

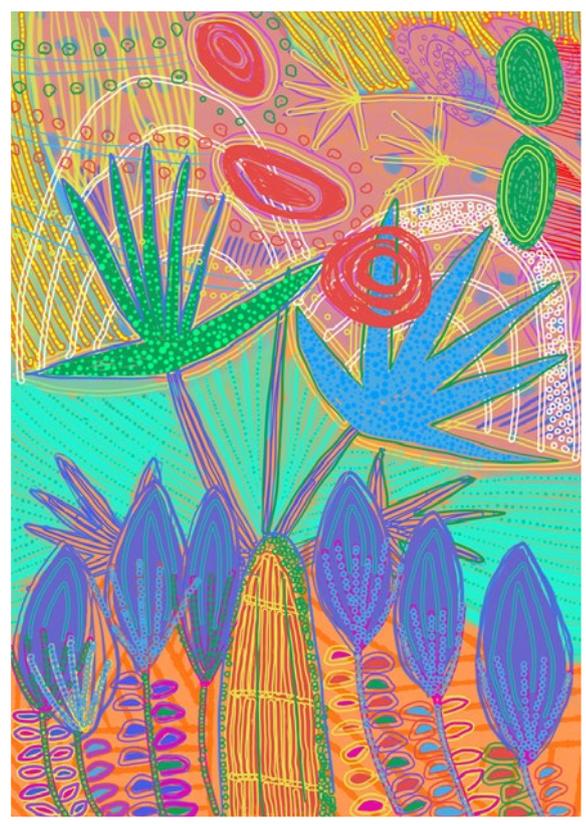


Strategic plan
2025–2027



The Australian Education Research Organisation (AERO) acknowledges Traditional Owners and Custodians of Country throughout Australia, recognises their continuing connection to land, waters and community, and pays respects to Elders past and present.

AERO is committed to improving education outcomes for First Nations children and young people through the implementation of its First Nations Charter. This strategic commitment reinforces AERO's dedication to integrating First Nations knowledges and perspectives within our research methodologies, strategic planning and operational processes. By prioritising these perspectives, AERO aims to enhance the quality and relevance of educational research, supporting the development of culturally informed education practice and policy.



Artist's statement

The artwork represents the journey of life and our connection to language, spirituality, food, shelter, plants and water. It tells the story of the universe.

In the centre is the cabbage palm, *ma peal*, which is central to our lives. My knowledge of *ma peal* comes from the bush classroom, taught to me by my mother, grandmother and great-grandmother, who understood the interconnectivity of their surroundings.

This artwork is a declaration of my Country and illustrates my rights to its ownership, to its freshwater and saltwater estates, and all the land from Staaten to Nassau River and east to Staaten River National Park.

Artist biography

Ma Wanjibung Pukun (English name, Shaun Edwards)

Wanjibung is a Traditional Owner and leader of the Kokoberrin peoples of western Cape York Peninsular. He is an established visual and cultural artist and the founder of Wildbarra clothing company.

Wanjibung's art is about his homeland, its creation and its story. His work is featured in such collections as the Art Gallery of NSW, ANU, Cairns Regional Art Gallery, and many private institutions.

Wanjibung was the Director of Opposition Research of the Give Us a Go Campaign, the founder of the Kowanyama Baby Festival, and co-founder and spokesperson for the Indigenous Environment Foundation. In 2020, he received a cultural award as part of the Australia Day acknowledgements. He holds a Master of Philosophy in Public Health (University of Sydney) and is completing a PhD in Visual Anthropology.



Chair's foreword

All children and young people have the capacity to learn and to succeed.

Australia has high expectations about what our children and young people can achieve and what our education system should offer them.

The Mparntwe Declaration sets out an ambitious vision for an Australian education system that promotes excellence and equity and where all young Australians become confident and creative individuals, successful lifelong learners and active and informed members of the community.

AERO was established by Australia's Commonwealth, State and Territory Education Ministers to share and contribute towards this vision, recognising that evidence offers a path to ensure Australia's education effort and investment are focused where they are most likely to make the biggest difference to these outcomes.

The specific purpose given to AERO in its Constitution is to position Australia's educators at the forefront of education research to improve learning outcomes for all children and young people. This means ensuring educators, teachers and service and school leaders have access to relevant, engaging, high-quality evidence that supports their work. But for them to implement that evidence, a range of enabling conditions must be present, and these can only be provided at scale and equitably by policymakers. AERO's work is strengthened through its close partnerships with practitioners, leaders and policymakers.



