

**PRESS RELEASE****DepEd, AusAid set new directions for the Basic Education Sector Transformation (BEST) program**

*PASIG CITY, March 23, 2017* – Department of Education (DepEd) key officials, representatives from the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), and implementing partners from the academe convened during the first Joint Technical Working Group (TWG) meeting of the Basic Education Sector Transformation (BEST) program at Ace Hotel in Pasig City.

The BEST program is a partnership between the governments of Australia and the Philippines, which aims to improve quality, access and governance of basic education. BEST is operationalized through two major components— (Component 1) Improving Teaching and Learning, and (Component 2) Strengthening Systems.

Going on its fourth year of implementation, BEST has had significant achievements in the areas of pre-service and in-service teacher training, education leadership management, curriculum and assessment, teaching and learning materials, education facilities, and context-specific learning systems under Component 1.

For Component 2, BEST contributes in the areas of evidence-based policy, planning and management, unified information systems, gender mainstreaming, and organizational development.

The first Joint TWG meet kicked off a series of planning and consultations to set the program's directions and key priorities for the remainder of 2017 and beyond. DepEd Assistant Secretary and BEST Executive Sponsor Nepomuceno Malaluan presided over the meeting.

"We will ensure that the priorities of the program are in accord with the current vision and agenda of DepEd, which is to provide quality, accessible, relevant and liberating basic education for all," Malaluan said, noting the continuing convergence of the strategic interests of the two countries and taking into consideration the new directions of the current administration.

Other Deped officials present at the event were Undersecretaries Jesus Mateo, Victoria Catibog and Alain Del Pascua, Assistant Secretary Revsee Escobedo, Bureau/Service Directors, and Regional Directors from the focus regions—Regions V, VI, VII, VIII and X, the National Capital Region (NCR) and Negros Island Region (NIR).

The event was also attended by some Australian Aid (AusAid) representatives headed by Australian Embassy First Secretary Felicity Lee.

BEST implementing partners include Cardno Emerging Markets Pty, Assessment Curriculum and Technology Research Centre (ACTRC), Philippine Business for Education (PBE), Philippine Business for Social Progress (PBSP), Commission on Higher Education (CHED) and Research Center for Teacher Quality (RCTQ).

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