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AEU Calls for Negotiations on Genuine School Accountability and Improvement Measures

The Australian Education Union today called on the Federal Government to work with teachers on school accountability and improvement measures that do not include damaging and misleading league tables.

The AEU will present to the Education Minister Julia Gillard on Wednesday a charter setting out its position on school accountability, improvement, assessment and reporting.

AEU Federal President, Angelo Gavrielatos said the union believed effective assessment was at the heart of successful teaching and learning.

“We agree with the Government about the critical importance of assessment and accountability,” Mr Gavrielatos said.

“As our charter states, parents, students and the public have a right to know that schools are implementing high quality, effective teaching and learning programs.

“But the approach the Federal Government is taking to accountability will see schools judged on a single test undertaken once a year by a limited number of students.

“These NAPLAN tests were never designed for this purpose. They are neither an accurate or valid measure of school performance.

“In addition the way the test scores will be presented will allow the media to create league tables ranking schools on their results.

“These league tables present a damaging and misleading picture of school performance and inevitably involve naming and shaming schools in disadvantaged areas.

“There is no evidence anywhere in the world that this approach improves the quality of education children receive or leads to better outcomes.

“Ms Gillard must heed the concerns of parents, teachers and principals about the dangers of her approach and work constructively to ensure new measures lead to better outcomes in schools.

“The AEU’s charter sets out the principles that should underpin school accountability, improvement, assessment and reporting.

“These include ensuring accountability processes are driven by the idea that schools are learning communities characterised by a culture of ongoing evaluation and the continuing improvement of teaching and learning.

“This process of ongoing evaluation can be further supported by external cyclical reviews of school operations and performance.

“These reviews would be conducted by panels consisting of school leaders, teachers and other education experts.

“The purpose of the reviews would be to affirm the work of schools against quality standards and assist schools in setting new targets so that all students can maximise their potential.”

The AEU charter is available at:

<http://www.aefederal.org.au/Publications/2009/Chschaccountability.pdf>

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