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Ministers of the Education Portfolio

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Better and fairer schools agreement

The Hon Jason Clare MP
Minister for Education

Reforms, targets and transparency are at the centre of the next school funding agreement, released by the Albanese Government today.

The Better and Fairer Schools Agreement (BFSA) ties new funding to reforms to help lift student outcomes, sets targets and improves school funding transparency.

The BFSA is a 10-year agreement and has been developed in collaboration with State and Territory governments, First Nations education representatives and non-government peak education bodies.

This has included 25 meetings with States and Territories on the BFSA, six of which were attended by First Nations and non-government education representatives, and 37 bilateral meetings between the Australian Government and individual States and Territories.

The BFSA includes the following key reforms:

- Year 1 phonics check and early years of schooling numeracy check to identify students who need additional help.
- Evidence-based teaching and targeted and intensive supports such as small-group or catch-up tutoring to help students who fall behind.
- Greater wellbeing support for learning and engagement, including through full-service schools, counsellors, wellbeing coordinators and mental health workers.
- Initiatives that help attract and retain teachers and school leaders, including rewarding and recognising experienced teachers to work in schools which need additional support.
- Providing access to high-quality and evidence-based professional learning for teachers and school leaders and providing quality-assured curriculum resources that have been

developed in partnership with the teaching profession.

The new agreement sets a target for participating jurisdictions that by 2030, the proportion of students leaving school with a Year 12 certificate will increase to 83.8 per cent (by 2030), from 76.3 per cent in 2022.

This will be the highest rate of Year 12 certification ever achieved.

Other targets in the agreement include:

- Reducing the proportion of students in the NAPLAN 'Needs Additional Support' proficiency level for reading and numeracy by 10 per cent and increasing the proportion of students in the 'Strong' and 'Exceeding' proficiency levels for reading and numeracy by 2030.
- Increasing the Student Attendance Rate to pre-Covid level levels (91.4 per cent) by 2030, from 88.6 per cent in 2023.
- Increasing the engagement rate (completed or still enrolled) of initial teacher education students to 71 per cent by 2035, from 61 per cent in 2022.
- Increasing the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people (age 20-24) attaining a Year 12 or equivalent qualification to 96 per cent by 2031, up from 68.4 per cent in 2021, which reflects the target in the National Agreement on Closing the Gap.

The BFSA is a key part of achieving the Australian Government's tertiary education target set in the Budget of 80 per cent of the workforce having a university degree or TAFE qualification by 2050.

The new agreement also strengthens the reporting and public transparency requirements around how taxpayer funding is invested, without placing additional burden on schools.

This includes an annual report from the Commonwealth to the Australian Parliament on Commonwealth funding for government and non-government approved authorities, a new public reporting dashboard and requirements for States and Territories to outline how the additional money is being invested in the key reform areas.

The agreement has been informed by the work of the Productivity Commission and the Expert panel to inform a better and fairer education system, which visited 92 schools and consulted with school leaders, teachers, students and parents.

Today the Northern Territory becomes the first jurisdiction to sign the BFSA, with Western Australia expected to be the next jurisdiction to sign on.

The remaining States and Territories have until the end of September to confirm they will sign this agreement or continue with the current funding arrangements.

The Albanese Government has put \$16 billion of additional investment for public schools on the table and will continue to work with the remaining States and Territories to fully fund public schools across Australia.

The Government will also introduce legislation into Parliament that will remove the current funding cap that stops the Commonwealth from providing additional funding to public schools.

The BFSA Heads of Agreement can be accessed [here](https://www.education.gov.au/recurrent-funding-schools/resources/heads-agreement) (<https://www.education.gov.au/recurrent-funding-schools/resources/heads-agreement>).

Quotes attributable to Minister for Education Jason Clare:

“We have a good education system, but it can be a lot better and fairer.

“NAPLAN results tell us that one in 10 young people at the moment are below the minimum standard we have set and one in three kids from poor families are below that standard.

“The number of kids finishing high school is going backwards. In the last seven years it’s dropped from 85 per cent to 79 per cent.

“In public schools the drop is even bigger, from 83 per cent to 73.6 per cent.

“We’ve got to turn this around. That’s what this agreement is all about.

“I have made clear that the additional \$16 billion of funding for public schools the Government has put on the table will be tied to reforms. These are the reforms. Reforms that will help kids catch up, keep up and finish school.

“Practical things like phonics checks and numeracy checks, evidenced-based teaching and catch-up tutoring, to identify kids who need additional support and make sure they get it.

“There are no blank cheques here. I want to invest billions into our public schools and I want to make sure that money makes a difference to the kids who really need it.

“That means tying that funding to the sort of things that will help more kids catch up, keep up and finish school.

“The Northern Territory has signed up and Western Australia is expected to be the next to sign up. The remaining States and Territories have until the end of September to confirm they will sign this agreement or continue with the current funding arrangements.”