

2018 Queensland NAPLAN Review

Queensland Government Response



Message from the Minister

As Education Minister, I can't go anywhere in Queensland without parents, teachers and students giving me their feedback about the NAPLAN tests.

That is why I committed to conducting comprehensive state-wide consultation about NAPLAN, to gauge whether the program still meets the needs of students, parents, schools and the education system.

Given NAPLAN is a topic of great interest for many Queensland families and school communities, I was not surprised by the overwhelming response we received to this consultation.

Overall, we received feedback from more than 7500 parents and carers, 5800 teachers and principals, 3000 students and 200 education stakeholders.

The feedback identified some positive impacts of NAPLAN. However, it has also confirmed differing expectations about the purpose and use of NAPLAN amongst stakeholders, and a range of unintended consequences that stem from the increasingly high-stakes nature of this assessment.

NAPLAN was not intended to be a high-stakes test when it was introduced more than 10 years ago.

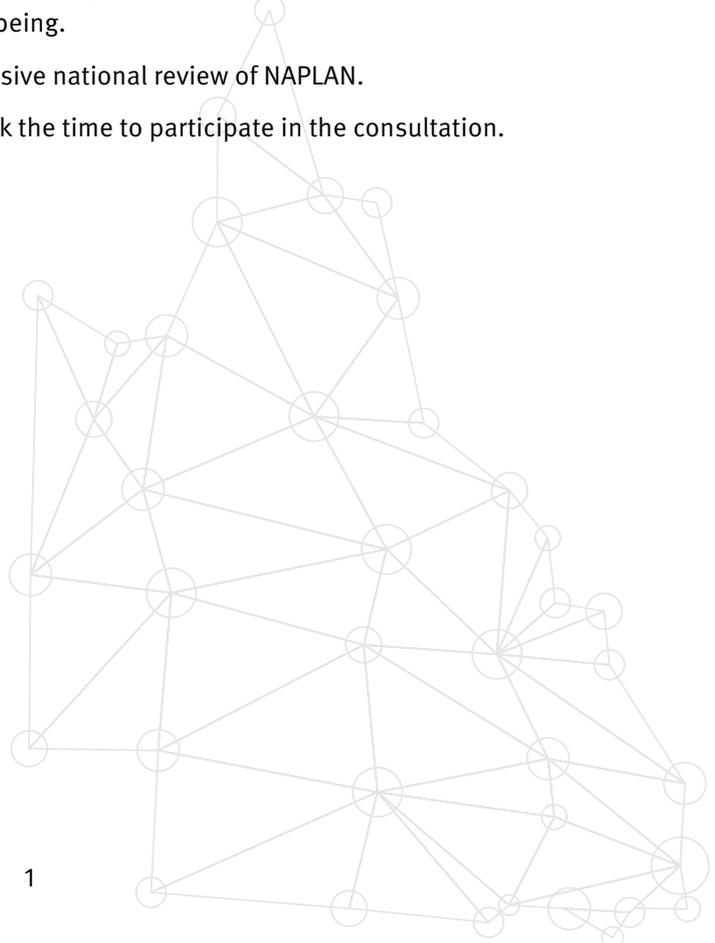
Moving forward, I want to make sure we strike the right balance, with the information gained from NAPLAN used for the right purpose and any negative impacts addressed.

The Government Response to the state-wide consultation outlines actions the Queensland Government will take to achieve this balance, including new assessment guidelines for schools, an online resource for parents and strategies to ensure assessment does not negatively affect student and teacher wellbeing.

I will also continue to call for a comprehensive national review of NAPLAN.

I want to thank all Queenslanders who took the time to participate in the consultation.

The Honourable Grace Grace MP
Minister for Education



INTRODUCTION

The Queensland Government is committed to ensuring all young Queenslanders experience a high quality education.

We aim to inspire students to become lifelong learners, global citizens and successful people, confidently navigating their future. For this to happen, we are focused on ensuring every young person has the foundation skills required to face the challenges of tomorrow.

The National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) was first introduced in 2008 to provide consistency in monitoring literacy and numeracy levels nationally in Years 3, 5, 7 and 9. In 2010, publication of NAPLAN results by individual school occurred for the first time through the My School website. A decade after its introduction, NAPLAN remains the primary indicator of literacy and numeracy progress nationally.

