



# **TRAUMA-AWARE EDUCATION**

**Addressing the life impacts of trauma  
for Australian learners.**

**#TraumaAware2024**

# **Presentation, workshop and poster abstracts**

**31 Oct – 2 Nov 2024  
Brisbane Convention &  
Exhibition Centre**

**[traumaawareeducation.com.au](https://traumaawareeducation.com.au)**

**100****Keynote address: Setting the scene: Child maltreatment and trauma in Australia****Dr Lyra L'Estrange***Queensland University of Technology*

Understanding the scope of adversity and child maltreatment in Australia is key to addressing the profound impacts of trauma across the lifespan. By understanding the widespread nature of trauma, we can respond more effectively. Lyra will extract crucial insights from the recently released Australian Child Maltreatment Study, presenting key findings essential for educators and education systems, emphasising the importance of prevention and intervention. The data from this study is critical for trauma-aware education, and Lyra will translate its main findings, underscoring the urgency to act. Lyra's presentation will "set the scene" for Judith to present the evolving journey of trauma-aware education in Australia.

**101****Setting the scene: TAE in Australia (where we have come from and where we are heading)****Associate Professor Dr Judith Howard***Queensland University of Technology*

On the first morning of the conference, Judith will describe the evolving story of Trauma-Aware Education in Australia. From quite humble beginnings, this approach to supporting and educating trauma-impacted learners in schools and early childhood education programs has grown more and more each year, to the extent that we are progressing quickly and importantly towards a significant national "movement" for our country. This movement is now influencing thinking and practice in higher education and has an increasing focus on the personal and professional well-being of our wonderful educators. Judith will conclude by advocating for the important next steps for Trauma-Aware Education in Australia.

**102****Embracing empathy: uniting for a global Trauma-Aware movement****Mr Mathew Portell***Director of Communities (PACES Connection), Founder of the Trauma Informed Educators Network, USA*

You are not alone! In today's world, understanding and addressing trauma is not just a personal journey, but a global imperative. Join Mathew as he delves into the heart of the Global Trauma-Aware Movement. This transformative discussion will explore the significance of cultivating empathy, awareness, and action on a global scale to create supportive environments for individuals affected by trauma. Mathew will explore the foundational principles of trauma-informed care and the critical role this plays in our communities, institutions, and policies. Through compelling insights and real-life examples, Mathew will explore the power of a trauma-informed approach in fostering resilience, healing, and understanding across cultures, societies, and nations - one school at a time! Come, join this impactful conversation, and be part of the movement that seeks to create a more compassionate and understanding world, where trauma is met with empathy, healing, and support.

**103****Trauma aware resilience: How to stay present, integrated and effective in frontline work****Sarah Ralston***CEO, "Rebooting Life" and "Resilient Us"*

Working to transform the impact of childhood trauma is enormously rewarding, and at times absolutely exhausting. The unpredictable and illogical behaviours and disclosures related to trauma exposure can be challenging on many levels. It can feel like a superhuman task. In the face of these challenges our professional practice is dependent on how calm and integrated our nervous systems are. This practical session draws from research and work with over 6000 educators to go beyond self-care with daily strategies to boost both individual and collective resilience. Discover the most effective ways to stay within your window of tolerance, present and effective for clients and colleagues and proactively reduce the risk for compassion fatigue, emotional burnout, and vicarious trauma.

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## Introduction to Trauma-Aware Education

**Mrs Stephanie Curtis***Curtis Consulting*

So, you've decided to come along to the Trauma-Aware Education Conference but this is all very new to you – what is Trauma-Aware Education all about? I invite you to join me for this introductory session.

Children and adolescents who have suffered complex trauma are more likely to have difficulties concentrating in class, be withdrawn or disruptive to others.

Complex trauma impacts the physical, emotional and social development of children and adolescents and they often have difficulties in their relationships with others. To minimise harm and provide support, teachers and school leaders need to respond with trauma-informed practices in their classrooms or schools.

Developments in neuroscience over the last twenty years have provided significant understandings to support why trauma-informed practice is important and necessary. Childhood trauma impacts the developing brain and causes it to be in constant states of fear, wiring the brain to be prepared to respond to threat. We also know that early trauma impacts on the development of healthy patterns of attachment with caregivers, resulting in disorganisation in relational concepts such as empathy, social connectedness and the ability to form relationships.

Many of the challenging behaviours seen in schools are a result of maladaptive behaviours forming in response to early childhood trauma. As these behaviours have been formed as a defence mechanism, they are largely automated, governed by the brain stem to keep us safe. We know that schools and educational facilities are in a perfect position to implement trauma-aware early intervention strategies to reduce the negative long-term impacts of trauma and associated public health costs.

Complex trauma impacts on the three key areas of perceptions of safety, relationships, and emotional regulation. A trauma-aware approach purposefully embeds practices to support young people in these three areas.

Participants will walk away with a new-found understanding of how to consider your students through a neuroscience lens.

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## Embedding HOPE into Educational Settings.

**Ms Alyssa McNeilly<sup>1</sup>, Mrs Sally Lasslett<sup>1</sup>***<sup>1</sup>Hester Hornbrook Academy, Melbourne, Australia*

Understand how Hester Hornbrook Academy is changing the way that education can be delivered. Traditional school settings are struggling to cope with students who become disconnected. At Hester Hornbrook re engaging these young people is what we do best.

This presentation will unpack our Healing Oriented approach to education or HOPE, which is built upon a foundation of safety, trust, agency and supportive relationships. HOPE takes a holistic view of a young person's needs and development, recognising the interconnectedness of all parts of the person's life and hence the need for a multi-disciplinary and coordinated approach.

When Alyssa commenced her position as Head of Research and Innovation at Hester Hornbrook Academy, she conducted a mini ethnographic research piece to help better understand the HOPE (Healing Orientated Approach to Education).

This presentation will involve sharing the findings of Alyssa's research, while hearing from the Principal on her vision for educational settings which are focused on Healing and ensuring that school is "done differently" so that each young person can achieve positive pathways for the future.

HOPE is an opportunity to reimagine education and the critical relationship between learning and wellbeing for young people. Gain an understanding of what HOPE is and how it can be implemented into every school setting.

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**Trauma-Sensitive Cultural Shift within Learning and Behaviour Units, South Australia.****Ms Susan Furga<sup>1</sup>, Mr Andrew Hanrahan<sup>1</sup>**<sup>1</sup>*Department For Education, Adelaide, Australia*

South Australian Learning and Behaviour units (LBU) supports vulnerable students with the provision of 2 services: Learning Centres and Better Behaviour Centres. Learning Centres offer restoratively focussed educational programs to excluded students, and Better Behaviour Centres offer an early intervention transition program for students at risk. LBU systems, processes, structures, and practices have been reviewed through a trauma lens creating trauma responsive conditions for student learning that builds relational safety and repair, nurtures the learning strengths of young people, and builds scaffolded restorative processes for students, supporting their transition back to mainstream educational settings. Our focus on centralising 'safety' for young people has presented some challenges, particularly at student transition points. Student relational mapping activities have revealed 'hidden transition risks' by exposing relational strengths, stressors, and relational ruptures within their school network, prompting the need to actively engage students/stakeholders in differentiated restorative processes. Our 'trauma sensitive' responses have impacted our thinking, problem solving, and the way student successes are recognised. In addition, relational mapping activities have deeply impacted students/stakeholders as showcased in students' 'letters of hope'. These letters have reshaped a new a narrative of 'self' for the student and of those working with them, based on optimism and aspiration.

Transformative system changes within LBU reflect deep understandings of neurobiology, a result of heavy investment in staff professional development with Australian Childhood Foundation SMART program, Berry Street Education Model and leadership undertaking graduate certificate level training in trauma-informed education. We have restructured Professional Learning Communities targeting literacy, numeracy, and social-emotional learning outcomes of aboriginal students, students with disability, trauma-impacted students. Coaching has driven pedagogical change, supporting staff to be discriminatory in their practices in the pursuit of achieving healing outcomes for students. Staff are required to look 'inward,' and to apply neurobiological understandings to 'self', supporting their ability to engage therapeutically with students and in providing 'deep safety' within the sequenced process of connection. This has unmasked staff vulnerability, addressed by staff accessing a clinician and psychoeducation sessions.

LBU 'trauma-sensitive' system change has impacted universal, targeted, and individualised interventions for students. New norms relating to the language we use, reporting structures, curriculum teachings have all been transformed. The biggest impact has been 'our way of being' - what it means to interact with our young people and what it takes to ensure we are intentionally preparing for relational safety and in building learning environments that support relational safety and repair.

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## Teachers (particularly those working in detention centres) and Secondary Trauma

**Ms Rosemary Curley<sup>1</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>*Brisbane Youth Education and Training Centre - Queensland Education, Brisbane, Australia*

It is a part of the nature of education that teachers may be placed in situations where they experience secondary trauma. This is concerning because not only does this impact on the quality of their teaching and their ability to teach, but has broader implications, including their own mental health and wellbeing. This study seeks to explore how teachers, particularly teachers working in detention centres are impacted by trauma.

Teachers in Queensland are working with a growing number of students who are victims of trauma which they can share with classmates and teachers during classes. This sharing of their experiences with trauma results in secondary trauma.

Secondary trauma can be defined as the emotional stress a person feels when they hear about the firsthand trauma experienced by another individual. Occupations where there is a high exposure to traumatic material or the sharing of lived experience by clients increases the likelihood of secondary trauma. A study conducted by Johnson et al., (2005) compared the experienced of occupational stress across a large and diverse set of occupations. The study found that of the twenty-six occupations included in the study, there were six occupations that reported worse than average scores for physical health, psychological well-being, and job satisfaction. These six occupations included ambulance workers, teachers, social service, customer services-call centres, prison officers and police. What we can take from studies of these types is that occupations, including teachers that work in youth detention centres, are at an elevated risk of experiencing secondary trauma.

Research conducted by Dr Stathis and his colleagues in 2008 at Brisbane Youth Detention Centre showed 75% of boys and 90% of girls showed high levels of mental health challenges indicative of trauma (Stathis et al., 2008). A follow up study in 2012 found that 94% of boys and 100% of girls were showing even higher levels of trauma. However, there is little known about secondary trauma and its effects on teachers, working with these students. Research by Hatcher et al.,(2011) found that teachers working in youth detention centres, “were highly likely to be exposed to traumatic events through their work with traumatized populations.” (p. 214).

The lack of current research into the effects of secondary trauma on teachers, especially those working in youth detention centres is of key concern as it impacts their effectiveness, can lead to mental health issues, stress, compassion fatigue, and burnout.

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## Imagine if it was all about relationships! Expanding responses to behaviour with a culturally responsive, trauma informed lens in Aotearoa/New Zealand.

**Caroline McGlinchy<sup>1</sup>, Donna Eden<sup>1</sup>, Ngaretta Strong<sup>2</sup>, Tiana Ranfurly<sup>2</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>*Incredible Families Trust, Wellington, New Zealand*, <sup>2</sup>*He Whānau manaaki kindergartens, Wellington, New Zealand*

We are in crisis in Aotearoa, if not in the world, child abuse, masked feelings, parents and teachers repeating the same patterns that they endured, resulting in the same repressed emotional states, and therefore continuing child rearing and educational practices that undermine our children's ability to thrive. Not only is thriving critical for wellbeing, it is also a fundamental skill needed to navigate an increasingly complex, intersectional, and climate challenged world.

We are a country of quick fixes and individualistic targeted approaches. This individualistic approach to change perpetuates the current theories and actions of the delivery of programmes to 'target groups'. Often these target groups are sent 'to be fixed' in the aftermath of a crisis yet the situations and triggers remain unfixed, so returning to the same environment where no one else has changed or grown perpetuating the same experiences. When we move to a 'everybody' rather than an 'individual' perspective, we enable social and emotional skills for all. In doing so we develop increased awareness, break down barriers and enable those who are not seen as the target group to develop empathy, social skills and demonstrate genuine belonging.

How do we get to a place of comfort and fluency with the entire range of emotional responses? How do we work together, across complex relational spaces, to interrupt the 'cycle of trauma' perpetuated by dominant punitive, behaviourist parenting and educational pedagogy?

Children/tamariki, parents/whānau and teachers/kaiako need agency, resources, and coaching in a sustainable way, using multifaceted inclusive practical applications that reflect their authentic value. For empathy, respect and kindness to have equal focus and support to that of physical development these values and structures need to be actively braided throughout our education system and not just targeted at those who are seen as a problem 'to be fixed'.

An organisation wide programme to address these challenges was co-designed as part of a Masters research and developed from within the unique environment of Aotearoa/New Zealand by 29 kaiako/teachers.

Participants attending the workshop will explore a reflective practice tool that was developed during the co-design process called Nō rere. It is used to encourage kaiako/teachers to expand their own repertoire of responses and beliefs about behaviour with a culturally responsive, trauma informed lens and lift the weight of responsibility to change off the child. Participants will have an opportunity to reflect and grow through a safe and fun process.

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## Common and effective elements of School-Based Trauma Interventions: A Systematic Review and Meta-analysis

**Ms Kirsten Rowlinson**<sup>1</sup>, A/Prof Emma Barrett<sup>1</sup>, Dr Lucinda Grummitt<sup>1</sup>, Dr Ivana Kihass<sup>1</sup>, Ms Isabelle Lynch<sup>1</sup>, Ms Chloe Conroy<sup>1</sup>, Dr Erin Kelly<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>*The Matilda Centre For Research In Mental Health And Substance Use, Sydney, Australia*

**Background:** The school environment can provide critical support for children who have experienced trauma, with school-based trauma interventions demonstrating substantial potential in addressing posttraumatic stress symptoms. However, selecting and creating effective school-based programs proves challenging, due to the heterogeneity in design, implementation, and efficacy of existing interventions. This review and meta-analysis aims to identify school-based trauma interventions targeting PTSD and distinguish the common and effective practice, process, and implementation elements of these programs.

**Methods:** A literature search in the databases PsychINFO, MEDLINE, Embase, and Pubmed was done using a search-criteria based on keywords of interest. Eligible studies described a school-based intervention designed to reduce PTSD symptoms in students. Participants receiving the intervention must be diagnosed with PTSD or have been exposed to a traumatic event that has caused ongoing distress. Emerging practice, process, and implementation elements were tallied, and Cohen's d effect size was calculated to determine the effect size of each study.

**Results:** A total of 44 studies were included in this review and 46 datasets were usable for analysis. Common practice elements included psychoeducation, cognitive behavioural therapy, and creative expressive therapy. Common process elements included group therapy sessions, with 10 to 12 sessions, 30-60 minutes in length, run by mental health professionals. Common implementation elements included supervision of facilitators, review of recorded sessions, and collaboration with school principals. The more effective components included creative-expressive therapy, relaxation techniques, and problem-solving skills (practice elements); individual therapy sessions facilitated by a mental health professional (process elements); and facilitator supervision sessions, collaboration with school staff, and use of a manual (implementation elements).

