

## Topics of current interest

*Presented to the ACDS Executive Meeting on 28 January 2026  
Covering the period November 2025 to January 2026.*

The following are recent articles and reports that may be of interest to Deans of Science. This list is not meant to indicate a particular point of view from the ACDS. We encourage you to follow the links to the original articles.

### 1. Jobs and Skills Report 2025 – Connecting for Impact

<https://www.jobsandskills.gov.au/publications/jobs-and-skills-report-2025>

Jobs and Skills Australia, November 2025

- This report discusses some of the issues around shifting skill demands, technological changes and structural barriers. It identifies ‘where better alignment between education, migration and workforce planning’ can deliver better productivity and participation.

### 2. The preparedness of Australian science for AI

<https://www.science.org.au/supporting-science/science-advice-and-policy/reports-and-publications/is-australian-science-ready-for-ai>

Australian Academy of Science, December 2025

- Eight issues papers were released by the Academy in late 2025. They cover a range of matters that are important for Australia’s preparedness to make the most of AI in science, including infrastructure, skills and funding.

### 3. National AI plan

<https://www.industry.gov.au/publications/national-ai-plan>

Department of Industry, Science and Resources, December 2025.

- Meanwhile, the Australian Government has released its national plan to help ‘build an AI-enabled economy that is more competitive, productive and resilient’. The plan discusses how to ensure that the benefits of AI are spread widely and accessible to all.

### 4. Unleashing growth: Australia’s AI investment blueprint

<https://www.atse.org.au/what-we-do/strategic-advice/unleashing-growth-australias-ai-investment-blueprint/>

ATSE, December 2025

- ATSE has released its second report on AI in a few months (see the previous report from August 2025 discussed in my previous update). This report considers the drivers that are needed to enable economic benefit from AI, including workforce and capability, infrastructure and a supportive AI ecosystem.

### 5. New ATEC interim commissioners appointed

<https://ministers.education.gov.au/clare/new-commissioners-appointed-australian-tertiary-education-commission>

Australian Tertiary Education Commission, January 2026

- Minister Clare has announced the appointment of Professor Tom Calma and the Hon Fiona Nash as interim commissioners. Applications for the statutory ATEC Commissioner roles close on 29 January.

## 6. ATEC Insights

<https://msg.dese.gov.au/pub/pubType/EO/pubID/zzzz6939db6c39802064/interface.html>

Australian Tertiary Education Commission, December 2025

- This newsletter from ATEC is a good way to keep up-to-date with the activities of ATEC in a number of areas. Of particular relevance to ACDS members is the report on the 'Enhancing Professional Practice in Higher Education' workshop led by Professor Liz Johnson in December. (Liz was the inaugural Director of the ACDS T&L Centre, and she spoke at both the ACDS AGM and Annual Conference in 2025.) The next workshop is due to be held in February 2026.

## 7. Universities Accord (ATEC) Bill 2025

[https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary\\_Business/Committees/Senate/Education\\_and\\_Employment/ATEC2025](https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate/Education_and_Employment/ATEC2025)

Australian Government, November 2025-January 2026

- A bill to establish ATEC (the real one, as distinct from the Interim ATEC) was introduced to parliament in November 2025 and referred to a committee of inquiry. Submissions closed on 15 January 2026 and 46 documents are available to read.

## 8. Funding and resourcing for CSIRO inquiry

[https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary\\_Business/Committees/Senate/Economics/CSIRO](https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate/Economics/CSIRO)

Australian Government, January 2026

- The government has called for submissions in response to the cuts in funding announced for CSIRO in November 2025. Submissions close on 30 January 2026.

## 9. Australia Day honours

<https://scienceandtechnologyaustralia.org.au/science-benefits-to-australia-recognised-in-awards/>

- We congratulate all the STEM professionals who have been recognised in the recent Australian honours list. It is wonderful to see Katherine Bennell-Pegg named as the 2026 Australian of the Year. She is a wonderful ambassador for science and an inspiration for school students. It was also great to see the acknowledgement of Shaun Collin, previously Dean of science at La Trobe and a former member of the ACDS Executive.

## 10. Reports from the ARC and SERD consultations

- At the time of writing, we understand that the reports from these important consultations in 2025 are sitting with the respective Ministers.

## Some books for the ACDS book club: 😊

- Fiona Erskine, 2021, "Phosphate rocks", Sandstone Press.  
This book is good for anyone with an interest in chemistry or engineering. It is a detective story set in a fictionalised version of a fertiliser factory in Edinburgh. The author was a chemical engineer for many years. It is one of the most enjoyable science-based novels I have read in a while. The appendix on 'People' is worth reading too!
- Ben Rein, 2025, "Why brains need friends: the neuroscience of social connectivity", Penguin.  
It is very interesting to see a genuine science researcher writing on a topic that affects us all. According to the publisher, this is 'a neuroscientist's guide to boosting your brain health by living a more connected life, and thriving in a post-interaction world.'

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