



Australian Government



# BUILDING A BETTER AND FAIRER EDUCATION SYSTEM



July 2025

The Australian Government acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the lands and waters on which Australians live, work and study, and pays respects to their Elders, past and present. Australia's First Nations peoples are the custodians of the world's oldest continuous cultures of learning and the passing down of knowledge. The Australian Government also acknowledges the determination of First Nations leaders over generations to ensure that higher education is accessible to First Nations people, reflects knowledges and law, and supports research led by First Nations people about their community, land and culture.



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The document must be attributed as *Building a Better and Fairer Education System*.

Image on page 2: The Hon Jason Clare MP, Minister for Education and students from Moulden Park Primary school in the Northern Territory. Source: Supplied.

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## Minister's foreword – Building a better and fairer education system

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### A good education changes lives, and a good education system changes countries.

The big reforms of Bob Hawke and Paul Keating weren't just Super, Medicare or floating the dollar.

Under their leadership, the percentage of people who finished high school basically doubled. From 40% to almost 80%. That was nation changing.

It was real microeconomic reform.

We're a stronger, wealthier and better country today than we were back when I was young. Education is one of the reasons for that.

It's the fuel in the tank. But the Universities Accord tells us that the tank is only half full.

That there is more we have to do.

That by the middle of this century we are going to need a workforce where 80% haven't just finished school, but they also have a trade certificate, or a diploma, or a university degree.

That's a big change.

And that means real and ongoing reforms, to build the education system Australia needs.

That's why the Albanese Government has been driving reforms over the past three years in early education, in school education and in tertiary education.

Reforms that include:

- cutting the cost of early education and care for around one million families
- fixing the funding of our public schools and tying that funding to real reform, and
- cutting student debt by a further 20% for around 3 million students and graduates.

These reforms and others outlined in this document are all about building a better and fairer education system where more Australians benefit from a quality education.

**The Hon Jason Clare MP**

Minister for Education



## More affordable early childhood education and care



For a family earning \$168,000, with one child in care 30 hours a week and paying \$13.90 per hour, **out of pocket costs are around \$7,440 lower** than they otherwise would be over the last 2 years.



**15% pay rise** for early education and care workers.



About 100,000 families will be **entitled to additional hours** of subsidised care under the **3 Day Guarantee** from 1 January 2026.



## More funding for schools and more teachers in the pipeline



\$16.5 billion in additional funding to **fully fund all public schools** over the next 10 financial years tied to real and practical reforms.



**More teachers in the pipeline** with preliminary data showing the number of domestic students commencing a teaching degree this year is up 11%<sup>1</sup> from the same time in 2024. Reforms to teacher training start on 1 January 2026.



**Paid prac** for teaching students to help with cost of placements.



## More students going to university, less student debt, and more study hubs across Australia



**More Australians are enrolling in university**, with preliminary data showing domestic undergraduate and postgraduate starters are up 3% from last year. And more than 14,000 students have already taken up Fee-Free Uni Ready courses in 2025.



**More than double the number of University Study Hubs** across Australia from 34 to 69. Twenty more in regional Australia and 15 in our outer suburbs.



Student debt is **being cut by 20% for around 3 million Australians**. Combined with the changes made to indexation last year this will cut student debt by around \$20 billion.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Preliminary data extracted from the Tertiary Collection of Student Information May 2025. Full year data may differ.

<sup>2</sup> Subject to the passage of legislation.

# Reforming the entire education system to build a better and fairer Australia

Over the past 3 years, the Government has implemented reforms across the entire education system – in early education, school education and in tertiary education. The focus has been on expanding opportunities for more Australians to get a great education. This transformation will remain a high priority and focus.



## Supporting children and families through early childhood education and care (ECEC)

Today more than 1.6 million children from more than a million families are attending more than 15,000 approved ECEC services, receiving \$15.4 billion in subsidy payments. This is preparing children for school and supporting families, particularly women, to re-engage in work or learning during children's early years.

### This means:

#### 1 A better future

Children who attend ECEC are almost 1.7 times more likely to be school-ready (assessed as being on track across all 5 Australian Early Development Census domains) compared to children who do not attend<sup>3</sup>.

#### 2 Lower fees

The Cheaper Child Care reforms have cut out-of-pocket costs for more than one million families.

#### 3 Better pay for educators

The worker retention payment is supporting a 15% wage increase over 2 years.

3 2024 Australian Early Development Census (AEDC) data.

## Investing in school education to improve student outcomes

In 2025, the Australian Government is investing \$31.1 billion in recurrent funding to 9,634 Australian schools to provide 4,119,064 full-time students with a great education to prepare them for the future.

### This means:

- 1 More completions**  
Lifting children out of the lowest NAPLAN level will make them almost 30% more likely to finish school<sup>4</sup>.
- 2 Higher lifetime incomes**  
Finishing Year 12 increases a person's expected lifetime income by 20%, compared to those not finishing school<sup>5</sup>.
- 3 More opportunities**  
Doing well at school makes students more likely to pursue tertiary education.
- 4 National benefits**  
Increasing the proportion of students who receive a Year 12 certificate by 7.5 percentage points by 2030 is a central goal of the Better and Fairer Schools Agreement (BFSA). Achieving this would add an estimated \$65 billion (in today's dollars) to the economy over the period to 2050<sup>6</sup> and also help achieve the national 80% tertiary attainment target that has been set.

