

Impact Report



2020–21

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Reconciliation Action Plan artwork © Keisha Leon

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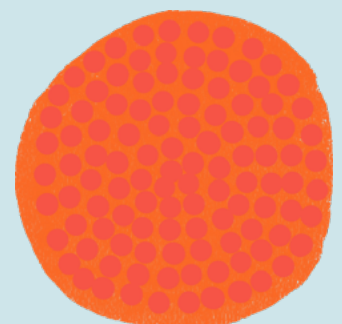
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ESA acknowledges the Eastern Kulin Nation, Traditional Custodians of the land on which our head office stands, and pays our respects to Elders past and present. We recognise the Traditional Custodians of Country across Australia and their continuing connection and contribution to lands, waters, communities and learning.



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From the Chair



On behalf of the ESA Board, it gives me great pleasure to present our Impact Report for 2020–21.

The COVID-19 pandemic presented ESA and its stakeholders with many challenges. It also allowed us to reflect on the experience and be forward-thinking about how we work educating our young people.

The place of technology in education – the lessons learnt and how to shape the future of education in Australia – has been front of mind. In late 2020, ESA drew on our stakeholders' experiences to reflect on how we can best contribute to the needs of Australia's changing classrooms through our Voice of Education research. The research revealed how the education community's pandemic experiences created a renewed impetus to develop innovative education technology services enabling more flexible learning methods. ESA's stakeholders see a role for ESA as a catalyst to move this agenda forward and bring together government institutions, industry and agencies to spotlight innovative practice in the design and effective implementation of education technology.

This research and additional stakeholder feedback informed ESA's 2021–23 Strategic Plan and our continued focus on sustainable, high-quality services, with a greater emphasis on driving discussion about the future needs and use of innovative technologies.

This past year has changed many things – our outlook, the way we work and the context in which we operate. We applaud all jurisdictions' resilience and cooperative spirit and the renewed focus on shaping education reform initiatives enabled by innovative technology services.

I thank our CEO Andrew Smith for his outstanding leadership, and his Executive team – particularly for how staff wellbeing was looked after through the most trying circumstances.

The resilience and dedication shown by all staff once again produced the outstanding results described in this report. Your work and ability to collaborate across the education community lead to ministers continuing to trust ESA.

We thank ministers for that trust and look forward to another year of working together to support them in improving outcomes for all Australian students.

Diane Joseph
Chair, Education Services Australia

From the CEO



Had I been asked in January 2020 whether ESA could successfully operate with all staff working remotely, I would have said ‘no way’.

I am in awe of the resilience and resourcefulness of staff to work through the personal and professional challenges that the COVID-19 pandemic created. Like many of our stakeholders, we emerged from lockdown in late 2020 and began a process of reflection on our experiences that prompted us to think differently about how we do things and the future needs of education.

For ESA, it meant deciding to take a more active role in assisting our stakeholders in determining their needs and identifying innovative ways to meet them. This year it has included conducting the Voice of Education research, investing in a discovery phase for work experience online, making evidence-based enhancements to myfuture; and planning a series of Digital Innovation roundtables. Finally, we introduced a flexible working policy, enabling staff to work remotely for part of their time fraction on an ongoing basis, in recognition of this year's many achievements while working from home.

Corporate services have supported all this work to continue smoothly. In particular, the People and Culture Team kept staff informed and supported their mental health and the ICT Team ensured that we were equipped for remote working.

I am grateful to ESA staff for their contribution to these achievements, their resilience and ability to support one another and their dedication to working with our stakeholders. I thank the ESA Board for keeping the welfare of staff as a priority and providing much-appreciated advice and support.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'A. Smith', written in a cursive style.

Andrew Smith
CEO, Education Services Australia

Our impact in a time of COVID-19 disruption

In this report, we highlight just some of the ways ESA has made a positive difference in the lives and learning of young Australians during a challenging year.

