

# NATIONAL PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT ON LITERACY AND NUMERACY

Council of  
Australian  
Governments

An agreement between

- the **Commonwealth of Australia** and
- the **States and Territories**, being:
  - ◆ the State of New South Wales;
  - ◆ the State of Victoria;
  - ◆ the State of Queensland;
  - ◆ the State of Western Australia;
  - ◆ the State of South Australia;
  - ◆ the State of Tasmania;
  - ◆ the Australian Capital Territory; and
  - ◆ the Northern Territory of Australia.

This National Partnership Agreement for Literacy and Numeracy ('the Agreement') will focus on the key areas of teaching, leadership and the effective use of student performance information to deliver sustained improvement in literacy and numeracy outcomes for all students, especially those who are falling behind.



# National Partnership Agreement on Literacy and Numeracy

## PRELIMINARIES

1. Australian governments share the objective of raising overall attainment so that all Australian school students acquire the knowledge and skills to participate effectively in society.
2. The 2008-09 Budget announced funding of \$577.4 million over four years to deliver a National Action Plan for Literacy and Numeracy to improve literacy and numeracy outcomes.
3. This National Partnership Agreement (NP) is the centrepiece of this budget initiative with \$540 million to support this NP. An additional \$30 million has been allocated to fund Literacy and Numeracy pilots in low SES communities.
4. This NP is envisioned as a tool to galvanise the collective resources and energy of the Australian Government and the state, territory and non-government education systems, to put in place the infrastructure and practices that will deliver sustained improvement in literacy and numeracy outcomes for all students, especially those who are falling behind. The NP will accelerate progress towards the ambitious literacy and numeracy target set by COAG to halve the gap for Indigenous students in reading, writing and numeracy within a decade.
5. The NP will operate for four years from 2009 and will facilitate and reward literacy and numeracy models or approaches that clearly demonstrate evidence for accelerating improvement in student results. Effective practice will be disseminated to support system wide improvements in attainment.
6. Analysis of national and international research, together with stakeholder feedback, has helped identify the key influences on students' literacy and numeracy learning outcomes. These priority areas for reform for this NP are:
  - (a) effective and evidence-based teaching of literacy and numeracy;
  - (b) strong school leadership and whole school engagement with literacy and numeracy; and
  - (c) monitoring student and school literacy and numeracy performance to identify where support is needed.

## PART 1 – FORMALITIES

### Parties to this Agreement

7. This National Partnership is created subject to the provisions of the Intergovernmental Agreement on Federal Financial Relations and its schedules, and should be read in conjunction with them.
8. In entering this Agreement, the Commonwealth and the States and Territories (the States) recognise that they have a mutual interest in and shared responsibility for improving outcomes in the area of literacy and numeracy and need to work together to achieve those outcomes.
  - (a) Individual States can elect not to participate in this Agreement. In that case, the Commonwealth may negotiate separate agreements with the non-government sectors in those States, using the proportion of Commonwealth funding allocated to those States, through the agreed methodology, as a result of non-government school National Assessment Program for Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) results. The proportion of funding allocated to those States as a result of government school NAPLAN results will be set aside for participating States.
  - (b) States may seek Commonwealth agreement to participate in the Agreement for part of its life. In this case, the funding to a State will be determined by its implementation plan.
9. The Commonwealth and States will work together to bring school systems from the non-government sector into this NP. States will invite non-government school systems to participate in this NP. These systems will be involved in the design, operation and evaluation of State Implementation Plans.
10. Where effective non-government participation in these Plans cannot be secured, the Commonwealth may establish separate Literacy and Numeracy NPs with sector and school authorities.

### Term of the Agreement

11. This Agreement will commence on 1 January 2009 or as soon as the Commonwealth and one other Party signs the Agreement. The Agreement will expire on 31 December 2012, or earlier, as agreed in writing by all Parties.
12. Bilateral agreements between the Commonwealth and participating States will commence as soon as they are signed and expire on 31 December 2012, or earlier, as agreed in writing by all Parties.

### Purpose of the Agreement

13. This Agreement provides an agreed multilateral framework for the NP on Literacy and Numeracy.
  - (a) This framework sets out this NP's objectives, outputs, outcomes, priority areas for reform, and reporting, financial and governance arrangements. It also provides guidance for the development of Implementation Plans by participating States. These Plans will be agreed with the Commonwealth and form the basis of bilateral agreements.

