

# Purposeful Partnering

How school-business partnering can make a difference for students

Part 5 excerpt on the four key messages 'ingredients' for making a difference



The best thing businesses can do is provide the context of 'real-world' problems...

***Dr Alan Finkel, AC,  
Australia's former Chief Scientist***

Produced by Interface2Learn for

 **origin energy  
foundation**

# Thank you

The enabler for this piece is Origin Energy Foundation

## Saying thank you is one of the most rewarding tasks.

The people we thank are many. They come from different places and perspectives. We connected through formal and informal interactions. These include people with whom we did in-depth interviews (e.g. David Gonski) and those who we joined during workshops (e.g. the Rural Youth Ambassadors, Country Education Partnership), or at forums (e.g. the Australian Financial Review 2020 Business Summit; #Teachmeet online - #Leadmeet 2021).

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## This document contains Part 5 of the full *Purposeful Partnering* paper.

Part 5 provides guidance on:

- How shall we open-up new ways of working together in the context of each student's uniqueness?
- How can we make partnering a great choice for any school and any business?
- What strategic partnering actions might we choose to take or continue taking together?

**Cover photo:** Students from Roma State College, Queensland engaging with Origin Energy volunteers.

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### Term:

Throughout this paper, school-business **partnering** describes a dynamic suite of relations – networking, cooperating and collaborating. The type and combination of relations depicted are voluntary, intentional and change over time. Partnering interactions can come in different forms – mentoring, sharing career stories via Q&As and quizzes, hosting students or businesses on-site, learning challenges and career expos.

There is no 'right' model of a school business relationship.<sup>2</sup> Purpose is what drives why and how schools and businesses choose and need to engage together to provide benefits to students and create value beyond self-benefit.

<sup>1</sup>**Disclaimer:** The full base paper lists names. The purpose of listing names is to respectfully acknowledge those who have influenced the thinking so far. We note, however, listing names is not an indication that everyone in that list agrees with all or parts of this document's content.

<sup>2</sup>Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations. (2012). *Evaluate to grow*.

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# Executive summary

*I especially like the intent of this piece – **partnering with business**. To my mind, that is the future – genuine home-school-business-community partnering.*

**Nathan Chisholm, Foundation Principal, Prahran High School, Victoria.**

## Value

Australian governments recognise “developing stronger partnerships” as pivotal to each Australian young person pursuing, “fulfilling, productive and responsible lives”. The importance of education, and business sectors working together has been high on the national agenda for at least the last 30 years. These sectors either *already* work together or they *want* to do so. A consistent finding from the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) is that working together reaps benefits to students (e.g. inspiration, confidence, learning, networks). But benefits can also extend to families, educators, employers and employees, and governments. A growing body of evidence from the United Kingdom (UK) and Australia sees the value of employee volunteering in education. Volunteering enhances employee ‘skills and competencies’, ‘motivation and mission’, with transferrable ‘productivity and career gains’.

## Mandate

Students today are mixing in a complex and uncertain world. Recent challenges and disruptors have made the expectations of students a whole lot greater and the expectations on them a whole lot heavier.

Together, school and business expertise, and the expertise of those with whom they choose to work,

can drive change to build public trust and inform where governments should/might put the weight of policy. This mandate comes from young people, consumers and employees. The 2021 Global Trust Barometer (GTB) survey (involving 33,000 people aged 18 and over) found 86% agree that CEOs must lead on societal issues. Australia’s GTB report shows 76% of people trust in their employers at the local level.<sup>3</sup> These new voices (young people, consumers and employees) expect to ‘have a seat at the table’, to learn about and be able to shape decisions around present and emerging opportunities and challenges.

## Mindset

Nobel Laureate, Daniel Kahneman reminds us that, “Science, like many other systems, does not thrive on everybody being the same”. In preparing people for life, learning must relate closely to life and our uniqueness within it. Who gets to set the change agenda is a shared responsibility. Trust in schools and businesses to lead change together with other groups and expertise is key.<sup>3</sup> To keep these considerations ‘front and centre’, a robust place to start is to ask three simple questions:<sup>4</sup>

- What strengths and skills do our young people bring and need to succeed?
- What does this community need from its young people, now and in the future?
- What do young people need from this community to succeed in life?

*“There is a culture, behaviour piece we need to start with. Developing and valuing curiosity. I think a lot of workplace processes and systems get stuck just because we have engendered this habit of accepting, in many instances, the current way. Instead of taking up this opportunity to be curious and ask, ‘Could we explore ‘this’ in another way?’”*

**Alexandra Gartmann, former CEO, Rural Bank.**

<sup>3</sup>Edelman Global Trust Barometer measures two trust attributes: competence and ethical behaviour. The 2022 report finds sharp declines in trust, for all institutions. Once again, 74% of employees trust their employers the most. See: [Trust Barometer 2022 Australia](#).

<sup>4</sup>Adapted from those shared by a rural government school’s former principal, combined with our analysis for this paper.

## Measure:

To truly appreciate and value school-business partnering there is a need to measure it, over time, with a focus on ...