This year, the COVID-19 pandemic substantially disrupted education and the way we all work. It required flexibility in thinking and operations and the ability to adjust quickly but carefully to changing circumstances. Our dedication to achieving educational excellence in Australian schools, however, did not change. It required the delivery of national strategic initiatives to ensure that Australian students in every school had the opportunity to reach their potential. As Australia's national cross-sector education technology provider, Education Services Australia (ESA) leveraged our stakeholder relationships, our unique combination of education and technology expertise, and our track record to take a leadership position in driving initiatives and achieve this goal.



Our work at a glance



Scootle

Provides access to over 12,000 quality-assured digital resources aligned to the Australian Curriculum in a single national repository. **Users increased by 8% to over 1.56 million.**



Early Learning Languages Australia

Encourages Australian children to study an additional language by offering a fun, digital, play-based language program. **Uptake continued to grow, with more than 4,800 preschools participating across Australia.**



Digital Technologies Hub

Supports the Digital Technologies curriculum with high-quality resources and services for teachers, students and parents. **Users increased by 23% to 302,500.**



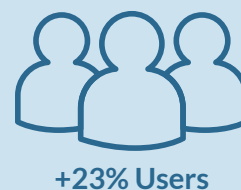
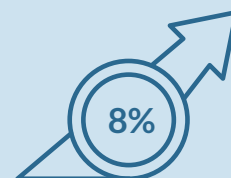
Endeavour 250

Provides **eight inquiry-based learning sequences for Years F–10** to examine the complex histories and legacy of the *HMS Endeavour* voyage to Australia, particularly the impact on First Nations Australians.



Civics and Citizenship Education

Promotes students' participation in Australia's democracy by **building active, informed citizenship knowledge, skills, values, and dispositions**. Resources, information, activities and links for teachers, students and parents will be available for access in 2022.





Literacy Hub

Provides online evidence-based resources and professional learning for Australian educators and activities for families. **Includes Phonics Check for teachers of Year 1 students** and advice and activities to help families support their child's literacy development at home.



Ketawa Online Indonesian Language Program

Supports Western Australian teachers without formal language training to **teach Indonesian in schools**.



Student Wellbeing Hub

Supports the Australian Student Wellbeing Framework. Provides information, resources and professional development for teachers, students and parents, for the creation and maintenance of a safe and welcoming school environment for all students. **Users increased by 23% to over 139,000 users.**



Girls in STEM Toolkit (The GiST)

Encourages female students to study and pursue careers in STEM, providing online resources and case studies to all Australian schools. **Users increased 25% to 20,200.**



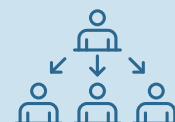
myfuture (the national career education service)

Assists young Australians with career planning, career pathways and work transitions. **Users increased 22% to 577,500.**



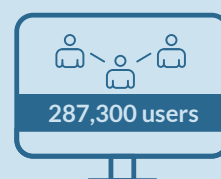
myskills (national directory of VET organisations and courses)

Provides **access to current, trustworthy information to help jobseekers, students and employers** find the training that best suits their needs.



Nationally Consistent Collection of Data on School Students with Disability (NCCD)

Supports the annual national schools' census, fostering better understanding of the needs of students with disability and how these students can be best supported at school. **The portal had 287,300 users and 10.6 million page views.**





Online National Assessment Platform

Enables online delivery of national assessment across all Australian schools, using contemporary assessment and reporting technology. Currently supports NAPLAN and National Assessment Program (NAP) sample testing in civics and citizenship and science literacy.

During the test window over 870,000 students submitted 2,956,000 online tests from 6,380 schools.



Schools Catalogue Information Service (SCIS)

Provides a central library cataloguing service to create high-quality, consistent catalogue records for schools.

In this period, **SCIS subscribers included 85% of Australian school libraries and 45% of New Zealand schools, as well as 365 schools in the United Kingdom.**



School Survey

Enables schools to gain valuable **feedback from their school community** via a purpose-built online survey tool developed to meet the needs of government schools in WA, Tasmania, SA and the NT.



Secured managed hosting services

Secures personal and private data on behalf of Australian Government departments and agencies via enterprise-grade, secure Infrastructure as a Service (IaaS) and Platform as a Service (PaaS).



