

ANNUAL REPORT 2020



MCERA

Media Centre for Education Research
A U S T R A L I A



Education Matters

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FROM THE CHAIR AND CEO

Welcome to the third annual report for MCERA.

When we wrote our welcome to last year's report, we were ruminating on the state of flux of the media in Australia.

This year, having watched the world slowly and then suddenly shutdown as the seriousness of the pandemic became more apparent, and a number of media outlets shut or downsized in response, the "state of flux" from a year ago feels like a lifetime ago.

MCERA started the FY2019/20 strongly, and at the end of 2019, there was a real sense of optimism about our work and future.

Then, early in 2020, we had an initial journalist query about the impact on Wuhan universities from the novel corona virus detected in that province a couple of months prior.

In February, we were asking researchers if they wished to go ahead with media engagements "after this corona news dies down a bit".

By March, MCERA was operating entirely remotely and with a pressing sense of urgency as questions about education dominated the news cycle.

We responded quickly to this changing landscape, holding a series of webinars for journalists, opening up access to MCERA Informed Sources (our schools subscription service), and responding to a flood of questions.

After the first school holidays, fear remained. Across Australia, different school systems, universities, and employees were finding their “new normal” depending on where they were located.

We are proud of the way our organisation responded, and the part we played in ensuring that the mainstream media were able to quickly and easily engage with experts in a time of such uncertainty. You can read more about our response later in this Report.

None of us know for sure what is in store for the future – we never have really, but 2020 has made the reality even more stark. It is clear that media outlets are being asked to do more with less, and research informed news, including expert commentary is extremely important. And that’s what makes MCERA so important – as the go-to organisation that facilitates well-informed education media reporting by providing easy access to independent quality research and expertise, MCERA is able to provide that service.

And we will continue to, because education matters.



Associate Professor Anna Sullivan
MCERA Chair



Dr Shannon Schedlich
MCERA CEO

"COVID has shown us how powerful educational uses of digital technology can actually be quite informal, impromptu, and conducted on the fly."

–Professor Neil Selwyn, Monash University



HOME SCHOOLING A

Parents have many ways to run effective lessons

With two children of his own, the educator said he and his wife were trying to stick as closely as possible to the school routine by making up lunches and snacks the night before. "That way they know exactly where the snacks and lunch are, already made, and can help themselves," he said. This time of isolation is unique in many respects and one of them is that children, many for the first time, are seeing their parents in "work mode" and are unused to the transition. Dr Penny Van Bergen, Associate Professor of Educational Psychology, School of Education, Macquarie University, advised parents to have a conversation with their little ones. "You have to let them know that you have your 'work hat' on and give them clear guidelines so they don't

CLARE MASTERS

THERE is a very big difference between traditional home schooling and the remote learning that is

First lesson is routine

WITH home-schooling being phased out across the nation, experts warn the transition back to classrooms will take some getting used to - for parents as well as kids. Re-establishing routines, supporting nervous students and reconnecting with friends and teachers are keys in the days leading up to and early days of a return to school.

University of Wollongong school readiness expert Dr Lyn Cronin said that for those parents with children already back at school or juggling the staggered return of siblings the focus should be on establishing a routine as quickly as possible and keeping it consistent.

Coulson said parents should not just tell kids everything would be OK.

"Assuring the does not help," "Explore what thinking and wh be done to help. try to minimise feelings of

Supporting parents home learning

ADDRESSING FEARS

Dr Rouse said some children would worry about reconnecting with friends they had not seen in person for many weeks.

She suggested parents do informal catch-ups and drop-offs and pick-ups so children renew friendships.

Dr Rouse said parents should be "open and honest" with their children about how they felt about going back to school. "Often parents are looking forward to

just as new for many teachers as it is for parents, so it's important to be patient with yourselves, your kids and their teachers," she said.

She offered these tips for managing remote learning:

Get children into a routine and set up a timetable they can stay on top of what they are doing during the day.

Remember that school is only from 9am to 3pm. Children also have at least two breaks in this time. Children should be doing no more than five hours of schooling, plus usual homework time.