While confirming a long term trend of lifting literacy and numeracy outcomes in Queensland, NAPLAN has increasingly become the focus of media attention and many stakeholders have raised issues about its effect on school communities.

During 2018, Education Ministers across the nation discussed various aspects of NAPLAN and its impact on schooling in Australia. Queensland advocated strongly for a broad national review of NAPLAN, including the impact it has on students, parents, teachers and schools. Education Council instead commissioned a review focusing solely on NAPLAN data presentation. In the absence of a broad national review, the Queensland Government commenced its own comprehensive review of NAPLAN and its place in our education system.

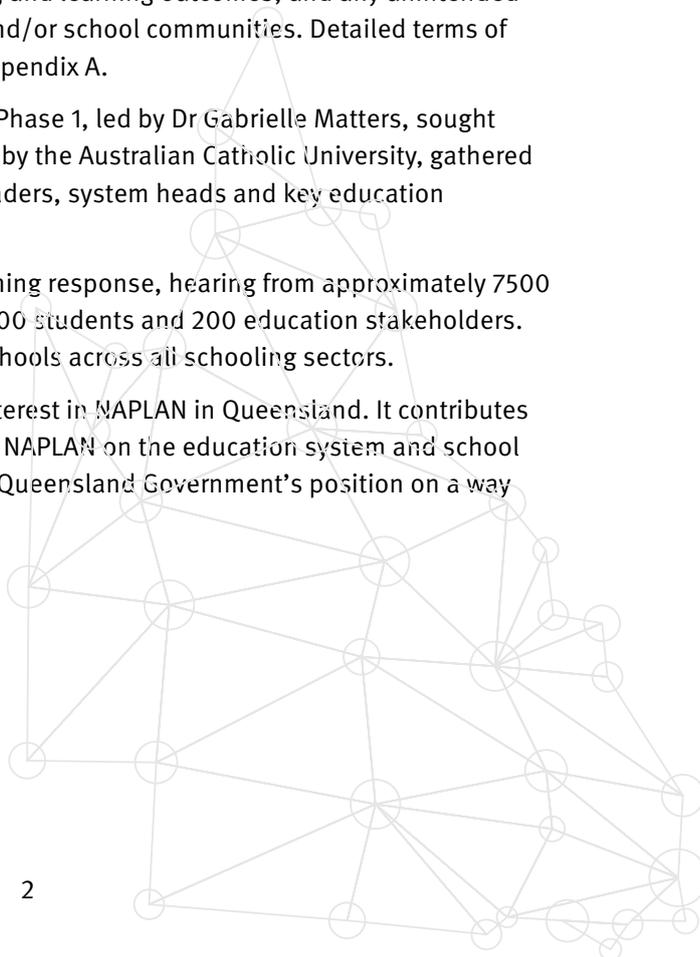
REVIEW COVERAGE

The Queensland Review of NAPLAN aimed to better understand: the value, expectations and use of NAPLAN; its impact on teaching and learning outcomes; and any unintended consequences for the education system and/or school communities. Detailed terms of reference for the review are provided at Appendix A.

The review was conducted in two phases. Phase 1, led by Dr Gabrielle Matters, sought the views of parents. Phase 2, undertaken by the Australian Catholic University, gathered the views of students, teachers, school leaders, system heads and key education stakeholders.

Overall, the review achieved an overwhelming response, hearing from approximately 7500 parents, 5800 teachers and principals, 3000 students and 200 education stakeholders. Responses covered 77% of Queensland schools across all schooling sectors.

This response highlights the significant interest in NAPLAN in Queensland. It contributes to a strong understanding of the impact of NAPLAN on the education system and school communities in this state, and guides the Queensland Government's position on a way forward.



SYNOPSIS OF FINDINGS

Overall, Phase 1 of the review found that parents believe the high-stakes nature of NAPLAN puts pressure on students, teachers and schools that is not balanced by its benefits.

Some parents indicated that their child was positive towards NAPLAN; the test-taking skills associated with NAPLAN may be worthwhile; and NAPLAN is an important accountability tool.