- **Intent:** Why are schools and businesses choosing to interact together? (The foundation for measuring impact and across the four stages of education)
- **Engagement:** How are schools and businesses interacting? (Directly/via others see which industry areas and types of interactions go in and out of focus)
- **Impact:** How well are school-business interactions translating into value beyond self-benefit?

*"I learned that it does not matter how old you are at the beginning because if you actually learn with other people, you can become smarter than you were in solitary; because learning with other people can build your confidence and your collaboration skills and you can 'shoot like a rocket' in your learning."*

**Middle years student entrepreneurial education network panel member.<sup>5</sup>**

## Moves:

How can we make partnering a great choice for any school and any business? How can we be co-creating non-prescriptive experiences *with* students, families and their communities? Where can our actions be making a positive difference in the "entire environment around each young person"?<sup>6</sup>

### Message 1: Get the excellence and equity settings right.

Framing what educational 'success' looks like and how to measure it is very important to the rest of the work schools and businesses choose to do together. It reduces the risk of students, educators and businesses simply doing 'busy work'. Every interaction has a curriculum and change agenda.

### Message 2: Set a positive ambitious goal for businesses to engage with students and their schools.

There are strategic ways to bring together Australia's schools and businesses with students, to show how they are doing their part to meet learning, working and active citizenship goals in creative, innovative and measurable ways. Becoming entrepreneurial is everyone's business.

### Message 3: Publicly recognise how both educational and business expertise is making a difference.

Strong and equitable partnering recognises and uses *both* educational *and* business expertise so every student is able to take increasing levels of control and experience success, in their learning, working and active citizenship.

### Message 4: Sustaining equitable, trusting and mutually beneficial partnering is the benchmark.

Businesses partnering purposefully *with* students and their schools should be a normal educational experience for *each* student, *anywhere* in Australia, and starting early at *every* stage of education.

*"The best thing businesses can do is provide the context of 'real-world' problems. If they are trying to do something collaboratively with schools, then they shouldn't think they are smarter than teachers because of their industry experience. The teachers are the ones who should be developing the curriculum, well-informed by the practical applications that the businesses can offer."*

**Dr Alan Finkel, AC, Australia's former Chief Scientist.**

**It takes a village. Working in each student's present and for all our futures. "It is being done. It can be done."<sup>7</sup>**

<sup>5</sup>Anderson, M. & CESA Leading Learning Team. (2019). *CESA Entrepreneurial Education Inaugural 2019 Network - 'The Ideators'*.

<sup>6</sup>Drew Paten, former Australian Indigenous Mentoring Education, AIME student, then University mentor and at 24 years of age, Co-CEO of AIME. At the launch of Global Citizen's #EducationCannotWait campaign, 28 October 2021.

<sup>7</sup>Rooty Hill High School Submission to the Senior Secondary Pathways national review, December 2020.

# Our position

## ‘It takes a village’

**Partnering has always been important. In recent years it’s become a must for all.**

It is our shared responsibility to ensure each young Australian is able to connect with those who they need, when they need, and in ways most useful to each of them in making their own learning, working and active citizenship choices.

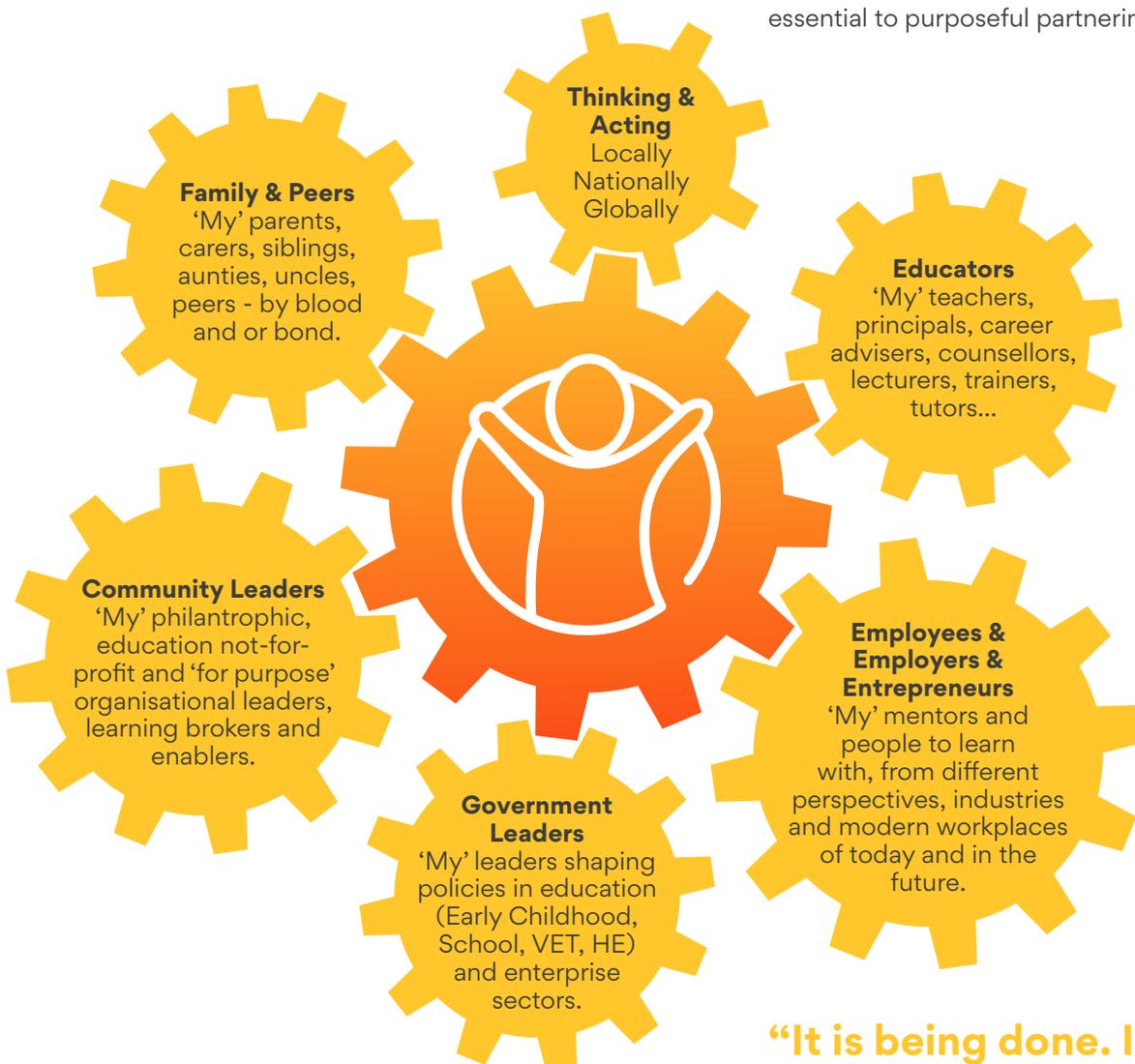
**#Lifelong and #Lifewide Learning with a suite of people directly and indirectly over time.**

