Chief Executive Officer

Positive Education Schools Association (PESA)

Australia's peak national body for wellbeing education

About PESA

PESA is Australia's peak national body for wellbeing education. As a not-for-profit association, PESA works across education sectors and settings to advance evidence-informed approaches that enable students, educators and communities to thrive.

PESA's vision is to accelerate the prioritisation of evidence-informed wellbeing education for the future of Australians. Its mission is to advocate, educate and collaborate to grow and embed wellbeing education throughout Australia.

PESA brings together schools, universities, educators, researchers, practitioners, philanthropic partners and aligned organisations. It translates research into practice, strengthens professional capability, cultivates collaboration and represents wellbeing education in national conversations.

Position Overview

- **Position:** Chief Executive Officer
- **Reports to:** PESA Board through the Chair
- **Location:** Flexible / remote within Australia, with national travel as required
- **Employment basis:** Full time, permanent
- **Salary:** To be discussed with the Chair
- **Key relationships:** Board and committees; members; education systems and sector bodies; governments and policy leaders; researchers and practitioners; philanthropic trusts, foundations and donors; corporate and community partners; outsourced governance, compliance and operational service providers

Role Purpose

The Chief Executive Officer provides the strategic, external and organisational leadership required for PESA to increase its national influence and impact. The CEO converts the Board's direction into a clear, focused program of work; advances a purposeful philanthropic agenda; and positions PESA as an authoritative, evidence-informed voice for wellbeing education in Australia.

The CEO is accountable for results, relationships, reputation and organisational coherence. Governance administration, compliance and routine operations are expected to be delivered through outsourced or specialist providers. The CEO retains executive accountability for ensuring these arrangements are well specified, effectively coordinated, appropriately assured and aligned with Board expectations.

Leadership Context

This is a strategic leadership role requiring the CEO to work at the intersection of education, wellbeing science, policy, philanthropy and public influence. The CEO will lead a focused

organisation, mobilise a national network and build coalitions that can create sustainable, system-level change.

Key Responsibilities

Strategic Direction and Association Leadership

- Partner with the Board to shape, refresh and deliver PESA's strategy, ensuring priorities are ambitious, evidence-informed, financially responsible and responsive to the changing needs of Australian education.
- Translate strategy into a disciplined organisational plan with clear priorities, sequencing, ownership, resourcing and measures of progress, impact and organisational health.
- Provide the Board with candid, timely and well-founded advice on strategic opportunities, emerging issues, organisational performance, financial sustainability, reputation and risk.
- Lead PESA's evolution as the national peak body for wellbeing education, maintaining a clear value proposition and a distinctive role within a crowded education and wellbeing landscape.
- Create alignment across PESA's member, professional learning, research translation, partnership, communication and sector-engagement activities so they contribute to common strategic outcomes.
- Build and lead a high-trust, purpose-led culture characterised by clarity, collaboration, accountability, inclusion, agility and evidence-informed decision-making.
- Attract, lead and support employees, contractors, volunteers and partners, setting clear expectations and enabling strong performance within a lean organisational model.
- Commission and oversee outsourced governance, compliance, finance, administration, technology and operational services; ensure service standards, delegations, reporting, controls and escalation pathways are fit for purpose.
- Maintain executive oversight of financial stewardship, resource allocation and organisational sustainability, working with the Treasurer, Board and specialist providers.
- Protect and strengthen PESA's reputation, intellectual assets, data, relationships and institutional knowledge, and ensure material risks are identified and addressed.
- Use qualitative and quantitative evidence to assess reach, engagement, influence, outcomes and value; report transparently to the Board and stakeholders; and use findings to refine strategy and investment.
- Represent PESA at key national and international forums and build strategic relationships with aligned peak bodies, research institutions and professional networks.

Philanthropic Agenda

- Develop and lead a compelling philanthropic strategy that connects PESA's purpose with clearly articulated opportunities for donors to advance wellbeing education at scale.
- Build a credible case for support, supported by evidence, lived experience and a clear account of the change PESA seeks to achieve for learners, educators and communities.
- Cultivate enduring relationships with philanthropic trusts and foundations, major donors, corporate partners and values-aligned supporters, with appropriate involvement from the Chair and Board.

- Develop a diverse and sustainable income pipeline, including grants, partnerships, sponsorships and major gifts, while protecting PESA's independence, integrity and evidence-informed position.
- Identify and shape fundable initiatives that address inequity and extend access to evidence-informed wellbeing education, particularly for regional, rural, remote and resource-constrained communities.
- Ensure funding proposals, partnership agreements and donor stewardship are strategically aligned, ethically sound, deliverable and supported by proportionate governance and reporting.
- Demonstrate the contribution of philanthropic investment through meaningful narratives and robust evidence of progress, learning, reach and impact, without reducing PESA's purpose to narrow activity metrics.
- Create pathways for supporters to remain connected to PESA's mission and to contribute expertise, influence and networks as well as financial resources.

