

About the Australian Learning Lecture

Australian Learning Lecture (ALL) is a joint project of State Library Victoria and the Koshland Innovation Fund. Commencing in 2015, the decade-long project is designed to strengthen the importance of learning in Australia for all Australians. It is not politically or commercially aligned.

ALL is structured around a biennial lecture that brings to national attention a new, big idea in learning and compelling reasons for new approaches to learning. The lecture is followed by a two-year impact program to showcase how the idea proposed in the lecture can be translated into practice and to create awareness of the need for a learning culture in Australia.

A summary of key points

The Melbourne Declaration had impact by providing a fine aspirational statement which everyone could refer to. But it showed that aspiration is not enough and there must be accountable actions and objectives attached.

The guiding message of the new declaration ought to emphasise that the safest option we have for our young people is to educate them to learn, unlearn and relearn in our fast-changing world, and that we need forces in and beyond school to assist, not hamper, the many opportunities.

We have to have a national discussion about what we mean by 'excellence.' Being excellent ought not to be confined to measuring numeracy and literacy. There are now additional skills and capabilities that are accepted internationally as the foundations of education for every child.

A new national declaration ought to:

- Strengthen the understanding that young Australians' future success is dependent on their know-how to navigate and become globally competent in a rapidly changing world.
- Function as a measure of success as a nation to enabling all young people to be confident, committed and capable learners
- Encourage new approaches to education in Australia, including creating and sharing powerful practices and tools which make us all great learners¹.
- Set out why all students have to develop critical and creative thinking skills, personal wellbeing, digital ability, and entrepreneurship to maximise their opportunities.
- Promote the importance of cross cultural and intercultural understanding, empathy and collaboration.
- Promote the importance of individual interest and passion in learning. If passion is so important in life and work, why is it not valued more in schools?

Finally, the national declaration should inspire and guide the entire education sector (school leaders, boards, teachers) education policy makers, parents, carers, higher education and training providers, large and small business, and communities across Australia.

¹ The All Passion Index Trial: 2018 Schools' Pilot Passion Toolkit

1. What are your expectations of a national aspirational declaration on Australian education?

All Australians deserve a national commitment to the shared goals of education which equips young people with the capacity of thrive in a rapidly changing world, and to contribute to a prosperous Australia for all.²

The need for a new national aspirational declaration is evident: since 2008, research indicates that young people today are likely to have seventeen jobs over five careers in their lifetime. The rise of automation, globalisation and artificial intelligence puts a premium on the capabilities of entrepreneurship, creativity, resilience and a high level of drive and self-motivation.

These factors provide major new opportunities and challenges for young Australians, which should be reflected in a new national declaration.

A new national declaration ought to:

- Create compelling awareness of the reasons why all Australians –wherever they live and whatever their backgrounds – require their schooling to equip them with knowledge, skills and capabilities to become great lifelong learners
- Strengthen the understanding that young Australians' future success is dependent on their know-how to navigate and become globally competent in a rapidly changing world.
- Function as a measure of success as a nation to enabling all young people to be confident, committed and capable learners
- Encourage new approaches to education in Australia, including creating and sharing powerful practices and tools which make us all great learners.³
- Set out why all students have to develop critical and creative thinking skills, personal wellbeing, digital ability, and entrepreneurship to maximise their opportunities.
- Promote the importance of cross cultural and intercultural understanding, empathy and collaboration.

2. Who should the national declaration inspire and/or guide?

The national declaration should inspire and guide the entire education sector (school leaders, boards, teachers) education policy makers, parents, carers, higher education and training providers, large and small business, and communities across Australia.

The guiding message is that the safest option we have for our young people is to educate them to learn, unlearn and relearn in our fast-changing world, and that we need forces in and beyond school to assist, not hamper, the many opportunities.

² ALL-the initiative_2017

³ The All Passion Index Trial: 2018 Schools' Pilot Passion Toolkit

3. How has the Melbourne Declaration impacted or influenced you?

The Melbourne Declaration had impact by providing a fine aspirational statement which everyone could refer to. But it showed that aspiration is not enough and there must be accountable actions and objectives attached.

