

FEDERATION OF PARENTS AND CITIZENS ASSOCIATIONS OF NEW SOUTH WALES

POSITION PAPER - Inspiring Australia Strategy

Scientific literacy is an increasingly important factor in modern workforces, even for those who do not pursue a career in science. All effort should be made to kindle an interest and enthusiasm in science from a young age, and pride should be taken in the achievements of Australians in the sciences. The NSW Department of Education must ensure that science teachers have a thorough understanding of science to confidently teach students in science fields. Further, the science curriculum must provide students with a thorough understanding of the principles of scientific thought. The Inspiring Australia Strategy (IAS) provides a commendable framework to boost the performance in and enthusiasm for science subjects, and it is the obligation of governments to ensure that schools can implement this framework.

Background

- In 2015, PISA scores showed NSW ranked 4th out of all Australian states/territories in scientific literacy. NSW also had a 27 point decline in average scientific literacy scores between PISA 2006 and 2015, and 18 point decline between PISA 2012 and 2015 – the largest decline of all states/territories.
- Australia as a whole showed a significant decline (17 points) in its scientific literacy performance between 2006 and 2015.
- In Australia and in NSW generally, there has been a marked decline in enrolment in science subjects.
- The Inspiring Australia Strategy (IAS) was developed in 2010 to form a framework for improving the performance of Australians in sciences by streamlining science education into a broader and more cohesive strategy.
- The continuing mediocre figures for enrolment and performance in science is a sign that the implementation of the IAS should be evaluated.
- An understanding and appreciation of science may be highly useful in fostering critical thinking skills, and provide skills that are widely applicable.

Additional Resources

Inspiring Australia. 2010. Inspiring Australia: A National Strategy for Engagement with the Sciences.
<https://industry.gov.au/Science/InspiringAustralia/Documents/InspiringAustraliaReport.pdf>

Thomson et al. 2016. PISA 2015: A first look at Australia's results. Australian Council for Educational Research.
<http://research.acer.edu.au/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1021&context=ozpisa>