**Conclusion:** These findings indicate certain therapeutic modalities delivered in the school setting tend to be more effective in reducing PTSD symptomology among students. Similarly, specific process and implementation elements identified that may improve the efficacy of a school-based trauma intervention.

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## **Redefining Play in the Classroom: Unleashing Its Hidden Power in Trauma-Informed Schools**

**Dr Sarah Aiono<sup>1</sup>***<sup>1</sup>Longworth Education, Napier, New Zealand*

This session explores the need for innovative pedagogies in trauma-aware education, specifically addressing the complex needs of trauma-impacted children. Attendees will gain insights into the transformative power of play pedagogy and its crucial role in enhancing social, emotional, and cognitive development within primary school settings. The discussion will focus on debunking the misconception that play-based learning lacks structure, instead revealing its effectiveness in creating a stable and nurturing environment essential for children affected by trauma.

Participants will learn how structured play, when thoughtfully designed and facilitated, can provide a predictable and safe learning space. This is key for children seeking a sense of control and predictability in their lives. An important emphasis will be placed on the relevance and effectiveness of play pedagogy beyond the realm of younger children. Attendees will explore how play serves as a therapeutic medium for older children, especially those who have experienced early traumatic events. This aspect of play as a versatile and age-inclusive tool highlights its critical role in addressing the needs of children across various developmental stages, making it a valuable component in trauma-informed educational practices.

Moreover, the session will highlight how play pedagogy aids in the development of executive function skills like working memory, cognitive flexibility, and inhibitory control, which are often compromised in trauma-experienced children. Attendees will see how play-based learning serves as a non-threatening, engaging method to enhance these skills.

A key focus will be on the empowerment and engagement aspects of play pedagogy. For trauma-impacted children, the autonomy and choice offered in play are profoundly healing, helping them to navigate their learning, make decisions, and engage creatively. This fosters a sense of achievement and self-efficacy.

Attendees will also discover the importance of the relationships formed in play-centric primary school classrooms. These relationships between children and educators are crucial for providing trauma-impacted children with a sense of security and belonging.

The session aims to provide educators and policymakers with practical strategies to integrate play pedagogy in trauma-aware schooling effectively. By challenging existing misconceptions, this session showcases play as a structured, predictable, and deeply therapeutic approach to support the holistic development of trauma-impacted children.



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## Building a Felt Sense of Safety and Connection Through LEGO

**Mrs Elen Nathan<sup>1</sup>**<sup>1</sup>*The Playful Place, Napier, New Zealand*

Combine the intrinsic joy of LEGO with the power of safety and connection throughout this hands on workshop. Participants will explore how to therapeutically build alongside learners who might otherwise find connection and co-regulation with others difficult, scary or overwhelming due to developmental trauma or neurodivergent sensory processing differences.

Not all learners feel safe in relationship with others. Some take time to establish trust, some have non neuro-normative social drives which are not honoured in typical settings. Some are stuck in survival responses and just need a place to rest in psychological safety with reduced demands on language and social expectations.

However, a calm body is not a safe feeling for some and silence is not quiet for everyone. Sometimes people have a drive to be busy, to be occupied, in order to be able to rest or feel safe within themselves or alongside others. This is where occupational therapy and sensory modulation play a key role. LEGO is a great tool for sensory modulation, creating safe predictable input through all 8 sensory systems, including the tactile system which is often set to over-responsivity as a threat response following trauma. Processing the controlled and predictable sensations of LEGO, while creating carefully designed builds which have meaningful reflective challenges, allows integration of sensory, motor, emotional and cognitive brain processes.

Drawing from polyvagal theory & sensory integration with an occupational science lens, this workshop builds knowledge and practical skills around using LEGO therapeutically to support co-regulation and relationship building through a series of LEGO build challenges. These can be applied in classrooms, clinics, family therapy, secure settings, or staff meetings... just like LEGO itself, the possibilities for application are endless.

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## Effective use of calming kete (kit) in the classroom: Designed to target sensory systems of the body to provide support self-regulation for students

**Ms Jane Ellery<sup>1</sup>**<sup>1</sup>*Waihi Kahui Ako, Waihi, New Zealand*

The action research inquiry conducted within the Waihi Kahui Ako (Community of Learning) in New Zealand, has focused on the development and implementation of Calming Kete (kits) across eight educational settings. These kits were designed to incorporate items targeting the five sensory systems of the human body: Visual, Auditory, Somatosensory, Olfactory, and Vestibular. The overarching goal was to provide support for students in learning how to self-regulate their emotions.

Throughout the process, students engaged in both self-discovery and direct teaching to understand the connection between their sensory systems and emotions. By doing so, they embarked on a journey of creating personalised strategies and actions to manage their emotions effectively.

In addition to supporting students' emotional regulation, the research also aimed to identify the most effective ways to introduce and implement the Calming Kete across various educational contexts and age groups. Through teacher discovery, valuable insights were gained, allowing for the refinement of strategies tailored to different settings and student demographics.

The research presentation includes perspectives from both students and teachers, providing a comprehensive view of the impact and effectiveness of the Calming Kete. As a culmination of this inquiry, a resource has been developed to assist schools in setting up their own Calming Kete, ensuring relevance and applicability to their specific context.

Overall, this action research inquiry not only enhances students' ability to self-regulate but also contributes to the broader understanding of effective strategies for supporting emotional well-being in educational settings. The Calming Kete serves as a tangible tool for empowering students and promoting a positive learning environment.

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## Kimberley SPACE: Exploring social and emotional learning with primary school students in remote locations

**Ms Jennifer Knoll<sup>1</sup>**, Mrs Lyn Millett<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>*Australian Childhood Foundation, East Perth, Australia*

Recently, there has been significant growth in research exploring the effects of incorporating social and emotional learning (SEL) programs in schools. A broad range of studies point to the worth of schools incorporating SEL programs in their curriculum. Findings suggest that not only does SEL result in pro-social growth for students, such as motivation to learn and improved relationships with peers, it also offers effective protection from negative outcomes, such as reducing emotional distress and conduct problems. SEL programs can resource schools to provide children and educators with opportunities to develop their social competence through practicing social interactions and navigating social challenges, learning, and practicing behavioural social skills, navigating cultural differences and further developing their emotional literacy and emotion regulation skill building.

In 2022, the Kimberley SPACE program was delivered to 6 regional and remote primary schools across the East and West Kimberley education districts in Western Australia. It was a collaboration between the Australian Childhood Foundation (ACF) and the WA Department of Education. It was a pilot study that implemented a culturally responsive program to promote social competence and emotional maturity (regulation) capabilities in primary school aged students, including those with diverse learning needs.

The program had links to a pre-existing ACF school support program, ‘Making Space for Learning’, a resource for schools to better understand and meet the needs of children who have experienced trauma, significant disruption, or disadvantage. ‘Making Space for Learning’ draws on neurobiological evidence related to trauma and considers principles and strategies to support students to learn and manage social and emotional relationships at school.

Kimberley SPACE translated and expanded this framework into an accessible, child friendly, whole of school program of activities for students, that allowed cultural contexts to be easily included into the curriculum. The program invited primary school students to learn more about their social and emotional selves with the central concepts of social competence and emotional regulation explored throughout the eight-week program. The program embraced and integrated the concepts of social and emotional wellbeing as defined within an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspective. The concepts of social competence and emotional regulation were considered in relation to the experience of children with experiential and developmental vulnerabilities such as FASD, neurodevelopmental delays and the experience of trauma.

Findings from the program’s learning and evaluation report will be shared as well as insights into the program’s set up, co-design and delivery.

**114****Get Psych'ed about Brain Breaks: The what, the why, and the how.****Ms Khara Saunders<sup>1</sup>**<sup>1</sup>*Get Psych'ed Clinical Psychology, with Lavender House Wellness Collective, Toowoomba, Australia*

Brain Breaks are more than just giving the brain a break. They are about providing brief, structured breaks for nervous system regulation and positively priming the brain and body for learning. In this 45-minute workshop, participants will explore the what, the why and the how of implementing “Brain Breaks” in the classroom and other settings.

The implementation of Brain Breaks in the school setting is not only trauma-informed, but mental health promoting and inclusive of neurodivergence and individuals with learning differences and other needs.

Research indicates the use of breaks in the classroom has a positive effect on learning across numerous domains, including cognitive functioning; increased positive emotion; student engagement and motivation; supporting executive functioning; self-awareness; stamina; learning consolidation; and more of which will be reviewed. We also explore how brain breaks are grounded in neuroscience, many of which offer activation of the parasympathetic nervous system and vagus nerve, provide rhythmic and repetitive regulation, support sensory and hemispheric brain integration, and offer predictability and routine – which we know brains LOVE! Brain breaks also offer co-regulation activities, and can assist students to develop their own capacity for self-regulation. And an important note: brain breaks benefit educators too!

Within this workshop, numerous interactive activities will be incorporated to explore various types of brain breaks, including through concept of down-regulating and up-regulating breaks.

Participants will walk away with inspired creativity, alongside a bank of brain breaks that they can implement immediately in the classroom and other settings. During our workshop we will explore brain breaks that use movement, social connection, mental stimulation, mindfulness, relaxation, focused attention, emotion regulation, rhythm, and sensory activities which support brains to learn at their best.

Finally, this workshop will offer participants key considerations as to how brain breaks can be effectively implemented; individually, in groups and whole class; and across varying contexts not just the classroom. We are reminded that different brains need different kinds of breaks, at different times. As such, differentiation and adapting to individual and developmental needs will be discussed, as well as upskilling students themselves to learn about the purpose of brain breaks, and increase their capacity for self-awareness and self-regulation by supporting them to implement and adjust brain breaks as they require. A key take away message from this workshop is that brain breaks are a right, not a reward. They are a need, not an extra. So give ‘em a break!

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## To use or not to use: Predicting teacher use of trauma-informed practices in the classroom

**Ms Kate Eastman**<sup>1</sup>, Dr Anne McMaugh<sup>1</sup>, Associate Professor John De Nobile<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Macquarie University, Sydney, Australia

Increased recognition of the prevalence of childhood trauma (Scott & Mathews, 2023) has seen the need for teachers to be trauma-informed. The impacts of trauma on student development, relationships, behaviour and learning are well documented (Chafouleas et al., 2021; Kavanaugh et al., 2017; Porche et al., 2016), with significant implications for the school and classroom. Despite recommendations and guidelines for the implementation of trauma-informed practices (TIP) in schools (Howard et al., 2022; Martin et al., 2023) there is limited understanding of whether teachers are implementing trauma-informed practices in their classrooms and what is predicting this use. This study of New South Wales (NSW) primary school classroom teachers (N=226), sought to examine the predictors of teacher TIP use including their trauma literacy, self-efficacy, professional learning and teaching experiences. The teacher's use of TIP was most strongly predicted by their level of trauma literacy, closely followed by the amount of trauma-related professional learning, and their experience of teaching a student with a trauma diagnosis in their classroom. Significant differences were identified between teachers who used TIP and those who did not use TIP in their classroom. Those who used TIP reported significantly higher trauma literacy, self-efficacy, hours of trauma professional learning and experiences of teaching a child with a trauma diagnosis. The findings indicate that modest levels of trauma literacy and relatively small amounts of professional learning support inclusive trauma-informed practices in the classroom. Specifically, these findings indicate that teacher trauma literacy is a critical factor to consider when seeking to develop teacher practice in the classroom.

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## Lived experience in the intersection between complex trauma and disability: A message for educators

**Mrs Beccy Madsen**<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Mount Lilydale Mercy College, Lilydale, Australia

This presentation is a message of hope to educators from a survivor of complex trauma who is now working in the inclusive education space. The presenter's lived experiences of trauma and disability, and the way in which she has used these to create a safe and welcoming classroom environment for a variety of learners, will be the focus of this presentation. There is a growing awareness of both neurodiversity-affirming and trauma-informed practices, and strategies that support each population in a school setting often overlap. This is particularly important given the higher rates of trauma experienced by neurodivergent and/or disabled young people. As such, these intersecting strategies will be framed as a way for educators to facilitate connection, build relationships and support the engagement of students with complex and overlapping needs.

**117****Trauma informed practice and students with complex communication needs and intellectual disability (special education context)****Ms Joanne Scott**<sup>1</sup><sup>1</sup>*Independent Speaker, Australia*

During this workshop and case-study, Jo will discuss trauma-informed practice and disability education. Jo will discuss the dynamics that shape effective support systems for students with diverse needs such as non-verbal communication, and tailored approaches for supporting students with Intellectual Disability, Autism, and Physical Disability.

Navigating trauma-informed care within the realm of disability education requires a deep understanding of individualised needs and effective communication beyond verbal cues. In this workshop, Jo addresses the challenges educators face in supporting students and tailored strategies for each student's unique requirements.

Additionally, we will examine the crucial role of teaching self-advocacy skills for students with physical disabilities, equipping them with the tools to navigate barriers and advocate for their needs effectively.

Educators and practitioners will walk away with practical insights and strategies to create inclusive, trauma-informed learning environments that promote the holistic development and well-being of all students.

**118****Brainstem calmers in the classroom: Maximising learning and student success****Ms Beth Macgregor**<sup>1</sup>, **Ms Morgan Tyson**<sup>1</sup><sup>1</sup>*Macgregor Consulting, Sydney, Australia*

Early childhood trauma has a profound impact on the development of the brain and nervous system and can lead to an overactive stress response system and frequent and excessive periods of dysregulation. This dysregulation can be the result of fight, flight and freeze responses which emerge from the brainstem. Dysregulated children don't have reliable access to their cortex – the area of the brain responsible for learning, cooperation, self-regulation, attention, and other executive function skills like working memory and impulse control.

Dr. Bruce Perry, – the esteemed psychiatrist, researcher and originator of the Neurosequential Model of Development – tells us that 'it's the educator's job to get to the cortex', so that children can learn and thrive. But how? Dr. Perry offers this sage advice: 'The number and intensity of dysregulated episodes will be far fewer if you have proactively put in place regulating elements in your classrooms'.

This engaging workshop shows teachers how to incorporate simple and practical regulation and connection activities into their daily routines and rituals. These 'Brainstem Calmers' follow the rules of the biological organisation of the brain to reduce dysregulation and enhance children's capacity to engage meaningfully and flourish in their learning environment. Participants will leave the session with practical tools and strategies they can apply immediately. We hope you will join us for this enjoyable, energising and enlightening session.

