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RE: House Standing Committee on Employment, Education and Training
Committee Secretariat
Submission via online portal

To whom it may concern,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the use of generative artificial intelligence in the Australian education system. The Education Futures Studio (a multi-university collaboration), and the Sydney Policy Lab at the University of Sydney recognise the potential for AI to enhance educational outcomes, improve lives and society more broadly. We recognise that this can also come with significant risks that need to be anticipated and managed effectively.

Our submission provides three top-level recommendations in response to **Point 6 of the Terms of Reference**: *Recommendations to manage the risks, seize the opportunities, and guide the potential development of generative AI tools including in the area of standards.*

Recommendation 1: Policy making should be both anticipatory and responsive to systemically manage the risks and seize the opportunities facing the Australian education sector

AI technology is being introduced before there are adequate policies for guiding productive use and mitigating harms in education. This means a lag time between the introduction of AI and policy development, which also contributes to largely reactive policy making. There needs to be both anticipatory policy making (to assess both development and potential harms and opportunities) and responsive policy making (to guide existing use). Attention to future possibilities - based on past and present needs – has the potential to address the systemic risks and opportunities which the education sector currently faces at a time of unprecedented uncertainty.

Recommendation 2: There needs to be meaningful, participatory and collective approaches to address the complexity of AI in education policy making

Involving a diverse range of community members and education stakeholders at all stages of policy development and implementation will help to anticipate risks, build trust and co-create principles to inform complex decision-making measures. This is particularly important in anticipatory policymaking which must be responsive to local, regional, and national needs. This genuinely multi-scalar and multi-stakeholder approach throughout the entire process will lead to more timely decisions in the future. Part of this will require

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distributing socio-technical expertise and embedding opportunities for collective learning, experimentation, and policymaking about the development and use of AI and emerging technologies in education. In particular, there is a need to distribute expertise and embed these opportunities in a way that is accessible to and involves those from under-represented backgrounds who might otherwise lack the opportunity and resources to participate in policy co-creation processes. To ensure that this collaborative work (which is systemic, collective, and cross-sectoral) becomes embedded across research, policy, and practice - there is a need for long-term government funding to sustain this initiative.

Recommendation 3: Establish a cross-sector representative body and knowledge-sharing hub which embeds a research-policy-practice approach toward the governance of AI across all Australian education contexts.

All areas of education are already and likely to be impacted by the use of AI and all stakeholders need opportunities to shape the implementation of AI in Australian education systems. A representative cross-sector independent body should include members from government, departmental agencies (e.g. Department of Education, Department of Industry, Science and Resources), regulatory bodies relating to education (e.g. TEQSA, ASQA and ACECQA), higher education (both STEM and HASS disciplines), schooling and early childhood sectors (including diverse range of students for all sectors), the education technology industry, teacher associations and parent groups. The body should be established to: (1) oversee the development of AI in Australian education with a focus on the risks and possibilities of open A.I. development; (2) produce regular issue-specific publications and events for the groups it represents; and, (3) maintain a set of iteratively revised guidelines and learning resources for the field.

About the Education Futures Studio and Sydney Policy Lab

The *Education Futures Studio* is hosted at the University of Sydney, and is a cross university collaboration supported by the Queensland University of Technology and University of Technology-Sydney. The *Education Futures Studio* aims to make technical democracy a defining feature of education futures. We bring together a range of academic and non-academic stakeholders to generate collective learning, experimentation, and policymaking which seeks to embed the democratisation of AI across society. Our approach recognises that distributed expertise and action is urgently needed to build stakeholder networks and knowledge sharing across policymaking scales: including classrooms, schools, organisations, and state, territory, and national jurisdictions. The Education Futures Studio is supporting the next-generation of interdisciplinary early career researchers who can apply and advance this research-policy-practice lens across Australian and transnational contexts (to further support collective learning, experimentation, and policymaking about AI governance in education).

The *Sydney Policy Lab* at the University of Sydney was created to be a multidisciplinary, non partisan space where the academy and community can come together to investigate and solve complex policy issues that face our world, build community and make progress. We are a 'policy laboratory' in that we bring people together to investigate, test and develop solutions to complex issues. The Lab's prime focus is on and with community. It was created by people searching for practical answers to the questions of how we can best arrange our life together.

The Education Futures Studio and Sydney Policy Lab have a shared interest in participatory policymaking in AI to ensure better, fairer outcomes that improve lives and minimise risks. This is why we are partnering to deliver a series of workshops in 2023 to facilitate community-informed principles for AI governance and policymaking. The Education Futures Studio has also co-created an 'EdTech Assessment Toolkit' with diverse education stakeholders, which aims to support multi-stakeholder capacity building for collective learning, experimentation, and policymaking about AI and emerging technologies in education. This toolkit will be publicly available in the final quarter of this year.

We would be happy to elaborate on our work in more detail and welcome further engagement on this critical issue.

Yours sincerely,

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