Be aware of lapses in concentration and engagement. It's important to acknowledge and support children's need to take a break. Give them permission to come back to their work when they're feeling more connected.

Have honest discussions with your children about how they're feeling and, if they are feeling overwhelmed, work together to navigate the way through the challenges. Let them know that it is okay not to be okay, but it is not okay not to talk about it.

ROUTINE

Deakin University education expert Elizabeth Rouse recommended that families returned to their pre-pandemic routine, including the times for bed, getting up in the morning and beginning a remote learning day, before starting back in the classroom. "Get back into routines now," Dr

Demand dives

MADELEINE HEFFERNAN

Enrolments at Catholic primary schools have dived, particularly in Melbourne's east, as cost-conscious families and migrant communities choose government schools.

In response, Catholic secondary school Emmaus College will from next year prioritise grade 6 students who attend a Catholic school over Catholic children attending a government or independent school.

Emmaus, an in-demand school in Vermont South, said the change was designed to "support the communit-

the social

gion, a schools and the s the Cath the Roya tional Re Abuse.

"It real time for Ca enrolment com that enrolme in forthcoming

In addition, Ho said Catholic s

Education Matters

Get 'tough love' on STEM

LUSIVE
AH ISON

ENTS need to push their children towards science and maths subjects or risk them falling out on the jobs of the future, Federal Minister for Industry, Science and Technology Karen Andrews says. The engineering graduate "tough love" was needed from Australian parents, who are giving their children a "pass" when it came to studying the vital disciplines. It's far too convenient for parents to have subjects for them brushed with an "it's OK, I wasn't good at it either and I've done out fine," she said.

in science in particular, with results falling to the lowest levels since recording began.

"The recent PISA results also paint a worrying picture," Ms Andrews said. "We're going backwards and it's not for lack of investment.

"Now, I know not every child wants to be an astrophysicist or a chemist, but STEM skills are going to be even more vital as technology permeates everything we do."

Data released last week by the Department of Employment, Skills, Small and Family Business showed STEM jobs grew twice as fast than other occupations between 2014 and 2019, expanding by

students and adults saying 'I just can't do maths,' she said.

"If someone said they couldn't read, that would be a shock, but these skills are becoming just as important and we need to get rid of maths anxiety."

But many experts were concerned about the affect of "pushing" students into fields they were not interested in, further risking the survival of the arts and humanities.

Edith Cowan University vice-chancellor Steve Chapman said enrolments in arts subjects were "flat" at his and other Australian universities and the subjects were just as important as those in STEM.



MOBILE DEVICE BAN DIFFICULT TO ENFORCE'

Audio recording and photography are among risks associated with mobile phone use in schools according to Mount Gambier educator. Mount Gambier High School principal yesterday said while phones are a valuable resource, use of the devices in schools posed several challenges. Students - whose students would be affected by a proposed statewide ban on mobile phones - has warned the potential

restrictions would be difficult to enforce. School captain Thomas Male, pictured right with fellow Year 12 student Madelyn Sutherland, believes his peers are spending up to 70pc of their time on social media when accessing their devices. The major public school currently enforces its own mobile phone policy which applies to students, teachers and parents.

STORY PAGE 4

MCERA SNAPSHOT

*"For those of us immersed in the academic world with its definitions and scientific lingo, it is a relief to know that MCERA staff are available to promote our research and share it with the broader community."
-Dr Grace Skrzypiec,
Flinders University*

13.8 m *

cumulative reach in 2019-20

*equalling an ASR of

\$3.17m

MCERA SNAPSHOT

974

media items were directly impacted by MCERA's input- either through reporting on media releases we issued, expert comments or rapid responses we compiled, webinars we coordinated, or journalists direct requests for experts to contribute to their reporting.