## Delegations

14. The Minister for Education, Employment and Workplace Relations is authorised to agree to the Implementation Plans and bilateral agreements on behalf of the Commonwealth and certify that facilitation payments may be made to the States to support work under the Implementation Plans.
15. Ministers for Education are authorised to agree to the Implementation Plans and bilateral agreements on behalf of their State or Territory.

## Interpretation

16. Unless otherwise specified, the following terms and definitions are used throughout this Agreement:
  - (a) *NP/The Agreement* – National Partnership for Literacy and Numeracy.
  - (b) *Bilateral Agreement* – Bilateral Agreements with each State and Territory and where appropriate non-government sector authority.
  - (c) *Implementation Plan* - Appendix to Bilateral Agreement that details the proposed strategies specific to each State and Territory.
  - (d) *Evidence Base/Framework* – A central repository and structure to gather, organise and disseminate information about the effective literacy and numeracy strategies.
  - (e) *Priority Areas of Reform* – The areas identified in this NP as the key influences on students' literacy and numeracy learning outcomes.
  - (f) *State Co-investment* – The investment by partner States towards the proposed strategies under the facilitation component of this NP. It should be noted that for this NP this can include existing or redirected investments.
  - (g) *Facilitation payment* – Payment to each State and Territory to support the implementation of strategies as agreed through the Implementation Plan.
  - (h) *Reward payment* – Payment to each State and Territory based on achievement of targets based on measures of improvement as agreed through the Implementation Plan, made only after an independent assessment is provided by the COAG Reform Council that predetermined milestones or performance benchmarks have been achieved.

## PART 2 – OBJECTIVES, OUTCOMES AND OUTPUTS

### Objectives

17. Increased collaboration with state, territory and non-government education systems in achieving national literacy and numeracy reform, with priority focus on those primary aged students most in need of support, especially Indigenous students.
18. Identification and implementation of evidence-based interventions which achieve accelerated and sustained improvements in literacy and numeracy outcomes for students, particularly those falling behind.

19. Working collaboratively with state, territory and non-government education systems to inspire a renewed focus and Australia-wide awareness of the importance of increasing the literacy and numeracy skills of all students, with a particular focus on lifting performance in numeracy.
20. Work towards achieving improvement in outcomes for schooling agreed by COAG and in the National Education Agreement and the National Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians.
21. Achieve sustained improvements in educational outcomes in participating schools/school communities.

## Outcomes

22. This Agreement supports ambitious, nationally significant reforms which aim to improve the literacy and numeracy outcomes of all students, particularly those most in need.
23. All Parties agree to implement literacy and numeracy strategies that improve literacy and numeracy outcomes for targeted schools/school communities and students.

*The measurement of literacy and numeracy outcomes under this Agreement is described in Part 4 of this Agreement.*

24. A key outcome of this NP will be to build a national understanding of what works and a shared accountability for the literacy and numeracy achievement of Australian students.
25. The Agreement will contribute to the following literacy and numeracy outcomes which are set out in the National Education Agreement. Progress against these outcomes will be measured by the performance indicators shown below.

Outcomes	Performance Indicators
Young people are meeting basic literacy and numeracy standards, and overall levels of literacy and numeracy achievement are improving.	Literacy and numeracy achievement of Year 3, 5, 7 and 9 students in national testing.
Australian students excel by international standards.	The proportion of students in the bottom and top levels of performance in international testing (for example Program for International Student Assessment and Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study).

## Outputs

### Framework for Effective Practice

26. The Australian Government will co-ordinate and manage a database of effective strategies and approaches through a framework of effective practice (the Framework), and facilitate access by state and territory government and non-government education authorities, including practitioners to this evidence base.
27. States will remain owners of their Intellectual Property.
28. The Framework has been progressed through the literacy and numeracy pilots in low SES communities and will be developed in consultation with the States. It is expected to be available by early 2009. Over time, successful new strategies can be added to the Framework

where there is robust evidence to support their success. The Framework will describe the key features of effective programs and how to measure these features.

