Our Research Action Plan

Partners in ‘The power of recognising more’
action research study 2023 - 2025

Darug

Wurundjeri

Darumbal

Eora

Dja Dja Wurrung

We acknowledge.

We acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land throughout Australia who have been learning and educating on Country for over a thousand generations.

We pay our respects to their Elders past, present and emerging for they hold the memories, traditions, cultures and hopes of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australia.

We acknowledge that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people continue to live in spiritual and sacred relationships with Australia.

Terrimurigal

Lutruwita

Gadigal

Kaurna

Peramangk

Bunwurrung

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

About the Study

There is emerging practice across the country that is pushing beyond the existing confines and measures of learning success to more fundamentally consider and address what we need and what we value from our learning system and the learners it supports.

This study is focused on probing common, complex and challenging questions that are necessary to build robust evidence on the impact and value of broader recognition of learning.

Bringing together early movers to work through these questions is integral to the trajectory of change.

The study has been commissioned by Learning Creates Australia and is supported by research partner, Nous Group. The initial phase of work will take place between September 2023 and December 2025.

LearningCreates AUSTRALIA

nous

Why am I here?

A group of early movers - schools, academics, employers, universities, admissions centres and jurisdictions - have independently been developing programs, activities and projects to recognise ‘more’.

Some of this work is still at very early stages of development, other work is further developed, some even evaluated - all are part of an emergent program of work that seeks to shift what and how young people learn, and how that learning is recognised.

This network is coming together to work on this study and together we will:

- Collect information, data and insights
- Examine emerging issues and assumptions to understand the impact and effects of new approaches
- Generate practical outputs that can accelerate broader uptake and influence policy
- Amplify the benefits of broader learning recognition in our spheres of influence.

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This section details the questions we will explore over the life of the action research study. It also outlines the ‘signals of change’ we want to track and report on.

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This section describes the secondary research methodology that the study will use, drawing on primary research and work conducted by study partners. It outlines data sources and our approaches to analysis and reporting, as well as privacy and ethics considerations.

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Process

This section sets out the structure of the study and the key steps involved in each action research cycle, including key actions for design and contribution partners.

PART ONE

Overview

This section describes the background to the study and sets out the purpose and context for the study, its objectives, audiences and how we plan to work together.

A VISION FOR CHANGE

Young people are wonderfully capable and diverse, and are our future

When young people are thriving they are wired for learning success. Young people are telling us they want to bring their whole self into their learning – with home, community, culture and family life valued as central to their wellbeing and ability to unlock future pathways that are relevant to who they are and what they know and can do.

All young people should be able to finish school with what they need to keep learning, working and exploring their future. We see a future where young people are:

- **Thriving individuals** - with agency, wellbeing and a strong sense of self and identity
- **Thriving learners and workers** - in further education and employment
- **Thriving citizens** - active in their communities and society.

THE OPPORTUNITY

There is growing momentum for change

In the 21st Century, we can recognise achievement in far more sophisticated ways than exams or test scores, as these point-in-time assessments do not reflect the breadth and depth of what young people know and can do.

How we recognise learning at the end of secondary schooling is important because it determines post school pathways to further learning and work. It also has a flow on effect to what we teach and what and how we assess young people at school.

There is emerging practice across the country that is pushing beyond the existing confines and measures of learning success to more fundamentally consider and address what we need and what we value from our learning system and the learners it supports.

Recognising ‘more’

A group of early movers - schools, academics, employers, universities, admissions centres and jurisdictions - have independently been developing programs, activities and projects to recognise ‘more’.

This work is showing promise to improve transitions and school experiences. Practices include: Learner Profile pilots, alternative entry pathways to Universities, peer or student self-assessment, learning experiences outside of school, assessment of complex capabilities, micro-credentialing and work integrated learning of work-ready skills.

