CORPORATE PLAN

2016–17

acara AUSTRALIAN CURRICULUM, ASSESSMENT AND REPORTING AUTHORITY

AC | Australian CURRICULUM

NAP NATIONAL ASSESSMENT PROGRAM

My School®

FROM THE CHAIR

Education is the great leveler of society. Armed with a comprehensive curriculum, a valid and reliable assessment program, and capable teachers, Australia's schools will give all children, regardless of their family circumstances, an opportunity to live up to their full potential. The mission of the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) is to improve the learning of all young Australians. We do this by providing schools with the tools, techniques and information they require to fulfil their vital social role.

ACARA's work begins with the Australian Curriculum, which sets out the knowledge and skills that all students need to learn to participate in modern society. For the first time, all schools in Australia will be teaching the same curriculum. This offers many advantages. It ensures that what a child learns is not determined by where he or she happens to live, and prevents students from being disadvantaged should their families relocate interstate. And most important of all, a national curriculum permits the sharing of best practice and resources across state and territory borders.

To track progress, provide accountability and identify good teaching practices, ACARA conducts the National Assessment Program, which includes the tests of literacy and numeracy known as NAPLAN and sample testing in Science Literacy, ICT Literacy and Civics and Citizenship. ACARA also produces the National Report on Schooling in Australia and provides information about schools through the *My School* website.

In future years, ACARA will continue to improve the Australian Curriculum, ensuring that it meets the needs of all students and is accessible to teachers, parents and the broader community.

In addition to work on the curriculum, ACARA will significantly improve the National Assessment Program by moving it online. Online testing will allow more precise measurement, earlier reporting of results, and it can be adapted to meet the needs of all children including those with a disability. By aligning the assessments with the Australian Curriculum, the results will provide valuable diagnostic data for teachers to use in the classroom. ACARA will add further information to the *My School* website while also making it more accessible to parents and educators.

The ACARA plan is ambitious but achievable. It is designed to produce a return on the investment already made in curriculum development, assessment and reporting by tying the three areas of work together. The curriculum specifies the knowledge and skills we expect students to acquire, the national assessment program reveals whether students are learning what we want them to learn, and reporting allows us to identify good teaching ideas and share them nationally. Taken together, they provide a powerful mechanism for improving education for the benefit of all Australians.

