

Australia's education system highly regarded but there are challenges

Following the release overnight of reports highlighting student results in national and international testing, the Australian Primary Principals Association again calls for a non-partisan, 20-year school education plan that focuses on every school and school system providing the best education possible for every child.

In commenting on the report, APPA President, Dennis Yarrington said that short-term reactions have only ever produced band-aid solutions.

"Too often, responses are about searching for something new to happen in our schools. Our driver should be, as stated in the 2008 Melbourne Declaration, 'All young Australians become successful learners, confident and creative individuals, and active and informed citizens.'

Mr Yarrington said the challenges in primary schools include juggling a crowded curriculum, a growing focus on testing students, fewer teachers willing to take up leadership positions and worrying trends in student mental health and classroom behaviour. There are, he said, solutions available.

"Let's not forget, as Minister Birmingham said this morning, Australia has a high performing education system by global standards. That's important to recognise and APPA applauds the Minister's comments. We know, too, that there are many challenges needing to be addressed.

"Improving teaching quality, for example, means we need to attract the best people into the profession. It requires universities to re-evaluate how they prepare primary teachers for the classroom. And those in the classroom need the time and incentive to be great teachers.

"We are on the right path when every school has dynamic and focused leadership, a strongly supportive and engaged school community, and the trust and backing of governments and systems.

"There are good things happening in, for example, teacher education reform. However, we should look for less distractions, knowing that change takes time, commitment, resourcing and strategic focus."

APPA will continue to call for a non-partisan, 20-year school education plan aimed at having every school characterised by dedicated school leaders and teachers with high expectations of student learning, and communities that respect and value education.

APPA is the professional association representing over 7,200 Government, Catholic and Independent primary school principals across Australia.

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