Adults have an important responsibility to work *with* students to model and enact strategies of learning, respect for self, respect for others; and respect for the future.<sup>8</sup>

‘It takes a village’ is more than just a catchphrase<sup>9</sup>; it is a collective obligation.

Being open to exploring and experimenting and then acting to do things differently is key.

Together, school and business leaders are in really good positions to recognise and use their expertise for driving and building the trusting cultures essential to purposeful partnering.



**“It is being done. It can be done.”<sup>10</sup>**

<sup>8</sup> Informed by Emeritus Professor John Hattie ‘The Art of Teaching Podcast’ interview with Mathew Green, 30 June 2021.

<sup>9</sup> The Lancet. (2020). ‘A future for the world’s children?’

<sup>10</sup> Western Sydney, Rooty Hill High School’s evidenced position. It is also our (author) evidenced position.

# Two leaders, one message:

## Partnering makes a difference for students

Two highly respected leaders, **Christine Cawsey, AM** and **Frank Calabria**, write directly to their peers in education and business. Together, Christine and Frank's messages urge educational and business leaders to engage in purposeful partnering because it makes a difference for students.



**Christine  
Cawsey, AM**

Principal, Rooty Hill High School, western Sydney, New South Wales; Non-Executive Director, The Smith Family; and Immediate past Non-Executive Director, The Greater Western Sydney Giants, Australian Football League (AFL) Club.

*We have learnt major lessons in the power of strategic partnering to promote student learning, agency, family engagement and opportunity.*

**“It is being done. It can be done.”** These were the words used in our submission to ‘the Shergold’ review of senior secondary pathways to illustrate the impact of existing partnering work on student post-school transitions at Rooty Hill High School.<sup>11</sup>

Our submission recognised that our students were using their engagement with business mentors, programs and initiatives to take greater agency over their own learning and transition pathways. We had replaced traditional notions of career education with multiple and deep entrepreneurial learning experiences across Years 7-12, encouraging students to explore School Based Traineeships, vocational certificate training, volunteering and part-time work for inclusion in their senior programs of study.

Schools can keep doing what they did in the past and will be forgiven if this makes little difference. At Rooty Hill High School we know that identifying and

implementing new ways of working and new practices *will* make a difference for students. Partnering makes a difference.

As part of the school's Strategic Plan, we identified key organisations whose values, mindsets and ways of working encouraged strategic partnering. The willingness of the leaders of those organisations to work with our staff and students to co-design and deliver innovative “work and enterprise” learning was one of the keys to our school making a shift towards next practice. In an annual review conversation with the leaders of each partner initiative, it became evident that the partnering relationship *itself* added value. Together we gained an understanding of each other's professional context and commitment, finding the best ways to work together and observing changes in student confidence, attitudes, knowledge, skills and transitions.

Students in western Sydney come from a diverse set of cultural and linguistic backgrounds, including a large Aboriginal community. Many are bilingual and they all bring a diverse set of skills to their learning. These students rely (more than most) on the networks and opportunities created by their schools, their teachers and those who work with them. Many work hard to take up every one of those opportunities. When students plan to transition from school to employment, traineeships, apprenticeships or university pathways, many are “first in family”.