Advocacy

- Develop and lead a national advocacy agenda that advances the prioritisation and integration of evidence-informed wellbeing education across Australian education systems.
- Position PESA as a trusted, non-partisan and solutions-focused adviser to governments, education authorities, sector leaders and other decision-makers.
- Build coalitions across school sectors, universities, research bodies, professional associations, community organisations and aligned peak bodies to strengthen collective influence.
- Translate research, practice evidence and member experience into clear policy positions, submissions, briefings, campaigns and practical recommendations.
- Ensure PESA's public positions reflect credible evidence, diverse educational contexts and the voices and experiences of educators, students and communities.
- Anticipate policy developments and emerging issues affecting student and educator wellbeing, and advise the Board on where PESA can make a distinctive and timely contribution.
- Act as a confident spokesperson for PESA across media, conferences, government consultations and sector forums, communicating complex evidence with clarity and authority.
- Strengthen public understanding of wellbeing education as integral to learning, belonging, engagement and sustainable educational outcomes, rather than an additional program or isolated intervention.
- Measure and review PESA's advocacy influence through evidence such as policy engagement, quality of relationships, contribution to public discourse, coalition activity and signs of system-level change, using learning to sharpen future advocacy.

Accountability and Measurement

The CEO will work with the Board to maintain a proportionate performance and impact framework. Rather than relying only on activity counts, the framework should provide a balanced view of strategic progress, stakeholder value, influence, financial sustainability, organisational capability, reputation, learning and longer-term contribution to system change.

The CEO will establish clear baselines where needed, use fit-for-purpose qualitative and quantitative evidence, and provide concise reporting that supports governance, decision-making and continuous improvement. Measures will be reviewed as PESA's strategy, maturity and operating context evolve.

Board and Governance Relationship

- Work in close partnership with the Chair and Board, respecting the distinction between governance and management while enabling informed, timely decision-making.
- Provide high-quality strategic papers, performance insights, financial and risk information, and recommendations in accordance with the Board's annual cycle.
- Ensure Board decisions are translated into action and that progress, constraints and material variances are communicated early.
- Coordinate outsourced company secretarial, governance and compliance support, ensuring statutory obligations, records, policies and meeting processes are completed to the required standard.
- Operate within the Constitution, delegations, policies, approved strategy and budget, and all applicable legal and regulatory obligations.
- Escalate material risks, conflicts, incidents and emerging reputational issues promptly and transparently.

Experience and Qualifications

The successful candidate will bring a combination of strategic leadership, external engagement and organisational stewardship. Experience may have been developed in education, a peak body, philanthropy, public policy, research translation, a purpose-led organisation or a related field.

Essential

- Demonstrated success leading strategy and organisational development in a complex, stakeholder-rich environment.
- Credibility and strong networks across education, wellbeing, policy, philanthropy or related sectors, with the capacity to build further national influence.
- Experience developing partnerships and securing or stewarding significant philanthropic, grant, sponsorship or other purpose-aligned income.
- Highly developed advocacy, public affairs and communication capability, including the ability to represent an organisation with authority and discretion.
- Capacity to interpret evidence and translate it into strategy, public policy, practical action and compelling cases for investment.
- Commercial and financial acumen, including experience prioritising limited resources and supporting long-term sustainability.
- Experience working with a Board and operating within sound governance, risk and accountability frameworks.

- Ability to lead through influence and coordinate employees, contractors, volunteers, partners and outsourced providers.
- Excellent judgement, integrity and political acuity, including the ability to navigate competing interests and maintain a non-partisan position.
- Tertiary qualifications in education, psychology, public policy, business, social impact, philanthropy or another relevant discipline, or equivalent senior leadership experience.

Desirable

- Understanding of wellbeing education, positive education, implementation science or evidence-to-practice approaches.
- Experience in a national peak body, member-based association, charity or not-for-profit organisation.
- Knowledge of Australian education policy and the structures of government, Catholic and independent schooling.
- Experience working across metropolitan, regional, rural and remote contexts.
- Experience with impact measurement, evaluation, systems change or collective-impact approaches.

Leadership Attributes

Purpose-led	Keeps PESA's mission and public value at the centre of decisions.
Strategic	Sees the system, identifies leverage points and converts ambition into focused action.
Influential	Builds trust, coalitions and momentum across diverse stakeholders.
Evidence-informed	Uses research, data, practice insight and learning to improve judgement.
Entrepreneurial	Creates opportunities, mobilises resources and works effectively in a lean environment.
Stewarding	Protects reputation, resources, relationships and institutional integrity.
Inclusive	Listens actively and values diverse contexts, perspectives and experiences.
Courageous and pragmatic	Addresses difficult issues directly while remaining constructive and solutions-focused.

Employment and other requirements

- Terms, remuneration and commencement date will be determined by the Board and documented in the employment contract.
- The role may be performed flexibly from within Australia, with regular availability across Australian time zones and travel required for Board, government, member, donor and sector engagements.
- The appointee must be eligible to work in Australia and satisfy any probity, reference, qualification and child-safety screening requirements determined by the Board.
- The CEO is expected to model PESA's values and maintain appropriate confidentiality, conflicts-of-interest disclosure and professional conduct.

How to apply

To apply, please send a cover letter addressing the role and a current CV to **Leonie Abbott** via email Chair@pesa.edu.au by **7th December 2026.** For a confidential conversation about the role, contact Leonie Abbott, PESA Chair on 0417 361 155.

PESA is an equal opportunity employer. We welcome applications from people of all backgrounds, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, people with disability, people of all ages, genders and sexualities, and people with caring responsibilities. We make employment decisions on merit and are committed to a fair, inclusive and flexible workplace where everyone is treated with respect.