The specific purpose given to AERO in its Constitution is to position Australia's educators at the forefront of education research to improve learning outcomes for all children and young people.

AERO is uniquely positioned for this work. Sitting within the Australian education architecture, its proximity to system and sector actors helps it to identify needs and provide direct support, cognisant of the processes that are required for change at scale. Yet the design and conduct of AERO's work and its findings are independent, ensuring both governments and the education community can have confidence that AERO's advice is objective and trustworthy.

AERO's impact depends on partnerships with those who can take evidence-based practice and policy to scale. Having built its capability and a library of resources through its first three years, AERO has developed this second Strategic Plan with a recurring theme of enhancing its partnerships to ensure the work's value is maximised.

AERO's Board thanks Education Ministers for their investment in AERO and is proud of the foundations established over the past three years. AERO looks forward to working with our partners through this next Strategic Plan towards the education goals that we all share for our children and young people.

Dr Lisa O'Brien AM
Chair

On behalf of AERO Board Directors:

Emeritus Professor Colleen Hayward AM,
Deputy Chair

Dr Emma Burns

Ms Belinda Giudice

Dr Anne Kennedy

Professor Leslie Loble AM

Dr Robyn Mildon

Mr Barry Sandison



CEO's foreword

It has been an exciting first three years at AERO.

We have generated and synthesised evidence to produce and publish over 250 research reports and resources addressing 13 priority areas across three Research Agendas. We have worked closely with a growing network of partners and stakeholders across the early childhood education and care (ECEC) and school sectors, as well as the research community, to enable research to be undertaken and to support the use of its insights.

We have described standards of evidence, created a First Nations Charter, developed a research and governance ethics framework and developed quality assurance and user-testing mechanisms to ensure the rigour and usability of our work.

And we have delivered this work while establishing our unique, online organisation, assembling a talented, diverse team who live and work all over Australia.

In three years, we have learned a great deal from our direct engagement with practitioners in schools and early childhood settings. It is a joy and privilege of the role that I am welcomed into ECEC services and schools to observe first-hand the impact of our work playing out. From the suburbs of Sydney to the remoteness of Groote Eylandt, I have watched teachers and educators confidently using the practices that evidence tells us will improve the education outcomes of their children and students. It is inspiring to witness learning happen – to see students who are completely engaged in the process, who feel safe in their learning environment and who enjoy the success and thrill of gaining new knowledge.

In our next three years, AERO will shift emphasis towards greater support for implementation of the evidence-based approaches that work. Without effective implementation, research and evidence-based practices languish as good ideas on a website. Support for implementation can take many forms, from researching implementation approaches to providing



It is inspiring to witness learning happen – to see students who are completely engaged in the process, who feel safe in their learning environment and who enjoy the success and thrill of gaining new knowledge.

advice about effective implementation to services, schools and systems. AERO will seek to mobilise the evidence by working with our education partners.

AERO has identified that certain focus areas hold the greatest potential for contributing to excellence and equity in education outcomes. Quality ECEC strengthens children's learning and development with far-reaching consequences for excellence and equity. Greater uptake of evidence-based teaching practice improves learning outcomes in schools. And system-level policy decisions are critical to enable scaling and equitable benefit from evidence-based approaches. AERO's goals and key initiatives for the next three years are centred on these three focus areas. Across each of these areas, the learning experiences, aspirations and needs of students experiencing disadvantage, disability or both will be a constant priority.

Impact on excellence and equity is the objective of all the work we do. AERO's evidence generation, presentation and support for adoption and effective implementation can make a useful contribution towards positive change, but impact will only be achieved if AERO's work is used by those working in or with services and schools. Our work is enabled by the partnerships we have established across ECEC and schooling, and it is only through these partnerships that we will achieve real impact. AERO is excited to further embed our partnerships with our stakeholders over the next three years. We recognise our role in making this happen through being transparent in our work, actively encouraging feedback and collaboration and seeking to listen and respond to our stakeholders' needs. We encourage all who work in education to join in the effort to improve learning through effective use of evidence.

Dr Jenny Donovan
Chief Executive Officer

Our vision

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.