However, more prevalent views included that:

- there is greater value in teachers' reports about a child's progress in classroom assessments
- NAPLAN can lead to anxiety in both students and teachers
- some schools appear to spend too much time preparing for NAPLAN
- some schools tailor their teaching to the test, which may have the effect of 'narrowing the curriculum' (i.e. focusing more on what is tested in NAPLAN than other parts of the curriculum)
- the media is creating a high-stakes environment in relation to NAPLAN
- there is little communication between schools and parents in relation to NAPLAN
- it is not clear what NAPLAN tests or what the test results are used for.

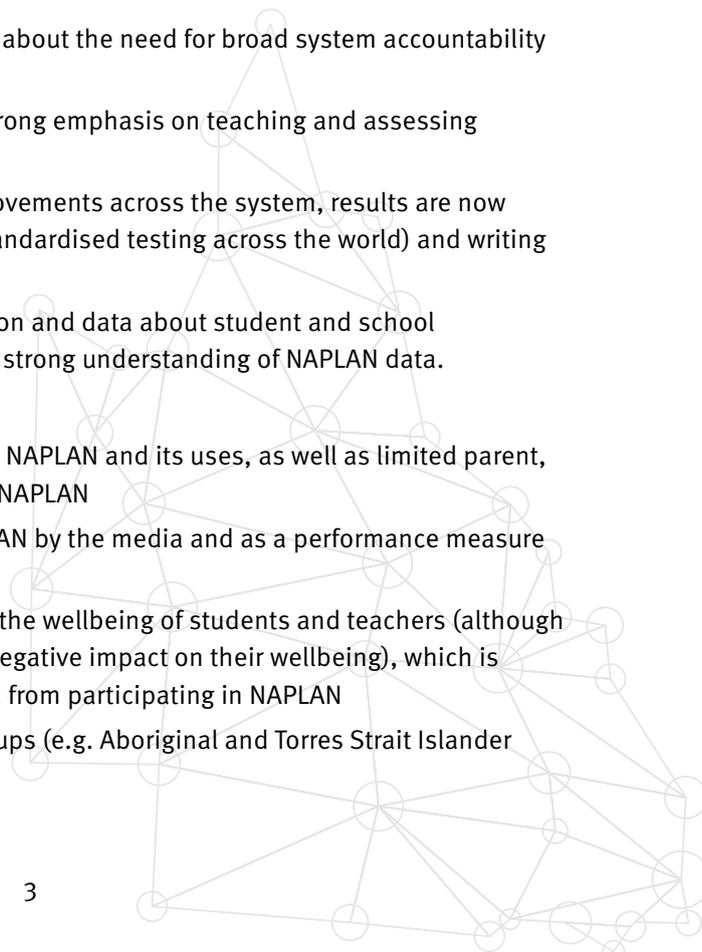
In Phase 2 of the review, many stakeholders suggested that NAPLAN has served its purpose and it is time for accountability assessment in Australia to evolve.

Specific findings from this phase included that:

- NAPLAN served as a 'wake up' call in 2008, highlighting the need for action and supporting schools and the education system more broadly, to identify what they should focus on to improve results
- NAPLAN has led to general acceptance about the need for broad system accountability measures
- at a system level, Queensland has a strong emphasis on teaching and assessing against the Australian Curriculum
- while NAPLAN has contributed to improvements across the system, results are now plateauing nationally (a hallmark of standardised testing across the world) and writing is of particular concern
- schools use many sources of information and data about student and school performance and progress, and have a strong understanding of NAPLAN data.

Stakeholders in Phase 2 also reported:

- differing views and expectations about NAPLAN and its uses, as well as limited parent, teacher and student engagement with NAPLAN
- strong concerns about misuse of NAPLAN by the media and as a performance measure for schools and staff
- that NAPLAN has a negative impact on the wellbeing of students and teachers (although students themselves did not report a negative impact on their wellbeing), which is causing parents to withdraw their child from participating in NAPLAN
- low expectations for some student groups (e.g. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students)



- that the high-stakes nature of NAPLAN has led to a range of unintended negative consequences (e.g. too much time spent on test preparation, narrowing of the curriculum and a focus on students that can most easily be moved up into the next NAPLAN band to improve school-level results)
- NAPLAN may be having a negative impact on the quality and breadth of teaching and learning over time.

