



Education Ministers Meeting

Our ref: MS26-000518

Ms Vicki Baylis
Chair
Education Services Australia Ltd
Level 5, 440 Collins Street
MELBOURNE VIC 3000

Dear Chair

Vicki

By email: CEO@esa.edu.au

EDUCATION SERVICES AUSTRALIA – LETTER OF EXPECTATION

I am writing on behalf of the members of the Education Ministers' Meeting (EMM), as company owners of Education Services Australia Ltd (ESA), to set out the priorities and expectations for ESA for a period of two years from the date this letter is signed.

PURPOSE

This Letter of Expectation outlines the roles and responsibilities of ESA and sets out the high-level performance expectations and strategic priorities for the company. It builds on previous letters and recognises that the ESA Board and Chief Executive Officer are responsible for ESA's implementation of these commitments. This letter can be amended at any time with EMM agreement.

This new Letter of Expectation should inform the development of ESA's corporate and strategic planning for the period stated. All annual reporting from ESA should be consistent with this letter.

CONTEXT

This Letter of Expectation is developed within the following context that informs the work priorities of ESA.

EMM provides a forum through which strategic policy on school education, early childhood and higher education can be coordinated at the national level and through which information can be shared, and resources used collaboratively, to address issues of national significance. Current EMM priorities include the continued development and delivery of NAPLAN Online; promoting quality teaching and school leadership; and promoting improved outcomes for priority equity cohorts including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, students living in regional, rural and remote locations, students with disability and students from educationally disadvantaged backgrounds; and improving quality in early childhood education and care.

ESA is a ministerial not-for-profit company owned and established by Education Ministers. ESA operates in accordance with the Company Objects set out in its constitution, as established by Ministers, and has a key role in supporting national education infrastructure and delivering secure, reliable digital solutions for schools. It also supports the four other ministerial companies and authorities (the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA), the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL), the Australian Education Research Organisation (AERO), and the Australian Children's Education & Care Quality Authority (ACECQA) in their work.

Given the scope of the EMM responsibilities, ESA should continue to take the opportunity to offer its services, where appropriate, to the higher education and vocational education and training sectors and explore areas of intersection between the education and early childhood sectors in progressing

priority work. ESA should also foster opportunities, where relevant, to contribute to the EMM objectives to reduce or remove regulatory burden, wherever possible, on individuals, early childhood and school community organisations, education institutions and business.

OPERATING PRINCIPLES

The EMM expects ESA to operate in accordance with the following six principles:

- **Innovation and quality:** ESA should deliver high-quality advice and deliver innovative products and reliable, consistent services to meet the requirements of the education sector in implementing the broader reform agenda. This includes ensuring accessibility for students with disability within online systems and developed resources.
- **Engagement:** ESA should engage closely with all jurisdictions, systems, non-government education authorities, the bodies that comprise the national education architecture, and where appropriate, individual providers, in the education sector to determine the sector's requirements as consumers and to ensure that ESA advice, products and services are aligned with these requirements and do not unnecessarily replicate existing service delivery offered by jurisdictions.
- **Leveraging existing capital:** Wherever possible, ESA should leverage and help scale existing investment in resources, tools, systems, and infrastructure that is owned nationally (Commonwealth and states or territories) or by individual jurisdictions, and existing knowledge, expertise and capacity in jurisdictions and the non-government education sector, where practical and mutually beneficial.
- **Efficiency:** ESA should ensure products and services are cost-effective and delivered competitively and in a timely manner. ESA should meet all timeframes for deliverables agreed in the workplan and provide regular updates to EMM on progress. In developing products and services ESA should prioritise, hosting and maintenance arrangements that support long term sustainability.
- **Sustainability:** ESA should continue to build its capability to ensure its continued financial viability into the future, such as proactive exploration of business opportunities across all sectors of education and related industries.
- **Accountability:** ESA should demonstrate transparent and responsible management of its obligations, particularly where it relies on external delivery partners to fulfil nationally significant functions. ESA should maintain clear and robust governance arrangements that set out responsibilities, performance expectations and assurance processes to support confidence in the delivery of its services. ESA is expected to provide timely, accurate reporting to the EMM, proactively flag emerging risks, and ensure its operations remain aligned with the broader national reform environment.

In performing its functions, ESA will:

- ensure it acts in accordance with the decisions of the EMM; and
- progress advice to the EMM in accordance with protocols, procedures and/or arrangements agreed to by the EMM, or AESOC on behalf of the EMM, from time to time.

WORK PRIORITIES

In providing support for the projects and outputs included in this new Letter of Expectation, the EMM expects that ESA works in the priority areas identified under the ESA Company Objects in accordance with its Constitution.

