



Weekly Briefing For Member Schools

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Communiqué, Council of Australian Governments, 02/07/09; The Age, Stephanie Peatling, 03/07/09; The Australian, Justine Ferrari, 03/07/09; Canberra Times, Danielle Cronin, 03/07/09; Canberra Times, Emma Macdonald, 03/07/09;

The latest meeting of the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) has agreed to introduce a range of reforms for early childhood education, vocational education and skills training, indigenous education and international education. COAG has agreed to implement a national childhood strategy as part of a move to introduce universal access to early childhood education. The *Investing in the Early Years – A National Early Childhood Development Strategy* is designed to 'guide consideration of investment in future reforms'. As part of the strategy, all early childhood education centres will be required to implement the Early Years Learning Framework, which describes the principles, practice and outcomes required to support and enhance young children's learning from birth to five years of age, as well as their transition to school, from July 2009. In addition, COAG agreed to establish a jointly-governed national licensing and quality assurance system and national quality standards for early childhood education. The Minister for Education, The Hon. Julia Gillard, MP, indicated that she expected the strategy to include requirements for early childhood education centres to improve staff-student ratios and for a greater proportion of staff to hold appropriate tertiary qualifications.

As part of its commitment to introduce a Youth Compact, COAG also agreed to implement the *National Partnership on Youth Attainment and Transitions* (NP). The Youth Compact requires children to stay in school until Year 10 and then to be in full-time education, training or employment. The NP will provide states and territories with \$623 million over five years to improve youth careers and transition programs, as well as \$100 million in reward payments for states and territories to improve participation and Year 12 attainment rates. COAG also agreed to develop models for a national regulatory body of vocational education and training and to increase funding for nationally accredited training programs.

At the COAG meeting, the *2009 Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage: Key Indicators Report* was also launched. In order to address indigenous disadvantage, COAG agreed that the Ministerial Council for Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA) would develop a National Indigenous Education Action Plan. Under the plan, states and territories would introduce school-level strategies to:

- improve enrolment, attendance and retention rates and student engagement
- improve literacy and numeracy attainment
- enhance development of the indigenous education workforce and up-skilling the teaching workforce to better support Indigenous students
- improve parental and community engagement
- improve 'wrap around' support, including through extended service school models
- improve transition from school to further education through education and training and
- create high expectations for indigenous young people.

The Action Plan aims to halve the gap in literacy and numeracy performance between indigenous and non-indigenous students by 2017.

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Finally, COAG agreed to develop a 'comprehensive' *National International Student Strategy*. The strategy aims to 'place Australia's international education on a more sustainable basis by:

- improving the international student experience through improved pre- and post-arrival information and engagement with the ethnic and broader Australian community
- enhancing general educational offerings that develop cultural understanding, tolerance and language skills
- achieving a clearer articulation between international education and migration policies and
- considering the quality of education providers.

COAG argued that 'all government, education and training providers and student unions should support greater levels of interaction between international students and local communities'. In addition, the Australian Government will conduct a review of the *Education for Overseas Students Act 2000* to ensure that it aligns with the new strategy by June 2010.

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