Our purpose

AERO's purpose is to position Australia's educators at the forefront of education research to improve learning outcomes for all children and young people.

To achieve this purpose, AERO:



generates high-quality evidence

AERO works with policymakers and other actors across the ECEC and school sectors to identify needs and conduct new research on topics likely to have the highest impact on learning outcomes. Over its first three years, AERO has built capacity to conduct rigorous and ethical research, conducted pioneering data analysis and established original primary research projects in partnership with services, schools, systems and sectors.



presents high-quality evidence that is relevant, accessible and useable

AERO reviews existing research and presents high-quality evidence in ways that support its use by busy practitioners, leaders and policymakers. Over its first three years, AERO has published a considerable library of resources, making available high-quality evidence on the topics listed in its first three Research Agendas.



promotes the adoption and effective implementation of evidence in practice and policy

Evidence can be generated and translated, but it will not make an impact unless it is also adopted and implemented. AERO does not have direct responsibility for ECEC services or schools, but as Australia's national education evidence institute, AERO undertakes research into the best ways to implement evidence-based practice in ECEC services and schools. AERO also offers support to our partners as they work through the design and implementation of evidence-based practice and policy in their own settings.

The evidence that AERO has generated and presented over its first three years provides a foundation for AERO to increase support for its adoption and effective implementation over the next three years.

Our goals and initiatives for 2025–27

AERO has chosen three focus areas where its work to date has identified the greatest potential for impact.



ECEC offers the chance to enable *excellence and equity right from the start*. Young children's learning, development and wellbeing outcomes are enhanced by access to high-quality ECEC. AERO aims to build and share the evidence base about what works, for whom and in what circumstances, to support educators, teachers, service leaders and policymakers in their efforts to provide equitable, accessible and responsive ECEC programs. AERO will also work to enhance understanding between the ECEC and school sectors to strengthen continuity of learning and development. In recognition of its importance within Australia's education system and the diverse and dispersed composition of the sector, ECEC becomes a standalone focus for AERO to ensure responsiveness to its particular sector requirements, with an emphasis on policy, practice and implementation.

Focus on equity: AERO will prioritise generating, presenting and promoting adoption of evidence that supports participation and learning of children experiencing disadvantage in high-quality ECEC.



Teaching practice in schools offers the *most direct means available to improve learning outcomes*. Teaching practice is a variable within schools' influence. There is a clear, robust and extensive evidence base on the teaching practices that best support all students to learn, including practices that foster engagement and equity within diverse classrooms and that identify additional supports students may need. AERO has brought these practices together in its learning and teaching model, which provides a foundation for its next initiatives in this area.

Focus on equity: The practices in AERO's learning and teaching model enhance equity within the classroom by ensuring all students experience effective, inclusive teaching and receive additional supports they may need.

Evidence for policymakers is the means to *achieve scale and to ensure equity across diverse settings*. AERO has built its capacity to provide evidence in support of national policy priorities, both through the use of data to identify trends and evaluate approaches, and through original primary research. AERO has also built capacity to work with and support partners in planning the implementation of evidence-based policies and programs. AERO will work with Ministers and policymakers to jointly prioritise the national policy questions on which it can best contribute.

Focus on equity: AERO will bring an equity lens to all policy priorities it works on and seek a particular focus on policy priorities that can enhance equity across diverse education settings.

2025–27 goals

Vision

Excellence and equity in education outcomes for all children and young people through effective use of evidence.

Purpose

AERO's purpose is to position Australia's educators at the forefront of education research to improve learning outcomes for all children and young people. To achieve this purpose, 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.

For excellence and equity right from the start

For improved learning via the most direct means available

For scale and equity across diverse settings

Goals



Increase knowledge about, and effective use of, evidence-based practice and policy in ECEC



Increase effective use of evidence-based teaching practice in schools



Increase availability and accessibility of high-quality evidence for high-impact schools policy decisions

Initiatives

Present evidence on practices that maximise all children's learning and development and improve continuity across the early years

Generate evidence on factors that contribute to quality and equity in ECEC services to support all children's learning and development

Promote adoption by working with partners to support implementation of evidence-based practices and policy

Present a complete suite of resources explaining and demonstrating evidence-based teaching practices, including practices that foster engagement and equity within diverse classrooms and identify additional supports students may need

Generate evidence on effective implementation of evidence-based teaching practice at both system and school levels

Promote adoption by working with partners to support implementation of evidence-based teaching practice

Generate evidence through data analysis and the design of pioneering data methodologies to identify trends, challenges and opportunities for high-impact policymaking

Generate evidence through primary research projects on jointly prioritised national policy questions in partnership with systems and schools

Promote adoption by working with partners to provide advice and support for evidence-based policymaking and policy implementation

Contribute to the generation of more and higher quality policy-relevant evidence by enhancing the national education research infrastructure

Our partners

Partnerships are critical to every aspect of AERO's work and the impact this work will have.