It had a strong impact on ensuring the education sector know that all Australian Ministers of Education recognised the impact of a changing world on the education needs of young Australians.

Finally, it provided a national authorising environment to support systems, sectors and schools. This however, has had limited impact because the goals were not monitored and reported on.

4. What do you consider are the three most important economic, social and technological changes that will shape the future of education in Australia?

- The disappearance of manual labour and white collar jobs as automation replaces the need for people; at the same time the emergence of new jobs and industries will demand transferable skills and capabilities. The sort of capabilities young people now need to thrive including values, empathy, respect, resilience. See this report just released: <https://www2.deloitte.com/insights/us/en/focus/technology-and-the-future-of-work.html>. One example of this is the need for future education to concentrate on how to **create** technology rather than how to **use** it.
- Global boundaries are disappearing, which presents opportunities - and risks - for Australian workers.⁴ An example of this is the continuing importance of Asia in the Australian economic landscape, and the need for Australian education to assist young people to be culturally adroit to take advantage of what this growing region can offer in terms of jobs across services, climate change, sustainable development and governance.
- Socially community institutions and the community fabric have been weakened. This places greater importance on the school as playing a meaningful social role, where people interact and experience a positive collective life.

5. How can a national declaration best reflect that Australians need to continue to participate in learning throughout their lifetime?

The landscape has shifted considerably since the Melbourne Declaration was launched, with the emphasis on the need for all young people to be lifelong learners. The OECD has been inexhaustible in its research and analysis of the future of work globally.

In Australia, six ground-breaking reports by the Foundation for Young Australians (FYA) researched 'The New Work Order'⁵ with 2018 *The New Work Mindset* emphasising that 'Instead of training for a particular occupation, and working in that area for life, some studies have estimated that Australians will make 17 changes in employers across five different careers.'⁶

⁴ ALL – the initiative_2017

⁵ https://www.fya.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/NWO_ReportSeriesSummary-1.pdf

⁶ <https://www.fya.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/The-New-Work-Mindset.pdf>

Skills such as problem-solving and critical thinking are already within the Australian curriculum but are not being implemented at scale or in sufficient depth. This is in direct contrast to Singapore, Canada, Hong Kong, and Japan.

Australia's current narrow measures of student worth and achievement are constantly undermining the purpose of education, and certainly do not press the point of the importance of lifelong learning.

This was made manifest in the Australian Learning Lecture's second lecture *The New Success* and in its current research *Beyond ATAR: three proposals*; both highlight the importance of shifting from scores to developing 'the whole person' who can withstand the vicissitudes of a rapidly transforming world. The latter also highlights the importance for secondary and higher education to work more closely to assist students at all ages and stages to become 'work ready,' offering a suite of different courses that enable them to transfer their skillset between jobs and continue to build and expand it.

The findings of international and national research should be reflected in any new national declaration.

The Business Council of Australia⁷ argues the need to future proof Australians through education and skills. It says that we have national consensus that we want a universal education system for all Australians, but we do not have a consensus on the purpose or priorities of universal education. We know what we don't want but we have not talked about what we want the system to deliver or how it should be delivered and designed. The new national declaration should heed and act on the BCA's viewpoint to ensure all Australians are 'future proofed.'

Finally, the guiding message of the new declaration ought to emphasise that the safest option we have for our young people is to educate them to learn, unlearn and relearn in our fast-changing world, and that we need forces in and beyond school to assist, not hamper, the many opportunities.

Other principle messages are that for today's and tomorrow's learners to flourish, the new declaration should guide all involved to:

- Support a consolidated move from scores to knowledge, skills and capabilities
- Support teachers to teach for future success
- Introduce broader measures of success to monitor students' capabilities and the quality of our education system
- Assist parents to understand what success looks like today and tomorrow
- Ensure universities broaden their entrance requirements to reflect the capabilities that matter to future success
- Encourage politicians to plan long term.⁸

⁷ Future proof: Protecting Australians through education and skills

⁸ The New Success 2: 'What needs to change in Australia, to equip our young people for the future?'

