CEO external vodcast script – My School – 13 January 2014

Hi, I am Rob Randall, CEO of ACARA.

In this vodcast I would like to talk to you about *My School*.

My School provides a detailed profile on all schools across Australia – all 9 500 of them. You can search for any of these simply by entering the school's name, suburb or postcode

The 2014 update of *My School* builds on the past four years of sharing information with the Australian public about the performance and resources of schools.

My School enables parents, school leaders and their communities, educators and members of the wider community to:

- search for schools in their local area or from any part of the country
- view school-level NAPLAN results
- compare statistically similar schools
- identify schools that are doing well and share successful strategies.

This service is designed to support accessing and sharing of information about schools across the Australian community. Of course, *My School* does not provide information about all that is going on in a school. One would need to visit the school or the school's website to learn more about particular schools.

This year's update maintains all of the functionality of previous releases, including various ways one can compare a school's progress over time with schools serving statistically similar student populations. The 2014 update provides an extra year's worth of data on educational outcomes, and the latest profile and population data on each school.

A new feature is a mapping function, which allows one to view a map of the school's location, with other local schools displayed on the same map.

We have also enhanced the calculation process for the Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage or ICSEA. Research shows that family background factors, such as parent education level and occupation, are closely linked with student educational outcomes. The development of ICSEA involved identifying the combination of these factors that were most closely associated with student achievement in NAPLAN tests. During 2013, we worked closely with our partners and with independent experts to make the calculation of ICSEA more accurate and reliable – to ensure an even greater fairness of comparison.

My School continues to be an extremely valuable tool for educators and communities to understand what is going on inside schools. As always, the site's greatest utility remains its power to spark the sort of conversations, which lead to better outcomes for students. By opening a window on school performance across Australia, discussions can focus on what schools are able to do – be they the school down the road or on the other side of the country.

Since the release of the first version of *My School* in January 2010, there has been much discussion about the data presented on the site and their usefulness and validity. In the intervening years, these data have become widely accepted, and information presented on *My School* has been used to inform and bolster any number of policy discussions and debates about school performance. It is encouraging to see how *My School* has grown to become a valuable and widely accepted feature of the Australian educational landscape.

It is an important responsibility to publish such vital information, and we here at ACARA work closely with our key partners – that is the state and territory and federal departments and education authorities as well as the Catholic and independent school sectors – to collect the information on a regular basis and make sure that what we are publishing is the most accurate and current data.

For more information, visit the *My School* website or contact ACARA by phone or email.

Thank you

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION BELOW

As in previous years, each school's page is made up of five main sections.

First, there is the 'Profile' page – a kind of *My School* home page, if you like, – for each school. This is where a principal has an opportunity to tell parents, teachers or interested citizens about the school's context, ethos, programs and achievements. This page also has information about what type the school is, the year level range for students (for example, primary, secondary or K–12), its student enrolments and attendance rates, and its staff numbers.

These figures have been updated so they represent the latest information available for the school, collected in 2013, and relating to either 2013 or 2012, depending on the kind of data it is, and the lead times involved for reporting those data. As well as viewing the latest figures, of course, users can also tab back to profile pages from previous years to look at the figures for those years, and perhaps make some comparisons, and note how things may have changed. Once again, principals have been given the opportunity to make any changes or updates to the 'School comments' box that sits at the top of the profile page, which might reflect any changes in the school's context or emphasis since the principal last updated this section.

Importantly, the 'Student background' section on this page displays the school's Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage or ICSEA. Research shows that family background factors, such as parent education level and occupation, are closely linked with student educational outcomes. The development of ICSEA involved identifying the combination of these factors that were most closely associated with student achievement in NAPLAN tests.

Then, based on these calculations, every school is given an ICSEA value on a scale that has an average of 1000. ICSEA values start within the range of about 500, representing extreme disadvantage, and go up to about 1300, representing high advantage. About two thirds of schools lie somewhere between 900 and 1100. ICSEA has been developed specifically for the *My School* website so that fair and meaningful comparisons can be made between schools. This year, we have further enhanced the calculation process to make it more accurate and reliable than ever. We have worked closely with our partners and with independent experts to make this happen, to ensure an even greater fairness of comparison.

Next up is the 'School finances' page, which provides information on the resources available to individual schools to support the education of their students. These pages show tables and charts, which summarise the recurrent and other income of the selected school, together with its capital expenditure for the calendar year, and the sources of funding. The latest release shows finance figures for the year 2012.

My School provides extensive reporting on outcomes for each school in standardised literacy and numeracy assessments. These results are displayed on the 'NAPLAN' pages of the site. Here, school averages for NAPLAN are presented in graphs, numbers and bands, across the different domains of NAPLAN, and the various year cohorts in the school that have sat the tests (that would be one or more of Years 3, 5, 7 and 9). These pages also display student gain and comparisons with statistically similar schools (with the nature of that similarity drawing on the ICSEA index I talked about just now).

In addition to previous years' data, we now display outcomes from the 2013 round of NAPLAN tests. The fourth section of the site is a page on vocational education and training measures. Secondary school students can take vocational education and training (VET) courses as a part of their school program. On this page we display enrolments and qualifications for those courses. The latest figures we have updated are for enrolments and qualifications in 2012.

Finally, the 'Local schools' page displays a list of up to 20 schools that are geographically closest to the selected school. From this list you can navigate to the school profile for these schools. A new feature on this page from 2014 is the facility to use a mapping function, which enables a user to view a map of the school's location, with other local schools (and links to their pages) displayed on the same map.

Hopefully, this gives you a flavour of what's on *My School*, and what new figures and features we have added for the 2014 release of the site. For more information, visit the *My School* website or contact ACARA by phone or email.

You can also be part of the *My School* conversations via Twitter.