Some of this work is still at very early stages of development, other work is further developed, some even evaluated - all are part of a growing network that seeks to create equitable transformation in education so that it better meets the modern needs and values of our young people, communities and nation.

An action research study

Over the next three years, as a group of early movers, we will come together to examine our practice so we can learn, build and create together. Together we will generate principles for practice and informed policy directions, and develop questions for further research.

Our network is made up of schools, government, tertiary providers and admissions centres, peak bodies, First Nations groups and community organisations all committed to advancing and leading new practice in broader recognition of learning. **Together we will:**

- Collect information, data and insights
- Examine emerging issues and assumptions to understand the impact and effects of new approaches
- Generate practical outputs that can accelerate broader uptake and influence policy
- Amplify the benefits of broader learning recognition in our spheres of influence

Common principles underpinning the Study:

CENTRES YOUNG PEOPLE	We embed young people's voice and agency across all aspects of our work, particularly those excluded or disadvantaged by the system. We believe that by giving young people access to power and decision making about the future, our ability to design systems fit for purpose expands.
FIRST NATIONS SELF-DETERMINATION	We are committed to First Nations leadership and self-determination as we work towards an equitable learning system that values, respects and trusts Indigenous learning aspirations and draws from generations of wisdom and teaching.
FOCUSSED ON EQUITY AND INCLUSION	We are working to dismantle inequity in the current system. We work to shift power to those who stand to benefit most and who are usually excluded from the design and decision-making process in education, and more broadly.

Research Questions

GUIDING QUESTION

Can evidence of each learner's broader skills, capabilities and attributes be trusted and used to enable young people's transition to further learning and employment?

Field questions - lines of enquiry:

1. *What impact does broader recognition of learning have on the educational experience of young people, and their pathways to further learning and work?*

2. *What arrangements need to be in place to enable equitable broader learning recognition approaches?*

3. *What conditions in the learning system are enabling (or preventing) broader learning recognition?*

So what?

What more do we need to learn, communicate and apply to emerging practice to build momentum for broader learning recognition?

OUR STARTING PLACE

Australia is ready for us to transform education.

Practice related to broadening learning recognition is emerging and diverse. It will take time to develop meaningful, robust and complete evidence on broader recognition of learning. Our study will contribute to the development of that evidence.

We will conduct this action research study during a busy period of education reform, dialogue and evolving national and global challenges. This context will affect what we are examining and how our insights are received.

The current context includes:

- **The national conversation around a First Nations Voice to Parliament** brings an opportunity for Australians to come together, but there has also been an intensification of racism and community division. This response affects all Indigenous Australians, including communities involved in partnerships and innovation on broader recognition of learning.

- **Re-consideration of the purpose, scope and funding of Australian education,** via national reviews of schooling (The Review to Inform a Better and Fairer Education System) and the higher education sector (the Australian Universities Accord, plus public consultation on the transparency of admissions information). There is also a parliamentary inquiry into the perceptions and status of vocational education and training. These reviews may have implications for the scope and policy appetite for broader recognition of learning.

- **Community and policy discussion of contemporary issues that affect young people's education access, choices and experiences,** including school refusal, higher education debt, flow-on effects of Free TAFE, and the implications of ChatGPT and artificial intelligence for assessment. These discussions may affect perceptions of broader learning recognition, as well as provide emerging themes for the study to consider.

ABOUT LEARNING CREATES

Why have Learning Creates commissioned this study?

