

**AUSTRALIAN  
TECHNOLOGY  
NETWORK**  
OF UNIVERSITIES

**ATN**  
**25** YEARS

# ATN25 National Symposium Curriculum Innovation

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## Industry-Engaged Curricula

# Contents

ATN25 National Symposium Curriculum Innovation .....	02
Key takeaways .....	03
1. Collaboration is crucial .....	03
2. Harmony needed in the system .....	04
3. Using data and acting on insights .....	05
4. Need for innovative curriculum models .....	06
We all have an active part to play .....	07
Event details .....	08



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

We respectfully acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the lands on which our universities are situated, and we pay our respects to their Elders past, present, and emerging.

We honour the enduring knowledge, cultures, and traditions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and we recognise their continuing connection to the lands, waters, and communities across Australia.

As leaders in education and research, we are committed to walking alongside First Nations peoples, learning from their wisdom, and working together to create a shared future grounded in respect, reconciliation, and justice.



## ATN25 National Symposium *Curriculum Innovation*

The ATN25 National Symposium on Curriculum Innovation brought together leaders from tertiary education, industry and government for a solutions-focused discussion on the role and impact of industry-engaged curricula in meeting the emerging skills needed for a thriving economy. It was an open space for discussions about: good practice currently in action; barriers to success; and opportunities for us as a connected sector and system.

The symposium took place just before the 2024 Federal Budget and built on the national discussions following the release of the Universities Accord Final Report by The Hon Jason Clare MP, Minister for Education, on 25 February 2024 and Prime Minister Albanese's policy announcement *A Future Made in Australia*, on 11 April 2024.

### KEYNOTE ADDRESS:

Professor Barney Glover AO, Commissioner of Jobs and Skills Australia

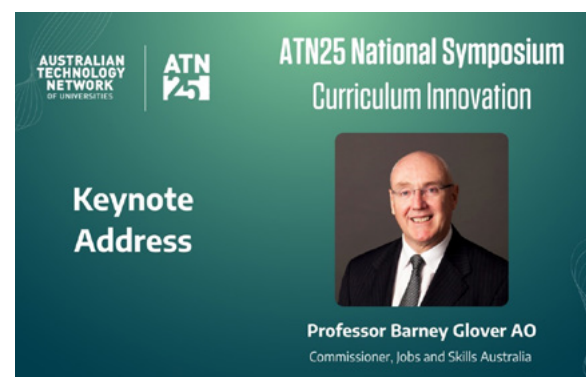
### PANEL:

Chaired by Prof Kylie Readman, Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Vice-President (Education and Students) at the University of Technology Sydney (UTS) and included Kate Pounder thought leader from the technology sector, Craig Robertson of the Victorian Skills Authority, Prof Sherman Young Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Education) at RMIT University, and Dr Suneeti Rekhari of TAFE NSW.