National Schools Interoperability Program

Secures the exchange of education information by **establishing education data standards** and working collaboratively with stakeholders on interoperability and data sharing.



Safer Technologies 4 Schools initiative

Provides a **standardised approach to evaluating digital products and services** used by government, Catholic and independent schools across Australia.



edu.au domain registrar

The edu.au domain registrar is the only place Australian education and training providers can register website domains specific to the Australian education sector. ESA provides registration and **renewal services for over 17,000 domains across the sector.**



Our mission and role

Our Mission

ESA's mission is to combine education and technology expertise to create and deliver national solutions that further education reform in Australia and contribute to improved student outcomes, enhanced teacher impact and stronger school communities.

Our Role

ESA works in collaboration with all Australian education jurisdictions to provide technology-based products and services for education.

Focused on advancing nationally agreed education initiatives, programs and projects, ESA has been established to:

- research, test and develop innovative technologies and communication systems for use in education
- devise, develop and deliver curriculum and assessment, professional development, career and information support services
- facilitate the pooling, sharing and distribution of knowledge, resources and services to support and promote e-learning
- support national infrastructure to ensure access to quality-assured systems and content and interoperability between individuals, entities and systems
- create, publish, disseminate and market curriculum and assessment materials, ICT-based solutions, products and services to support learning, teaching, leadership and administration.

Enhancing our impact

During the year, ESA's work was guided by the Letter of Expectation from Education Ministers and by its strategic plan, *Enhancing our impact: ESA Strategic Plan 2018–2020*, which aims to enhance ESA's effect on Australia's education landscape by continuing to work with ESA's stakeholders to improve its services and contribute to educational outcomes in a sustainable way. It focuses on five strategic pillars that build on our core capabilities:

- Develop and maintain national education technology platforms that increase access and improve connectivity.
- Deliver high-quality projects and services.
- Disseminate insights that support decision-making.
- Provide leadership in education information management.
- Strategically engage stakeholders to establish partnerships that help achieve their goals.

In April 2021 the Board approved the strategic plan for 2021–2023.
View the strategic plan on the ESA website (www.esa.edu.au/about/strategic-plan).



1. Shared platforms to increase access and improve connectivity

To execute the *shared platforms to increase access and improve connectivity* strategic pillar, ESA aims to achieve efficiencies, economies of scale on existing platforms and enhanced connectivity between content and service providers to reduce duplication, complexity and cost.

Safer Technologies 4 Schools

The Safer Technologies 4 Schools (ST4S) initiative is a standardised approach to evaluating digital products and services used by schools across Australia.

The ST4S service continued with additional assessment approaches to over 100 vendors, contributing to an assessment library of over 200 outcomes for widely used education software products. Product assessments cover both school administration and e-learning products provided by Australian and international suppliers. Assessment reports were distributed to stakeholders, to assist departments and schools with product selection and the management of privacy risks,

and to the product vendors, to help improve their products.

Approximately one-third of participating ST4S vendors have improved (or committed to improving) their product's privacy and security due to undergoing the assessment process, further contributing to a safer learning ecosystem for all Australian schools.

A memorandum of understanding was signed with the New Zealand Ministry of Education to investigate the scope for collaboration in delivering the ST4S service, potentially increasing its impact on local and international product suppliers.





Online Formative Assessment Initiative

ESA is Australia's leading provider of shared education platforms. It develops, procures and maintains valuable software products and services on behalf of stakeholders to support access to quality-assured systems and content, achieving greater interoperability between individuals, entities and systems. Significantly, many of these digital platforms leverage similar underlying technology and infrastructure.

During 2020–21, ESA, ACARA and AITSL continued to collaborate with the teaching profession, school leaders, parents/carers and students on the Education Ministers' Online Formative Assessment Initiative (OFAI).

Throughout 2020–21, work focused on completing the Alpha phase of the project, where prototypes were built and tested

with teachers and school leaders from all over Australia. The Alpha phase report was delivered to ministers, providing detailed design requirements for a minimum viable product to take to the market for a potential Beta phase.