29. Education authorities will use the Framework as a mechanism to report on the success of targeted literacy and numeracy interventions. It is expected that the Framework will be a mechanism that will support a learning community that will share information and effective practice that will lead to better informed and evidence-based decisions to improve the literacy and numeracy outcomes for Australian students.

#### **Data collection and research**

30. The Commonwealth will commit \$40 million to research initiatives targeted at improving teaching capacity in literacy and numeracy to assist in the accelerated improvement of literacy and numeracy for all students. This will identify initiatives that have demonstrated sustained improvement and those that are suitable for broader implementation.
31. This will include \$13 million for the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority.

### **PART 3 – ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF EACH PARTY**

32. To realise the objectives and commitments in this Agreement, each Party has specific roles and responsibilities, as outlined below.

#### **Role of the Commonwealth**

33. The Commonwealth will have responsibility for:
  - (a) agreed complementary interventions that might be required to support this Agreement, State Implementation Plans and bilateral agreements;
  - (b) ensuring efficient payment of agreed Commonwealth facilitation and reward payments, under the terms and conditions set out in the relevant bilateral agreement;
  - (c) agreeing to the proposed reform initiatives proposed in State Implementation Plans, and State proposed co-investments, as a basis for determining the Commonwealth's facilitation payment schedule;
  - (d) Commonwealth facilitation payments will be authorised by the Commonwealth Treasurer on the advice of the Commonwealth Minister for Education, Employment and Workplace Relations; and
  - (e) Commonwealth reward payments will be authorised only after an independent assessment is provided by the COAG Reform Council that participating States have met previously agreed implementation milestones and/or reform targets for the previous reporting period and complied in full with their earlier funding (co-investment) obligations.

#### **Role of the States and Territories**

34. The States and Territories will have responsibility for:
  - (a) the development of the Implementation Plans which will form the basis of the bilateral agreements to be negotiated with the Commonwealth and give effect to this NP;

- (b) ensuring full and timely implementation of agreed strategies set out in the bilateral agreements, including supporting the participating schools/school communities;
- (c) ensuring the full and timely payment of agreed State co-investment (where appropriate) as set out in the bilateral agreements;
- (d) providing regular reports to the Commonwealth on progress in implementing the agreed reform agenda outlined in the Implementation Plans and associated bilateral agreements;
- (e) provision of information in line with performance and reporting requirements detailed in Part 4; and
- (f) cooperating with any auditor the Commonwealth appoints to ensure the terms of the bilateral agreements are being complied with. The details of any auditing arrangements will be set out in the relevant bilateral agreements.

## **PART 4 – PERFORMANCE BENCHMARKS AND REPORTING**

### **Performance benchmarks and indicators**

- 35. Implementation milestones, measurements of improvement and reform targets will be negotiated with individual States in the development of bilateral agreements and Implementation Plans.
- 36. The development of the reform targets and measures of improvement will be informed by the scope and degree of ambition of each State's reform strategies as identified in the Implementation Plan, the cohort of students/schools/school communities being targeted and the availability and suitability of data to measure improvement.
- 37. Reform targets will be ambitious and will aim for accelerated improvement for schools/school communities and students involved in the NP, including specific targets for Indigenous students, and will reflect the different starting points in State literacy and numeracy achievement.
- 38. While targets may vary according to each State's circumstances and Implementation Plans, there will be consistency where possible in the measurement of improvement. For example NAPLAN results will be one component of measurement in all States, but this can be supplemented with appropriate local data.
- 39. Bilateral agreements and Implementation Plans will be published to ensure transparency.
- 40. Bilateral agreements may also include identification, measurement and reporting of other indicators of the effectiveness of the interventions supported through this NP. This could include, for example data on student attendance and turnover, teacher satisfaction, retention, turnover, and parent feedback.