### IDEATION SEGMENT:

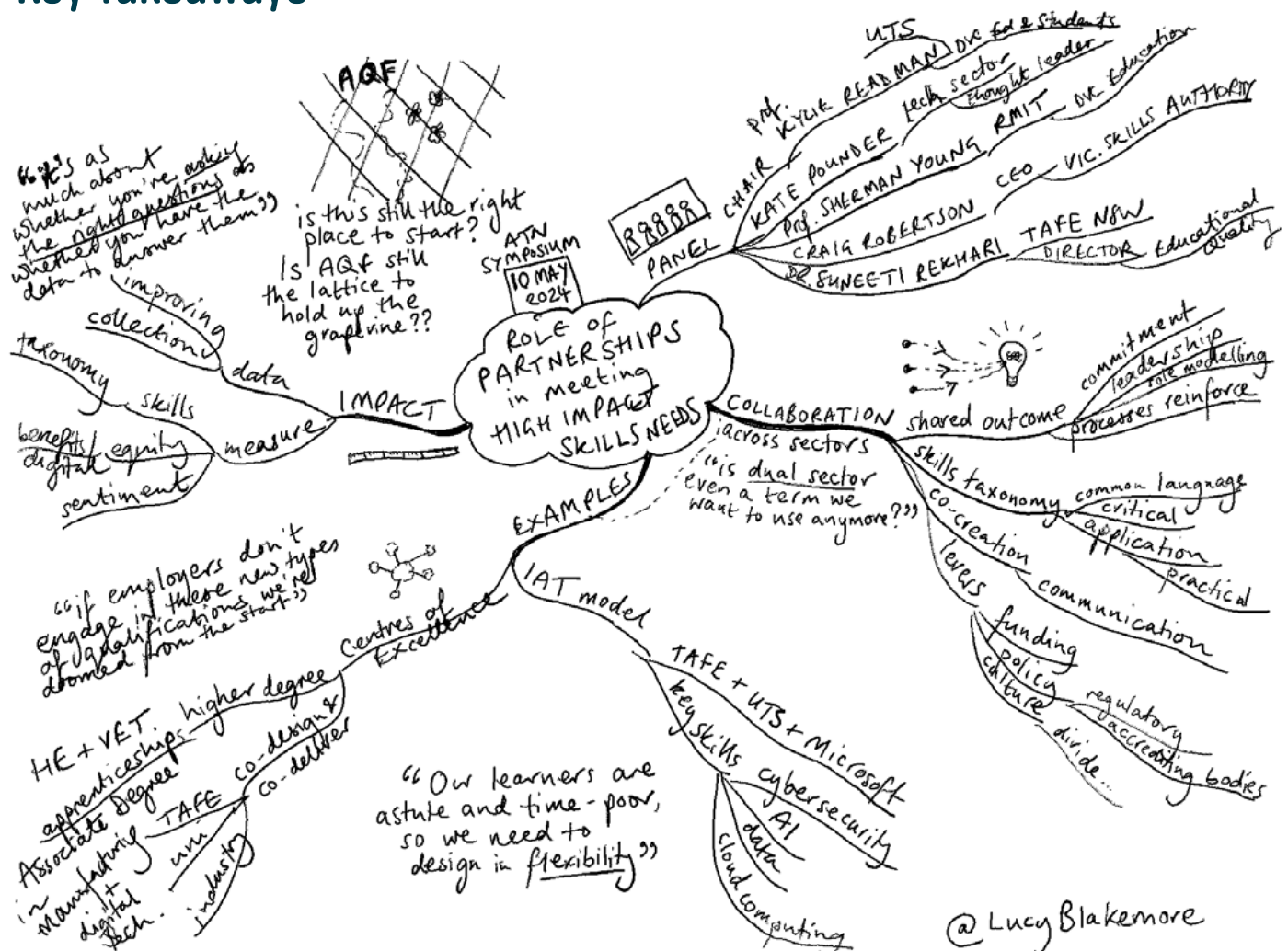
Audience participation, sharing what's working well in cross-sector collaborations, identifying blockers, and imagining what an ideal state might look like if anything was possible. Facilitated by Prof Liz Johnson Senior Deputy Vice-Chancellor Academic at Deakin University, Dr Suneeti Rekhari of TAFE NSW, and Dr Dee Halil of the Australian Technology Network of Universities (ATN).

Ahead of the event, case studies of industry-engaged curricula from ATN universities were shared and showcased examples of current practice across the sector, including partnerships between vocational and higher education.





# Key Takeaways



**Figure 2 Mindmap of the ATN25 National Symposium:**

Curriculum Innovation panel discussion. Mindmap created by Lucy Blakemore, content writer (University of Technology Sydney) and research consultant ([www.lucyblakemore.com](http://www.lucyblakemore.com)).

## 1. Collaboration is Crucial

Effective partnerships between universities, vocational institutions, industry, and government are essential for addressing skills shortages and enhancing workforce readiness.

The three key partnership models shared, and that are highlighted in the Accord, have TAFEs at the heart with universities as major contributors as partners – TAFE Centres of Excellence, Institutes of Applied Technology, and Regional Study Hubs.

Panel members discussed a series of factors that make partnerships successful, noting the following from their firsthand experiences:

- Shared ownership of outcomes and sense of purpose
- Model change with clear and demonstrated commitment at the leadership level
- Investment in capabilities with a clear direction
- Processes and regulations that enable and reinforce the change
- Keep the focus on students and student outcomes

## 2. Harmony needed in the system – breaking traditional divides

Breaking down the long-standing divides between vocational and higher education is essential for creating a more integrated and harmonious tertiary education system.

### CULTURE

The panel spoke to the cultural divides that exist between vocational and higher education – noting the different ways of working, perceived difference in value and associated biases and judgement, and the different languages used to describe and define skills, capabilities and qualifications. It was acknowledged that differences in culture and language also exist between individual institutions - these are unhelpful and act as barriers to impactful partnerships and collaboration. It would be a remiss to not consider this as a people issue, and the role of leadership in leading a cultural shift together with their teams at a whole-of-organisation and sectoral commitment.