Emeritus Professor Steven Schwartz AM
Chair, ACARA Board

"Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world."
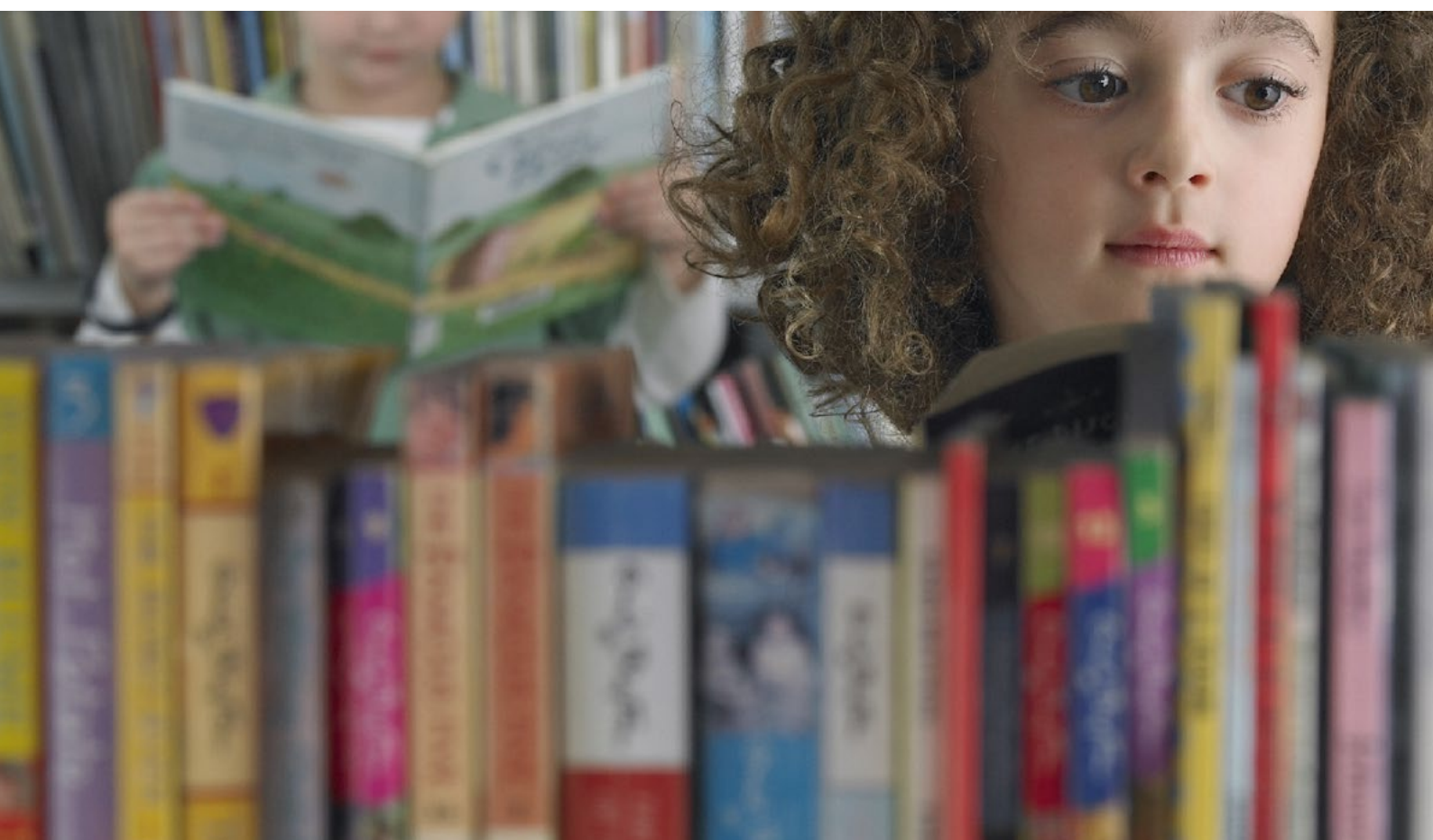
Nelson Mandela

INTRODUCTION

ACARA's corporate plan has been prepared for the 2016–17 reporting period in accordance with the *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013* (section 35(1)(b)) and covers the period from 1 July 2016 to 30 June 2020.

It has been informed by the:

- *ACARA Act 2008,* which sets out ACARA's functions
- ACARA's Charter from the Council of Australian Governments' Education Council, which provides its strategic directions
- 2016–17 to 2019–20 work plan and related budget for ACARA, endorsed by the Education Council in 2015–16.

CONTENTS

Section one
WHO WE ARE

WHO WE ARE

The Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) is an independent statutory authority.

ACARA has been operational since 28 May 2009 and was established under section 5 of the *Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority Act* (Cth) on 8 December 2008.

ACARA executes policy directions determined by the Education Council regarding curriculum, assessment, data and reporting at a national level and operates in accordance with the following principles:

- **National interest:** ACARA's priorities are based on initiatives that are collectively agreed by the Education Council, focusing on matters that are most effectively undertaken at a national level

- **Alignment:** work streams undertaken by ACARA align internally and complement the national education agenda

- **Quality and innovation:** delivering superior, creative and effective products and services that are fit for purpose and actively assist jurisdictions in the implementation of the national education agenda

- **Efficiency:** ensuring products and services are developed and delivered in a timely manner within agreed budgets

- **Transparency and accountability:** ACARA's planning and reporting is undertaken in a manner that provides assurance to the Education Council that ACARA's work is in the national interest

- **Engagement:** working collaboratively with all jurisdictions, the non-government education sector, ministerial companies and authorities and relevant stakeholders, to ensure ACARA's outputs are aligned with the national education agenda and ACARA communicates effectively with the general public.

WHAT WE DO

ACARA's mission is to improve the learning of all young Australians through world-class school curriculum, assessment and reporting.