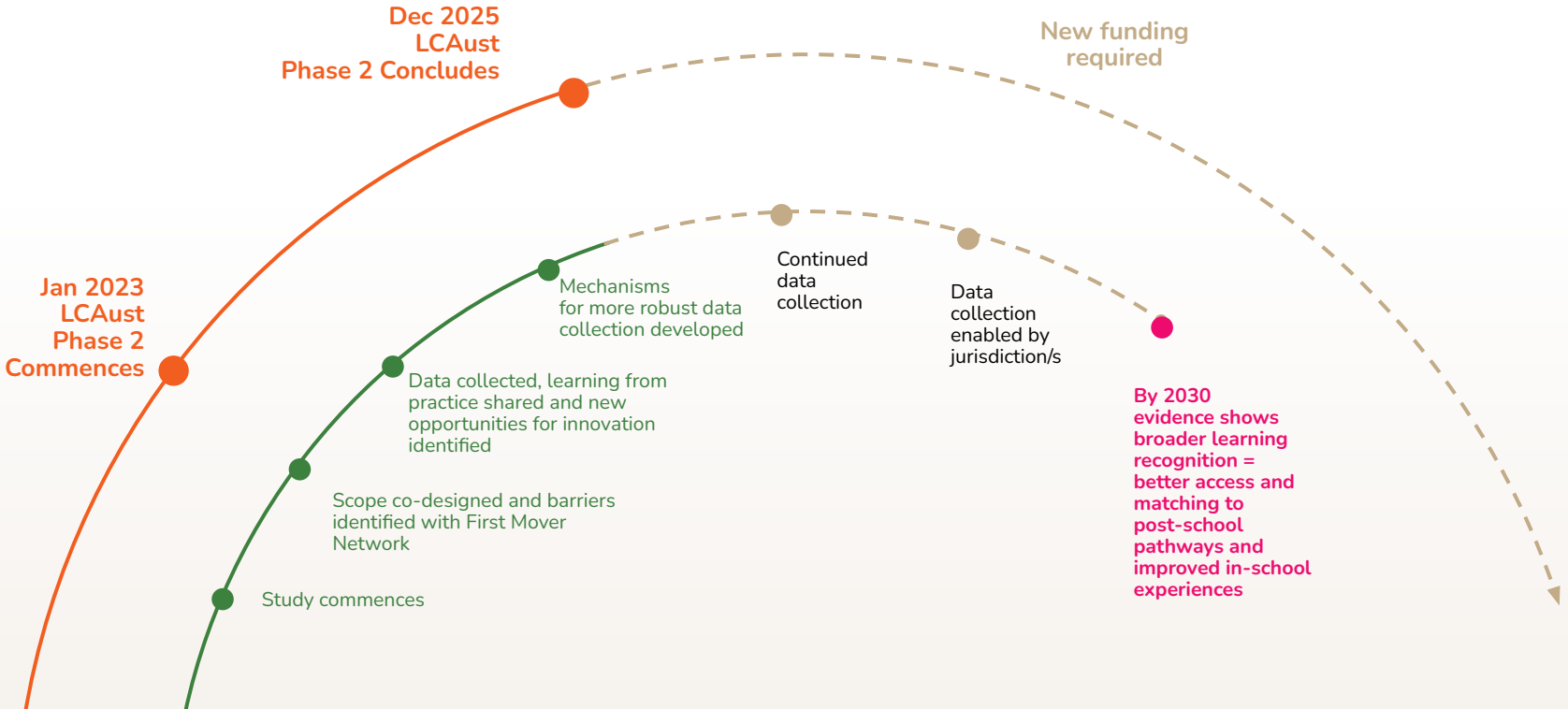
Learning Creates is focused on creating meaningful systemic change in education. How we recognise learning success is powerful because it shapes both young people's learning experiences and their pathways to further learning and work after school. This study is a central part of our 5 point plan to build the conditions required for wider system change.

