MCEETYA Joint Statement on Education and Training in the Information Economy

New technologies are transforming our society: the way we work, our social and community life and the way we learn. Embracing information and communications technology in education and training improves the skills and knowledge of all Australians, enhances our international engagement, and moves Australia confidently into the twenty-first century. The everyday use of information and communications technology will transform education and training, and lay a foundation for our future economic and social prosperity. National collaboration is essential to achieve this vision.

Creating an innovative society

A leading edge education and training system drives development of an innovative society. Information and communications technology in education and training has the potential to raise education standards and minimum skill levels, including information and communications technology literacy skills, necessary for the future economy. A workforce with access to individualised and flexible, quality training through new technologies will address Australia's need for competent workers who learn throughout life. This is especially important in the context of an ageing population and a world of continuous technological change where knowledge is becoming a commodity.

Ensuring that all learners achieve their potential

Information and communications technology in education and training promotes teaching and learning that is targeted to individual needs. It facilitates individualised pathways through education and training that match students' interests, potential, and life stage. Students report that it is stimulating to work in a digital environment with improved access to quality educational resources. Educators should take advantage of this increased motivation to achieve more equitable educational outcomes for all, including, high performing students, those living in rural and remote communities, Indigenous Australians, mature aged workers, people with disabilities and disengaged young people.

Improving quality and raising standards

Information and communications technology empowers teachers and trainers by increasing options for improving learning outcomes through access to new types of quality digital content, training, networking and advice. A greater consistency of educational outcomes across the country will be achieved through more widely available quality teaching and teacher education, and better access to resources regardless of location.

Achieving efficiencies through sharing

Information and communications technology enables new more efficient organisational and business models and new powerful methods of collaborating, across Australia or amongst communities of interest anywhere in the world. Digital learning materials can be widely distributed, modified, enhanced, shared, stored and reused. Duplication of effort between jurisdictions and organisations can be minimised and new administrative systems offer economies for educational providers.

Capitalising on the internationalisation of education

Education is a major export earner for Australia, but we risk losing international markets if we are not at the forefront of educational developments in information and communications technology. Through new technologies, education and training provision is becoming borderless. Australia must position itself to benefit from this trend; to achieve sustainable growth in trade; enhance international collaboration on research and scholarship; and enable individuals to participate in the broader global community. We value our place at the forefront of development in information and communications technology in education and training internationally.

The way forward

Information and communications technology has been progressively introduced into education and training, but there are still enormous challenges before we can claim that we have achieved its full potential. Ministers recognise that in order to achieve this vision for Australia we must collaborate over the next three years, and beyond, to address the following issues within an agreed broad framework.

We need to work together to:
- Provide high quality, sharable Australian digital content and services to facilitate significant improvement in the learning experiences of all Australians;
- Achieve common technical standards to allow the sharing of resources and the development of common services;
- Ensure supply of adequate bandwidth through cooperation across the sector and across all Australian governments to support innovative teaching and learning, and business processes at a sustainable cost;
- Ensure legislation about the use and reuse of digital resources is consistent with principles of equity and access; and
- Integrate information and communications technology into all facets of education and training, including the administrative functions and e-business models required to support learning.

We will start new collaborative work to:
- Research, develop and promote pedagogies and professional learning to assist teachers, trainers and lecturers to deliver improved teaching and learning experiences and empower learners;
- Support leaders as agents of change in education and training and in institutional reform;
- Explore how information and communications technology can be most efficiently utilised, with all governments, to maximise education and training outcomes, both within and beyond the classroom, and encourage learning throughout life;
- Ensure, through the intelligent use of information and communications technology, that all learners have the necessary knowledge and skills for work and life in the twenty-first century;
- Investigate and disseminate information on the effective provision of quality online education services to strengthen Australia's presence internationally and expand our international markets; and
- Report regularly on Australia's performance in comparison to our international peers.

To progress this agenda, Ministers, through the Australian Information and Communications Technology in Education Committee (AICTEC), will be releasing a series of action plans and issues papers which cover the whole of the education and training sector.