In relation to NAPLAN Online, this phase of the review identified very positive engagement of students (including students with disability) and staff. Some concerns were raised about issues such as information technology capacity, the need to improve the computer literacy of teachers and students and to ensure that a focus on typing skills does not interfere with a student's handwriting ability.

QUEENSLAND GOVERNMENT POSITION

The Queensland Government will continue to pursue improvements in educational outcomes on a range of measures. We will maintain high expectations for all Queensland students, regardless of their background, and continue to ensure the Australian Curriculum is at the centre of teaching and learning in Queensland state schools.

Accountability is an important aspect of our education system and Queensland supports continuation of a national mechanism to ensure appropriate monitoring of progress at the system level. The Queensland Government acknowledges that NAPLAN has provided assistance in tracking literacy and numeracy outcomes over time. However, the negative effects identified by the review are such that new and better ways of monitoring progress are required. Though it will take time and national agreement, it is time for NAPLAN to evolve.

Until national agreement is reached, the undesirable effects identified in the Queensland Review of NAPLAN must be minimised. The Queensland Government will work closely with education stakeholders with a view to ensuring that:

- the purpose of NAPLAN is clearly understood by students, parents, school staff and stakeholders
- teacher professional judgement is paramount
- NAPLAN is positioned as only one of many sources of information that can be used to determine progress and identify areas of future focus for schools and individual students
- NAPLAN is viewed as a small part of a child's learning journey and not a complete picture of their progress
- any public reporting on NAPLAN reflects its limited role and does not lead to negative unintended consequences such as impacts on wellbeing, an overemphasis on test preparation and narrowing the curriculum
- NAPLAN is not used as an isolated performance or accountability measure for staff, schools or Queensland's education system
- NAPLAN does not compromise teaching and learning, or delivery of broader educational objectives.

The Queensland Government supports a move to NAPLAN Online, noting its potential to differentiate results through adaptive testing. However, particular caution will be taken in reporting, reviewing and/or using online results for accountability and other purposes to ensure no school is disadvantaged by moving online.

ACTIONS THE QUEENSLAND GOVERNMENT WILL TAKE

As a national initiative, any significant changes to NAPLAN require approval from Education Ministers across Australia. The Queensland Government will take action by advocating for change nationally, as well as implementing changes within its remit at the state level.

The following actions will build on solid foundations to date, including the recent Joint Statement on NAPLAN between the Queensland Teachers' Union (QTU) and Queensland Department of Education (the department).

Actions at the national level

At the national level, the Queensland Government will:

- continue to advocate for a broad national review of NAPLAN to ensure Australia has a contemporary assessment regime that meets the needs of students, schools and education systems
- seek for this broad national review to have a strong focus on writing, including with respect to any potential impact of online writing assessment
- provide a submission to the Review of NAPLAN Data Presentation commissioned by Education Council, signalling the state's cautious approach to NAPLAN reporting, particularly at the school level.

Actions at the state level

At the state level, the Queensland Government will work collaboratively with education stakeholders to take action in the following key areas.

Joint Statements

The department will work with the QTU to review and where appropriate update both the *2016 Joint Statement on the purpose and use of data in Queensland schools* and the *2018 Joint Statement on NAPLAN*. These statements already address many of the matters canvassed in the Queensland Review of NAPLAN. Any updates will ensure alignment between the two documents and that where applicable, Queensland NAPLAN Review findings are taken into account.

