

MEDIA RELEASE

Needs-based funding a first step towards a world-leading school system

23 June 2017: Passage of the *Australian Education Amendment Bill 2017* is a step in the right direction for Australian schools. The next step is to ensure the right strategies are in place to create a world-leading school system.

Welcoming the passage of the Bill, Professor Geoff Masters AO, chief executive of the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER), said the needs-based funding of schools provided an opportunity for Australia to take its place as an international leader in re-imagining the future of schools.

“We must now use this opportunity to rethink how we organise and deliver schooling in this country to ensure that every learner is provided with learning opportunities matched to their present levels of achievement and learning needs,” Professor Masters said.

“Needs-based funding is a first step toward needs-based teaching and learning – the key to changing our industrial model of schooling and lifting levels of student performance. As a result of the passage of this Bill, Australia is now in a better position to lead the world in school reform.”

According to Professor Masters, a needs-based approach requires a focus on the points students have reached in their learning so that individual learning needs are understood and can be better addressed. This is important because the achievement levels of students in the same grade vary by five to six years of school.

“Schools in Australia, as in most of the world, are organised along industrial lines. What students are taught is determined almost entirely by their year level. As a result, the learning needs of many less advanced students are not being met and many of our most advanced students are not being adequately challenged and extended.

“Attempts to infer students’ learning needs from their year level, or from some category to which they have been assigned, are not serving all students well and are no doubt part of the reason for low performance levels in our schools,” Professor Masters said.

“Greater attention to individual learning needs has implications for how we think about the school curriculum, individual learners, teaching, what it means to learn successfully, and how learning is assessed and reported. We must now move from a model of schooling that judges success in terms of common, year-level expectations to a model that is more sensitive to individual learning needs and that expects every student to make excellent progress every year, regardless of their starting point.”

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