



Response to Draft Declaration on Education Goals

October 2019

1. The IEUA has been part of a consortium of national education stakeholders that since July 2018 has been urging for a review and re-commitment to the goals and principles of the 2008 Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians.
2. In June 2019, the IEUA was a co-signatory to a submission from a group of these stakeholders to education ministers about the imperative that a new declaration should “inspire all stakeholders in education and be inclusive of the views and perspectives of students, parents, teachers and school leaders in school communities”. [Attachment]
3. One of the central themes identified in the stakeholder submission was that “central to achieving the goals of a declaration is the respect for the professional judgement and expertise of the teaching profession and to continue to collaborate with the profession to build its own capacity”.
4. This could be evidenced in part, we urged, by ensuring that the “responsibility for, and leadership of measurement and monitoring (of the goals) should be vested in an independent group of educators and other organisations (such as the teacher unions) who are at ‘arm’s length’ from government”.
5. The IEUA is consequently dismayed that the draft declaration completely fails to articulate, recognize or support these key elements of professional judgement, respect and professional carriage.
6. Whilst the draft declaration has many laudable elements, addressed below, this fundamental failure to “be inclusive” of the skills, capacity, advice and expertise of the profession will neither enliven the Education Goals nor assist in their achievement.
7. The IEUA strongly supports the statement that “all Australian Governments and all education sectors must provide all young Australians with access to high-quality education that is inclusive and free from any form of discrimination”.
8. The IEUA welcomes the significant inclusion of more expansive commentary and commitment to the critical role of the early years of learning and early childhood education.

9. Unfortunately, the central part of the background narrative in *Strengthening early childhood education* is quite unlike the remainder of the declaration and instead of recognizing the nature of work to be done and aspirations to be sought, it dissolves into a commentary of apparent achievement and a sense that the work is done and the current programs sufficient and in place. The IEUA contends that this is not the case at all and would urge a review of this discourse.
10. The IEUA is pleased to see the stronger emphasis on cultural knowledge and experience of Aboriginal Islander peoples at a local, regional and national level and the importance of working in partnership with local communities to achieve educational goals.
11. The IEUA is concerned that there seems to be a very narrow view of curriculum (see the *delivering world class curriculum and assessment* area) inconsistent with the statement in Goal 2 and driven by a national assessment and reporting regimen that narrows curriculum focus.
12. Perhaps to mollify the education commentariat, schools and teachers should just stick to the designated learning areas, and in particular those subject to the high stakes testing and reporting requirements and forget about all the extra-curricular engagement and depth of learning across the national key learning areas.
13. The IEUA believes that the statements on Measurement and data (assessment and reporting) seems to be about only one section of Goal 2 i.e. Successful learners. There appears to be no measurement and reporting of the other two sections i.e. Confident and creative individuals ... and Active and informed community members. It is important that the declaration recognise the wide range of flexible and authentic assessment and reporting strategies teachers possess.
14. For instance, recent community action and commitment by school students clearly demonstrated competency and success in achieving these two goals. But it would seem that because it doesn't appear to have the collection of varied quantified and qualitative data as requested by the stakeholders' submission it is not 'relevant' to measure or report because we are not prepared to respect teacher professional judgement on such attributes and achievements.
15. The IEUA believes that there is insufficient emphasis given to the development of vocational skills in the draft. Consequently, the mountain of challenges facing this area and the unfair workload on school staff remains unaddressed, leading inevitably to lessened quality opportunities for students.
16. The IEUA questions the shift from a more global perspective, including with Asia, to a tighter focus with an Indo-Pacific outlook. The IEUA would welcome an expanded explanation in the declaration on this shift.
17. The IEUA welcomes the commitment to a biennial forum of national stakeholders. Unfortunately, until the forum in late 2018, the Australian government has spent the best part of a decade locking out the national stakeholders and in particular, dismissed the expertise and commitment of the profession, completely contrary to the declaration statement made in the Melbourne Declaration.

Review of the Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians

Context

In July 2018, a consortium of Australia's peak organisations in education developed, and subsequently proactively argued for a review of the Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians.

The original consortium consisted of the Australian Alliance of Associations in Education (AAAE), the Australian College of Educators (ACE), the Australian Council for Educational Leaders (ACEL), the Australian Curriculum Studies Association (ACSA), the Australian Education Union (AEU), Early Childhood Australia (ECA) and the Independent Education Union (IEU).

The Minister for Education's call for a Review of the Melbourne Declaration, announced in November 2018 was supported and member organisations participated in the forum on the review in February 2019.

The members of the Consortium, indicated below, welcome the opportunity to make the following submission on behalf of the consortium. Further, members of the consortium will provide individual submissions.

Submission

The Consortium submit that a declaration should provide a national statement that defines the core vision, goals and purposes for education aimed at ensuring that:

- All young peoples' learning, and wellbeing is maximised
- Education is inclusive of the needs of all learners
- Learners develop the knowledge skills and capacities to be active and informed citizens in their local, national and global communities.
- Cultural diversity is embraced and valued as a key aspect of our democratic system
- Education responds to emerging and future challenges including the impact of technological change, mass communication, emerging virtual realities and changes that effect work and social lives.
- The nation has a clear framework to inform initial teacher education and career long professional learning of the teaching workforce that meets diverse learners' needs.

