

To Whom It May Concern:

MAY 2017

NAPLAN CHANGES - A GREAT CONCERN FOR OUR NSW YOUTH

My name is Juli Secker. I am a local Children's Pastor in Sydney involved in teaching scripture in a local Primary School. In my work I have the great privilege of seeing many young people grow and mature, moving from Primary School into High School and beyond to find their place in the world.

I am very concerned that a recent change to the application of NAPLAN results will greatly affect our youth and the opportunities they have to enjoy their schooling years, to gain maturity and to choose various careers.

I wish to communicate with you my concerns, as our youth have little power or opportunity to have a voice about something that I believe will have vast and lasting impact on them, their friends and their futures.

CHANGE TO NAPLAN

In July 2016, the NSW Government announced that all Year 12 students must reach a minimum standard of literacy and numeracy to receive a Higher School Certificate (effective from 2020). Students can demonstrate they have met this standard through achieving a Band 8 in each section of their Year 9 NAPLAN test or by passing subsequent tests.

The change directly connects the NAPLAN testing in Year 9 (from May 2017) to a student's eligibility to be awarded their HSC (from Year 12, 2020).

The Board of Studies, Teaching and Educational Standards NSW (BOSTES) indicates that

Of the 70,000 students who complete the HSC annually, the vast majority will meet the minimum standard of literacy and numeracy. Based on an analysis of NAPLAN results, BOSTES forecasts that at least 50% of HSC students will pre-qualify for the minimum standard in Year 9, by achieving Band 8 in their NAPLAN reading, writing, and numeracy tests.¹

If at least 50% will pre-qualify for the HSC in Year 9 NAPLAN, then around 40 000 NSW youth will not pass at this point and be forced to sit further testing until they pass, even up to five years after leaving school.

MAJOR CONCERNS

- **NAPLAN was never designed to have individual student implications such as this.** NAPLAN was designed for School Principals and teachers to use as a diagnostic tool to enable them to enhance their teaching in covering curriculum.
- **The idea of a student being required to 'pass NAPLAN' is contradictory to its aim.** Literacy and Numeracy are cumulative skills, reflecting increasing maturity of students, not a final achievement at age 15 in Year 9.

¹ <https://www.aisnsw.edu.au/Publications/Other/Documents/BOSTES%20Stronger%20HSC%20Standards%20FAQ.pdf>

- **NAPLAN has only been operational for less than a decade and its validity as an educational tool is still being analysed.** The 2017 Year 9 cohort were among the first children to do NAPLAN in Year 3 in 2011. Surely it should be required to have major research applied to gauge its validity as an educational tool prior to any extended application such as this.² If the NAPLAN system were working, we should not have this kind of percentage failure rate – 50% not achieving Band 8 in Yr 9! Why put this extra pressure upon our Year 9 youth with very little time to prepare when six years of teaching the NAPLAN style has not achieved the educator's goal?
- **Currently NAPLAN results are private**, seen only by the School and a child's family. A student's HSC results are also not publicly known. Under the new NAPLAN plan there will be a very clear passed/not passed divide and stigma within every NSW Year 9 cohort.
- **This change has the potential to be extremely damaging socially, emotionally and psychologically** on these 40 000 students annually who do not pass, especially as it is such a public result. I am not sure our Schools, School Counsellors, or our community services are equipped to cope with the potential ramifications of the emotional needs of these youth, let alone their families. With such a high predicted 'fail' rate, I am very surprised that those who designed and approved this new plan seem not to have considered the vast ramifications of their Year 9 NAPLAN result on our youth - anywhere from increased anxiety, depression, or disillusionment through to suicide.
- **This new NAPLAN Year 9 test will also affect those conscientious students** who have different strengths and weaknesses within our student population. It won't just affect those 5% who they report find it a struggle to learn. For example, those who excel at mathematics, but are challenged by reading and writing and vice versa, have the great potential of falling into the 50% fail category, as Band 8 needs to be achieved in all three streams.
- **This change has only recently been widely publicised and discussed amongst educators and/or parents.** Many people I have spoken to so far are shocked and dismayed at the possibility.

At the moment in these youth's education there are no roadblocks saying they can't do the HSC or whatever it is they are going to do with their future. Many of these youth are thriving on their strengths and working on areas of challenge. Most are still gaining maturity and grappling with study. Why allow 40 000 of them to receive a unnecessary 'fail' at this very vulnerable point in their lives, when they are still four long years away from the HSC? These young people are at a stage in life where acceptance, image and their peers are so important, and this stigma in their lives could have lifetime ramifications.

These are the youth of our future; they have so much to offer. I personally believe it is a significant mistake to allow this NAPLAN/HSC change to happen to our NSW children.

Thank you for taking the time to read this information. My hope is that it has moved you to want to see this NAPLAN plan overturned. Please see link below of how to start petitioning our NSW parliament.

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² http://www.pc.gov.au/data/assets/pdf_file/0003/209145/subdr136-education-evidence.pdf

<https://www.change.org/p/scrap-devastating-nsw-hsc-reforms-which-label-kids-from-14-as-failures-exclude-them-from-doing-their-hsc>