

Media Release

NAPLAN must be used to help students - not market schools

Catholic Schools NSW (CSNSW) said today that it strongly supports the continuation of NAPLAN as a tool to help identify students needing support with their basic skills.

However, changes need to be made to the way NAPLAN data is reported on MySchool.edu.au so that it cannot be used as a marketing tool that divides schools into 'red' or 'green' columns.

CSNSW Chief Executive Officer Dallas McInerney said the debate around NAPLAN's future involves two separate issues – the test itself and the way the resulting data is used.

"NAPLAN has a critical continuing role to play in improving literacy and numeracy, which are the foundations of a person's ability to learn and to participate in society," Mr McInerney said.

He said NAPLAN supports school improvement processes by enabling teachers to monitor students' progress over time against a national measure and to identify areas of strength and development.

"NAPLAN should be relied upon for diagnostic insights before anything else," he said.

"However, the NAPLAN testing regime does need to constantly evolve to become more effective, making the best use of available technology.

"This is why Catholic education is working with government to support the introduction of NAPLAN Online including adaptive testing, which tailors questions to better assess a student's abilities and progress, while also providing for a faster turnaround of results.

"Consequently, CSNSW is concerned by any commentary that may divert the education sector from focusing on the improved delivery of NAPLAN."

Mr McInerney said NAPLAN has an established place among a suite of tools that schools can use to improve student outcomes in basic literacy and numeracy.

"However, we urge policymakers to make changes to the way NAPLAN results are published to prevent their misuse. In this regard, we share the concerns of NSW Minister for Education Rob Stokes that schools' NAPLAN scores are being turned into league tables or used as marketing tools.

"It is simplistic - and therefore misleading - to make judgments about a school's performance based on whether its NAPLAN tables are coloured red or green.

"This is particularly unfair to schools that are asked to do much of the heavy lifting because they serve students from disadvantaged backgrounds.

"This was not the intended outcome when NAPLAN was first introduced."

Mr McInerney said there was a near universal consensus among school sectors, teachers and principals for the Federal Government to modify the way NAPLAN results are reported.

"We welcome Friday's indication by Federal Education Minister Simon Birmingham that a review of NAPLAN may commence later this year, which would also examine how the data is reported."

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