	1	2	3	4	5
WE ARE:	Illuminating Common Purpose	Driving a Bold Policy Agenda	Building Robust Evidence	Amplifying Innovative Practice	Igniting New Power
	Building a diverse alliance with a shared ambition, common tools and coherent message, on the need for change and the transformative benefits for all.	Engaging Government and responding to open policy discussions that support state and federal reform and re-regulation with a view to wider-system change.	Collaborating with leading schools and practitioners to develop a robust and compelling evidence base that supports our case for change with robust data.	Connecting up and sharing place-based initiatives and co-designing to fill gaps in practice through projects that have significant system implications.	Embedding lived expertise through employing and engaging young people and partnering with First Nations peoples through a self-determined approach.
THROUGH:	• Cross-sectoral convenings • Developing shared community campaign tools and messaging • Communicating latest news, insights and perspectives	• Convening policy experts • Monitoring the current political environment and submissions to reviews • Supporting an innovative agenda in leading jurisdictions	• 'The power of recognising more' action research study • Reports and discussion papers on the latest research • Measuring and tracking progress and system impact	• Developing First Nations Charters with schools • Piloting Industry and Tertiary Pathways projects • Supporting low-SES school engagement	• Embedding and employing young people • A self-determined First-Nations approach • Sharing lived experiences through storytelling
SO THAT:	There's a cohesive and critical mass, supporting and demanding change	New policies and structures are equitable and reflect current and future needs	Authorities can trust new approaches and have what they need to take action	We can learn from promising practices and identify common barriers	A new system doesn't replicate existing challenges of equity and inclusion

TIMELINE

Trajectory of the study

The study is currently funded to the end of 2025, with a desire to secure further funding. Further funding will allow for us to collect increasingly robust data. Action learning reports and final report findings in Phase 2 will contribute to informing our direction and continued resourcing of the study post 2025.



PART TWO

Scope

This section details the questions we will explore over the life of the action research study. It also outlines the ‘signals of change’ we want to track and report on.

Our hypothesis and how we have structured the scope of enquiry

OUR HYPOTHESIS

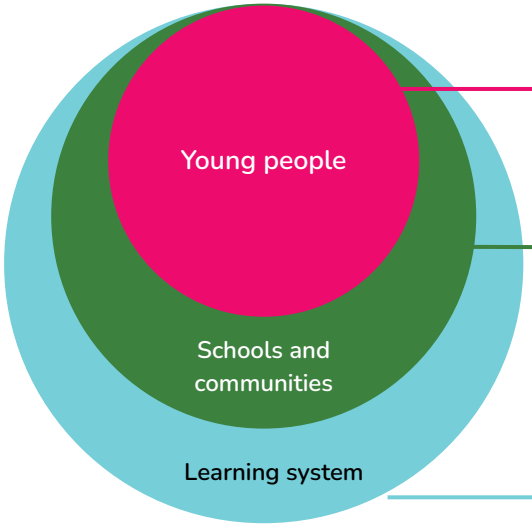
'Broader recognition of learning will improve the in-school experiences and post-school pathways and for young people' (with long-term flow-on benefits for the wider Australian community)

So we will..

Test this hypothesis, and reveal the promise of what a new approach offers

Utilising action-research methodology

FIELD OF VIEW



AREA OF ENQUIRY

Impact in place

Can broader recognition of learning impact young people's educational experience, and their pathways to further learning and work?

School and post-school pathway arrangements

How are arrangements in schools and communities supporting broader learning recognition approaches?

Conditions and wider enablers

How are conditions in the learning system enabling (or preventing) broader learning recognition?

EXAMPLE ARTEFACTS

Impact stories
Impact report
Personas

Case studies
Best practice guidelines
Tools for training, community engagement & evaluation

Recommendations for Policy directives and further research
Case for Change

To build an increasingly robust evidence base over time

How we'll look for 'signals of change' in that enquiry, as we learn more

1

HYPOTHESIS

IF... broadening recognition of learning is a mechanism for improving young people's experiences and opening up their pathways...

2

ASSUMPTION

...WHICH – based on our practice and research expertise – we think it can be...

3

TEST

...THEN we would expect to see some early signals of change through our work.

4

RESEARCH

SO... we will look for these signals within the 3 fields of view, starting first and foremost with the experiences of, and impacts on, young people.

5

DATA COLLECTION

AND... focus on signals that make sense initially, shifting or widening our focus to a) ensure we are applying the right lenses (e.g. a First Nations view) and b) responding to emerging insights.