“If we are genuinely serious about getting the skills gap filled and building that seamless journey for students and co-creating a solution for the workforce, we need to find a way to address that cultural divide.” **Prof Sherman Young**

Interestingly, audience contributions to the ideation segment identified vocational and higher education partnerships as both enablers and blockers. This emphasises the role and importance of shared languages, shared outcomes, and addressing cultural barriers (real and perceived) that block our path to shared success.

“We need to acknowledge the parity of esteem between our two sectors, and we need to ensure that we offer an uplifting opportunity for all Australians to achieve their potential.” **Prof Barney Glover**

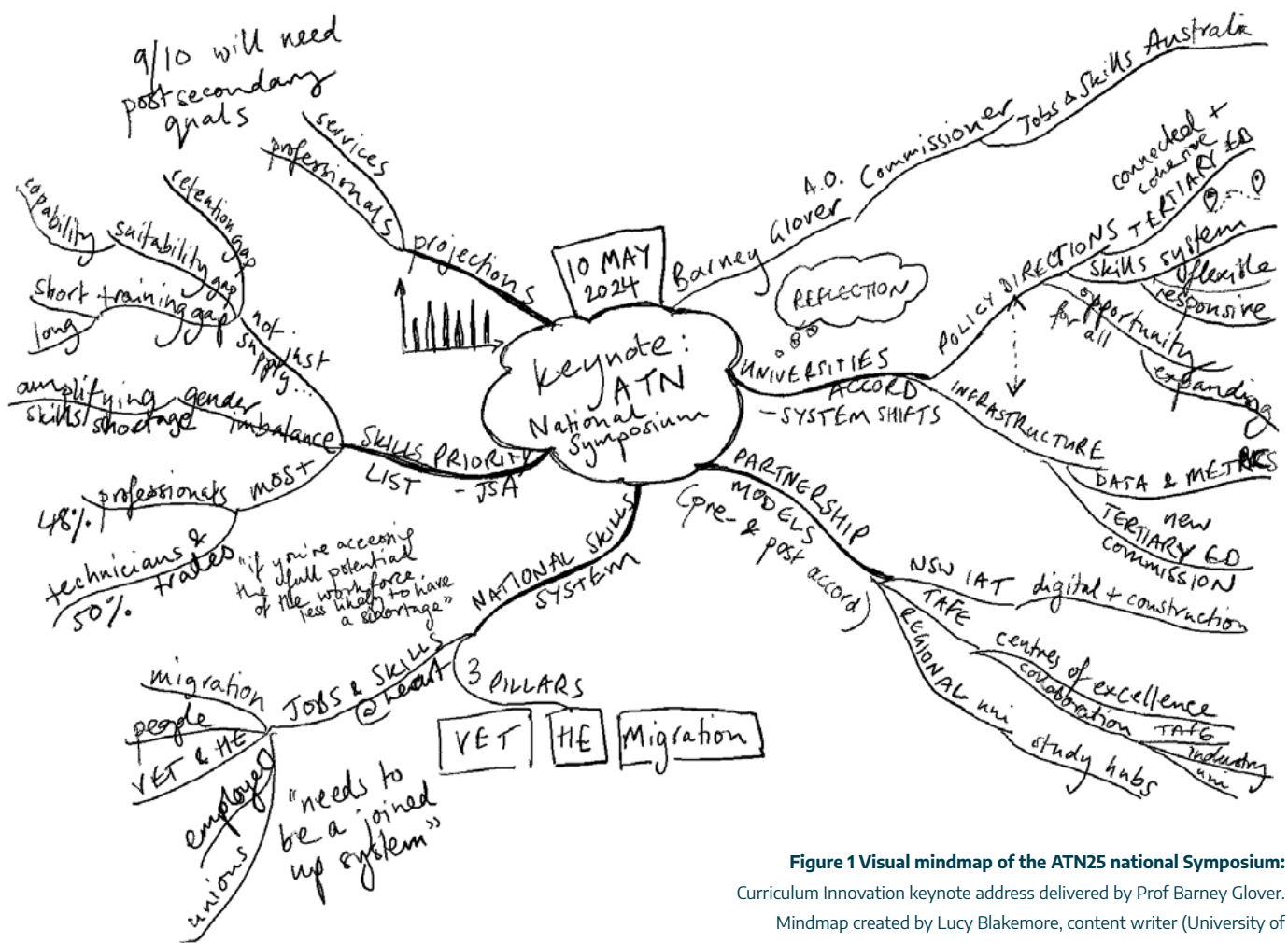
### SYSTEMS

The educational system must support lifelong learning and adaptability to ensure continuous skill development and career progression.

