

Connection and Collaboration – Building a Resilient Geoscience Community and Future Workforce

Kaylene Camuti¹, **Ned Howard**¹, Jenna McGovern¹, Martin Robinson¹, Doug Young¹, Jaime Livesey¹

¹Australian Institute of Geoscientists, Education Committee, Sydney, Australia

A sustainable future relies on geoscience. Geoscientists are central to finding critical minerals, supporting the energy transition, managing water resources, and building safe, sustainable communities. But the ability to meet these challenges is increasingly at risk because geoscience education is under threat.

In Australia, as in many other countries, falling enrolments have led to shrinking course content and the closure of geoscience programs. In the past five years, approximately 15% of tertiary geoscience teaching capacity has been lost to program closures alone. Eroded teaching and research capacity compromises not only education, but Australia's long-term capability in critical sectors.

In response, the Education Committee of the Australian Institute of Geoscientists (AIG) initiated a highly collaborative Geoscience Education Action Plan, involving experts and stakeholders from schools, academia, employers, students and early career geoscientists. Two themes emerged from the discussion: connection and collaboration.

Connection is essential to attract and retain future geoscientists. This includes:

- Supporting established, impactful outreach programs in schools (e.g. AusEarthEd, TESEP, CORE, Geoscience Pathways).
- Cultivating student cohorts early in university through immersive field experiences.
- Engaging students through mentoring and exposure to geoscientists and educators conveying the relevance and career opportunities of geoscience.

Collaboration is vital to reverse the downward trend. No single group can solve this alone. Stronger alignment between educators, industry, government, outreach organisations and professional bodies is needed to:

- Share expertise and resources to deliver high-quality learning experiences and achieve shared goals.
- Drive structural change in education policy and administration.
- Raise public awareness of the societal value of geoscience.

The Australian experience offers insight for the global geoscience community. This presentation will outline the collaborative approach being taken, and argue that building deep connections—with students, communities and between institutions—is not just desirable, but essential.