6

ANALYSIS

PRODUCE... evidence that may confirm, challenge or refine our hypothesis about how broader recognition of learning can be a mechanism for change.

7

REFLECTION

BEFORE... identifying new 'signals of change' to explore further to address gaps or strengthen the emerging evidence.

Understanding the impacts for young people

Can broader recognition of learning improve young people's educational experience, and their pathways to further learning and work?

Research questions	Can a broader conception of learning success make it **easier (or not) for a young person** to describe their capabilities?	How does this, in turn, **affect (or not) their** sense of potential and willingness to engage in learning?	To what extent does this translate (or not) into an improved **capacity to identify options and chart a course** to further learning or work?
Signals of change *Things we might expect to see if the hypothesis is correct.* *To be explored through lenses of different student cohorts and school or cultural contexts.*	Young people: - Are self-aware about their skills and attributes - Have a confidence in and language for talking about their capabilities - Have a strengthened sense of self, their value and belonging **Teachers, Families and Community:** - Are hearing, seeing, perceiving the above from young people - Feel able, trusted and empowered to assist in this strengths-based process - Have a more holistic view of wellbeing and inclusivity	Young people: - Can perceive and connect to a positive future - Have a clearer sense of their goals for learning and beyond **Teachers, Families and Community:** - *Are hearing, seeing, perceiving the above from young people* - Feel confident and empowered to assist with goal-setting - Understand how potential might be described and felt differently - Are encouraged by the perceived positive changes	Young people: - Know the steps to take to achieve their goals for their post-school pathways - Feel worthy and supported to achieve their goals - Have confidence that they will be able to follow their chosen path and be successful on their own terms **Teachers, Families and Community:** - See greater confidence and self-efficacy in their young people - Observe a positive impact on student wellbeing - Develop deeper trust in the power of broader recognition of learning

Understanding school and community arrangements that can support positive impacts for students

What arrangements need to be in place to enable and support broader learning recognition approaches?

Research questions	How do school-level approaches to broader recognition of learning **change teachers' mindsets?**	How are school-level changes **impacting teaching practices?**	How are **assessment processes changing** and what are the **responses to this?**
Signals of change *Things we might expect to see if the hypothesis is correct* *To be explored through lenses of different student cohorts and school or cultural contexts.*	Teachers: - See value in a strengths-based approach to identifying young people's' capabilities - Are more inclined to engage with the process of identifying and helping learners articulate their capabilities - Have a greater appreciation for capabilities developed out of school and demonstrated in school **Young people:** - Perceive the above changes	Teachers: - Receive appropriate professional development - Collaborate to build a shared view of learners' capabilities - Adjust how they talk about skills and knowledge - Change lesson plans to reflect broader learning outcomes - Have access to necessary systems and supports **Young people:** - Receive feedback on a wider range of capabilities	Teachers: - Learn about and adopt new assessment process that provide broader recognition - Learn about and adopt new moderation processes that enable consistency and equity **School Leaders, Employers:** - Promote and support new learning recognition processes **Families, Employers and Communities** - Contribute to the development and use of new learning recognition processes that are relevant to their community - Feel well-informed about new learning recognition processes - Welcome and support new learning recognition processes

Understanding learning system conditions, enablers and barriers

What conditions in the learning system enabling (or preventing) broader learning recognition?

