

Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration

DECEMBER 2019



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Mparntwe (pronounced M-ban tua) is the Arrernte name for Alice Springs. The Aboriginal Arrernte (pronounced arrunda) peoples are the traditional custodians of Alice Springs and the surrounding region.

Artwork: *Ceremony, Karrinyarra* by Nerine Tilmouth represents Water Dreaming (also called Kapi, or Ngapa Tjukurrpa), from Karrinyarra and Central Mt Wedge, north of Papunya in Central Australia. The circles represent water holes, and this site is strongly associated with rain making ceremonies. Karrinyarra represents an important cultural point of intersection, where people come together to share in access to the resources, and to take responsibility for the Country and its Law.

Nerine Tilmouth is a young artist who lives in Alice Springs. She studied at Yipirinya Aboriginal Independent School, Alice Springs High School and later at Centralian College. Surrounded by artists all her life, Nerine holds Karrinyarra as her country through both her mother and her father.

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Preamble

Young Australians are at the centre of the Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration.

Education has the power to transform lives. It supports young people to realise their potential by providing skills they need to participate in the economy and in society, and contributing to every aspect of their wellbeing.

This Declaration sets out our vision for education in Australia and our commitment to improving educational outcomes for young Australians.

It builds on past declarations signed in Hobart, Adelaide and Melbourne, which have guided our journey over three decades. In developing this Declaration, we have heard from young people, parents, educators and the broader community and listened to what is important to them. They have told us that the Melbourne Declaration has stood the test of time, so in developing this new Declaration, we have sought to further build on and update it to meet the needs of today's young Australians.

Our vision is for a world class education system that encourages and supports every student to be the very best they can be, no matter where they live or what kind of learning challenges they may face.

This begins with making sure that every young child has the opportunity to benefit from structured play-based learning before they start school, because this helps build the social, emotional and cognitive skills they need to succeed in the years to come.

To achieve excellence, and for our system to be equitable, every student must develop strong literacy and numeracy skills in their earliest years of schooling, and go on to develop broad and deep knowledge across a range of curriculum areas.

However, our education system must do more than this – it must also prepare young people to thrive in a time of rapid social and technological change, and complex environmental, social and economic challenges. Education plays a vital role in promoting the intellectual, physical, social, emotional, moral, spiritual and aesthetic development and wellbeing of young Australians, and in ensuring the nation's ongoing economic prosperity and social cohesion. They need to deal with information abundance and navigate questions of trust and authenticity. They need flexibility, resilience, creativity, and the ability and drive to keep on learning throughout their lives.

As the importance of a high-quality education grows, so does the complexity of being an educator. We entrust Australia's educators and education leaders with delivering the goals in this Declaration, and educators in particular need to be supported appropriately as they play their part but they cannot do this alone. Learning is a partnership with parents, carers, and others in the community, all of whom have a role to play in nurturing the love of learning needed for success at school and in life.

We recognise the more than 60,000 years of continual connection by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as a key part of the nation's history, present and future. Through education, we are committed to ensuring that all students learn about the diversity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, and to seeing all young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples thrive in their education and all facets of life.

As Australia's education ministers we are proud custodians of Australia's education system. Our challenge is to turn the aspirations set out in this document into actions – a task that we are committed to achieving.

Our best efforts will translate into opportunities for every young Australian. We will ensure that we place young Australians at the centre of our education system as they navigate their learning and set out on their own journey.

The Education Goals for Young Australians

Improving educational outcomes for all young Australians is central to the nation's social and economic prosperity and will position young people to live fulfilling, productive and responsible lives.

The Declaration has two distinct but interconnected goals:

Goal 1: The Australian education system promotes excellence and equity

Goal 2: All young Australians become:

- confident and creative individuals
- successful lifelong learners
- active and informed members of the community.

Achieving these education goals is the responsibility of Australian Governments and the education community in partnership with young Australians, their families and carers and the broader community.

Goal 1: The Australian education system promotes excellence and equity

Australian Governments commit to promoting excellence and equity in Australian education.