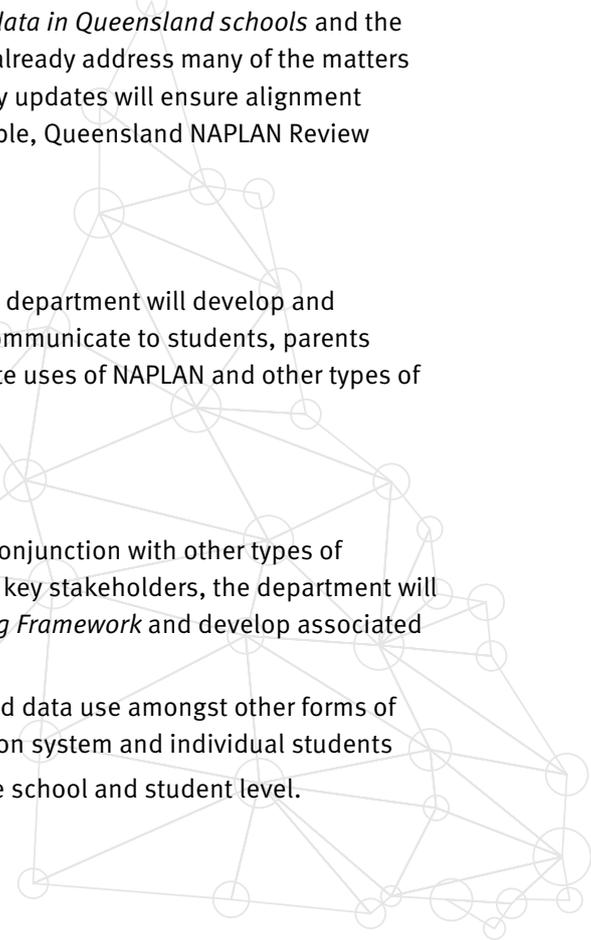
Communications strategy

Building on existing information where possible, the department will develop and implement a targeted communications strategy to communicate to students, parents and school communities the purpose and appropriate uses of NAPLAN and other types of assessment and data collection.

Clear guidance for schools

Queensland will continue to use NAPLAN results in conjunction with other types of assessment and reporting data. In consultation with key stakeholders, the department will review the *School Planning, Reporting and Reviewing Framework* and develop associated guidelines which provide clear guidance on:

- the appropriate positioning of NAPLAN testing and data use amongst other forms of information used to track progress of the education system and individual students
- how schools may use various types of data at the school and student level.



Implementation of the guidelines will be underpinned by development of a new data literacy framework. This will provide advice to school staff at various levels on how to identify and effectively use the data available to them (including NAPLAN) to support school improvement. It will be accompanied by a related professional development program.

To ensure alignment of purpose between the system, school leaders and teachers, the guidelines and data literacy framework will inform development of data plans for individual schools, consistent with the *Joint Statement on the purpose and use of data in Queensland schools*.

Clear guidance for parents

The department will develop an online resource for parents and schools, which identifies at each year level the types of assessments a student might expect to encounter. For each of these assessment types, information would be provided on:

- its purpose, benefit, alignment to the Australian Curriculum and limitations
- who is likely to be involved and what it is testing
- what to expect in relation to readiness activities, if applicable
- how the results may be used and to whom they are likely to be communicated
- whether it is international, national, state or school based
- whether it is optional or a core part of teaching and learning.

Information will also be made available to parents and school communities about the types of techniques used in NAPLAN and typical example texts students may experience at Years 3, 5, 7 and 9.

Use of NAPLAN for reporting and accountability purposes

The department will map where and how NAPLAN results are currently used for reporting and/or accountability purposes, both within the Queensland education system and publicly.

Taking into account the findings of Queensland's NAPLAN Review, an assessment will be made as to whether these uses are constructive or result in negative unintended consequences for schools and/or across the system. While maintaining transparency, consideration will be given to changing, removing or advocating for removal of unnecessary or counterproductive reporting.

Student and teacher wellbeing

The Queensland Government is committed to ensuring the wellbeing of every student and teacher, including providing support to participate in and navigate times of stress or pressure during assessment.

