# Teachers have completely lost faith in NAPLAN after latest online debacle

The recent NAPLAN online debacle has shattered any confidence that the teaching profession has in NAPLAN going forward.

According to reports received by the Australian Education Union (AEU) from its members, the shambolic situation yesterday left thousands of public school students unable to log on or finish the test due to NAPLAN online connectivity issues, leaving many students in tears after repeatedly losing work.

AEU Federal President Correna Haythorpe said that education authorities had ignored warnings to abandon NAPLAN online after last year's disaster. She said that this meant that teachers could no longer trust the test or the results it produced.

"It is clearer than ever that NAPLAN is in no way fit for purpose, and that the farcical move to NAPLAN online has been hasty and ill-conceived," Ms Haythorpe said.

"After last year's debacle with the delivery of NAPLAN online, Federal Education Minister Dan Tehan had the opportunity to institute a full review of NAPLAN. However he failed to do so."

"Minister Tehan's lack of leadership on this issue has exacerbated the stress imposed on students by this high stakes and pressurised test. We have had principals from across the country telling us that many students were in tears," Ms Haythorpe said.

"NAPLAN has already been widely condemned within the teaching profession. Following the chaos of the widespread NAPLAN online IT outages yesterday, no one can have any faith in the data which is produced by this round of testing."

According to reports from AEU members yesterday:

- Some schools were advised to re-sit the test again today, while others were told to battle on and finish it yesterday. This means that some students will have a night to think of their creative ideas or responses to questions.
- Students ended up with shortened time to complete the test due to being blocked out of the NAPLAN portal (one student had a total of seven minutes to do his writing)
- Students lost all their work, started again, lost all their work again, and finally gave up.

"ACARA's response to both the 2018 NAPLAN online debacle and yesterday's IT collapse clearly demonstrates that it is more concerned with preserving the testing regime than ensuring the valid, consistent and reliable assessment of student achievement," Ms Haythorpe said.

"ACARA has had months and months to fix the widespread issues from last year, but this year things are even worse. How can anyone have any faith that this is a valid testing process when we have such significant issues? It's absurd."

"The Morrison Government has squibbed on the issue of a comprehensive NAPLAN review and this is the result. We have raised the importance of this issue with the federal Education Council headed up by Minister Tehan. We demand answers," Ms Haythorpe said.

"Victorian Education Minister James Merlino has responded to the crisis this morning by advising schools that they do not have to participate in NAPLAN online. We welcome this decision."

A recent AEU survey of more than 6000 teachers found that 65% said publication of NAPLAN data had led to a noticeable increase in the stress levels of students in the lead up to the test, while 61% said publication of NAPLAN data had led to a greater focus on preparing for the test, including pre-testing.

Ms Haythorpe said that NAPLAN was extremely damaging to school curriculums and teaching strategies. She said it had impacted on teacher health and wellbeing, lowered staff morale, while the increased publication of league tables had negatively impacted on school reputations and their capacity to attract and retain students and staff.

“International assessment experts found last year that “the design and execution of NAPLAN make it so flawed that its results are of very limited use to students, parents, and schools,” Ms Haythorpe said.

“The AEU has repeatedly called on Federal Education Minister Dan Tehan to show some leadership and be completely transparent about finding the solutions to the issues being experienced with NAPLAN online.”

Ms Haythorpe said that a teacher’s assessment of their student was preferable to any standardised NAPLAN assessment.

“A child’s education cannot simply be encapsulated as a number in a spreadsheet – we need a much more holistic assessment process which is connected to the daily learning that occurs in our schools,” Ms Haythorpe said.

“The best form of assessment is the informed judgment of a teacher. Teachers make sure that the full range of factors influencing a child’s learning are considered when conducting learning assessments,” Ms Haythorpe said.

“Given the significant concerns of the teaching profession, it is time to end NAPLAN and develop a new assessment strategy that has teachers and students at its heart,” Ms Haythorpe said.



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