

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

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## **ACU Centre to advance reading instruction and student outcomes**

Scientifically validated literacy practices for teachers and improved student reading outcomes are at the heart of Australian Catholic University's new Australian Centre for the Advancement of Literacy, which was officially launched today.

Amid a panel discussion about the future of early literacy education, the Centre's role as a leader in high-quality literacy research, evidence-based teaching methods, and targeted interventions was formalised.

ACU Executive Dean of Education and Arts Professor Mary Ryan said the launch of the Centre – including a reading clinic to be open to the public in the new year with literacy supports also available online – signalled an exciting time for the future of literacy education in Australia.

“We know how important literacy education is to young people's success at school and in life, which is why we've developed this Centre to ensure teachers and students have access to research-driven and effective reading strategies and practices,” Professor Ryan said.

“The field of literacy research, existing and future teachers, including those we graduate at ACU as Australia's largest provider of teachers, and students of all ages will benefit from this important aim.

“This Centre and our reading clinic, which will be staffed by expert clinicians, will help us to better prepare teachers and support students' foundational literacy to meet their needs as 21<sup>st</sup> century learners.”

Inaugural Director Professor Rauno Parrila said the Centre was unique in that it had the capability to conduct rigorous research and embed it directly into initial teacher education courses, post-graduate certificates, and professional learning opportunities designed to upskill existing teachers.

“Our goal is simply to increase the reading achievement in Australia – that's it. But to do it, you need to approach it from all levels and that's what we are already doing,” he said.

“We are providing continuously updated information on what we know works. For example, we know that systematic phonics is a necessary part of early reading instruction and therefore we have used this evidence to inform our teacher education courses.

“But we also have a high-calibre team conducting hands-on research to continue to improve the methods of instruction.”

Leading literacy researchers who have joined the Centre include Laureate Fellow Professor Anne Castles whose \$3 million Australian Research Council-funded project into adolescent illiteracy will investigate the causes behind the problem, ways to assess students' abilities, and effective interventions.

Fellow renowned researchers and lecturers at the Centre include Professor Donald Compton, Professor Genevieve McArthur, Dr Danielle Colenbrander, Dr Tina Daniel, Dr Valeria M. Rigobon, Dr Andrea Salins, and Dr Signy Wegener.

Their areas of expertise include spelling, reading comprehension, morphology, reading disabilities and risk factors, environmental and systemic impacts on learning to read, links between reading difficulties and children's emotional health, and the role of oral vocabulary in reading.

**More information about the [Centre](#).**

**[Link](#) to recording available after today's launch and panel discussion.**

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