Australian Government

Australian Government response to the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Employment, Education and Training report on Study Buddy or Influencer: Inquiry into the Use of Generative Artificial Intelligence in the Australian Education System

TABLING APRIL 2026

Overview

The Australian Government (the Government) thanks the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Employment, Education and Training (the Committee) for its work on the inquiry into the use of Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI) in the Australian education system.

The Government welcomes the opportunity to respond to the inquiry and acknowledges and thanks those who have contributed.

GenAI has the potential to deliver significant benefits to teaching and learning. It can help personalise education and make learning more compelling and effective. However, it also brings new challenges, including for the privacy and safety of students.

The Government is committed to supporting teachers and school communities to maximise the potential benefits of this new technology, while also mitigating the risks. This is a national education priority.

The Government is focussed on capturing the opportunity of GenAI, spreading its benefits, and keeping Australians safe. On 2 December 2025, the Government released the National AI Plan (the Plan), setting out the Government's ambition to position Australia as a leader in responsible, inclusive and innovative Artificial Intelligence (AI) development and adoption, including in the education sector. The Plan has Australians at its centre, with the aim that everyone in Australia benefits from the opportunities of AI, across all regions, industries and communities.

The Government acknowledges that work is ongoing across all education sectors to address the rapid pace of developments in GenAI and to manage its safe, ethical and effective use. The Government will continue to work in partnership with states and territories to ensure guidance supports the appropriate use of GenAI, while maintaining the quality of education outcomes.

The response to the Committee's recommendations has been coordinated by the Department of Education, in consultation with the following agencies:

- Department of Industry, Science and Resources (DISR)
- Department of Employment and Workplace Relations (DEWR)
- Attorney-General's Department (AGD)
- eSafety Commissioner
- Australian Research Council (ARC)
- Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA)
- Education Services Australia (ESA)
- Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA)
- Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL)

- Australian Education Research Organisation (AERO)

In responding to the Committee's recommendations, the Government has been cognisant of respective roles and responsibilities. The Australian Government provides strategic direction and national leadership of Australia's school education system, in collaboration with states and territories and the non-government sector. The delivery of school education, including decisions on specific programs or technologies, is the responsibility of state and territory governments and non-government education authorities.

The response has 4 parts:

- **Part 1** responds to Recommendation 2 of the Committee's report which calls for all Australian schools to be funded to 100 per cent of the Schooling Resource Standard. The Government supports this recommendation.
- **Parts 2, 3, and 4** respond to Recommendations 1 and 3-25. The Government notes these recommendations.

Part 1: Better and Fairer Schools Agreements

Australia is creating a better and fairer education system for all students

Relevant recommendation 2

The Australian Government has reached agreement with every state and territory government to get all public schools on a path to 100 per cent of the Schooling Resource Standard (SRS) through the Better and Fairer Schools Agreement 2025-2034 and the Better and Fairer Schools Agreement 2025-2034 – Full and Fair Funding (collectively known as the BFSA).

Under these agreements, the Australian Government will provide an estimated $16.5 billion in additional Commonwealth funding to government schools nationally over the next 10 financial years from 2025-26 to 2034-35 — lifting the Commonwealth's share of the SRS for public schools to 25 per cent by 2034 in every state and the ACT, and to 40 per cent in the Northern Territory. More than $16.5 billion over 10 financial years is tied to real, practical reforms, and represents the biggest ever new investment in public schools by an Australian Government.

The Australian Government's significant investment through the BFSA can provide students and teachers greater opportunity to harness the potential of digital technologies, including GenAI.

Reforms are focused on three priority areas: equity and excellence, wellbeing for learning and engagement, and a strong and sustainable workforce. These reform areas have been designed to ensure that all students can access a quality education and provide the support to help all students finish school and reach their educational potential.

Reform initiatives will support more individualised learning and promote greater uptake of high-quality science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) education opportunities, along with increased teacher attraction and retention, and strengthened teacher and school leader wellbeing.

Part 2: Schools and early childhood education

The Australian Government is adopting a leadership and coordination role

Relevant recommendations 1, 3, 4, 7, 8, 10, 12, 13, 15, 17, 18, 19, 20

The Australian Government is providing national leadership and guidance on the use of AI in schools

The Government is collaborating with the states and territories and monitoring progress on GenAI pilots in schools through the National AI in Schools Taskforce (AI Taskforce) and other forums. The AI Taskforce was established by Education Ministers in 2023 and comprises representatives from all jurisdictions, school sectors, and national education bodies, including:

- Education Services Australia (ESA);
- the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA);
- the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL);
- the Australian Education Research Organisation (AERO); and
- the eSafety Commissioner.