The Consortium submit that a declaration should inspire all stakeholders in education and be inclusive of the views and perspectives of students, parents, teachers and school leaders in school communities. It should guide education policy makers and bureaucrats in their work.

It is the belief of the Consortium that the Melbourne Declaration has had a significant impact and ongoing influence in shaping the Australian curriculum, and has guided all Ministers of Education, systems and education providers as the cornerstone for action.

Members of the Consortium are actively involved in all aspects of education and believe that the Melbourne Declaration provides recognition of the importance of their fields of endeavour, across the breadth and depths of education.

In relation to the economic, social and technological impacts on education, the following is identified:

Economic: As noted in the Melbourne Declaration (MCEETYA, 2008), 'Globalisation and technological change are placing greater demands on education and skill development in Australia and the nature of jobs available to young Australians is changing faster than ever' (p.5). But the trend for greater levels of youth unemployment, regardless of skills and qualifications will be shaping forces.

Social: Ethnic, language, religious, and socio-economic diversity will continue to shape and impact on school communities. Personal and social resilience will be required so learners can adapt to issues of sustainability that are also linked to economic, ecological and environmental challenges.

The changing nature of industry and workplaces has created a greater need for workers who can have high levels of intercultural capability and the ability to communicate effectively in the global economy.

Social media will continue to impact on peoples' lives.

Technological: The development of Artificial intelligence, the replacement of humans in work practices and the automation of work functions will shape education and require ethical responses and the development of an adaptable workforce who will require new skills.

The Consortium submit that a declaration should state, and operate from the premise that learning is lifelong and complex. It should highlight the multimodal, multilingual, multicultural resources that young people bring with them to education and value teachers' contribution in nurturing and expanding learner capabilities. For the wellbeing of all Australians, education must be lifelong.

A declaration must be inclusive of diverse communities; respectful; able to be understood; actionable, with clear responsibilities and accountability; and state that lifelong learning is a right and a national goal.

The current Goal: Australian schooling promotes equity and excellence should still be at the core of the renewed Declaration. It is still vital that 'all Australian governments and all school sectors must: – provide all students with access to high-quality schooling that is free from discrimination based on gender, language, sexual orientation, pregnancy, culture, ethnicity, religion, health or disability, socioeconomic background or geographic location' (MCEETYA, 2008). The scope of this goal (p.7) as stated in The Melbourne Declaration, still has relevance and currency. But there must be an action plan to ensure that the stated Goals are achieved.

The Consortium submits that the eight areas of action remain relevant, contemporary, and do reflect the goals of Melbourne Declaration. But there must be strengthening of a focus on the importance of quality teaching and school leadership, and further development of partnerships between schools and the community to ensure authentic and purposeful teaching and learning. Central to achieving the goals of a declaration is the respect for the professional judgement and expertise of the teaching profession and to continue to collaborate with the profession to build its own capacity.

Middle years learning and learning transitions have fallen off the agenda and should be put back in the agenda, to ensure and maximise learning progression for all students. Early learning needs to be included and proactively pursued as an educational outcome.

Improving educational outcomes for Indigenous youth and disadvantaged young Australians, especially those from low socioeconomic backgrounds and young people with disability remain key challenges for the nation and needs prioritization.

The Consortium believe that none of the action areas should be removed. It is noted that the current Commitment to Action does not include a call for an explicit focus on ensuring the health and wellbeing of all young Australians and ensuring their voice and agency in their learning. The empowerment of young people should be a new priority for action. There should be greater emphasis on building their personal and social learning as members of diverse communities and an increasingly globalised world.

Targeted research funding should ensure that progress on the achievement of the national goals is captured in multiple ways, through the collective of varied quantitative and qualitative data that reflects the diverse contexts of schools and schooling across Australia.

Resourcing that supports sustained implementation of approaches to achieve goals should be available.

Formal reviews and reports on an annual or biennial basis should be developed that aim high, and be delivered to parliament.

Responsibility for, and leadership of measurement and monitoring should be vested in an independent group of educators and other organisations who are at 'arm's length' from government.

Regular national forums should be held to share and disseminate research and evidence-based practice on the ways that sector initiatives are enabling the achievement of goals. These should include the voices of students, educators, politicians, bureaucrats, NGO's, industry and business leaders, as well as members of the wider community who 'work together'.

Central to different players working with others to achieve the Goals of the Declaration will be their level of ownership of those Goals, the focus areas and actions. This ownership will be established – or not – through the processes used to develop it.

The Declaration itself will need to inspire and encourage different segments of the education sector to work together for shared purposes.

Putting young people in the centre will be a major contribution to this.

It appears that the processes for monitoring progress on the original Melbourne Declaration have 'fallen away' during the decade since its adoption by all Ministers of Education. A more robust process for monitoring progress – to which all parties are genuinely and publicly committed – is one strategy for encouraging collaboration on achieving the Goals of the Declaration.

The monitoring processes to be planned and funded appropriately to ensure that the findings are accurate and that recommendations for action are well supported by the evidence.

Submitted on behalf of named contributors

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