ESA designed and developed an interactive prototype, named Spindle, made publicly available for demonstration and testing of the proposed functionality of the Teaching Tools Network (TTN).

Central to this network is the Suggestion Engine, which ESA developed with Deakin University's A2I2 group. The Suggestion Engine will recommend resources teachers can allocate to students based on information collected from the formative assessment network.

2. High-quality projects and services

Technology is an essential tool for personalising learning, enhancing equity and preparing students for the world of today and tomorrow.

Advances in technology – and its potential to enhance student outcomes, support systems, and school administration – are progressing rapidly.

In executing the *delivery of high-quality projects and services* pillar, ESA aims to deliver digitally enabled projects and services that support national reform priorities and positively impact the education of young Australians. Notably, these activities will support collecting, sharing and distributing knowledge, resources and services to reduce cost and duplication across jurisdictions, sectors and schools.

English Language Learning for Indigenous Children (ELLIC) trial

Co-design is at the heart of the ELLIC trial, which aims to help Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander preschool children who have English as an additional language or dialect (EAL/D) learn English in a fun and engaging way.

The project will trial a series of digital play-based apps for children in the year before full-time school, with resources for educators, families and communities, co-designed and aligned to the Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF) and the Australian Curriculum: Foundation.

With the Discovery and Alpha phases of the trial completed, the Beta phase is currently underway.

Co-design occurred in two Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in Queensland during the Alpha phase. ESA

partnered with the Stronger Smarter Institute (SSI) to run the co-design sessions with the communities. Due to the trust and respect given to participants and the protection of their knowledge and input, this process was positively received by participants.

ESA has delivered the initial app's first version, iteratively developed with input from the project's Education Advisory Group and feedback loops with the co-design community members and EAL/D subject matter experts. Initial feedback was that preschools feel that this will be a valuable program for their children.

The first app in the series will be tested by five preschools participating in the Beta phase in the second half of 2021. Ethics approvals with the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies and research approvals in participating states and territories are in place for the Beta phase.

The project is proposed to be trialled in 20 preschools during the Go-live project phase.



Literacy Hub and Year 1 Phonics Check

ESA launched both the Literacy Hub and the Year 1 Phonics Check in August 2020. The Check was created for teachers to conduct with their students. By the end of June 2021, 1,859 schools had registered for it and 8,800 Year 1 Phonics Checks had been completed.

To complement the Check, the Literacy Hub is being further developed to provide access to evidence-based resources for teachers and families, as well as professional learning materials for teachers. The Discovery phase to inform this further development was completed, and the results used to develop a new version of the Hub with over 200 resources added, including:

- information for families in 11 languages
- 56 videos illustrating best practices
- over 30 curated resources from trusted providers
- an evaluation framework for resources for the teaching of reading in the early years
- detailed information for conducting the Year 1 Phonics Check and follow-up 'next steps'.

The final component of the Year 1 Phonics Check and Literacy Hub program is the design and delivery of the Phonics Targeted Assistance Program (TAP), which will provide phonics coaching over an 18-month period to up to 100 schools identified as disadvantaged and below national reading benchmarks in Year 3. Seventy-nine schools across Australia are participating in the program, which commenced in July 2021.

Maths in Schools

This initiative will strengthen the capacity of teachers to teach mathematics and numeracy in Australian schools, supported by face-to-face learning.

The Maths in Schools project will support mathematics and numeracy teachers of Foundation to Year 10 students through an online Mathematics Hub. The Hub will be the repository of quality, evidence-based teaching and learning resources plus an online Number Check for teachers to conduct one-on-one with Year 1 students. The Check comprises items from the NSW SENA assessment and suggested teaching and learning resources aligned to the items in the Check.

The project also includes a range of free professional learning resources, including free online courses, training and professional learning packs and professional learning to support teachers engaging with the online courses. These will focus on providing additional support to teachers in disadvantaged and low socioeconomic schools. In a great example of universities engaging with industry, ESA is partnering with the University of Adelaide to deliver the professional learning component.

The Mathematics Hub will be launched in 2021.