"I have found MCERA to be super efficient to work with - they provide lots of opportunities to comment on current issues relevant to the researcher's portfolio. They are very respectful of the needs of researchers, going to efforts to make sure that researchers aren't represented out of context or in a way that wasn't otherwise intended."
-Assoc Prof Matt Bower, Macquarie University

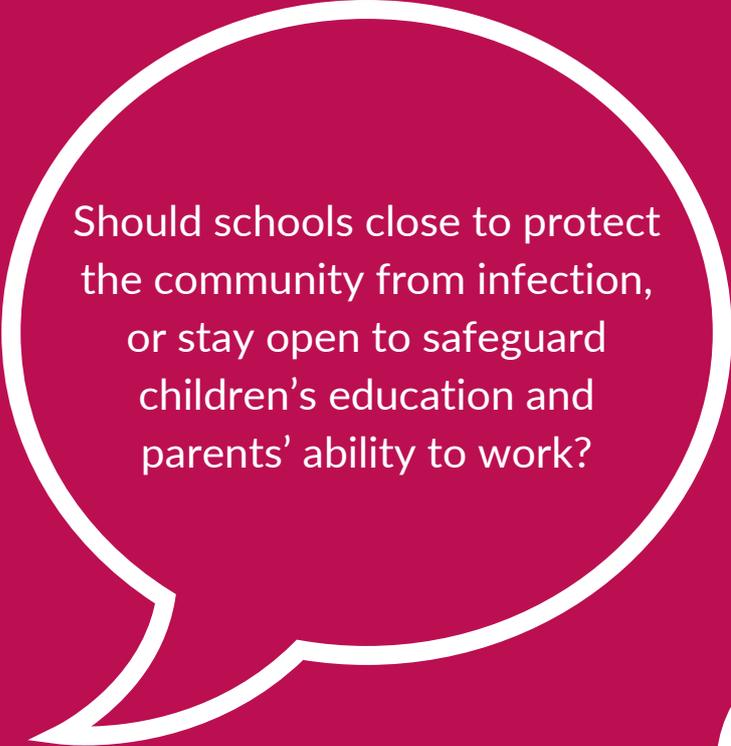
In addition, MCERA's Informed Sources brought research directly to the attention of school leaders and policymakers.

EXPERTS IN THE TIME OF A PANDEMIC

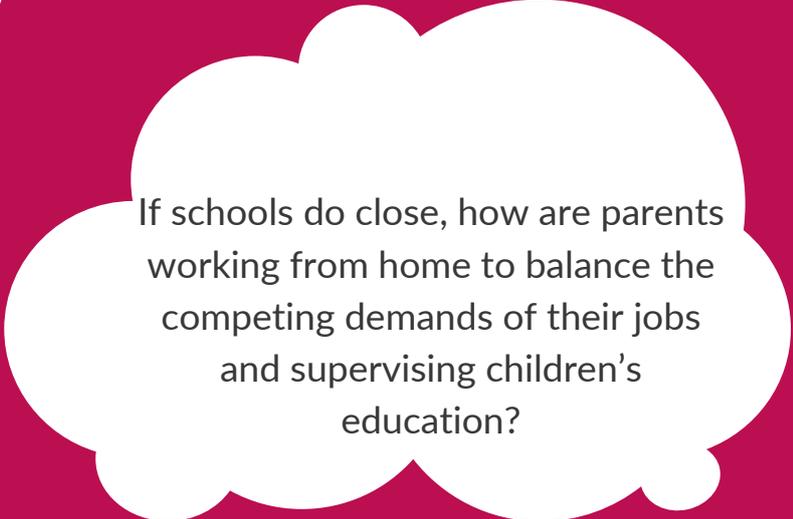
An extended case study

The pandemic forced difficult decisions on parents, teachers, students, education leaders, and policymakers alike.