4 Department of Education analysis (unpublished), 2025.

5 Department of Education analysis (unpublished), 2025.

6 Australian Universities Accord: 2024–25 Budget Summary.

## Contributing to the prosperity of the nation through higher education

The Government is investing an extra \$6.7 billion to deliver major structural reforms to help more Australians get a university qualification, as recommended by the Australian Universities Accord. The Government is also fostering innovation in the sector through a \$20 billion commitment to research.

### This means:

- 1 More Australians with a tertiary qualification**  
Meeting the 80% tertiary attainment target would add an estimated \$240 billion (in today's dollars) to the economy over the period to 2050<sup>7</sup>.
- 2 Potential to earn higher incomes**  
Achieving a bachelor's degree increases a person's expected lifetime income by 30%<sup>8</sup>, compared to finishing school and not doing further study.
- 3 Creating the jobs of the future**  
University research will lead to more jobs in exciting, high-growth areas such as medical research, information and communication technology and transport.

7 Australian Universities Accord: 2024–25 Budget Summary.

8 Department of Education analysis (unpublished), 2025.





## Building a universal early childhood education and care system

We are building a truly universal early childhood education and care (ECEC) system by making it more affordable, widening access and investing in its workforce.

### Cheaper Child Care

In July 2023, changes to the Child Care Subsidy (CCS) brought costs down for more than one million families – by lifting the maximum CCS rate to 90% for families earning \$80,000 or less and increasing subsidy rates for families earning less than \$530,000.

As a result, for a family earning \$168,000, with one child in care 30 hours a week and paying \$13.90 per hour, out of pocket costs are around \$7,440 lower than they otherwise would be over the last 2 years.

### Building the early education workforce

In 2023, the Government introduced a \$72.4 million ECEC workforce package of:

- \$34.4 million to provide professional development opportunities for up to 75,000 early childhood educators
- \$33.1 million to support up to 6,000 educators to complete their professional studies, and
- \$4.8 million to help up to 2,000 educators or students complete placements required for their qualifications.

As at February 2025, about 270,100 people worked as child carers, early childhood teachers, or centre managers in early childhood education – an increase of 48,300 since May 2022.



## Worker retention payment

To further strengthen ECEC workforce supply, the Government is investing \$3.6 billion to support a 15% wage increase over 2 years.

Under the worker retention payment, all eligible ECEC providers can apply for grants to help them retain and attract employees.

The first grants to services supporting a 10% pay rise above the award rate were received by eligible ECEC workers in December 2024, with a further 5% increase due in December 2025.

To receive the worker retention payment, providers must limit fee increases – to no more than 4.4% over 12 months from August 2024, and to no more than 4.2% over 12 months from August 2025 – to ensure workers can be paid fairly without costs being passed on to families.

Since the worker retention payment was announced in August 2024, internet vacancies for ECEC workers have fallen by more than 21%.<sup>9</sup>

## 3 Day Guarantee

The Productivity Commission's 2024 report, *A path to universal early childhood education and care*<sup>10</sup>, found those children and families most likely to benefit from ECEC are often the least likely to attend.

To tackle this, the Australian Government is replacing the CCS Activity Test with a guarantee of at least 3 days of subsidised ECEC each week. This is a significant step towards creating a universal ECEC system for Australian families.

Under the scheme, from January 2026:

- all CCS-eligible families will be entitled to at least 72 hours of subsidised ECEC a fortnight (3 days a week), and
- First Nations children will be eligible for 100 hours of subsidised ECEC a fortnight.

As well as helping children become school-ready, the 3 Day Guarantee will provide cost-of-living relief to

around 66,700 families, with more than 100,000 families eligible for additional hours of subsidised care.

For example, a family that earns \$86,000, with one child enrolled in ECEC 3 days per week, one parent working full-time and the other 6 hours per fortnight, currently gets no subsidised hours of care for their child. Under the 3 Day Guarantee, all 3 days will be subsidised – which could save them up to \$440 a week.

## Building Early Education Fund

The Government is investing \$1 billion through the Building Early Education Fund to build and expand high-quality ECEC centres in areas of need, including in the outer suburbs and in regional Australia. This is comprised of:

- \$500 million in targeted capital grants, focusing on not-for-profit ECEC providers and state and local government providers to help fund new services and increase the capacity of existing services
- \$500 million in the Contingency Reserve for future Commonwealth investments in owning and leasing a portfolio of ECEC centres, and
- with \$2.3 million over 2 years to undertake a business case to inform the design of the portfolio of ECEC centres.

## Service delivery prices

In working towards universal early education, the Government is investing \$10.4 million to develop data on the fair cost of quality ECEC services. This will help guide future funding decisions.

## Quality and safety

The Government is strengthening safety and quality in early education, including by:

- reducing reporting of allegations, complaints or incidents of physical or sexual abuse from 7 days to 24 hours
- restricting personal devices in services, and
- banning vapes.

The Government will soon introduce new laws to strengthen Commonwealth regulatory and enforcement powers to deal with providers that put profit over quality and child safety at risk.

<sup>9</sup> Jobs and Skills Australia, Labour Market Insights, Internet Vacancy Index, April 2025.

