

Isolated Children's Parents' Association of Australia Inc.

"Access to Education"



Submission

to the

NAPLAN Review

from the

Federal Council

of the

**Isolated Children's Parents' Association of Australia Inc.
ICPA (Aust)**

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The Isolated Children's Parents' Association of Australia, ICPA (Aust), welcomes the opportunity to comment on the NAPLAN Review and highlight key issues and challenges for meeting the objectives of NAPLAN for rural and remote students. ICPA (Aust) is a voluntary parent body dedicated to ensuring all geographically isolated students have equity of access to a continuing and appropriate education. The member families of the association reside and work in rural and remote Australia and all share a common goal of achieving access to education for their children and the provision of services required to achieve this. Many of our families live on isolated stations, vast distances from their nearest community with their only access to education, including early childhood education, being via distance education programs.

ICPA (Aust) appreciates the opportunity to represent rural and remote families on the Australian Curriculum and Reporting Authority's (ACARA), Parents and Principals Peak National Stakeholder group.

There are critical issues associated with the delivery, implementation and use of results from NAPLAN for rural and remote students, specifically regarding timing, relevance and accessibility.

For many rural and remote students undertaking distance education or attending a small rural school, it can be difficult for them to receive assistance as a result of areas identified through NAPLAN where they require extra support. While NAPLAN can identify where a student may need more development or concentrated assistance, a rural and remote student can rarely access this. Small rural schools get very little specialist teaching or specific learning needs time especially in a multi-age classroom and for geographically isolated distance education students, extra support can be non-existent. With this in mind, ICPA (Aust) requests that further consideration be given to identifying the number of students who may be missing out on the extra support and assistance they may require, ascertained through NAPLAN testing and that processes be put into place to resolve this issue.

Timing

The future ability of schools to determine when NAPLAN is taken will benefit rural and remote students as strategies may be implemented to address their needs early in the school year. It is widely known that often rural and remote students lag behind their urban counterparts across many aspects of education, the ability for schools to identify the areas where students need to be assisted and where intervention is needed early is advantageous in rectifying these issues. Students' results being made available within a much shorter timeframe than in the past with the new online platform, will benefit students enormously.

Relevance

Our members highlight across all of the curriculum that often there is a lack of relevant and appropriate subject matter for rural and remote students. In order to build on students' prior knowledge, the materials presented must be relevant to students and be able to be clearly understood by them. The demographics of a school and its students needs to be considered in order to ensure student engagement is maximised, therefore allowing for an accurate measure of these students' capabilities.

Connectivity, Accessibility, Availability

While the move to online NAPLAN comes with advantages for schools and students, in rural and remote areas online connectivity remains a significant concern. Hence, ICPA (Aust) has welcomed consultations with ACARA throughout the development, trialling and implementation associated with NAPLAN online to bring forth concerns for rural and remote students and schools. In 2019 there were issues which affected the online platform, across all schools, from metropolitan to remote schools. This is bound to be problematic for many rural and remote schools, whereby internet capacity and

accessibility is already more than often less reliable and available than urban areas. With a move to NAPLAN online it is essential that the possible internet access and availability limitations for rural and remote students is considered.

School Community

Education of rural and remote students is notably hindered by a lack of choice and availability of education opportunity and facilities. ICPA (Aust) welcomes a move to limiting the availability of comparison information between schools as it can affect a school community greatly when it is perceived as having lower outcomes than other schools. In a remote area this is even more of a concern when there is no choice but to attend the local school.

ICPA (Aust) advocates for geographically isolated children and believes that any standardised testing model, such as NAPLAN needs to consider these children as being a unique disadvantage group. Rural and remote students need to be provided with equitable opportunity, support and assistance to ensure NAPLAN is effective in assessing key outcomes for these children.