Research questions	What are the sufficient **pre-conditions for successful** introduction of broader learning recognition?	What is **facilitating school-level implementation** of approaches to broader learning recognition?	What is **supporting or getting in the way** of efforts among First Movers to broaden learning recognition?	What is **supporting or getting in the way** of Indigenous self-determination, diversity and equality with broader recognition?
Signals of change *Things we might expect to see if the hypothesis is correct.* *To be explored through lenses of different student cohorts and school or cultural contexts.*	**What are the signals about what needs to be in place beforehand. For example:** - Backing from authorities at different levels (including cultural organisations and authorities) - Family support - Community and community leader support - A trusted process - Trusting relationships - A willing workforce - A culturally competent workforce - Effective communications	**What are the signals about what enables effective implementation. For example:** - Teachers' confidence and capability - Clear guidance - Peer support - Backing from school leader/s - Early signs of a positive difference - 'Primed' students (e.g encouraged by parents to be open to the new approach) - Practical and reliable assessment tools - Encouragement from families - Time	**What are the signals (enablers / barriers) to effective implementation. For example:** - Maintaining commitment and momentum - System-level responses, resistance or scepticism about early results - Workload issues/competing priorities - Challenges in demonstrating success/impact - Ability to engage wider community and employers and their interest and endorsement - Teacher and/or school leader turnover	**What are the signals (enablers/barriers) to effective implementation. For example:** - Backing from local community (schools, local authorising organisations and communities) - Partnership with local First Nations peoples and organisations - Positive engagement from school leadership and workforce - Diverse representation of First Nations educators, community members, academics, policy makers, organisations and young people - Trusting relationships that back self-determined and community engaged responses reflective of diverse communities and young people - Broad acknowledgement current system marginalisation of First Nations young people and disadvantaged young people

Building an increasingly robust and compelling evidence base over time

What impact does broader recognition of learning have on the educational experience of young people, and their pathways to further learning and work?

1

What arrangements need to be in place to enable equitable broader learning recognition approaches?

2

What conditions in the learning system are enabling (or preventing) broader learning recognition?

3

What more do we need to learn, communicate and apply to emerging practice to build momentum for broader learning recognition?

What are we learning from emerging practice about how to make broader learning recognition approaches effective?

What are we learning from emerging practice about how to demonstrate and communicate the benefits of broader learning recognition to increase trust and take-up?

What are the priorities for building new or additional evidence over time to help build momentum?

PART THREE

Method

This section describes how the secondary research methodology that the study will use, drawing on primary research and work conducted by study partners. It outlines data sources and our approaches to analysis and reporting, as well as privacy and ethics considerations.

Structure of the method

BUILD FROM THE EXISTING

A network of early movers

Information, insights and data that partners are already collecting

New information, insights and data that partners could start collecting throughout the study, with support from Learning Creates

First Nations informed research practices and principles

Learning through action

Secondary analyses of all data available e.g. descriptive statistical analysis and visualisation, thematic analysis, archetypes or other human centred design tools, case studies, policy analysis

Collective learning and sense making with partners in workshop to deepen insight

Producing new artefacts

Artefacts e.g. Best practice guidelines, impact stories, recommendations for policy directives

Action learning reports with progressive insights
Principles for best practice

New / refined questions for primary work and research by Learning Creates, design and contribution partners

DEVELOP THE NEW

ANALYTICAL METHODS

Expected methods of synthesis and analysis to make progressive findings.

Nous will conduct robust quantitative and qualitative synthesis and analysis of the information/data provided by partners to progressively answer the research questions. The analytical methods we use in each cycle may vary to suit the scope and completeness of the information/data provided.

Quantitative analyses

- Descriptive statistical analysis and visualisation of first movers' data to better explore, visualise and understand the distribution, reach and impacts of work being undertaken. This will include lived expertise and experiences.

Qualitative analyses

- Thematic synthesis and analysis to describe the work first movers are implementing, identify insights and patterns against sub-questions, draw evolving conclusions about the nature of the impacts of broader recognition of learning and what contributes to those impacts, and the enablers and barriers to change and impact.
- Archetypes (or other human centered design tools) to explore and communicate young people's educational experiences and outcomes and the ways in which broader learning recognition contributes (or not).
- Case studies to explain or compare issues, opportunities, challenges or risks that have arisen in the design and delivery of innovative approaches to broadening learning recognition.
- Policy analysis of the rationale and priorities for broadening learning recognition, drawing on what first movers' work is demonstrating, lessons learned and the evolving policy context.
- Sensemaking workshops to create space for the productive exchange of information, and delve into challenging questions

PRIVACY AND ETHICS

How we conduct the study will respect privacy and ethics principles and practices.

