

ACARA is either incapable or uninterested in protecting our students

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Federation has written to ACARA seeking “meaningful action” over the publication in newspapers of school league tables, in contravention of the terms of use of My School data.

Over three days from 29 April to 1 May, a prominent media organisation published as many as 48 articles in its newspapers in all the local government areas of Greater Sydney, the Central Coast, Newcastle, Illawarra, Canberra and Wagga Wagga rating schools in each region.

The articles commonly featured NAPLAN in the headline and used the words “see how your school rates”, “top schools revealed” or “data reveals best performing schools”, among others.

Federation’s clear position on the publication of school results on the My School website is that it has historically set up disadvantaged students, their families and their communities for derision.

ACARA distributed a media release on 29 April that stated it was *“very disappointed at the publication by a major news organisation ... of crude league tables that rank schools using average NAPLAN scores”*.

In its letter to ACARA CEO David de Carvahlo, Federation pointed to the “Terms of Use” of the My School site, which specifically restrict the creation of *“lists of comparative school performance from such content, or anything derived from such content, for a commercial purpose”*.

“Given this breach, a statement merely expressing ‘disappointment’ is totally inadequate,” the correspondence stated.

“Federation seeks immediate clarification on what tangible actions will be taken in response to this breach. Failing to take meaningful action would be nothing short of a further admission that ACARA is either incapable or uninterested in protecting our students.

“It also puts into question the efficacy of Terms of Use of the My School website and ACARA as a whole.”

In its submission to the NAPLAN Review, Federation raised concerns about the risks of My School and the use of its content.

“With three clicks anyone can discover the test outcomes, the level of disadvantage, the cultural backgrounds, the language backgrounds, and the level of indigeneity of the children within any school community,” the submission stated.



“One could scarcely design a more efficient tool for social division and increased segregation and snobbery. And remember, of course, that it was deliberately designed as a device for school choice. And it is colour coded just in case one misses the point.

“In Australia, this is especially reprehensible at a time when public policy should be working towards social cohesion and providing hope and encouragement for our young, in particular, with a world ever-more fractured and where mindless populism threatens to divide whole nations.”