Rooty Hill High School now holds six years of post-school destination data to demonstrate that having the mentoring, support, expertise and encouragement of key business, not-for-profit and university partners makes a measurable difference.

<sup>11</sup>Education Council. (2020). *Looking to the future*. Also known as the Shergold review - Professor Peter Shergold, AC, Chancellor of Western Sydney University chaired the senior secondary pathways national review.

*“When businesses and schools engage constructively together, we can meet the challenges of a new world of work, and young people have the greatest opportunities to achieve their best.”*



**Frank Calabria**

A message from Frank Calabria Chief Executive Officer, Origin Energy; Director of the Australian Energy Council and the Australian Petroleum Production and Exploration Association; and Origin Energy Foundation Board member.

*When working with young people and their schools, we are challenged by new thinking.*

As the world takes action to combat climate change and transition to a lower-emissions future, we remain focused on our purpose to get energy right for our customers, communities and planet.

The challenges we face in our industry are not unique. Society is undergoing the most significant disruption in the world of work since the industrial revolution. Many of today’s school students will eventually be employed in jobs that have yet to be created.

Some young people and their families could see the emerging world of work as a threat rather than an opportunity.

These circumstances present shared challenges for both schools and businesses.

How do teachers enable young people to prepare for the unknown? What should be prioritised in the curriculum?

How does the business community learn to quickly and effectively share with young people and their schools the skills and behaviours needed for the roles that are only now emerging?

Working together makes sense.

At Origin we have seen how mutually beneficial relationships with schools can be.

Given the nature of our business, we have many employees across STEM disciplines. By volunteering, our employees are able to work with teachers, bringing alive the STEM curriculum with real-world examples. Our volunteers have worked with more than 20,000 school students.

When working with young people and their schools, we are challenged by new thinking. When we hosted an international gathering of entrepreneurs working on disruptive technologies, we invited members of the Young Entrepreneurs Program and their teachers from Rooty Hill High School in western Sydney to join. The result was a remarkable session bringing together entrepreneurs, industry experts and students; where age and experience were eclipsed by original thinking.

These activities have given us a new respect for the work of teachers and the capacity of young people.

**I encourage other businesses to engage constructively with schools through purposeful partnering so together we can meet the challenges of a new world of work, and enable young people to achieve their best.**

# Preface

**This preface introduces and sets the scene for the rest of the paper.**

**Who?** The paper's primary audiences are school and business senior leaders (including the leaders of organisations with whom schools and businesses choose to engage). Philanthropists and philanthropy leaders may also find the paper's content informative for their own impact giving decisions. As the workplace context is schools, the paper refers to children and young people as 'students'.

**What and how to use?** *Purposeful Partnering* is a position paper, providing detailed content and examples to think through the case for purposeful partnering and the leadership it requires. People will be coming to this paper from different perspectives and with specific needs or areas of interest. With this in mind, readers can view each part as its own stand-alone document. People can read the paper or use it at the point that makes most sense to them and their need.

**Organisation?** After the Preface, the paper comprises five parts:

1. **Benefits:** Who benefits when schools and businesses engage purposefully?
2. **Importance:** Why do schools and businesses need to work together?
3. **Building a partnering culture:** Building cultures for high impact partnering
4. **Meaningful ways to engage with students:** Putting high impact partnering into place
5. **Four key messages ('ingredients') for making a difference:** From intent to action to impact

Some sections include specific illustrations of practice, as well as key reading lists.

The stories and quotations in the document come from individuals in schools, businesses and education-related organisations who have direct experience of the issues in some capacity.

**How?** Across mainly 2020-2021, this purposeful partnering project (referred to in this paper as 'the project or the analysis') involved a range of processes: interviews with 27 key Australian education and business leaders; insights from 15 educator-led forums and school-student-business interactions; a review of close to 200 reports and research documents; listening to key business and education leaders and researchers explain their thinking on podcasts;<sup>12</sup> and analysing recurrent themes and having our thinking tested in formal and informal ways.

**Background?** The people of Origin Energy chose education as the Foundation's focus in 2010. By 2020, QUT's Centre for Philanthropy and Nonprofit Studies reported that 62,725 students had benefited. The Foundation facilitates Origin Energy volunteering through its long-term partnering with, for example, SolarBuddy. Origin Energy volunteers have worked with 20,000 young people across the education spectrum and from different locations around Australia. Some volunteers work directly with teachers to help bring the STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) curriculum 'to life' and mentor students. The Foundation also works directly, in a school-led approach, with Rooty Hill High School in Western Sydney and the Foundation sees this collaboration as both "strategic" and a "privilege".

Origin Energy Foundation is committed to the purposeful partnering of schools and businesses. The Foundation initiated and enabled this position paper and work.