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## Development and implementation of a universal, school-based, trauma-informed program to prevent mental ill-health among adolescents

**Dr Lucinda Grummitt**<sup>1</sup>, Ms Sasha Bailey<sup>1</sup>, Dr Erin Kelly<sup>1</sup>, Dr Louise Birrell<sup>1</sup>, Dr Lauren Gardner<sup>1</sup>, Dr Katrina Champion<sup>1</sup>, Associate Professor Cath Chapman<sup>1</sup>, Ms Emily Hunter<sup>1</sup>, Professor Maree Teesson<sup>1</sup>, Professor Nicola Newton<sup>1</sup>, Associate Professor Emma Barrett<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>The University Of Sydney, Australia

**Background:** There is a lack of evidence-based trauma-informed interventions for schools. This presentation will describe the adaptation of the universal OurFutures Mental Health program to be trauma-informed and respond to disproportionate rates of mental illness among LGBTQA+ youth. It will cover the process of ethics approvals, the implementation of the program with schools, the student and teacher evaluation of the program, and the broader context of the randomised controlled trial to evaluate the program's efficacy in preventing depression and anxiety symptoms among Australian adolescents.

**Methods:** From April 2022 to July 2023, the OurFutures Mental Health program underwent adaptation through four stages. Stage 1 involved analysing student evaluation data from a previous trial of the program (N=762 participants, average age 13.5). Stage 2 encompassed 3 focus groups with high school students (N=39), along with regular meetings with an eight-member LGBTQA+ Youth Advisory Committee, and two individual semi-structured interviews with LGBTQA+ young people. In Stage 3, a clinical psychologist conducted a comprehensive review and update of all program materials. In Stage 4, researchers and clinicians engaged in fortnightly consultations to adapt the intervention, drawing upon the latest evidence from literature on school-based prevention interventions, trauma-informed practice, and adolescent mental health. The adapted OurFutures Mental Health trial was implemented across 13 schools in a cluster randomised controlled trial to evaluate the implementation and efficacy of the program on student mental health outcomes.

**Results:** Key program adaptations included: 1) adding new storylines to reflect gender and sexuality diversity and common adverse life events (such as domestic violence and bullying); 2) updating teacher resources to include more guidance on trauma; and 3) re-structuring content across classroom-based and optional, "at-home" activities, to provide students with an opportunity to practice coping skills learned from the program in the privacy of their own home. A total of 752 year 8 students (Mage=13.3 years) have completed the baseline assessment of the OurFutures Mental Health trial, with the final follow-up survey (9-months post-baseline) expected to be completed in May 2024. Implementation outcomes, including student and staff feedback are undergoing a mixed-methods analysis.

**Conclusion:** The updated OurFutures Mental Health program is a trauma-informed, LGBTQA+ affirmative program, and is currently being trialled via RCT in secondary schools across Australia. This presentation will provide practical information on the adaptation, implementation, and randomised controlled trial of one of the first trauma-informed programs for Australian schools.

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## Discovering trauma informed physical education

**Mr David Pascoe<sup>1</sup>, Mr Liam Branigan<sup>1</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>*Elizabeth Vale Primary School, Australia*

Elizabeth Vale Primary School is situated in the northern suburbs of Adelaide, a community of high social and economic disadvantage. Elizabeth Vale Primary consists of two inclusive education classes, six intensive English classes, eighteen reception to year six mainstream classes, and an on-site preschool. The leadership team, educators and support staff have been working in the trauma-informed practice space for the last seven years with focused strategic planning and implementation. This began with the recognition of the difficulties experienced by students and the impact that complex trauma was having on teaching and learning.

The impacts of trauma can be evident in students' disengagement with the school community and learning. Using an evidence-based approach the leadership team continue to implement, embed, review and refine the trauma-informed strategies and processes used by all staff within the school. There is no one size fits all approach with this work and we firmly believe this is a journey, not a destination.

The presentation will discuss our deep reflection and questioning, to challenge our current thinking in the specialist physical education space. As a school we first focussed on using consistent intentional routines to support students to be able to regulate in lessons. This was successful, but now our goal is to set students up to flourish in the classroom.

As a specialist team in a trauma informed school, we decided to leave our egos, stereotypes, preconceived and societal moulded ideas at the door and ask ourselves what the intent of physical education is and how we can use our knowledge of trauma informed practice to shape and build a trauma informed physical education environment.

This endeavour led us down paths that questioned the dynamics and need for competition, discovering the voices of those who are affected both positively and negatively, identifying social and cultural dynamics, as well as analysing how we teach and the intent behind our plans and our interactions.

This presentation will inspire others that are also on their trauma informed journeys to go deeper and to be authentic in their journey as a trauma informed school.

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## Invisible victims: Understanding and supporting children affected by domestic violence

**Mrs Sarah Woolley<sup>1</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>*Education Qld, Australia*

Domestic violence is a pervasive issue that impacts millions of individuals worldwide, with devastating effects that extend beyond the immediate victims to their families, especially children. Often referred to as "invisible victims," these children suffer in silence, their voices drowned out by the chaos and trauma of their home environment. My presentation, "Invisible Victims: Understanding and Supporting Children Affected by Domestic Violence," seeks to shed light on the experiences of these children, exploring the profound impact of domestic violence on their lives and offering strategies for support and intervention.

The presentation begins by providing a comprehensive overview of domestic violence, emphasizing its complex and multifaceted nature. It highlights the various forms of abuse that children may experience, including physical, emotional, and psychological abuse, as well as witnessing violence between caregivers. Drawing on research and case studies, the presentation illustrates the long-term consequences of exposure to domestic violence, such as poor mental health outcomes, behavioural problems, and difficulties forming healthy relationships.

Central to the presentation is the recognition of children's resilience and their capacity for healing. By understanding the unique needs and challenges faced by children affected by domestic violence, participants will gain insight into how to provide effective support and intervention. The presentation offers practical strategies for educators, social workers, and other professionals working with these children, emphasizing the importance of creating safe and supportive environments where children feel empowered to share their experiences.

Key topics covered in the presentation include trauma-informed care, recognizing signs of abuse, and building resilience in children. Participants will learn how to effectively communicate with children impacted by domestic violence, validate their experiences, and connect them with appropriate resources for support. Additionally, the presentation explores the role of schools and communities in addressing domestic violence, highlighting the importance of collaboration and advocacy.

Overall, "Invisible Victims: Understanding and Supporting Children Affected by Domestic Violence," aims to raise awareness about the often-overlooked plight of these children and equip professionals with the knowledge and tools needed to make a positive difference in their lives. Through education, empathy, and action, we can help break the cycle of violence and create a safer, more supportive environment for all children.



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## Healing with dogs: Trauma informed Canine-Assisted Interventions in a multicultural setting

**Ms Noemie Rigaud<sup>1</sup>**<sup>1</sup>*QPASTT, Woolloongabba, Australia*

Despite the lack of evidence in the field of animal-assisted interventions (AAI) with people from refugee or CALD backgrounds, QPASTT started introducing canine assisted interventions with a trained staff handler in early 2022, after over a year of preparatory work and consultation. QPASTT's experience has shown that it is important to have an understanding of cultural and religious views, and specific health needs to inform risk management planning. However it also highlights the importance of keeping a person-centred approach as clients and staff' choice to engage with a therapy dog is a personal process that may not align with the predominant views in their cultural, family or religious backgrounds. When working with survivors of systemic oppression, violence and war, particular considerations must be fulfilled in utilising canine assisted interventions to ensure safety, choice and individual needs have been attended to.

The presentation will detail QPASTT experience, the risks that need to be considered and the benefits observed. Considering the presence of a therapy dog is growing in popularity and practice in schools, the learnings from the presentation are likely to inform the practice of professionals working with people from refugee backgrounds and considering or already utilizing animal assisted interventions.

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## Developing Culturally Responsive Professional Learning Sessions on Self-Regulation for Schools with High Aboriginal Cohorts

**Mrs Laura Cathery<sup>1</sup>, Abby Drummond<sup>2</sup>**<sup>1</sup>*Department for Education, Adelaide, Australia*, <sup>2</sup>*Koonibba Aboriginal School, Koonibba*

The Self-Regulation Service (SRS) is a multidisciplinary team of Occupational Therapists, Psychologists, and Educators focused on capacity building of education staff in South Australian department schools and preschools to support student regulation in order to increase engagement and participation with learning. The Catalogue of Services includes a diverse array of professional learning sessions aimed at supporting student emotional literacy, sensory processing. All professional learning sessions are followed by coaching to support implementation/reflection. A Two-Way learning approach blended the clinical and education expertise from our service with the cultural and community expertise of local Aboriginal leaders and educators to create culturally responsive adaptations of our current catalogue of services that are meaningful to Aboriginal learners. At the core of the Two-Way learning process lay recognition of profound historical and ongoing trans-generational trauma within these communities, coupled with an understanding of the cultural appropriateness surrounding the communication of emotions and body cues. This paved the way for the development of culturally responsive workshops, informed by community insights and findings from national research reports on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander mental health and wellbeing while maintaining a strong clinical and educational evidence informed foundation. Highlighting the holistic wellness paradigm of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander individuals, sessions delved into the interconnectedness of spiritual, physical, emotional, familial, communal, and ancestral domains. This comprehensive understanding culminated in the development of training packages that addressed strategies for externalising emotions and body cues and linked energy levels, sensory processing, and the window of tolerance.

This presentation will focus on the process and resources used when developing these packages of professional learning and how schools tailored their teaching. To ensure cultural relevance, visuals such as local animals and energy meters were utilised, fostering consistency of language and strategies. This utilised both Aboriginal English and local languages, enhancing communication and understanding among students and educators alike with regards to regulation. Participants will understand the process utilised by SRS, the importance of Two-Way learning and partnership with the local community to develop relevant, evidence-based, and culturally responsive professional learning for schools with large Aboriginal cohorts.

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Commonwealth of Australia, Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, Keeping Our Kids Safe: Cultural Safety and the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations

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## A Collaborative approach towards trauma informed literacy intervention for indigenous children in OoHC

**Ms Kellie Walker<sup>1</sup>, Ms Catherine John<sup>1</sup>, Mr Rick Balchin<sup>1</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>*Department Of Education, Wimmera South West, Australia*

The significant attainment gap for students living in statutory care in Victoria highlights the critical need to commit to evidence-based teaching approaches delivered through a trauma responsive lens. Progress and attainment data, combined with early leaver data for students living in Out-of-Home Care shines a light on the challenges facing our education system when it comes to improving learning outcomes for vulnerable students.

In 2022 The LOOKOUT Centre in SWVR in collaboration with Equal Education UK delivered a targeted literacy pilot to address the attainment gap for children in care, to support transition into secondary school and to highlight that with the right approach, our children and young people with a care experience can progress and attain alongside their peers in mainstream education.

This pilot, shaped by trauma responsive practice placed attachment within the school environment at the forefront, with the understanding that safe, trusting relationships based on unconditional positive regard drive improved learning outcomes for children and young people who have experienced complex trauma.

The cohort of students participating in the tuition pilot program is not large enough to make statistical conclusions, however data collated indicated that when tutors focussed on developing a rapport with students, learning outcomes improved. Carers spoke about the positive impact the pilot had on the students they were caring for and noted a significant increase in confidence and engagement with school. Additionally, students involved in this pilot were moving into secondary school. An increase in confidence and literacy attainment proved one of the steps towards a smooth transition.

In 2024, the partnership continues to develop as we seek to address Closing the Gap Targets 3 and 4, through developing inclusive practices that champions co-design and promotes Aboriginal voice across the department's programs and projects through Dhelk Wukang.

The LOOKOUT Centre SWVR have commenced a second teaching and learning pilot that reflects the learnings and successes of the first pilot, but aims to address the significant attainment gap for our indigenous students in their middle years of Primary School in the Wimmera South-West area.

Our belief is that by developing a collaborative relationship between community and schools, utilising trauma aware teaching and learning approaches and implementing evidence-based literacy interventions there will be a reduction in the disproportionate gap between our indigenous and non-indigenous students with a care experience as well as strengthened relationships between school and local community in the Wimmera South-West area of Victoria.

**125****Using a Human Centred Design approach in the trauma-impacted school setting.****Dr Ian Thomson**<sup>1</sup><sup>1</sup>*The Ed Institute, Australia*

Working in the classroom with trauma-impacted children and young people is a place that requires empathy, the ability to be flexible, and an understanding that we need to reframe the way we speak about failure. The modern learning environment requires us to consider the opportunities that come with seeing mistakes as an opportunity for personal growth. Coupling this with positive scaffolding allows academic, social and emotional progress to be realised. In his school-based work with adolescents from diverse, complex and often trauma-impacted backgrounds Dr Ian Thomson utilised a design thinking approach that enabled the young people to engage with learning through a student-led human-centred design (HCD) approach.

Students were encouraged to think empathetically through authentic challenges in their lives. The collaboratively iterated solutions that the young people then developed had a significant impact within their own contexts as well as the worlds they were a part of. It was shown that those young people who were impacted by trauma had the propensity to be particularly engaged in this style of learning and prototyping, and the results were as diverse as they were interesting. The impact of this work was acknowledged by the Order of Australia Council and was the recipient of an ACT Violence Prevention Award.

In this workshop participants will be encouraged to think about how the skills of HCD could be utilised in their own context, as well as challenged to consider how a design thinking approach could be connected to our knowledge of trauma and its impact. Participants will leave with an understanding of HCD and how it could be utilised with young people in their context, as well as a simple toolkit for trying a design thinking approach in a range of settings.

**126****Addressing the educational challenges for children in out of home care****Ms Kerri Chard**<sup>1</sup><sup>1</sup>*Little Stars Foundation, Brisbane, Australia*

Trauma profoundly impacts children's development across multiple dimensions—brain, body, biology, belief systems, and behaviour. This disruption often leaves children developmentally "stuck", exhibiting behaviours and emotional responses that may be half their chronological age. Consequently, educationally, they lag significantly behind their peers. Such behaviours can perplex and frustrate educators and caregivers, presenting as baffling and seemingly irrational. However, understanding the underlying causes of these behaviours can transform interactions and educational strategies.

This workshop is designed specifically for educators, caregivers, and professionals supporting children in the out-of-home care system. It aims to equip participants with a new language and perspective to interpret these challenging behaviours. By shifting our lens, we can begin to make sense of what these behaviours communicate about unmet needs and past experiences. Participants will learn to recognise the hidden influences of trauma on behaviour and discover effective tools and strategies to help these children reach their full educational potential.

This workshop will also provide practical approaches and interventions that acknowledge and address the unique needs of children impacted by trauma. Through evidence based practices and case studies, participants will gain insights into creating a supportive and responsive educational environment.

Attendees will leave this session empowered with knowledge and tools to become pivotal contributors to the educational and personal success of children in out-of-home care. This is not only an opportunity to transform educational outcomes but also to significantly alter the life trajectories of some of our most vulnerable students.