Prof Glover and the panel spoke to the criticality of the National Skills Taxonomy as a shared language across vocational and higher education, and a key facilitator and enabler for cohesion in the sector. Most importantly, it will increase mobility of students within the system and into the labour market with the implementation of the National Skills Passport.

### FUNDING

The proposed Australian Tertiary Education Commission (ATEC) was described by Prof Glover as a “steward of the sector” and a stabiliser of an already high-quality system. Discussions included a hope that the ATEC will reform funding structures that currently work against effective partnerships across the sector and act as barriers to horizontal mobility across qualifications.



**Figure 1 Visual mindmap of the ATN25 national Symposium:**

Curriculum Innovation keynote address delivered by Prof Barney Glover.

Mindmap created by Lucy Blakemore, content writer (University of Technology Sydney) and research consultant ([www.lucyblakemore.com](http://www.lucyblakemore.com)).

### 3. Using data and acting on insights

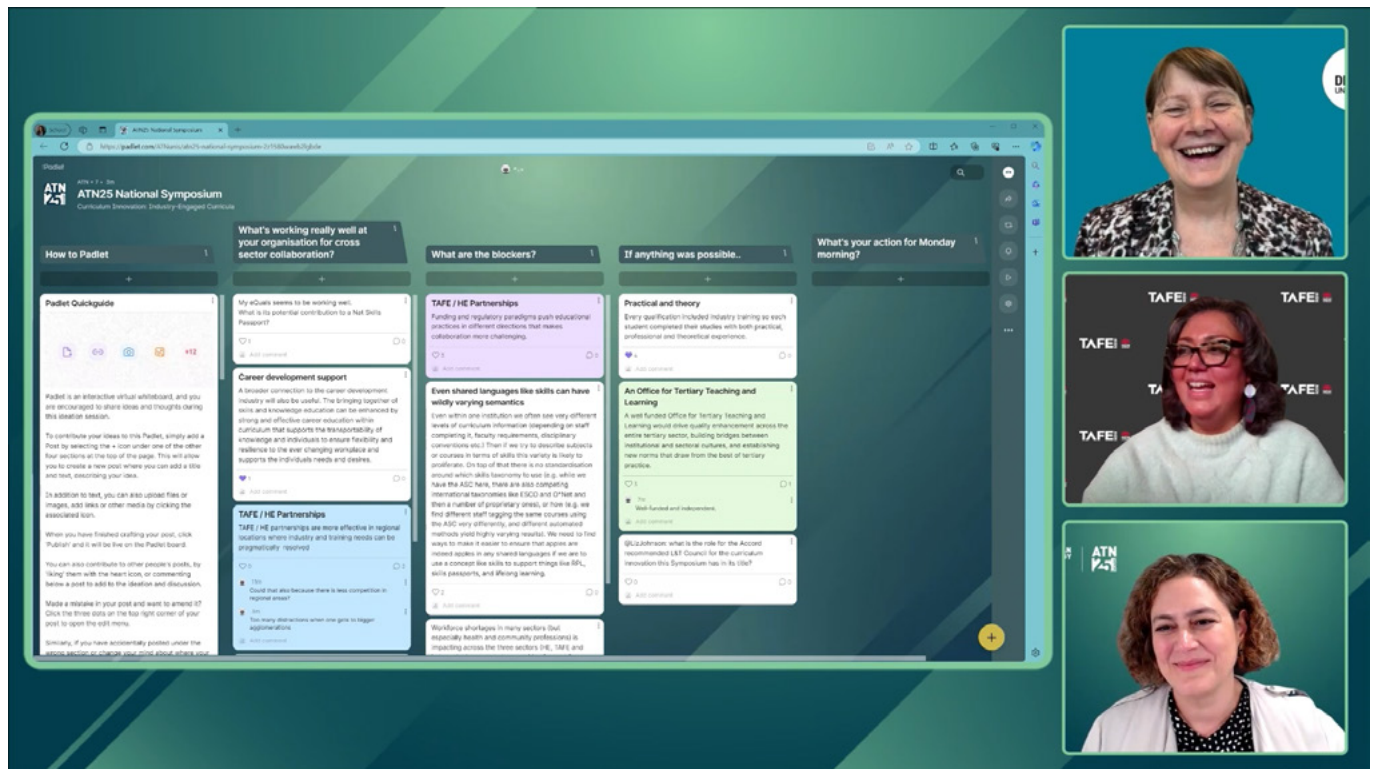
The use of advanced data sets and technologies for workforce planning can provide more accurate and actionable insights.