<sup>12</sup> Examples include: 'No Limitations: Blenheim Partners'; Singularity University, 'The Corporate Innovation Podcast'; 'The Art of Teaching Podcast: Mathew Green'; 'The Learning Future: Louka Parry'; 'The Knowledge Project'; 'Entrepreneurship & Ethics: Stanford Innovation Lab'; 'The Marketing Commute: Uni of Sydney'; 'How I work: Amantha Imber'; 'Work Life TED: Adam Grant'; 'Curious Minds: Gayle Allen'; 'Game Changers: Phillip Cummins and Adriano Di Prato'; and 'Fostering Creativity: Dublin City Uni'. 'Talking Teaching: The University of Melbourne'; 'Life's Lottery: Paul Ramsay Foundation'; 'InnovationAus Podcast'.

# Part 5: Four key messages for making a difference

*I always say I got where I am today through a little bit of luck and lots of hard work. Whereas, I think I should have also been able to get 'here' by design.*

*By design I mean making opportunities accessible to students, no matter where they are and through experiences that expose students to a 'bigger world' of possibilities and in ways that are actually meaningful for the student; and make these experiences a lot more integrated at the local community level, but understanding that interacting with business is a 'two-way street'.*

**Sally-Ann Williams, CEO,  
Cicada Innovations.**

**This section presents four key messages** ('ingredients') and practical opportunities for how together, schools and businesses could be progressing creative and impactful ways of partnering.

## From intent to action to impact

The world is a complex and uncertain place, with our young people facing a range of challenges, both shared and individual (discussed in Part 2). How shall we open-up new ways of working together in the context of each student's uniqueness?

Behavioural research tells us three things need to happen to go **from intent to action to impact**:

- Motivation (high/low).
- Ability (easy/difficult).
- Prompts (add/subtract value).<sup>225</sup>

To the first issue, motivation, the case is strong for why schools and businesses should and *need* to be partnering (see Parts 1 and 2). To the issues of ability (capability and capacity) and prompts (#hacks), it is also clear schools and businesses either do already or *want* to engage together, but it is not always an easy choice to enact with impact (see Parts 3 and 4).

How can we make partnering a great choice for any school and any business? How can we be co-creating non-prescriptive experiences *with* students, families and their communities? Where can our actions be making a positive difference in the "entire environment around each young person"?<sup>226</sup>

"It is being done. It can be done."<sup>227</sup>

The challenges and disruptors discussed in Part 2 offer new insights for rethinking and reimaging how to action equitable, trusting, transparent, and mutually beneficial purposes and ways of working together.

Building richer pictures of partnering provides a new lens in the progress Australia is making toward its national aspirations and goals for every young person. As a recent policy report concluded: "There can be no educational excellence for our nation without equity".<sup>228</sup> #ItTakesAVillage.

The following messages focus attention on key areas at individual partnering and system / eco-system levels.

## Message 1: Get the excellence and equity settings right

Framing what educational 'success' looks like and how to measure it is very important to the rest of the work schools and businesses choose to do together. It reduces the risk of students, educators and businesses simply doing 'busy work'. Every engagement has a curriculum and change agenda.

<sup>225</sup>Fogg, B. J. (2020). *Tiny habits: The small changes that change everything*. Mariner Books.

<sup>226</sup>Drew Paten, former Australian Indigenous Mentoring Education, AIME student, then University mentor and now, at 24 years of age, Co-CEO of AIME. At the launch of Global Citizen's #EducationCannotWait campaign.

<sup>227</sup>Rooty Hill High School Submission to the Senior Secondary Pathways national review, December 2020.

<sup>228</sup>Bonnor, C., Kidson, P., Piccoli, A., Sahlberg, P., Wilson, R (2021). *Structural Failure*.

## Message 2: Set a positive ambitious goal for businesses engaging *with* students and their schools

There are strategic ways to show how, together, Australia's schools and businesses with students are doing their part to meet learning, working and active citizenship goals in creative, innovative and measurable ways. Becoming entrepreneurial is everyone's business.

## Message 3: Publicly recognise how *both* educational and business expertise *is* making a difference

Strong and equitable partnering recognises and uses *both* educational *and* business expertise, so every student is able to take increasing levels of control and experience success, in their learning, working and active citizenship.

## Message 4: Sustaining equitable, trusting and mutually beneficial partnering is the benchmark

Businesses partnering purposefully *with* students and their schools should be a normal educational experience for *each* student, *anywhere* in Australia, and starting early at *every* stage of education.

There are policy benefits to be had. The focus of the messages and practical ways to action these provide a visible way to connect to various **recommendations** (R) in or across multiple national education review reports, including:

### ***Through growth to achievement, 2018 March:***

- **R3:** Ensure all students have the opportunity within schools to be partners in their own learning.
- **R8:** Strengthen school-community engagement to enrich student learning through the establishment of mechanisms to facilitate quality partnerships, including engagement in mentoring, volunteering and extra-curricular activities, between schools, employers, members of the community, community organisations and tertiary institutions.
- **R10:** Accelerate the development of contemporary pedagogy through the use of collaboration, mentoring, observation and

feedback, including from colleagues and students, by incorporating these practices into the core role of teachers and creating the conditions to enable teachers to engage in them.