6. How could the concepts of equity, excellence and the attributes for young Australians in the Melbourne Declaration be updated to ensure they are still contemporary over the next decade?

What is crucial here is what we mean by 'excellence.' Being excellent ought not to be confined to measuring numeracy and literacy. There are now additional skills and capabilities that are accepted internationally as the foundations of education for every child.

Australia could take the lead from the OECD which in 2015 spelled out the commitment of 193 countries to achieving the UN's 17 Sustainable Development Goals wrote:

'The extent to which that vision becomes a reality will depend on today's classrooms; Goal 4, which commits to quality education for all, is intentionally not limited to foundation knowledge and skills such as literacy, mathematics and science, but places strong emphasis on learning to live together sustainably. But such goals are only meaningful if they become visible. ⁹

It is a matter of equity that any new national declaration is explicit about the attributes that all young Australians will need to have.

It is a matter of equity that the education sector – from early childhood through to higher education – work to ensure all young people are globally work ready.

If, however, to be excellent is more about success, our view is that education success is about making it clear to teachers, students and parents that both learning and assessment should be purposeful, engaging, flexible, fair and accessible if it is to give all students the opportunity to demonstrate and retain what they have learnt.

Educational success is also about ensuring the system fits the child instead of trying to make the child fit the system. The safest option we have for our students is to educate them to learn, unlearn and relearn in our fast-changing world.

Finally, the declaration should be updated to reflect the fact that as a society we have high expectations for all children to have higher level thinking skills and 21 capabilities.

7. Are the eight areas for action in the Melbourne Declaration still contemporary and how well do they address the goals?

Goal 1: Australian schooling promotes equity and excellence
Goal 2: All young Australians become successful learners, confident and creative individuals, and active and informed citizens

In general:

- These two goals are still relevant but the eight areas of action are too broad, generic and lack specific outcomes. The result is their impact has been almost impossible to monitor and measure.

⁹ <https://www.oecd.org/education/Global-competency-for-an-inclusive-world.pdf>

- The Biennial Forum established to monitor action has not been an adequate mechanism to track progress or accountability.
- Current areas of action are not focussed on transforming schooling to meet the changing needs of the future, unlike Singapore, Finland, South Korea, Canada and New Zealand which are constantly reviewing and updating to stay high performing education nations.

Specifically:

Developing stronger partnerships: In the commitment to collaborative federalism and bipartisanship, stronger partnerships are key to creating a new education which meets the needs of all Australians, our enterprises and our economy. As highlighted in #2, a national declaration on education should inspire the education sector, business, parents, and others with an interest in education. There are many examples of partnerships being organised (The Smith Family's *Learning for Life* and business, Swinburne and Victoria University and schools) but these are not currently scalable. The action is still relevant but more needs to be done to realise the impact.

Supporting quality teaching and school leadership: The Australian Learning Lecture's *Joy and Data*¹⁰ lecture and subsequent publication highlighted some of the diverse ways of thinking about and using data to ensure each student is successful, confident and ready for the future. Each case study provided an example of how schools are using analytics (both adaptive and predictive) to understand learning processes and tailor education to students' individual needs. Schools have access to data and diagnostic tools which, once analysed, can improve learning methods, enhance teacher performance, or flag students that are more likely to drop out or need extra help afterwards. The action is still relevant but more needs to be done to realise the impact.

Supporting senior years of schooling and youth transitions: The Australian Learning Lecture is about to launch *Beyond ATAR, three proposals* which aim to transform the transitioning years from secondary school to higher education and work, and to support the student better. The research and position paper emerged a Forum which brought together 50 Australian leaders from the education sector including Vice Chancellors, principals, teachers, not for profits, university and TAFE leaders and researchers. The proposals are intertwined and including the need to see 15 – 19 year olds as a phase (including the first year after school), the introduction of a learning profile and universities reviewing barriers to entrance. The action remains relevant but more needs to be done to realise the impact.