<sup>10</sup> Productivity Commission, *A path to universal early childhood education and care*. 28 June 2024.



## Fully and fairly funding Australia's schools

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We are putting every school in Australia on the path to full and fair funding. This will see the biggest new investment yet in public education by an Australian Government, worth about \$16.5 billion over the next decade. It will also see the biggest reforms to our schools in decades.

The 2011 Gonski review of school education set out a formula to properly fund our schools based on need. It recommended the establishment of a Schooling Resource Standard (SRS) and needs-based funding for *all* Australian schools.

Outside of the Australian Capital Territory, no public school system in any other jurisdiction has been funded at 100% of the SRS funding or on a path to get there.

Until now.

### Better and fairer school funding

Agreement has now been reached with every jurisdiction to put public school systems on track to be funded to 100% of the SRS.

The agreements deliver significant additional funding for public schools in return for implementing agreed reforms to improve student outcomes. These agreements are the *Better and Fairer Schools Agreement 2025–2034 – Full and Fair Funding* (Full and Fair Funding Agreement) and the *Better and Fairer Schools Agreement 2025–2034* (BFSA).

Under the 10-year Full and Fair Funding Agreement, the Australian Government will provide up to an additional 5% of the SRS to all public schools in New South Wales,

Victoria, Queensland, South Australia, Western Australia, Tasmania and the Australian Capital Territory. This will lift the Australian Government's contribution to 25% of the SRS by 2034.

And under the BFSA, public schools in the Northern Territory are now on a path to 100% of the SRS, with a 40% SRS contribution from the Commonwealth.

This is not a blank cheque.

The funding is tied to implementing reforms to help students *catch up, keep up and finish school* and includes small group tutoring, year 1 phonics checks, and early years of schooling numeracy checks.

These reforms will help every child get a great start in life and make the most of every school learning opportunity through:

- more individualised support for students
- greater use of evidence-based teaching practices, and
- more mental health support in schools.

The agreements set out realistic yet ambitious targets to track progress against the reforms. These targets help us better understand how the combined efforts of governments, school systems, and approved authorities are improving outcomes for both students and educators.

As part of the Full and Fair Funding Agreement, all jurisdictions, where relevant, will remove the provision allowing them to claim 4% of state school funding for indirect school costs such as capital depreciation. It will be replaced with 4% recurrent funding on eligible expenses.

**These reforms will help every child get a great start in life and make the most of every school learning opportunity.**





## Improvement measures

### Equity and excellence



#### Year 12 certification

- Increasing the proportion of students leaving school with a Year 12 certificate (or equivalent) by 7.5 percentage points (nationally) by 2030 and trend upwards compared with 2022, for priority equity cohorts.
- We will seek to report annually on the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students with a Year 12 (or equivalent) certification.
- Consideration will be given to a new sub-measure that captures the alternative pathways available to young people.



#### Pathways for success

- Increasing the proportion of people, First Nations and all aged 20 to 24, attaining Year 12 or equivalent qualification to 96% by 2031 (a National Agreement on Closing the Gap indicator).



#### Learning equity

- Reducing the proportion of students in the NAPLAN 'Needs Additional Support' proficiency level for reading and numeracy by 10% by 2030.
- Increasing the proportion of students in the 'Strong' and 'Exceeding' proficiency levels for reading and numeracy by 10% by 2030 and trend upwards for priority equity cohorts in the 'Strong' and 'Exceeding' proficiency levels.
- Consideration will be given to a new equity in learning gain measure, to enable measurement of student learning growth.

### Wellbeing for learning and engagement



#### Student attendance

- Increasing the Student Attendance Rate, nationally, to 91.4% (2019 level) and a return to 2019 levels for priority equity cohorts (nationally) by 2030.
- By 2035, the Student Attendance Rate for priority equity cohorts is the same as the overall student population.
- Consideration will be given to a new measure of student engagement.

### A strong and sustainable workforce



#### Building the workforce

- Increasing the engagement rate (completed or still enrolled) of initial teacher education students by 10 percentage points to 69.7% by 2035.
- Consideration will be given to a new early career retention measure that captures the number and proportion of teachers who remain engaged as teachers after 3 or 5 years by 31 December 2027.



#### Strengthening the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce

- Increasing the engagement rate (completed or still enrolled) of First Nations initial teacher education students by 10 percentage points to 56.2% by 2035.



## National Teacher Workforce Action Plan

Australia has a shortage of teachers. Not enough people are becoming teachers and too many are leaving the profession.

To reverse this, in 2022 the Australian Government and state and territory education ministers agreed on a National Teacher Workforce Action Plan.

The action plan builds on a range of initiatives already under way in jurisdictions, sectors and individual schools.

The plan has 5 priority action areas:

1. improving teacher supply
2. strengthening initial teacher education
3. keeping the teachers we have
4. elevating the profession, and
5. better understanding future teacher workforce needs.

The steps the Australian Government has already taken include:

- \$159 million for 4,000 additional university teacher training places
- \$78.8 million (from 2022 to 2027) for 1,500 more places in the High Achieving Teachers Program, getting teachers in the classroom faster, and
- \$30 million for a Workload Reduction Fund to help address workload pressures on teachers and school leaders.

