# AERO's submission to the Productivity Commission on building a skilled and adaptable workforce

September 2025

AERO welcomes the Productivity Commission's focus on the role of education in building a skilled and adaptable workforce, and the importance of all students developing the foundational knowledge needed to participate in a growing Australian economy.

AERO would like to thank the Productivity Commission for the opportunity to provide a submission in response to the *Building a skilled and adaptable workforce - Interim report*.

The Australian Education Research Organisation (AERO) is Australia's independent education evidence body. AERO's vision is for Australia to achieve excellence and equity in educational outcomes for all children and young people through effective use of evidence in policy and practice. In support of this vision, AERO:

- generates high-quality evidence
- presents high-quality evidence that is relevant, accessible and useable
- promotes the adoption and effective implementation of evidence in practice and policy.

The national education architecture will play a critical role in supporting the delivery of many initiatives identified in this interim report, and AERO stands ready to support this important work.

## High-quality resources to support effective teaching practices

AERO welcomes the Productivity Commission's focus on improving student outcomes through supporting all teachers and schools to access high-quality resources that support evidence-based teaching practices.

Nearly 1 in 5 Australian students start secondary school at or below minimum standards for literacy or numeracy (AERO, 2024a). This puts them at least 3 years behind their peers. As they progress through secondary school, students who have not developed foundational literacy and numeracy skills will struggle to participate in classes that require them to engage with more complex materials and topics.

There is clear evidence that the quality of teaching has the greatest impact on students' literacy and numeracy outcomes. Evidence-based teaching practices, such as

those described in AERO's model of learning and teaching, paired with the systemic provision of additional supports for students who have fallen behind in their learning, are the most effective and efficient ways to maximise student learning (AERO, 2023; Australian Government, 2023, de Bruin et al., 2023).

Supporting schools and teachers to implement evidence-based practices is complex and multifaceted work. Building a consistent understanding of what it takes to support teachers to change and sustain their practice is critical to successful implementation at scale. One implementation strategy shown to be a key support for quality teaching is access to high-quality, evidence-based and classroom-ready resources (AERO, 2024b).

These resources should be easy to access and use, provide comprehensive and detailed guidance, integrate formative assessment practices to check for understanding and support the implementation of evidence-based pedagogy (Hunter & Haywood, 2023).

Widespread use of quality resources can reduce variation in what students are taught, support staff planning and encourage professional development (Ashbee, 2021). This enables greater consistency in how the curriculum is delivered within schools and across the wider education system. The availability of quality resources also frees up teachers' time, which could instead be used to develop subject knowledge and undertake pedagogy planning.

AERO's work with Ochre Education in 2022 provides an example of lesson planning and sequencing of curriculum content to support the use of effective, evidence-based practices and address the learning expected in the Australian curriculum.

## Aligning educational technology with evidence-based teaching practices

AERO welcomes a focus on equitable access to educational technology (edtech) and artificial intelligence (AI) in the interim report. Edtech, including generative AI (GenAI) tools, has the potential to enhance learning outcomes for all students – but it also comes with risks.

AERO recognises the considerable variation in quality, transparency, and alignment of edtech and GenAI tools with evidence-based teaching practices. As the market for digital tools expands rapidly, it is important to understand the extent to which edtech and GenAI can enhance teaching and learning and help address persistent inequities.

AERO notes the Productivity Commission's acknowledgement that GenAI tools and the way they are trained have particular implications for First Nations people. AERO recognises the importance upholding Indigenous Data Sovereignty, which protects the rights of First Nations people to govern the collection, application and ownership of data and information relating to them. When considering the implications of GenAI and edtech for First Nations communities, AERO encourages an approach that privileges First Nations stakeholders and Indigenous Data Sovereignty principles at every stage, to ensure First Nations perspectives and priorities guide processes and outcomes.

AERO also notes the different approaches being taken across Australia with respect to edtech and GenAI for both students and teachers, and strongly supports any initiatives that ensure systems, schools and teachers can make informed choices about the adoption and effective use of edtech that supports student learning. The emerging evidence on edtech and GenAI tools should inform decisions about their use by systems, schools, teachers and students, alongside ongoing monitoring and evaluation of the use and impact of edtech and GenAI tools on teaching and learning in Australia.

Through our partnership with Education Services Australia (ESA), AERO is supporting the alignment of edtech tools with the evidence on effective teaching practices through progressing work on a national quality assurance education standards. The quality assurance education standards have been developed with a primary focus on supporting effective student learning in Australian classrooms. It will complement ESA's Safer Technologies 4 Schools (ST4S) and other initiatives to assure schools and systems about which products are safe, responsible and educationally effective.

## References

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