

JOINT MEDIA STATEMENT

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Australian and New Zealand universities join forces to negotiate landmark open access deals

Universities across Australia and New Zealand are teaming up to strike a better deal on open access research publishing, in a bold new approach to negotiations with the world's largest academic publishers.

Led by the Council of Australasian University Librarians (CAUL), Universities Australia and Universities New Zealand – Te Pūkai Tara, the sector will take a unified position in upcoming negotiations with Elsevier, Springer Nature, Wiley, and Taylor & Francis.

The moves come amid mounting pressure on university budgets and growing concern about the rising cost of open access publishing. The sector is now pursuing new agreements that are more sustainable, transparent and equitable, and deliver better value for the public investment in research.

"These are crucial negotiations for the future of research in our regions," said Professor Iain Martin, Vice Chancellor of Deakin University and Chair of the sector's new oversight committee. "Our universities are committed to making research openly accessible to maximise its impact for the communities we serve. The negotiations offer an important opportunity to establish new models that align more closely with the needs of our sector and the public who fund and benefit from our work."

The cross-Tasman initiative will be overseen by a senior academic advisory group, comprising university leaders and university librarians from both countries. The group will ensure that any new agreements reflect the changing needs of researchers and institutions alike.

Luke Sheehy, Chief Executive of Universities Australia, said the move reflects the sector's broader commitment to collaboration and reform.

“Universities are stepping up to find smarter, more sustainable ways to support open access. By negotiating together, we’re giving ourselves the best shot at securing a fairer deal for our researchers - and better value for public investment,” he said.

“Much of the research done by universities in Australia and New Zealand is funded by taxpayers. We have obligations to make sure that the knowledge we generate is widely and freely available and not hidden behind paywalls,” said Dr Bronwen Kelly, Deputy Chief Executive of Universities New Zealand – Te Pōkai Tara. “Where making the knowledge we generate widely available is best done by working through global publishers, we have obligations to make sure that we do this in a way that ensures the best value for taxpayers.”

CAUL Content Procurement Committee Chair Hero Macdonald said the joint approach marks a pivotal shift for the sector.

“This new approach reflects our sector’s shared commitment to achieving a sustainable, fair, equitable and truly open future for the region’s research”, Hero said.

Angus Cook, Director of Content Procurement at CAUL, said the collaboration was designed to drive better outcomes for both researchers and institutions.

“This isn’t just about cost, it’s about securing fair access, improving transparency and supporting a healthy publishing ecosystem that works for our region”.

Negotiations will continue throughout 2025, with new agreements beginning from January 2026.

Media Contacts

Hero Macdonald, Chair, CAUL Content Procurement Committee
Council of Australian University Librarians
h.macdonald@deakin.edu.au

Angus Cook, Director, CAUL Content Procurement
Council of Australian University Librarians
Angus.cook@caul.edu.au

Jenny Clark, Executive Director, Strategic Communications and Engagement
Universities Australia
media@uniaus.edu.au

Fiona Clarkson, Communications Manager
Universities New Zealand – Te Pōkai Tara
fiona.clarkson@universitiesnz.ac.nz

About CAUL

The Council of Australasian University Librarians (CAUL) is the peak collegiate body for the leaders of university libraries in Australasia and Oceania. It facilitates connection and collaboration and optimises its collective knowledge, expertise, and resources to achieve strategic outcomes at scale in priority areas for the university library sector. CAUL is the trusted voice of the university library sector in the region.

About UA

Universities Australia is the voice of Australia's universities. As the peak body for the sector, we advocate the vast social, economic and cultural value of higher education and research to Australia and the world. On behalf of our 39 member universities, we provide expert policy advice, analysis and statistical evidence, and media commentary on higher education. We also make submissions, develop policy across the sector, represent Australia's universities on government and industry-appointed bodies and partner with university sectors in other countries to enable bilateral and global collaborations.

About UNZ

Universities New Zealand—Te Pōkai Tara is the sector voice for all eight universities, representing their collective views nationally and internationally, championing the quality education they deliver, and the important contribution they make to New Zealand, economically, socially and culturally.