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## Trauma-informed behaviour support: From co-design to research trials

**Dr Govind Krishnamoorthy**<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>University Of Southern Queensland, Ipswich, Australia

There is a growing recognition of the challenge of maximising the learning days of students with complex social and emotional needs. Despite several emerging trauma-informed practice approaches, robust research evidence is lacking. The Trauma-informed Behaviour Support (TIBS) is a multi-tiered, trauma-informed practice program that has been disseminated in schools since 2015. The program was co-designed with First Nation communities in the Northern Territory and has since been evaluated in research trials in schools in Queensland. This presentation will introduce the program, the co-design process, and innovative strategies in implementing the program using a hybrid-flexible learning approach in supporting educators. Results from five studies on the mixed methods, multi-tiered evaluation methodology highlight the positive impact of the TIBS program, as well as the complexities of addressing the learning and wellbeing needs of children exposed to trauma. The findings will also shed light on university-school research partnerships that offer practical, feasible and sustainable solutions to the use of trauma-informed practices in the context of funding mandates related to NCCD. Finally, learnings from workings of the diverse, interdisciplinary team will be shared. The presentation will offer teachers practical strategies and free-to-use resources from the program in managing classroom environments, while offering educational leaders an insight into whole-of-school approaches to TIP.

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## Developing a readiness culture for effective implementation of trauma informed restorative practice

**Ms Margaret Thorsborne (OAM)**<sup>1,2,3,4</sup>, **Ms Sue Attrill**<sup>1,2,3,4</sup>, **Ms Beverley Turner**<sup>1,2,3,4</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Restorative Practice International, <sup>2</sup>Change Management Institute, <sup>3</sup>Australian Association of Restorative Justice, <sup>4</sup>Australian Institute of Management

Is your educational organisation ready to move towards a relationship-base culture? If not, what do you need to do?

Before implementing Restorative Practice it is vital to understand the 'state' of relationships within the educational organisation and how Restorative Practice aligns with the organisational values and key priorities such as student engagement and whole school wellbeing.

In this workshop you will preview tools and processes the authors have constructed to ensure 'cultural readiness' before the implementation of RP. Cultural readiness for RP can be defined as the extent to which the school culture fits within an authoritative or RP framework. The quality of relationships and beliefs about discipline and problem-solving need to be congruent with restorative philosophy in order for the practices to take root, grow and thrive.

We have developed a broad RP Readiness Framework to assist educational organisations to evaluate, values, systems, policies and practices and to decide if they are ready to implement. It provides an educational organisation with the opportunity to conceptualise, consider and increase readiness for change by having a 'birds-eye' view of their organisational culture, exploring some of the factors that impact a staff's readiness for implementation and identifying the appropriate next steps to maximise success. Participants will be invited to use the tools and provide feedback about their usefulness.

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## The [un]conditioning of the behaviour: Moving beyond behaviourism to embrace trauma informed practices

Dr Amanda McCubbin<sup>2</sup>, **Dr Amy Cloughton**<sup>1</sup>, Ms Kirsten Andrews<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Federation University Australia, Australia, <sup>2</sup>Federation University Australia, Ballarat, Australia, <sup>3</sup>Federation University Australia, Ballarat, Australia

This research received funding from the Victorian Department of Education as part of the Access Quality Teaching project.

There are a range of challenges that teachers face in the classroom, including how the impacts of trauma affects children's experiences in the classroom and contribute in diverse ways to the classroom dynamic. Creating safe and supportive learning environments can develop a classroom culture that supports children's emotional and physical regulation and prioritises relational approaches. While there is evidence about in-service teachers engaging in training on trauma aware approaches, there has been scant research undertaken about supporting pre-service teachers to develop and implement trauma aware practices in the classroom

This presentation explores how prepared pre-service teachers (PSTs) felt after engaging in professional development through the Access Quality Teaching (AQT) project. The project supported PSTs to learn about trauma aware approaches and provided placement in low Index of Community Socio-educational advantage (ICSEA) schools where there was a high probability of teaching children living with the impacts of trauma. This research used interpretive perspectives to gain insight into the experiences of PSTs. A mixed method approach of surveys and semi-structured interviews was used to gather data.

Several themes became evident from the data analysis and these will be explored through the presentation. These themes include 1) PSTs internal conflict regarding the use of trauma-informed practices, especially given their own experiences in schools. 2) PSTs searching and hoping for an all-encompassing strategy that would work with students all the time. Additionally, there were some challenges for PSTs to navigate including their own experiences in schools and internal beliefs that aligned with behaviourism. however, generally PSTs felt more confident and empowered in working in classrooms with their new trauma-aware approaches than prior engaging in the AQT project.

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## Trauma-aware strategies in disability and inclusive education

**Mr Andrew Zakrzewski<sup>1</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>*Berry Street, Melbourne, Australia*

This session will provide trauma-aware disability and inclusion strategies for educators from mainstream, flexible learning, and special education settings to provide safe, positive learning environments for all students. Recent findings suggest schools are reporting increases in student cohorts, both diagnosed with disability and as reported in Nationally Consistent Collection of Data (NCCD), that require support and intervention (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW), 2022). Students who contend with disability needs are also more likely to have experienced adverse childhood experiences resulting in trauma (AIHW, 2022). The need for the continued development of trauma-aware disability and inclusion strategies is therefore critical to supporting student learning success.

Trauma-aware inclusive education seeks to eliminate barriers to learning and promote equitable access and participation of all students, regardless of their backgrounds, diverse characteristics, and unique needs (Swancutt, 2023). Our vision is to transform educational settings to ensure that disability and diversity are respected and valued and that all students can access enriching learning in supportive environments (Cologon, 2019; Shyman, 2015). By prioritising belonging, inclusive education creates environments where students feel accepted, supported, and valued (Prince & Hadwin, 2013). Trauma-aware education aims to re-envision the education experience for students with disability or diverse learning needs from children's rights-based and strengths-based perspectives.

Strategies you will learn include:

- Practical strategies to support all students in and out of the classroom.
- Effective coregulatory practices informed by consideration of sensory and communication needs.
- Approaches for enhancing the psychological capacities of students with disabilities through strengths-based strategies.
- Strategies for building stamina in special or inclusive settings.

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**131****Discover trauma-informed mindfulness and somatic (body based) practices to support resilience in yourself and students****Mrs Trish Du Temple**<sup>1</sup><sup>1</sup>*Greenlight Foundation, New Zealand*

As educators navigating today's many challenges, we recognize and honour your inherent resilience and courage. We aim to help amplify these qualities by equipping you with research-backed trauma informed mindfulness and somatic (body based) tools and practices to support resilience in yourself and your students.

In this session, learn about the connection between trauma and the body, gaining insights into how these experiences can manifest in students' behaviour (as communication), particularly in emotional dis-regulation and nervous system responses. "The kids who need the most love will ask for it in the most unloving ways". Embracing this concept is pivotal for creating safe, nurturing environments conducive to learning and healing.

Fortunately, there are research-backed practices that can develop our inner resources for greater resilience and facilitate the release of trapped stress and trauma in the body. Many of these practices incorporate nature-inspired mindfulness fostering centeredness (through grounding techniques), presence, self-regulation, and resilience in both educators and students.

Being an experiential workshop, you'll be invited to try mindful somatic based practices aimed at regulating the nervous system and cultivating wellbeing through harnessing the power of the breath, movement, senses, sound, and brief restorative/relaxation techniques. These practices offer daily opportunities for (re) centering (amidst the storm), alleviating overwhelm or anxiety, and nurturing a culture of care within educational settings. You'll also come away with top-line strategies for compassionately attending to traumatic wounds (whether within yourselves or your students), and/ or helping students through emotional challenges in the face of triggered trauma.

Leave feeling empowered with a handout to facilitate the sharing of these trauma informed practices with your students and colleagues, fostering greater resilience and holistic wellbeing.

**132****Keynote address: Change your brain. Change your life.****Mr Nathan Wallis***Neuroscience Educator at Xfactor Education, New Zealand*

'Change your brain - change your life!' takes a broader perspective than Nathan's previous talks. This new discussion explores the inherent ability in everyone's brain to be able to change the 'wiring' of their brain and thereby improve their level of happiness, well-being and overall quality of life.

Nathan's message is that we are not subject to the biology dictated by the brain, but rather, it's actually an interactive process – the biology of the brain is also dictated by our thoughts and actions. Or alternatively, our brains are voice activated and we are far more in control of our brains than we realise.

This talk will update you (in Nathan's usual plain, direct, 'southern-man style' kind of way!) on Neuroplasticity - or the brains ability to change itself - and how to do this.

This is the same information Nathan shares with trauma experts and all manner of professionals across New Zealand, Australia and China. This seminar will be of interest to anyone who is committed to self-development and improving the quality of their lives. It will also be of interest to anyone working with trauma, or in roles helping other people improve the quality of their lives.

**200****A Trauma Aware and Restraint Free World: The Journey of CPI****Ms Susan Driscoll<sup>1</sup>**<sup>1</sup>*Crisis Prevention Institute, Milwaukee, United States*

This presentation will share the journey of the Crisis Prevention Institute as we transition from being the world's largest provider of restrictive intervention training to the provider of solutions that we hope will eliminate the need for restraint altogether. Through our 42,000 Certified Instructors, CPI understands the challenges facing teachers and schools-- and we see it through growing requests for our training. But to quote Desmond Tutu, "There comes a point where we need to stop just pulling people out of the river. We need to go upstream and find out why they're falling in."

When CPI was founded 40 years ago, there was limited research that showed the connection between the brain, nervous system and behavior. Now, research connecting neuroscience and behavior is rich and growing, and yet teachers and staff members are not provided with the training and tools to adopt new practices based on the research. When we assume that everyone is—to some degree—is experiencing stress and trauma, and when we understand what happens to the body when stress becomes toxic, a reframing of behavior and of our responses to it is possible.

In this session (and it can be developed either as one session or two) I will present the basics of brain science with a few key principles: neuroception (and fight, flight, freeze); brain development; interoception and self-regulation, co-regulation, and intentional practices for building relationships. The presentation will also highlight neuroplasticity – what happens to us when we are exposed to prolonged trauma, but also what is possible with the implementation of trauma informed practices. I will highlight the specific perspective of neurodiverse individuals who, merely by living in a neurotypical world, are more likely to experience a lack of felt safety and the unintentional stress responses that result.

I will show examples of how we at CPI are bringing trauma awareness and neuro-informed practices into all our programs, and will highlight our new "upstream" offering, Reframing Behavior. Reframing Behavior is designed to give all teachers, administrators, and staff members a short course on the neuroscience of behavior, but more importantly to expose educators to simple, actionable practices that are easy to implement but that over time can lead to profound cultural change.

**201****Trauma-Informed Restorative Practices: A Symbiotic Relationship****Mr Joe (Samuel) Brummer<sup>1</sup>, Ms Margaret Thorsborne<sup>2</sup>**<sup>1</sup>*Joe Brummer Consulting*, <sup>2</sup>*Margaret Thorsborne & Associates*

In this keynote, Marg and Joe, co-authors of their new book "Becoming a Trauma-informed Restorative Educator: Practical Skills to Change Culture and Behavior", will outline some of the challenges educators and students face today concerning mental health, the lack of institutional trust among students and parents, and the old ways and habits of thinking about how we develop and manage relationships in our school communities. They will discuss the view that to be truly trauma-informed, educators need to move restorative principles into practice, and to be truly restorative, educators need to be trauma-informed. These links and the interconnected nature of being human and humane are vital for school communities to understand as they develop the school cultures they strive to create. As they write in their new book, "Claiming to be restorative or trauma-aware is not enough. It has to be felt and visible."



**202****Trauma-sensitivity and the importance of student, parent, and educator voice:  
Rethinking school-based decision making****Prof Michael Gregory**<sup>1</sup><sup>1</sup>*Harvard Law School, United States*

In trauma-sensitive schools, educators recognize that learning requires a sense of safety, trusting relationships, connection, adaptability, and working together as a school community. Such schools focus on creating inclusive and equitable cultures that nurture authentic relationships, foster a sense of belonging, and strengthen student learning and behaviors. However, a common barrier to establishing a schoolwide culture of safety and trust can be the exclusion of important stakeholders—students, parents, and educators—from participation in school-based decision-making processes. This not only results in organizational decisions that fail to reflect the needs and lived experiences of these excluded stakeholders but also reinforces existing power dynamics and sends an implicit message that stakeholders lack the insight and judgment necessary to share in the governance of institutions that serve them. For students and families that have endured traumatic experiences, this denial of agency and voice also compounds the feeling of powerlessness that is at the very core of trauma. In many marginalized communities in the U.S., particularly where school staff does not share lived experiences with students and families, this dynamic of exclusion has existed for generations and has eroded the trust between communities and their schools. This keynote will discuss the work of the Trauma and Learning Policy Initiative (TLPI) to search for an antidote to this vicious cycle of traumatization, alienation, and powerlessness: namely, to re-empower students, families, and educators by creating effective school-based mechanisms for their meaningful participation in making decisions about policies and programs that directly impact them.

**203****Creating protected spaces: A journey through trauma and healing****Dr Rebecca Bailey**<sup>1</sup>, **Miss Jaycee Dugard**<sup>1</sup><sup>1</sup>*Polyvagal Equine Institute*

Dr. Rebecca Bailey and Jaycee Dugard share their experiences through the lens of the survivor and healer, highlighting resilience, recovery, and the power of protected spaces in the face of trauma. Dr. Rebecca Bailey, renowned for her expertise in trauma therapy and family systems, offers invaluable insights into the creation of such spaces for survivors. Drawing from her extensive experience, Dr. Bailey illuminates the multifaceted dynamics of trauma recovery and the essential role of supportive environments. Together, Dr. Bailey and Jaycee Dugard weave a rich tapestry of wisdom, combining personal experiences with professional insights to inspire hope and resilience in the face of adversity. Through their collaborative dialogue, they showcase the transformative power of empathy, compassion, and connection in fostering healing and growth. As they delve into the nuances of trauma and healing, Dr. Bailey and Jaycee Dugard guide audiences on a journey of understanding, empathy, and empowerment. Their keynote serves as a beacon of hope, illuminating the path toward creating protected spaces where survivors can find solace, support, and the opportunity to reclaim their lives.

**204****Trauma informed classrooms and schools for students from refugee background****Ms Stephanie Long<sup>1</sup>, Miss Kitty Cook<sup>1</sup>**<sup>1</sup>Queensland Program of Assistance to Survivors of Torture and Trauma (QPASTT), Australia

Students from refugee background and their families are survivors of trauma that is frequently complex in nature. The impact of this trauma is dynamically affected by both ongoing overseas conflict and experiences at school. In addition, these students face challenges of different expectations of education, and interrupted education.

