Julian Leeser MP
Shadow Minister for Education
Shadow Minister for Indigenous Australians
Federal Member for Berowra

Sam Birrell MP
Shadow Assistant Minister for Regional Education
Federal Member for Nicholls

MEDIA RELEASE
Page Report under embargo till 12.00pm today.

27 October 2026

PAGE REPORT RAISES SERIOUS QUESTIONS ABOUT FAIRNESS OF AUSTRALIAN SCHOOL ASSESSMENTS

A new paper from the Page Research Centre raises serious questions about the fairness and reliability of school student assessments across the country.

School reforms have typically focussed on curriculum (*what* students learn) and pedagogy (*how* they learn).

But to date, we have not paid serious attention to the third key element: student assessment. The new Page Research Centre paper report, *Neither better nor fairer: how student assessment practices betray Australia's national education goals*, critically evaluates these topics.

The Page Centre report reveals significant inconsistencies in how Australian students are assessed across the country. Some students can receive an ATAR without any requirement to complete formal, standardised, external examinations. Others are required to do so for all subjects. Too often, students are incentivised to choose subjects that optimise for ATAR schools, rather than rather than more challenging subjects that might be better suited to preparing them for success at university.

Drawing on feedback from teachers themselves, the paper also highlights how, in too many cases, students are not set up for success by scaffolding systems that do not grow autonomous, independent learners.

These are yet more examples of the system letting students and teachers down.

The research comes at a time when Australia's latest PISA results show student performance in maths and reading has fallen to its lowest-ever levels, and recommends an independent review of senior secondary certificates, nationally consistent assessment standards and an examination of the feasibility of national assessments at key milestones in Years 6, 10 and 12.

The Page Research Centre is launching the paper on 27 October at Parliament House.

Quotes attributable to Julian Leeser MP
“We are spending record amounts on schools, but our academic performance is at its worst level ever. Now is the time to question existing approaches and demand a change of course.”

“ATAR is a national system, but how can we be confident in our school leavers if an ATAR from Perth doesn’t carry the same weight as an ATAR from Melbourne?”

“The lack of any consistent standard means that employers, the public and even the tertiary sector may lose faith in the integrity of oursenior secondary assessment and qualifications systems.”

“We need the ability to distinguish between whether a student has completed an assessment task, and whether they have learned from it.”

“This is a hugely important contribution from the Page Research Centre and it warrants serious consideration from all those in the Parliament.”

“Critically, it is research informed by Australia's teachers. We need to listen to them, and make sure their front-line experiences are informing our education policy."

Quotes attributable to Sam Birrell MP
"A student's postcode should not determine the academic standards they are taught to or assessed against. Every young Australian deserves a rigorous, high-quality education, whether they live in a capital city, a regional town or a remote community."

"The report raises serious questions about whether Year 12 results and qualifications represent comparable achievement across Australia. Without clear and consistent evidence, we cannot simply assume the system is fair."

"Falling enrolments in mathematics, science, humanities, literature and languages should concern every Australian. We need students leaving school with the knowledge, skills and credible qualifications required for university, training and a high-skill workforce."

Quotes attributable to Dr Fiona Mueller, Page Research Centre
“For decades, Australian education policies have been disproportionately influenced by unproven, experimental approaches to curriculum, teaching, student assessment and other critical areas.”

“As many Australians are aware, state and territory education authorities are now racing to introduce what they refer to as ‘evidence-based reforms’ to curriculum and teaching.”

“However, we need to pay equally close attention to the third key element of schooling - student assessment.”

“The world’s highest performing education systems are unequivocal about the importance of formal examinations for measuring student achievement across the curriculum in valid and reliable ways. The OECD calls these ‘trusted signals of achievement.”

“The Page Research Centre is proud to support the authors and their teacher networks. This paper offers precisely the sort of evidence that is needed to build a better and fairer education system.”

“To Julian Leeser MP, Shadow Minister for Education and Indigenous Affairs, and Sam Birrell MP, Shadow Assistant Minister for Regional Education – a huge thank you for giving these teachers a voice.”

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Doorstop
Time: 11.40am, Tuesday 27 October 2026
Location: Mural Hall, Parliament House, Canberra
Speakers: Julian Leeser MP, Sam Birrell MP and Dr Fiona Mueller, Director of Research, Page Research Centre.