Education Council's weak response to calls for NAPLAN review

June 23, 2018

Despite strong public support, and calls from numerous state and territory governments, Federal Education Minister Simon Birmingham vetoed plans for a comprehensive national review of NAPLAN at the Educational Council meeting in Adelaide on Friday.

Minister Birmingham instead announced a significantly narrower review that will focus on the presentation of data on the MySchool website and the use of data by teachers and school leaders, including issues of misinterpretation and misuse of that data.

This review fails to address the core concerns of the NAPLAN test, such as the validity of the assessment processes, the test's narrow focus on literacy and numeracy that excludes the majority of school curriculum outcomes, and the lack of transparency around the commercial arrangements to develop and deliver the NAPLAN tests.

Earlier in 2018, Federation engaged international writing assessment expert, Dr Les Perelman, to evaluate the NAPLAN test. He found NAPLAN to be one of 'the most absurd, and least valid' of any writing assessment in the world, and was particularly critical of marking criteria that valued use of multiple difficult-to-spell words over the ability to write clearly to communicate ideas.

Federation President Maurie Mulheron said that despite Minister Birmingham's failure to a listen to the voices of the profession and parents, the momentum behind a change to NAPLAN was too large to ignore.

"Teachers, parents, education system leaders and politicians on all sides have acknowledged the significant issues with the NAPAN testing regime," he said. "The Minister may seek to side-step the issue in the short term, but everyone who sees the harm that NAPLAN in its current form is doing to students and to the curriculum knows this is too important to give up on."

Minister Birmingham's veto of a comprehensive NAPLAN review comes as part of an increasing trend to shut out the education profession from discussions about education reform. Read more here.