

NAPLAN Online Continues to Hurt Students

P&C Federation is deeply disappointed that a computer glitch in yesterday's online NAPLAN test will affect thousands of students across Australia. Students in numerous schools experienced delays accessing the test and then lost much of their work in the middle of the test.

This is only the latest debacle with NAPLAN Online. Last year, there were delays in publishing the 2018 NAPLAN results when the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) realised that results from the online and paper NAPLAN tests may not be validly compared.

P&C Federation and others had warned ACARA of these flaws long before NAPLAN Online was rolled out. We pointed out that many schools lack adequate IT infrastructure and reliable Internet coverage, that many students lack proficiency with the devices they are taking the tests on, and that results of the online and paper tests may not be compared in a statistically valid way, which would make the reported results meaningless.

We are dismayed that ACARA has continued to ignore these warnings and gone ahead with the rollout. Coupled with the fact that so much school time is often spent on NAPLAN preparation rather than the curriculum, we consider the current NAPLAN regime and these technical problems to consume time that teachers and students could spend on meaningful learning.

We therefore call on ACARA and the Government to stop outsourcing its responsibilities to technology platforms that obviously do not have the capacity to effectively deliver, and put the best interests of students as their top priority.

We also call on the Australian Government to undertake a nation-wide review into all aspects of NAPLAN, with all stakeholders in all States and Territories. That will hopefully lead to the establishment of a testing regime that fulfils the original stated purpose of NAPLAN, which was to be a diagnostic snapshot of each individual student, to inform parents and educators of their child's progress.

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