This means that all Australian Governments will work with the education community to:

- provide all young Australians with access to high-quality education that is inclusive and free from any form of discrimination
- recognise the individual needs of all young Australians, identify barriers that can be addressed, and empower learners to overcome barriers
- promote personalised learning and provide support that aims to fulfil the individual capabilities and needs of learners
- ensure that young Australians of all backgrounds are supported to achieve their full educational potential
- encourage young people to hold high expectations for their educational outcomes, supported by parents, carers, families and the broader community
- ensure that education promotes and contributes to a socially cohesive society that values, respects and appreciates different points of view and cultural, social, linguistic and religious diversity
- ensure that learning is built on and includes local, regional and national cultural knowledge and experience of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and work in partnership with local communities
- collaborate internationally to share best practice and help young Australians learn about and engage with the world
- support all education sectors – government, non-government, secular and faith based education
- promote a culture of excellence in all learning environments, by providing varied, challenging, and stimulating learning experiences and opportunities that enable all learners to explore and build on their individual abilities, interests, and experiences
- ensure that Australia's education system is recognised internationally for delivering high quality learning outcomes.

Goal 2: All young Australians become confident and creative individuals, successful lifelong learners, and active and informed members of the community

Australian Governments commit to working in collaboration with the education community to support all young Australians to become:

- confident and creative individuals
- successful lifelong learners
- active and informed members of the community.

Confident and creative individuals who...

- have a sense of self-worth, self-awareness and personal identity that enables them to manage their emotional, mental, cultural, spiritual and physical wellbeing
- develop personal values and attributes such as honesty, empathy, loyalty, responsibility and respect for others
- are resilient and develop the skills and strategies they need to tackle current and future challenges
- are able to recognise, adapt to, and manage change
- have a sense of optimism about their lives and the future
- show initiative, use their creative abilities and are enterprising
- have the imagination, knowledge, skills, understanding and values to establish and maintain healthy, satisfying lives
- understand their responsibilities as global citizens and know how to affect positive change
- have the confidence and capability to pursue learning throughout life, leading to enjoyable, fulfilling and productive employment
- relate well to others and form and maintain healthy relationships
- are well prepared for their potential life roles as friends, family, community and workforce members
- embrace opportunities, make informed decisions about their own lives and accept responsibility for their own actions
- have a sense of belonging, purpose and meaning that enable them to thrive in their learning environment.

Successful lifelong learners who...

- develop their ability and motivation to learn and play an active role in their own learning
- have the essential skills in literacy and numeracy as the foundation for learning
- engage in respectful debate on a diverse range of views
- are productive and informed users of technology as a vehicle for information gathering and sharing, and are able to adapt to emerging technologies into the future
- are able to think deeply and logically, and obtain and evaluate evidence as the result of studying fundamental disciplines
- are creative, innovative and resourceful, and are able to solve problems in ways that draw upon a range of learning areas and disciplines and deep content knowledge
- are inquisitive and experimental, and have the ability to test different sources and types of knowledge
- are responsive and adaptive to new ways of thinking and learning
- are able to plan activities independently, collaborate, work in teams and communicate ideas
- continue to improve through formal and informal learning in further education, and training or employment, and acquire the skills to make informed decisions throughout their lives
- are able to make sense of their world and think about how things have become the way they are
- are confident and motivated to reach their full potential.

Active and informed members of the community who...

- act with moral and ethical integrity
- have empathy for the circumstances of others and work for the common good, in particular sustaining and improving natural and social environments

- appreciate and respect Australia's rich social, cultural, religious and linguistic diversity and embrace opportunities to communicate and share knowledge and experiences
- have an understanding of Australia's system of government, its histories, religions and culture
- are committed to national values of democracy, equity and justice, and participate in Australia's civic life by connecting with their community and contributing to local and national conversations
- understand, acknowledge and celebrate the diversity and richness of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures
- possess the knowledge, skills and understanding to contribute to, and benefit from, reconciliation between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and non-Indigenous Australians
- are informed and responsible global and local members of the community who value and celebrate cultural and linguistic differences, and engage in the global community, particularly with our neighbours in the Indo-Pacific regions.