3. Insights

Through the *insights for decision-making* pillar of our strategic plan, we aim to expand our role in providing trusted, high-quality evidence and resources to support teachers and school leaders in adopting and adapting evidence into practice and supporting the safe and effective use of education technology.

ESA contributes to national conversations on improving student outcomes through submissions to public reviews, primary and secondary research shared with stakeholders and industry, and via webinars, newsletters and articles published in ESA publications. Contributions made in 2020–21 include:

- The ESA Voice of Education Research Report 2020, drawn from a stakeholder survey and detailed long-form interviews, provided valuable insights across three major themes:
 - » How COVID-19 has impacted education in Australia
 - » How stakeholders and key partners assess ESA's performance in 2020
 - » How ESA can meet the needs of Australia's changing classroom.
- Security and privacy assessments of education software products were distributed to stakeholders via the Safer Technologies 4 Schools (ST4S) service to assist schools with product selection and the management of privacy risks. ESA shared the information with product vendors to improve the privacy and security of their products.
- The Classroom Strategies for Inclusive STEM Learning Environments resource used the research ESA had conducted for the Australian Government's Girls in STEM Toolkit (GiST). The resource complements and builds on initiatives taken by governments and institutions across the country.
- ESA's contribution to AITSL's Indigenous cultural competency in the Australian teaching workforce discussion paper shared ESA's observations and learnings on the opportunities, challenges and barriers in developing teacher cultural competence and the role of digital technology.

4. Management of education information

In executing the *leadership in the management of education information* pillar of our strategic plan, ESA aims to use its expertise to be a leader in the management and operation of secure technology platforms and services, both for itself and its stakeholders and partners.

Privacy and information security underpin all our work.

ESA has in place an Information Security Management System (ISMS) and Framework based on industry best practice and aligned with the Australian Government Information Security Manual (ISM) and Protective Security Policy Framework (PSPF).

Specialist staff are employed to manage privacy and security across the company, provide advice and training to staff, and ensure that all staff understand their privacy and security responsibilities and risks.



5. Strengthening our connections

To deliver on our commitment as a *trusted strategic partner that helps stakeholders to achieve their goals*, ESA aims to ensure alignment between ESA's activities and the priorities of our stakeholders. In doing so, ESA identifies opportunities for value creation, co-designs solutions and monitors impact.

The Australian education sector is diverse, distributed and, to varying degrees, devolved. Effective stakeholder engagement for ESA means understanding the specific challenges faced by systems, sectors, schools, educators and students.

During the year, ESA engaged an independent consultant to conduct the Voice of Education research. In addition to gathering information on how COVID-19 has impacted education in Australia, the study asked our stakeholders to assess ESA's performance in 2020 and how we can meet the needs of Australia's changing classroom.

Research insights shed light on the role key stakeholders would like ESA to play to help build a more resilient education system and one that is better prepared to meet the challenges of the future.