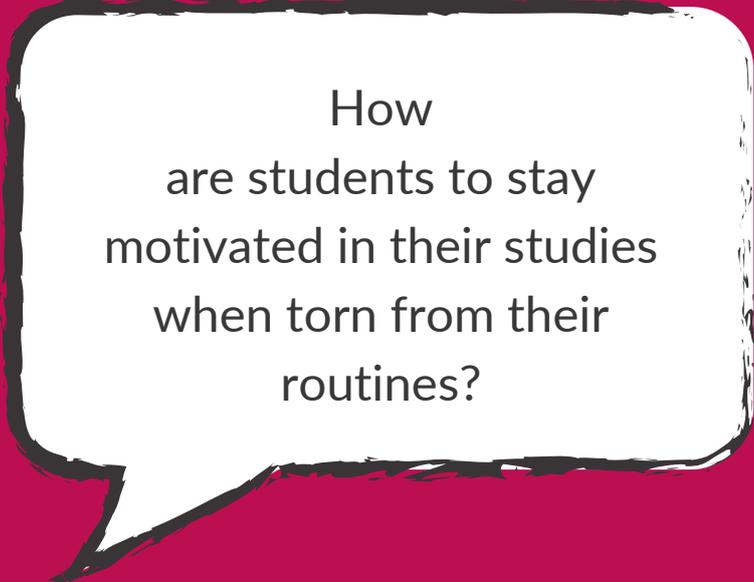
All were faced with dilemmas, particularly surrounding the prospect of school closures.



Should schools close to protect the community from infection, or stay open to safeguard children's education and parents' ability to work?



If schools do close, how are parents working from home to balance the competing demands of their jobs and supervising children's education?



How
are students to stay
motivated in their studies
when torn from their
routines?

What are the equity consequences of closing schools? What happens to students for whom school is the only safe haven?

"With so much uncertainty, it is likely that many students will feel little or no control over their learning. Research has found that when students feel little or no control, they are at risk of disengagement: why bother trying when you have no control over events?"

- *Scientia Professor Andrew Martin, UNSW*

EXPERTS IN THE TIME OF A PANDEMIC

An extended case study

MCERA responded.

In the first two months:

- We issued **11 expert comments**
- We ran **3 webinars**
- We put forward **46 experts** to the media
- We referred **8 experts** to journalists following in-bound queries
- We focused **3 issues of MCERA's Informed Sources** on COVID
- We compiled **1 briefing paper**

As most of Australia began to return to "normal", we followed this initial work up with a **10-part series** "Education After COVID"

EXPERTS IN THE TIME OF A PANDEMIC

Examples of coverage

- An **expert referral** for a story on schools' preparedness for COVID-19 disruption saw Professor Sue Bennett of the University of Wollongong was quoted in a piece in *The Australian*.
- Associate Professor Liz Rouse from Deakin University spoke at a **webinar** and was quoted in an **expert comment**. She was quoted in the *Herald Sun*, as well as 8 regional papers, and on 5AA radio.
- MCERA provided an **expert comment** including Program Director of Infectious Diseases and Immunology at Griffith University Professor Nigel McMillan. He was interviewed on Channel 9 6pm News in Brisbane, syndicated to multiple regional stations in Queensland.
- Following a **expert referral** on Australian schools' capacity for en masse distance learning, Dr Carlo Perrota of Monash University was quoted in the *Sunday Telegraph* and *Sunday Mail* (Adelaide), and on the websites of several affiliated regional outlets.