The AI Taskforce's work provides nationally consistent guidance for schools and teachers on the use of AI. This work includes resources for whole school planning for AI by assisting schools and teachers to identify interrelationships across the dimensions of the Australian Curriculum. It also includes curriculum content elaborations that provide teachers with examples and illustrations to support them in their delivery of AI-related content to students.

The Australian Government is engaging to leverage international insights

The Government is engaging internationally to support safe and responsible AI innovation and to promote safe, secure, inclusive and trustworthy adoption of AI. The Government supports responsible AI innovation by delivering on international commitments and working closely with partners to shape global AI norms and standards and international governance frameworks to reflect Australia's values and interests.

Australia is establishing an AI Safety Institute (the Safety Institute). The Safety Institute will monitor, test and share information on AI, ensuring Australia's laws keep pace with AI developments to protect people and businesses. The Safety Institute will be established in early 2026. The Safety Institute will work with the International Network for Advanced AI Measurement, Evaluation and Science to leverage world-class safety testing expertise from leading AI nations.

Australia has signed the India AI Impact Summit Declaration, the Paris AI Action Summit Statement, the Bletchley Declaration, and the Seoul Declaration for Safe,

Innovative and Inclusive AI, and is a member of the Hiroshima AI Process Friends Group and the International Network for Advanced AI Measurement, Evaluation and Science. The Government also participates in international forums and summits through the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the United Nations (UN), the G20 and the OECD's Global Partnership on AI.

The Government takes a multi-stakeholder approach to international engagement, working closely with industry and civil society, as well as other governments, to ensure Australia captures the opportunity of AI, spreads the benefits widely and keeps Australians safe. To support this, the Government is developing a Strategy for International Engagement and Regional Leadership on AI to align Australia's foreign and domestic AI policy settings.

The Australian Government is engaging with states and territories to ensure schools and early childhood education systems are supported

Relevant recommendations 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21

The Australian Government is supporting nationally consistent guidance on the use of AI in schools

All Australian Education Ministers agree that responding to the risks and harnessing the opportunities for Australian schools and students arising from GenAI technologies is a national education priority.

Recognising the rapidly evolving technology landscape, in February 2023, Education Ministers agreed to develop an evidence-based, best-practice framework to guide schools in harnessing AI tools to support teaching and learning.

The *Australian Framework for Generative Artificial Intelligence in Schools* (the Framework) was jointly developed by states and territories and non-government representative bodies through the AI Taskforce and released for implementation by states and territories on 1 December 2023.

The Framework provides nationally consistent guidance to schools and their communities on the use of GenAI. It seeks to guide the responsible and ethical use of GenAI tools in ways that benefit students, schools, and society.

Education Ministers have committed to regularly reviewing the Framework to accommodate the fast-moving pace of technological development in GenAI. The 2024 Framework Review found that the Framework not only correctly identified and made provision for existing challenges but also effectively predicted emerging and current risks, such as the increased use of AI deep fakes, highlighting its relevance and foresight in addressing contemporary challenges.

As part of the Framework's implementation, Education Ministers provided $1.8 million to ESA to establish product expectations for GenAI technology in partnership with AERO. These product expectations have been developed across three workstreams: privacy and information security; human rights and wellbeing; and education impact.

The privacy and information security stream extends the guidance provided to schools about software security and privacy controls through ESA's Safer Technology 4 Schools (ST4S) initiative. This extension to ST4S covers aspects specific to AI and, importantly, it also establishes a technical assessment framework and product development guidance for education software vendors and developers. As part of the ST4S assessment process, ESA released the new assessment module on AI security, privacy and online safety in 2024. Software suppliers and vendors can use the self-assessment tool to understand their level of AI risk before submitting their product for evaluation.

To advance the human rights and wellbeing workstream, ESA has developed a Responsible AI standard to assess ethical and human rights dimensions of education technology. Importantly, this standard draws from established and emerging national and international standards and approaches including Australia's Guidance for AI Adoption, the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO) AI Risk assessment, the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) AI Risk Management Framework, and ISO 42001. It is informed by work with states and territories through a national working group, convened by ESA. The standard is undergoing pilot testing with a select number of software vendors and Indigenous Data Sovereignty considerations are being incorporated.

To advance the education impact workstream, ESA has undertaken work, in partnership with AERO, to determine how to measure the educational effectiveness of AI-enabled education technology. This work seeks to assess and provide guidance to the education software industry on the educational effectiveness of software and tools and importantly to enable educators to select software with confidence.