Preliminary, year-to-date data for 2025 shows the number of domestic students commencing an Initial Teacher Education (ITE) degree is up 11% compared to the same time in 2024. This is driven by a 15% increase in postgraduate commencements and a 10% rise in undergraduate commencements<sup>11</sup>.

The teacher workforce is also growing, with the number of full-time equivalent school teachers increasing 19% nationally between 2015 and 2024.

<sup>11</sup> Preliminary, year-to-date data extracted from the Tertiary Collection of Student Information in May 2025. Full-year data may differ.

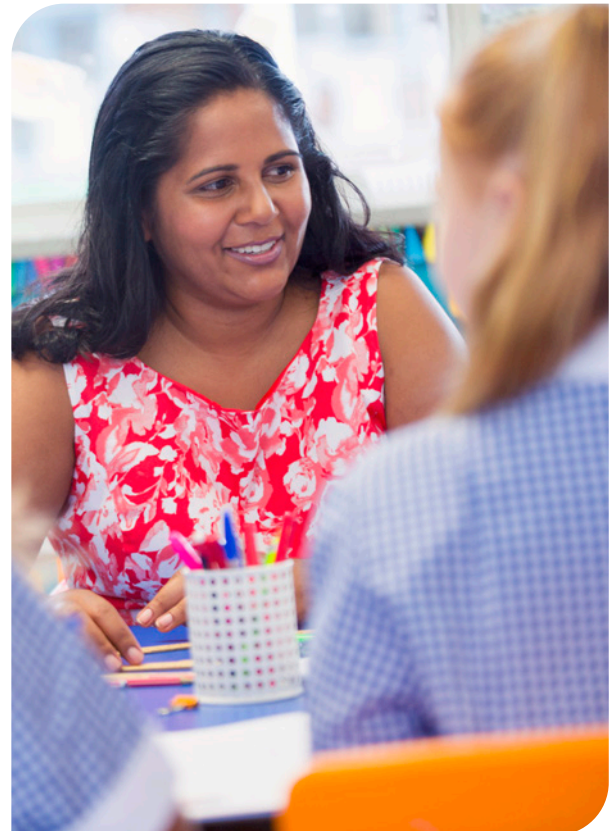
## Commonwealth Teaching Scholarships

The Australian Government has committed \$160.1 million to the Commonwealth Teaching Scholarships (CTS) Program over the 8 years to 2030–31.

The CTS Program offers 1,000 scholarships a year for 5 years (2024–2028) to students enrolling in accredited primary, secondary or early childhood ITE programs.

The scholarships are worth up to \$40,000 over 4 years for new undergraduate students, and up to \$20,000 over 2 years for new postgraduate teaching students. They include a 'commitment to teach' requirement, under which undergraduate recipients must commit to teach for up to 4 years and postgraduate recipients up to 2 years in government-run schools or in early learning centres.

The first CTS round was in 2024. The second-round scholarship offers to successful applicants were made in February 2025.



## Anti-Bullying Rapid Review

This expert-led review is under way and is looking into bullying behaviours in Australian schools to inform the development of a consistent national standard.

The review is examining current school procedures and best-practice approaches to address bullying within schools.

It is looking at what is working and what needs strengthening by talking to students, parents, teachers, principals and education systems.

Over 1,600 submissions to the review were received.

A consistent national standard will provide confidence that, no matter where a child goes to school, if they experience bullying, it will be managed appropriately.



## Further reforms

The Australian Government has introduced a Commonwealth Prac Payment for eligible ITE students, providing financial support while they do the practical part of their course.

These initiatives come on top of the biggest reforms to ITE in a generation. This new core content in ITE degrees will commence in 2026 and include a stronger focus on how to effectively teach children to read and write, do mathematics, and manage their behaviour.











## Setting up tertiary education for the future

The Australian Universities Accord is a blueprint for reforming the tertiary education system. It found that in the years ahead, more Australians will need a tertiary qualification. The Accord sets out the reforms needed to make this happen. The Government is now implementing those reforms.

The Australian Universities Accord<sup>12</sup> sets out a blueprint for tertiary education reform for the next decade and beyond.

It found that by the middle of this century we are going to need a workforce where 80% of the workforce haven't just finished school, but they have a trade certificate, a diploma, or a university degree as well.

The Government has started implementing 31 of the Accord's 47 recommendations in full or in part.

These reforms will make Australia's higher education better, fairer and more responsive to student needs.

<sup>12</sup> Australian Government, *Australian Universities Accord – Final report*. 25 February 2024.

### Making the Higher Education Loan Program (HELP) system fairer

The Australian Government has wiped more than \$3 billion of HELP and other student debts for 3 million Australians by changing the way indexation is calculated, ensuring indexation on student loans will never outpace future wages growth.

The Government has also committed to:

- cut a further 20% off HELP and other student loan debts backdated to 1 June 2025, wiping around a further \$16 billion in student debt, and
- reduce the amount debtors have to repay on a HELP or other student loan each year and raise the threshold for when repayments start being made.

When implemented, someone with an average HELP debt of \$27,500 will see it cut by \$5,500. Under new repayment rules, a person earning \$70,000 will pay about \$1,300 less each year.



## Commonwealth Prac Payment

One of the financial pressures many students face is the requirement to undertake unpaid placements to complete their qualifications.

To address this, the Australian Government has established a new Commonwealth Prac Payment to support students studying to be teachers, nurses, midwives or social workers.

