**Introduction to OER**

**Introduction to Open Education Resources**

Open Educational Resources (OER) are teaching, learning and research materials in any medium, digital or otherwise, that reside in the public domain or have been released under an open license that permits no-cost access, use, adaption and redistribution by others with no or limited restrictions.

**Why Open Education Resources are good for Australian schools, teachers and students**

The current collective copyright licence schemes and free use exceptions in relation to educational uses by teachers and schools are expensive, restrictive and complicated.  Educator’s valuable time is spent trying to understand complex copyright rules and seeking permission to use education resources.

Australian schools pay over $665 million purchasing education resources each year. These resources cannot be modified, shared or remixed by teachers and students except in very limited circumstances.

Another big problem is that many teachers believe that they are allowed to use material made freely available on the internet for free in their classes and at their school.  This is not the case.  Teachers downloading, saving, printing or emailing pages from the internet will attract fees payable under the education statutory licence for schools.  Generally the only material that is free for teachers and schools to use from the internet is online material that is licensed under Creative Commons.

Currently the schools’ national copyright fees paid to collecting societies are approximately $90 million a year.

However Open Education Resources can provide the following benefits:

• **Safer**: It is much safer for teachers to use Open Education Resources (OER) as they are free to reuse, remix, redistribute and adapt education resources without running the risk of breaching the complex copyright exceptions and copyright licence rules.  
• **Internet compatible**: It is better adapted to the Internet and the freedom which the Internet provides to copy, distribute, adapt and remix resources.  
• **Enabler**: Resources which are free to access are not necessarily free to reuse, remix or adapt. There are many online sources of information which can be freely accessed but often the right to adapt or remix is reserved to the copyright owner. Embedding third party content in education resources also prevents that content from being shared and copied without permission of the copyright owner. OER enables educators to reuse, remix and adapt resources since the copyright owner has already given permission to everyone.  
• **Accessible**: It is easy to access openly licensed materials with over 800 million CC-licensed items of material as of 2014 and many searchable online databases of CC-licensed material available.  
• **Collaborative**: It encourages collaboration between educators and creates communities based on sharing of education resources which can increase the quality of materials and the development of ideas.  
• **Cheaper**: It helps to save money on the national copyright fees and school budgets and administrative costs of seeking permission and allows education resources to be shared freely online with very low transaction costs.  
•**Equitable**: It offers equal access to knowledge for everyone and allows for education resources to be adapted for minorities and those with disabilities.

**What are Open Education Resources (OER)?**

OER are teaching and learning materials in any medium, digital or otherwise, that are freely available for everyone to use whether you are a teacher, student or self- learner. Learning and teaching materials which are made available openly under licences which permit their free access, use, adaptation and sharing by others are transformed into OER.

OER resources are licensed under Creative Commons (CC) licences and in particular the CC-BY (Attribution) and CC-BY-SA (Share Alike) licences are used. Further information about Creative Commons can be found on the Smartcopying website under[’Creative Commons’](https://smartcopying.edu.au/creative-commons-oer/).

OER are not restricted to one format and can include hard copy and digital text, audio, video, images, interactive multimedia and combinations of these. OER can cover all levels of a learning plan from a single learning object to an entire course. They include worksheets, curriculum materials, lectures, homework assignments, quizzes, class activities, pedagogical materials, games and many more resources from around the world.

OER’s fundamental values are that they are free for anyone to use and can be freely distributed, adapted, translated, remixed and improved.

OER meet the ‘5Rs Framework,’ meaning that users are free to:

**Retain**: Users have the right to make, archive, and “own” copies of the content  
**Reuse**:  Content can be reused in its unaltered form  
**Revise**: Content can be adapted, adjusted, modified or altered  
**Remix**: The original or revised content can be combined with other content to create something new  
**Redistribute**: Copies of the content can be shared with others in its original, revised or remixed form.

**OER in Australia**

There is growing use and creation of OER in Australia. All Australian Departments of Education have licensed their websites under CC BY 4.0.  and applying CC licences to their publications. Increasingly government and non- government schools are licensing their learning resources under Creative Commons licences to ensure wider sharing and building of knowledge.

Other OER initiatives include:

• Education Services Australia licensing more than 1600 digital learning resources from the national digital resources collection under CC licences through [Scootle](http://www.scootle.edu.au/ec/lobjects.htm)  
• [The Australian Curriculum](http://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/) is also under a CC BY 4.0. ensuring that the curriculum is widely accessible to teachers and schools as well as facilitating the development of teaching and learning resources.