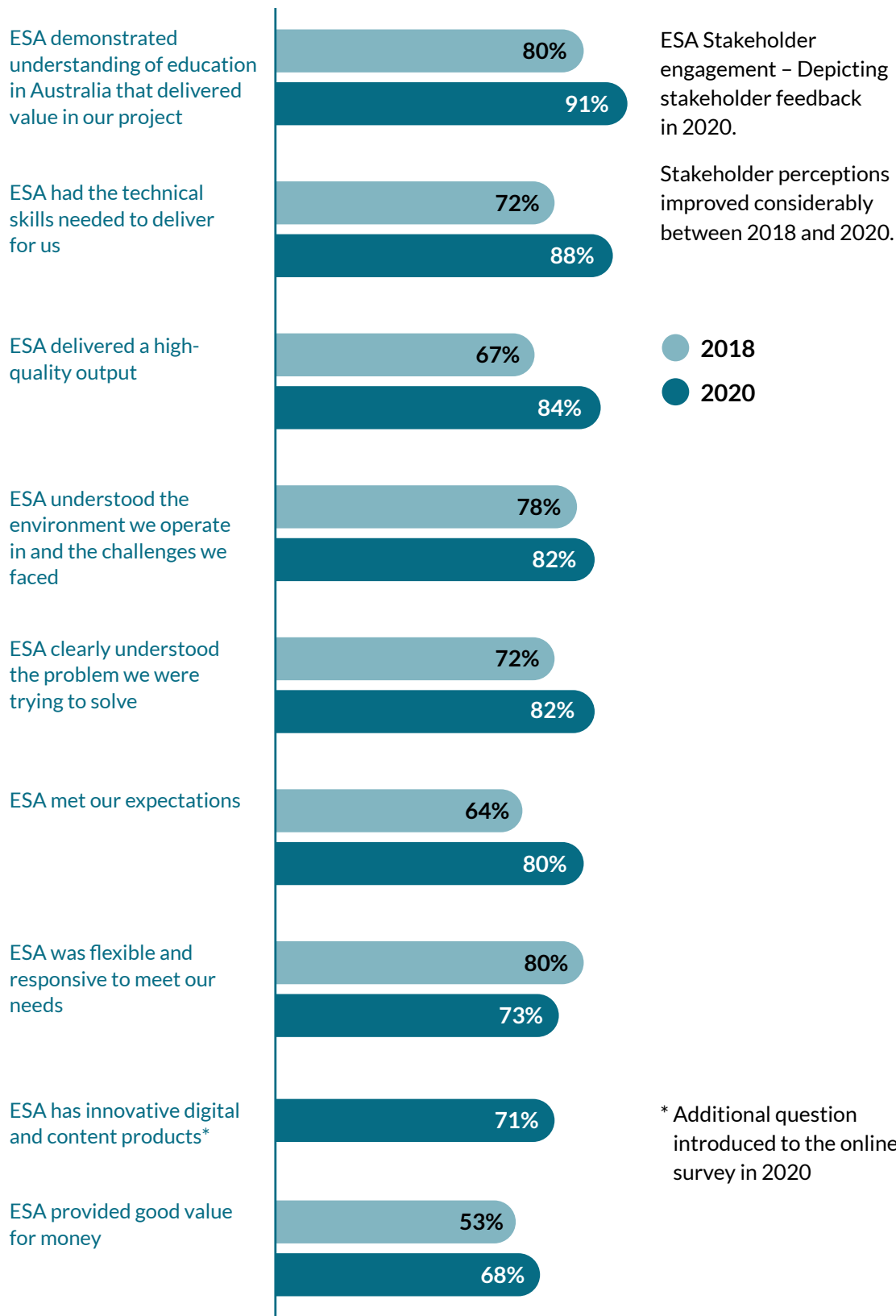
Stakeholder perceptions of ESA strengths were:

- the evidence-based and research-driven approach to service delivery and our ability to mobilise some of the country's best thinkers and practitioners to advance the delivery of educational services
- ESA's own significant expertise in digital pedagogy and curriculum design
- the information technology experience and skills of ESA staff
- the ability to engage with the jurisdictions and collaborate meaningfully throughout a project's lifespan.

Opportunities for improvement relate to deepening ESA's already highly regarded collaborative approach by facilitating more opportunities for stakeholder involvement in the pre-project phase and making ESA's value for money more evident.

ESA has used the research findings to engage with ministers and senior officials and provide insights into the education sector priorities in the coming years.

Perceptions and Performance of ESA





Strengthening our services

Enabling our people during COVID-19 lockdowns

With staff working from home due to prolonged COVID-19 lockdown periods and tight restrictions on in-office work, our primary focus was to support staff wellbeing and ensure staff were equipped to work safely and effectively from home.

We adapted our Wellbeing Program to online delivery, with more frequent communications, opportunities to stay connected, and a program designed for staff to maintain physical, mental and emotional health and wellbeing.

ICT remote working tools and security systems were maintained and upgraded, new tools added, and a range of privacy and security training and awareness-raising activities conducted.