The new payment will help alleviate placement poverty by supporting up to 68,000 students studying a bachelor's or master's qualification in relevant disciplines, and about 5,000 VET students studying a Diploma of Nursing.

Eligible students will receive \$331.65 a week (in 2025) during their mandatory practicum placements. The payment amount is aligned with the single Austudy rate, which is indexed yearly.



## FEE-FREE Uni Ready courses

FEE-FREE Uni Ready courses act as a bridge between school or work and university, helping to ensure more Australians get a chance at university and succeed when they get there.

The Australian Government is investing an additional \$350 million to 2028 to properly fund and expand these courses, with total funding in 2025 of \$158 million across 33 universities.

Preliminary data shows that, year to date, more than 14,000 students have enrolled in a FEE-FREE Uni Ready course in 2025<sup>13</sup>.

## A new funding system for universities

There are 2 significant funding reforms that will help our universities increase enrolments to meet our nation's long-term skills needs.

- **Managed Growth Funding** for universities will begin on 1 January 2027, with a transition year in 2026. It will provide universities with Domestic Student Profiles, offering greater certainty on the number of fully funded Commonwealth supported places. It will effectively deliver demand-driven funding for eligible students from under-represented backgrounds who meet enrolment requirements.
- **Needs-based Funding** will fund additional academic and wraparound supports, such as mentoring and peer learning, to help under-represented students succeed at university. It will be introduced from 1 January 2026.

These changes will add 82,000 fully funded Commonwealth supported university places by 2035. They will also:

- support around 140,000 First Nations students and students from low socioeconomic status backgrounds in the first year, and
- benefit an estimated 150,000 students at regional campuses, increasing the sustainability of our regional universities.

<sup>13</sup> Preliminary, year-to-date data extracted from the Tertiary Collection of Student Information in May 2025. Full-year data may differ.







## Australian Tertiary Education Commission

The Australian Government has committed to establish the Australian Tertiary Education Commission (ATEC) as the steward of Australia's tertiary education system.

The ATEC began in an interim capacity on 1 July 2025 and, subject to the passage of legislation, will be fully operational in 2026.

The ATEC will play a key role in driving important structural reforms in higher education to help meet Australia's skills needs.

These reforms will better align the supply of skilled workers with Australia's future workforce needs, by:

- promoting a joined-up tertiary education system
- allocating funding under the new Managed Growth Funding system
- implementing Needs-based Funding within the core funding model, and
- negotiating mission-based compacts to support a diverse, responsive, and high-performing sector.

The interim ATEC will be led by 2 expert, non-statutory commissioners:

- **Professor Mary O'Kane AC**  
as interim Chief Commissioner
- **Distinguished Professor Larissa Behrendt AO**  
as interim First Nations Commissioner

They will work alongside **Professor Barney Glover AO**, the Jobs and Skills Australia Commissioner, to form the interim commission.

The primary role of the interim commission will be to provide a consultative forum that supports the Government, and Parliament, in finalising key priorities such as:

- the ATEC legislation
- the operation of mission-based compacts
- Needs-based Funding and Managed Growth Funding System legislation, and
- progressing tertiary harmonisation.

## Safety on campus and the National Student Ombudsman

The Australian Government is taking strong action to make Australian campuses safer places for all. This includes:

- **National Student Ombudsman**  
Students can now escalate complaints about the actions of their higher education provider, including complaints about gender-based violence, to the National Student Ombudsman, who began this important role from February 2025. The National Student Ombudsman provides an independent and impartial complaints handling process to investigate students' complaints and resolve disputes with universities.
- **Action on gender-based violence**  
Legislation will be re-introduced shortly to enable the Minister for Education to establish a mandatory National Higher Education Code to Prevent and Respond to Gender-Based Violence. The National Code will set consistent standards for preventing and responding to gender-based violence in higher education, including in student accommodation.
- The Code gives the recommendations of the National Student Ombudsman real teeth and will make sure that they are put in place to improve our universities and other providers.
- **Racism study**  
The Government has funded a study into antisemitism, Islamophobia, racism and the experience of First Nations people in the university sector. The study is being led by Race Discrimination Commissioner Giridharan Sivaraman with support from the Australian Human Rights Commission.



## University governance

The Australian Universities Accord found that governance and regulatory frameworks have been slow to address key issues, particularly student wellbeing and staff employment.

In January 2025, the Minister for Education established an Expert Council to develop University Governance Principles and Recommendations based on 10 priority areas identified by education ministers.

These will be presented to ministers in October 2025 and aim to strengthen governance, accountability, and stakeholder representation across the sector.



## Strategic examination of research and development

Boosting research and development (R&D) is essential to revitalising Australian manufacturing, driving local innovation, and ensuring long-term productivity and prosperity.

Increasing R&D intensity is key to building a Future Made in Australia – enhancing resilience, competitiveness, and sovereign capability.

Australia's R&D ecosystem also underpins major government priorities, including the net zero transition, critical technologies, and building sovereign capability.

To support this, the Government has appointed an independent expert panel, chaired by Robyn Denholm, to conduct a strategic review of R&D. The panel will report to the Minister for Industry and Science, the Minister for Education, and the Treasurer by the end of 2025.

