

Australian Publishers Association submission to the Review to Inform a Better and Fairer Education System

1. Preamble

The Australian Publishers Association (APA) welcomes the opportunity to contribute to this important review.

KEY MESSAGE

Government and education leaders must engage with educational publishers as essential partners to advance and promote a higher performing and more equitable education system. We believe what's missing right now is a constructive dialogue between government and the publishing sector's skilled creators and providers of learning materials. There are numerous advantages - not least efficiency, quality and innovation and greater equity - that can arise from a strong public-private partnership within the education system.

Outline of the submission

- Who is the APA?
- Schools publishing in Australia
- The role of learning resources in education
- Education policy issues
- Policy solutions: Publishers vision for a better and fairer education system

2. Who is the APA?

The APA represents over 200 Australian publishers, who are responsible for generating more than 90% of Australia's annual book industry turnover across the trade and education sectors.

Publishers play a critical role in delivering well-prepared and thoroughly researched works to a global audience. They engage skilled authors, teachers, and scholars, either through

commissioning or contracting, to produce manuscripts tailored for different markets. In certain genres, publishers use expert selection processes, such as peer review, to ensure high quality. They also make editorial improvements to add value to these works. Additionally, publishers handle the entire process from production to promotion, distribution, and sale. Some even offer digital platforms for accessing the works.

3. Schools Publishing in Australia

Schools publishing in Australia is one of the three education sectors alongside the publication of tertiary learning materials and the publication of scholarly and research materials.

The schools' education publishing sector is diverse, with more than 50 member companies actively developing content for Australian schools. Perhaps a dozen of these publishers could be described as 'large' publishers, with firms of all sizes contributing to the array of learning materials that are available. The sector includes independent Australian publishers, multinational companies with Australian offices and staff, as well as not for profit presses like Oxford University Press and Cambridge University Press & Assessment.

Some firms provide content and services across various curriculum subject areas and school years, while others focus on specific content areas like First Nations' content or particular subjects like the Primary English Teachers Association Australia (PETAA).

Schools publishers produce learning materials in various formats, with digital resources being the fastest growing, offering interactivity, customisation, accessibility, and data-based support, catering to diverse learning needs, and being globally exported.

Overall, the value of educational publishing is evident in its multifaceted contribution to the learning and academic landscape. Educational publishers play a crucial role in shaping positive educational outcomes, industry development, and workforce development in Australia by catering to the learning needs of educational institutions and students.

4. The role of learning resources in education

As argued by the Grattan Institute and researchers such as Mike Horsley, the APA emphasises the significance of well-designed learning resources in positively impacting student engagement, understanding, and academic achievement. Quality learning resources serve as essential tools for teachers, supporting effective instruction, catering to diverse learning needs, and creating meaningful learning experiences. Aligned with curriculum standards, these resources deliver structured content, engaging and

motivating learners. Personalisation options enable tailored learning experiences, while exercises and practice opportunities reinforce understanding and skills. Complex concepts are clarified, aiding comprehension.

Technology integration with interactive elements and multimedia enhances student engagement, while real-world examples connect learning to practical applications. Formative assessment tools help teachers gauge progress and adapt teaching strategies. Regular updates ensure materials remain relevant and aligned with educational advancements.

Learning resources play a crucial role in supporting teachers' work and enhancing student learning experiences. These resources offer immediate feedback and tools that foster a sense of achievement, catering to individual needs through differentiated programs. Teachers can track and monitor student progress, gaining valuable data-driven insights to focus on areas requiring attention. Moreover, comprehensive lesson plans are readily available to save teachers time and ensure comprehensive curriculum coverage.

In summary, this integration of learning resources empowers educators and students alike, leading to more effective and successful teaching and learning outcomes.

5. Policy issues that require government action

5.1 There is major social risk if the government does not address the provision, diversity and discoverability of high quality content. If governments fail to address the provision, diversity, and discoverability of high-quality learning materials, significant social, economic, and educational risks arise.

