

Media Release: Release of the Final Report of the Literacy and Numeracy Education Expert Panel: *Achieving equity and excellence through evidence-informed consistency*

**Embargoed until 06:00 AEST, Thursday 2 May 2024**

Leading economics firm, Equity Economics, the ACT Alliance for Evidence-Based Education and The Snow Foundation have welcomed a new report released today by the Literacy and Numeracy Education Expert Panel, *Achieving equity and excellence through evidence-informed consistency*.

The inquiry's report reflects the recommendations made in Equity Economics' report *Raising the grade: how schools in the ACT can lift literacy outcomes for students and the economy*.

The Equity Economics report, which was commissioned by the Snow Foundation in 2023, highlighted that too many students in the ACT are not proficient in literacy with many students being 'instructional casualties', students who could and should have become proficient readers but who did not receive appropriate instruction.

Scarlett Gaffey from the Snow Foundation said, "the Snow Foundation cares deeply about the Canberra community and supports systemic change that addresses entrenched disadvantage by taking a preventative approach to ensure the best possible outcomes for Canberra's children and their life trajectories."

Strategic adviser at Equity Economics Jessica Del Rio said that "too many students in the ACT are leaving school without acquiring the literacy skills they need for work and life".

"Low literacy comes at a significant individual cost to the student impacting whether a child will finish school, go to TAFE or university, get a job and their lifetime earnings. It impacts on students' behaviour, mental health and whether they end up in prison or in trouble with the law. Low literacy also comes at a significant cost to the economy."

The ground-breaking research by Equity Economics revealed that a significant gap in performance was emerging between Catholic sector schools utilising evidence-based practices and Government schools in the ACT applying approaches which do not work for all students.

In 2019, 42 per cent of Catholic schools and 54 per cent of Government schools were underperforming in reading in Year 3. Four years later, only four per cent of Catholic schools underperformed compared to 60 per cent of Government schools. The Catholic schools achieved these results because of a deliberate and ongoing investment in evidence-based practices.

A subsequent Equity Economics report, which was commissioned by the Code REaD Dyslexia Network, *Saving money by spending: solving illiteracy in Australia*, examined

the performance of all Australian states and territories and found that the ACT and Victoria were the worst performers in implementing evidence-based best practices.

These reports were instrumental in demonstrating the need for a system wide change to lift literacy and equity outcomes in ACT public schools and the establishment of an inquiry into literacy and numeracy.

Equity Economics, The Snow Foundation, and the ACT Alliance for Evidence-Based Education are pleased to see the findings and recommendations of the ACT inquiry reflect the calls made in these Equity Economics reports for:

- Implementing a high-quality evidence-based curriculum backed in by resources such as decodable readers for beginner readers
- Professional development for principals and teachers
- Appropriate screening, diagnostic and progress monitoring assessments to find struggling readers, including the Year 1 Phonics Check
- A multi-tiered system of support (MTSS) with high quality whole class instruction, additional small group intervention for around 20% of students and one-on-one intervention for 5% of students.

“As with all things, the devil will be in the detail and a sophisticated theory of change and implementation plan will be required to make these significant system changes, backed in by an appropriate budget commitment,” Ms Del Rio said.

“Equity Economics estimates that around \$92 million over four years is required for the ACT public education system to become a world leader in delivering evidence-based literacy and numeracy initiatives.”

This investment is outlined in a [joint submission to the 2024-25 ACT Government Budget process from Equity Economics and the ACT Alliance for Evidence-Based Education](#).

“As with all complex system changes, there needs to clear and purposeful leadership, appropriate resourcing and a rigorous approach to monitoring and evaluation,” Ms Del Rio said.

*Equity Economics has been supported by the Snow Foundation, Code REaD Dyslexia Network and ACT Alliance for Evidence-Based Education to produce reports linked here:*

*[Raising the grade: how schools in the ACT can lift literacy outcomes for students and the economy](#)*

*[Saving money by spending: solving illiteracy in Australia](#)*

*[joint submission to the 2024-25 ACT Government Budget process from Equity Economics and the ACT Alliance for Evidence-Based Education](#)*