



NAPLAN KIT 2010

STOPPING league tables



Advice to AEU sub-branches

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Further information

You can access further information on the AEU campaign website at www.aeuact.asn.au and at the AEU Federal website <http://www.aeufederal.org.au/>

1. Letter from Penny Gilmour, AEU - ACT Branch Secretary

Dear AEU member

The AEU Federal Executive has declared a national moratorium on the implementation and administration of NAPLAN 2010 until the profession's concerns have been addressed. Given our ethical and professional responsibility to our students and school communities, and the intransigence of the Deputy Prime Minister Julia Gillard, we are compelled to participate in this historic united federal action.

It is regrettable that the DPM has refused to meet with the Union since January despite the clear damage to students and school communities caused by the publication of crude league tables. The AEU put proposals to her that would stop league tables and provide more comprehensive and accurate information to parents.

Nothing is more important to AEU members than the quality of education our students receive. That is why we must take the strongest stand to stop league tables.

Julia Gillard launched her *My School* website claiming it would "shine a light" on individual school performance. Her website focuses on NAPLAN results as the major, if not sole, measurement of school performance.

For the record, the AEU maintains that rigorous, ongoing assessment is an integral part of successful teaching and learning. We also support parents' right to rich information on their child's progress and indeed the value that school adds to that progress.

However, the *My School* website does little to contribute to that rich information. Moreover, it invites shallow judgements on school performance including the publication of league tables.

Despite the urging of the peak organisations representing parents, principals and teachers, nothing has been done to stop those student results being used by the media to publicly rank schools in league tables.

League tables are simplistic and misleading. Furthermore, the NAPLAN tests were not designed to be used to compare schools and are not accurate enough to do so.

League tables damage schools by naming and shaming those that do not get high average scores.

Unfairly branding schools as failing based on a single test is devastating for students and their teachers. It makes it harder to achieve genuine improvement for individual students and schools as a whole.

Schools that are struggling need resources not rankings.

This kit aims to support members in implementing the Federal decision.

Yours sincerely



Penny Gilmour
Branch Secretary

2. The Campaign to Stop League Tables

The Federal Executive decision of 12 April declared unanimously our unwavering commitment to stopping the publication of league tables, by declaring a national moratorium on the implementation and administration of NAPLAN 2010 until the profession's concerns have been addressed.

All AEU members [principals, teachers and school support staff] across all States and Territories of Australia will be participating in this unprecedented national professional and ethical action on the days the tests are scheduled.

This is testament to the strength of feeling about the important role we have to play in protecting our students and school reputations from the damaging effects of the misuse of the *My School* information, something which the Deputy Prime Minister has steadfastly refused to do.

The tests are scheduled to be held on:

- 11 May — Language conventions and writing
- 12 May — Reading
- 13 May — Numeracy

On the days of the tests AEU members should attend their workplaces as normal and undertake their normal duties.

However, AEU members should not implement or administer the NAPLAN tests in any way including the following:

- Do not plan the logistical arrangements for students on the day of the tests, such as timetabling of classes and staff; no allocation of replacement classes, no booking of CRTs, support staff, parents or outside supervisors to administer/supervise the tests.
- Do not open the box.
- Do not distribute tests to classroom teachers who may be requested to supervise tests.
- Do not supervise the tests on 11, 12 or 13 May 2010.

3. Sub-Branch Action

1. Attend one of the AEU member information meetings which will discuss NAPLAN. These meetings are being held as follows:

Wed 28 April - Dickson College, Phillip Avenue DICKSON 4:00-6:00pm

Thurs 29 April - Weston Creek Community Centre, WESTON 4:00-6:00pm

2. Meet as early as possible in Term 2.

3. If you wish, invite an AEU Officer to attend your Sub-Branch meeting to make sure your Sub-Branch is fully informed and has an opportunity to ask questions.

4. Sub-Branch meetings should meet to discuss the national moratorium on the 2010 NAPLAN tests and pass the following resolution:

That the [school name] AEU Sub-Branch condemns the failure of the Deputy Prime Minister, Julia Gillard, to heed and address the profession's concerns with the misuse of data, the publication of league tables and the structure of the My School website. We believe it is our professional and ethical responsibility to protect our students and our school's reputation from the damaging effects of the exploitation of the My School information.