Overseas conflict can affect those who have extended family members and friends remaining in life-threatening situations, and can result in students being exposed to media images, sounds and stories of conflict. Additionally, students from refugee background report frequent experiences of microaggressions, overt interpersonal and systemic racism at school. Trauma symptoms can be triggered affecting learning and the social development opportunities of the educational experience. It also hinders trauma recovery by failing to provide a sense of safety and belonging at school, which is often an aspiration of students and their parents.

Educators play a significant role in the lives of children, young people and their families. School staff, in and outside of the classroom, can have a positive influence on students' education experience in multiple ways. In supportive, culturally safe and trauma informed environments where systemic barriers are addressed, children and young people can thrive. Families can realise the future they dream of for their children.

QPASTT has been engaged in supporting schools and educators to increase their trauma informed and culturally safe education skills. Our work is informed by years of school-based engagement, the experiences of students we work with and support, and informed by current research and evidence-based practice. This presentation offers guidance for school staff to respond to impacts of overseas conflict, racism within school environment, considerations to the educational needs of refugee students, and engaging with families to welcome them to the school community.

**205****A helper helping helpers to help.****Mr Benji Gersh<sup>1</sup>**<sup>1</sup>Greater Space, Melbourne, Australia

There is unanimous agreement in the education and helping sectors that supervision is required for safe, effective practice and to support worker wellbeing (Hawkins & McMahon, 2020). Much of the research related to wellbeing in the education sector (for example) speaks to the need for supervision to support teacher wellbeing and discusses the hope for programs to be implemented and appraised for efficacy (Stapleton, Garby & Sabot, 2020). The path seems clear, the agreement that it should be studied is there, and yet, Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs) have been offered to teachers, with minimal take up or appraisal. Given teachers are over-represented in terms of mental health issues, and have disastrously low rates of EAP participation ([data.cese.nsw.gov.au](http://data.cese.nsw.gov.au)) - the current approach doesn't seem to be working.

As a qualified teacher and counsellor I have piloted, implemented, reviewed and grown a program of counselling and supervision initially with one school just prior to the pandemic, and now with over 40 organisations from the education and helping sectors. Utilising trauma-informed, person-centred approaches to hold space for helpers to reflect on themselves and their practice, the program has answered the question that research papers hypothesised. The suggestion of research papers that it would be useful, has been demonstrated time and again with phenomenal results both in short and long term engagement.

In this presentation the insights gained into how to effectively supplement and support organisational wellbeing efforts will be shared. The key ingredients that have allowed us to successfully facilitate thousands of sessions with hundreds of clients will be distilled so that participants can think broadly about how to best support their colleagues in their own context. From what type of practitioners are best suited to supervision, to the underlying therapeutic modalities that have been most successful, to some of the key trends that have arisen from the past few years. There are insights and answers that I've learned from an innovative approach to the field.

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## Teaching with Heart: Fast-track to Psychological Safety

**Mrs Christine Taylor<sup>1</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>*Department of Education, Toowoomba, Australia*

The goal of this teacher workshop is to equip educators with practical tools and information to create a classroom environment that fosters psychological safety. Participants will explore strategies for building trust, promoting open communication, and supporting the emotional well-being of students.

**Understanding Psychological Safety - Definition and Importance:** Define psychological safety and discuss its significance in the classroom. **Benefits:** Explore the positive impact of psychological safety on student engagement, learning outcomes, and overall well-being.

**Building Trust and Connection -** Introduce the Iceberg Model as a metaphor for understanding the visible and invisible aspects of student emotions. **Building Relationships:** Discuss practical strategies for building trust and connections with students, including active listening, empathy, and getting to know their interests.

**Communication Strategies -** Explore the importance of open communication in creating a safe space. Discuss techniques for providing constructive feedback and encouraging students to share their thoughts and concerns - two-way feedback.

**Emotional Well-being Support - Recognising the Signs:** Provide insights into recognising signs of emotional distress in students. Encourage teachers to reflect on their emotions and reactions. Provide strategies for handling stress and challenges in the classroom. Discuss ways to teach students emotional intelligence.

**Discussion -** participants will share their experiences, ask questions, and discuss challenges and successes in implementing psychological safety strategies.

**Action Steps:** participants will identify one or two actionable steps they can take to enhance psychological safety in their classrooms.

This workshop is designed to be interactive, and participant focused. Encouraging teachers to share their experiences and collaborate on solutions. The goal is for participants to leave with practical tools they can immediately implement in their classrooms to create a more psychologically safe environment for students. **Additional Resources:** recommended readings, websites, or tools for further exploration.

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## John Pirie Secondary School (JPSS): A Trauma-Informed journey through a shift in thinking

**Ms Emma Pendry<sup>1</sup>**, Mr Andrew Congdon<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Dept For Education South Australia, Port Pirie, Australia

John Pirie Secondary School is a Category 2 school situated approximately 2 hours north of Adelaide. JPSS is a complex site with 680 enrolments, 129 Aboriginal and Torres Strait islander students, a large number of children in care and more than a quarter of the school have a diagnosed learning difficulty. Nearly all enrolled students have experienced at least one adverse childhood experience in their short life times.

JPSS students and families struggle to engage with education for a variety of reasons, in 2019 behaviour was escalating and staff wellbeing was at an all time low because of this. As the dynamics in classrooms shifted both the anecdotal and specific data at JPSS showed that student behaviour and lives were becoming more complex and that all staff needed upskilling to understand the needs of our students. The site decided that increasing knowledge of trauma and trauma-informed practices was important. In 2019 with the support of the departments trauma-aware school initiative John Piri started their trauma-informed practice journey working with the team from the Berry Street Education Model.

It has been a long and difficult road at times, with the primary challenge for us translating the knowledge into practice through staff needing a shift in their thinking. At the start of the journey, not all senior leadership valued this work and saw it as “too primary school”. Shifting staff thinking, particularly those in senior leadership is not an easy task but with perseverance, training and resilience from those leading implementation, the shift in thinking was eventually made. To bolster this work and ensure its longevity JPSS are the only school in South Australia who opted to include their service providers in their trauma informed training journey. This meant that all staff who interact with the young people now have the skills and knowledge to put a trauma informed lens on their work. The shift in thinking has seen a decrease in behaviour incidents, staff and student wellbeing has increased as classrooms are more welcoming and trauma informed, and staff are now able to look at situations with a trauma informed lens.

The presentation will discuss the journey of a secondary school in a highly vulnerable regional community to implement trauma-informed practice and improve the educational experience for our students. We will discuss the challenges we faced and how we shifted staff thinking, the progress and next steps for the site.

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## Developing high-quality teaching & learning in special assistance schools

**Mr Michael Freedman<sup>1</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>Hester Hornbrook Academy, South Melbourne, Australia

Hester Hornbrook Academy has expanded to cater to 480 students across four campuses, with plans underway to build additional campuses and expand our reach further. our organisation follows the healing orientated program of education (hope) framework, which guides the hope classroom practice instructional model that all classroom teams have incorporated. every classroom consists of a multidisciplinary team (teacher, youth worker, and education support officer).

At Hester Hornbrook Academy, classroom practice reflects the school's vision, mission, and values. it is also informed by current research about learning, wellbeing, curriculum, and assessment. our overarching purpose is to ensure that all Hester Hornbrook Academy students experience high quality teaching and learning in every classroom. consistency in expectations, quality learning experiences, and a guaranteed and viable curriculum are central to our aspirations for young people. we know that students learn and thrive in classrooms that are safe, supportive, predictable, and respectful. their relationships with their peers and their classroom team develop their personal and social capability and build a classroom culture where students can take risks with their learning, make mistakes, and receive constructive feedback.

Our hope approach focuses on understanding how young people who have experienced significant barriers to education integrate wellbeing and learning which leads to positive pathways. we have built and embedded a unique trauma aware teaching and learning structure which focuses on 4 distinct phases of learning – engage, equip, empower and extend. all members of the classroom team are responsible for wellbeing for learning and learning for wellbeing.

Hester Hornbrook Academy classroom practice combines four phases of learning with four classroom pillars illustrating the classroom conditions that must be present to support the social, emotional, and intellectual needs of students. together the phases of learning and the classroom pillars demonstrate an intentional, explicit approach to teaching and learning and a recognition of the reciprocal relationship between wellbeing and learning.

Ongoing professional learning, hope classroom practice continuum, consistent visuals and routines, classroom observations, mentoring, and collaboration help us maintain consistency across all classroom teams. data analysis shows increased engagement and positive pathways through our hope high-quality teaching, learning and wellbeing. our journey has been full of learning, and our experience can provide valuable insights to other special assistance schools across Australia.

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## Creating optimum conditions for learning through a trauma-informed lens, at Easter Fleurieu R-12 School

**Mrs Merryn Gomez<sup>1</sup>, Mrs Vanessa Coker, Mrs Jo Garwood, Mr Ian Kent**

<sup>1</sup>*Eastern Fleurieu R-12 School, Strathalbyn, Australia*

Embedding inclusive, consistent, predictable routines and expectations to create a safe learning environment using a Multi-Tiered System of Support, through a trauma-informed lens.

Eastern Fleurieu R-12 School is a multi-campus school in a rural setting in Strathalbyn, South Australia, catering for 1500 students from various socio-economic backgrounds with increasing complexity year on year. Over the past 3-5 years numbers of students with complex disabilities, trauma and disadvantage are presenting to our school because of our successful education program R-12, and reputation for supporting students through innovative and effective use of trauma-informed practices.

At the start of 2023, our post-COVID data reflected unprecedented increases in challenging behaviour, and an escalation in punitive consequences, contrary to our goals with restorative and trauma-informed practices. This workshop explores the data-informed processes we used to identify inconsistencies of practice and the consequences of an imbalance between 'safe-haven' and 'secure-base' approaches, and the steps we took to turn this around.

We were experiencing burn out, division between leaders, teachers, and parents, increased challenging student behaviour; we realised the pendulum had swung too far. Getting the balance of having clear expectations and accountability, coupled with compassion and care can be a challenging line to maintain for any school. This is why we want to share our experience through this workshop which will help you create clarity in your culture around accountability within a trauma-informed lens.

In this workshop we will share our data-informed response to several challenges such as:

- a community perception/expectation around the automaticity of punitive consequences
- leaders being perceived as lenient in a climate of unconditional positive regard
- using data stories to build a shared understanding of levels of responsibility
- clearly articulating HOW to respond to tricky situations
- how we reset the boundaries needed for effective learning

Through navigating a shift from a reactive to a proactive culture that improved communication and efficiency, leader business became everybody's business, and the next step in the change-process began, with students at the centre of every decision we made.

This workshop highlights how, by using a clearly articulated Multi-Tiered System of Support promoting a shared commitment to consistent and predictable routines, you can improve student behaviour, emotional regulation, and re-focus all your energy back onto the core business of teaching and learning.

You will leave this workshop with the tools for change including data-informed practice and effective change-management processes.

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## Enhancing inclusive education and personalised support for traumatised students: Impact of a mapping tool at Andamooka Primary School

**Mr Bronte Stanford<sup>1</sup>, Ms Jodie Turpin<sup>2</sup>, Ms Robyn Simpson<sup>2</sup>**

*<sup>1</sup>Department For Education South Australia, Andamooka, Australia, <sup>2</sup>Department For Education South Australia Student Support Services, Port Augusta, Whyalla and Far North, Australia*

This presentation will explore how Andamooka Primary School has used a trauma-informed whole of school approach alongside the Student Support Services (SSS) School Mapping Tool to ensure students learning and wellbeing needs can be met. The School Mapping tool is an Excel-based tool developed by the South Australian Department for Education Behaviour Support Educators. It provides a comprehensive overview of areas of support, concerns, disability, interventions, and transition information for students, classes, cohorts, and the entire school community. Through a trauma-informed lens, the tool has revolutionised the way in which Andamooka Primary School provides inclusive education and personalised support for their students. Join Bronte Stanford (Principal), Jodie Turpin (Behaviour Support Educator), and Robyn Simpson (Inclusive Educator) as they share their experiences and insights on the benefits of using the SSS School Mapping Tool to enhance student well-being and academic success.

Andamooka is a small community school based in the Far North of South Australia. It is situated in a fairly rugged and resilient Opal Mining Town and Began in 1947. There are currently 20 students enrolled from kindergarten to year 6 and it has an occasional care children's service attached. Families in our community face a range of vulnerabilities and we have identified that all of our students have been impacted by trauma. 25% of our students identify aboriginal heritage and there are significant numbers with either verified or waiting to be assessed neurological diversity. We have been supported with training through the Berry Street Education Model and this informs all of our practice at the school. We explicitly teach the zones of regulation and have just been trained in restorative justice practises. The School Mapping Tool has transformed our approach and streamlined the individual approach to every student have to ensure they access to the right interventions to help them be successful in both learning and wellbeing. It is referred to weekly and has proven invaluable in help us to not only track the students' progress, but assists in informing the evidenced based interventions that are applied for every student who is needing support.

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## School staff wellbeing: The cornerstone of student flourishing

**Mr Justin Roberts<sup>1,2</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>The Mackillop Institute, Australia, <sup>2</sup>MacKillop Family Services, Australia

In our human-centred and relational field of work, our dedication as educators to student wellbeing is unquestionable. But, what about in the times when this focus might inadvertently overshadow the equally crucial need for staff wellbeing, or in the constant pursuit of supporting our students' wellbeing we neglect our own?

In our current school education climate this is particularly relevant. Australian schools are navigating one of the most complex times in their existence with a myriad of challenges: a national teacher shortage, high teacher attrition rates - up to 50% leaving in the first five years (Brandenburg et al., 2023) – excessive workloads, burnout and escalating mental health challenges among school staff. Australian principals are reporting alarming rates of 'red flag' incidents of violence (Principal Occupational Health and Safety Survey, 2022), and challenges including workload (89%), lack of recognition (71%), and negative school culture (47%) are three primary factors driving teachers away from our crucial profession.

Yet, we know that positive relationships between the staff, between students, and between staff and students lay the foundations to foster effective teaching and learning. This requires a school workforce who are safe, supported and well – the wellbeing of our school staff is paramount! School staff who feel recognised, safe, and perceive a supportive and positive whole-school culture have higher satisfaction and retention rates (AITSL, 2022).

This requires intention - we must cultivate the school environments that support all individuals, the whole workforce and staff involved in nurturing our young people. We know that when we don't look after the wellbeing of our staff, we cannot create the environment for positive relationships with our students and for effective teaching and learning to occur.

At MacKillop, we've garnered first-hand insights from our schools over a decade and have witnessed the profound effects of deliberately nurturing a holistic school culture that prioritises the wellbeing of both students and staff. Over that time, we've seamlessly integrated evidence, educational theory, social theory, psychology, neuroscience, and our frontline practice wisdom into the development of a comprehensive framework and a set of strategies to create our schools' culture. These tools enable us to intentionally design the creation of safe, predictable, and supportive school cultures, which serve as the foundational bedrock for effective teaching and learning.