41. Strategies in the Implementation Plans must focus on all of the following priority areas for reform.

(a) Teaching and Learning:

(i) Through the NP, the Australian Government and education authorities will implement literacy and numeracy reforms that ensure teaching and learning is effective and evidence-based by:

PRIORITY FOR REFORM	INDICATIVE ACTIONS
Effective and evidence-based teaching of literacy and numeracy.	<p>Providing teachers with the skills and strategies to teach the key concepts in literacy and numeracy from the early years and extend these skills in the middle and later years. Identifying and developing resources for teachers to deliver consistent, high quality literacy and numeracy teaching.</p> <p>Identifying and developing targeted strategies and resources to address the specific needs of students from diverse backgrounds.</p> <p>Providing access to professional development to increase teacher capacity to teach literacy and numeracy.</p> <p>Introducing literacy and numeracy standards for all teachers as part of the national teacher standards and accreditation.</p> <p>Introducing additional specialised classroom support to assist school leaders and teachers to improve student outcomes.</p>

(b) School Leadership and Whole School Engagement:

(i) The NP will implement literacy and numeracy reforms that develop strong school leadership and whole school engagement with literacy and numeracy by:

PRIORITY FOR REFORM	INDICATIVE ACTIONS
Strong school leadership and whole school engagement with literacy and numeracy.	<p>Supporting school leaders to develop a whole school culture of high performance in literacy and numeracy.</p> <p>Implementing approaches which encourage parental engagement in literacy and numeracy education.</p> <p>Supporting schools to share practice and performance outcomes with other schools and the community.</p> <p>Building the capacity of principals and other members of school leadership teams to drive continuous improvement, through identification and implementation of proven literacy and numeracy practices and the use of performance data.</p> <p>Professional learning support for principals and other members of school leadership.</p>

## (c) Monitoring Student and School Performance:

- (i) The Australian Government and education authorities will implement literacy and numeracy reforms that identify where support is needed through monitoring student and school literacy and numeracy performance by:

PRIORITY FOR REFORM	INDICATIVE ACTIONS
Monitoring student and school literacy and numeracy performance to identify where support is needed.	<p>Supporting schools and teachers to use literacy and numeracy performance information to identify the individual learning needs of every student so that appropriate teaching strategies can be used.</p> <p>Ensuring that reporting clearly tells students, parents and teachers how each student's literacy and numeracy attainment compares to national standards.</p> <p>Sharing best practice in using information to diagnose student learning needs and the success of intervention strategies.</p> <p>Supporting schools to track student progress over time, particularly for cohorts of students.</p>

## Implementation plan

42. States will develop an Implementation Plan to achieve the objectives of this Agreement. The Plan will form part of the bilateral agreement and will be reviewed by the Parties on a biennial basis and must include detail of:
- (a) an agreed list of schools/school communities to participate in the NP;
  - (b) the specific initiatives that will be funded, their proof of effectiveness and their links to the priority areas for reform of the NP;
  - (c) how the initiatives/approaches will focus support for disadvantaged students, in particular Indigenous students;
  - (d) the State co-investment, including the costed initiative/s that the NP will build on, complement or intensify;
  - (e) the measurement/s for improvement and the reform targets to be achieved, including for Indigenous students, with timelines for achievement (negotiated with Australian Government); and
  - (f) a framework or mechanism to gather, synthesise and share the monitoring and evaluation of the initiative.
43. Amendments to the Plan can be requested by a State at any time, to accommodate emerging issues. These amendments will be agreed with the Commonwealth and the other Parties.

## Bilateral Agreements

44. These Implementation Plans will form the basis of bilateral agreements to be concluded between participating States and the Commonwealth. Bilateral agreements will set out:
- (a) an agreed reform agenda, including specific milestones for implementation of these reforms;
  - (b) the Commonwealth facilitation payments and State co-investments to be made in support of these reforms over the life of the NP;
  - (c) how States propose to distribute Commonwealth facilitation payments and any State co-investments to participating non-government schools;
  - (d) measurements of improvement, including State-specific indicators that might be agreed in addition to utilising NAPLAN data;
  - (e) monitoring and reporting arrangements to track State implementation of agreed reforms, State co-investment and achievement of reform targets, using agreed improvement measures;
  - (f) any auditing arrangements that Parties consider necessary to ensure the terms of bilateral agreements are being complied with; and
  - (g) bilateral governance arrangements, including dispute resolution procedures.

## Reporting

45. Reporting under this NP will comply with the requirements of Schedule C of the Intergovernmental Agreement on Federal Financial Relations 'Public Accountability and Performance Reporting'.
46. The States will provide reports to the Commonwealth against the implementation milestones, achievement of reform targets and timelines, as detailed in each State's bilateral agreement. These reports will be also published.
47. The reports will be provided to the Commonwealth within four months of the end of the relevant period, or as otherwise specified each State's bilateral agreement.

