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**Australian College of Educators**

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## **SPEECH**

### **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

I acknowledge the Ngunnawal people, traditional owners of the land we are meeting on today, and in a spirit of reconciliation pay my respects to their elders past and present.

### **INTRODUCTION**

Thank you Tracey, for your kind invitation.

We all know how important education is to our collective prosperity and to individual achievement.

It's been said that a 1 per cent increase in literacy among adults would increase GDP by 1.5 per cent. And yet, 4.5 million Australians are not literate enough to operate effectively in the modern global economy, according to the OECD. This figure includes 60 per cent of all unemployed people.

Last year we commissioned Econtech to tell us what some of the reforms we are pursuing might contribute to the economy.

Econtech told us that lifting year 12 or equivalent attainment to 90% by 2015 could generate up to \$11.3 billion to GDP each year, or \$416 per person every year on average over the next thirty years, compared to what would otherwise happen.

The 2011 Budget recognises the central role of education. With funding of over \$876 million for schools, it is an outstanding result given the tight fiscal environment.

This morning I'd like to give you some insights into the direction in which the Government's agenda is heading.

### **POLICY CONTEXT, AGENDA AND FIRST TERM ACHIEVEMENTS**

Since coming to office in 2007 the current Government has made education the centrepiece of its broad reform agenda.

Since 2009 the Government has almost doubled the amount of Commonwealth funding provided to Australian schools—from \$33.5 billion in the last quadrennium to over \$64 billion in this quadrennium.

This investment will pay dividends for decades to come.

The roll out of the new national curriculum from this year is a highlight of this investment.

I know that many of you contributed to the shaping of the curriculum and I acknowledge your expertise. You should also feel proud that the ACT is leading the way in implementing the new national curriculum. This is testimony to your preparedness to innovate and implement best practice.

New standards for teachers and initial teacher accreditation are also a highlight of the Government's investment. Six thousand teachers in Australia, together with governments, employers, teacher unions and registration bodies have shaped these standards.

The standards reflect community expectations of teachers.

They describe what your profession stand for. They describe what good teaching looks like. They are about recognising good teachers and encouraging them to become great teachers.

Through the MySchool website we have entered a new era of transparency. Powerful information about schools' performance is now in the hands of those people who need it most: students, parents, teachers, governments and policy makers.

Of course, NAPLAN makes the MySchool website the powerful tool it is. I hope, with such an emphasis on 'evidence-based' teaching today, NAPLAN is helping you address the learning needs of your students.

Such rich data means assistance can be directed at students and schools most in need. Practices in high performing schools can be shared.

Helping those in need is another highlight of the government's investment, especially through the three Smarter Schools National Partnerships.

Educators in the ACT have a lot to offer the rest of the country:

- More than 80 per cent Year 12 attainment, compared to the national average of 69 per cent
- A commitment to raise the level of 19-year-olds with Year 12 attainment or equivalent to 95 per cent by 2013, and
- Better performance compared to other states and territories among 15-year-olds in the key measures of reading, scientific and mathematical literacy.

Equity of opportunity has also been a key theme. The Prime Minister and Minister Garrett have said many times that ‘demography isn’t destiny’.

Through the *Smarter Schools National Partnerships* improvements are being made in low socio-economic schools in literacy and numeracy results.

Some 2,500 disadvantaged schools across the country are directly benefiting from these partnerships. Early results suggest that the National Partnerships are making a real difference to results.

In the ACT, for example, under the National Partnerships:

- The professional development and teaching programs, *Count Me In Too* and *First Steps*, have been implemented in Government and Catholic schools.
- The systematic use of NAPLAN data is helping better target support,
- Literacy and Numeracy Field Officers have been appointed to all NP schools and are also helping non-NP Schools improve teaching practice.
- In all four Low SES NP schools in the ACT, extended services are being provided to students through Breakfast or Homework Clubs. One homework club supports Somali refugee students, and another focuses on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

Efforts to close the gap in Indigenous outcomes are now showing positive results. 900 ‘focus schools’ are initially being targeted across Australia.

Good VET pathways are being promoted through Trade Training Centres. Building the Education Revolution delivered 36 years of school construction in one year, according to one system. The Digital Education Revolution is bringing schools into the 21st century.

## **MOVING FORWARD**

The new reforms following the 2010 election, focus on supporting teachers and rewarding high performance. For the new reforms, the Minister has set up a working group to provide advice on implementation.

The working group is chaired by Minister Garrett and comprises senior education officials from all states and territories as well as the non-government sector.

I would encourage ACE to keep members informed of the latest developments and how to become involved.

### ***Reward Payments for Great Teachers***

The Government is fundamentally committed to supporting teachers to be the best they can be.