Join us, as Justin delves into the tangible impacts of placing our whole school's wellbeing, especially staff, at the forefront within our school communities.



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## Understanding the 'whole child': A multi-disciplinary and trauma-informed approach to support schools

**Miss Jess Sugarman**<sup>1</sup>, Ms Melissa Boylan<sup>1</sup>, **Gemma Davie**<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Act for Kids, Woolloowin, Australia

Students who have experienced trauma can have difficulties with school attendance, academic achievement, engagement at school, and school connectedness (Roseby & Gascoigne, 2021). To support the learning and social development of students who have experienced trauma, it is essential that a holistic and systemic therapeutic approach is provided to the student and their school.

The Act for Kids Specialist Disability Support in Schools team works collaboratively with schools and students in Brisbane North.

This workshop will share the model and resources used by our multidisciplinary team (psychologist, occupational therapist and speech pathologist) to support schools to develop a holistic understanding of their students. This holistic understanding underpins the formation of responsive recommendations and adjustments to support the student's access, participation and engagement at school. Once participants have an overview of the model and resources, they will be able to put their knowledge into practice using case studies with the knowledge and support of the presenters.

Learning objectives:

1. To understand the wholistic impact childhood trauma can have on a student's ability to engage in the classroom.
2. To understand strategies to support collaborative understanding of student needs, goal setting and intervention between therapeutic staff, school, and families.
3. To become familiar with some key trauma informed adjustments that can support students' participation and connectedness at school.
4. To have a foundational experience in applying a model and resources to develop a more holistic understanding of student needs and trauma responsive practices

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## What's the difference: My journey from high fee 'academic' schools to trauma aware schooling.

**Ms Samantha Bolton<sup>1</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>*Indie Education, Brisbane, Australia*

I have been operating in the context of trauma aware schooling for less than 3 years. The majority of my 35-year career in schools, has been spent in academically focused girls' schools often labelled as 'elite'. I learnt my craft as a teacher and an educational leader over a 24-year period in one such school. Given the seemingly disparate contexts in which I have worked, and my relative inexperience in trauma aware schooling, one may ask what insights I have to offer.

This presentation explores my learnings since taking up a Principal role in a strengths-based, trauma aware special assistance school. It tracks the change in my language from 'recognising the value of a learner' to 'unconditional positive regard'. It references my growing confidence in facilitating exceptional teaching and learning in the context of a school for 'disengaged' (a seriously loaded term) young people. It details my ongoing struggle to strike a balance between the principles of safety, respect and engagement when leading a school of young people who have been disenfranchised and are disconnected from any sense of an educational community.

In my relatively short stint in this space I have come to believe that trauma aware schooling demands a strengths-based learning environment utilising principles of adult education, a sophisticated curriculum, refined pedagogy, and a reflective approach to professional growth. Together these elements foster the creation of positive learning relationships.

So, what is the difference between where I have been and where I am now? Is it that the margin for error when working with young people who are suffering from the impact of trauma is smaller? Is it easier to confuse learning gaps with an inability to learn, in schools which cater for students who have missed significant periods of time in the classroom?

We must strive to make the quality of the teaching and the importance of the learning offered in trauma aware schools, equal to that of more stereotypical academic institutions. To do this we must address the automaticity of the interactions occurring in many classrooms so that the rhetoric around trauma informed strength based practice becomes consistent reality.

My colleagues and I continue to learn as we seek to lift our gazes and those of the students we spend our days with.

This presentation tells my story of a quest to be better and do better as a trauma aware practitioner and leader.

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## Growing educators' capacity to respond relationally to student's complex needs: A mental health and education initiative

Mrs Claire Walsh<sup>1</sup>, Mrs Rachel Powell<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>*Evolve Therapeutic Services, CYMHS, Metro South, Queensland Health, Meadowbrook, Australia*, <sup>2</sup>*State High School in Logan, Loganlea, Australia*

In addressing the complexity of the impact of childhood trauma in a secondary school, a collaborative approach was implemented between Evolve Therapeutic Service (Queensland Health) and a local state high school. The high school operates in a community facing complex challenges, including socio-economic issues like domestic violence, low income households, mental health concerns, and substance use. Recognizing the impact of these factors on students, the school prioritized becoming trauma-informed to better support student engagement in learning. In partnership with Evolve Therapeutic Service, the school developed a program to enhance educators' understanding and response to trauma. This included comprehensive training sessions, ongoing skill-building sessions, and a coaching initiative to empower trauma champions within the staff. The program emphasized the importance of using relationship-based and evidence-supported approaches to not only benefit students with trauma experiences but also the entire school community in their learning journey. This presentation explores the advantages of collaborating with community-based mental health services to enhance educators' ability to respond effectively to students' needs.

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## School belonging in adolescence buffers the impact of childhood trauma on depression and anxiety symptoms

Dr Lucinda Grummitt<sup>1</sup>, Ms Kirsty Rowlinson<sup>1</sup>, Ms Sasha Bailey<sup>1</sup>, Ms An Nguyen<sup>1</sup>, Dr Louise Birrell<sup>1</sup>, Dr Erin Kelly<sup>1</sup>, Dr Lauren Gardner<sup>1</sup>, Dr Katrina Champion<sup>1</sup>, Professor Cath Chapman<sup>1</sup>, Professor Maree Teesson<sup>1</sup>, Professor Nicola Newton<sup>1</sup>, Associate Professor Emma Barrett<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>*The Matilda Centre for Research in Mental Health and Substance Use, The University Of Sydney, Australia*

**Background:** Schools are powerfully involved in shaping the mental health of young people. School belonging refers to the extent to which a child feels acceptance and has caring relations at school and with the school community. Emerging evidence suggests that students exposed to trauma may be particularly influenced by school belonging – with a lower sense of belonging further exacerbating mental health problems and greater belonging providing an even greater benefit to students affected by trauma relative to their peers. This suggests that school belonging may be an important factor that schools can prioritise to promote healing from traumatic exposures. We examined associations between experiences of childhood trauma and school belonging in a sample of young Australians, and tested whether school belonging moderates the relationship between trauma and symptoms of anxiety and depression.

**Methods:** Data for this study is drawn from the baseline assessment of a cluster randomized controlled trial of a mental health prevention program with 9 schools across Australia (N=752, Mean age = 13.3 years). Students completed the Psychological Sense of School Membership scale, an 18-item scale assessing school connectedness and prosocial relationships at school. Anxiety symptoms were measured by the Generalised Anxiety Disorder 7 scale (GAD-7) and depressive symptoms were measured by the Patient Health Questionnaire for adolescents (PHQ-9A). Traumatic experiences were measured using the Child and Adolescent Trauma Screen. Regression analyses with interaction terms between trauma and school belonging were conducted to predict depression and anxiety symptoms.

**Results:** There was very strong evidence that any exposure to trauma, and the number of traumatic events experienced by the student, were significantly associated with a lower sense of school belonging, after adjusting for age, gender, and school-level clustering. School belonging moderated the associations between trauma and both depression and anxiety symptoms. Higher levels of school belonging buffered the impact of trauma on both depression and anxiety. For those exposed to trauma, increases in school belonging showed a greater reduction on symptoms of anxiety and depression compared to students not exposed to trauma.

**Conclusion:** School belonging significantly moderated symptoms of depression and anxiety among students with trauma. The findings from this study demonstrate the profound role schools play in the mental health of their students, particularly those students exposed to trauma. Future research with longitudinal data is needed, but results suggest that efforts to promote a sense of school belonging among students exposed to trauma should be prioritized.

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## Attachment-informed, trauma-aware policy and practice in Scottish education

**Dr Christine McKee<sup>1</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>*University Of Glasgow, Glasgow, United Kingdom*

Recent narratives surrounding education policy and practice in Scotland have sought to prioritise the wellbeing of children and young people. The national Curriculum for Excellence is underpinned equally by literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing. Indeed, health and wellbeing is officially the 'Responsibility of All' (education professionals). Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC) is the national approach to which all who work with children should adhere. More recently, the independent review of the care system in Scotland has resulted in the series of reports entitled The Promise. Following this, Scotland's workforce, and all who come into contact with disadvantaged children and young people, are tasked with transforming their practice in order to fully support their needs. The crucial role of all education professionals within this is recognised if social justice is to be achieved.

This presentation seeks to explore the role of attachment theory within the educational landscape in Scotland. Given the increasing awareness of the impact of early adversity as well as enhanced understanding of the concept of trauma, it is timely to elucidate exactly what may be meant by 'attachment-informed', why this may be important and how it fits with current national and local initiatives. For example, the city of Glasgow aims to become a 'nurturing city' while South Lanarkshire Council has an 'attachment strategy'. Discourse in Scotland and elsewhere mentions Adverse Childhood Experiences, trauma and nurture amongst other concepts while in neighbouring England there remains considerable vocal support for a 'zero tolerance' approach to what proponents may term challenging behaviour.

The objective with this presentation is to explore the prominence or otherwise of attachment theory within the Scottish context and ask to what extent it is a useful underlying approach in the drive towards improving the life chances of our most disadvantaged children and young people. Recent examples of practice from Scotland will be shared as we look not only at the language of a trauma-aware approach but at the reality and challenges of implementing it.

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## Repairing Trust: The Power of Apologies in Trauma-Informed Classrooms

**Mrs Jo Chamberlain<sup>1</sup>, Mrs Cath Forster<sup>1</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>*Te Whai Toi Tangata, Te Whare Wananga o Waikato, University Of Waikato, Hamilton, New Zealand*

Have you ever received an apology that caused more harm, made the situation worse or failed to resolve the issue?

Have you ever given an apology under duress?

Research in trauma-informed education often highlights the importance of restorative practices, which involve acknowledging harm, taking responsibility, and making amends. These practices can include meaningful apologies, which serve to repair relationships between students, teachers, and other members of the school community.

In trauma-informed classrooms, the use of apologies plays a role in fostering a supportive and healing environment for students and educators.

This workshop explores how apologies, when used effectively, can repair trust, build empathy, and strengthen relationships. We will explore tools that can be used when both framing an apology and / or delivering an apology to begin to repair harm.

We will discuss best practices for educators to incorporate apologies into their teaching methods, including the importance of sincerity, timing, and appropriate language.

Through an examination of current research and fun, practical examples, we will demonstrate how apologies can be an essential tool in acknowledging harm, facilitating accountability, and promoting emotional safety in the classroom.

By understanding and implementing the power of apologies, educators can create trauma-informed classrooms that empower students to heal, learn, and grow.

**218****Relational neuroscience for school transformation: The journey of Glenview school.****Ms Lynda Knight**<sup>1</sup><sup>1</sup>*Glenview School, Porirua, New Zealand,* <sup>2</sup>*Interlead Consultants, Wellington, New Zealand*

The journey of Glenview School from 2017 to the present illustrates an exciting trajectory of change and improvement which led to stunning outcomes both for students and staff. Lynda will outline the journey that resulted in this transformation where the adults, as well as children, shifted from high levels of stress and dysregulation to new states of calm and regulation. A new culture and context emerged with no behavioural incidents nor stand downs or suspensions, and in which learning, attendance and staff retention saw marked improvement. Glenview now receives visitors from around the country, including Members of Parliament, to hear about their journey and to meet staff and students.

One of the key factors, which is often overlooked in government and school initiatives, for improving learner engagement, behaviour and wellbeing is the relevant neuroscience knowledge for educators and leaders. This presentation will include some of the neuroscience concepts that led to a shift in teacher understandings as well as school policies and practice. In particular some of the work of Dr Bruce Perry with whom Lynda has trained.

Lynda will cover the alignment of a trauma-aware and neuroscience-based approach with indigenous values and concepts, with reference to a Māori and Pacific context.

Practical, effective strategies for teachers, leaders and students that Lynda and her team developed and adopted as part of Glenview's trauma-aware approach will be shared.

Lynda is a 2024 Winston Churchill Fellowship recipient which has enabled her to travel internationally this year to research best practice in trauma-aware education at the secondary school level. She will share some of her findings.

**219****Professional learning to support students living with paediatric medical traumatic stress****Mrs Karlie Ross**<sup>1</sup><sup>1</sup>*Queensland University Of Technology, Australia*

Considering diseases like cancer are on the rise worldwide, medical stress is impacting more and more households, and this can travel into children's classrooms. Paediatric Medical Traumatic Stress (PMTS) affects up to 80% of children who experience injury or illness, and is responsible for their psychological and physiological distress responses. Caring and practically wise teachers can help minimise student stress and enable their education during adversity; however, care-wisdom is difficult to develop in areas of sensitivity, such as cancer, where needs might be misunderstood and experience might be limited. This presentation shares a current PhD study which explores a novel professional learning method that uses embodied learning to potentially grow a teacher's care-wisdom in PMTS and better prepare them to support these trauma-impacted students.

**220****Siobhan's journey: Hear from 15 year-old Siobhan who has lived with medical trauma and who recommends trauma-informed strategies for compassionate teaching.****Miss Siobhan Wilson**<sup>1</sup><sup>1</sup>*Our Pixie Friends Pty Ltd, Redlands, Australia*

Siobhan's life journey, marked by complex medical and social traumas from an early age, offers invaluable insights for educators. Born prematurely at 27 weeks, Siobhan's challenges began early, compounded by diagnoses of Generalized Anxiety Disorder at two, PTSD by six, and battling depression and suicidal ideations by nine. Her experiences encompass not only medical conditions but also profound social adversities, including grief and loss, family breakdown, homelessness, and exposure to family violence.

This presentation delves into Siobhan's journey, highlighting effective and ineffective strategies she encountered across different life stages: 0-2, 2-5, 5-10, and 10-15 years old. By reflecting on her interactions with medical and educational professionals, Siobhan emphasizes the critical need for early and ongoing interventions to support children living with trauma.

Siobhan advocates for a multidisciplinary response to trauma, stressing the importance of collaboration among medical and educational professionals. Her insights illuminate the challenges faced by traumatized children and underscore the role of comprehensive support systems involving all stakeholders in promoting resilience and healing.

Drawing from her own experiences, Siobhan provides practical guidance for trauma-aware schooling practices for each developmental phase. Her narrative informs education professionals on the importance of creating safe and supportive learning environments that prioritize the unique needs of traumatized students, enhancing understanding of trauma's impact and equipping education professionals with the tools and strategies needed to support students.

Overcoming adversity, Siobhan is a beacon of hope for others. This young founder of Our Pixie Friends is an inspiration to all who meet her or hear her speak. The lessons gleaned from Siobhan's story promise to deepen our understanding of trauma's far-reaching effects and inform practical strategies for more effective support and intervention for young children and adolescents.