This review responds to Recommendation 24 of the Australian Universities Accord Final Report, calling for a coordinated, multi-agency strategy to strengthen R&D.

## National Research Infrastructure Roadmap

National research infrastructure is vital for advancing discovery, embracing new technologies, and tackling global challenges.

The Australian Government is investing \$4 billion over 12 years (2018–2029) to ensure researchers and industry have access to world-class research infrastructure.

Delivering cutting-edge infrastructure requires coordinated, long-term planning. Every 5 years, the Government develops a roadmap to identify and set priorities, and to guide investment.

Work on the 2026 roadmap is under way, led by the National Research Infrastructure Advisory Group – comprising experts from universities, research, government, and industry. Based on broad consultation, the roadmap will be delivered to Government by the end of 2025.



## Policy review of the ARC National Competitive Grants Program

The Australian Research Council's (ARC) National Competitive Grants Program is unique and supports university research across both the humanities, arts and social sciences (HASS) and science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) disciplines.

In partnership with the Department of Education, the ARC is reviewing the program's core settings to ensure it remains innovative and responsive to Australia's evolving research landscape.

Following extensive consultation, the ARC Board will deliver its final report to the Minister for Education in the second half of 2025.

## International education

International education is vital to Australia's economy and the strength of its education institutions.

Reforms introduced in 2024, including Ministerial Direction 111, aim to restore sustainable student numbers and focus on genuine students and providers.

The Government will continue engaging with the sector to shape future policy and regulatory settings, supporting a long-term strategy developed in consultation with stakeholders.

**Boosting R&D is essential to revitalising Australian manufacturing, driving local innovation, and ensuring long-term productivity and prosperity.**





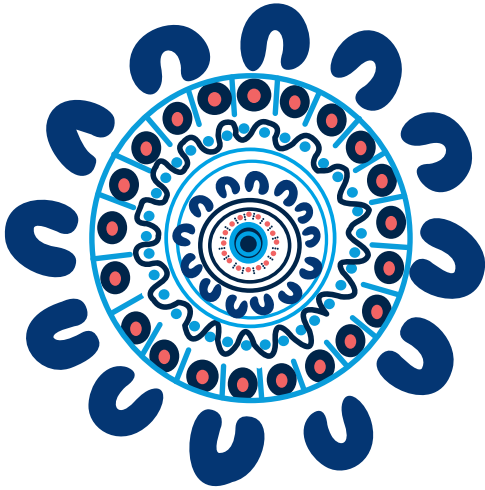
# First Nations focus

## Working to close the gap in education

The Australian Government is committed to working with states, territories and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peak partners to help all First Nations Australians reach their full learning potential, with a strong focus on closing the gap in education.







## Early childhood education and care

According to the latest data<sup>14</sup>, there has been a 7.4% annual increase in the number of First Nations children attending approved early education and care.

And from 5 January 2026, the Australian Government will ensure families of First Nations children will be eligible for 100 hours of subsidised ECEC a fortnight.

## School education

The Government is fixing the funding of our public schools and tying that funding to reforms to help students finish school.

As part of this, by 2029 the Government will have doubled the annual investment the Commonwealth makes in Northern Territory public schools.

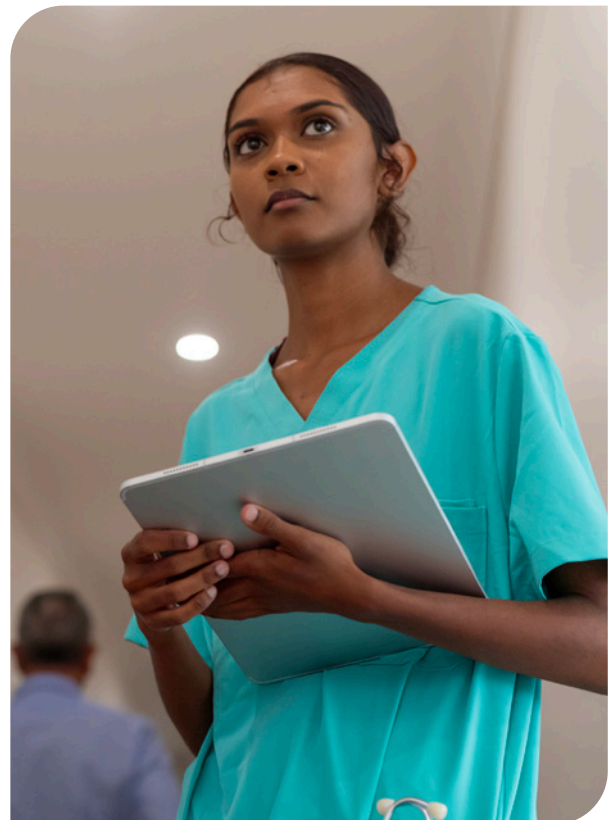
The Government is also delivering \$2.4 million to develop and implement the First Nations Teacher Strategy.

## Tertiary education and First Nations students

The Government has delivered demand-driven funding for all Indigenous students to attend university if they qualify for admission to the course.

In addition, the Government is delivering demand-driven places for First Nations medical students from 2026, along with Needs-Based Funding to support First Nations students at university.

