

MEDIA RELEASE

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ACER welcomes National Curriculum Board

Chief Executive of the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER), Professor Geoff Masters today welcomed the appointment of Professor Barry McGaw as head of the new National Curriculum Board and progress towards a national curriculum. He called on the Board to develop an engaging and relevant core curriculum that will benefit all of the nation's students.

“The question of how best to prepare today's students for tomorrow's world is a question of national significance and the National Curriculum Board will ensure that our best minds are brought together to address this question.” Professor Masters said.

Unnecessary differences in school curricula across Australia, including different ways of reporting Year 12 results which make it impossible to compare standards from one jurisdiction to another, will be one of the challenges facing the Board. With nine senior certificates offered by seven government authorities, there also were questions to be asked about the duplication of effort and resources.

However, Professor Masters, who authored a report on school curricula for the Australian Government, said that the Board must do more than iron out inconsistencies in curricula across Australia.

“We now have an opportunity to re-think school curricula for the 21st century. If we do nothing more than reduce duplication and remove unnecessary differences across states, then we will have lost an important opportunity.”

Professor Masters said that the school curriculum often was treated as a given.

“For example, the decline in the numbers of students studying science often is attributed to the quality of science teaching. That may be part of the explanation, but we also must be prepared to ask hard questions about the science curriculum itself. Is there something about what we teach in schools that is leading many students to conclude that science is irrelevant to their lives?”

Professor Masters said that a challenge for the new Board would be in balancing competing demands. These would include ensuring both relevance and rigour, and ensuring that every Australian student had access to core knowledge and skills while creating opportunities for local responsiveness, diversity and innovation.

“This is an exciting opportunity for education authorities to come together to re-think the Australian school curriculum. Professor McGaw is the right person to lead this vital task.”

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