

## MEDIA STATEMENT

31 January 2017

### ACARA RESPONDS TO A SENSATIONALIST ARTICLE IN THE COURIER MAIL

An article in *The Courier Mail* today focuses on the inclusion of text messages as a stimulus for four comprehension questions on ACARA's NAPLAN Online demonstration website.

The story does not address that this passage is one of five that have been provided to enable students, parents and teachers to become familiar with how items might be presented in NAPLAN Online in May this year.

"It is disappointing *The Courier Mail* has chosen this sensationalist angle, when the more valuable discussion is on working to ensure that all students have basic reading comprehension skills much earlier than in Year 9," said ACARA CEO, Robert Randall.

"To clarify, the text message item is just one in a set of five literacy assessment passages that have been provided on the NAPLAN Online demonstration website."

The purpose of the demonstration site is to enable students, parents and teachers to become familiar with the technology-enhanced questions that NAPLAN Online allows, including interactive navigation and features such as drag and drop. The public demonstration site does not, and is not intended to, reflect the full range of items of an actual NAPLAN reading test.

"*The Courier Mail* article has focused on just one passage, not the other four types featured on the public demonstration site, from traditional to contemporary. These include various types of other media texts, such as newspapers and film," said Mr Randall.

"NAPLAN assessments include a range of questions from easy to challenging in order to assess what all students, from higher to the lower achieving, know and can do. The sample SMS text passage and associated questions are a simple comprehension exercise in the context of an SMS conversation. The questions posed are related to a conversation between students, they are not questions about emojis."

ACARA expects that the great majority of Year 9 students would get the questions right, but also anticipates that about 10 per cent of students, those who are at or below the national minimum standard, would not.

“At any year level, students possess a wide range of reading ability and interests. In order to precisely measure each student’s strengths and weaknesses, test content must range from basic to complex. Because engagement with the test can affect student performance, test developers include a range of passage types, from commonplace applications such as text messages to more traditional, literature-type passages, all aligned to the expectations of the Australian Curriculum,” said Mr Randall.

Students are expected to be able to analyse, interpret and evaluate these texts, based on content taught through the Australian Curriculum. The test needs to be as relevant and engaging for students as possible.

NAPLAN is expected to be taken online by up to 10 per cent of the student population this year, with the remainder completing the assessments by paper and pencil as they have done since 2008.

Visit the NAPLAN Online public demonstration website: [www.nap.edu.au/online-assessment/naplan-online/naplan-online-public-demonstration-site](http://www.nap.edu.au/online-assessment/naplan-online/naplan-online-public-demonstration-site)

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