- Firstly, social inequity can worsen, as marginalised communities and low-income students suffer from limited access to diverse resources, perpetuating the achievement gap and hindering social mobility.
- Additionally, a workforce skills gap may widen, impeding economic growth and reducing Australia's competitiveness in the global economy.
- Teacher effectiveness can also be compromised, impacting diverse learners' needs. Innovation, research, and educational advancement may suffer due to insufficient learning materials, exacerbating the digital divide and leading to resource wastage.
- Furthermore, student disengagement and limited educational progress can occur when learning materials are uninspiring and outdated, hindering intellectual growth and academic progress.

5.2 Reluctance of government to partner with educational publishers to meet teacher and student needs: There is a clear need for ongoing partnerships between government and publishers, which draw upon publishers' expert input into the changing modes of learning, and the provision of learning materials. There has been extensive recent public discussion about how to get the best resources into the hands of teachers. Yet governments, for the most part, have been reluctant to work with publishers to address the complexities of this issue. We see the government working in a collaborative way in other sectors, so why not education?

5.3 The difficulties of the federated system: the need for more timely information about curriculum changes and implementation: Educational publishers encounter numerous challenges when responding to state-based curriculum in Australia's federated system. The complexities primarily arise from the diversity of curriculum frameworks across different states and territories, necessitating materials that align with multiple sets of standards. Keeping pace with the constant updates and revisions to state-based curriculum presents a hurdle, demanding publishers maintain relevant and up-to-date resources. Additionally, publishers must adapt their content development schedules to match varying implementation timelines introduced across jurisdictions, often creating logistical complexities.

Time constraints pose further difficulties, as developing high-quality learning materials demands substantial time investments. When curriculum changes are introduced with short notice, publishers may struggle to meet required standards within the allocated time frame. Smaller educational publishing companies, in particular, may face resource allocation challenges, as catering to different jurisdictions may strain limited financial and human resources, potentially affecting the development of comprehensive materials.

Regional differences add another layer of complexity, requiring publishers to tailor materials to address specific needs and priorities of each jurisdiction while maintaining content quality and consistency in educational outcomes. Building effective relationships with state education departments and curriculum bodies is essential to gaining timely information about changes, necessitating considerable effort and negotiation.

5.4 The need for diverse Australian-focused learning resources to be available to our students: This is vital for several compelling reasons. First and foremost, a diversity of materials caters to different learning styles and preferences of students. Diverse resources enable educators to address the specific requirements and interests of the diverse student population, creating a more inclusive and equitable learning environment.

Secondly, diverse learning resources, such as multimedia materials and interactive tools, play a significant role in engaging students and kindling their interest in the subject matter, leading to better motivation and academic performance. Additionally, supporting different subjects and grade levels with relevant and comprehensive materials ensures that the entire Australian schools system benefits from a well-rounded education.

Thirdly, it is crucial to recognise the importance of including First Nations related materials in the educational landscape. Incorporating Indigenous perspectives, histories, and cultures in learning resources fosters a deeper understanding and appreciation of Australia's First Nations' contributions to the nation's identity. By providing access to such resources, publishers contribute to a more culturally diverse and accurate representation of Australia.

5.5 The importance of a viable education publishing sector viable in guaranteeing the Australian focussed resources that teachers and students need. A financially viable educational publishing sector is crucial for Australian schools, teachers, and students as it enables the creation of high-quality learning materials and comprehensive curriculum coverage. In this context, we acknowledge an intersection with *Revive*, the comprehensive national cultural policy, which overtly encompasses multiple government sectors, including education, and emphasises the importance of promoting Australian content within the nation. This acknowledgment extends to Australian education resources tailored for local students, an area of utmost importance that deserves attention, especially considering the relatively small and state-based Australian market, with its diverse curricula.

5.6 The need to update the models for the provision of learning materials to schools, teachers and students: In the Australian school system teachers choose learning materials and supply them to students through a range of pathways that are used in differing combinations by different schools in different education system settings. There is a role for each of the modes of procurement – and they each have differing implications for learning outcomes and for equity.

