

# MEDIA RELEASE

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## *Better focus required on principal career paths and roles*

Building communities of professional learners is the key to meeting Australia's school leadership challenge a new review of research has concluded.

The Australian Education review 53: *The Leadership Challenge: Improving learning in schools*, written by University of Tasmania researcher Professor Bill Mulford, was released today by the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER).

The review draws on papers from ACER's 2007 Research Conference and many other contemporary sources within the leadership research literature to address and provide a focus for the issues facing Australian school leadership.

"It is clear from the research that the task of leading a school is now too complex and demanding a job for one person," Professor Mulford said. "Improving schooling over time requires the enhanced capacity, not just of one person, but of many."

Advances in science and technology, changes in demography, increased globalisation and pressures on the environment are causing education organisations to broaden and personalise curriculum and to rethink school structures and the role of the principal within them.

"The old but continuing attempts to improve schools in a small number of areas by top down political and bureaucratic means, has failed. On the other hand, research evidence is clear in its support for the advantages of building social capital within schools, among and between schools as well as between the school and its community," he said.

Professor Mulford calls for more research and policy attention to be given to the career paths of school principals in order to meet the challenge of identifying and developing the next generation of school leaders.

"The challenges associated with succession planning will be best dealt with by local solutions developed by groups of schools taking responsibility for developing their talent pools and career paths," Professor Mulford said.

Australian Education Review number 53, *The Leadership Challenge: Improving learning in schools*, by Bill Mulford with a foreword by Geoff Southworth, Deputy CEO and Strategic Director of Research and Policy at the National College for School Leadership in England, is available for download from the ACER website at [www.acer.edu.au](http://www.acer.edu.au). Print copies can be purchased from ACER Press. Contact customer service on 1800 338 402 or via email on [sales@acer.edu.au](mailto:sales@acer.edu.au)

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