KEY PROJECTS & OUTPUTS

Online National Assessment Platform

EMM expects that ESA continues, as a key priority, to work on the maintenance and further development of the Online National Assessment Platform (ONAP) that supports the National Assessment Program (NAP). EMM expects that ESA will ensure the ONAP provides a robust and stable basis for delivery of NAPLAN. It is critical that ESA, in collaboration with ACARA (who has overarching responsibility for NAPLAN), ensures there are no disruptions to the test window and to results reporting, to allow a smooth testing experience for teachers and students and a nationally consistent longitudinal dataset. ESA, in collaboration with ACARA, must ensure the ONAP is accompanied by thorough and responsive incident response processes.

ESA will continue to play a leadership role in the Future National Assessment project with specific responsibility for the design, development and implementation of the solution approved by EMM to address the current ageing platform. The long-term sustainability, as well as the experiences of Test Administration Authorities, schools and students should be key considerations for the new platform.

In undertaking this work, ESA must operate within the governance arrangements, implementation timeframes and models agreed by the EMM to deliver NAPLAN online and implement decisions made by the EMM. ESA must also utilise the National Schools Interoperability Program (NSIP) in ensuring interoperability issues are considered and managed and work within the *Privacy Act 1988* (Cth) and relevant state and territory privacy legislation.

National Online Learning Services (NOLS)

ESA will undertake further scoping work in 2026 to provide advice on the future of Scootle. This should include consideration of arrangements that meet the needs of participating jurisdictions and of discontinuing the service if an agreed way forward is not achieved. In the meantime, ESA will continue to maintain and promote Scootle and the national collection of digital teaching and learning content to support digital resource implementation of the Australian Curriculum.

Strengthening quality assurance for curriculum support and professional learning

ESA will explore the development of a robust and transparent national quality assurance framework for curriculum support and professional learning resources in collaboration with ACARA, AERO and AITSL. This work should draw on lessons learned from AERO's educational effectiveness standards for edtech tools; quality assurance practices within jurisdictions; and international best practice. If agreed by EMM, the quality assurance framework should be made publicly available to support schools and teachers to assess the quality and usefulness of curriculum resources.

Student Data Transfer Protocol and Exchange

Once forward arrangements for the Student Data Transfer Protocol (SDTP) and Exchange are determined, ESA will develop and maintain the technical infrastructure as required. ESA will act as the broker for non-systemic schools for the SDTP Exchange.

Myfuture – Career Information Service

ESA will continue to manage, host, and develop the Myfuture online career information and exploration service and seek opportunities for further development through paid subscription arrangements.

Nationally Consistent Collection of Data on School Students with Disability (NCCD) Portal

ESA will provide technical and content hosting and maintenance from 1 July 2025 to 30 June 2027 in accordance with the contract awarded by the Australian Government on behalf of AESOC. The NCCD Portal is the primary communication channel for information and resources for teachers, school leaders and families on the NCCD and its underpinning legislation. ESA will make resources available

on the Portal to support approved authorities to complete the NCCD as well as practical information for parents, guardians and carers. The resources include but are not limited to the NCCD Guidelines, eLearning modules, templates, videos, webinars, case studies and podcasts.

National Schools Interoperability Program (NSIP)

Consistent with the approved annual NSIP workplan and approved expenditure, ESA is expected to continue to provide and support key activities, including:

- The Safer Technologies 4 Schools Service (ST4S) service.
- Maintain and extend the interoperability standards and key data assets such as the Machine-Readable Australian curriculum and the National Education Data Dictionary to enhance data exchange between IT Systems.
- Develop and maintain the National Education Data Dictionary for use by schools, software developers and policy makers to assist in managing, exchanging and interpreting education data.
- Deliver data and standards supporting services through consultation and appropriate governance processes to develop, maintain and endorse national standards, including emerging needs in data analytics.

AI in Schools

ESA will continue work on the development of standards to support the establishment of nationally agreed product expectations for generative AI technology that is supported for use in schools. This will include work addressing privacy and information security, human rights and wellbeing, and educational impact. Subject to decisions of AESOC and EMM, ESA will proceed with implementation of the Responsible AI Standard and further development and implementation of the Education Quality Standard in collaboration with AERO.

Support for ACARA, AITSL, AERO and ACECQA

Collaboration between the bodies comprising the national education architecture is essential for the effective and efficient delivery of reform priorities. The EMM acknowledges the collaborative environment that has been established by ESA in its work to support the four other ministerial companies and authorities; ACARA, AITSL, AERO and ACECQA. The EMM expects ESA to continue to seek opportunities to collaborate with these groups, as appropriate.

Australian Government, state and territory and ESA funded projects

EMM notes ESA may be engaged, and funded separately, to deliver individual projects for the Australian Government or individual states and territories through their respective education departments.

ESA delivers projects and services to support the corporate deliverables and Company Objects. The EMM does not have governance responsibility for these projects but notes that ESA would undertake this work within the context of the Company Objects and operating principles, as detailed in its Constitution.