The purposes of the authority (strategic directions agreed by the Education Council) are:

National assessment

- provide a quality, comprehensive and cohesive suite of national assessments

National data and reporting

- provide and apply a comprehensive and reliable national measurement framework
- facilitate the use and dissemination of data for research and policy development in accordance with agreed protocols
- present detailed, accessible, timely and meaningful school education performance information

National curriculum

- provide a world-class curriculum from Foundation to Year 12 in specified learning areas agreed to by the Education Council
- assemble the evidence base required to review, develop and refine curriculum

National collaboration and leadership

- provide effective national leadership in curriculum development, educational assessment and national reporting
- closely collaborate with jurisdictions, the non-government education sector and relevant stakeholders in pursuing the national education agenda

These purposes acknowledge the commitment to promoting world-class curriculum and assessment and to strengthening accountability and transparency as identified within the *Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians* (the Melbourne Declaration) as agreed by all education ministers in December 2008.

Section three
OUR ENVIRONMENT

OUR ENVIRONMENT

Context

ACARA works in a transparent and collaborative manner with Australian Government, state and territory departments of education and government and non-government school authorities. ACARA shares its work and seeks input and advice on a range of topics through its advisory group structure. The structure enables consistent opportunities for engagement with key stakeholders.

National assessment provides school education leaders, teachers and parents with the means to assess students against previous performance, national benchmarks and their peers using an objective measure. The National Assessment Program, NAPLAN and NAP Sample are used in combination with other forms of assessment to diagnose learning and inform priorities for students, cohorts and schools. New digital technologies are transforming assessment.

Public reporting promotes accountability and engagement in school education. Provision of quality information on schooling is important for schools and their students, for parents and their families, and for the community and governments.

The rationale for an Australian curriculum centres on improving the quality, equity and transparency of Australia's education system. In particular, a national curriculum ensures that every child in Australia, regardless of where they live or the school they attend, has access to a world-class curriculum.

Direction-setting

The ACARA Act stipulates that ACARA must perform its purposes in accordance with directions given to it by the Education Council in writing, and in accordance with its Charter. ACARA's Charter is agreed to by the Education Council and sets the strategic direction for ACARA. The Charter affirms ACARA's role as an independent statutory authority and provides guidance about the nature of the activities ACARA is expected to undertake in fulfilling its functions and executing the policy directions set by the Education Council.

ACARA prepares a quadrennial work plan and budget for endorsement by the Education Council in accordance with the ACARA Charter. In addition, under current arrangements, each financial year ACARA submits a detailed annual work plan for endorsement by the Education Council. ACARA reports its progress against its annual work plan at meetings of the ACARA Board, the Australian Education Senior Officials Committee (AESOC) and the Education Council.

National education landscape and ACARA's impact

ACARA has reshaped the education landscape over the past seven years through the introduction of the national curriculum, continuation and enhancement of national testing and initiation of public reporting on schools through *My School*. The next period represents an opportunity to further enhance these areas, including bringing national assessments online and further aligning assessment to the Australian Curriculum as this is implemented across Australia.

ACARA's highest priority under its current Charter is to shift the balance of the available resources and attention to its assessment function and collaborate with Education Services Australia and all Australian governments to ensure successful implementation of NAPLAN Online.

Stakeholders

ACARA's partners are the Australian Government, state and territory departments of education and national non-government school sector peak bodies. ACARA's stakeholders include teachers, principals, parents and students as well as the broader community. ACARA has a range of advisory and expert groups that provide advice to support ACARA's work and ensure it takes account of input from partners, stakeholders and relevant experts. The advisory structure is reviewed regularly to ensure advice provided is fit for purpose. ACARA works closely with its Education Council counterparts, the Australian Institute of Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) and Education Services Australia (ESA).

Funding

Funding for ACARA is allocated by states and territories and the Australian Government under the Education Council's funding formula – with half of ACARA's funding provided by the Australian Government and the other half provided by states and territories.

Section four
OUR PERFORMANCE

OUR PERFORMANCE

Our performance: **national curriculum – 2016–17 to 2019–20**

National Curriculum: provide a world-class curriculum from Foundation to Year 12 in specified learning areas agreed to by the Education Council and assemble the evidence base required to review, develop and refine curriculum

Budget Portfolio Statements 2016–17: Education and Training – Page 93 – Program 1.1