**221****Strategies for trauma-aware, culturally responsive education****Ms Monique Langley-Freeman**<sup>1</sup>, **Mr Jack Greig**<sup>1</sup><sup>1</sup>*Berry Street, Australia*

Culturally responsive education offers pedagogies that explicitly acknowledge the strengths and values inherent within students' own cultures in order to dismantle the intergenerational impacts of colonization, systemic racism, and educational inequities on student wellbeing, learning and academic achievement (Gay, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 2021; Rigney & Hattam, 2024). Many schools currently engaged in trauma-aware whole school implementation serve superdiverse student cohorts from First Nations, and culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds (Morrison et al., 2019). Critical researchers have argued that traumatisation can occur within schools that do not address their own cultural biases and exacerbate harmful deficit discourses around young people and their families (Gorski, 2020; Palma et al., 2023). As trauma-aware educators it is therefore an imperative that we seek to embed culturally responsive practices within whole school initiatives and classroom-based practice.

Drawing on our team's original research and emerging practice (Langley-Freeman et al., 2024; Norrish & Brunzell, 2023) this session provides pathways toward integrating trauma-aware and culturally responsive practices to support educators to provide safe and empowering learning environments for all students.

Strategies you will learn include:

- Building culturally recognisable coregulatory routines
- Including students' cultures as an asset for learning
- Empowering student voice and building co-agency
- Reflective practice for relational repair

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**Trauma transformative practice: A system-wide approach to transforming classrooms.****Ms Angela Weller, Ms Jennifer Knoll**<sup>1</sup>*Australian Childhood Foundation, Melbourne, Australia*

Trauma is a visceral force that resonates through time, leaving children and young people unable to learn effectively. Impacted children are often considered disruptive or poor learners or too overwhelmed to go to school. With classrooms becoming more complex, teachers can feel ill-equipped to respond; and there's a need to work differently.

Trauma transformation is new way of working with trauma, founded on the principle of working with the whole person as part of a network of relationships. It's a whole of school approach that guides how teachers, leaders, and systems work together to translate the neuroscience of relationships and trauma into practice.

This session draws on 20 years of Australian Childhood Foundation (ACF) work across Australia and is informed by the release of the Handbook of Trauma Transformative Practice; which brings together the work of leading international trauma experts in a vision of transformation and healing.

We will describe Making SPACE for Learning, ACF's framework for schools to better understand and meet the needs of children who have experienced trauma, disruption and disadvantage. MS4L draws on the neurobiology of trauma and provides strategies for helping students feel safe and connected at school.

We will share our recent experience a 'whole of system' professional learning program in Tasmania, delivered in partnership with the Department for Education, Children and Young People. This delivered tailored learning across 195 Tasmanian government schools, helping over 3000 staff to build the skills and culture needed to support students impacted by trauma. An evaluation was conducted with the University of Tasmania to examine the process, change elements, and outcomes of the program.

We will describe key elements of trauma transformative practice:

- Developing system-wide and whole-of-school approaches that enable consistent, multi-tiered support.
- Building classrooms and school environments that focus on relational safety, predictability, connection.
- Supporting leadership capability for cultural change, workforce development, policy, and 'compassion satisfaction'.
- Understanding the interface of trauma and neurodiversity.
- Family and community engagement to connect people around the child.

We will showcase methods and approaches that are working:

- Practical, tailored strategies for early learning, primary, secondary, specialist settings.
- Opportunities for cross-over learning and problem-solving between colleagues, integrating new knowledge directly into classroom practices.
- Using emerging technologies to simulate real-world scenarios, offering learners a safe and more exploratory approach to build skills.
- Using reflective practice and action research to support the implementation of change.

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## From awareness to implementation: how do we support sustainable workforce capability to enable thriving kids?

**Miss Michelle Cole**<sup>1</sup>, Miss Sophie Morson<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Thriving Queensland Kids Partnership, Brisbane, Australia, <sup>2</sup>Thriving Queensland Kids Partnership, Brisbane, Australia

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) articulates that all children have the right to grow, play, learn and contribute. They deserve to be well supported and equipped to deal with life's ups and downs, and buffered as much as possible from traumatic experiences and their impact, to enable them to thrive.

"So what do we need to do to keep children safe and well? Well I think we know what to do, the problem is we are not doing it. We have a 'doing' problem."

Ann Hollands, National Children's Commissioner, 2022

How do we move from 'knowing' to 'doing' and apply learnings from evidence, practice and educator wisdom to an already overcrowded education system?

Elevating the awareness and impact of trauma-informed education must be a cornerstone if we are to maximise positive health, development and learning outcomes across the lifespan.

Recent key Queensland Government strategies, including Achieving Balance, Shifting Minds, Every Life and Putting Queensland Kids First, have highlighted the need to develop more confident and culturally-competent workforces and systems to adopt developmental and healing approaches that better support children who have experienced trauma.

These approaches complement education-specific initiatives including the Queensland Department of Education's Equity and Excellence 2023-2027 plan. They also align with the priorities that emerged from the Better and Fairer Education national review, namely equity, mental health and workforce.

In this presentation we will explore how the Enabling Workforces and Organisations to Thrive initiative is connecting existing resources; catalysing conversations and implementation strategies to build collective capability; and learning from trial and test locations and application across systems. We will share resources and emerging findings that will help uplift the capability of education staff and systems, now and into the future.

Enabling Workforces and Organisations to Thrive is funded by the Queensland Mental Health Commission (QMHC) and is led by Thriving Queensland Kids Partnership (TQKP) in collaboration with Emerging Minds, Yiliyapinya Indigenous Corporation, Queensland Brain Institute of the University of Queensland and Dovetail, as part of Insight, Centre for Alcohol and other Drugs Training and Workforce Development.

Drawing on the latest research, lived experience and cross-sectoral workforce wisdom, Enabling Workforces aims to broaden and sustain shared, contemporary knowledge, language and practice within and across sectors regarding:

- Brain and body health and development, mental wellbeing, healing and resilience; and
- The incidence and impacts of adverse childhood experiences, trauma, complexity and diversity.



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## The importance of trauma-informed practice for Pacific Islander/Indigenous student excellence

**Mrs Alethea Hickman<sup>1</sup>, Dr Lefaolii Dion Enari<sup>2</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>HES, Glen Innes, Australia, <sup>2</sup>Senior Lecturer at AUT, Auckland, New Zealand

I am – a Samoan, but not a Samoan...

To my aiga (family) in Samoa, I am a palagi (Caucasian)

I am – a New Zealander, but not a New Zealander...

To New Zealanders I am a 'bloody coconut,' at worst, a 'Pacific Islander', at best

I am – to my Samoan parents, their child. (Anae, 1998, p. 2)

Educational excellence in Indigenous and Pacific communities is a rare privilege that data shows many do not get to experience. With the increased urbanisation of their individual ecosystems, Pacific and Indigenous youth are continually stuck navigating two worlds, and not fitting in either. With many of these youth being too "brown" for mainstream society and too "white" for their elders and communities. Not fitting in has resulted in disengagement with high levels of trauma and identity crisis.

This presentation explores how a white Australian, Queensland teacher was able to transcend racial barriers and help her Indigenous and Pacific Island students navigate these spaces safely and empowered. Whilst ensuring they academically excelled in the classroom and beyond graduation. Through her Trauma informed embedded practice and Relational Pedagogy, she shares how she was able to increase student engagement and consequential achievement among this cohort. Many of these students have become lifelong friends years later with a symbiotic relationship to continue to support and enhance personal, social, and academic growth. Combined with one of her former Pacific students who was destined for the factory, but is now a doctor, they share what the formula is for success among this cohort.

It is envisioned that this presentation will better inform Practitioners, community leaders and policy makers in best practice as well as effective targeted practical strategies to ensure Indigenous and Pacific Island student's celebrate success within the education system.

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**“Horses Helping People Program”- a unique experiential social and emotional intervention.****Ms Kaye Pace**<sup>1</sup><sup>1</sup>*EREA Ipswich Flexible Learning Centre, Ipswich, Australia,* <sup>2</sup>*Equine Assisted Growth and Learning Association (EAGALA), Utar, USA*

Horses act like a mirror – they cannot lie, and they simply reflect our emotions, energy, and communication, back to us. The featured program was offered to young people from Flexible Schools in Queensland. Young people who attend these schools have typically experienced significant and complex educational, social, developmental, psychological, health and family issues which demand unique trauma informed responses.

A framework developed from Equine Facilitated Learning (EFL) was adapted to engage young people in this experiential program to learn about themselves, other people, and their world through interactions with horses. The program incorporates social and emotional capabilities from the Australian Curriculum and the CASEL model of social and emotional learning. Social and emotional capabilities are essential for connecting with others, managing emotions, building healthy relationships, and feeling empathy. EFL also teaches the importance of body language, gestures, breathing and voice, and shows how to build relationships based on trust. All this takes place through practical on the ground lessons as young people learn to work with horses. Horses utilised in the Equine Team are well experienced with this type of work and were originally selected for this purpose due to their calm, curious, and accepting temperaments.

Longitudinal data capturing learning outcomes were collected via verbal and observational feedback, and through written surveys. Demonstrated transferable skills included: improved verbal and non-verbal communication, enhanced self-regulation skills, increased assertiveness, ability to quiet the mind, listen more attentively, participate in a team, as well as self-advocacy and other agency skills. The lead EFL facilitator is also a teacher at the Flexi Schools, and observed transferable skills in the classroom, home, community and in future transition to work planning.

Additionally, the program provided professional development and capacity building for Youth Workers at the Flexi Schools, who were trained by the key EFL staff lead facilitator. Trained staff were then able to support the lead facilitator in program delivery and expansion. To date six eight-week term programs have been offered for class groups, multi-age groups, along with four holiday programs, a senior class leadership program and a staff professional learning day. The term long programs were offered for one full day per week, over eight weeks. Each program involved the lead facilitator and two trained youth workers with 8 - 10 young people. The last day of the term involves a celebration and showcasing of new skills.

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## Does taking a developmentally informed, trauma aware approach contribute to positive outcomes for students?

**Ms Sharon Sperling<sup>1</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>La Trobe University, Bendigo, Australia, <sup>2</sup>Federation University, Ballarat, Australia, <sup>3</sup>Nurture International, Darley, Australia

Children and young people are not receiving adequate social, emotional, or cognitive support in Australian schools, evidenced by the declining national performance across reading, mathematics, and science since 2000 (OECD, 2023) and the increase in mental health issues among students in Australia (AIHW, 2023). Children and young people exposed to adverse childhood experiences (ACE's) struggle with their developmental milestones, resulting in difficulties in social, emotional, cognitive development, and school outcomes (Perry, 2019).

Educators are required to differentiate the curriculum to meet the needs of their students (<https://www.schools.vic.gov.au/differentiation-improve-engagement-and-learning>), without the understanding of developmental theories and trauma informed approaches; or having the tools, and strategies, this is a challenge. Hambrick, et al, (2019) acknowledges that ACE's have an impact on the development of children in the first years of life and indicates that positive relational experiences can buffer negative outcomes for students.

Providing a developmentally informed, trauma aware approach in schools is thought to increase the skills of educators, and meet the social, emotional, and cognitive needs of students with ACE's (Greenspan, 2010; Macpherson & Phillips, 2021; Cunningham et al, 2019; Whitters, 2020; Perry, 2019; Fraser, et al, 2017). Trauma occurs at different times in students' lives and depending on the brain's development when this occurs, can determine the interventions required (Perry, 2019; Mason, 2020; Hambrick, 2019). Validated tools measure the targeted developmental requirements of a student, through neuroscientific, attachment-based, and sensory strategies (Perry, 2019; Fraser, 2017; Mason, 2020; <https://www.nurtureinternational.co.uk/>; <https://www.nurtureuk.org>).

This research aims to evaluate the outcomes of implementing a developmentally informed, trauma aware approach in Australian schools. The methodology for this research will be a participatory action research model designed to create change and empower teachers and students. Kemmis (2006) states, this research "is a matter of addressing important problems in thought and action, in theory and practice – problems worth addressing in and for our times, in and for our communities, in and for our shared world" (p. 471). The impact of the research will be measured by case studies, interviews, and school-based assessments. Pre and post testing of validated online developmental tools will assess student developmental gaps. The research will include students from primary and secondary schools in Australia. Key stakeholders include students, teachers, families and experts in trauma, developmental theory, and neuroscience. The research is likely to recommend further comprehensive research across schools and the implementation of a developmentally informed, trauma aware approach in schools across Australia.

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## Lived experiences of music therapy: Journeying with practitioners and adolescents experiencing stress and trauma

**Dr Emma-Lee Steindl<sup>1</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>Queensland University Of Technology, Brisbane, Australia

This PhD thesis explores the lived experiences of adolescent clients in group music therapy and those of music therapists providing services and highlights the need to apply trauma-informed approaches. It focuses on people who have endured or are living through potentially traumatic or stressful events such as resettlement in Australia and the COVID-19 pandemic. The program of research applies a Salutogenic framework and identified factors which promoted health-ease for clients and practitioners. Two separate studies were conducted employing ethnography and narrative interviewing with data analysed using Reflexive Thematic Analysis and Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis respectively.

The first study explored the ways in which six adolescent male students, who had recently entered Australia on refugee visas, participated within a group music therapy program at their school. Various meaning-making opportunities arose through music, music therapy, and inclusive practices which promoted connection to others, self-identity, and culture. The participants had negative experiences such as racism, triggering of traumas, feeling overwhelmed, and cultural disparities. The data also highlighted how important the therapist was to the program and success of a session.

Findings of the first study led to the second study which comprised of interviews at two time points with music therapists living through the stressful and traumatic events surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic. Ten music therapists were initially interviewed as they adapted to online telehealth services and when they returned to in-person sessions. Connection, flexibility, reflexive practices, gratitude, and identity were crucial supports for the music therapists' personal health-ease when navigating anxiety, stress, change, and feeling overwhelmed.

The findings suggest necessary therapeutic and personal approaches for music therapists navigating stressful or potentially traumatic events with their service users. Connection, coping resources and strategies, and identity are crucial elements during or following a potentially stressful life event or period and are necessary considerations for both music therapists and their clients.

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## Perspectives and experiences of early career teachers about trauma-informed practice, education and training: A scoping review.

**Miss Ella Carton**<sup>1,2</sup>, Dr Alix Woolard<sup>2</sup>, Professor Rhonda Clifford<sup>1</sup>, Dr Monique Platell<sup>3</sup>, Professor Karen Martin<sup>1</sup>

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**Introduction:** This scoping review aims to comprehensively describe early career teachers' education and experiences in trauma-informed practice. The global prevalence of childhood trauma is on the rise, and its detrimental effects on children's education necessitate that teachers possess the knowledge and skills to support trauma-impacted students through a trauma-informed approach. To enhance our understanding of early career teachers' training and preparedness to engage in trauma-informed practice, it is imperative to synthesize existing evidence concerning their education and experiences with trauma-informed practice.

