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Funding awarded to develop free, open, and impactful textbooks for university students

CAUL awarded \$20,000 in grant funding this month to six CAUL Member institutions across Australia and New Zealand in its third year of the Open Educational Resources Collective Open Textbook Grant Program. This brings the total funding for the program to \$92,500.

The CAUL Open Educational Resources Collective was established as a pilot program at the start of 2022 to build institutional capability to support open textbook publishing, build community across participating institutions, and provide grant funding for open textbook projects. The two-year pilot was a success and now continues as a CAUL service into 2024-2025 with a membership of almost 90% of CAUL Member institutions across Australia and New Zealand.

“Australian students are under increasing financial pressure and the increase in textbook costs further compounds the issue, especially for traditionally under-represented groups in higher education,” said Fiona Salisbury, Open Educational Resources Program Director for CAUL. “Creating textbooks with an open licence is aligned with the inclusive approach outlined in the [Universities Accord](#), and will contribute to the significant benefits of a growth through equity model of addressing skills needs in the future; everyone benefits.”

While they may be free for students to access, open textbooks are not free to create. Aside from the investment of academic time in writing an open textbook, there are production costs including platform fees, the cost of a professional editor, library staff time in providing copyright and licensing advice, and overheads associated with running a peer review process.

This year, the OER Collective Governance Group awarded six grants to author teams lead by academics at La Trobe University, Massey University, Queensland University of Technology, University of Canberra, University of Canterbury, and Victoria University of Wellington.

\$20,000 in funding was awarded across three categories: Kickstarter, Indigenous Content or Knowledge, and Health Sciences – Nursing or Pharmacy. Projects focus on a diverse range of disciplines, including psychology, law, Indigenous studies, and health – telemedicine, pharmacy, nursing and midwifery.

[Information about the projects](#) is available on the OER Collective website.

“To fully realise the potential of open textbooks, we need to see funding for grants programs at the levels we’ve seen in the US and Canada,” said Fiona Salisbury. “Since its establishment in 2022, the

OER Collective grants scheme has been vital in building the momentum needed to push the open textbook agenda forward in Australia and New Zealand. We're excited to see the outcomes of the 12 projects funded this year, which will make a real difference to student success."

About the Council of Australian University Librarians

The [Council of Australian University Librarians](#) Inc. (CAUL) is the peak leadership organisation for university libraries in Australia and New Zealand. CAUL members are the University Librarians or equivalent of the 39 institutions that have representation on Universities Australia (UA) and the University Librarians or equivalent of the 8 institutions that have representation on Universities New Zealand (UNZ) and which form the Council of New Zealand University Librarians (CONZUL), a committee of UNZ. CAUL makes a significant contribution to higher education strategy, policy and outcomes through a commitment to a shared purpose: To transform how people experience knowledge – how it can be discovered, used and shared. CAUL's vision is that society is transformed through the power of research, teaching and learning. University libraries are essential knowledge and information infrastructures that enable student achievement and research excellence.

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