14 Child Care Subsidy data report – March quarter 2025.





## Regional and Suburban University Study Hubs

### Western Australia

#### Regional University Study Hubs

- 1 Ashburton University Study Hub (new)  
A-Onslow B-Tom Price
- 2 East Kimberley University Centre (new)\*
- 3 Geraldton Universities Centre
- 4 Great Southern Universities Centre
- 5 Katanning Study Hub (new)
- 6 Kimberley Universities Centre
- 7 Lumen Wheatbelt Regional University Study Hubs  
A-Narrogin B-Merredin C-Wongan Hills D-York
- 8 Lumen Wheatbelt Regional University Study Hub Northam (new)\*
- 9 Pilbara Universities Centre  
A-Karratha B-Port Hedland

#### Suburban University Study Hubs

- 10 Armadale University Study Hub (new)\*
- 11 Ellenbrook Study Hub (new)
- 12 Mandurah Universities Centre (new)

### Northern Territory

#### Regional University Study Hubs

- 13 Arnhem Land Progress Aboriginal Corporation  
A-Nhulunbuy B-Galiwin'ku C-Ramingining
- 14 Garrthlala Bush University Study Hub (new)
- 15 Wuyagiba Regional Study Hub

### South Australia

#### Regional University Study Hubs

- 16 Barossa Regional University Campus
- 17 Copper Coast University Centre
- 18 Fleurieu Study Hub (new)
- 19 Kangaroo Island Study Hub (new)\*
- 20 Murray River Study Hub  
A-Murraylands B-Riverland
- 21 Uni Hub Spencer Gulf  
A-Port Augusta B-Port Pirie
- 22 Uni Hub Spencer Gulf Port Lincoln
- 23 Uni Hub Spencer Gulf Roxby Downs Outreach

#### Suburban University Study Hub

- 24 Uni Hub Playford (new)

### Queensland

#### Regional University Study Hubs

- 25 Cassowary Coast University Centre (new)
- 26 Country Universities Centre Balonne  
A-St George B-Dirranbandi
- 27 Country Universities Centre Cape York
- 28 Country Universities Centre Hughenden (new)\*
- 29 Country Universities Centre Isaac (new)\*  
A-Clermont B-Moranbah
- 30 Country Universities Centre Maranoa
- 31 Country Universities Centre Mount Isa
- 32 Country Universities Centre RAPAD Central West Queensland (new)  
A-Barcardine B-Bedourie C-Birdsville D-Blackall E-Boulia F-Jundah G-Longreach H-Winton
- 33 Country Universities Centre Southern Downs (new)
- 34 Country Universities Centre Western Downs (new)
- 35 Goondiwindi Regional University Centre
- 36 Tablelands University Centre

#### Suburban University Study Hubs

- 37 Beenleigh University Study Hub (new)\*
- 38 Inala University Study Hub (new)\*
- 39 Strathpine University Study Hub (new)