The Australian Government is investing in GenAI pilots in schools across the country

The Government is providing funding to support multiple pilots involving GenAI under the Workload Reduction Fund (WRF), part of the National Teacher Workforce Action Plan. This complements work by states and territories to trial GenAI through a range of initiatives, such as the New South Wales (NSW) Department of Education's NSWEduChat and the South Australian (SA) Department for Education's EdChat. WRF pilots involving GenAI include:

- Australian Government support of $2.3 million for a Western Australian (WA) cross-sectoral GenAI pilot. The Australian Government's contribution has been matched by WA, including an in-kind contribution from the Association of Independent Schools WA and Catholic Education WA.

- Support for three pilots involving GenAI in NSW, with matched funding to be provided by NSW, these include:
    - $1.5 million in Australian Government funding to support a NSW Government pilot to expand the NSWEduChat trial to enable access for all government school staff. The pilot aims to increase understanding of the impact of NSWEduChat on teacher workload reduction and opportunities to use AI to assist teachers.
    - $0.7 million in Australian Government funding to support 'Cechat – A Generative AI in Schools' pilot, led by Catholic Schools NSW. The AI-powered chatbot will be trialled in select Catholic sector schools to reduce teacher workloads by automating routine tasks and supporting educational leadership.
    - $0.5 million in Australian Government funding to support the 'Reducing Teacher Workload: Assessment, Marking and Feedback' pilot, which will be implemented by the Association of Independent Schools of NSW and is expected to incorporate the use of generative AI tools.

The Australian Government is supporting investment in resources and research for teaching and learning

Australian governments are enhancing digital and AI literacy through the Australian Curriculum. The Australian Curriculum (Version 9.0) was approved by all Education Ministers on 1 April 2022 and is being implemented progressively across Australia from Foundation to Year 10. It includes guidance on what digital knowledge and skills should be taught in schools.

To support teachers to implement AI-related content across all curriculum learning areas, ACARA published new elaborations in Mathematics and Digital Technologies along with its AI Curriculum Connection resource in 2023, accessible on the ACARA website. This resource helps teachers develop their students' understanding of how AI works and the elements that comprise it, and how to use it responsibly and ethically.

The Government is also providing teachers with a wide range of resources to build students' digital literacy and understanding of digital technologies, including GenAI and its limitations, through its Digital Technologies Hub (DT Hub). The DT Hub is delivered by ESA and provides an extensive array of freely available, quality-assured resources to support teachers to deliver the Australian Curriculum: Digital Technologies and the Digital Literacy general capability in schools across Australia.

The resources provided through the DT Hub are complemented by several other government-backed initiatives to support teaching and learning on the use of GenAI tools including:

- a two-part resource, provided by AITSL as part of its 'Spotlight' series, evaluating the evidence for educational technology, including GenAI models, and how these technologies can be leveraged to support teachers, enhance their teaching capabilities, and enable learning in schools;
- research undertaken by AERO, as part of its 2024 Research Agenda, exploring the most effective ways to deploy edtech, including GenAI, to reverse growing inequity in child and student learning outcomes;
- free training programs targeted at educators, provided by the eSafety Commissioner, acknowledging the positive and negative applications of AI and safety issues to look out for; and
- funding support for Charles Sturt University to deliver microcredential courses on practical application of AI for teachers.

The Government recognises the importance of students having the skills and knowledge to prepare for further education and the workforce. Action 5 of the National AI Plan, 'Support and train Australians', aims to boost digital skills, expand training access, and grow an inclusive pipeline of AI-ready workers through industry, and the skills and education sectors. This builds on existing government initiatives to support AI literacy, education and skills, such as the Next Generation Graduates Program, the National Skills Agreement and the Future Skills Organisation's 'FSO Skills Accelerator – AI'.

The Australian Government is providing support for early childhood education and care

Best practice around the introduction and safe use of GenAI is still being developed in the early childhood education and care (ECEC) sector. Guidance for ECEC services is available on the Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA) website as part of the National Quality Framework (NQF) Online Safety Guide.

Given the sensitive nature of information in ECEC settings, robust cybersecurity measures, guidance for the ethical use of AI, and parental/carer involvement, are essential for ensuring approved providers and educators can provide a safe digital environment.

Working collaboratively with the states and territories will be equally critical. Regulatory authorities in each state and territory administer the NQF to ensure compliance and continuous improvement including in relation to online environments.

Part 3: Higher education and research

The Australian Government is working proactively with the higher education and VET sectors to promote ethical and effective engagement with GenAI

Relevant recommendations 6, 8, 16, 21, 22, 23

The Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA) — Australia's national regulator of higher education — has been working proactively with experts from Australian higher education providers to support institutions to understand and address the impact of GenAI on teaching, learning, assessment and research. Resources are available for universities and higher education providers via the TEQSA AI Good Practice Hub.

