

## ENHANCED MEASUREMENT AND REPORTING TO PROMOTE CHOICE, FAIRNESS AND EQUITY IN AUSTRALIAN SCHOOLS

*Improving Outcomes for All*, the report from the Independent Expert Panel's Review to Inform a Better and Fairer Education System commissioned by the Commonwealth Education Minister, presents far-ranging evidence that Australia's highly socially segregated school system is undermining equity and overall achievement.<sup>1</sup>

Its findings draw on many reports including from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries which shows... *"that students experiencing disadvantage who attend advantaged schools score 86 points higher in PISA 2015 science testing, the equivalent of three years of school, than their peers experiencing disadvantage who attend disadvantaged schools."*<sup>2</sup>

OECD data goes further to indicate that the SES profile of the school may be a stronger predictor of academic achievement than the student's individual family socio economic status.

*"This is true in the Australian setting [too], with research suggesting that 78 per cent of low SES students in high-SES schools performed at or above NAPLAN's National Minimum Standards in 2017; that proportion fell to 38 per cent for low SES students in low SES schools."*<sup>3</sup>

### Recommendations

In response the Independent Expert Panel made the following recommendations:

The Panel recommends that governments, school systems and approved authorities commit to increasing socio-economic diversity by:

- i. incentivising, or continuing to incentivise, highly effective teachers and principals to work in schools with high numbers of students experiencing socio-economic disadvantage;
- ii. reviewing existing policy settings by the end of 2027 and implementing new policy levers to increase socio-economic diversity in schools and lift student outcomes; and
- iii. tracking (and annually publicly reporting on) the socio-economic diversity of schools and systems by the end of 2025, to monitor the level of diversity and support further work to increase diversity as part of the next Agreement and its implementation framework.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> D Gonski, K Greiner, K Boston, C Lawrence, P Tannock & B Scales, Review of Funding for Schooling: Final report, Federal Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, Canberra, 2011, p. 188; S Thomson et al (2017), PISA 2015: Reporting Australia's results, Australian Council for Educational Research, p. 218;

Productivity Commission 2022, Review of the National School Reform Agreement, Study Report, Canberra., p. 17; pp. 74-6.

<sup>2</sup> *Improving Outcomes for All*, O'Brien et al, p.83

<sup>3</sup> *Improving Outcomes for All*, O'Brien et al, p.89/90

<sup>4</sup> *Improving Outcomes for All*, O'Brien et al, p.98

## A CALL TO COMMIT TO ALL RECOMMENDATIONS, MORE TRANSPARENCY AND GOOD GOVERNANCE

Australian Learning Lecture calls on all governments and political parties to commit to the full implementation of the recommendations to enhance socio-economic diversity presented in *Improving Outcomes for All*.

### Tracking and annual public reporting of the socio-economic diversity of schools and systems

Annual public reporting on socio-economic diversity in Australian school education should include the following elements:

- the extent to which highly disadvantaged students (Q1) and disadvantaged students (Q2) attend schools with other students from similar backgrounds;
- the extent to which the student profiles of Australian schools are representative, in socio-economic terms, of the communities in which they are located;
- the proportion of students from categories of social disadvantage identified as having an effect on educational outcomes (such as Low-SES backgrounds, Indigeneity, rural and remote location, students with disabilities, non-English speaking background/ heritage from low-performing PISA countries) enrolled in the public, Catholic and Independent sectors respectively; and
- the impact on student learning of concentrations of disadvantage in the Australian education system.

*Improving Outcomes for All* additionally acknowledged that high concentrations of social disadvantage are overwhelmingly found in the public system, and that non-government fees and enrolment practices can be prohibitive for low-income families. Accordingly, annual public reporting on socio-economic diversity should include measurement of:

- changes in compulsory fees and charges over time;
- the impact of compulsory fees and charges on the accessibility and affordability of schools for students from low-income and/or disadvantaged backgrounds; and
- the impact of selective enrolment practices on the accessibility of schools for students from low-income and/or disadvantaged backgrounds.

Additionally, resource disparities can contribute to social segregation because schools with resource advantages are in a better position to compete for student enrolments. Accordingly, annual reporting should include:

- the number of non-government schools that receive more combined government recurrent funding than the average public school of comparable student profile, size, and location; and
- the number of non-government schools where private income is above the schooling resource standard for public schools with comparable student profiles, size and location.

### Review of existing policy settings and new policy levers to increase socio-economic diversity in schools and lift student outcomes

Australian Learning Lecture calls on the Commonwealth Government and all political parties to commit to an independent expert review into existing policy settings and new policy levers to increase socio-economic diversity in schools and lift student outcomes.

The Terms of Reference should allow the review to examine the policy levers that have been implemented internationally to increase socio-economic diversity, including those outlined in *Improving Outcomes for All*.

#### ABOUT THE AUSTRALIAN LEARNING LECTURE:

The Australian Learning Lecture is a ten-year initiative by Koshland Education Innovation designed to bring big ideas and new approaches in education to national attention. ALL acts as a hub and a catalyst, working with the world's leading knowledge shapers to drive impact in key areas of need for change. It draws on the input of multiple voices and stakeholders to strengthen the importance of learning for all Australians. ALL is not politically or commercially aligned.

#### Our Impact Program

Each lecture introduces a big new idea which is supported by an impact program. The program is designed to show that big ideas are possible in practice, to create awareness of the need for a learning culture and to build engagement with learning.

#### Koshland Education Innovation

Koshland Education Innovation Ltd is an incorporated association with charitable status committed to research in education to benefit all children. The Australian Learning Lecture is proudly supported by the Koshland Innovation Extension Fund, a sub fund of Australian Communities Foundation.