

Australia’s Submission to the OHCHR Note Verbale on the Right to Education by Every Girl

# Summary

The Australian Government supports face-to-face learning to support student well-being, mental health and educational outcomes. To support this, in cases of school closures, states and territories and the non-government sector will ensure that school students are supported with access to education via remote learning arrangements and all staff in schools and early childhood education and care must be vaccinated. This is supported through free access to COVID-19 vaccines for everyone in Australia who is aged five years and older. The National Cabinet also agreed to the [National Framework for Managing COVID-19 in Schools and Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC)](https://www.dese.gov.au/covid-19/resources/national-framework-managing-covid19) (Framework) which promotes a consistent approach to delivering high-quality education for all students. The Australian Government has also offered financial assistance to states and territories for 50:50 cost sharing to provide rapid antigen tests for staff and students in schools and ECEC for the first four weeks of the school year. Results from the National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) indicate that education outcomes have not fallen during the pandemic, with female students generally outperforming male students in most NAPLAN domains across all year levels.

# Submission

The Australian Government supports face-to-face learning to support student well-being, mental health and educational outcomes.

In Australia, all staff in schools and early childhood education and care must be vaccinated. This is supported through free access to COVID-19 vaccines for everyone in Australia who is aged five years and older.

Ahead of the 2022 return to school, on 13 January 2022, the National Cabinet agreed to the [*National Framework for Managing COVID-19 in Schools and Early Childhood Education and Care* (ECEC)](https://www.dese.gov.au/covid-19/resources/national-framework-managing-covid19)(Framework) which promotes a consistent approach to delivering high-quality education for all students. It also maximises opportunities for face-to-face learning, while minimising transmission in classrooms. The Framework has six national guiding principles:

* ECEC services and schools are essential and should be the first to open and the last to close wherever possible in outbreak situations, with face-to-face learning prioritised.
* Baseline public health measures continue to apply.
* No vulnerable child or child of an essential worker is turned away.
* Responses to be proportionate and health risk-based.
* Equip ECEC services and schools to respond on the basis of public health advice and with support from public health authorities where required.
* Wellbeing of children and education staff to be supported.

In cases of school closures, states and territories and the non-government sector will ensure that school students are supported with access to education via remote learning arrangements. This will ensure that all students, including vulnerable cohorts and those subject to isolation or quarantine requirements have access to education.

On 20 January 2022, the Australian Government offered financial assistance to states and territories for 50:50 cost sharing to provide rapid antigen tests for staff and students in schools, and children and staff in ECEC. This offer is for the first four weeks of the school year and covers two tests per week, per student and schooling staff, for up to four weeks.

Since COVID-19 arrived in Australian in early 2020, most students have experienced periods of remote learning due to COVID-19. Results from the *National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy* (NAPLAN), indicate that literacy and numeracy outcomes have not reduced between 2019 and 2021, despite the challenges of remote learning. Female students generally outperform male students in most NAPLAN domains across all year levels. In 2021, female students achieved better NAPLAN results than male students in literacy, while male students achieved better NAPLAN results than females in numeracy. While male students scored higher in numeracy, a higher proportion of female students performed at or above the National Minimum Standard in numeracy.