MCERA'S PRODUCTS & SERVICES



MCERA's products

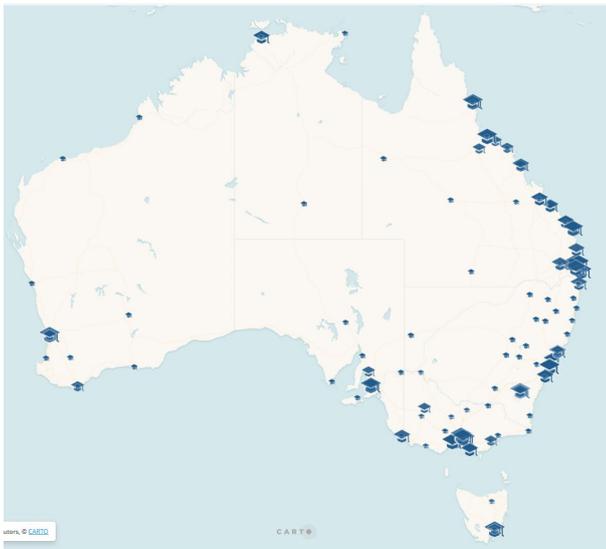
- **MCERA in the Media** - quarterly e-newsletter highlighting where researchers have featured in the media.
- **MCERA media releases** - develop media releases based on recent research and distribute them to our network of more about 1,000 journalists from across Australia.
- **MCERA rapid responses** - a series of short quotes from a variety of researchers when an education issues arises in the media, allowing journalists to know who is well placed to speak on an issue. They are compiled very quickly to respond to key events, issues or announcements.
- **MCERA expert comments** - a series of short quotes from a variety of researchers in preparation for when an education issue is coming up, such as an embargoed report. This provides journalists with access to a range of experts to speak on an issue.
- **MCERA Informed Sources** - a subscription-based service which provides school leaders, educators, parents, researchers and policy-makers short, accessible articles on the latest education research.
- **MCERA media reports** - MCERA provides tailored institutional and individual media engagement reports, outlining the reach and output of the engagement of researchers.
- **MCERA briefing papers** - compilations of expert comments supplemented with links to additional resources.
- **MCERA media engagement plans** - media wrap-around services that comprise of multiple channels of engagement through multiple media sources.

MCERA's services

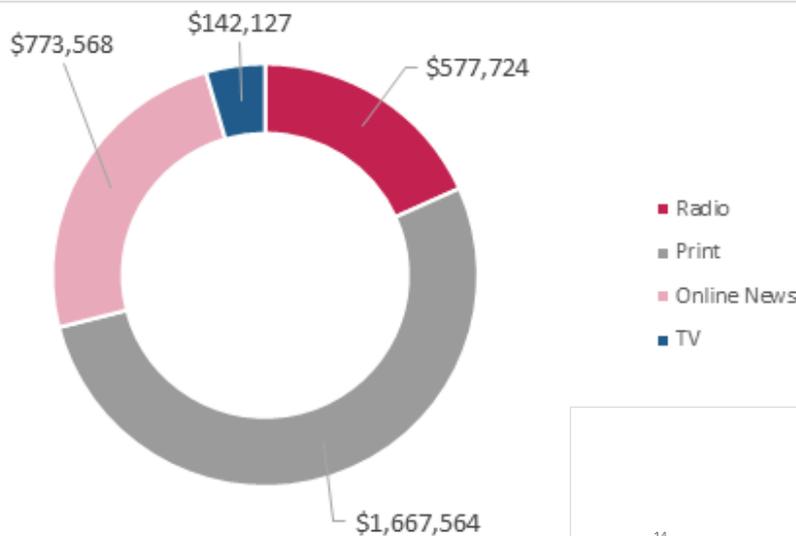
- **MCERA webinar briefings** - for journalists and policy makers to gain a better understanding of a complex educational issue. Experts with varying expertise explain the research related an aspect of an issue.
- **Open access for journal articles** - MCERA is often able to negotiate a period of (or indefinite) open access to articles used in the preparation of media releases.
- **MCERA expert referrals** - we refer journalists to experts they should speak to on specific topics.
- **MCERA tailored media training** - either individual or group training sessions.
- **MCERA Media Awards**
- Promotion of international publications presented within the Australian context.
- Liaison with other organisations where possible to promote releases internationally.
- Assistance in drafting and pitching broader media publications eg op-eds and articles for The Conversation based on works published
- Pitch to individual journalists to arrange exclusives.