Sustainability

Planning and investment activity during the year aimed at improving services for stakeholders and leveraging existing services included:

- renewal of the ESA strategic plan for 2021–23 based on future needs of our stakeholders as determined by the Education Ministers' priorities, the Mparntwe Declaration and ESA's Voice of Education research
- further expansion of ESA's secured managed hosting services to a niche market of small education-related organisations
- completion of an upgrade of the Schools Cataloguing Information Service (SCIS) cataloguing system to maintain the high quality of this service
- supplementation of jurisdictional funding for further enhancements to the myfuture career service
- discovery research into opportunities to address inequity in access to meaningful work experience, to support young Australians as they consider their future career choices. ESA partnered with industry to develop a concept proposal that we plan to pilot in partnership with jurisdictions
- development of the ESA Careers Action Plan, 2021–2024 emerging from the Work Experience Online Discovery Project.

Social responsibility

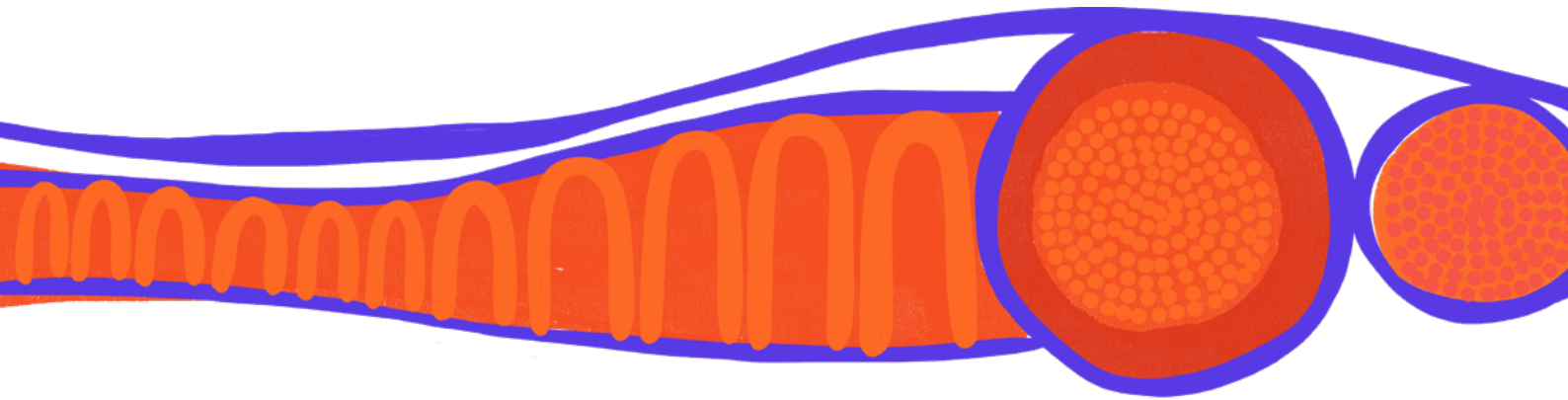
Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP)

ESA launched its Reflect RAP in partnership with Reconciliation Australia in May 2020. This year, ESA's strong commitment to working towards reconciliation included these actions:

- building and strengthening relationships through our work, such as the ELLIC project partnership with the Stronger Smarter Institute (SSI) and the SCIS partnership with Deadly Science
- fostering respect, awareness and understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, cultures, histories and knowledges through the promotion of Narragunnawali Reconciliation Education Program to schools; staff engagement in acknowledgement of country training; and National Reconciliation Week and NAIDOC week activities
- embedding reconciliation into governance and policy by ensuring compliance with Australian Government Indigenous Participation Procurement rules, expanding procurement from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander owned business, and membership of Supply Nation.

ESA's RAP Working Group of staff volunteers led the implementation and welcomed Jill West to the group. Jill brings invaluable experience as a proud Palawa and Bunurong woman who has spent her career supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in their work, education and personal lives.

As ESA prepares for the next phase of its reconciliation journey, our Innovate RAP, we commit to being braver, more visible and impactful in our actions and practice.



Climate Active certification

Achieving Climate Active certification as a carbon-neutral organisation is just one way ESA achieves its objective to build sustainable infrastructure and efficient processes underpinned by efficient, environmentally and socially responsible business practices.