AERO works with **Education Ministers and senior officials** to prioritise directions and topics for AERO's work through its three-year Strategic Plan and annual Research Agenda, as well as to enable research on those priorities through appropriate access to data, services and schools.

AERO believes that the knowledge of **First Nations communities** will strengthen outcomes for First Nations children and young people, and for the ECEC and school sectors as a whole. AERO has developed its First Nations Expert Reference Group to give voice to knowledge held across First Nations communities and has built its own expert First Nations team to lead work internally.

AERO works with **educators, teachers and service leaders** in ECEC services and with **teachers and leaders** in schools to understand the strengths they already bring and the challenges they face. This collaboration informs the topics AERO works on, the resources it produces and its guidance on implementation.

AERO recognises that **ECEC providers, school systems and school sectors** are best placed to ensure the conditions for success in services and schools. AERO seeks to ensure its core work responds to the collective needs of these partners, is produced with their maximum engagement and can be used by them in their contexts to support improvement.

AERO will also enhance its ability to respond in an agile way to the individual evidence needs of these partners through commissioned work.

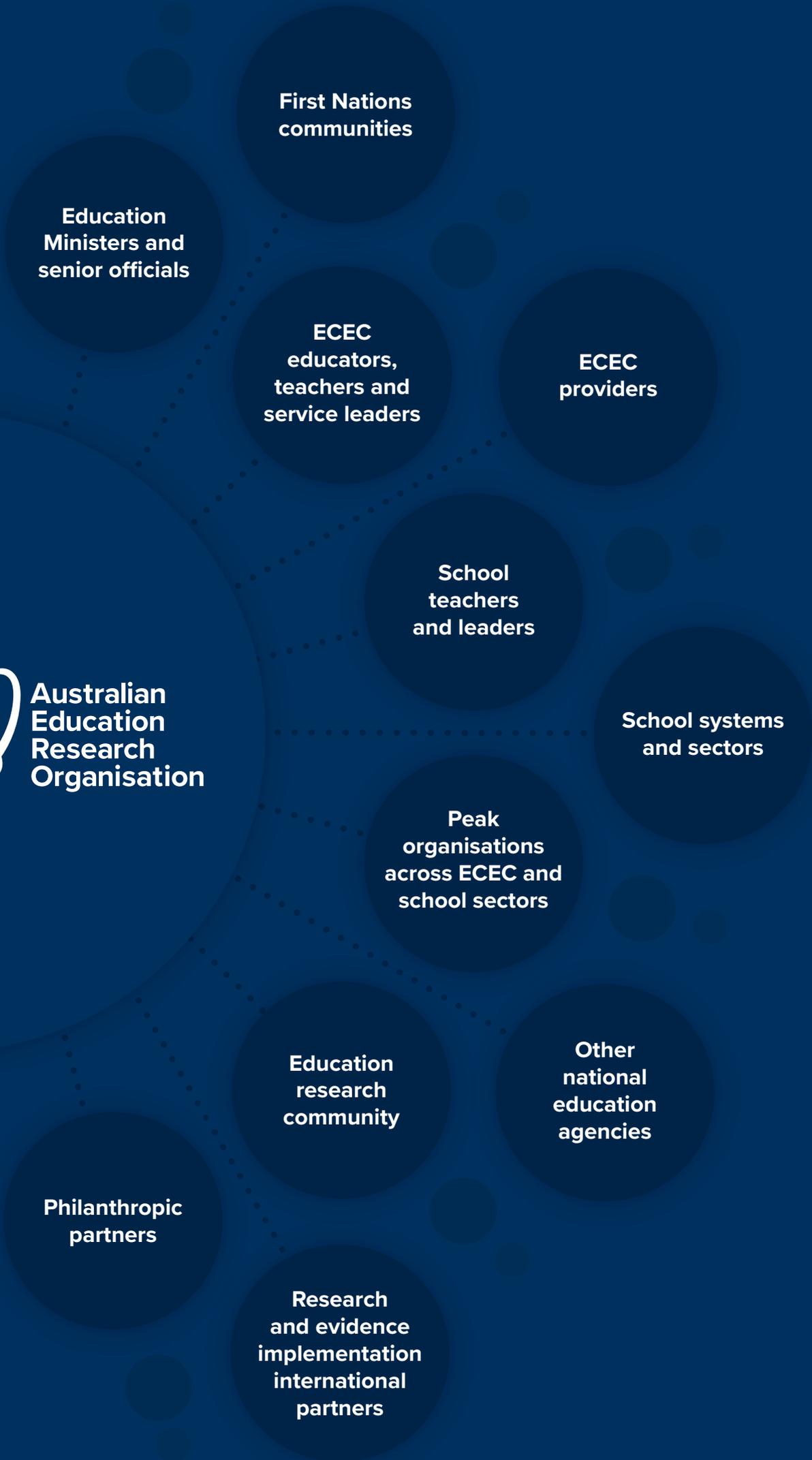
AERO works with **peak organisations** across the ECEC and school sectors to understand their needs and, where possible, support their programs and advocacy.