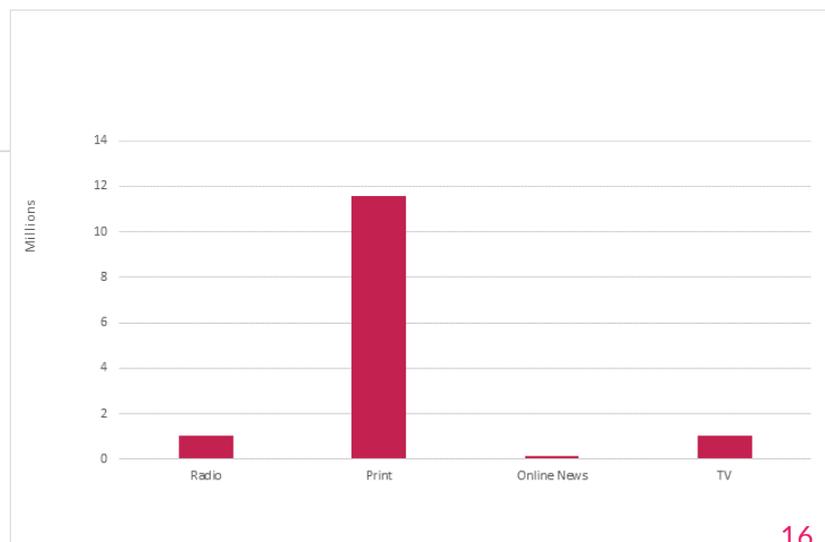
MCERA'S COVERAGE



MCERA's coverage has featured across the country



and across mediums



MCERA BOARD

The MCERA Board of Directors provides governance, strategic direction and oversight for the Centre. It is comprised of a mix of representatives, with a wide variety of expertise and experience, who are well placed to lead the organisation.

ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR ANNA SULLIVAN

Board Chair, Director

Associate Professor Anna Sullivan is a founding director of MCERA and was appointed the inaugural Chair of the Board in May 2016. Anna is currently an Associate Professor of Education at the University of South Australia and the Director of the Research in Educational and Social Inclusion Group at the University of South Australia.



ADJUNCT ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR JIM DAVIES

Company Secretary, Director

Jim Davies is a lecturer at Flinders University, as well as an independent education consultant and researcher, recently researching principals' professional practices that facilitate indigenous education. He has previously held numerous leadership roles in the South Australian public education system, including principal and District Superintendent.

PROFESSOR MICHELE SIMONS

Director

Professor Michele Simons is the Dean and Head of the School of Education at Western Sydney University. She has extensive experience in supporting learning in the fields of adult education, vocational education and workplace learning, and secondary teacher education programs. Michele is President of the Board of the Australian Council of Deans of Education.



LINCOLN SMITH

Director

Lincoln Smith is a Partner at Norman Waterhouse Lawyers, specialising in Employment, Industrial Relations and Media Law, with over 18 years' experience. Lincoln is also a Director of the Mary MacKillop College and a member of the Law Society's Industrial Relations Committee.

SUSI STEIGLER-PETERS

Director

Susi Steigler-Peters is the CEO of ProLearning and the founder of Learning 21, an education consultancy group. Susi was previously the Global Education Lead in Telstra, where her role reached all Australian schools, TAFEs, universities and key education agencies.





NICK WILKINS

Director

Nick Wilkins runs Wilkins Advisory. He specialises in business consulting and taxation, and has more than 25 years' experience in the provision of taxation, accounting and business services to corporate clients, including ASX-listed companies.

EMERITUS PROFESSOR CHRISTINA SLADE

Director

Emeritus Professor Christina Slade was Vice-Chancellor of Bath Spa University from 2012 -2017. She trained in mathematical logic and philosophy at ANU and Oxford and worked as a journalist and academic across the world. Christina's research has focussed on issues of the media and education since 1990.



DIDIER GUÉRIN

Director

Didier Guérin is the Executive Chairman of Media Convergence Asia-Pacific, a company he founded in 1999 to manage or assist the development of international media companies in the Asia-Pacific. Previously, Mr Guérin was a senior executive with Condé Nast and Hachette-Filipacchi Media and he served as President CEO for Asia Pacific for each group.

CATHERINE VOGEL

Director

Catherine Vogel has worked in and has been associated with the education industry for many years, with a particular focus on IB professional development for IB schools in the Asia Pacific region. She has worked closely with school communities to help meet their PD needs and is responsive to schools' requirements. She is a Fellow of the Australian Institute of Company Directors, and CEO and Director, Reshaping Schools Pty Ltd.



MARK ROBERTSON

Director

Mark is a private consultant specialising in research and educational publishing, Asia Pacific and career mentoring. He is also the Development Director for Asia Pacific for CHOR Inc (CHORUS). CHORUS is a not-for-profit organization supporting funding agencies, research institutions and publishers to monitor funded research output and open access compliance.