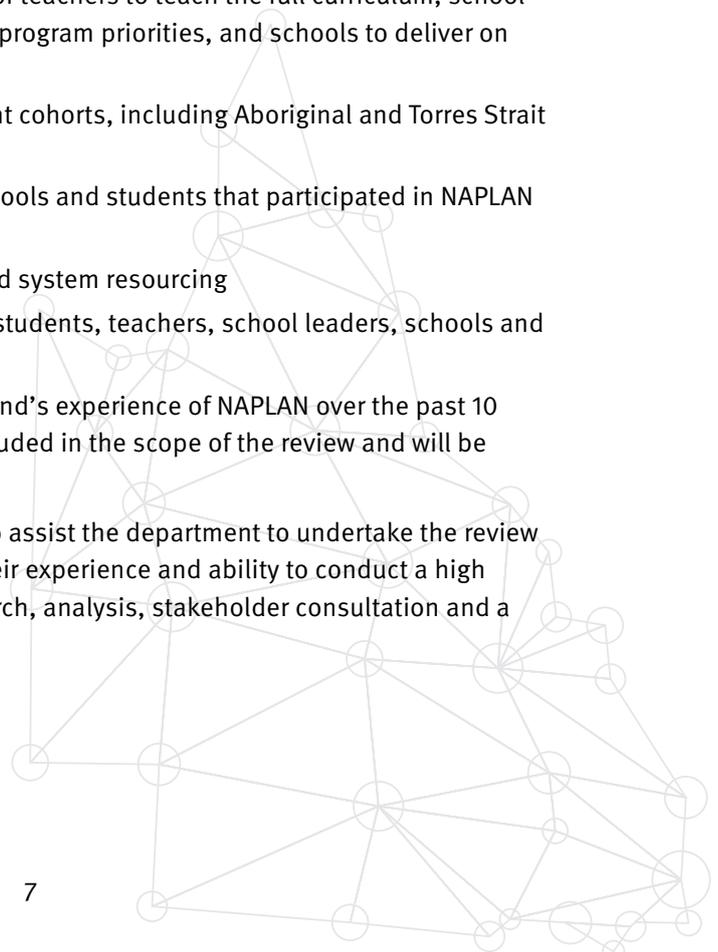
Building on its *Student Learning and Wellbeing Framework* and *Staff Wellbeing Framework*, the department will clearly articulate the policies and strategies Queensland will adopt to support the wellbeing of its students and teachers, with particular attention to the impact of assessment on teacher and student wellbeing.

Appendix A

Queensland Government NAPLAN Review 2018

Terms of Reference

1. Queensland has been participating in the National Assessment Program Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) for ten years. This period has seen significant changes in Queensland's education system and society more broadly.
2. The Queensland Department of Education will lead a review of how NAPLAN is used in the Queensland context, the contribution NAPLAN makes to enabling Queensland students to reach their full potential and the role NAPLAN plays in school and system improvement.
3. The review will ensure Queensland is well placed to participate in any future Education Council commissioned national review of NAPLAN.
4. Specifically, the review will consider: the value of NAPLAN as a mechanism to support improvement in educational outcomes at the student, school and system level:
 - how Queensland NAPLAN data is utilised, communicated and reported within schools, the broader education system and the community
 - expectations, understanding and use of NAPLAN by students, their families, school leaders and systems, and its importance in accountability and monitoring of student outcomes
 - factors affecting NAPLAN participation
 - evidence of the impact of NAPLAN on student and staff wellbeing
 - the effect of NAPLAN on the ability of teachers to teach the full curriculum, school leaders to progress curriculum and program priorities, and schools to deliver on broader educational objectives
 - how NAPLAN affects specific student cohorts, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students
 - the differentiated experience of schools and students that participated in NAPLAN Online in 2018
 - the impact of NAPLAN on school and system resourcing
 - any undesirable consequences for students, teachers, school leaders, schools and the education system.
5. To most appropriately reflect Queensland's experience of NAPLAN over the past 10 years, all schooling sectors will be included in the scope of the review and will be invited to participate in consultation.
6. External reviewers will be contracted to assist the department to undertake the review and will be selected on the basis of their experience and ability to conduct a high profile education review, deliver research, analysis, stakeholder consultation and a comprehensive review report.



7. The following stakeholders will be consulted as part of the review:
 - students, parents, families and parent associations
 - teachers, principals and principal associations
 - schooling sector representatives
 - teacher unions and other relevant staff associations
 - curriculum authorities.
8. The reviewer will have access to internal resources from the Queensland Department of Education, which will include:
 - facilitating access to schools (for non-state schools this will be via sector authorities)
 - professional expertise
 - survey and data tools
 - communications and marketing resources
 - other reasonable or available resources.
9. Having considered these matters, the review will provide advice on the optimal positioning of NAPLAN in the future of education in Queensland, and any changes needed to address issues raised and improve Queensland's education system outcomes.
10. A draft report regarding parent and community perceptions and understanding of NAPLAN will be provided to the Minister by June 2018, with a final report by July 2018.
11. A draft report regarding all other matters covered in the review will be provided to the Minister by end of October 2018.