***Optimising STEM, 2018:*** Solving real-world problems students want to solve rather than focusing on careers in STEM:

- **R6:** Governments and industry should work together to focus the narrative for primary and secondary students on how STEM skills and knowledge can solve real world problems. Having been motivated by real world problems, students should be introduced to the applicable subjects, skills and jobs that will afford them career flexibility as they contribute to meeting the needs of our future society. There should be particular effort to engage student cohorts underrepresented in STEM fields.
- **R8:** Education Council should establish a national online resource and provide a toolkit that brings together material to support schools and industry in designing, implementing and evaluating partnerships.

### ***Review into Regional, Rural and Remote Education, 2018 January:***

- **R (p. 72):** Support RRR students to make successful transitions from school to university, training, employment and combinations of these.
- **R (p. 77):** Improve opportunities for RRR schools to implement entrepreneurship in education through curriculum, teaching, system and cultural changes and building on good practice.
- **R (p. 73):** Support RRR communities to implement innovative approaches to education delivery designed to improve education access and outcomes for students living in remote communities.

### ***Looking to the future, 2020 June:***

- **R4:** Students should leave school with a Learner Profile that incorporates not only their ATAR score (where relevant) together with their individual subject results, but that also captures the broader range of evidenced capabilities

necessary for employment and active citizenship that they have acquired in senior secondary schooling.

- **R11:** Education authorities and industry bodies should formalise their working relationship in order to facilitate the engagement of industry in senior secondary schooling in a systematic and comprehensive manner.
- **R12:** Education authorities need to facilitate and encourage partnerships between schools and employers at the local level in order to help students make choices and gain experience in the diverse career pathways that different industries can offer.
- **R17:** All senior secondary students with disability should have access to work exploration in school, and in collaboration with disability support groups have an individual post-school transition plan put in place prior to leaving school.
- **R20:** Data integration projects across sectors and states and territories should be leveraged to provide insights into how and why people move through different parts of the education system and labour market across their lifetimes and, to this end, the Education Council should accelerate the development of a Unique Student Identifier to understand better the routes by which students, from Year 10 onwards, move into tertiary education, training and employment.

## What strategic partnering actions might we choose to take or continue taking together?

The entry point for a suite of phased-in actions and products (e.g. platforms for sharing and fostering connections) is a flexible but coherent frame to underpin the building and exchange of evidence.

Measure, gather and aggregate impact over time around three key metrics.<sup>229</sup>

- **Intent:** *Why are schools and businesses choosing to interact together?* (The foundation for measuring impact)

- **Engagement:** *How are schools and businesses interacting?* (Directly/via others see which industry areas and types of interactions go in and out of focus)
- **Impact:** *How well are school-business interactions translating into value beyond self-benefit?*

A starting point for taking action would be to work through existing and established networks and programs *and* expertise where, in self-determined ways, there is mutual benefit to participating in the project (e.g. it aligns to an evidenced student need).

The UK's Educator and Employers group has more than 10 years of robust research and practice-informed strategies for education and employer engagement that can inform the ongoing 'work'. The group recommends organising campaigns to show people, a lot of people, about what is happening. ... and how to join in. Similarly, the World Economic Forum used a crowd-sourcing campaign to identify case studies that were 'paving the way'. Partners might choose to adopt a similar approach to identify work already underway, but 'under the radar'.

### Action 1: Evidence-informed partnering for learning what works, in what ways and for whom.

David Gonski, AC said practice-led research could play a role in instigating, spreading and promoting new insights for action. Reporting at smaller, more 'local' personalised levels can show results that may otherwise remain masked by results for the whole of Australia, or for states and territories—allowing a better understanding for the schools and the local community, policymakers and researchers; and importantly, the student. Schools already gather student data at the local level.

A recommended focus for a phased-in program of research is where issues of equity and excellence and decent work intersect. As one leader interviewed said:

*"There is no room for young people to 'fall out' of the education system. When young people 'fall out' of full-time education or training or work, then getting them re-engaged is very, very difficult."*

**Megan Kirchner former Head, Tertiary Education, Business Council of Australia.**

Complementary to practice-led evidence, an important role for governments is investment in large-scale base

<sup>229</sup> Metrics informed by the Australian Research Council (2019). *Engagement and Impact Assessment 2018-19. National Report*. Australian Research Council, Canberra.

longitudinal data, such as with internationally renowned poverty experts at the [University of New South Wales](#) who are using OECD measures of poverty with a suite of organisations, including The Smith Family.

**A special case study project:** Frame a STEM-related ambitious target around the [UN Sustainable Development Goals](#) (SDGs). The SDG goals have currency with schools and businesses / industries. The goals provide a real-world context of problems. Goal 4's focus on education aggregates across so many issues. It is inclusive of education and wellbeing outcomes. A focus on STEM provides an opportunity to bridge and value equally students' vocational and university education intentions and expectations. It recognises the wider imperative of all young people becoming both entrepreneurial and employable. It also draws a clear line to an employment area the [Tech Council for Australia](#) reports employs 861,000 across cities, suburbs and regions and has a target of employing one million Australians by 2025.<sup>230</sup>

A partnering project with this focus and alignment can provide schools and businesses with a visible way to report and acquit on the benefits and outcomes from working together. It can provide students with a tangible case to use and comment on in their learner profiles. The cases can provide content for collaborative learning and research. The timeline of 2030 to achieve the 17 SDGs gives an end-date. A national platform for the SDGs exists. On a global stage, cases of Australia's schools and businesses working together shows others, here and around the world, how we are doing our part to meet these goals. As a result, there is the potential for learning, innovation and reputational benefits.

