

MEDIA RELEASE

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Educators urged to respond to 'civilisational challenge'

The single most significant omission from educational thinking and practice is the absence of any kind of effective futures studies according to futures expert Professor Richard Slaughter.

In an address to the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) annual conference in Brisbane on Monday, Professor Slaughter will argue that this situation has become indefensible. Professor Slaughter insists educators must begin to take very seriously what he describes as the 'civilisational challenge.'

Futures concepts, tools and other resources will be invaluable in assisting students to face an approaching 'perfect storm' comprised of climate change, regional environmental collapse, peak oil disruptions and economic crises, all exacerbated by continuing strife between different world views.

"Educators must first stand up for what they believe in as professionals, to nurture the young and prepare them for living and working in a globally connected but unsustainable society," Professor Slaughter says.

He will challenge educators to see these issues as intimately bound up with all aspects of teaching and learning and present three requirements for educators.

The first and core requirement is that educators look beyond their studies, offices and classrooms and inform themselves not only about the dimensions of the global challenge but also their implications for over dependent societies. Educators must also begin to seriously build on the wide range of futures work and initiatives that have occurred in various educational environments, both here and abroad.

"Having an early grounding in futures concepts and tools will assist young people in their transitions to life and work," Professor Slaughter says.

"With these foundations they are better equipped to develop active and informed responses to futures that most adults can still scarcely bring themselves to imagine."

Richard A Slaughter is a writer, practitioner and innovator in Futures Studies and Applied Foresight. He is currently Director of Foresight International, an independent company dedicated to building the Futures field, and facilitating the emergence of social foresight.

The ACER Research Conference 2008, *Touching the Future: Building skills for life and work*, takes place in Brisbane from 10 to 12 August.

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