To this end, the Government is committing \$425 million to the *Reward Payments for Great Teachers* initiative:

- \$50 million to education authorities to assist them to move to the new 'Australian Teacher Performance Management Principles and Procedures'.
- \$375 million to pay a ten percent bonus to the top ten percent of teachers in 2014 based on their performance assessment in 2013.

You may be familiar with two Grattan Institute research reports which suggested that teacher evaluation processes do not adequately identify effective teaching. They also suggest that teacher appraisal linked to student performance can increase teacher effectiveness by 20 to 30%.

The most important part of this to get right is the *Australian Teacher Performance Management Principles and Procedures*.

### ***Reward for School Improvement***

The next plank of reform is the \$388 million *Reward for School Improvement*.

There will be a National School Improvement Framework and reward payments to schools based on national data, local information and self assessment.

The first reward payments will be made to 500 (275 primary and 225 secondary) schools in early 2013 based on an interim approach. From 2014, 1000 (550 primary and 450 secondary) schools will receive reward payments each year.

Reward payments will be made to schools showing the most improvement. Secondary schools will receive \$100,000 in reward funding and primary schools will receive \$75,000.

Reward payments will be shared among states and territories based on the proportion of schools in each jurisdiction.

## ***Empowering Local Schools***

Here today there are representatives from over 60 of some 10 000 schools across Australia. As you know, all your schools have different needs, strengths, opportunities and challenges. Every school community has deep knowledge of their own students' needs.

Research suggests that more effective school systems devolve key decision-making responsibilities to schools.

That's why the Australian Government is committing \$480.5 million to the *Empowering Local Schools* initiative.

The ACT Government's vision for more autonomous schools has much in common with the vision of the Australian Government.

Greater autonomy could include more responsibility for school budgets, determining the right mixture of staff, and setting local priorities.

It will be implemented in two phases:

- Phase One: In 2012 and 2013, 1000 schools (just over 10 per cent of all Australian schools) will participate in the initial rollout, with a proportional spread of schools across all states and territories.
- Phase Two: From 2015, the balance of schools to be offered the opportunity to increase their level of local independence as part of a national rollout by 2018.

All schools will be given the opportunity to participate and will need to demonstrate their capacity to operate more independently.

I would encourage you to consider how your schools might wish to become involved in the initiative.

### ***The Australian Bacculaureate (AB)***

Let's move on now to a new curriculum development, the *Australian Bacculaureate*—'AB'.

The Australian Bacculaureate will be a voluntary national senior secondary credential. It will benchmark student achievement and have international standing.

Senior secondary qualifications of international standing are nothing new here in the ACT, of course:

- Telopea Park School offers the International Bacculaureate in addition to the ACT Year 12 Certificate
- Three colleges give the option of studying toward the International Bacculaureate, and
- Narrabundah College offers the French Bacculaureate.

The Australian Bacculaureate will give the option to high-achieving students, having been taught the Australian Curriculum, to gain a qualification of national and international standing.

The Australian Bacculaureate will address some of the issues that arise from having nine separate senior secondary school certificates, particularly in international recognition and comparability of results.

Some people have wondered whether the Australian Bacculaureate will replace our current high school certification. The answer is *no*.

The Australian Baccalaureate will operate within and alongside existing state and territory certification and credentialing systems and will not replace them.

The government will provide \$7.3 million in funding to ACARA to lead development of the Australian Baccalaureate. It will follow the development of the senior secondary Australian Curriculum, so I don't expect it to be available until at least 2015.

### ***Teach Next***

Despite the large pool of qualified teachers in Australia, as you know there remain chronic shortages of teachers in particular fields.

That's why the Government committed \$18.1 million to establish *Teach Next*. The initiative will place up to 450 new teachers over 2011-12 to 2014-15.

It will provide a new pathway into teaching for experienced professionals with specialist qualifications in areas of teacher shortage, such as mathematics and science, who are seeking a 'career-change'. It will see them placed in hard-to-staff schools, often in regional areas.

There is evidence to support the initiative. The 2006-07 *Staff in Australia's Schools* survey showed teacher shortages in mathematics and science, as well as ongoing difficulties in filling vacancies in regional and remote areas.

Career-change teachers are valuable in combining theory in say maths or science with real world application and experience.

Participants in *Teach Next* will complete their postgraduate qualifications over two years. After completing an initial intensive component, participants will be placed in schools with support by mentors. Participants will combine theory with practice while being supported by experienced classroom teachers.

Participants will gain a teaching qualification while earning a salary, removing one of the major barriers that discourage career-changers from entering teaching.

## **CONCLUSION**

Together, all these initiatives are designed to position Australia, and future generations, for success in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

There is no doubt that Australia's future success relies on you.

I acknowledge the wonderful work you do on a daily basis to help young people get a great start in life.

Thank you