Promoting world-class curriculum and assessment

The description of a 'world class curriculum' defined by Australia's learning areas is not aligned with global developments in high performing systems. The OECD's Education for 2030 position paper makes the point: 'In the face of an increasingly volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous world, education can make the difference as to whether people embrace the challenges they are confronted with or whether they are defeated by them. And in an era characterised by a new explosion of scientific knowledge and a growing array of complex societal problems, it is appropriate that curricula should continue to evolve, perhaps in radical ways.'¹¹ This action area remains contemporary but requires new urgency.

¹⁰ *Joy and Data, Creating Success for Every Student*, Australian Learning Lecture

¹¹ [https://www.oecd.org/education/2030/E2030%20Position%20Paper%20\(05.04.2018\).pdf](https://www.oecd.org/education/2030/E2030%20Position%20Paper%20(05.04.2018).pdf) Pg 3

Strengthening accountability and transparency

In strengthening accountability and transparency, the Melbourne Declaration called for good quality data to strengthen accountability and transparency. The Productivity Commission report on Evidence-based Enquiry identified that capabilities was one of three key data gaps, and that although more work needs to be done, Australia is progressing towards better measurement.

However, it requires increased monitoring if an evidence-based approach to education is to be realised. For example, in 2019 there is no national data on student participation in languages to inform evidence-based policy. This action area remains contemporary but requires new urgency.

8. Are new priority areas for action needed? And are there areas that should no longer be a priority.

New priority areas for actions include:

Supporting quality teaching and school leadership:

- putting more emphasis on 'joy in learning' which is achieved as a result of quality teaching and school leadership based on gaining greater insight into how each student learns.¹²
- equip our teaching workforce and young people for the opportunities and challenges of global economic and geo-strategic power shifts, especially in Asia
- prioritising high conceptual skills. Although surveys show 90% of teachers say that individual inquiry is the most effective teaching tool, Australia ranks very high on memorising in its teaching
- Reviewing school organisation which is core to capacity to deliver transformation: for example, China and Australia have the same Student Teacher ratio but China allows much larger class sizes. Teachers in China only teach in class for 11-16 hours a week. They work longer hours but their other hours are spent observing other classroom teaching, working with parents, helping individual students and designing learning.

Equipping our young people for an increasingly volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous future, including:

- ensuring our schools and young people are well prepared for the fast-paced developments of new digital technologies
- ensuring curriculum development and assessment keeps pace with other high performing education systems in the world.
- Moving from relying on achievement tests as the sole indicator of an effective education system. We need to move to scores and skills at **every** level of education
- developing the individual interest and passion in learning is crucial as part of our shared aspiration and imperative. Introducing the power of passion into the curriculum and co-curriculum experience as a way of improving education, engaging students, and preparing students for the world of work. If passion is so important in life and work, why is it not valued more in schools?

¹² *Joy and Data, Creating Success for Every Student*, Australian Learning Lecture

9. Are there better ways to measure and share progress toward achieving the declaration's goals?

The proposed new National Evidence Institute could play a role as a hub of data and evidence related to progress towards the goal's achievement.

A set of goals for five years may be more appropriate than for ten years.

More explicit outcomes for each goal and action area are required, together with regular tracking and reporting on by all states and territories to the Education Council would better ensure that a set of goals agreed to by all Ministers of Education are being achieved. *This is a similar approach to the one used in reporting on Actions to Eliminate Violence Against Women.*

10. How can we ensure the education sector works together to achieve the goals of the Declaration?

As has been outlined previously, it is crucial to engage in cross-sector collaboration which brings together schools, the higher education sector, and business to transform the education experience of every Australian young person, and to add a sense of urgency and rigour into the Declaration. This public submission process is a welcome step in different stakeholders in identifying the educational goals for all young Australians.

Australia's national education system needs to work more rigorously to the UN Sustainable Development Goal 4 which, in turn, should embrace the goals and ambitions of a new national declaration.

The Education Council should take the lead in monitoring and reporting on a set of national goals for education.

Effective mechanisms to track and assess progress to the declaration's goals should be set up by each state, territory and non-government sector.

Every education professional association and organisation should be encouraged to sign up to the goals and set up mechanisms to track and assess progress in their domain towards achieving the goals.

Progress reports from the Education Council to parents, carers and school communities and the business sector should be formal and regular.