



Australian Education Union - Federal Office

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Australian students maintain high achievement

The 2003 Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) results, released today, show that Australian students continue to perform well by international standards.

The programme compared the results of 15 year old students in 41 OECD countries in the areas of mathematical, scientific, and reading literacy as well as problem solving.

AEU Federal President, Ms. Pat Byrne said, "Only one country, Finland, outperformed Australia in reading literacy. This result is the same as in 2000 and shows that Australian students continue to achieve better results in this area than almost all OECD countries.

"Australian students are clearly performing very well on the world stage and these results do raise some serious concern over the motivation of the Minister for Education's comments in relation to literacy in our schools.

"It is very disappointing that Dr. Nelson would prefer to use the education of Australian students to win political points rather than entering into a dialogue with professionals who educate students every day.

"As the representative body of more than 160,000 teachers, the AEU is always interested in reviewing and improving the education system, but we must be careful to ensure that we do not overhaul a system that is clearly working," Ms. Byrne said.

The results from countries such as the USA should also warn Australian decision makers against blindly implementing policies and practices which are clearly unnecessary in an Australian context.

"Australian teachers can also take credit for the extremely positive student beliefs and attitudes which were expressed by students. Australian students reported above average positive attitudes towards schools, student-teacher relationships and student-teacher support levels.

"In 2000, the gap between the highest and lowest achieving students was significant, with Australia scoring poorly in comparison to other high-performing OECD countries. This year the results show a slight improvement, which is, of course, welcome. However, this remains the single greatest area of concern.

"In addition to this, outcomes for Indigenous students continue to be below the OECD average in all categories. While some Indigenous students – about 1% - scored at the highest levels of proficiency, and another 30% at a middle range, it is absolutely essential that the educational outcomes of **all** Indigenous students, irrespective of whether they are in remote or urban areas, are improved and that additional support and resources continue to be provided for this purpose," Ms Byrne concluded.

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