## Evaluation

48. The Commonwealth will provide funding to evaluate the progress of reforms through this NP. The evaluation will support program management and monitoring efforts and will inform COAG on the success of the reforms and how best to sustain them.

# PART 5 – FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS

## Funding

### Co-Investment

49. Co-investment is required as it will facilitate reform on a larger scale, in all years of schooling and result in a greater impact.

50. Co-investment from States will be required to match the Australian Government facilitation investment, noting this can include existing or redirected investments of States. Participating non-government education authorities/schools will contribute to the NP through existing and/or redirected investments.
51. A partnership approach to funding will optimise the combined efforts of governments and education systems to deliver sustained improvement in literacy and numeracy. The Australian Government's role in this partnership is not only to fund education systems to implement proven approaches, but to lead the coordination and dissemination of the latest evidence.
52. The combined investment will be focused on agreed reform activities to maximise impact and develop a comprehensive understanding of what works in a variety of school settings and student cohorts.

### **Facilitation and Reward**

53. Funding will be in two parts, facilitation and reward.

#### **FACILITATION COMPONENT**

54. Over the first two years of the NP, \$150 million will be allocated to facilitate reform delivering accelerated literacy and numeracy improvement and progress towards the COAG target, with a priority focus on those primary aged students most in need of support, especially Indigenous students.
55. The notional allocation of facilitation funding available to each State in 2009 and 2010 has been determined by each State's share of students at or below the minimum standard in Reading and Numeracy for Years 3, 5 and 7 (NAPLAN 2008). Note: Reading is used as the proxy for Literacy.
56. Based on this notional allocation, partner education authorities will develop and submit an Implementation Plan that will cover the four years of the NP, with appropriate recognition that the final two years are reward payments.
57. Actual allocation will be determined by the degree of reform including the breadth and scope of the Implementation Plan and the strategies to improve literacy and numeracy achievement. Where any State's actual facilitation allocation is less than their notional allocation, any unallocated facilitation funds may be redistributed to remaining States electing more ambitious reform strategies.
58. Facilitation payments will be triggered by achievement of implementation milestones as identified in the Implementation Plan.
59. The bilateral negotiation and subsequent acceptance of the Implementation Plan will trigger the first facilitation payments for 2009.

#### **REWARD COMPONENT**

60. Over the last two years of the NP, \$350 million will be allocated to reward reform, based on the achievement of predetermined milestones and benchmarks, as assessed by the COAG Reform Council. For each State a proportion of this reward payment will be made for demonstrated improvements for Indigenous students, to be determined in bilateral agreements.
61. The reward component will be triggered by the achievement of agreed reform targets, based on agreed measures of improvement in literacy and numeracy outcomes as identified in the Implementation Plans and bilateral agreements.

62. The reform targets and measures of improvement will reflect each State's starting point in literacy and numeracy achievement.
63. The achievement of reform targets will trigger the payment of reward funds over 2011-2012. Any unallocated funds due to the non-achievement of reform targets in 2011 will roll over into the allocated reward funds for that State in 2012.
64. Where States have the same schools participating in the National Partnership for Low Socio-economic status School Communities and the National Partnership for Literacy and Numeracy the State may receive reward payments if they achieve these agreed reform targets in the Literacy and Numeracy NP following assessment by the COAG Reform Council of whether reforms have been achieved.

## Payment schedule

65. The Commonwealth will make facilitation payments to the States in accordance with a schedule reflecting the achievement of implementation milestones identified in the bilateral agreements with the first facilitation payment to be made upfront, on signing of the bilateral agreement.
- (a) This schedule will be set out in bilateral agreements.
66. The Commonwealth will provide reward payments to the States following achievement of the reform targets identified in the Implementation Plan, as assessed by the COAG Reform Council.
67. The methodology for the notional allocation of funds available to each State will be reviewed before the end of 2010. This review will determine the appropriate allocation methodology for funds for 2011 and 2012<sup>1</sup>.

