



... Leadership, Advocacy and Support

**Council of Catholic School Parents**

**Submission**

**Review of the Melbourne Declaration**

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## Preamble

This submission has been prepared by the Council of Catholic School Parents NSW/ACT (CCSP) on behalf of the parents of 256,000 students in Catholic schools in NSW. CCSP appreciates the opportunity to provide input into the *Review of the Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians (December 2008)*.

CCSP is an independent association and the officially recognised body representing the interests of parents and carers with children in Catholic schools in NSW/ACT. The work of the Council is guided by the principles of choice, equity and social justice. CCSP is a founding member of the national body Catholic School Parents Australia (CSPA).

This submission provides feedback in response to the Education Council's Discussion Paper. In that respect, this submission follows the Discussion Paper's structure by addressing each of the ten key questions.

CCSP notes that this feedback is provided in the context of the ongoing Review of the NSW Curriculum currently taking place here in NSW.

## Focus Questions

### 1. What are your expectations of a national aspirational declaration on Australian education?

CCSP's expectation of a national aspirational declaration on education is that it aligns with the agreed aspirations of all stakeholders. It needs to view education broadly and consider the contribution education makes to the lives of individuals and the society as a whole. It needs to value the integrity of the human person and to champion learning as a lifelong pursuit. CCSP believes a national aspirational declaration on education must support the formation of students to become collaborative, innovative, community-minded and adaptable problem-solvers both at school and in readiness for their post-school pathway, whatever form that may take. In this way, a national aspirational declaration on education necessarily does more than announce its intentions, it must also provide the foundation for its own realisation.

### 2. Who should the national declaration inspire and/or guide?

The national declaration should inspire and/or guide all education stakeholders, particularly those who drive the education agenda for young Australians. The national declaration

should have as a central focus the education of the whole person. Educators, parents and policy-makers should be inspired and guided to deliver on identified spiritual, intellectual, physical, social, cultural and psychological outcomes.

### **3. How has the Melbourne Declaration impacted or influenced you?**

The Melbourne Declaration has impacted or influenced the CCSP by providing a point of reference for developing its vision and mission. It is considered to be a foundational document that forms one of the starting points for any process of policy formulation.

### **4. What do you consider are the three most important economic, social and technological changes that will shape the future of education in Australia?**

The three most important economic changes that will shape the future of education in Australia:

- i. Implementation of a national funding model that will ensure parents are able to make an affordable choice of the school that best meets their child's needs;
- ii. Efficient determination of agreements for equitable school funding;
- iii. New investment in innovative approaches to the delivery of educational outcomes.

The three most important social changes that will shape the future of education in Australia:

- i. Greater recognition of the importance of the educational continuum from pre- to post-school;
- ii. School-parent partnerships and engagement initiatives to enhance student learning and wellbeing;
- iii. Acknowledgement and nurturing of the spiritual dimension in the education of the whole person.

The three most important technological changes that will shape the future of education in Australia:

- i. Advances in technology-based communication and the efficiencies they afford;
- ii. Harnessing the best of the evolving new technologies for use in safe and sustainable ways;
- iii. Greater equity of access to technology.

## **5. How can a national declaration best reflect that Australians need to continue to participate in learning throughout their lifetime?**

A national declaration can best reflect that Australians need to continue to participate in learning throughout their lifetime by promoting learning as a lifelong pursuit. This can be achieved in part by recognising the importance of the educational continuum from pre-school through to post-school and identifying points of connection throughout. Further, it should not only acknowledge parents as the foremost educators of their children, but as learners themselves. The national declaration can acknowledge the key role parents play in facilitating their children's learning before they go to school, while they are at school and as they transition out of school. The national declaration can encourage all adult members of society to continue to participate in learning throughout their lifetime and frame such a pursuit as an expectation of a productive and harmonious society.

## **6. How could the concepts of equity, excellence and the attributes for young Australians in the Melbourne Declaration be updated to ensure they are still contemporary over the next decade?**

The Melbourne Declaration could more explicitly address the importance of the inclusivity of students from various areas of educational disadvantage, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, students with disabilities (additional needs), students in out-of-home care, rural and remote students, refugees and students from low socio-economic backgrounds. In respect of attributes and remaining contemporary, the Melbourne Declaration could place greater emphasis on the spiritual dimension of young Australians as well as the importance of the relationships they share with their parents/carers.

## **7. Are the eight areas for action in the Melbourne Declaration still contemporary and how well do they address the goals?**

The eight areas for action in the Melbourne Declaration remain contemporary and, generally speaking, still address the goals. They would, however, be enhanced by greater attention being given to the other areas addressed elsewhere in this submission.

## **8. Are new priority areas for action needed? And are there areas that should no longer be a priority?**

CCSP does not identify any areas that should no longer be a priority, but there are new priority areas for action that should be included. Refer to the response to 6. above. In

addition to these areas, the area of parent engagement in student learning and wellbeing is a necessary inclusion. For further explanation on this, please refer to the submission made by Catholic School Parents Australia (CSPA).

### **9. Are there better ways to measure and share progress toward achieving the declaration's goals?**

There are likely to be better ways to measure and share progress toward achieving the declaration's goals, which a National Evidence Institute could investigate.

### **10. How can we ensure the education sector works together to achieve the goals of the Declaration?**

The education sector is most likely to work together to achieve the goals of the Declaration if all stakeholders are both given a voice and listened to respectfully. There needs to be appropriate fora in and through which decision-makers from all jurisdictions can contribute to the discourse that supports the realisation of the Declaration's goals.

## **Conclusion**

CCSP provides this feedback in a spirit of collaboration with a shared view of arriving at a national declaration that is in the best interests of all Australians.

Once again, CCSP is grateful for the opportunity to contribute to the *Review of the Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians (December 2008)*.

CCSP is happy to provide further feedback, as requested and looks forward to working closely with the Education Council as the process continues.