

Government Matters

2 February 2023

Summary of recent key government announcements relevant to UQ and higher education prepared by the Government Relations and Policy unit.

Education and Skills

UNESCO - Higher Education qualifications

[Australia has joined the first worldwide treaty in higher education](#), making it easier for Australian education institutions and their students to be more globally mobile. The new [UNESCO Global Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education](#) ensures students who study with Australian education institutions will have their qualifications recognised in a fair, transparent and non-discriminatory manner around the world.

The global pandemic's disruption to education access and continuity has highlighted the importance of providing high-quality education beyond traditional in-person and in-country models.

Australia's participation in the Global Convention assures students that they can more readily access higher education study, including qualifications, using diverse forms of learning such as online or blended learning, joint degrees, microcredentials and offshore campus delivery.

International student data

[Education Minister Jason Clare](#) has announced the latest data on the number of international students in Australia. The data shows that in the year to November 2022, 148,174 international students commenced higher education provided by Australian universities - a 38 per cent increase on the same time period in 2021.

Indian students have been returning at a faster rate than many other countries with 160 per cent more Indian students in Australian higher education today than there were at the end of 2021

The top 5 countries of origin for international students are:

- China – 47,428 students (11.3 per cent fewer than the same time in 2021)
- India – 29,436 students (160 per cent more than the same time in 2021)
- Nepal – 17,954 students (169 per cent more than the same time in 2021)
- Vietnam – 5,949 students (50 per cent more than the same time in 2021)
- Indonesia – 3,832 students (20 per cent more than the same time in 2021)

This data was collated prior to the Chinese Government's announcement that Chinese students should return to onshore study.

Science and Innovation

Interim Queensland Forensic Advisory Board

[Eminent retired judges](#) Julie Dick SC and Walter Sofronoff KC will co-chair Forensic Science Queensland's new interim advisory board. The interim advisory board will provide strong accountability, transparency, and governance oversight to support the establishment and operations of Forensic Science Queensland. The interim board, once fully appointed, would include a membership that represented a broad cross-section of criminal justice stakeholders, including relevant government agencies, legal and scientific professionals, and victim advocacy representatives.

Engaging STEM grants

Community organisations, education professionals, scientists and citizen science groups are invited to apply for grants of up to \$20,000 for projects, events and activities that increase participation in science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM). More can be found on the Queensland Chief Scientist's website [here](#).

2023 World Science Festival Brisbane

Queensland Minister for the Arts Leeanne Enoch has launched the [2023 World Science Festival Brisbane \(WSFB\) program](#), which returns from 22 to 26 March. This year, the festival will cover a range of topics across its Conversations, Special Events and City of Science, with the ever popular The Hatchery; Turtle Conservation Experience, returning to delight visitors and livestreamed viewers.

Advanced Manufacturing

Commercial Manufacturing Accelerator Voucher Scheme

[Queensland Minister for Manufacturing](#) Glenn Butcher has announced the Commercial Manufacturing Accelerator Voucher Scheme in North Queensland with [James Cook University's Area 61](#). The \$250,000 program provides funding of up to \$25,000 per business - to be matched by suitable candidates - to accelerate the development of their working prototype, towards commercial manufacturing.

The program delivers a better pathway for research and development to North Queensland manufacturers. This program is a pilot program and there is opportunity for the program to be scaled and include SEQ businesses and universities.

Energy Transformation

Kidston Wind Farm – Prescribed project status

The final stage of the [Kidston Clean Energy Hub](#), the Kidston Wind Farm, has been declared a prescribed project. The Clean Energy Hub will provide large scale solar, pumped hydro storage and wind energy at a single location.

More than 20 local suppliers based in Townsville, Ingham and Cairns are partnering with Powerlink to deliver the transmission line that will connect the Clean Energy Hub to the national electricity grid. The statement can be read [here](#).

Australian – German joint Hydrogen projects

Australia and Germany are boosting research into [renewable](#) hydrogen production with around \$110 million combined conditional funding for [four joint projects](#). [The agreement](#) brings together Australian and German industry and research partners to deliver new projects, primarily based in Australia. The funding is part of the German-Australian Hydrogen Innovation and Technology Incubator, known as [HyGATE](#).

The initiative opened in March 2022 with Australia and Germany committing funding up to AU\$50 million and €50 million respectively. This round sees ARENA, on behalf of the [Department of Climate Change, Energy, Environment and Water](#) (DCCEEW), contributing \$50 million. [Project Management Jülich \(PtJ\)](#) is managing €40 million (\$60 million) on behalf of Germany's [Federal Ministry of Education and Research \(BMBF\)](#).

Japanese-Queensland green hydrogen investment

Japanese energy giant ENEOS officially opened the [demonstration plant at its Bulwer Island](#) for green hydrogen production. The Bulwer Island facility will have capacity to produce up to 20 kilograms of green hydrogen a day. ENEOS will produce the green hydrogen using its patented electrolysis technology (Direct MCH®), powered from renewable energy generated by an onsite 250-kilowatt solar system.

