



Australian Education Union

Submission to the

Education Council Review of the Melbourne

Declaration on Education Goals for

Young Australians

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The AEU represents more than 187,000 members employed in public primary, secondary and special schools and the early childhood, TAFE and adult provision sectors as teachers, educational leaders, education assistants or support staff across Australia. The AEU has a primary strategic objective to “protect and promote quality teaching and learning” and a series of primary aims including “to ensure that every child has access to a high quality, inclusive and culturally relevant curriculum.”

As such, the AEU strongly asserts that the Melbourne Declaration is an important and still valid document, and that the current focus of Education Council should be to ensure that the original and largely unfulfilled goals and priority areas for action detailed in the declaration are implemented, rather than subject to an unnecessary review.

The AEU has strong reservations about the language of the review questions and the tone of the discussion paper, particularly the attempt to reframe the declaration as “a national aspirational declaration” rather than a blueprint for committed action based on solid and obtainable goals.

The clear goals and associated areas for action in the Melbourne Declaration are just as relevant now as they were in 2008 and their implementation should be the most urgent priority for Education Council, for the governments the Council represents and for all those working in the sector.

The primary focus should be on taking action to ensure that the original goals of the declaration - the promotion of equity and excellence, and that all young Australians become successful learners, confident and creative individuals and active and informed citizens - are properly and fully implemented, not on facilitating their watering down to mere “aspirations” through a distracting and unnecessary review process.

The AEU firmly believes that rather than attempting to undermine the still unfulfilled goals of the Melbourne Declaration through this review, Commonwealth, state and territory governments would much better serve young Australians through a serious and sustained effort to act on the issues raised by the original declaration that are still endemic to education in Australia. The inequity in funding and resource allocation across sectors, the increasing socio-economic stratification of schools, the continued failure of the current national assessment system and the continued lack of federal action on ensuring consistent long term provision for early childhood education all require urgent and serious attention if we are to achieve the goals set out in the Melbourne Declaration, and addressing these issues should be the absolute priority.