



BUILDING OPPORTUNITIES FOR ALL AUSTRALIANS

Council of Australian Governments delivers an education revolution

A landmark education reform package was agreed to at the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) meeting on 29 November 2008.

For the first time in Australia's history, the Australian Government and the state and territory governments have agreed to work together to deliver significant reforms in the areas of early childhood development, schools and vocational education and training.

COAG has committed to several new National Partnerships and signed a new National Education Agreement, which underpins the Australian Government's Education Revolution.

To complement the National Education Agreement, Federal Parliament recently passed the *Schools Assistance Act 2008*, which confirms the Australian Government's financial support for the non-government school sector and introduces the same nationwide school curriculum, transparency and accountability reforms as for the public school system.

Through the various agreements and National Partnerships, the federal, state and territory governments committed to working together to improve the education outcomes for every child across Australia. This commitment includes:

- \$540 million to improve literacy and numeracy
- an extra \$635 million for primary schools
- \$550 million to boost the quality of teaching and school leadership
- \$1.1 billion to raise achievement in disadvantaged school communities
- \$807 million to help deliver the associated infrastructure for the Digital Education Revolution in our secondary schools
- \$970 million for universal access to preschool across Australia
- \$6.7 billion for skills and workforce development, including the Productivity Places training program and support for ambitious reforms in vocational education and training (VET).

These initiatives will enhance Australia's long-term productivity and build opportunities for all Australians.

Early childhood education

To give Australian children the best possible start in life, the Australian Government, along with the states and territories, will deliver universal access to high quality preschool education to improve children's school readiness, especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds. This includes:

- \$970 million over five years to achieve universal access to early childhood education in the year before school by 2013
- a major focus on preschool programs for Indigenous children, especially in remote communities.

Schools

The Australian Government wants all schools across Australia to strive for excellence. The National Education Agreement between the federal, state and territory governments will deliver a set of school reforms aimed at improving learning outcomes for every Australian child.

The reforms will deliver investment, accountability and support for evidence-based programs that develop literacy and numeracy skills. The Australian Government wants all children to be able to achieve the basics of reading, writing and arithmetic.

The new National Partnerships recognise the importance of teacher excellence, strong school leadership and high professional standards for teachers. They also recognise the need for more of our best principals and teachers to work in disadvantaged schools and the need for more high-achieving graduates to be recruited into teaching.

The Australian Government wants to see the Year 12 or equivalent retention rate increased to 90 per cent by 2020.



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Schools funding over the next four years will total \$46.5 billion, including:

- an additional \$635 million over the next four years to bring government primary school students on par with funding rates for government secondary school students
- an extra \$807 million to implement the Digital Education Revolution and ensure that every student in Years 9 to 12 can access a computer at school
- \$28 billion for the non-government school sector—appropriated through the *Schools Assistance Act 2008*.

The new 'Smarter Schools' National Partnerships will include:

- a \$540 million partnership on literacy and numeracy
- a \$550 million partnership on teacher quality
- a \$1.1 billion partnership to help disadvantaged school communities.

These investments will help to meet critical national targets, including:

- raising Year 12 or equivalent attainment to 90 per cent by 2020
- improving literacy and numeracy outcomes, especially for Indigenous students.

The National Education Agreement and Schools Assistance Act 2008 will help deliver a new era of transparency for Australian schools. National data on the performance, student population and financial resources of every school will be published in a consistent format through the new Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority.

Skills and workforce development

COAG has agreed to a new National Skills and Workforce Development Agreement that sets out the commitment to work towards increasing the skill levels of all Australians.

The Australian Government will provide an estimated \$6.7 billion under the Skills and Workforce Development Specific Purpose Payment. In return, the states and territories will deliver up to 1.15 million VET course completions until 30 June 2013.

The states and territories have agreed to deliver an additional 506 750 qualification commencements under the Productivity Places Program for job seekers and existing workers over four years. The Australian Government has already committed \$1.2 billion over four years for this program.

Indigenous education

The federal, state and territory governments have agreed to reforms that will provide greater support to the most disadvantaged preschool children, students and schools, which includes many Indigenous children and students.

Total funding for Indigenous education from early childhood to higher education now amounts to \$2.375 billion over four years.

Funding arrangements for Indigenous school education now provide greater flexibility and better indexation so that schools in all sectors get better support to focus on meeting the 'closing the gap' targets.

National targets include halving the gap in Indigenous literacy and numeracy within a decade and halving the gap in Year 12 attainment by 2020, agreed to by COAG on 26 March 2008. The Australian Government will work with states, territories and non-government school systems to identify effective approaches, monitor outcomes and accelerate improvement by working together.