Delivery	Key actions	Priorities
• **Delivering the Foundation – Year 10 and Senior Secondary Australian Curriculum through the Australian Curriculum website** • **Strengthening assessment of student learning of the Australian Curriculum through provision of student work samples and illustrations of practice and NAP development and data analysis** • **Monitoring the effectiveness of the Australian Curriculum by collecting, analysing and reporting annually on feedback** • **Reviewing and reporting on recent developments in research and international curriculum practice to inform national policy and practice and to further improve the Australian Curriculum** • **Providing authoritative Australian Curriculum advice to stakeholders and facilitating information-sharing and collaboration in support of the Australian Curriculum**	• **Finalise the development and publication of the Australian Curriculum: Languages** • **Maintain the accuracy and quality of all information and resources provided on the Australian Curriculum website** • **Provide learning area expertise and advice to support the alignment of the National Assessment Program to the Australian Curriculum** • **Complete monitoring processes each year and publish reports** • **Benchmark the Australian Curriculum against top-performing school systems/ nations** • **Provide expertise and advice, on request, to support implementation of the Australian Curriculum** • **Liaise with the Australian Government/state/territory departments of education and non-government school authorities in the development and implementation of additional actions to support the delivery of the Australian Curriculum**	• **Monitor and enhance the accessibility, balance and manageability of the national curriculum** • **Collect curriculum implementation information to assist with development of the next generation of curriculum** • **Scope options for further development of senior secondary curriculum in partnership with interested jurisdictions**

Performance criteria	Reporting period	Method	Target
Monitoring activities around the national curriculum undertaken	Annually	Final draft report submitted to the ACARA Board for consideration following feedback from jurisdictions	Report published by end of January
Actions (in addition to those relating to the Curriculum Review) undertaken to improve accessibility for students with a disability	2016–17	Actions presented to the ACARA Board for consideration following feedback from jurisdictions	Actions finalised and published
Level of satisfaction with the Australian Curriculum website	2017–18	Survey of stakeholders held during the reporting period. This survey be held as part of the monitoring activities around the national curriculum	Strong satisfaction recorded by end of June 2018
Portfolios of work samples for *all* published curriculum available	2018–19	Internal check of external accessibility of portfolios of work samples	Portfolios of work samples finalised and published by end of June 2019
Completion of and reporting on at least eight comparisons between the Australian Curriculum and top performing school systems-nations	2019–20	Each draft report submitted to the ACARA Board	At least eight comparisons undertaken and reported on by end of June 2020

Our performance: **national assessment – 2016–17 to 2019–20**

National assessment: provide a quality, comprehensive and cohesive suite of national assessments

Budget Portfolio Statements 2016–17: Education and Training – Page 93 – Program 1.2

Delivery	Key actions	Priorities
• **Researching, developing and supporting activities required for online assessment** • **Managing the planning and development and overseeing the delivery and reporting for the National Assessment Program Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN), managing the transition from pen-and-paper form to online delivery** • **Managing the development and overseeing the delivery of assessments and reporting for the National Assessment Program (NAP) sample assessments** • **Responding to agreed national assessment policy and providing evidence-based advice to AESOC and Education Council**	• **Undertake and complete research to support the move to NAPLAN online** • **Engage in test development for the delivery of NAPLAN online** • **Collaborate with Education Services Australia and all Australian governments to support the transition to NAPLAN online from 2017 over two–three years** • **Annually deliver NAPLAN, transitioning from pen and paper to online assessment** • **Annually deliver NAP sample assessment as agreed by the Education Council, and provide options for the future of the NAP sample assessment** • **Ensure all Education Council directives relating to national assessment are undertaken in a timely manner**	• **Ensure ACARA's resources and attention are focused on its assessment function, in particular ACARA's responsibilities for the successful transition to NAPLAN online** • **Ensure that the suite of online assessments is directly linked to the national curriculum, to improve the understanding of educational outcomes for Australian students**

Performance criteria	Reporting period	Method	Target
National Assessment Program (NAP) – NAPLAN and NAP sample assessments – delivered	Annually	Government and non-government schools undertake NAP – NAPLAN and sample assessments – as scheduled	NAP successfully delivered and reported on (including delivery of NAPLAN online in 2017 and successfully transitioned to fully online in 2019)
NAPLAN online proficiency standards and reports (student, school, national) developed	2016–17	Final draft submitted to AESOC and the Education Council for consideration following feedback provided by government and non-government school sectors via scheduled meetings of working and advisory groups	NAPLAN proficiency standards and reports finalised, agreed to and communicated
ACARA research relating to online assessment completed	2017–18	Final drafts submitted to the ACARA Board for consideration of outcomes	All agreed research completed and findings communicated
Evaluation of NAPLAN online processes undertaken and potential enhancements identified	2018–19	A comprehensive evaluation of NAPLAN online processes undertaken internally, informed by jurisdictional feedback	NAPLAN online processes reviewed (including the potential addition of gain scores to individual student reports (ISRs))
Level of stakeholder satisfaction with online assessment	2019–20	Survey of stakeholders held during the reporting period. This survey will establish the data basis for future surveys relating to satisfaction with online assessment	Strong level of satisfaction with online assessment