Privacy

Learning Creates will request, store and use data in the ways described in 'The power of recognising more study' sharing agreement.

When we talk about data we are talking about the information, insights, program reports and reviews that you will share with us. No personally identifiable information is being collected.

All data will be collected and stored by Learning Creates and shared with Nous Group in accordance with Learning Creates' privacy policy which can be found here learningcreates.org.au/privacy-policy. It will only be accessible during, and for use as part of the study and won't be used for any other purposes.

Ethical practice

We are committed to conducting our work and the study, in accordance with best practice principles* including:

- We ensure project value and integrity
- We conduct robust analysis
- We are transparent
- We work in a collaborative and consultative manner
- We are respectful and empathetic

In the Sharing Agreement, we have asked partners to only share data with Learning Creates if:

- Sharing of any data is in accordance with the terms of any existing ethics approval(s), and/or
- Where new or additional ethics approval is not required to share the data

Ethical considerations for conducting research with First Nations people and organisations

There are important and specific ethical consideration for conducting research with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and organisations. These are set out by AIATSIS in a Code of Ethics to ensure integrity in research, and include Indigenous self-determination, Indigenous Leadership, Sustainability and accountability, and Impact and value. We will ensure if any new data is being collected, it has the required ethics approval.

**National Health and Medical Research Council's National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007 – updated 2018).*

PART FOUR

Process

This section sets out the structure of the study and the key steps involved in each action research cycle, including key actions for design and contribution partners.

Structure of the study

We will conduct the study over three years, 2023-2025, with a series of action research cycles to start in September 2023. The timing, role of each study partner, and outputs are summarised below.

Role of Design Partners:	• Confirm objectives • Shape research questions, outcomes and data collection • Activate networks	• 3 regular and 2 deep dive cycles (young person and First Nations) • Collect and share information/data • Participate in sense-making workshop • Review draft action learning reports • Review research questions for next cycle, based on learnings • Provide advisory support as needed	• Participate in discussion of major findings and outcomes • Help to shape future research priorities
Outputs:	Action-research plan	4 x Action learning reports Each report will build on the insights documented in the previous report, discuss emerging issues, and identify further research interests	Final summary report

Structure of the action research cycles

We will conduct each six-monthly action cycle over a ten-week period, with four key stages in each: *Collect, Analyse, Probe, Reflect and Plan*, as shown. Each cycle will have a distinct focus and build on what we learnt from the previous cycle.

ANALYSE *(3 weeks)*

Synthesise and analyse information and insights

Participating partners will:

- ❑ Provide clarification on information and insights where required
- ❑ Provide advice on initial insights, if requested before workshop
- ❑ Review pre-reading materials and prepare for workshop discussion.

COLLECT *(2 weeks)*

Collect and share information and insights, agree on focus for the cycle

Participating partners will:

- ❑ Complete a short survey to provide updated context about your work and the information you are sharing
- ❑ Upload your de-identified information and insights to the secure folder
- ❑ Confirm attendance at the workshop.

PROBE *(1 week)*

Conduct collective sense-making and learning.

Participating partners will:

- ❑ Participate in the workshop
- ❑ Bring questions, challenges and opportunities for discussion
- ❑ Respond to any requests for clarification or input following the workshop.

REFLECT & PLAN *(4 weeks)*

Deliver the action learning report and refocus ahead of the next cycle.

Participating partners will:

- ❑ 1 week to provide feedback on a draft version of the report
- ❑ Receive the final report
- ❑ Socialise the report within your network to increase support for and understanding of the work.

CONTACT DETAILS

If you have any questions or would like to discuss the study - please get in touch.

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