5. AEU Sub-Branch representatives should inform the principal at the earliest opportunity of the endorsed resolution and that AEU members will not implement or administer the tests on 11–13 May.

6. If any AEU member is directed or instructed by the principal to implement or administer the NAPLAN tests they should inform their AEU Sub-Branch representative and seek advice from the AEU immediately.

7. Send the pro-forma letter [provided] to the school board informing them of the national moratorium on the 2010 NAPLAN and your participation in this professional and ethical action.

8. Seek to include a letter [pro-forma provided] or statement in your school newsletter explaining the Sub-Branch action to parents. Where this isn't possible, the Sub-Branch should consider handing out the letter outside the school gates to parents and/or secondary school students.

4. Frequently Asked Questions

1. Why has the AEU Federal Executive chosen to place a national moratorium on the implementation and administration of NAPLAN 2010?

A moratorium is a suspension of an ongoing activity, ie implementing and administering the NAPLAN, which allows for the activity to be resumed once the Federal Government has addressed the concerns of the profession about the misuse of student data to name and shame schools.

2. What do I do if the principal instructs/directs me to implement the tests?

Tell your Sub-Branch representative and ring the AEU immediately for advice.

3. Are we stopping work on the days that the tests are scheduled to be held?

No - this is national professional and ethical action to support our students and the reputations of our schools. Members will attend work as normal and undertake their normal duties, but not participate in the implementation or administration of the tests in any way.

4. Will I lose pay when I refuse to implement/administer the NAPLAN tests?

The question that arises with the AEU moratorium on the conduct of the NAPLAN is whether or not the action taken is "industrial". We assert that it is not industrial action but rather ethical and professional action arising out of our moral stance on league tables. It is likely that in the end a court will decide this question.

If a court decides that it is industrial action, the Fair Work Act has a requirement that an employee engaging in industrial action cannot be paid by the employer and the employee cannot accept payment from an employer. The Act also provides that where an employee is engaging in unprotected industrial action the employer must dock pay of four hours where the action is less than four hours and a day where the action is longer than four hours. None of the NAPLAN tests is longer than four hours.

5. Is the AEU opposed to relevant information about schools and students being available to parents?

No - we believe it is important to give as much information as possible to parents about school performance; however care must be taken to ensure that publication of this material is done in such a way that does not do more harm than good.

Teachers have always understood how important assessment and reporting are to parents. Parents have every right to accurate information on the progress of their child and the effectiveness of their school.

Parents already have access to a range of information about student achievement through provision of material such as NAPLAN results, school annual reports, student academic reports and by direct contact with schools. We want the Government to stop the misuse of the NAPLAN data by the media who use the information to create damaging and misleading league tables.

6. Does the AEU want the *My School* website removed?

The AEU has proposed to the Deputy Prime Minister that the *My School* website be restructured to remedy some of its problems, including the use of an educationally invalid mean score of student achievement as a measure of school performance, unsatisfactory comparisons of so-called like

schools [the use of the ICSEA value which has now been acknowledged as problematic by ACARA] and the use of the simplistic red/green colour code.

We have not proposed to have the “website gutted” as the DPM has claimed, but have suggested changes to ensure parents can access a wider range of richer information which gives them a much more accurate picture of what a school provides to its students.

The detailed proposal can be accessed on our website at www.aeuact.asn.au

7. Does the AEU national professional action only involve AEU teacher members?

No. We are asking **all** AEU members - principals, teachers and school support staff - to participate in the national professional action. In our view, support staff members cannot be asked to supervise tests if teacher members have indicated they will not implement or administer the tests.

8. Has the AEU attempted to resolve this dispute with the Deputy Prime Minister, Julia Gillard?

The AEU has been raising our concerns with the Minister for Education, Julia Gillard, for over 12 months in regard to the publication of data and damaging league tables.

Our Federal Conference in January this year carried a resolution warning of strong action if the Minister was not prepared to discuss their concerns with the profession. She has not met with the AEU since then to discuss our concerns and consider our proposed solutions.

