



## **Changing worlds: Virtual worlds for higher degree research, supervision and networking.**

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### **Abstract and Symposium Plan**

The DEHub Virtual Worlds Working Group (VWWG) consists of Australian and New Zealand higher education academics investigating the role that virtual worlds (VWs) play in the future of education. A sub group of the VWWG that includes Higher Degree Research (HDR) students and supervisors have been meeting regularly in the VW of second life. Many of these HDR students are the only student within their institution researching VWs. In many ways they lack the peer support that is so important to facilitate an expedient and successful completion of PhD candidates' dissertations. Through the regular VW meetings the HDR VW group have overcome the isolation of working alone and have developed a strong collegial network that extends beyond their individual institutions. These students and supervisors represent a cross section of researchers who are using VWs as a vital resource for their investigations, collegial networking and student-supervisor communication. Meeting with like-minded HDR students has facilitated a range of opinions and debate in relation to supervisor roles, methodologies, VW skills and research techniques.

The panel consists of six Phd Candidates at different stages of their candidatures, from beginning through to submitting, as well as two experienced supervisors. Two of the panel will be present through the VW of Second Life. Each panel member will contribute to the discussion as they present their experience in relation to each of the following topics:

1. Global possibilities, hypes and trends
2. Creating community among HDR students
3. Barriers encountered by working with non VW supervisors
4. Positive aspects to meeting with HDR supervisors in VWs
5. Value of networking in an immersive environment

The audience will be invited to actively participate in the discussion. Questions will be posed to the audience in relation to their own experience as HDR students and supervisors. The audience will take away with them a sense of the potential for VWs to change the way in which we conduct higher degree research, supervision and networking.

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