Climate Active confirmed ESA's ongoing certification following an external audit of its 2019–20 emissions inventory. We have maintained certification every year since 2012. We are one of the first companies in Australia to achieve certification under the Australian Government's Climate Active Carbon Neutral Standard (formerly known as the National Carbon Offset Standard (NCOS) scheme).

ESA is proud to be among the leading organisations taking action to achieve zero net emissions.

International Women's Day

ESA celebrated International Women's Day (IWD) this year with an International Women's Day online event attended by 136 staff.

It was a significant opportunity to reflect on and celebrate women's social, economic, cultural and political achievements, and celebrate the positive impact that the women of ESA have on the lives and learning of young Australians.

Our guest speaker and two ESA speakers inspired participants by sharing their career journeys, highlighting the importance of taking and offering opportunities, belief in self, building supportive networks, and challenging being pigeonholed into gendered roles that don't advance valuable goals. The day also marked a call to action for accelerating gender parity.

Our operations at a glance

Our workforce and financial operational plans underpin the achievement of our strategic objectives. Our operational plans ensure ESA is a capable, well-governed and financially sustainable organisation and that we attract and retain a diverse, engaged and productive staff.

Workforce highlights

Our workforce includes multi-talented, diverse, flexible and resilient employees.



155
Number of staff



28%
Staff managers



63%
Female managers



26%
Part-time staff



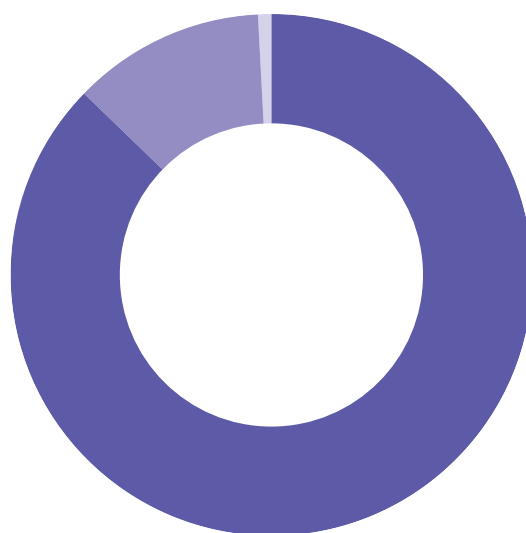
60%
Female staff

Financial highlights

ESA generates revenue by delivering project outcomes on behalf of the government education sector and non-government clients and by providing digital services to support educational outcomes.

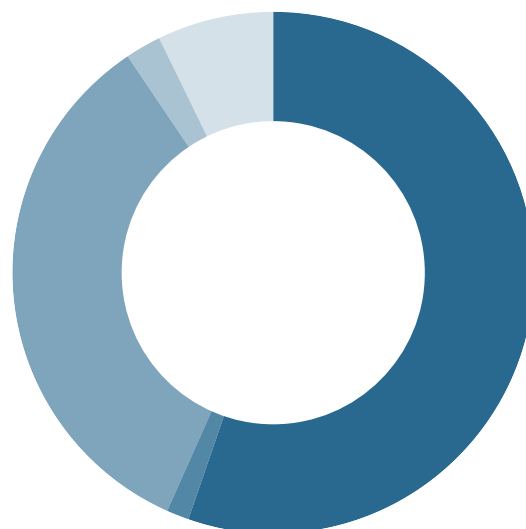
Revenue: \$'000

Project revenue	47,610	●
Digital services	6,538	●
Other income	361	●
Total	54,509	



Expenditure: \$'000

Project expenses	29,742	●
Subscription expenses	760	●
Employee benefits	18,133	●
Depreciation and Amortisation	1,256	●
Other expenses	3,764	●
Total	53,655	





Thank you

Thank you to our stakeholders and partners for your collaboration and for enabling us to continue making a positive impact in education. With your support and trust, we can advance equity in education and prepare our students for the world of tomorrow.

We would also like to extend our gratitude to all the school leaders, educators and members of the wider education sector for your continued support and feedback, enabling us to better serve our community.





Education
Services
Australia

Making a positive difference in the lives
and learning of young Australians
www.esa.edu.au