AERO collaborates with other **agencies** in the national education architecture where it can complement or support the delivery of their functions with high-quality evidence.

AERO will continue to build links across the education **research community**, working with partner organisations to deliver rigorous, relevant and ethical research.

AERO will continue to engage with **international partners** in both research and evidence implementation organisations to ensure its work is informed by the latest and most advanced insights in these fields.

AERO will work with **philanthropic partners** to expand the work it can do on issues of national priority and to advance the evidence and momentum for change.





Our values

AERO's team and partnerships are guided by our values:

Ambition

We have an unwavering commitment to achieving excellence and equity in Australian education.

Collaboration

We work with others to expand the depth, breadth and impact of education evidence.

Rigour

We apply relentless attention and care to ensure our work is of the highest standard.

Diversity and inclusivity

We seek and learn from difference of background, opinion and experience. We ensure the many contexts and experiences of Australian education are embedded in our work.

Transparency and integrity

We build trust by being honest, sharing our work and supporting new ideas. We welcome scrutiny to enhance the integrity of our processes.

Monitoring our progress

AERO's Strategic Plan outlines the role AERO plays in the broad education system. AERO's work will only have impact at scale if it is useful to, and used by, others across the ECEC and school sectors. With many actors in the complex education system, tracking AERO's contribution to improvement in learning outcomes is challenging. Within this context, AERO ensures that its work is high quality through self review mechanisms that include external views, monitors measures of outputs, and reports on its performance.

Self-review mechanisms: AERO has published its Standards of Evidence, which set out AERO's position on what constitutes rigorous and relevant evidence, and provide a basis for consistent, transparent decisions regarding research design and interpretation. Original research and data analysis are subject to a research governance and ethics framework, with approval by a qualified Human Research Ethics Committee where appropriate. Projects are overseen by advisory groups, comprising system and sector representatives, practitioners and other experts in fields such as pedagogy and data analytics, ensuring diverse views are considered. These groups provide guidance on the direction of projects and feedback on outputs, and AERO conducts annual surveys of members to understand their experience of participation, engagement with AERO's work and any opportunities to improve. Reports and resources are subject to expert review for rigour, and resources intended for a teacher audience are subject to user testing for relevance and accessibility.

Output and outcome monitoring: AERO monitors progress using activity measures, such as number of publications, and lead indicators of effectiveness, such as website analytics, newsletter subscribers and the reach of social media channels, as well as perceptions of AERO's work among its intended audiences. AERO documents the increasing number of instances of influence on practice and decision-making at school, system and national levels, and evidence of AERO's growing contribution to national conversations about education. As it continues to mature, AERO will consider additional indicators that could enable better measurement of its effectiveness.

Performance reporting: To ensure transparency and accountability to its owners, AERO provides Ministers with quarterly reports that provide updates on progress against the projects identified in our annual work plan, including timeframes, external contractors, outputs and next steps. The reports also include reflections on the effectiveness of projects as they are completed, drawing on measures available.





For more information visit
edresearch.edu.au

140425.CH.AAV1

