The recent decision taken by the education ministers of several states not to support the continuing progress of the national statements and profiles has caused a great deal of confusion among educators and the general public. Much of the confusion stems from the reporting of this decision in the popular press. In seeking a simplistic explanation (and a good headline) for the situation, the press (ably supported by information supplied by state political machines) zeroed in on the old ‘National Curriculum’ chestnut. In doing this it was simple enough to conjure up visions of some Napoleonic system of prescribed teaching and learning that was imposed centrally by the federal authorities. Couple this nonsense with assorted television appearances by politicians purporting to be talking about education but in fact playing party politics and academics with axes to grind and we have the distorted mess that was dished up to educators and parents alike.

No one who has been involved closely with the statements (in writing, refining, disseminating and trialing) will tell you that the process has been smooth or controversy free. However, the aim was not to produce iron clad curriculum programs that would be adopted by all states. The national statements are, and have always been, policy guidelines. The profiles are documents that are used to assist in the consistent reporting and recording of student progress. That enormous piece of the jigsaw in between — the actual curriculum itself — was always going to be something that states/systems and other authorities designed for themselves. So, no national curriculum, no tables at 9.30 a.m. across Australia, no diminishing of state’s rights to define the detail of their own curriculum structures. Of course there was and is always the hope that states, out of a common belief that consistency and quality across Australia are important things to achieve, might well design things cooperatively.

Whatever the case, the statements and profiles are still very much on the national agenda, with the documents likely to be published in the not too distant future.

The Technology Statement that our organisation as part of TEFA has worked with over the past couple of years, is likely to feature quite strongly in upcoming plans. Information technologies in particular will impact across and through all eight key areas.

Find out what is really happening in your state or territory. Ask some questions of your system. You will see that progress in the statements and profiles is still being made, albeit rather quietly in some places. The simple fact is that if we are to provide quality education across this country in a socially just and equitable manner then we must agree on some broad working parameters that can then be enhanced and enriched by local expertise. If we continue to make decisions in isolation, with no consideration for the broader picture and the greater good, then we fail to maximise our potential, we waste resources and we do a serious disservice to our client base — Australian parents and students.