A Commitment to Action

All Australian Governments commit to working with the education community and in partnership with young Australians, their families and the broader community to achieve the educational goals for young Australians.

This commitment will be supported by a range of inter-related areas for action:

- developing stronger partnerships
- supporting quality teaching and leadership
- strengthening early childhood education
- building foundational skills in the primary school years
- enhancing middle years development
- supporting senior years of schooling
- embedding pathways for learning throughout life and supporting effective transitions
- promoting world-class curriculum and assessment
- supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander learners to reach their full potential
- supporting all young Australians at risk of educational disadvantage
- strengthen responsibility mechanisms with strong, meaningful, accountable and transparent measures.

Developing stronger partnerships

Parents, carers and families are the first and most important educational influence in a child's life. They have a critical role in early development, including social, emotional, intellectual, spiritual and physical wellbeing. They instil attitudes and values that support young people to access and participate in education and training and contribute to local and global communities. It is critical for the education community to work in partnership with parents, carers and families to support a child's progress through early learning and school.

Partnerships create opportunities for young Australians to connect with their communities, business and industry and support the development and wellbeing of young people and their families. These connections and associations can facilitate development, training and employment opportunities, promote a sense of responsible citizenship and encourage lifelong learning. These partnerships should aim to enhance learner engagement, progress and achievement.

In particular, the development of partnerships and connections with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities will greatly improve learning outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and benefit all young Australians. Effective partnerships are based on culturally supportive and responsive learning environments.

Welcoming and valuing the local, regional and national cultural knowledge and the experiences of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples will help the education community to build authentic partnerships with local communities and teach young Australians the value of our nation's rich history.

More importantly, it will foster a culturally supportive learning environment where all young Australians can thrive educationally and in all facets of life.

Australian Governments commit to building partnerships that support learners' progress through the education system, and to provide them with individualised, high quality learning opportunities and experiences, and personal development. Further, Australian Governments commit to fostering these partnerships to support young Australians as they continue their learning throughout their lifetime.

Supporting quality teaching and leadership

Teachers, educators and leaders are vital to achieving these education goals for young Australians. Australia is fortunate to have excellent teachers and educators; their professionalism, expertise and ongoing engagement in developing education in Australia will be critical.

Highly skilled teachers and educators have the ability to transform the lives of young people and inspire and nurture their personal and academic development. They provide significant encouragement, advice and support for learners outside the home, shaping teaching to nurture the unique abilities of every child.

School principals and other education leaders at all levels and in all learning environments across the profession play a critical role in supporting and fostering quality teaching and learning. Education leaders are responsible for creating and sustaining high quality learning environments and conditions under which quality teaching and learning takes place. This includes instilling a culture of high expectations, collaboration and professional growth.

All Australian Governments and the education community, including universities, must work together to foster high-quality teaching and leadership. This includes providing the opportunity and resources for ongoing professional learning, equipping educators with high-quality evidence and data, and developing well-prepared pre-service teachers. In an information and technology rich society we must ensure that educators are supported to continually develop their own skills, in order to teach young Australians the essential skills and core knowledge needed for a modern society and economy.

Australian Governments commit to working with the education community to attract, develop, support and retain high-quality teachers, educators and leaders in Australia's education system. Excellence in teaching, educating and leadership will be recognised, celebrated and valued.

Strengthening early childhood education

The early years of life are a period of rapid growth and development as children form their language, social, emotional and physical skills, and undergo significant cognitive development. These years provide the foundation for learning throughout school and beyond. The key to children's earliest learning and development is the quality and depth of interaction they experience; between adult and child and between child and child. These interactions take place both within and outside formal early childhood education settings. Age appropriate approaches and supports for learning and development help children grow and develop during this formative stage.

The importance of the early years has been recognised through collaborative national efforts and state and territory reforms to lift quality and improve participation and access. The Early Learning Reform Principles, agreed by COAG, outline the commitment of all Australian Governments to early childhood and the connection between high quality early learning and positive outcomes throughout life. Strong regulation focused on improving quality in education and care settings has been established through the National Quality Framework, which emphasises lifting process and structural quality across all early childhood settings. Australian Governments have implemented the Early Years Learning Framework which provides guidance to the early childhood education workforce to enable it to support young children to learn and develop through play-based learning.

