

# How can we ensure science informs education policy and practice?

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JENNY DONOVAN, Australian Education Research Organisation

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In this presentation:

- A brief overview of AERO; its origins, vision and purposes
- How AERO will support a more evidence-based approach in education
- The implications for practitioners and policymakers

# Part 1: Introducing AERO

A brief overview of the Australian Education Research Organisation

# AERO's vision is for Australia to achieve excellence and equity in educational outcomes for all children and young people through effective use of evidence

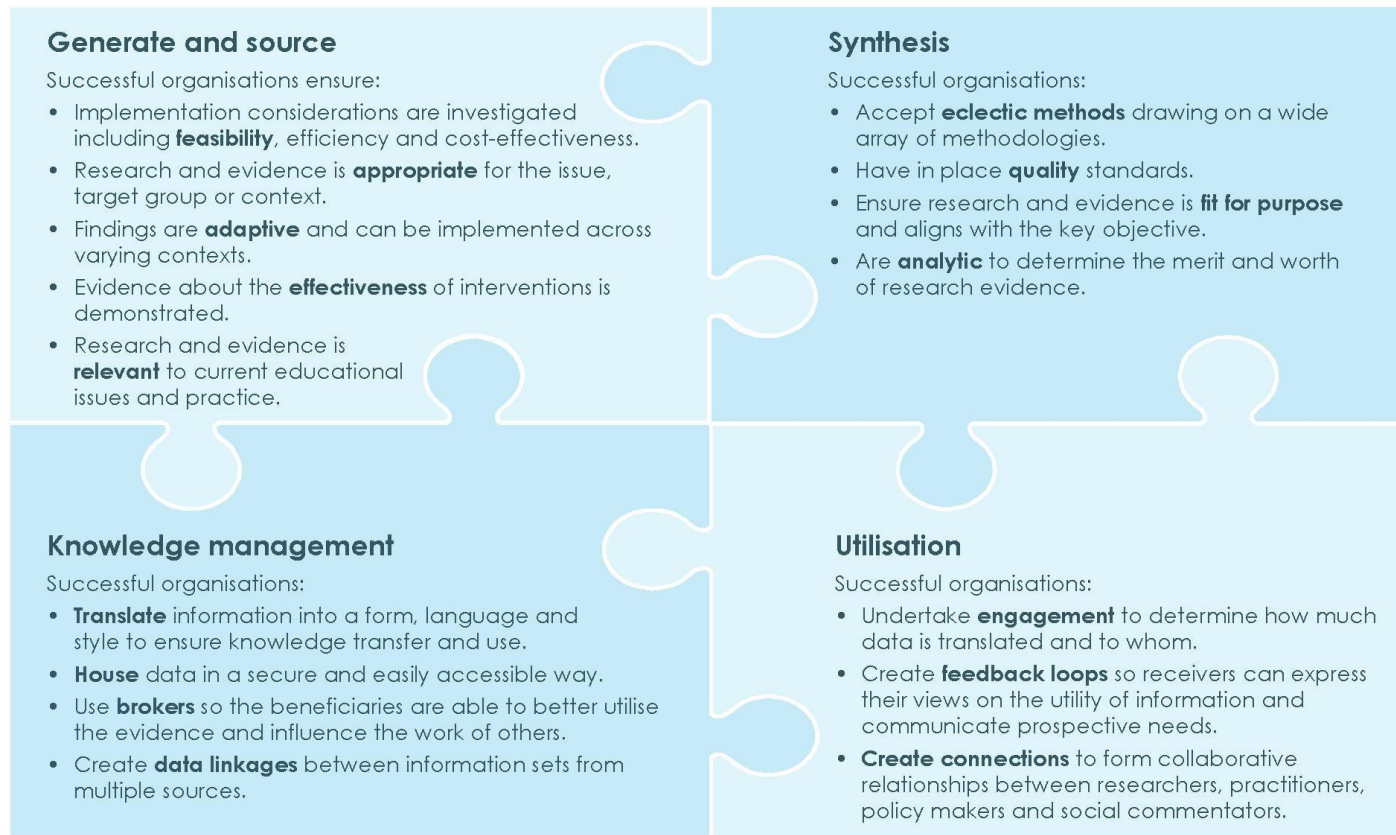
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- Independent national body, expressly charged by governments with the task of generating, presenting, and implementing evidence and research
- Initial investment of \$50m over three years from Ministers
- Governed by an independent, expert Board of Directors
- Three purposes:
  - generate high-quality evidence – eg RCTs; data linkage and analyses; investigation and construction of measures
  - present high-quality evidence that is relevant and accessible – eg synthesise existing research; curate resources; translate knowledge into products that are engaging and useful
  - encourage adoption and effective implementation of evidence in practice and policy – eg undertake research into strategies that support greater evidence use; understand the current state of evidence use; develop measures of evidence use in practice.