TEQSA is also playing an important role in supporting the higher education sector to meet the challenges and risks as well as opportunities afforded by GenAI. It has developed resources, and placed these on its GenAI knowledge hub webpage to help ensure the sector maintains compliance with the *Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2021*. The Threshold Standards set out the requirements providers must meet to be registered, and remain registered, to deliver higher education in Australia.

In the vocational education and training (VET) sector, the Government has been working to strengthen the skills and training system to ensure VET is high quality, relevant and responsive, and has an embedded cycle of continuous improvement that responds to and supports emerging technologies such as AI.

The 10 Jobs and Skills Councils (JSCs) develop and provide evidence-based guidance and find solutions to workforce issues affecting their industry sector. Future Skills Organisation (FSO) is undertaking research to better understand the impacts of GenAI on the finance, technology and business workforces.

In response to the VET Workforce Blueprint, released in October 2024, the JSCs are undertaking actions to grow and support the VET teacher, trainer and assessor workforce, including developing emerging skills related to digital capability and AI, and identifying methods for supporting the VET workforce.

Initiatives in this sector are underway to boost digital skills, expand training access, and grow an inclusive pipeline of AI-ready workers. These include:

- 'FSO Skills Accelerator – AI', which brings together the VET sector and industry to connect, collaborate, and share best practices. This program expands access to AI skills for VET learners, educators, and administrators. It aims to mobilise the VET system to upskill teachers and trainers, provide training to learners, and collaborate

with training providers. The long-term goal is to ensure a sustainable approach to AI skills development across the national skills and training system.

- The National Skills Agreement (NSA) is ensuring the national vocational education and training (VET) sector provides high-quality, responsive and accessible education and training. The NSA will boost productivity, deliver national priorities and support Australians to obtain the skills and capabilities they need to prosper. Ensuring Australia's digital and technological capability remains an agreed national priority under the NSA, with a new focus area for 2025-26 on maximising the benefits of AI adoption by strengthening VET capacity to support workforce upskilling.

The Australian Government recognises the importance of research and development for realising the potential of GenAI in education

Relevant recommendations 24 and 25

The Government recognises the growing accessibility and sophistication of GenAI, and the importance of research and development for realising the potential of high-quality and safe GenAI in education.

The Government already makes available a range of research and innovation funding, including through the Australian Research Council (ARC), that can support research and development on the potential application of the use of GenAI in education. This includes through the ARC's National Competitive Grants Program (NCGP).

The Government is also investing $1.6 billion through Australia's Economic Accelerator (AEA) to transform Australia's research translation and commercialisation landscape. AEA grants support the Government identified priority areas for the economy (outlined in the *National Reconstruction Fund Corporation (Priority Areas) Declaration 2023*). Within these priorities, grants also prioritise projects that align with one or more of 8 focus areas, including AI.

Part 4: Whole of economy approach to GenAI

The Australian Government is focussed on capturing the opportunity of AI, spreading the benefits, and keeping Australians safe

Relevant recommendations 1, 8, 9, 11, 13, 14

The Australian Government is focused on harnessing the opportunity of AI so all Australians can benefit.

On 2 December 2025 the Australian Government released the National AI Plan (the Plan), setting out the Government's ambition to position Australia as a leader in responsible, inclusive and innovative AI development and adoption. The Plan has Australians at its centre, with the aim that everyone in Australia benefits from the AI opportunity, across all regions, industries and communities.

The Plan is governed by three goals, with each supported by three respective pillars of action:

- **Capture the opportunity**: by building smart infrastructure, backing domestic AI capability and attracting global investment.
- **Spread the benefits**: through widespread AI adoption, supporting and training Australian workers, and improved public services.
- **Keep Australians safe:** with legislative and regulatory frameworks that mitigate AI harms, widespread responsible practices and international engagement that promotes Australia's values.

The Plan recognises the important role of the education sector in equipping Australian students and school leavers with the necessary AI literacy, skills and experience to thrive in AI-enabled workplaces. Action 5 of the Plan, 'Support and train Australians', aims to boost digital skills, expand training access, and grow an inclusive pipeline of AI-ready workers through industry, and the skills and education sectors.

The Plan also aims to capture the opportunities that AI presents in the education sector, including in reducing teacher workloads and improving student outcomes. Action 6 of the Plan, 'Improve public services', is focussed on harnessing AI to make delivery of public services, such as education and healthcare, more effective, efficient, accessible and responsive to the needs of Australians.