- **Statutory Licence:** This legal provision allows schools to use copyrighted materials without seeking individual permissions, streamlining access to resources. It ensures equity by providing equal access to copyrighted materials, benefiting schools with limited budgets.
- **Book Lists:** Schools provide curated lists, allowing students to choose and obtain resources, promoting ownership. Increasingly, this will take the form of a book list of ebooks (or e-ware) that parents access via providers such as [Boxofbooks.com.au](https://www.boxofbooks.com.au).

- **Direct Licensing or Subscription Model:** Publishers offer subscription-based models for comprehensive access to diverse resources.
- **Teacher-Originated Material:** Educators develop tailored resources to improve learning outcomes. Availability might be limited in schools with fewer resources.
- **Self-Sourced from Materials:** Students supplement learning with diverse resources, promoting creativity. Quality and reliability of self-sourced content will vary.
- **Class Sets:** Schools provide a specific set of materials for the entire class, ensuring access. Costs of acquisition and maintenance might limit material diversity.
- **Centralised Resources:** Educational authorities procure and distribute materials, ensuring consistency. However in practice such resources have presented a range of issues in the Australian education system.

The APA expresses concerns about the government's advocacy of centralised resource development, as past experiences have shown difficulties in meeting specific regional and school-level needs, potentially compromising equity of outcomes. For instance, a standardised curriculum might not consider the unique cultural context and needs of certain communities, leading to a lack of cultural relevance and disengagement among learners.

Moreover, centralised resources may limit schools' flexibility and autonomy to tailor materials to students' diverse learning styles and abilities, hindering effective teaching. Bureaucratic decision-making processes might also neglect teacher and school community insights, causing misalignment with local needs. Delays in updating materials and inadequate research evidence raise concerns about the long-term impact and sustainability of centralised resources.

6. Policy Recommendations: Publishers' vision for a better and fair education system

Educational publishers share a commitment to learning and to the provision of the highest quality learning resources. We offer the following advice to the government about policy settings that will see better outcomes and serve our shared desire for greater equity.

6.1 The need for government and publishers to be partners: A public-private partnership where publishers are valued for their expertise and their ability to produce the highest quality of Australian focused resources would bring many benefits:

- A partnership approach grants access to high-quality learning resources, encompassing textbooks, digital materials, and interactive tools. These

well-designed and thoroughly researched resources enhance the overall teaching and learning experience in schools.

- Partnering with publishers facilitates curriculum alignment, ensuring that the materials developed are directly relevant to the educational objectives set by authorities.
- Educational publishers are at the forefront of innovation and technology integration in the education sector. By collaborating with them, education systems can leverage cutting-edge technologies and innovative learning solutions, promoting enhanced student engagement and academic achievement.
- Research-based content is a valuable asset offered by publishers, as they invest in research and data analysis to inform the development of their educational materials. This evidence-based content supports effective teaching strategies and positively impacts student learning outcomes.
- Customisation of learning resources is possible through collaboration with publishers, addressing specific regional or institutional needs. This tailored approach ensures that the materials cater to the unique challenges and opportunities faced by schools and students.
- Publishers also provide professional development opportunities for teachers, facilitating effective integration of their resources into classrooms. Such collaboration can lead to training programs and support that enhance educators' instructional practices.
- Cost-effectiveness is an advantage of partnering with educational publishers, as it allows for leveraging economies of scale and negotiating better pricing and licensing arrangements for educational resources, ultimately benefiting schools.
- Continuous updates to learning materials are a key feature of publishers' work, ensuring that the resources remain up-to-date and relevant in accordance with changing pedagogy and best practices.
- Research collaboration with publishers lead to advancements in educational practices and the development of new and improved learning materials.
- Collaborating with local educational publishers supports the growth and sustainability of the domestic publishing industry, making a valuable contribution to Australia's cultural economy. .