# Part 2: The basis for AERO's approach

How AERO will support a more evidence-based approach in education

# Government reviews into key activities and features of research and evidence institutions



Clinton, J.M., Aston, R. & Quach, J. (2018) *Promoting evidence uptake in schools: A review of the key features of research and evidence institutions*

# Consultations with, and research on, evidence intermediaries

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- The question of impact - we must do more than merely generate and present high-quality evidence; to ensure impact we must play a critical part in facilitating the implementation of that evidence too
- What works for “what works” centres: Learnings from system-level efforts to cultivate evidence informed practice (Abdo, Goh *et al.* 2021) identifies factors that limit success:
  - inadequate attendance to effective and sustainable implementation
  - lack of credibility with the field
  - slow pace with which evidence is shared
  - insufficient awareness of how frontline practitioners, including educators, understand and use evidence
  - inappropriate skills and competencies in the workforce
  - rigour but not relevance in the evidence shared
  - lack of understanding of how to influence the policy process
- Consultation with the sector revealed an appetite for AERO to be 'bold and authoritative'

# AERO's Research Agenda and Work Plan are developed in consultation with the education community

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We are guided by three key factors:

- Demand – Each year, AERO listens to the Australian education community to hear their priorities and interests.
- Impact – We consider evidence gaps and areas of research that are likely to lead to the greatest impact.
- Feasibility – We consider operational issues, including availability of resources, data, expertise etc.



# Part 3: Scaling up evidence-based practice

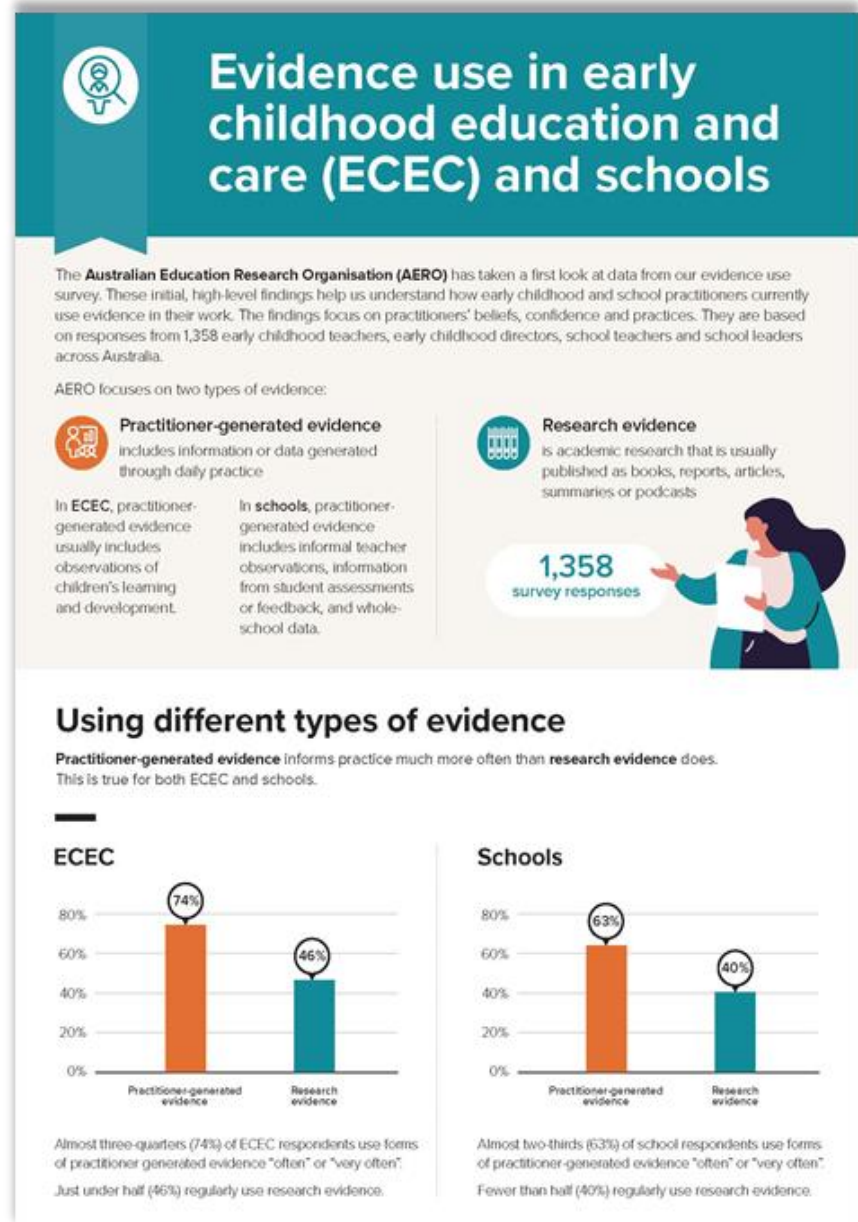
How AERO will work through systems as well as with practitioners

