

Learning Creates Australia thanks the Senate Standing Education and Employment References Committee for undertaking this important inquiry.

As an independent, non-profit organisation, [Learning Creates Australia](#) convenes a diverse alliance of people and organisations to create innovative, evidence-based and practical solutions for a more fair, deep and wide learning system. Over the past 3 years, this has included more than 2,000 young people, educators, parents, policy makers, First Nations communities, employers, academics and tertiary providers across the Australian learning landscape.

The many stories and the expert advice we've collected over the past few years echo many of the sentiments of the submissions and expert witness accounts the Committee has received - our schooling system is outdated, stagnating at best and underperforming at worst.

We recommend the prioritising of two interconnected activities to ensure all young people can learn and benefit from an Australian learning system that meets their needs.

Listening to young people

As many witness accounts have already recommended, Learning Creates echoes calls for the collection of new and better data on the young people missing school is an important first step to better understand and shine a light on the seriousness of the challenge and build appetite for more serious reform.

Most importantly we strongly urge that a formal process to listen deeply to the experience of young people who are disengaged with school is central to understanding what's not working. This crucial engagement can contribute to the valuable evidence base needed to support longer term, systemic interventions. Within this focus of listening with young people, Learning Creates Australia would also recommend a process to listen closely to the perspectives of First Nations young people and educators.

Learning Creates has worked directly with thousands of young people across Australia to listen to their perspectives and ensure young people's voice and agency is embedded at all levels of our work particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds. In the first 2 years of work, over 1200 young people have been involved in The Learner's Journey project to provide their expertise and lived experience within the system.

Overwhelmingly, young people said they felt inappropriately defined by success or failure in school and through examinations and assessments associated with senior secondary certificates. They rejected the idea that the breadth and depth of who they are, what they know and can do is represented in those credentials or reflected in their learning environments.

Re-thinking how we recognise learning

How we recognise learning and the focus on ATAR is impacting the wellbeing, in school experiences of young people and limiting their life trajectories.

Learning Creates also undertook an analysis of 22 policy papers and reviews from the past 4 years, including federal and state policy and curriculum reviews and reports from The Business Council of Australia and other leading academics. It revealed that there is:

- Universal agreement that there is an over-reliance on the ATAR, which is increasingly irrelevant to post-school pathways and is often unfair especially to those who are already starting from a position of educational disadvantage.
- Maintaining the status quo isn't good for Australia's economic strength and resilience and isn't good for society as disconnection and disengagement in learning entrenches disadvantage.

The common themes emerging in these official reports and expert opinions and in the views of young people, is that schooling in Australia does not reliably deliver or recognise what young people need if they are to thrive and contribute to a healthy economy and society. This situation is counter-productive for learners and for the economy, for society, for communities and for families.

Learning Creates research has illuminated an appetite amongst Australian educators and education stakeholders for serious reform to educational recognition systems and the subsequent benefits to school connectedness. This reflects change across developing nations around the world. UN member states have been rallying to create and share visions and plans for transforming education between now and 2030. Redefining the purpose of education is one of the most powerful levers for transforming the system and inclusive and intentional dialogues are needed to surface values and beliefs about education and to develop a broadly shared vision of the purpose of education.

Australia needs to redesign our education system to prepare young people for their future rather than for our past. Without a fit-for-purpose learning system for young people, we are putting limits on their engagement and the outcomes of their learning. This has a flow on effects that impact individuals, communities and our economy.

The first step, and our recommendation, is a community engaged public dialogue, with young people, parents, employers, educators, designed to ensure participants feel secure enough to think beyond the current reality of their experience of an education system. There are global models this could be based on such as [The Big Education Conversation](#) and [Big Change](#) in the UK. These models could inform us in developing an appropriate form of engagement in Australia which would need to take into account the unique needs of our young people, community and First Nations people.

We would value the opportunity to provide further information or suggestions to the Committee.

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Learning Creates would like to acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land throughout Australia who have been learning and educating on Country for over a thousand generations.