The hydrogen will be produced in the form of methylcyclohexane (MCH), so it can be stored and transported as a liquid before being refined back to hydrogen in Japan. It is the first project supported by the Japanese Government's \$24 billion Green Innovation Fund, which aims to help Japan achieve carbon neutrality by 2050. The company is investigating other sites in Queensland for future stages of its development. The Queensland Government's statement can be read [here](#).

Health and Bio-medical Research

Doomadgee and Millmerran health investment

[New health facilities](#) will be built in Doomadgee and Millmerran as part of a \$1.038 billion investment in rural and remote health infrastructure. The Doomadgee Hospital and Community Health Centre and the Millmerran Multipurpose Health Service will both be tendered in early 2023, with completion scheduled for 2025. The models of care include clinical review and health education and promotion programs. The Millmerran Multipurpose Health Service facility will comprise of an eight-bed inpatient unit, five-bed residential aged care space, and acute and non-acute spaces.

Mental health policy

The Federal Government will invest \$8.5 million to support those with a lived experience of mental health to shape the policies and programs that affect them. Funding of \$7.5 million will establish and operate two independent national mental health lived experience peak bodies – one representing consumers and the other representing

carers, families and kin. These steps address recommendations made in recent inquiries including the [Productivity Commission's Inquiry into Mental Health](#) and work undertaken by the [National Mental Health Commission](#).

National Autism Strategy

The [Federal Government](#) will progress a National Autism Strategy and commit further funds to the [Autism Cooperative Research Centre \(CRC\)](#). Minister for Social Services will today announce that a further \$2 million in Commonwealth funds have been allocated to the Autism CRC to continue their important research and provide advice to support development of a National Autism Strategy. An Oversight Council will be established for the Strategy, with its first meeting expected in March. The National Autism Strategy will form a whole-of-life plan for all autistic Australians, spanning a number of key reform areas including healthcare, education and employment.

Gold Coast University Hospital and Robina Hospital expansion projects

The [Queensland Government has announced](#) Broad Construction has been awarded the tender for the Gold Coast University Hospital sub-acute expansion project, and Alder Construction has been awarded the tender for the Robina Hospital Emergency Department expansion. The Gold Coast University Hospital will receive three new wards to provide 70 extra sub-acute beds to care for patients with complex behavioural issues.

Alder Construction will begin work early this year on the \$16.5 million expansion of Robina Hospital's Emergency Department which will deliver an extra 20 treatment spaces. The Emergency Department will be extended into the former transit lounge area to deliver 20 extra treatment spaces and additional procedure areas, which will improve patient flow and reduce waiting times

Defence and National Security

Global ransomware taskforce

[Australia will commence](#) the operations of the [International Counter Ransomware Task Force](#) to combat the scourge of ransomware. The Task Force sits under the US-led Counter Ransomware Initiative, comprised of 37 like-minded governments.

Minister for Home Affairs and Cyber Security the Hon. Clare O'Neil said the Task Force will enable sustained and impactful international collaboration, designed to disrupt, combat and defend against the increasing ransomware threat and called on other countries to join the collective effort. The creation of an International Counter Ransomware Task Force was agreed to by members of the Counter Ransomware Initiative at a meeting in Washington in November.

The Task Force, chaired by Australia, will drive international cooperation to tackle ransomware, including through information and intelligence exchanges, sharing best practice policy and legal authority frameworks, and collaboration between law enforcement and cyber authorities.

Environment

Australian marine park monitoring technology

The Department of Agriculture and Fisheries has been allocated \$1 million to support best management practices through agronomic research and technical support for bioreactor implementation to improve SEQ water quality. You can read the outcomes [here](#).

Earthborn Australia's Palmwoods organics facility

Minister for the Environment and Water Tanya Plibersek and the Queensland Minister for the Environment and the Great Barrier Reef Meaghan Scanlon [has announced \\$1.5 million in funding](#) to upgrade [Earthborn](#) Australia's Palmwoods organics processing facility on the Sunshine Coast. The completed facility will be able to process an additional 22,000 tonnes of organic waste each year to create high-quality soil improvers.

Agriculture and Biosecurity

Northern Australian Coordination Network – Biosecurity

Queensland, in partnership with the Northern Territory and Western Australia, will have even stronger surveillance and preparedness for emergency animal diseases with an injection of \$4.33 million in federal funding. The funding supports the newly-established [Northern Australian Coordination Network](#), which brings together Queensland, Northern Territory and Western Australian governments in partnership with key industries and local communities. The network will support preparedness activities by partnering with industry groups on the ground to maximise available resources, enhance communication and training, and boost our foot-and-mouth disease and lumpy skin disease surveillance efforts

International Engagement

Industry Minister mission to US

[Minister for Industry and Science Ed Husic](#) will promote Australia as an advanced and reliable commercial, science and technology partner during a visit to the United States from 25 January to 2 February. The US is Australia's third largest export market and the largest source of investment in Australia. The Minister has also [met US Secretary of Commerce](#) to discuss greater robotics, quantum and battery collaboration.