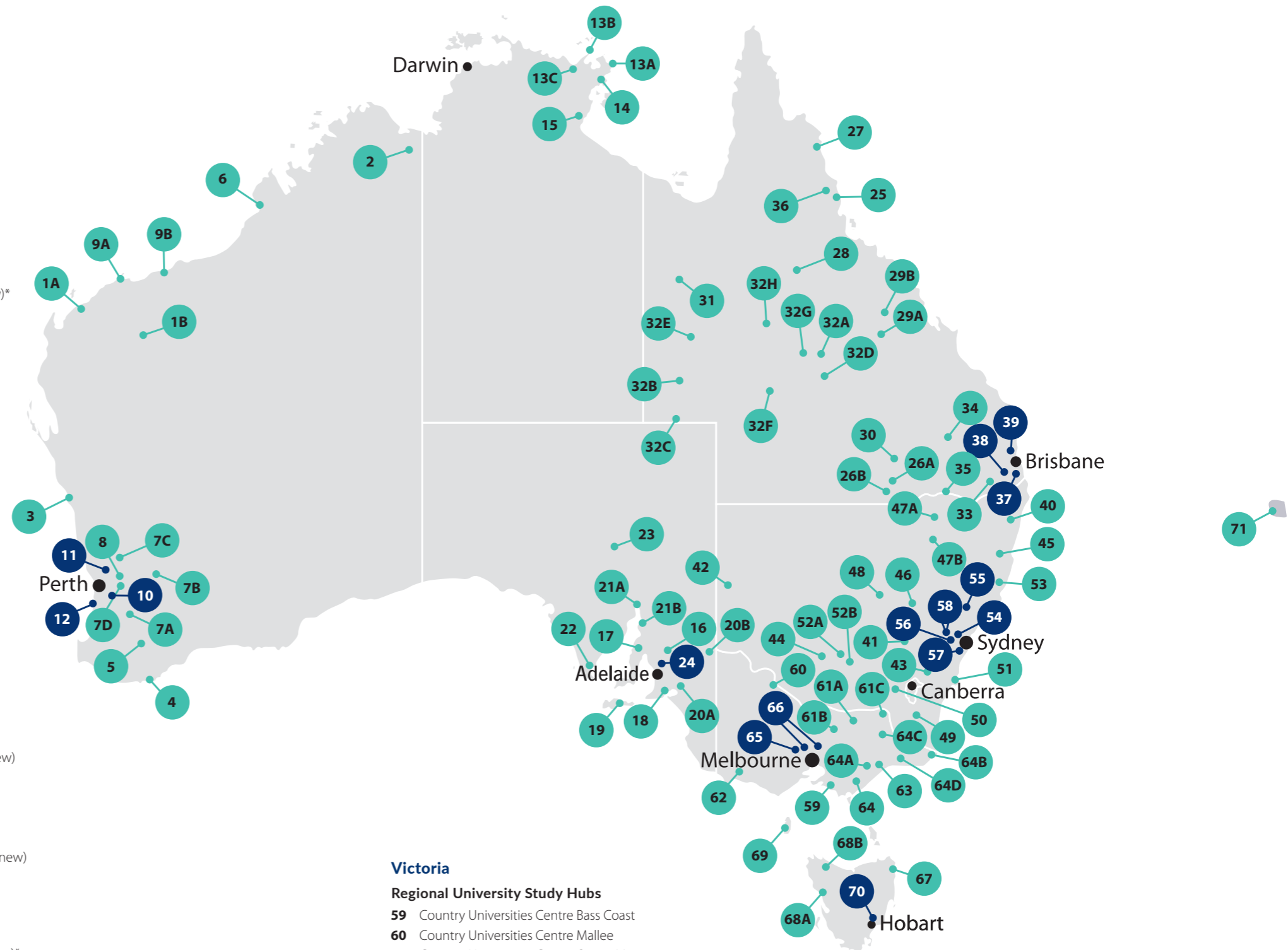
### New South Wales

#### Regional University Study Hubs

- 40 Country Universities Centre Clarence Valley
- 41 Country Universities Centre Cowra Region (new)
- 42 Country Universities Centre Far West
- 43 Country Universities Centre Goulburn
- 44 Country Universities Centre Hay (new)\*
- 45 Country Universities Centre Macleay Valley
- 46 Country Universities Centre Mudgee Region (new)
- 47 Country Universities Centre North West  
A-Moree B-Narrabri
- 48 Country Universities Centre Parkes
- 49 Country Universities Centre Snowy Monaro
- 50 Country Universities Centre Snowy Valleys (new)\*
- 51 Country Universities Centre Southern Shoalhaven
- 52 Country Universities Centre Western Riverina  
A-Griffith B-Leeton
- 53 Taree Universities Campus

#### Suburban University Study Hubs

- 54 Fairfield Connect University Study Hub (new)\*
- 55 Kurri Kurri Community Services (KKCS) Study Hub (new)
- 56 Liverpool Suburban University Study Hub (new)\*
- 57 Suburban Study Hub Macquarie Fields (new)\*
- 58 University Study Hub – Blackett and Mt Druitt (new)\*



### Victoria

#### Regional University Study Hubs

- 59 Country Universities Centre Bass Coast
- 60 Country Universities Centre Mallee
- 61 Country Universities Centre Ovens Murray  
A-Wangaratta B-Mansfield C-Corryong
- 62 Country Universities Centre Southern Grampians (new)\*
- 63 Gippsland East Study Hub
- 64 Gippsland East Study Hub Outreach (new)  
A-Heyfield B-Mallacoota C-Omeo D-Orbost E-Yarram

#### Suburban University Study Hubs

- 65 Melton Suburban University Study Hub (new)\*
- 66 Northern Suburbs Study Hub – Broadmeadows and Epping (new)\*

### Tasmania

#### Regional University Study Hubs

- 67 Country Universities Centre Eastern Tasmania (new)\*
- 68 Study Hub West Coast  
A-Zeehan B-Circular Head
- 69 Study King Island (new)

#### Suburban University Study Hub

- 70 Southeast Tasmania Study Hub (new)

### Other Territories

#### Regional University Study Hub

- 71 Country Universities Centre Norfolk Island (new)\*

The map is not to scale.  
Dot points indicate the relative location of hubs.  
Hub names are subject to change.  
\* Opening soon

● Regional University Study Hubs  
● Suburban University Study Hubs

## Legislative priorities ahead: 2025–26

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**LEGISLATION** will apply a 20% HELP loan reduction to student debts backdated to 1 June 2025, before indexation. A fairer repayment system will also begin from 1 July, with a higher threshold for compulsory student loan repayments.

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**LEGISLATION** to enable the Minister for Education to establish a National Higher Education Code to Prevent and Respond to Gender-based Violence.

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**LEGISLATION** to enable the ATEC to be fully operational following the establishment of the interim ATEC on 1 July 2025.

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**LEGISLATION** to improve integrity across the education system, including:

- amendments to the *A New Tax System (Family Assistance) (Administration) Act 1999* to strengthen safety and quality in early childhood education and care
  - amendments to the *Education Services for Overseas Students Act 2000* to strengthen integrity in the international education sector, combat the exploitation of overseas students, and address behaviours which seek to exploit the migration system.
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**AMENDMENTS** to enable the increase of the Commonwealth's share of the Schooling Resource Standard (SRS) for government schools for the years 2026 to 2034.

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**LEGISLATION** to introduce further higher education funding reforms.

- Amendments to the *Higher Education Support Act 2003* to establish Needs-based Funding and the new Managed Growth Funding System.
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**LEGISLATION** to strengthen Commonwealth regulatory and enforcement powers to deal with early education providers that put profit over quality and child safety at risk.

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# Program priorities ahead: 2025–26 and beyond