Australian Governments have worked together to provide access to 15 hours of early childhood education per week to all Australian children in the year before full-time school. This provides a solid foundation for development and learning and we need to build on the success of the collective efforts of governments and stakeholders to ensure sustainable ongoing outcomes.

The important link between educators and quality early childhood education experiences is recognised through the National Quality Framework, including through professional qualification requirements and educator to child ratios. Increasing the capability of the early childhood education workforce remains a priority to build quality, as does providing parents, carers and the community with advice and support to help children learn and develop wherever they are and regardless of their circumstances.

Australian Governments commit to continuing to build quality and access to early years learning and development in environments that meets the needs of all Australian families. Australian Governments also commit to providing support and advice through a range of channels on how to support children to develop and flourish, including partnering with families, the broader community and other services for children.

Building foundational skills through the primary school years

Building upon a strong foundation from early childhood learning, primary school is critical to further develop foundational skills which form the basis for ongoing learning throughout school and beyond. Having a positive and successful start to school gives children the confidence and motivation they need for continued learning success. It is important that primary school continues to understand, provide the right environment for, and respond to the needs of young learners to discover, explore, play, create and express themselves.

Primary school is a key stage for children as they enhance their communication skills, establish and grow peer relationships, and have a growing understanding of their place in the world. This period of significant change and growth also sees children develop resilience and adaptability and strategies to manage themselves in different situations.

The beginning of school is an important time to have in place effective early intervention and support strategies to ensure each young person has the necessary skills, knowledge and confidence to thrive as they move through school.

Australian Governments commit to working with all school sectors to ensure that schools are responsive to students' developmental and learning needs in primary school to provide a strong foundation for continued learning success throughout school and beyond.

Enhancing middle years development

The middle years are an important period of individual growth and learning when a balanced set of cognitive, social and emotional skills are developed. Students are finding a sense of self and require investment in their emotional wellbeing and a voice in and influence over their learning. This is also a time when they are at the greatest risk of disengagement from learning. Through directly addressing each student's range of needs, schools must focus on enhancing motivation and engagement.

Real-world learning that applies discipline knowledge and supports emotional learning and the development of financial and entrepreneurial skills is important. Developing healthy peer relationships should be encouraged, including a focus on student engagement and wellbeing. Literacy and numeracy remain critical and must also be assessed to ensure learning growth is understood, tracked and further supported.

Improved and effective transitions must be established throughout the middle years, not limited to transitions between primary and secondary school. Students will be supported to consider and prepare for future pathways and transitions as part of efforts to ensure student engagement and success.

Australian Governments commit to working with all school sectors to ensure that schools are responsive to students' developmental and learning needs in the middle years, in ways which are challenging, engaging and rewarding.

Supporting senior years of schooling

The senior years of schooling are a critical transition point for young people – emotionally, socially, and educationally. These years should provide all students with the high-quality, relevant and engaging education and support necessary to complete their secondary school education. The senior years of schooling should provide all students with high quality advice, support and experiences to make informed choices about their future and smooth the initial transition to further education, training or meaningful employment. This includes providing careers advice so that students with their families can make choices about their subject selections and post school pathway.

All Australian Governments and the education community need to support students in their senior years by helping them acquire the cognitive and social skills necessary for life after school and equip students to remain engaged in learning throughout life. This support requires effective partnerships with education and training providers, employers, industry and the broader community. Support may also be needed for young people returning to education and training after a period of employment.

Australian Governments commit to working with the education community to provide a senior secondary education that equips young people with the skills, knowledge, values and capabilities to succeed in employment, personal and civic life.

Embedding pathways for learning throughout life and supporting effective transitions

The skills and knowledge that young people acquire are critical to their success and happiness. The scale and pace of change in society and the economy mean that now more than ever, the ability to learn and grow beyond the compulsory years of education and training is essential. Skills, knowledge and capabilities will need to be renewed and updated throughout life.

