

# Priorities and Future Directions for Educational Research



## Communiqué

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## **Educational researchers, peak bodies, professional associations and representatives of national education research agencies met to discuss the challenges and opportunities for Australian education research over the next decade.**

With a focus on enabling education research to deliver better and more equitable learning outcomes to all Australians—from early-childhood through school, vocational and higher education—the meeting covered justice and equitable outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People and disadvantaged groups; opportunities for research to better support the education workforce; and the need for a robust and connected national educational research capability.

## **JUSTICE, EQUITY AND EXCELLENCE FOR ALL**

Opportunity, benefit and participation in high quality education are not equally distributed across Australia, with location, socio-economic status, cultural and linguistic background having an outsized role. Complex, cross-jurisdictional and cross-sector policy and funding mechanisms create significant challenges, as do inconsistent regulatory frameworks and broader societal factors that detrimentally shape education practices. Roundtable participants agreed that more coordinated, cross-sectoral and cross-disciplinary research is needed to better understand the nature of these challenges and to guide and evaluate high-quality research-based interventions. Participants noted a particular opportunity to learn from Indigenous approaches to relationality of and within Country to enhance educational systems, as well as the need to advance educational self-determination and sovereignty for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People.

## **SKILLED AND RESILIENT WORKFORCE**

Committed, passionate and highly skilled teachers and educators are fundamental to Australian society. They are the professional workforce who prepare and educate children, young people and adults for their

futures, and with the right conditions and enablers, they can ensure every Australian has the best opportunity to thrive. However, demanding workloads across all sectors (often driven by burdensome administration, compliance and staff shortages) are creating untenable education workforce pressures and contributing to high attrition rates. These factors also have a significant impact on research capacity.

Participants discussed the need for research to better understand the configuration, design and organisation of educators' work, along with shared understanding of professional standards and ethics and the effects of changes to credentials. Other priorities included evaluation of innovative models of initial teacher education, valuing current educators (including greater access to in-service training), opportunities for former educators and skilled migration to address workforce shortages, and research on the impacts of AI technologies and digital transformation at all levels of education.

## **WORLD-CLASS, CONNECTED RESEARCH CAPABILITY**

Australian educational research has a long and proud history of driving innovation, outcomes and policy improvements that have benefited generations of Australians and contributed to our international standing as a prosperous, democratic society of knowledge, invention and ideas. To ensure continued success and reverse worrying down-turns in some learning indicators, we need to ensure current and future generations of children and young people benefit from the highest quality education possible, from early-childhood through to vocational, tertiary and professional learning. An effective research-policy nexus requires a strong and connected pipeline of scholarly excellence, built on rigorous research training. Critical to this aspiration will therefore be increasing support for educational and related social science research (capacity building, evaluation programs, targeted projects, national priorities, and large, connected centres of excellence), along with frameworks to enable better access and connections across research datasets, and nationally harmonised processes for institutional and individual participation in research.

# TOWARDS A DECADAL PLAN FOR AUSTRALIAN EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH

By 2035, our 5-year-olds will be 16; nearing the end of their schooling journey and preparing to enter the world of work and higher education. To give all children, adults and generations to come the best possible chance for success, **participants in the roundtable agreed to come together to develop a 10-year roadmap for the educational research field.** This plan will be developed over the coming year, supported by key educational research organisations, and consulting broadly with the research and educational sector. It is intended to be finalised for launch in the second half of 2025 after which it will provide valuable policy inputs and an agreed, high-level roadmap of the critical opportunities and priorities for researchers, funding bodies and policy makers going forward.

## ABOUT THE ROUNDTABLE

This roundtable was convened in response to concerns that despite deep roots, valuable expertise, and enormous potential for insights and knowledge to inform education policy, Australian education research is under-resourced relative to other fields and can struggle for visibility and impact. The program and invitation list were developed by a working group drawn from across the sector, and attendees brought expertise from the early childhood education and care and school sectors, initial teacher education, higher education, vocational and adult education, international education, and Indigenous education.



Roundtable participants in Melbourne.

## PARTICIPANTS

**Dr Ben Arnold**, Deakin University  
**Dr Naomi Barnes**, QUT; Australian Association for Research in Education (AARE)  
**Cindy Bin Tahal**, Academy of the Social Sciences in Australia  
**Prof. Tracey Bunda**, The University of Queensland  
**Assoc. Prof. Jennifer Clifton**, Australian Teacher Education Association (ATEA)  
**Assoc. Prof. Gwilym Croucher**, The University of Melbourne  
**Dr Jenny Donovan**, Australian Education Research Organisation  
**Dr Daniel Edwards**, Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER)  
**Prof. Suzy Edwards**, Australian Catholic University  
**Dr Al Fricker**, NIKERI Institute, Deakin University  
**Prof. Jenny Gore AM FASSA**, University of Newcastle; AARE  
**Jonathan Guy**, Australian Education Union  
**Assoc. Prof. Steven Hodge**, Griffith Institute for Educational Research  
**Prof. Jo Lampert**, Monash University  
**Sarah Langman**, Australian Catholic University; AARE  
**Dr Joy de Leo**, National Centre for Vocational Education Research  
**Assoc. Prof. Kevin Lowe**, Scientia Indigenous Fellow, University of NSW  
**Prof. Catherine Manathunga**, University of the Sunshine Coast; Community of Associate Deans Research in Education (cADRE)  
**Dr Geoff Masters AO**, ACER  
**Prof. Barry McGaw AO FASSA**, Academy of the Social Sciences in Australia; The University of Melbourne  
**Prof. Nicole Mockler**, The University of Sydney  
**Dr Kate O'Connor**, La Trobe University  
**Samantha Page**, Early Childhood Australia  
**Dr Marg Rogers**, The University of New England, Manna Institute  
**Assoc. Prof. Louisa Tomas Engel**, James Cook University; cADRE  
**Prof. Ly Tran**, Deakin University  
**Assoc. Prof. Rebecca Walker**, Curtin University  
**Prof. Helen Watt FASSA**, The University of Sydney  
**Dr Sarah Wight**, Early Childhood Australia  
**Assoc. Prof. Joel Windle**, University of South Australia; AARE  
**Prof. Annette Woods**, AARE; QUT.

## CONVENORS

**Prof. Jill Blackmore AM FASSA**, President, Australian Association of University Professors; Deakin University; AARE  
**Prof. Julie McLeod FASSA**, President, AARE; The University of Melbourne  
**Dr Chris Hatherly**, CEO, Academy of the Social Sciences in Australia.