### Notional State and Territory funding shares, by financial year

	\$m		\$m		\$m		\$m		\$m		\$m
	2008-09	Share	2009-10	Share	2010-11	Share	2011-12	Share	2012-13	Share	5 yr total
Aust	70		80		175		175				500
NSW	19	0.2720	22	0.2720	48	0.2720	48	0.2720	-	0.2720	136
VIC	13	0.1789	14	0.1789	31	0.1789	31	0.1789	-	0.1789	89
QLD	19	0.2773	22	0.2773	49	0.2773	49	0.2773	-	0.2773	139
SA	6	0.0808	6	0.0808	14	0.0808	14	0.0808	-	0.0808	40
WA	9	0.1234	10	0.1234	22	0.1234	22	0.1234	-	0.1234	62
TAS	2	0.0258	2	0.0258	5	0.0258	5	0.0258	-	0.0258	13
NT	2	0.0298	2	0.0298	5	0.0298	5	0.0298	-	0.0298	15
ACT	1	0.0121	1	0.0121	2	0.0121	2	0.0121	-	0.0121	6

Methodology: The NP proposes allocating the facilitation component on need, indicated by the states and territories share of the total number of students AT or BELOW minimum standards (NAPLAN 2008) in Reading and Numeracy for Years 3,5 and 7.

68. Commonwealth facilitation and reward payments will be authorised by the Commonwealth Treasurer after receiving advice that participating States have met previous agreed implementation milestones, reform targets and complied in full with their earlier funding (co-investment) obligations, where applicable.

<sup>1</sup> The review will consider whether the funding methodology used for facilitation payments is appropriate for the allocation of reward funding, taking into account updated data from the NAPLAN, any interim findings from the ongoing evaluation of the NP, particularly relating to the effectiveness of the methodology, and any evidence of unintended or unforeseen consequences of the allocation methodology.

69. Provisions governing this approval process will be included in bilateral agreements.

## **PART 6 – GOVERNANCE ARRANGEMENTS**

### **Dispute resolution**

70. Any Party may give notice to other Parties of a dispute under this Agreement.
71. The relevant delegates will attempt to resolve any dispute in the first instance.
72. If a dispute cannot be resolved between the relevant delegates, it may be escalated to the relevant Ministerial Council or COAG Working Group for consideration.
73. If a dispute cannot be resolved by the relevant Ministerial Council or COAG Working Group, it may be referred by a Party to COAG for consideration.

### **Review of the Agreement**

74. The Agreement will be reviewed prior to the expiry of this agreement with regard to progress made by the Parties in respect of achieving the agreed outcomes.

### **Variation of the Agreement**

75. The agreement may be amended at any time by agreement in writing by all the Parties and under terms and conditions as agreed by all the Parties.
76. A Party to the Agreement may terminate their participation in the Agreement at any time by notifying all the other Parties in writing. At least two months notice must be provided.

The Parties have confirmed their commitment to this agreement as follows:

**Signed** *for and on behalf of the Commonwealth of Australia by*

---

**The Honourable Kevin Rudd MP**  
Prime Minister of the Commonwealth of Australia  
January 2009

**Signed** *for and on behalf of the State of New South Wales by*

---

**The Honourable Nathan Rees MP**  
Premier of the State of New South Wales  
December 2008

**Signed** *for and on behalf of the State of Queensland by*

---

**The Honourable Anna Bligh MP**  
Premier of the State of Queensland  
December 2008

**Signed** *for and on behalf of the State of South Australia by*

---

**The Honourable Mike Rann MP**  
Premier of the State of South Australia  
December 2008

**Signed** *for and on behalf of the Australian Capital Territory by*

---

**Jon Stanhope MLA**  
Chief Minister of the Australian Capital Territory  
December 2008

**Signed** *for and on behalf of the State of Victoria by*

---

**The Honourable John Brumby MP**  
Premier of the State of Victoria  
December 2008

**Signed** *for and on behalf of the State of Western Australia by*

---

**The Honourable Colin Barnett MP**  
Premier of the State of Western Australia  
December 2008

**Signed** *for and on behalf of the State of Tasmania by*

---

**The Honourable David Bartlett MP**  
Premier of the State of Tasmania  
December 2008

**Signed** *for and on behalf of the Northern Territory by*

---

**The Honourable Paul Henderson MLA**  
Chief Minister of the Northern Territory of Australia  
December 2008