

## **INTERVIEW: ABC Radio AM**

5 August 2015

*Professor Chubb was interviewed by Bridget Brennan on ABC Radio about the latest NAPLAN test results. The segment was presented by Michael Brissenden.*

**MICHAEL BRISSENDEN:** Australia's curriculum authority says parents have the right to expect more improvement than what's being shown in NAPLAN tests.

The nation's annual numeracy and literacy skills report has been released this morning. In the seven years since the tests were introduced in primary and high schools, most measurements show no major improvement. Meanwhile, the Chief Scientist says Australia's future will rely on improved numeracy skills. Bridget Brennan reports.

**BRIDGET BRENNAN:** In May more than a million students across the nation were tested for writing, spelling and numeracy skills in years three, five, seven and nine.

Today this year's NAPLAN scorecard is in. Robert Randall is the chief executive of the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority.

**ROBERT RANDALL:** This year's NAPLAN results, the tests of literacy and numeracy, are telling us that we've got pretty steady achievements compared to previous years, with some good news in year three reading, year five numeracy and year three writing.

We've got some good improvements there that we're pleased to see.

**BRIDGET BRENNAN:** In the seven years since NAPLAN testing was introduced, the curriculum authority says at a national level results have shown limited significant improvement across all year levels.

**ROBERT RANDALL:** I think what we would all like to see, mums and dads and teachers and everyone in the community would like to see some more gains over time - so compared to 2008 when we started NAPLAN and compared to last year.

Now this year's results show some areas, each state and territory has shown some improvement in some areas. But I think we'd all agree we'd like to see more improvement more broadly over longer periods of time.

**BRIDGET BRENNAN:** Like all other measurements, numeracy skills have been stable since 2008 in every year level except grade three. The Chief Scientist, Ian

Chubb, says he's concerned that at an international level Australia is falling behind in maths.

IAN CHUBB: I don't think we should flurry around about the second decimal point in these things but they're all indicating broad directions and those broad directions are not good for us.

And given that maths is so central to so much of what we do and so much of what we will need to do then there's a wake-up call for us. And we've got to do something about it and we've got to do something about it soon.

BRIDGET BRENNAN: Professor Chubb says science, technology, engineering and maths will eventually form the backbone of the Australian economy. Even though numeracy is already a core element of NAPLAN testing, he'd eventually like to see science included as a benchmark as well.

IAN CHUBB: Oh eventually I think it has to be. I think it is critical.

We really need to know how well our science is taught and our students are studying science, not because you want them all to be scientists but you want as many as your citizens as you can get to have some understanding of science and how it works. When that happens, we'll be much better informed- we'll make much better informed decisions and, in my view, that makes us a much better democracy.

BRIDGET BRENNAN: State and territory education ministers have agreed to develop a national strategy to improve STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) education in schools and the chief scientist says that's a positive step towards improving numeracy skills.

MICHAEL BRISSENDEN: Bridget Brennan reporting.

<http://www.abc.net.au/am/content/2015/s4287100.htm>