It is important that young people have a clear understanding of, and influence over, how they learn and can contribute in society in a meaningful way. Being able to see a clear link between theory and practice instils a thirst for knowledge and skills. Relevant and engaging educational and work experiences in youth are important to ensure young people have the drive, skills and disposition to continue to learn and grow throughout their lives.

At key developmental periods in each young person's life they transition between early childhood to primary school, from primary to secondary school and from secondary school to further education, training and employment.

These transitions involve a move from familiar and personal surroundings to usually much larger and more complex learning environments and systems. Students have to adapt to new routines, changes and pressures in social environments, a broader range of curricula, larger numbers of teachers and different teaching styles, new educational demands, and a fast-changing labour market.

Australian Governments commit to helping young Australians navigate the choices they will need to make for their education, training and employment by providing guidance and streamlining transitions.

Delivering world-class curriculum and assessment

Recognising that students have different strengths, needs and backgrounds, the Australian Curriculum sets clear and challenging learning goals, while having the flexibility to support students to progress in their learning regardless of their starting point.

The Australian Curriculum enables students to develop knowledge and understanding in the learning areas of English, Mathematics, Science, Humanities and Social Sciences, Health and Physical Education, Technologies, Languages, and the Arts. The learning areas in the curriculum support the development of deep knowledge within a discipline and allow for a depth of learning appropriate to students' phases of development. These learning areas, along with general capabilities, are critical to equip students with the knowledge, skills and confidence to actively contribute to society and Australia's economic prosperity.

Science, Technologies, Engineering and Mathematics make up the STEM learning areas. The STEM learning areas are a key national focus for school education in Australia and are critical to equip students to engage productively in a world of rapidly changing technology.

Students learn about Australia's rich Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures. This cross-curriculum priority provides Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students with the ability to see themselves, their identities and cultures reflected in the curriculum and allows all students to engage in reconciliation, respect and recognition of the world's oldest continuous living cultures.

The curriculum supports students to become responsible local and global members of the community in an interconnected world and to engage with complex ethical issues and concepts such as sustainability. As a foundation for further learning and adult life, the curriculum includes practical skills development in areas such as ICT, critical and creative thinking, intercultural understanding and problem solving. These skills support imagination, discovery, innovation, empathy and developing creative solutions to complex problems. They are central to contributing to Australia's knowledge-based economy.

To ensure that student progress and achievement is measured in meaningful ways Australian Governments will continue to develop and enhance national and school-level assessment that focuses on:

- assessment for learning - enabling teachers to use information about student progress to inform their teaching
- assessment as learning - enabling students to reflect on and monitor their own progress to inform their future learning goals
- assessment of learning - assisting teachers, education leaders, parents, the community, researchers and policy makers to use evidence of student learning to assess student achievement against recognised goals and standards and drive improvements in student outcomes.

Australian Governments commit to ensuring that all education sectors deliver world-class curriculum and assessment in Australian schools.

Supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander learners to reach their potential

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, knowledge and experiences are fundamental to Australia's social, economic and cultural wellbeing. Across Australia, the education community need to focus on imagining what is possible and promoting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leadership, knowledge and learnings. All Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young peoples must be empowered to achieve their full learning potential, shape their own futures, and embrace their cultures, languages and identities as Australia's First Nations peoples.

Educational outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young peoples remain behind those of other learners in a number of key areas. Meeting their needs and fostering access, engagement, progress, and achievement for their educational performance requires strategic effort and investment.

Australia's education system must embrace Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural identities and provide Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples with safe learning environments. The education community need to engage Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander learners, their families and communities in all aspects of education, increase Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' participation in the education workforce at all levels, and support coordinated community services for learners and their families to increase productive participation. This engagement needs to be based on the principles of shared decision-making, place-based responses and regional decision-making, evidence, evaluation and accountability, targeted investment, and integrated systems.

Australian Governments commit to empowering Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students to reach their potential and to ensuring the education community works to 'close the gap' for young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Supporting all young Australians at risk of educational disadvantage

For Australia's education system to promote excellence and equity, governments and the education community must improve outcomes for educationally disadvantaged young Australians. We must also encourage them, their families and their communities to hold high expectations for their future.