The panel discussed the role of employment forecasting, and how taking a view across sectors, versus occupations, enables us to look at the underpinning skills and knowledge that enables people to be adaptable, maximising their chances of success and mobility through the labour market.

Prof Glover spoke to the role of Jobs and Skills Australia (JSA) and work that they have commenced on integrating data sets from across vocational and higher education to identify student movements and outcomes. These insights aim to help to link pathways to outcomes by providing a better understanding of how existing students move through the tertiary education system and the outcomes they achieve.

JSA are also taking this a step further and looking at the efficacy of these pathways in relation to projecting employment growth, identifying the need for targeted education and training programs to meet specific skills shortages.

As part of the ideation segment, facilitators highlighted the value of exploring data from a different perspective, looking at the different and common career development needs of students and how this might play a role in enabling student mobility between vocational and higher education.



## 4. Need for innovative curriculum models

Flexible, responsive, and co-designed curriculum models are necessary to meet the evolving needs of learners and industries.

Panel members discussed that the outcome of successful partnerships across the sector and with industry leads to a better understanding of, and successfully meeting employer needs (current and emerging). They also noted that this cross-sector partnership approach often leads to innovative ways of thinking about curriculum and collective confidence in trialling new models.

During the ideation session, facilitators Prof Liz Johnson and Dr Suneeti Rekhari discussed the timing of joining up vocational and higher education, and who in the system is responsible for leading curriculum innovation – they agreed, we don't need to wait, and it's on us all to be active in this space. They noted that alongside curriculum innovation is developing educator capability to develop and deliver that curriculum, with educators and teachers as agents of this change.

Regulatory positions influence the shape of educational practices, however that's not to say that these cannot be challenged. The sector can at times demonstrate complacency without realising its agency – academic and professional colleagues alike can take an action to start a dialogue about what might be a better way forward.

# We all have an active part to play

ATN universities are committed to cutting-edge applied learning as the cornerstone of their education, due in part to their deep and close partnerships with industry.

There was a call to action for all those present, to commit to one thing that they can do at their local level to advocate and make progress, however small, towards shared goals across the sector.

We all have an active part to play in the shaping and implementation of reform, and we have agency to act within formal and informal roles. What's on the top of your action list?

Ideation facilitators Prof Liz Johnson and Dr Suneeti Rekari committed to taking the conversation from the Symposium into their institutions, activating their teams to use their existing partnerships to expand their thinking and lean further into the collaboration between universities and vocational education institutions.

We hope this overview provides food for thought for you to take into your institutions and continue the conversation during this time of significant reform and ongoing rapid change.

## **Find case studies of industry-engaged curricula in our ATN25 Case Studies booklet**

[ATN25 National Symposium Curriculum Innovation Case Studies](#)

## **Watch the ATN25 National Symposium Curriculum Innovation**

[ATN Events: ATN25 National Symposium on Curriculum Innovation](#)

## **Explore the ideas shared during the ideation segment of the symposium**

[ATN25 National Symposium Curriculum Innovation Ideation Padlet board](#)

## **Delve deeper into the current issues facing the sector by reading ATN's recent submissions to government consultations**

[ATN Policy and Submissions](#)



### Event details

ATN25 National Symposium on Curriculum Innovation

10 May 2024, 12:30–14:45 AEDT (Online).

Hosted by Frank Coletta, ATN Executive Director (Interim).

Participant engagement was supported by Slido (Q&A) and Padlet (sharing ideas).

The symposium was recorded for asynchronous engagement and is accessible on the [ATN website](#).

### Participants of the live event

Participant count: 175

Participant organisations: Higher Education, TAFE, Independent training providers, Industry, Government, Industry, Professional Bodies, Media organisations.

University of Technology Sydney (46), University of South Australia (25), Deakin University (24), Curtin University (20), RMIT University (18), The University of Newcastle (3), TAFE (4), La Trobe University (3), JCU (1), SCU (1), Swinburne (1), University of Sydney (1), Times Higher Education (1), The Australian (1), The University of Melbourne (1), University of New South Wales (1), University of Western Australia (1), Western Sydney University (1), Government (3).

Locations: Australia (169), Malaysia (1), Hong Kong SAR (1), India (2), Belgium (2)

Engagement: 112 of 175 participated for longer than an hour, and 60 for more than two hours.

# AUSTRALIAN TECHNOLOGY NETWORK OF UNIVERSITIES



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