

## Overview of the 1st two months of the Labor Government (2025-2028)



### Department of Education

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#### Introduction

The first two months of the Department of Education's new term have been characterized by a strong focus on equity, skills for the future, teacher workforce sustainability, digital inclusion, and global competitiveness. This report reviews the Ministry's performance, referencing the attached five imperatives and recent news, and evaluates key actions, policy changes, challenges, gaps, and overall impact.

#### Key actions undertaken

##### 1. Closing the opportunity gap

- **Needs-Based Equity Funding:** The Ministry's advanced plans to expand the Schools Excellence Fund into a targeted equity stream, directing extra resources to schools serving disadvantaged students, remote communities, and recent migrants.
- **Wrap-Around Supports:** There is a renewed push to embed student support services such as nurses, counselors, and learning aids within high-need schools.
- **Anti-Bullying Policy:** Strengthening of the national anti-bullying approach is underway, with consultations involving teachers, students, and parents.

##### 2. Future-proofing skills and curriculum reform

- **Digital Literacy Pathways:** The Ministry's has prioritized embedding digital literacy, coding, and critical thinking from Year 1, moving away from siloed approaches to technology education.
- **VET Pathways Hubs:** Announced partnerships between TAFEs, universities, and industry to create hubs where students can blend classroom learning with apprenticeships in tech, advanced manufacturing, and green energy sectors.
- **Tertiary Education Reform:** The interim Australian Tertiary Education Commission (ATEC) was launched to drive long-term reform, breaking down barriers between VET and university, and implementing needs-based funding models.

##### 3. Investing in teacher quality and workforce sustainability

- **Teacher Excellence Program:** The Ministry launched a scholarship program for postgraduate specializations in STEM and special-needs education, tied to service in underserved schools.

- **Workload Relief:** Funding has been allocated for additional non-teaching staff, such as learning coaches and administrative aids, to reduce teacher workload and improve retention.
- **Better and Fairer Schools Agreement:** The government committed an extra \$6.7 billion to major structural reforms, including teacher pipeline initiatives and new engagement targets for initial teacher education.

#### 4. Bridging the digital divide

- **National Student Connectivity Initiative:** Efforts have begun to provide every public-school student with an AI-capable device, with priority on regional and disadvantaged communities.
- **Learning Hubs:** The Ministry is supporting the creation of Wi-Fi-enabled community learning hubs, particularly in under-resourced areas.
- **Digital Access Metrics:** The government is tracking devices and internet access to ensure no student is left behind.

#### 5. Strengthening Australia's global education standing

- **International Education Reforms:** Major reforms were announced to improve the integrity and sustainability of the international education sector, including a proposed cap on student enrollments, stricter oversight of education agents, and new ministerial powers to suspend substandard courses.
- **Cultural Exchange:** The Ministry has promoted new programs to highlight Indigenous heritage and foster global partnerships.
- **Migration and Visa Policy:** New rules require Confirmation of Enrolment for student visas, higher fees, and stricter English and financial requirements, aiming to enhance quality and protect Australia's education reputation.

#### Major statements and public messaging

- The Ministry has emphasized the need for "genuine fairness" in education, the importance of future-ready skills, and the urgency of bridging digital and opportunity gaps.
- Public addresses have highlighted the government's commitment to teacher support, anti-bullying reforms, and a sustainable international education sector.

#### Gaps and areas for improvement

- **Legislative Progress:** Most reforms are in early implementation or consultation; few new laws have been enacted in the first 60 days.

- **Pace of Digital Inclusion:** While device provision has started, universal access remains a work in progress.
- **Teacher Retention:** Broader, more ambitious steps may be needed to address systemic teacher shortages and morale.
- **International Student Cap:** The proposed cap has been controversial, with concerns about impacts on university funding and sector jobs.
- **Transparency:** Calls remain for more regular public reporting and measurable targets, especially on equity and digital access.

## Overall impact

The Department of Education's first 60 days have set a clear and ambitious agenda, closely aligned with the five imperatives: equity, future skills, teacher quality, digital access, and global competitiveness. The period has seen significant announcements, new funding commitments, and the rollout of foundational reforms, especially in partnership with states and the tertiary sector.

However, the impact to date has been more strategic than transformative. Persistent equity gaps, digital divides, and teacher workforce issues require sustained investment and faster implementation. The international education reforms, while addressing integrity, have sparked debate about their broader economic and social effects.

The following summarize recommendations dated May 29, 2025, sent by IPAG Asia Pacific, Melbourne to Jason Clare, Minister for Education for implementing in the 1st 100 days of the 2nd term of the Labor Government. It provides status of implementation and what needs to be done is to be on track for timely completion of the initiatives.

IPAG Recommendations	Progress Made	Implementation Status (✓/X)	Remarks
<b>Equity gaps</b>	Expanded targeted funding and wrap-around supports for disadvantaged schools.	✓ (Partially)	Progress varies across states; needs better tracking of student outcomes.
<b>Teacher shortages &amp; burnout</b>	Launched excellence scholarships, workload relief, and new pipeline targets for initial teacher education.	✓ (In progress)	Scholarships and relief welcomed; retention pressures persist.
<b>Digital divide</b>	Fast-tracked device provision and community learning hubs for under-resourced students.	✓ (In progress)	Device rollout helped but internet access gaps remain for some remote communities

IPAG Recommendations	Progress Made	Implementation Status (✓/X)	Remarks
<b>Integrity in international sector</b>	Introduced caps, agent oversight, and stricter visa rules to manage growth and quality.	✓	New rules in place; ongoing monitoring is vital to maintain education quality and reputation.
<b>Disruptions in testing</b>	Ordered independent reviews into selective school testing issues to prevent future disruptions.	✓ (Partially)	Independent reviews started; implementation of findings will be key.

### Moving forward.....

The Ministry's early tenure has laid the groundwork for major reforms and demonstrated a strong policy vision. The next phase must deliver accelerated action, deeper inclusion, and greater transparency to ensure that every Australian student regardless of background can thrive in a rapidly changing world.