Our performance: **national data and reporting – 2016–17 to 2019–20**

National data and reporting: provide and apply a comprehensive and reliable national measurement framework; facilitate the use and dissemination of data for research and policy development in accordance with agreed protocols, and present detailed, accessible, timely and meaningful school education performance information

Budget Portfolio Statements 2016–17: Education and Training – Page 93 – Program 1.3

Delivery	Key actions	Priorities
• **Monitoring and, where necessary, reviewing the existing national key performance measures for schools** • **Producing a comprehensive and authoritative national report on schooling in Australia related to national key performance measures** • **Managing the collection and quality assurance of data and providing national school information through the *My School* website and national reports** • **Managing the sharing and dissemination of data with government and non-government school authorities and with other applicants in accordance with agreed protocols** • **Responding to agreed national data collection and reporting policy and provide evidence-based advice to AESOC and Education Council**	• **Enhance the *My School* website in accordance with the Education Council's agreed actions** • **Develop, pilot and implement a more interactive and timely format for the presentation of the National Report on Schooling in Australia (ANR)** • **Review, update and modify the Measurement Framework for Schooling in Australia, where appropriate, for the Education Council's endorsement** • **Provide data to jurisdictions, ACARA's reporting advisory groups and systems, and to approved research applicants in accordance with agreed protocols** • **Ensure ACARA's contribution to the successful implementation of national initiatives such as the Australian Schools List** • **Undertake a review of content and processes for all reports to ensure comprehensiveness and enhanced user access**	• **Assess data needs to review, and, if necessary, introduce new performance indicators in the measurement framework** • **Manage the collection and quality assurance of data for policy development in the school education sector and provide accessible and comprehensive national school and schooling information (including the *My School* website and National Assessment Program reporting)** • **Produce a revitalised, timely and accessible National Report on Schooling which meets the goals for national performance reporting**

Performance criteria	Reporting period	Method	Target
The National Report on Schooling in Australia is published before the end of the subsequent calendar year	Annually	Final respective drafts submitted to AESOC and the Education Council for consideration following feedback provided by government and non-government school sectors via scheduled meetings of working and advisory groups	A concise national report, reporting key information, published by the end of December of the following year and a related data portal available, allowing public access to the various national datasets for schooling
Australian Schools List finalised and an agreed process for regular updating in place	2016–17		Australian Schools List integrated into the *My School* data collection by end of June 2017 and refreshed quarterly
A review and revision of the Measurement Framework for Schooling in Australia, in consultation with stakeholders and advisory groups undertaken	2017–18		Review finalised and suggested modifications endorsed by the Education Council
Level of stakeholder satisfaction with the *My School* website	2018–19	Survey of stakeholders held during the reporting period. This survey will establish the data basis for future surveys relating to satisfaction with online assessment	Strong level of satisfaction with the *My School* website recorded
Enhancements to *My School* considered and agreed to by the Education Council in September 2015 progressed	2019–20	Related details submitted to AESOC and the Education Council for consideration as required and/or considered by government and non-government school sectors via scheduled meetings of working and advisory groups	*All* enhancements consulted on with key stakeholders and progressed and/or implemented as agreed

Our performance: **national collaboration and leadership – 2016–17 to 2019–20**

National collaboration and leadership: provide effective national leadership in curriculum development, educational assessment and national reporting and closely collaborate with jurisdictions, the non-government education sector and relevant stakeholders in pursuing the national education agenda

Budget Portfolio Statements 2016–17: Education and Training – Page 93 – Program 1.4