MCERA PATRONS

MCERA patrons provide strategic advice to the Board and high-level support through their expertise in their various fields.

Current Patrons

Professor Tom Calma, AO

Chancellor, University of Canberra and Co-Chair, Australian Literacy and Numeracy Foundation

Professor Clare Pollock

Deputy Vice Chancellor (Students), Flinders University

"MCERA is a fantastic resource for any journalist looking for a one-stop shop for a range of quality experts who can give valuable and accurate information. An enormous help for any education reporter."

-Clare Masters, National Education and Social Affairs Editor, News Corp Australia

EDUCATION RESEARCH ADVISORY PANEL

The MCERA Education Research Advisory Panel is comprised of senior, eminent researchers. Members of the panel advise MCERA staff in several ways. Their advice is sought on identifying the most appropriate experts for a topic, or to suggest colleagues who may be appropriate experts. They also provide advice on what topics MCERA may wish to consider for media briefings. The MCERA Education Research Advisors have regular, detailed input into various aspects of MCERA's operations and help shape the agenda of MCERA through their detailed knowledge of the sector.

In a year that has been particularly challenging on a number of fronts, MCERA is especially grateful for the way in which Panel members have prioritised assisting our staff in ensuring quality reporting.

Members who held positions on the MCERA Education Research Advisory Panel in 2019/20:

Associate Professor Helen Askwell-Williams

Flinders University

Associate Dean of Research and Director, Flinders Educational Futures Research Institute
Expertise: cognitive psychology and educational practice; evaluation of quality in teachers' and learners' knowledge; mental health promotion in educational settings.

Associate Professor Catherine Attard

Western Sydney University

Associate Professor in primary mathematics education and Deputy Director of Research within the School of Education.

Expertise: Primary Mathematics - pedagogy, technology, and engagement; teacher professional learning

Professor Sue Bennett

Secretary of the New South Wales Council of Deans of Education

University of Wollongong

Expertise: Learning design as supports for supporting teachers' educational design practices; sociological perspectives on educational technology investigating young people's creative practices with technology; functional brain imaging and multimedia-based problem solving

Professor Kim Beswick

University of New South Wales (Sydney)

Head of the School of Education

Expertise: mathematics education

Professor Tracey Bunda

University of Queensland

Head (College for Indigenous Studies, Education and Research)

Expertise: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education

Professor Lindsey Connor

Flinders University

Dean (People & Resources), College of Education, Psychology and Social Work

Expertise: education systems; education change

Professor Deborah Corrigan

Monash University

Expertise: science; STEM education

Professor Shane Dawson

University of South Australia

Director, Teacher Innovation Unit

Expertise: Learning analytics, educational technology, social network analysis, self-regulated learning, creative capacity, Higher Education

Associate Professor Sheila Degotardi

Macquarie University

Deputy Head of Research

Expertise: infant toddler curriculum, pedagogy and learning

Professor Kalervo Gulson

University of Sydney

Australian Research Council Future Fellow (2019-2022)

Expertise: - Education policy and governance; artificial intelligence and automated decision-making; race and computation; human geography; science and technology studies

Professor Kathryn Holmes

Western Sydney University

Associate Dean, Research

Expertise: STEM education, teacher education, educational technology, aspirations and student well-being.

Associate Professor Scott Imig

University of Newcastle

Expertise: preparation and support of teachers and school leaders; high quality learning environments and coaching; green school environments.

Associate Professor Jorge Knijnik

Western Sydney University

Deputy Director of the Centre for Educational Research in the School of Education

Expertise: Gender and sexuality studies; health and physical education curriculum and pedagogies

Professor Julianne Moss

Deakin University

Alfred Deakin Professor and Director, Research for Educational Impact

Expertise: Curriculum theory and change; practitioner inquiry; teacher education and qualitative research methodology (visual methods) with a focus on student diversity.