# We can accelerate impact if we target both policymakers and practitioners

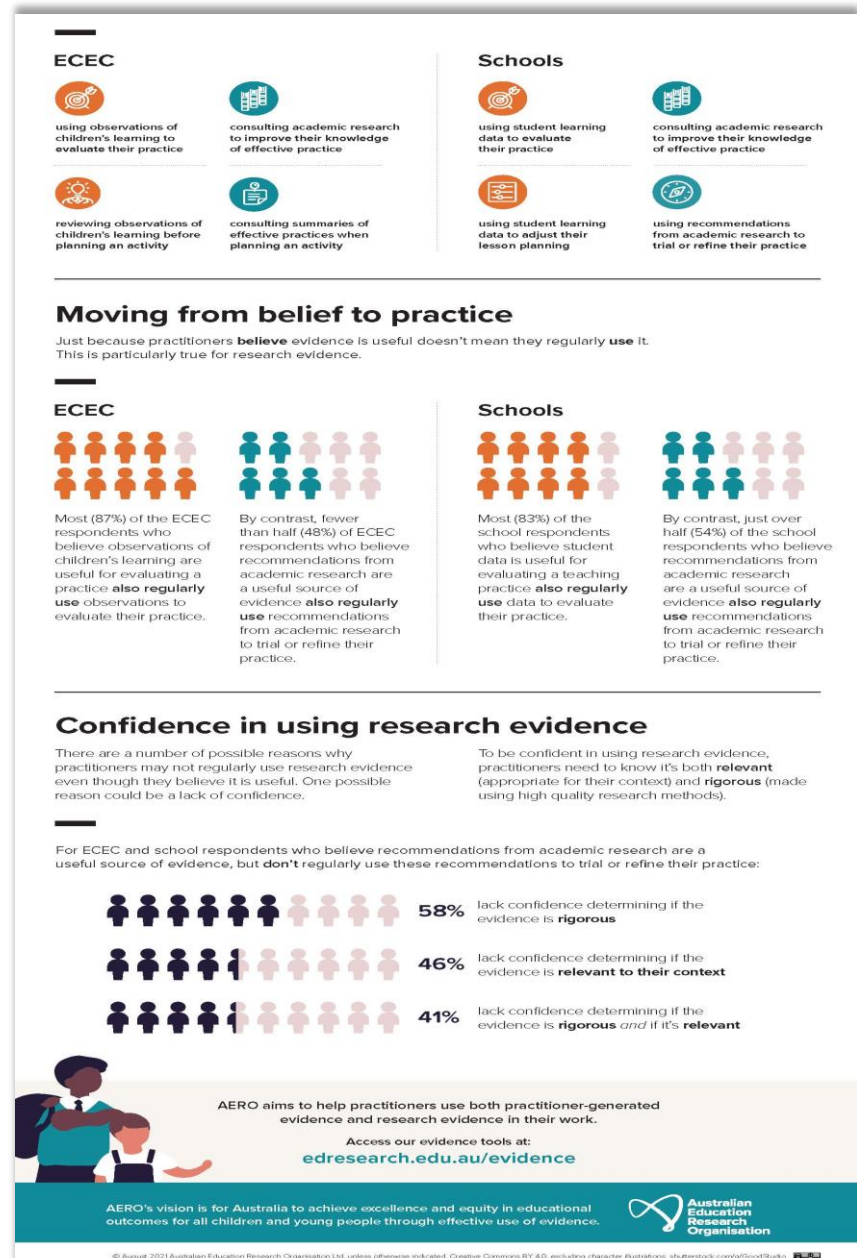
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- In order for practitioners to make sustained change towards evidence-based practices they will need:
  - capability/knowledge
  - opportunity/support
  - motivation/disposition
- To ensure policymakers are ready to meet these needs, AERO will:
  - seek to have systems and other partners disseminate our evidence-based resources to practitioners, and align their own guidance for practitioners with evidence
  - ensure our work is relevant to the needs of systems and other partners, and that they are engaged in its conduct, to improve the likelihood they will do so
  - help systems understand how to structure their policies, programs and professional learning to more effectively support sustained practice change, by conducting and engaging them in research around these questions.

We are establishing a baseline so that we can measure improvement (I)



We are establishing a baseline so that we can measure improvement (II)



# Thank you for your attention

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AERO <https://www.edresearch.edu.au/>