6.2 Make learning resources more discoverable and audit for quality. We know there is considerable room for improvement in the discoverability of learning resources for teachers. Publishers are keen to discuss how collectively we could do better. Possibilities include

- Centralised Digital Platforms: Expand and improve the centralised digital platforms or educational portals that organise learning materials based on

subject, grade level, and other criteria, providing easy access to a wide range of resources.

- **Enhanced Search and Filtering Options:** Improve search functionalities with filters for grade level, subject, format, and other attributes, enabling users to quickly find specific learning materials.
- **Metadata and Tagging:** Ensure learning materials are properly tagged with relevant metadata, enhancing their discoverability through search engines and digital platforms.
- **User Reviews and Ratings:** Encourage users to provide reviews and ratings for learning materials, facilitating peer-based recommendations and discoveries.
- **Collaboration with Education Associations:** Partner with education associations to promote and recommend high-quality learning materials, curating lists of recommended resources for different subjects and grade levels.
- **Professional Development and Training:** Provide training sessions for teachers to familiarise them with available learning materials and effectively incorporate them into their lessons.
- **Marketing and Awareness Campaigns:** Launch campaigns to promote the use of high-quality learning materials among schools and educators, highlighting their value in improving outcomes.
- **Data Analytics and Personalisation:** Utilise data analytics to understand user preferences and personalise recommendations, facilitating more relevant discoveries.
- **Feedback and Continuous Improvement:** Encourage user feedback on usability and discoverability to continuously enhance platforms and search functionalities.

By implementing these strategies and fostering collaboration, high-quality learning materials can be vetted, discovered and utilised.

6.3 Collaborate to deliver the benefits of AI: The role of the educational publishers in the future of education Educational publishers are pioneers in utilising digital technology for positive purposes. In Australia, they have a lengthy track record of delivering high-quality content and have readily embraced digital technologies, including AI. This has led to the development of immersive custom content, tailored assessment tools, and comprehensive digital platforms that support personalised learning.

Educational publishers are seeking to partner with government entities, curriculum authorities, education departments, independent and Catholic system leaders, and teachers to provide the next generation of education materials and services that Australian students require—including interactive and AI-driven materials.

The potential benefits of AI to the quality of learning resources include

- **Personalised learning:** AI can be used to create personalised learning experiences for each student, based on their individual needs and learning styles. This means that students can learn at their own pace and focus on the areas where they need the most help. Personalised learning has been shown to improve student engagement and achievement.
- **Real-time feedback:** AI can provide real-time feedback to students, helping them to identify and correct their mistakes. This can help students to improve their understanding of the material and learn more effectively. Real-time feedback can be provided through a variety of channels, such as chatbots, virtual assistants, and online learning platforms.
- **Immersive learning environments:** AI can be used to create immersive learning environments, such as virtual reality simulations. This can make learning more engaging and interactive for students. Immersive learning environments can help students to develop a deeper understanding of the material and to apply their knowledge in real-world situations.
- **Enhancing content discoverability:** AI can be used to analyse large datasets of educational content and identify patterns that can be used to improve the discoverability of this content. This can help students and educators find the content they need more easily.
- **Freeing up time for value-added and creative work:** AI can be used to automate routine tasks, such as proofreading, grammar checking, and content recommendations. This can free up time for researchers, authors, teachers, and consumers to focus on more value-added and creative work.

These important benefits come with widely acknowledged risks, not least privacy concerns and massive copyright breaches. Transparency and obtaining permission and appropriate remuneration for use are crucial in this context.

Collaborative efforts guided by these principles between governments and publishers can responsibly harness AI's capabilities, contributing to a more innovative and equitable education system. Efforts can take various forms, such as research and development projects, piloting programs, and providing professional development opportunities, all of which lead to the creation of innovative and evidence-based resources aligned with curriculum standards. By working together, educators and publishers ensure robust data privacy, accessibility for all students, and the co-creation of region-specific content, addressing scalability, affordability, and continuous improvement while developing ethical policies. Through these partnerships, government entities can effectively harness

AI's potential, enhancing educational outcomes, and fostering personalised, inclusive learning experiences for students.

