessment. Annually deliver NAP sample assessment as agreed by the Council, and provide options for the future of the NAP sample assessment. Ensure all Council directives relating to national assessment are undertaken in a timely manner.
Measures of success	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All research relating to support for online assessment completed and results published by end of 2017 Test items for online delivery developed and ready for online assessment mode in 2017 A majority of stakeholders are receiving information that NAPLAN is moving online, know there is a research program in place to support the move, and understand that planning and support for the move online are in place. By June 2016, a majority of identified stakeholders are aware of the requirement to make an opt-in decision, including when, how and why to make the decision to opt in. By December 2016, a majority of opt-in stakeholders are aware of the requirement to register students, including when, how and why to register students. By April 2017, a sufficient cohort of stakeholders are aware of what is required to take NAPLAN online. A clear strategy for the future of NAP sample assessment endorsed by Council. 	

National Data Collection and Reporting 2015–16 to 2019–20

ACARA will continue to be responsible for collecting, managing, analysing, evaluating and reporting statistical and related information about educational inputs and outcomes. This includes the development of national key performance measures for reporting the performance of Australian schooling.

ACARA will also continue to collect data from schools for the purpose of accountability and reporting, research and analysis, and resource allocation. It will maintain the *My School* website, which provides parents and the community with information about NAPLAN performance, as well as information about school finances and school communities.

ACARA will publish the annual National Report on Schooling in Australia on behalf of Australian education ministers, meeting as the Education Council. The report specifically addresses education ministers' Commitment to Action in the eight interrelated areas identified in the Melbourne Declaration by summarising national initiatives and achievements in terms of these areas. ACARA will also publish the national reports for the National Assessment Program – literacy and numeracy (NAPLAN) and for the National Assessment Program sample assessments.

Ongoing responsibilities	Key actions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitoring and, where necessary, reviewing the existing national key performance measures for schools. Producing a comprehensive and authoritative national report on schooling in Australia related to national key performance measures. Managing the collection and quality assurance of data and providing national school information through the <i>My School</i> website and national reports. Managing the sharing and dissemination of data with government and non-government school authorities and with other applicants in accordance with agreed protocols. Responding to agreed national data collection and reporting policy and provide evidence-based advice to AEEYSOC and Education Council. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhance the <i>My School</i> website in accordance with the Council agreed actions. Develop, pilot and implement a more interactive and timely format for the presentation of the National Report on Schooling in Australia (ANR). Review, update and modify the Measurement Framework for Schooling in Australia, where appropriate, for the Council endorsement. Provide data to jurisdictions, ACARA's reporting advisory groups and systems, and to approved research applicants in accordance with agreed protocols. Ensure ACARA's contribution to successful implementation of national initiatives such as the Australian Schools List. Undertake a review of content and processes for all reports to ensure comprehensiveness and enhanced user access.
Measures of success	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The ANR published within the following year of receipt of data. A schedule for the development and implementation of the Council agreed enhancements on <i>My School</i> endorsed by Council. Agreed enhancements developed and implemented on time. Key stakeholder satisfaction with <i>My School</i> enhancements increases each year. Suggested modifications to the Measurement Framework for Schooling in Australia are endorsed by the Council. Key stakeholder satisfaction with the timely provision of data increases each year. 	

A young woman with long dark hair, wearing a white lab coat, is smiling and looking towards the camera. She is positioned in a laboratory setting, with a microscope and several glass beakers containing colored liquids (yellow and red) on the table in front of her. In the background, there are white storage cabinets. A red graphic overlay with white text is positioned in the lower half of the image.

SECTION FIVE:

Our capability

OUR CAPABILITY

ACARA will recruit, develop and retain high-performing staff and will foster a positive and agile work culture. Its people will reflect the diversity and dynamism of the education community and have the skills and values needed to support its ongoing responsibilities as well as advance the authority's strategic proposals.

Five values uphold our work:

- Respect
- Integrity
- Collaboration
- Professionalism
- Passion

ACARA will maintain organisational efficiency through:

- Strong frameworks of planning and reporting
- A framework of internal and external audits
- Fit-for-purpose and sustainable ICT management systems

A young woman with dark hair, wearing a green school uniform with a white collar and white cuffs, is sitting at a wooden desk in a classroom. She is smiling and looking towards the camera. In the background, there is a green chalkboard, a colorful world map, and a globe. A green highlighter is on the desk in front of her.

SECTION SIX:

Our accountability

OUR OVERSIGHT OF RISK

ACARA will maintain a risk framework and policy aligned with AS/NZS ISO 31000:2009 Risk management – Principles and guidelines that are compliant with the *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013*. These documents acknowledge that risk management is a fundamental tool to support ACARA to achieve ACARA's strategic objectives in a complex stakeholder environment. ACARA's Board, Audit and Risk Committee and executive, as well as staff, will be actively involved in risk management for ACARA. This work will be supported by an internal audit program that tests ACARA's compliance framework and controls.

The ACARA Board will have oversight of ACARA's risk management framework and policy, and will regularly review ACARA's corporate risk register.

The Audit and Risk Committee will provide recommendations on operational capacity, accountability frameworks, budget, compliance and risks associated with meeting the requirements of the ACARA Charter. It will continue to hold an important role in ACARA's risk management framework.

ACARA's senior management group, inclusive of ACARA's executive, will consider operational matters, and will review risk and management controls on a regular basis.

ACARA will maintain its project management policy. This policy applies across its key activities and highlights project related risk, ensuring that risk management is pivotal within ACARA's operations.

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