

27 March 2020

Meeting Communique

Education Ministers met by Teleconference this morning to collaborate on responses to the COVID-19 pandemic. Ministers acknowledged the extraordinary efforts of all early childhood education and care workers, teachers, support staff and school leaders across the country as they have worked together to continue to support the learning and wellbeing of children and young people through this exceptionally challenging time.

Education Council acknowledged the National Cabinet statement today on schooling, that school systems are now in a transition phase until the end of the term to prepare for a new mode of operation following the school holidays.

Early education and care sector

Education Council agreed that supporting ongoing access to early childhood education and care services for vulnerable children and the children of essential workers is a priority.

Ministers agreed the importance of maintaining safe, high quality early childhood education and care services, adhering to public health advice, and to be flexible and responsive to community needs.

Ministers noted that governments have enacted a range of stimulus measures and are developing further safety net measures to support the economy including the early education and care sector.

Council agreed that all governments will continue to work with the sector to address the issues presented by COVID-19. Ministers have established a small working group, chaired by the Australian Government, which will provide urgent advice back to Education Council by early next week, on regulatory, funding and viability measures.

Senior secondary assessments and university admissions

Education Council received an update from the Australasian Curriculum, Assessment and Certification Authorities (ACACA) regarding a national approach for Senior Secondary assessments in the wake of COVID-19. Ministers agreed that it is important that no senior secondary student is disadvantaged. Future decisions will ensure equitable outcomes for all senior secondary students as they complete their schooling.

Options discussed by Ministers included changes to the way that the Australian Tertiary Admission Rank (ATAR) may be calculated and presented, and how student assessments may be undertaken. Adjustments to university admission processes were also discussed.

Ministers agreed that given the importance and urgency of this issue, a special purpose Education Council meeting will be held in April to consider advice from ACACA to be able to provide certainty to students, their families and teachers as soon as possible.

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