



The Australian Association of Mathematics Teachers Inc.

Response to the MCEETYA Action Plan 2009-2012

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MCEETYA Draft Action Plan

Response from the Australian Association of Mathematics Teachers Inc.

The following comments relate to the sections of the Draft MCEETYA Action Plan 2009-2012

General comments

The AAMT **endorses** the notion of an Action Plan to support the achievement of the goals of the Melbourne Declaration.

The Association **notes and supports** 'eight inter-related' areas for action as listed. These are key areas.

The Association suggests in the strongest possible terms that a ninth specific area for action in support of the goals from the Melbourne Declaration should relate specifically to the domain of mathematics and science education. This would give confidence that MCEETYA will initiate and lead practical efforts over the next quadrennium to address the serious and trenchant issues in this area. Improved performance in science and mathematics is necessary for continued economic prosperity and social advancement in the 21st century. Science and mathematics education need explicit attention in the Action Plan at this time. **Several of our recommendations on the sections of the draft indicate some places where this should happen when MCEETYA is finalising the Action Plan.**

Partnerships

The AAMT **notes and supports** the six areas for action as listed. These are all areas in which partnerships will make a difference to the nation's educational enterprise.

Partnerships with the teaching profession — through the agency of professional associations — is also an important domain. **This should be made explicit as a seventh area for partnership/partnership development.**

Supporting quality teaching and school leadership

The AAMT **appreciates** that the agreed actions cover a range of areas that can serve to support quality teaching and school leadership. **An explicit commitment to providing direct support for teachers and school leaders to do their work should be added to the actions.**

The AAMT believes that actions to monitor the performance of systemic structures for delivery of support (e.g. providing access to high quality developmental programs and opportunities etc.) should also be added to the actions. Without actions from systems to provide meaningful support, action that

expects a “continual improvement program for all teachers” is at best a hollow expectation; at worst divisive and punitive.

In addition, and in concert with the general point that mathematics (and science) education require specific attention in the Action Plan, the AAMT believes that targetted actions that build the supply and retention of suitably prepared teachers of mathematics should be included.

Strengthening early childhood education

The AAMT **notes** that the dot point about the Early Years Learning Framework is the only one that is explicitly about learning in the actions. As this and other actions progress, the AAMT will be keen to contribute to the discussions about policy and practice to ensure that there is appropriate and clear attention to early mathematical learning.

Enhancing middle years development

The AAMT notes that disengagement from learning mathematics in the middle years is a key factor in students not reaching their full potential at school and beyond. **Hence we believe that MCEETYA should adopt a further action that is explicitly about improving student engagement in mathematics in the middle years.**

Supporting senior years of schooling and youth transitions

The AAMT **notes** that the areas for action largely reflect the economic ‘good times’ in which they were drafted. It is likely that the impact in Australia of the global economic crisis requires that the actions relating to transitions, work and training be reviewed. Difficult times in the labour market — particularly for youth — would appear to be likely for much of the period 2009-2012. **The AAMT believes that an Action Plan for this period needs to be in tune with this context.**

Promoting world-class curriculum and assessment

The action:

development of plans to improve the capacity of schools to assess student performance, and to link assessment to the national curriculum where appropriate

is unsatisfactory. It is not only — or even mainly — schools that need to “link assessment to the national curriculum”. This is an urgent imperative for systemic assessment programs — NAPLAN in particular. **A minimum condition for Australia’s national assessment program to be considered ‘world-class’ is the development and adoption of an assessment framework that is rigorously applied.** That this is currently not the case with NAPLAN is a serious issue that requires urgent action by MCEETYA. **A commitment to efforts to address this should be explicitly made in this Action Plan.**

The description of the National Assessment Plan should also include “sample assessments in...mathematics”, as per Recommendation 7 of COAG’s *National Numeracy Review* (2008; p. 42)

Maintaining a world-class curriculum into the future requires that the 2011 version of the national curriculum be monitored from its first use in schools, with a view to it being revised on a known timeline. **Australia needs a systematic and thorough gathering of evidence about the curriculum ‘in action’ to provide the basis on which the next national curriculum should be based; this should be part of MCEETYA’s Action Plan.**

Strengthening accountability and transparency

The AAMT believes that the emphasis on school accountability in the actions should be matched with similar emphasis on accountability for education systems and bureaucracies. The community should be able to expect reporting of, and accountability for, the performance of the various agencies of education systems in delivering services and support for schools, teachers and students’ learning and so on.