



Statement on National Schools Performance Information and Reporting Framework

The Association of Heads of Independent Schools of Australia

AHISA members share key concerns regarding national initiatives in assessment and reporting.

AHISA members agree that accountability and transparency of school operations are important if schools are to demonstrate that they are meeting the public goals for schooling. Independent schools are already highly accountable to parents, the wider community and governments.

AHISA members are also of the view that the delivery of high quality education to students in the 21st century is best served through greater school autonomy, not through an increasing uniformity in schooling provision driven by standardised national testing and comparison of narrow measures of school performance.

There is now a significant body of research and opinion on the negative educational effects of national standardised testing when used to compare school performance. AHISA is concerned there is the potential for these effects – including impoverishment of curriculum delivery and a ‘teach to the test’ mentality that is counterproductive to the developmental needs of children – to be experienced in Australia.

AHISA is of the view that the complexity of the business of schools and an accurate measure of their performance cannot be captured through the comparisons to be published on the proposed ‘My School’ website. AHISA questions if the use of NAPLAN data or any single measure of academic achievement to compare schools is an effective measure of whether students are receiving, and schools are delivering, a high quality liberal education.

The best schooling outcomes occur when schools and parents align their focus on the development of students, when the quality of teaching is high and school leaders have the autonomy to deliver strong educational leadership. When school communities are student-centred, public comparisons of school data become a second order priority.

Public reporting is richer and more informative when data can be read in the context of each school community. Reporting on the proposed national ‘My School’ website should therefore be minimal and the public referred to annual school performance reporting on school websites.

AHISA is also of the view that ‘league tables’ add little value to school communities or the decisions parents make about schools. They add little of quality to the broader public debates about education and governments have a role to play in countering the misinformation that arises through the media’s publication of school league tables.

AHISA members are also concerned that the socio-economic ranking used to identify ‘like’ schools and the process used to arrive at a school’s ICSEA score will not be identified on school pages on the ‘My School’ site. The scores for AHISA member schools under the Australian Government’s SES general recurrent funding model are a matter of public record, as is the process for determining the scores. There is also a mechanism for schools to request a review of their SES score under this model. It is AHISA’s view that if schools are to be compared to ‘like’ schools the basis for that comparison must be open and contestable or the Government’s claims to ‘transparency’ are totally undermined.