The AEU Federal President, Angelo Gavrielatos, wrote to Julia Gillard on March 29 informing her of the Federal Executive decision of March 25 and putting a proposal aimed at addressing the concerns of the profession as they related to the misuse of student data, league tables and the *My School* website. The Minister unfortunately refused to meet with the AEU to discuss the issue.

9. My school is receiving additional funding through the National Partnership Agreements; will the moratorium on the NAPLAN put that money at risk?

With all AEU Branches across the nation placing a moratorium on the NAPLAN it is unlikely that the National Partnership Agreement funding will be affected. The moratorium allows for the tests to be undertaken should the Federal Government address the concerns of the profession about the misuse of student data to name and shame schools. It would be outrageous if a Labor Government took funds off government schools - particularly in an election year.

Check the website for updates to these FAQs - go to www.aeuact.asn.au

5. Decision of AEU Federal Executive

The following resolution of the AEU Federal Executive was unanimously carried on 12 April 2010:

Despite the urging of the profession, the body of research and evidence and the repeated attempts by the AEU to negotiate a satisfactory outcome, the Federal Government has failed to introduce measures necessary to protect students, schools and school communities from the damaging effects of league tables and the incomplete, inaccurate and invalid representation of student data on the *My School* website.

Given our ethical and professional responsibility we cannot sit by and watch our students, schools and school communities continue to be damaged due to the Government's intransigence.

Therefore, the AEU Federal Executive declares a national moratorium on the implementation and administration of NAPLAN 2010 until the profession's concerns have been addressed.

Pro Forma Letter to School Board

Dear School Board President

The AEU Sub-Branch writes in regard to the action we feel compelled to take to prevent damaging league tables.

We want to assure you that nothing is more important to us than the quality of education our students receive and the comprehensive reporting to parents of our students/their children's progress. We will continue to do that.

Please understand that we feel an ethical and professional responsibility to our students and school community to ensure improvements to *My School* and protect schools and students.

The AEU regrets that the Deputy Prime Minister has refused to meet with the Union and parent organisations to discuss changes to the *My School* website and protections from the damaging effect of League Tables.

We ask for your understanding and support in these difficult circumstances.

A very practical measure of support would be for you to advise the principal that you give permission for the attached letter to parents to be distributed as part of the school newsletter or other normal communications provided to students to give to their parents.

Should you wish to have an AEU representative address a Board meeting on this issue, please advise the Sub-Branch President.

Yours sincerely

AEU Sub-Branch

Pro Forma Letter to Parents

Dear Parents

As teachers and education workers we understand how important assessment and reporting is to parents. You need accurate information on your child's progress and the effectiveness of their school. But, we also know the damage that can be done when information on students and schools is misused.

When the Federal Government established the *My School* website in January, it published information on schools in a way that was both inaccurate and incomplete. Misleading comparisons of schools were created that didn't even take into account school funding, the students' background or resources.

Of greatest concern was that newspapers were allowed to take test data from the website and inappropriately rank schools in league tables. This has caused significant unfair damage to many schools, their teachers and students.

No matter how much progress schools had made with their students, those with low average results were judged as failures. Being branded in that way hurts students and school communities.

It also makes it harder to improve the quality of education in our schools.

Why we must act

We have repeatedly tried to get the Federal Government to do two things:

1. Protect students and school communities from damaging league tables, and
2. Improve the *My School* website so it provides meaningful and accurate information for parents.

Unfortunately, the Government has refused to heed the concerns of the profession. Indeed the Federal Minister for Education, Julia Gillard, has refused to meet with the representatives of principals, teachers or parents to discuss proposals that would protect schools and students while ensuring parents have access to comprehensive information.

Faced with the choice of doing nothing or protecting students, we have taken the difficult decision to act. Our decision is that we will not deliver the national NAPLAN tests in May. No other test, student assessment or reports will be affected. We will ensure you get comprehensive and quality reports on your student's progress.

We also want to let you know that parents have a right to withdraw their children from sitting the tests - we urge you to support our action in protecting students and school communities by notifying the school that your child will not sit the tests in 2010.

If the Federal Government won't protect students, teachers must.

Yours sincerely

AEU Members