The Plan acknowledges that AI also presents novel risks and harms, including for Australian students, and one of the three goals of the Plan is to keep Australians safe. The Government is leveraging Australia's robust existing legal and regulatory frameworks to take proactive and targeted action to address AI harms as they arise. To support this approach, the Government is establishing the Safety Institute. The Safety Institute will monitor, test and share information on emerging AI capabilities, risks and

harms. Its insights will support ministers, portfolio agencies and regulators to maintain safety measures, laws and regulatory frameworks that keep pace with rapid technological change.

The Australian Government is a world leader on online safety and is continuing to deliver reforms that prevent online harm, especially for young Australians.

This includes:

- Announcing a digital duty of care, which will put the onus on services to take responsibility for online harms, including from Al.
- Investing in digital literacy and online safety education, with a commitment of $6.45 million from 20256 onwards. This includes:
    - $450,000 to SmackTalk to expand their program to better protect young Australians from online sextortion. It will broaden their reach and develop free resources and education on risks, warning signs, and safety strategies for young Australians, parents, and community members. Funding will also support ongoing learning and strengthen collaboration with eSafety, law enforcement agencies, schools, and community groups.
    - A further $6 million to the Alannah and Madeline Foundation (AMF) for continued delivery of its 'Safe Kids are eSmart kids' digital and media literacy education program in Australian schools from 2026-2029. This commitment builds on an initial $6 million committed by the government to from 2023-2026 to the AMF to provide schools with free tools to teach kids to be safe, smart and responsible in the digital world.
- Working to reduce and restrict access to 'nudify' apps and undetectable stalking apps, which are mostly weaponised against Australian girls and women.
- Developing Australia's first National Media Literacy Strategy. The National Strategy will establish the key skills and competencies Australians need to navigate the challenges and opportunities presented by the digital world.

In relation to this, the Commonwealth *Online Safety Act 2021* provides the eSafety Commissioner with a range of powers to require the removal of unlawful and harmful material, whether generated by AI or not. It also provides for industry codes and standards requiring systemic safety measures from a wide range of online services, including GenAI services and those with GenAI features. Codes and standards in relation to unlawful and seriously harmful material are already in force, and eSafety has taken enforcement action against a number of services.

In November 2025, eSafety announced that the provider of three of the most widely visited GenAI ‘nudify’ services had withdrawn access from Australia, after receiving a formal warning from eSafety as a result of its use to generate child sexual exploitation material of Australian schoolchildren. A second phase of Codes focussed on age-

restricted material currently was registered by the eSafety Commissioner in 2025 and will come into force between December 2025 and March 2026.

eSafety also has powers to require information from industry about the measures they have in place to ensure the safety of their services, including GenAI features. This information is published to promote transparency and accountability and incentivise safety uplift. Recent findings from notices to companies like Meta, Google and Snapchat are available on the eSafety website.

The Australian Government is implementing measures to protect privacy

Relevant recommendations 12, 14

The Government is committed to prioritising the safety and wellbeing of students and educators using edtech and GenAI technology in education settings and recognises that robust data protection is critical to this.

Also referenced in Part 2, The *Australian Framework for Generative Artificial Intelligence in Schools* embeds 'privacy, security and safety' as one of its six principles in order that 'students and others using generative AI products have their privacy and data protected'.

Existing data protection frameworks are key in upholding students' privacy. The Commonwealth *Privacy Act 1988* (Privacy Act) is Australia's main legislative framework that regulates the collection, use, disclosure and retention of personal information by Commonwealth public sector agencies, organisations with an annual turnover of more than $3 million and some smaller entities. Many public educational institutions are covered by state or territory privacy frameworks, with some states and territories also having a privacy policy or privacy code that applies to their schools.

The Government has already implemented several proposals from the Privacy Act Review through the *Privacy and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2024* and has committed to further reform to ensure Australia's privacy laws are fit for purpose for the digital age, including for the development and use of AI technologies, and provide a basis for both innovation and the protection of people's personal data. Relevant reforms under consideration include updating key definitions and requiring information handling to be fair and reasonable in the circumstances, having regard to a legislated list of factors including the kind, sensitivity and amount of personal information, the risk of harm and (where relevant) the best interests of the child.

To provide additional protection for children engaging in the digital world, a Children's Online Privacy Code will be in place by December 2026. The Code, being developed by the Information Commissioner, will apply to online services likely to be accessed by children, leveraging insights from international counterparts. Development of the Code is being informed by public consultation, including with children, parents, and organisations focused on the welfare of children.