Learners experiencing disadvantage are more likely than their peers to start school developmentally vulnerable and less likely to have attended early education in the year before school. Targeted support can help learners such as those from low socioeconomic backgrounds, those from regional, rural and remote areas, migrants and refugees, learners in out of home care, homeless young people, and children with disability to reach their potential. This means tailoring to the needs of individuals across a system that prioritises equity of opportunity and that supports achievement.

Australian Governments must provide all young Australians with equality of opportunity that enables them to reach their potential and achieve their highest educational outcomes.

Australian Governments commit to ensuring the education community works to provide equality of opportunity and educational outcomes for all students at risk of educational disadvantage.

Strengthening accountability and transparency with strong meaningful measures

Good quality data and information is important for educators and their students, parents and families, the community and governments. Good data will provide information about the educational experience and outcomes including pathways into further education and employment. This will be used to inform policy development and implementation as well as track progress against the goals of this declaration. The collection of data should be proportionate and not unduly add to the workloads of educators.

Good quality data allows teachers to evaluate the effectiveness of their classroom practice and supports educators to effectively identify learners' progress and growth, and design individualised and adaptive learning programs. It also informs programs, policies, allocation of resources, relationships with parents and partnerships and connections with community and business.

Reliable and appropriate information about the achievement and progress of individuals and education providers helps parents and families make informed choices and engage with their children's education.

Parents, carers and families should have access to:

- data on learner progress and outcomes
- data that allows them to assess an education provider's performance overall and in improving learner progress and outcomes
- contextual information about the philosophy and educational approach of education providers, and their facilities, programs and extra-curricular activities
- information about an education provider's enrolment and staffing profile.

For schools, Australian Governments provide assessment results that are publicly available at the school, sector and jurisdiction level to ensure accountability and provide sufficient information to parents, carers, families, the broader community, researchers, policy makers and governments to make informed decisions based on evidence. They deliver national reform activity contributing to the eleven areas for action. Building on national reform, each jurisdiction delivers state and territory reform activities specific to local contexts to support student learning and improve student outcomes. This information provides the community with an understanding of the decisions taken by governments and the status and performance of schooling in Australia, to ensure schools are accountable for the results they achieve with the public funding they receive, and governments are accountable for the decisions they take.

Good quality data enables governments to:

- analyse how well schools are performing against each other and internationally
- identify schools with students with particular needs
- understand outcomes in relation to educational disadvantage and target resources accordingly

- determine where resources are most needed to support student learning needs and lift attainment
- ensure equity of access to education
- identify best practice and innovation
- conduct national and international comparisons of approaches and performance
- develop a substantive evidence base on what works.

Australian Governments commit to continuing to provide public reporting that:

- **focuses on improving performance and student growth and outcomes for all students**
- **provides parents with information on their child's performance, progress and outcomes**
- **is locally, nationally, and internationally relevant**
- **is accessible, timely, consistent and comparable.**

Achieving the Educational Goals for Young Australians

With shared commitment and sustained efforts of Australia Governments and the education community, working in partnership with young Australians, their families and carers and the broader community, all young Australians will have the opportunity to reach their full potential.

The commitments outlined in this Declaration will be implemented through the efforts of all Australian Governments, working collectively together through the Council of Australian Governments Education Council and individually in their own areas of responsibility.

Australian Governments will collectively invest in national reforms to give all young Australians equal access and opportunity to become confident and creative individuals, successful lifelong learners, and active and informed members of the community.

National reforms are outlined in national agreements, and national data collection and reporting is undertaken to track the progress towards achievement of the educational goals for young Australians.

Biennial Forum

There continue to be many innovative and collaborative educational reforms developed across the education community, jurisdictions and at a national level, and there is potential for these ideas to be shared and adapted across the nation.

Education Council will convene a national forum biennially with education stakeholders to showcase best practice, success stories, and progress against the goals outlined in the Declaration.

Acknowledgements

Ministers would like to acknowledge those individuals and organisations that were involved in the consultation process. Over 260 submissions were received in response to the discussion paper and the exposure draft declaration, and over 900 people attended the consultation events and/ or provided submissions to the review. This extensive consultation shaped the Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration.

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