## **Action 2: Build an online knowledge-bank of partnering purpose statements (learning intentions and success criteria).**

A simple, doable idea is to prototype a searchable and publicly available bank of purpose statements on an existing platform. A host would have the capability

(or resourced capability) to manage the content. It is an idea that puts the focus on outcomes and impact. It is a practice familiar to teachers. It values teaching expertise, develops and deepens their capabilities to improve student learning. How to construct and co-design purpose statements with others is a transferrable capability. It offers a new avenue to inspire possibilities, invite new connections and provide feedback to inform and complement Action 1. Schools can have the option to include a link to their own webpage for further details about the specific curriculum alignment, tools and/or multi-media stories and cases of 'the work' and its impacts to-date. **'The Partnering Wheel' in Appendix 2** could help with purpose statement development.

The advantage of the times we live in is that we can (*and should*) do more than post purpose statements and links to stories of school-business partnering. We can compound the evidence gathered and shared. With machine learning assistance, the online-bank could provide a way to profile and track patterns over time, creating real-time data.<sup>231</sup>

● We would expect:

- An effective algorithm set of instructions to focus on four areas: 1) Intent of opportunities (a real-time ticker of intent statements at program, project or interaction level); and using the full intent statement to identify 2) Who's getting opportunities; 3) Breadth of opportunities (with indicative links to ANZSCO categories and emerging occupations); and 4) Scope of opportunities (mentoring; hosting; challenges; talks / Q&As or expos).<sup>232</sup> A name for this online bank might be the 'Index of School-Business Partnering Opportunity'.
- There is a role for teaching expertise to create and co-create the purpose statement content with others who best understand the students and their strengths, circumstances and community. There is a role for business expertise with school educators, through education departments authorising support, to create the algorithms for the real-time exchange of information.

<sup>230</sup> Tech Council of Australia. (2021). *The economic contribution of Australia's tech sector*.

<sup>231</sup> Brookings policy research institute, 6 May 2021. See: [How can real-time performance data lead to better education outcomes?](#)

<sup>232</sup> UK research on volunteering in schools and colleges concludes, "Our research affords a tantalising opportunity to investigate the types of volunteering activity which respondents were most commonly doing when they reported skills gains in particular areas." (p. 17).

As noted, this approach could accelerate the exchange of real-time data. Publications are still essential to see interpretations, but publications are time-bound and, consequently, the reliability of content or interpretations may diminish over time. By contrast, real-time data will allow us to see the size of change as we experience change in real-life. In a complex and fast-paced changing labour market, schools and families need access to this kind of real-time information.

Based on the evidence gathered for this paper, a phased-in approach could focus first on building the bank with examples from schools in under-served communities and students and families living in disadvantage.

### **Action 3: Ensure consistency and currency of student occupational information.**

A whole market-place of different diagnostic career-related learning platforms (products) is emerging for students, schools, families. We explored nine of these. The platforms included commercial fee-paying, as well as login free or freely accessible options (but not necessarily easily discoverable). These are an important resource for helping students, their families, and their advisors to pair interests to current and emerging employment and inform subject choices.

There is an important role for governments to play in ensuring visibility and promoting the base source market information on the various diagnostic platforms. The classification system for occupational information needs to be relevant to the Australian economy.

Given the relentless pace of change, bringing together current and emerging industry and occupation data will also be vital.

How students, their families and schools use this source of information opens a new perspective for reviewing platforms and evidencing what partners use to promote greater student participation and in what ways or combinations of ways:

- Students and principals indicated they would expect to see ‘student friendly’ #hacks include:
  - **Quizzes:** Enabling students to: 1) Deepen understandings of themselves (interests, passions

and strengths) *“Whenever I’m having trouble figuring out what I want to do, I’d go to the website and re-do the quizzes.”* (Year 9 student);

2) Make connections from their interests to different subjects (learn about, learn to do), and to current and emerging industries and occupations (e.g. starting salaries, who works in each, rise or decline opportunities or risks); 3) See vocational and university offerings together in the one place (e.g. sortable by geography, fees, scholarship or other financial assistance, accommodation etc.).

- **Expectations:** All industry, university, and vocational providers, plus government to articulate and publish the skills, capabilities and dispositions that are fundamental to vocational readiness for that industry, written in language students can understand.
- **Stories:** Enabling students to see ‘people like me’ in the context of their workspaces. Hear about their decisions and choices and goals from student-driven questions.
- **Tracking:** Students being able to save their quiz results to see patterns or shifts, year on year. Students being able to explain whether this helped them make informed choices. A principal said, *“It would be good to start at Year 7. To begin Career Action Plans”.*
- **Aggregate:** Students being able to see what other students are interested in. *“I would like to see, and I also wouldn’t mind anyone seeing what people who are my age are interested in.”* (Year 9 student).
- **Share:** Students being able to share and use the tool with a parent / family member. *“It would be good for parents because they could get to know what job option is good for their child and children could also show their parent what they want to do.”* (Year 9 student).