Professor Martin Mills

University College London

Director of the Centre for Research on Teachers and Teaching at the Institute of Education

Expertise: social justice; pedagogies; school reform; teachers' work; alternative education; gender

Associate Professor Sue Nichols

University of South Australia

Leader, Multiliteracies and Global Englishes Research Group in the Centre for Research in Education

Expertise: literacy; family involvement; practitioner inquiry; inclusive education

Professor Bob Lingard

Australian Catholic University

Expertise: equity in education; assessment; education policy

Professor Mary Ryan

Macquarie University

Dean of Education

Expertise: writing pedagogy and assessment, reflective writing, teachers' work and professional learning, the enabling and constraining conditions for graduating students to manage the demands of their profession, and reflexive learning and practice.

Professor Pasi Sahlberg

UNSW Sydney

Expertise: International education; educational policy and reform issues; equity in education; school improvement; technology, wellbeing and learning; learning through play

Professor Neil Selwyn

Monash University

Expertise: digital media in everyday life; the sociology of technology (non)use in educational settings

Professor Pat Thompson

University of Nottingham

Convenor of the Centre for Research in Arts, Creativity and Literacy

Expertise: interdisciplinary engagement with questions of creative and socially just learning and change

Professor Helen Watt

University of Sydney

Expertise: Motivation, Occupational choice, STEM engagement and pathways, Gender, Teacher development

Professor Annette Woods

Immediate Past President, Australian Association for Research in Education

Queensland University of Technology

Expertise: Literacy; multiliteracies; social justice; curriculum; pedagogy; assessment

MCERA'S FUNDING

MCERA is a not-for-profit registered charity, committed to advancing education by improving the reporting of educational research in the media. To do this we rely on our subscribers and sponsors to support us in this work.

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SYDNEY

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MACQUARIE
University



FINANCIAL REPORT



Media Centre for Education Research Australia

Financial statements

For the year ended 30 June 2020

Media Centre for Education Research Australia

ABN: 91 612 123 627

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For the year ended 30 June 2020

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Media Centre for Education Research Australia

ABN: 91 612 123 627

Income statement

For the year ended 30 June 2020

	2020 \$	2019 \$
Income		
Government Stimulus		
Federal (cashboost)	15,982	-
Federal (JobKeeper)	12,000	-
SA State Government	10,000	-
	37,982	-
Interest received	29	203
Sponsorships	168,450	125,909
Subscriptions (Informed Sources)	2,180	6,055
	208,641	132,167
Expenses		
Bank Charges	39	39
Events and fundraising	217	463
General Expenses	300	140
Insurance	4,903	259
Interest	0	14
Marketing and advertising	103	631
Media Monitoring	6,115	-
Minor plant and equipment	-	143
Office expenses	2,274	1,439
Recruitment expenses	-	560
Salaries and wages (and on-costs)	159,996	171,326
Sundry Expenses	-	240
Travelling Expenses	859	4,219
Websites	559	345
	175,365	179,817
Net profit (loss)	33,276	(47,650)
Retained earnings at the beginning of the financial year	15,888	63,539
Retained earnings at the end of the financial year	49,164	15,888

Media Centre for Education Research Australia

ABN: 91 612 123 627

Balance sheet

For the year ended 30 June 2020

	2020 \$	2019 \$
Current assets		
Cash at bank		
Credit Union	59,419	33,369
Credit Union (credit card)	-	(633)
	<u>59,419</u>	<u>32,737</u>
Total current assets	<u>59,419</u>	<u>32,737</u>
Total assets	<u>59,419</u>	<u>32,737</u>
Current liabilities		
Sundry creditors		
PAYG Withholding	2,916	9,856
Superannuation	3,711	3,530
	<u>6,627</u>	<u>13,386</u>
GST Paid	3,629	3,463
Total current liabilities	<u>10,256</u>	<u>16,848</u>
Total liabilities	<u>10,256</u>	<u>16,848</u>
Net assets	<u>49,164</u>	<u>15,888</u>
Equity		
Retained earnings	49,164	15,888
Total equity	<u>49,164</u>	<u>15,888</u>



Education Matters