

75th Anniversary

ACER's mission is to create and disseminate knowledge and tools that can be used to improve learning. For 75 years, ACER has been undertaking a wide range of research and development and providing services and materials in support of educational policy-making and improved professional practice. ACER is an independent, not for profit organisation operating internationally.

- 1928 James Russell from the United States visited Australia on behalf of the Carnegie Corporation to assess the state of education and investigate appropriate means of assistance.
- 1929 Representatives from each of the states except Queensland, and Executive met to form a constitution. Official title 'Australian Educational Research Council' was accepted.
- 1930 February. Australian Council for Educational Research was established (its name being changed at the first council meeting) with the agreement of a grant from the Carnegie Corporation. April. Commenced operation. K.S. Cunningham was appointed first Executive Officer, and served from 1930-1954.
- 1930 First ACER publication, Educational Research Series No. 1, *Individual Education*, by C. Fenner and A.G. Paull.
- 1930s IQ tests gain popularity.
- 1935 A Library Group was established and ran until 1948. ACER was instrumental in setting up free library services in Australia.
- 1937 The international New Education Fellowship Conference hosted by ACER. The conference began in Brisbane, and concluded in Perth seven weeks later after moving to other capital cities. The conference was a huge success, with more than 8000 people attending.
- 1939 Funding from Carnegie Corporation ceases. ACER had saved some of the initial grant money, which kept the organisation afloat during the war years until government support became available in 1946.
- 1940 ACER begins aptitude testing with army recruits.
- 1945 First full time librarian appointed.
- 1954 Dr Cunningham retired after 25 years as Director.
- 1955 Dr W.C. Radford commences as Director, and serves until 1976. Radford was previously Assistant Director.
- 1957 ACER established the *Australian Journal of Education*, which is still published today.
- 1958 ACER office moves from Collins Street to Lonsdale Street, Melbourne.
- 1962 Co-operative Scholarship Testing Program (CSTP) for scholarships to independent schools begins. The program still runs today.
- 1963 ACER office moves to Hawthorn.
- 1977 Dr J.P. Keeves appointed Director, and serves until 1984.
- 1985 Dr Barry McGaw appointed Director, and serves until 1998.
- 1994 ACER office moves to current head office in Camberwell.
- 1998 Dr Geoff Masters appointed Director.
- 2002 ACER government funding ceases. ACER had been receiving a small portion of its income from the Commonwealth and State governments.
- 2002 January. Sydney office opens.
- 2004 Dubai office opens.

Australian Council for Educational Research Limited ABN 19 004 398 145

19 Prospect Hill Road (Private Bag 55) Camberwell VIC 3124 Australia
T +61 3 9277 5555 F +61 3 9277 5500
E communications@acer.edu.au W www.acer.edu.au

Improving Learning



1930 + 2005

75

Australian Council for Educational Research

ACER

1930

Established in the 1930s, ACER was funded by a grant from the Carnegie Corporation, a US organisation created in 1911 to promote 'the advancement and diffusion of knowledge and understanding.'

2005

ACER continues to be an independent, not for profit organisation, and now operates internationally.



ACER: the early years

ACER's early focus was on research as opposed to service activities, and making ACER a clearinghouse of research information. Emphasis was placed on primary and secondary education. It had a policy of functioning through the state Institutes of Educational Research, although this was never particularly successful.

In the early years ACER built up an image as:

- a centre devoted to the scientific study of education;
- a knowledgeable institution that could be used by Australian educators to improve their information, and a source of reference on what was the best and latest in educational thought and practice; and
- a supporter of progressive education.

Prior to the establishment of ACER there had been no educational institution with an Australia-wide interest. The first research undertaken was: the standardisation of scholastic and mental testing for Australia; a study of the number of children aged 10 to 18 in each school grade or type of occupation; and the fundamental problems of the primary school curriculum.

During the Second World War, ACER was involved in psychological testing for personnel selection to the Armed Services and government departments. ACER also worked on publications dealing with evacuation possibilities, and advised the Department of Post-War Reconstruction. For the three years from 1942 ACER was mostly concerned with the war effort, with regular work suspended. Its war time work helped lead to government financial support for ACER from 1946 and confirmed it as a significant national institution.

In the post war years, ACER was able to move away from war work to focus on schools again. There was now more emphasis on testing. ACER had become dependent on government finance.

ACER's head office was located in Collins Street, Melbourne until 1958, then in Lonsdale Street. In 1963 ACER moved eight kilometres from central Melbourne to Hawthorn, then to its current premises in nearby Camberwell in 1994. In recent years, staff have occupied a second building in Camberwell. The Sydney office opened in 2002, and the Dubai office in 2004. From two staff in 1930, then five at the end of the decade, ACER now has more than 200 staff members.

ACER: today

ACER continues to be an independent, not for profit organisation. ACER receives no government funding – it is funded entirely through contract work, fees for services and product sales.

ACER's research and development is underpinned by its mission to create and disseminate knowledge and tools that can be used to improve learning. ACER undertakes a wide range of research and development and provides services and materials in support of educational policy-making and improved professional practice.

ACER research is organised into seven research programs: assessment and reporting; early childhood education; learning processes and contexts; national and international surveys; system and school testing; teaching and learning; and transitions and economics of education.

There are also three special research topics: indigenous education; education of boys; and brain research and learning.

In addition to research, ACER's work includes fee for service testing programs such as scholarship selection, university entrance, psychological and human resources tests. Some of these are available online. Test scoring and administration services and a career guidance service are available. Tests, books and other materials are also published and sold through ACER Press for the education, psychology, human resources, parent education and speech pathology markets. The Centre for Professional Learning provides professional development in education, psychology and human resources.

Changes in international role

After an early focus on Australian education, ACER now provides a range of services for international clients. The ACER International Institute provides training and professional learning for educators, researchers, policy makers and managers from around the world at the Sydney and Melbourne offices. ACER manages the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) project on behalf of the OECD and has been involved in many international studies. ACER has been involved in major international projects: the implementation of Grade 11 examinations in Cambodia, preparation of primary teacher training in Vietnam, and an East Timor maths and science project. ACER is a founding member of the Asia Pacific Educational Research Association (APERA) which links educational research organisations across the region.

Further Information

Connell, W.F. (1980) *The Australian Council for Educational Research 1930-80*, ACER: Melbourne.

Williams, B. (1994) *Education With its Eyes Open: A biography of Dr K. S. Cunningham*, ACER: Melbourne.