Delivery	Key actions	Priorities
• Providing national leadership in curriculum, assessment, data collection and reporting directly and in collaboration with the Australian Government, states, territories, non-government sector, AITSL, ESA and other stakeholder groups, and ensuring liaison with key stakeholders across all matters relating to curriculum, assessment and reporting • Communicating information about ACARA's work and achievements to partners, stakeholders and the broader community • Collaborating with international education bodies to ensure ACARA's work and advice to ministers are informed by leading research and better practice, and provide support services internationally where this aligns with ACARA's core areas of work	• Inform, strengthen and promote general community understanding of the significance of national curriculum, assessment and reporting processes • Lead national communications initiatives for the move to NAPLAN online • Support ACARA's key areas of work through communications planning and stakeholder engagement for curriculum, assessment and reporting activities • Work in partnership with jurisdictions around Education Council directions and provide quality advice that facilitates effective decision-making by AESOC/Education Council • Maintain a system of review of ACARA's advisory structure to ensure it is fit-for-purpose • Complete the work around the provision of services to support development of national curriculum in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia • Build on ACARA's reputation for world-class curriculum, assessment and reporting programs by supporting learning opportunities requested by international delegations	• Collaborate with all Australian governments, the non-government education sector and Education Services Australia in the transition to NAPLAN online • Work in partnership with senior officials to implement the National Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) School Education Strategy and the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Strategy

Performance criteria	Reporting period	Method	Target
An advisory structure that is fit-for-purpose is in place	Annually and survey every two years	Internal review of advisory structure held each reporting period. Survey of members conducted in 2017 and 2019 and results reported to the ACARA Board	Advisory structure published (with strong level of satisfaction received as measured through surveys in 2017 and 2019)
A transparent and timely reporting process and structure is maintained	Annually	Submissions to the ACARA Board and Education Council and/or AESOC for consideration with traffic light rating system in place with related comments on progress	Progress reports against the annual work plan submitted to the Education Council and/or AESOC twice a year and at each meeting of the ACARA Board and all advice provided on time and of high quality
Collaboration with partners (government and non-government school sectors), national stakeholders and international education bodies clearly maintained	Annually	An internal evaluation of the scheduling of advisory groups and representation at meetings of key working groups/peak body opportunities and exchanges with international bodies	Evidence of collaboration through scheduled meetings of ACARA's key advisory groups, ACARA's attendance at key working groups and peak body opportunities, and evidence of communication with international education bodies

OUR CAPABILITY

ACARA will recruit, develop and retain high-performing staff and will foster a positive and agile work culture. Its people will reflect the diversity and dynamism of the education community and have the skills and values needed to support its ongoing responsibilities as well as advance the authority's strategic proposals.

Five values uphold our work:

- Respect

- Integrity

- Collaboration

- Professionalism

- Passion

ACARA will maintain organisational efficiency through:

- strong frameworks of planning and reporting

- a framework of internal and external audits

- fit-for-purpose and sustainable ICT management systems

Performance criteria	Reporting period	Method	Targets
Staff turnover rate	Annually	Internal analysis of related data	Staff turnover rate consistent with turnover and retention benchmarks
Level of staff satisfaction and/or engagement	2017–18 and 2019–20	Survey of staff held during the reporting periods of 2017–18 and 2019–20	Strong level of staff satisfaction and/or engagement

OVERSIGHT OF RISK

ACARA will maintain a risk framework and policy aligned with *AS/NZS ISO 31000:2009 Risk management – Principles and Guidelines* that are compliant with the *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013*. These documents acknowledge that risk management is a fundamental tool to support ACARA to achieve ACARA's strategic objectives in a complex stakeholder environment. ACARA's Board, Audit and Risk Committee and executive, as well as staff will be actively involved in risk management for ACARA. This work will be supported by an internal audit program that tests ACARA's compliance framework and controls.

The ACARA Board will have oversight of ACARA's risk management framework and policy, and will regularly review ACARA's corporate risk register to ensure this captures the key operational and strategic risks faced by ACARA and that appropriate management strategies are in place to manage these risks.

The Audit and Risk Committee will provide recommendations on operational capacity, accountability frameworks, budget, compliance and risks associated with meeting the requirements of the ACARA Charter. It will continue to hold an important role in ACARA's risk management framework.

ACARA's senior management group, inclusive of ACARA's executive, will consider operational matters and will review risk and management controls on a regular basis.

ACARA will maintain its project management policy. This policy applies across its key activities and highlights project related risk, ensuring that risk management is pivotal within ACARA's operations.