During the visit, Minister Husic toured Moderna pharmaceutical manufacturing and the MassRobotics facilities both in Massachusetts before travelling to Washington DC to meet policy makers. The Minister said that that "Discussions with industry leaders will boost Australia's economic integration with the US, as well as inform our National Quantum, Robotics and Battery Strategies to strengthen Australia's economic prosperity and resilience."

Australia-India Economic Cooperation and Trade Agreement in Force

Australia-India Economic Cooperation and Trade Agreement (ECTA) has [come into force](#). The ECTA will expand trade in goods and services and deliver better economic outcomes for businesses on both sides. You can read more about the agreement [here](#).

Industry and Economy

Australia's AAA credit rating confirmed by S&P

Standard and Poor has confirmed Australia's AAA credit rating. The international ratings agency also upgraded Australia's fiscal assessment score from 2 to 1. You can read the Treasurer's statement [here](#) and view S&P's credit ratings webpage for more information [here](#).

Queensland Small Business Strategy

[Queensland's small businesses](#) are being encouraged to share their challenges, priorities, and goals to help inform the Queensland Government's new Small Business Strategy. The [Small Business Survey](#) opens today (January 30) and gives small business owners and operators an opportunity to share their views on what they need to help their business thrive.

Housing and Communities

Communities Innovation Fund

Community organisations and not-for-profits are being encouraged to apply for funding under a new [Queensland Government](#) grants program to tackle social isolation and loneliness in our communities.

Minister for Communities and Housing Leeanne Enoch said applications for the new Communities Innovation Fund were now open. The fund is being supported with \$4 million over four years from the Queensland Government. The [Communities Innovation Fund](#) will deliver funding to a diverse range of projects, programs, services and supports across Queensland that will deliver community-led solutions to reduce social isolation and loneliness

Critical Minerals and Resources

Hastings Technology Metals - NAIF Loan

The [Northern Australia Infrastructure Facility \(NAIF\)](#), a key funding pillar driving the Australian Government's Northern Australia agenda, will provide a \$220 million loan to Hastings Technology Metals Ltd to help fund the construction of a rare earths mine, processing plants and associated infrastructure.

[Yangibana](#) will deliver a Mixed Rare Earth Carbonate product into the global critical minerals supply chain, to meet growing demand for products supporting the manufacture of technology needed to reach net zero. Yangibana

boasts high-quality concentrations of Neodymium and Praseodymium, which are key in the manufacture of permanent magnets used in electric vehicles, wind turbines, robotics, medical applications, and digital services.

Indigenous and Cultural Engagement

First Nations Digital Inclusion Advisory Group

[The Federal Government](#) has announced the establishment of the First Nations Digital Inclusion Advisory Group to accelerate progress towards closing the digital inclusion gap for First Nations Australians. The Advisory Group will work closely with First Nations people to provide advice to Government and identify practical measures to support progress towards Target 17 of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap.

The Group was funded in the October 2022-23 Federal Budget. The Group will be chaired by Ms Dorothy West OAM, who has extensive experience across the media and broadcasting sectors and is a strong advocate for digital inclusion for First Nations people.

Australia's new National Cultural Policy

[The Federal Government's](#) new [National Cultural Policy – Revive](#) – has been released today and will set the course for Australia's arts, entertainment and cultural sector for the next five years. Backed by \$286 million in dedicated funding over four years, Revive's centrepiece is the establishment of Creative Australia.

Creative Australia will be the Government's new principal arts investment and advisory body. The governing body of Creative Australia will continue to be known as the Australia Council.

Within Creative Australia four new bodies will be established:

- A new First Nations-led body that will give First Nations people autonomy over decisions and investments
- Music Australia, a dedicated new body to support and invest in the Australian contemporary music industry
- Writers Australia, to support writers and illustrators to create new works
- A new Centre for Arts and Entertainment Workplaces to ensure creative workers are paid fairly and have safe workplaces free from harassment and discrimination

Expansion of Connected Beginnings program

The Australian Government is expanding the [Connected Beginnings](#) program to nine new communities, which will help 3,500 First Nations children be better prepared for school. The funding for the new sites is part of an investment of \$81.8 million from the Australian Government to expand the program nationally to 50 sites by 2025.

Across the 34 new and existing sites, the Connected Beginnings program has the potential to benefit around 11,600 First Nations children in Australia aged 0 to 5 years. The program connects families to local early childhood education, health and family support services to help young children meet learning and development milestones so they are ready for school.

Parliamentary Updates

Parliamentary Inquiries

The latest opportunities to participate in Parliamentary Inquiries can be found [here](#).

The latest parliament sitting dates for the Federal Parliament can be found [here](#) and the Queensland Parliament [here](#).

Resources

Contact us

govrelations@uq.edu.au

Have questions or suggestions? Let us know.

Government Relations and Policy are available to support you with engaging government, understanding government processes and announcements, and assist with identifying key opportunities.