#### **Action 4: Deepen and strengthen shared responsibilities by seeking out intentional opportunities for mixing.**

To make the most of school-business partnering, we need to find strategic and authentic forums and ways to engage together. To offer *one* illustrative example of putting strategic thinking in to action:

The Australian Financial Review (AFR), Business Summit is a practical way for business leaders to interact routinely with school principals, students and teachers. It has a wide-reach.<sup>233</sup> It is big-picture and solution-focused. It is a space in which business, policy and tertiary audiences already gather.<sup>234</sup>

The Summit's issues and 'calls to action' directly affect young people and families. For example:

- 2018: How network platforms reshape business and society? Digital disruption. Lessons from Australia's start-up culture. Key ingredients for success.
- 2019: What is business for? How can business sharpen its sense of purpose and restore its reputation? Technology trends and the future of society. Young entrepreneurs under 40. Global success stories of corporate Australia.
- 2020: Risk in uncertain complex times; digital disruption, transforming Australian companies from the inside; nurturing and scaling-up deep tech start-ups to bring them to the world. How the nation's best young entrepreneurs turn fresh ideas into successful enterprises. Climate change.
- 2021: The future of work and equity (e.g. The Smith Family Chairman and CEO) and new practices for digital future; green economic imperative.
- 2022: Panel - Riding out Australia's skills and labor shortage (e.g. Kate Pounder, CEO, Tech Council of Australia; Dominic Price, Work Futurist, Atlassian).

Young people belong in conversations and forums directly affecting their present and our future. Young people are the seekers and creators of jobs. Young people are our current and future citizens. There are roles for sponsoring the active participation of students and the organisations working with them at the summit.

#### A phased-in approach might be around the theme, **"Striving for educational excellence and equity through partnering":**

1. **A (standing) session** each year to inspire possibilities and recognise school-business partnering expertise, to make it easier to see why and how to connect with purpose. It can be done. We recommend prioritising:
  - *How are student learner profiles changing the way recruiters, employers and tertiaries do or could do business?*<sup>235</sup> Reason: Currency of assessment and assessing.
  - *How are students with VET or university intentions becoming both entrepreneurial and employable through enterprise and entrepreneurship strategies and place-based approaches?* (Middle Primary and Secondary Years (Age 9 to14) and Senior Secondary Years (Age 15 to 19).) Reason: Becoming entrepreneurial and employable. Start early.
  - *How are we learning to learn and collaborate in complex "messy hybrid" times?* (Leadership lessons from remote and blended learning practice and research.) Reason: Excellence and equity through opportunity.
  - *Mentoring is a high impact practice. The problem is how to volunteer?* Coordinate an annual expo at the Summit. For example, through the network, 'Together4Youth' and schools.<sup>236</sup> Reason: Excellence and equity through opportunity.
2. **Create an annual innovation in school-business partnering award.** Governed and judged by a panel of students with educator and business leaders and entrepreneurs. Reason: Striving for educational excellence and equity through partnering. Make visible and reward the kinds of partnering behaviours we want to see more of in the system. The Rural Youth Ambassadors is an example of an existing authentic young-people led group with which to partner. It can be done.

<sup>233</sup> Advancing Regional Innovation Program (ARIP) funded more than 100 innovative business leaders from regional Queensland to attend the Myriad Technology Conference.

<sup>234</sup> The AFR Business Summit 2021 website states: "Bringing together the nation's highest level of political, business and expert leadership to work out how Australia can come out of the crisis stronger than most."

<sup>235</sup> The Summit also holds a breakfast session.

<sup>236</sup> In 2020, around 25 organisations formed a cooperative network called, "Together4Youth". Each organisation has expertise in volunteer mentoring with young people (secondary through to early adult). The Centre for Social Impact brings an evaluative frame to the network's cooperative learning together.

<sup>237</sup> Science & Technology Australia. See: [Science meets Parliament 2022](#). "Australia's most powerful vehicle for deep engagement between STEM sector and policymakers."

3. **Look for opportunities to strategically connect and compound the learning** from significant cross-sector forums, such as the AFR Business Summit (but also with such events as, ‘Science meets Parliament 2022’<sup>237</sup>). For example, organisations such as Cool Australia, with their track record of partnering and their reach to 90% of schools in Australia, seem well-placed to enable practical and strategic benefit to students and their schools. These important and significant forums are ‘out of reach’ to most young people, their families and their schools. It does not have to stay this way.

Discovering new ways for business to engage with students and their schools and scaling the learning of what works can take us beyond pockets of good work. It can take us to *systemic* good work.

*We need a cultural mindset change. Teachers are part of this cultural change, but business also needs to engage earlier, and not just firm by firm, but as a collective; because firm by firm is good, but it’s not a ‘game changer’.*

**Dr Heather Smith, PSM, Former Secretary of the Department of Industry, Innovation and Science.**