CORPORATE RESPONSIBILITIES

EMM expects that ESA will continue to undertake the following corporate responsibilities effectively and efficiently, including:

- providing financial services as set out in the agreement between ESA and the Australian Government (managed by the Australian Government Department of Education);
- providing support for the Education and Care Services Ombudsman, the National Education and Care Services Privacy Commissioner and the National Education and Care Services Freedom of Information Officer;

- engaging with NATSIEC to ensure that the development and delivery of products and services include Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander content and perspectives, as appropriate; giving consideration to the Priority Reforms in the National Agreement on Closing the Gap, particularly Priority Reform 4 and considerations around Indigenous Data Governance. ESA is to include this element of its work in its progress reports to EMM;
- acting as the sole registrar for the edu.au Domain on behalf of Education Ministers;
- managing the Schools Cataloguing Information Service;
- maintaining licensing and copyright for the national digital resource collection to ensure, where possible, open access to educational resources through Creative Commons licensing arrangements;
- ensuring there is the ability to link agreed data with holdings ESA operates and those of jurisdictions to ensure a strategic use of education data, along with ESA's role as a data custodian; and
- ensuring a continued focus on data security.

CONSULTATION WITH STAKEHOLDERS

In the development and implementation of its projects and activities, the EMM considers it critical that ESA seeks to engage collaboratively with, and gain support from, key stakeholders including bodies such as, ACARA, AITSL, AERO ACECQA, and NATSIEC, the state, territory and Australian Government education authorities, and the non-government education sector.

The EMM acknowledges the valuable role ESA plays in providing advice and leadership in the design, development and implementation of efficient, cost-effective services to state, territory and Australian governments, and other agencies given its *not-for-profit* status, and its specialist educational information and communications technology expertise.

A strong collaborative approach to service delivery will have benefits for both ESA and all parts of the education system with whom it engages. Formal consultation mechanisms such as project steering groups and project reference groups should be employed for this engagement and collaboration. ESA should also engage with the National Education Digital Advisory Group (NEDAG) for advice and guidance on the efficient and effective design, deployment and utilisation of digital technologies and services that support improved education outcomes for educational stakeholders.

REPORTING

The EMM expects that ESA prepares an annual Work Plan that builds on this Letter and details ESA's proposed relationships, services, and engagements in relation to all relevant work. The EMM expects that ESA reports against its Work Plan at least once per year (to coincide with scheduled meetings of the Australia Education Senior Officials Council (AESOC) or out-of-session dates) or more frequently if requested by the EMM, and that ESA consults with and is responsive to AESOC and relevant working groups.

The EMM expects that ESA provides an Annual Report to AESOC (for noting and awareness) that outlines ESA's activities during the preceding financial year and how these relate to this Letter of Expectation. The Annual Report should be provided no later than 30 November, unless otherwise agreed.

The EMM expects that this Annual Report specifically includes:

- a report on consultation undertaken with states, territories and key education stakeholders regarding the sector's requirements and activities undertaken to meet these requirements;
- detailed financial information;
- progress against the program of work; and

- potential opportunities to leverage and build on existing work led by other key stakeholders and possible future areas of work to pursue to support the national reform agenda, subject to agreement by the state, territory, and Australian governments.

ESA must also provide a separate version of the Annual Report for the ESA website that provides a high-level update on the strategic and financial positions of ESA and its work. This Letter of Expectation is also to be published on the ESA website.

FUNDING

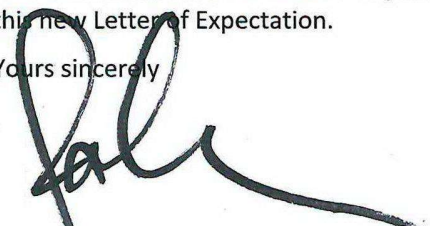
The EMM notes that, while ESA does not receive baseline operational funding in the same way as ACARA, AITSL, AERO and ACECQA, it does rely on funding from the EMM for core national services, as well as for nationally approved projects, which it is expected to deliver within the agreed funding allocations. The EMM also expects ESA to seek opportunities for commissioned work and to provide products and services commercially.

It is expected that ESA will retain and build capacity to respond to opportunities provided by the EMM, respective governments, ACARA, AITSL, AERO, ACECQA, and NATSIEC and other key education stakeholders where appropriate.

CONCLUSION

The EMM notes the significant achievements of ESA to date. ESA plays an ongoing critical role in ensuring the consistent delivery of national assessments and delivering national assessment reform in the schooling sector through development of the technical platform to deliver assessments online. The EMM looks forward to ESA's reports on its operations in line with the expectations articulated in this new Letter of Expectation.

Yours sincerely



The Hon Jason Clare MP
Chair

5 / 8 / 2026