7.4 Promote and utilise the educational statutory licence. The education statutory licence in Australia plays a crucial role in supporting learning outcomes by facilitating easy and cost-effective access to a wide array of high-quality learning resources, promoting innovation in teaching practices, and ensuring equal opportunities for all students to access relevant and diverse materials:

- **Streamlined Access to Learning Materials:** The statutory licence streamlines access to a wide range of copyrighted learning resources, eliminating the need for individual permissions, and enhancing availability for teachers and students.
- **Diverse Learning Resources:** Schools can offer a diverse array of learning materials under the statutory licence, catering to different learning styles, promoting engagement, and leading to improved outcomes.
- **Flexibility in Resource Use:** The statutory licence allows tailored use of materials for specific educational activities, empowering teachers to align resources with lesson plans and students' needs.
- **Support for Innovation:** Encouraging innovative use of copyrighted materials, the statutory licence promotes creativity in teaching methods, enriching the learning experience.
- **Cost-Effective Solution:** Eliminating the need for individual permissions saves time and costs, making licensed resources more affordable for schools.
- **Equal Access to Learning Materials:** The statutory licence ensures equal access to resources, levelling the playing field and promoting equity in education for all students.
- **Support for Curriculum Alignment:** Materials under the statutory licence align with curriculum standards, ensuring relevance to educational goals.
- **Consistency in Resource Availability:** The statutory licence provides a reliable source of learning materials, reducing shortages and ensuring access throughout the academic year.

Despite these important benefits, the value of the educational statutory licence is not always appreciated by educational system managers or its utility maximised by teachers and schools. We encourage the government to partner with the APA and with the Copyright Agency to promote the value and utility of licence in order to maximise its benefits.

By adopting a multi-faceted approach that combines educational events, online resources, collaborative efforts, and targeted communication, the promotion of the

education statutory licence in Australia can be more effective in reaching schools and fostering its adoption for improved access to high-quality learning resources.

7.5 Restore school budgets for resources and embrace the utilities of new market

intermediaries. The APA recommends the restoration of school-level budgets for learning resources and materials as a crucial step in addressing equity of access to educational materials. Allocating funds directly to schools or passing them onto parents offers significant advantages in supporting inquiry and learning outcomes:

- **Enhancing Educational Quality:** High-quality learning materials positively impact the overall educational quality and effectiveness of classroom instruction, leading to improved student learning experiences.
- **Curriculum Alignment:** Budgeting for learning materials ensures that resources align with national or regional curriculum standards, ensuring consistent and relevant instruction across schools.
- **Equitable Access:** Including budget lines for learning materials promotes equitable access to educational resources, levelling the playing field for schools in economically disadvantaged areas.
- **Supporting Teachers:** Quality learning materials assist teachers in planning and delivering effective lessons, empowering them to be more effective educators in the classroom.
- **Continuous Updates and Revisions:** Budgeted funds allow for regular updates and revisions of learning materials, keeping them current and aligned with evolving educational standards for enhanced learning outcomes.

7.6 Leverage educational publishers' capacity to monitor engagement, outcomes and

barriers to learning. The shift to the production and publication of interactive digital resources has fundamentally altered educational publishers' capacity to monitor engagement, outcomes, and barriers to learning. More than ever, publishers could use data to significantly improve equity of access and learning outcomes.

Data-driven insights enable personalised instruction and support for students facing barriers. Tailored learning materials cater to diverse needs, making education more inclusive. Identifying common barriers leads to targeted interventions. Continuous improvement ensures relevant and impactful resources. Data informs equity-focused resource allocation to address disparities. Early intervention helps prevent learning gaps. Inclusive design considers diverse student needs. Professional development supports effective material use.

Collaboration with educators enhances resource usability. Research and advocacy promote evidence-based practices. Overall, publishers' monitoring empowers schools, teachers, and students with data-driven insights and resources for equitable access and positive learning outcomes. The APA would, for example, welcome collaborations with esteemed education researchers such as AERO into the applications of new types of learning resources in Australian schools.

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This is a public submission.