

MEDIA RELEASE

Steps to improve STEM learning

Research Conference 2016

4 August 2014: Delegates to *Research Conference 2016* in Brisbane next week will consider educational research that investigates how best to improve science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) learning.

Researchers and practitioners will come together at the annual research conference of the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER), which commences on Sunday 7 August, to address the theme, *Improving STEM Learning: What will it take?*

Senator the Hon. Simon Birmingham, Australian Government Minister for Education and Training, will open the conference on Monday 8 August.

Speaking ahead of the conference, ACER chief executive, Professor Geoff Masters AO said Australia faces significant challenges in promoting improved STEM learning in our schools.

“There has been a steady decline in the mathematical and scientific literacy levels of Australian 15 year olds since at least the turn of the century,” Professor Masters said.

“These declines are occurring at a time when the economy and an increasing number of occupations are requiring graduates with advanced STEM skills.

“*Research Conference 2016* will showcase research into what works, and what else it will take, to address these challenges.

“Strategies that encourage engagement with STEM, especially in the primary years, through cross-disciplinary, team-based problem solving approaches show great promise.

“Increasing engagement with STEM is vital if we are to increase participation in STEM subjects in the secondary years. This is especially important if we are to ensure the future supply of STEM specialists, not least the supply of the next generation of mathematics and science teachers.

Delegates will hear from researchers who work with teachers to engage students in studying STEM-related subjects through targeted teaching, activities like gaming and applying learning from neuroscience.”

Research Conference 2016 will explore ways to improve STEM education in Australia, with keynotes:

- Dr Geoff Garrett AO, Chief Scientist, Office of the Queensland Chief Scientist, on the snakes and ladders, or ups and downs, of STEM innovation in Australia
- Pauline Hoyle, Associate Director of STEM Learning in the United Kingdom, on the impact of government policy directions in STEM education in the UK
- Prof Tim Bell, University of Canterbury at Christchurch, New Zealand, on coding, the challenge of introducing computer science and approaches like [Computer Science Unplugged](#)

Research Conference 2016 takes place in Brisbane from 7 to 9 August.

Further information is available from www.acer.edu.au/rc

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