**Inclusion Criteria:** This review considered teachers who have obtained a university teaching degree and are presently engaged in teaching school children. Published and grey literature was reviewed if they incorporated trauma-informed practice. Only articles or literature published from 2013 onwards and full-text articles in English were included.

**Methods:** Following JBI methodology and Arksey and O'Malley's framework, the review adheres to Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses extension for Scoping Reviews (PRISMA-ScR). Keywords and subject headings, identified by the research team and librarians, was used for database searches (e.g., Embase, Psychinfo, MEDLINE, and ERIC). Findings will be presented through a narrative summary, supplemented by tables, figures, and graphs, including the PRISMA-ScR flow diagram, describing and summarising teachers' education and experiences with trauma-informed practice.

**Results:** The results will identify, analyse and provide comprehensive insights into existing literature on teachers' experiences and education in trauma-informed practice. Barriers and facilitators regarding early career teachers' training will be presented, along with perspectives on the significance of teacher education. The emergent themes derived from this review will be summarised and are expected to have far-reaching benefits for school children, schools, teachers, and universities.

**Conclusion:** This review highlights the significance of training and education for teachers to effectively respond to children impacted by trauma. Early career teachers require support and guidance. Evidence suggests that trauma-informed education can mitigate the likelihood of re-traumatisation and ameliorate the adverse outcomes associated with childhood trauma.

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## Schools' Readiness for Child Sexual Abuse Prevention Education: Preliminary Scale Development using a Delphi method

**Miss Yuejiao Wu**<sup>1</sup>

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**Background:** This study aims to develop and validate a new instrument to assess schools' readiness for school-based child sexual abuse prevention education.

**Methods:** An initial item pool was generated based on a review of existing empirical research and theoretical models. We invited researchers and stakeholders in the field of child sexual abuse prevention as experts to participate in a two-round online Delphi study in which they rated item importance and clarity, contributed their views on superfluous and/or missing items, gave rephrasing suggestions, and re-appraised revised items. Following the Delphi study, the instrument was pilot tested with a convenience sample of school staff. After the main quantitative investigation with Australian school teachers, the scale was validated via Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA).

**Results:** The initial item pool comprised 80 items in five construct sub-scales congruent with Wiener's Organizational Readiness for Change theory: contextual factors, informational assessment, change valence, change commitment, and change efficacy. In the Delphi study, 24 experts participated in round 1, and 13 participated in round 2. Based on Delphi study responses, the instrument was reduced to 56 items in the five construct subscales: contextual factors (28 items), informational assessment (13 items), change valence (6 items), change commitment (3 items), and change efficacy (6 items). The Schools' Readiness for Child Sexual Abuse Prevention Education (SR-CSAPE) was successfully pilot tested with school staff (n=19) and minor changes to demographic items were incorporated. Following the main quantitative investigation, EFA was employed to validate the structure of the scale. Four items were removed from contextual factors, while change commitment and change efficacy were combined into one factor "Organizational Readiness for Change". Overall, the 52-item Schools' Readiness for Child Sexual Abuse Prevention Education (SR-CSAPE) scale with 4 sub-scales (contextual factor, informational assessment, change valence, organizational readiness for change) was developed.

**Conclusions:** Informed by experts, the Schools' Readiness for Child Sexual Abuse Prevention Education (SR-CSAPE) is a newly-developed 52-item scale that identifies key organizational dimensions to schools' preparedness for CSA prevention education.

**Keywords:** Child sexual abuse, Organizational readiness, Scale development

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## The Javanese school counsellor's role in supporting students who have experienced complex childhood trauma.

**Mrs Septinda Dewanti**<sup>1</sup><sup>1</sup>*Qut, Australia*

The impact of complex childhood trauma includes physical, emotional, and sexual abuse, severe neglect, and exposure or involvement in family violence. As international awareness of the trauma-informed practice and the importance of the role of the school counsellor grows in supporting students who have lived through complex childhood trauma, it is timely to examine the role of the Javanese school counsellor in this work. This study aims to investigate the role of the high school counsellor in Java-Indonesia in supporting students who have lived through complex trauma by examining the influence of culture on their practice. The research implements an explanatory mixed-method design and uses an online survey and interview for data collection. The participants of this study are school counsellors who work in public high schools and are of Javanese ethnicity in Indonesia.

The first data collection was drawn from a survey with 107 participants. Data analysis results: 37% of the participants have little knowledge of complex trauma and trauma-informed practices, 34% have a fair understanding, 17% have no previous knowledge, 10% are quite informed, and only 2% have an excellent understanding. Data also shows that most of the participants perceived their work in supporting students who have experienced CCT as their priority (n=90, 84.2%), requiring the highest amount of work (n=83, 77.9%), and they mostly value their role in helping the trauma-impacted student (n=88, 82.7%).

Following the survey, interviews with 20 Javanese school counsellors were implemented. Reflexive thematic analysis was conducted to analyse the interview's result, and three main themes were found: understanding, perceptions, and roles. An understanding of impacts, causes, and punishment and the misunderstanding of students impacted by complex childhood trauma explained the theme of understanding. The theme of perceptions is explained by the strengths and barriers of Javanese school counsellors in supporting trauma-impacted students. The theme of roles is explained by two sub-themes, including the role they have done and the role they want to do if they can. From this study, we understand that Indonesian school counsellors know that helping students who have experienced CCT is an essential part of their roles. However, they need more support to improve their understanding of complex childhood trauma and trauma-informed practices.

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## By the students. For the students: Giving back agency to young people, for them to lead the way to their future

**Ms Lisa Coles**<sup>1</sup>, **Mr Mick Cross**<sup>1</sup><sup>1</sup>*Arethusa College, Australia*

"What is in that young person's best interests?" It's always the right question. How do we know if we have the right answers? A Trauma-Aware Education framework considers the broad impacts of trauma upon a young person's learning and development. Our response needs to be one that restores what has been taken away. Where choice and voice has been stolen, how do we give it back? Where a sense of safety and hope has been taken, how do we see it restored? We let our students tell us. We let them not only lead the process but participate in the restoration journey of their peers as well. By the Students, For the Students is our catchcry for giving back agency to young people, for them to lead the way to their future. What they tell us, what they show us is that their capacity for working through the complexities they face is enormous. When we use a range of approaches that give them back what has been taken away, they show us the path through the insurmountable.

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## Sustaining trauma-informed practice in schools - an observation of schools in NZ and the US

**Ms Fiona Beasley<sup>1</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>NSW Department Of Education, Batemans Bay, Australia, <sup>2</sup>NSW Teachers Federation, Surry Hills, 2000

Children and young people that are exposed to trauma are at increased risk of suspensions and expulsions and lower results on achievement assessments. They may experience difficulties with learning and memory, a sense of self, focus and concentration, self-regulation and coping and find it very difficult to form positive relationships. Teachers and school based staff are integral to the protection of children against ongoing abuse, neglect and the subsequent impact of these. The NSW Department of Education has developed a suite of four modules of professional learning for school staff in order to support teachers, school-based staff and leaders to improve their knowledge of complex and developmental trauma. These have been based on the frameworks from Victoria, Calmer Classrooms (Downey, 2007) and South Australia, Making SPACE for Learning (Australian Childhood Foundation, 2018) and have been developed in consultation with Dr Tom Brunzell from Berry Street. A pilot was developed and implemented in 128 schools across the state. The schools from the public sector included primary, secondary and schools for specific purposes in a variety of geographic locations. Despite the pilot being evaluated positively by participants, it remains to be seen how trauma-informed practice will be sustained in those schools that have completed the professional learning modules. In becoming one of 250 trained trauma-informed practice facilitators across NSW, I have seen but a handful of schools successfully improve and sustain culture change resulting in improved outcomes for students and staff. In applying for and winning the NSW Teachers Federation Eric Pearson Study Grant in 2022, the opportunity presented itself to observe schools in various stages of the journey to becoming trauma-informed. I wanted to find out what it was that teachers felt were the essential elements they required to sustain trauma-informed practices in their schools and classrooms. What resources or supports would they require to maintain focus and, for many, change mindsets? Finally, what might that mean for schools in New South Wales, or as a system? I was able to meet with educators and visit schools in the north island of New Zealand as well as in Virginia, Kentucky and Massachusetts in the United States and observed some common elements I believe are key to sustaining culture change and support of improved outcomes for kids in our school.

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## Connecting culture and movement to thrive: Dance movement therapy for secondary students from refugee backgrounds

**Ms Erica Fernandez<sup>1</sup>, Ms Lalita Lakshmi<sup>1</sup>, Ms Sue Cameron<sup>1,2</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>HEAL / QPASTT, Brisbane, Australia, <sup>2</sup>St James College, Brisbane, Australia

In this experiential workshop we will present the findings of HEAL's Connecting Culture and Movement to Thrive, a trauma informed Dance Movement Therapy Pilot trialed for approximately 30 students with an experience of refugee trauma across St James College (Brisbane) and Marsden State High School (Logan) in 2024.

HEAL is a school-based expressive arts therapy program working across four Queensland schools (Milpera State High School, Yeronga State High School, St James College and Marsden State High School) to support the trauma-recovery of students from refugee backgrounds. HEAL developed the Connecting Culture and Movement to Thrive Pilot to collect evidence about dance movement as a therapeutic intervention for young people of refugee backgrounds in schools. Dance Movement Therapy uses dance and movement to support physical, emotional, cognitive, social and cultural wellbeing. It is an integrative approach to trauma-recovery, recognising that body and mind are interconnected. Dance Movement therapists combine the elements of dance, movement systems, creative processes, and psychological and social frameworks and theories to address the specific needs of groups and individuals.

The Pilot's objective was to offer trauma-focused Dance Movement Therapy to secondary students from refugee backgrounds to increase protective factors and healthy development while decreasing the negative impacts of trauma.

This experiential workshop will outline the results of the Pilot, including its evaluation (informed by the Queensland University of Technology) and key learnings about collaboration with schools to deliver therapeutic interventions and increase their capacity to be trauma-informed.

Workshop attendees will have the opportunity to participate in activities used in the program, experiencing an embodied, felt sense of what expressive therapies can do to engender hope and recovery for survivors.



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## Teaching language and literacy to students from a refugee background through creating trauma-aware learning environments.

**Dr Anette Bremer<sup>1</sup>, Ms Rachel Hennessy<sup>1</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>NSW Department of Education, Australia

The workshop will explore one of NSW Department of Education's signature teacher professional learning: Teaching students from a refugee background. This NESAs accredited professional learning explores how to equip students from a refugee background with the English language and literacy skills they require to succeed in school. The workshop will focus on sharing some of the research underpinning the course, workshop some of the activities in the course exploring how they build English language and literacy skills in students as well as showcasing how teachers have implemented the strategies and EAL/D pedagogy in their teaching practice to create trauma-aware learning environments.

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## From the 'System' to the 'Moment': Building a trauma-responsive school community at Reynella East College.

**Mr David Kelly<sup>1</sup>, Mr Warren Symonds<sup>2</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>Life Buoyancy Institute Foundation, Adelaide, Australia, <sup>2</sup>Reynella East College, Reynella East, Australia

A trauma responsive school community responds (rather than reacts) to the mental health, trauma, wellbeing, growth and developmental needs of students, in a manner that is personalised to their needs and context. It is a community with the shared knowledge, skills, methods and language to work side-by-side together in 'shared intent' and develop personalised wellbeing and trauma-informed responses. It is an education community that is equipped and empowered to intentionally integrate the science of wellbeing, trauma and growth from the 'system' to 'moment-to-moment' student support (e.g., intentional communication, teaching, restorative processes and coaching conversations etc).

This presentation will detail the 2-year partnership Reynella East College (REC) is undertaking with Life Buoyancy Institute Foundation (LBI) to build a trauma and wellbeing responsive school community. Reynella East College is a large K-12 school based in the southern suburbs of Adelaide. Reynella East College (REC) offers a unique and comprehensive education for almost 2,000 students that is based upon diverse learning opportunities and a strong sense of belonging.

The capacity building partnership between LBI and REC is founded upon the 'Resilient IMPACT' strategy (<https://lbi.org.au/our-work/education/resilient-impact>). This identifies 7 key implementation features:

- Local contextualised, whole-of-school wellbeing framework.
- Foundational whole-of-school IMPACT training (foundational trauma content knowledge, [www.impactprogram.net](http://www.impactprogram.net)).
- Side-by-side coaching with educators and leaders.
- Training and accreditation of community champions (IMPACT Coaches).
- Contextualised embedding strategy based upon a Communities of Practice approach.
- Access to online resource library and advanced specialist workshops.
- Dynamic participatory evaluation.

The presentation will detail the implementation journey, the outcomes that have been achieved to date and offer best-practice suggestions to intentionally embed trauma science across large complex school sites, including:

- High level commitment and active support from senior leaders.
- Training and ongoing support for a cohort of REC staff as IMPACT Coaches in providing leadership and mentoring at all levels.
- The integration of IMPACT language and strategies into wellbeing, trauma and mental health systems, policies and procedures.
- Ongoing whole-of-school coaching to deepen understanding and use of IMPACT tools and strategies and explore specialist trauma issues and interventions.
- Activating a whole-of-school community of practice approach to intentionally embed trauma responsive wellbeing strategies into professional practice and the culture of the school.

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## A systemic approach to trauma-aware education at Waikino Bush School.

**Ms Jane Ellery<sup>1</sup>, Ms Jo Wheway<sup>1</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>*Waikino School, Waikino, New Zealand*

This presentation showcases how a ngā mātāpono (values) have guided Waikino School to develop a unique programme of schooling that is, at its heart, naturally trauma-aware.

Waikino School is a small and unique primary school located in the Karangahake Gorge, in the North Island of New Zealand. Since 2017 the school has been on a journey of systemic change lead by their principal, Joanna Wheway alongside a supportive BoT and a passionate and dedicated team of Learning Coaches.

The Waikino Model of teaching and learning has been developed in consultation with a range of stakeholders (families, community, local iwi), and embodies a te ao maori perspective on learners achieving success as individuals. The holistic and trauma-aware nature of the model develops the full range of learners needs, and this leads to a highly equitable learning environment for all Waikino School students.

The school's unique approach to learning is underpinned by te ngāhere, their on-site bush, and through this, students learn to build resilience, and understand how the natural environment supports their well-being and social and emotional regulation. These skills learnt in one environment are explicitly scaffolded by Ākonga and Coach to grow and develop until the learnt skills flow seamlessly into other areas of learning and life.

Alongside this individualised socio emotional developmental journey, each child is supported to develop cognitive skills through an interactive design cycle process that weaves Waikino Schools own unique student led capability goals through their own inquiry or project pathway.

By developing the skills of kaitakitanga (guardianship - of self, others, and environment) and manaakitanga (caring for & valuing self and others), students learn about themselves as people, and as learners; thus becoming leaders of their own learning journey.

What makes this model so successful for all learners, but especially for children who are neuro diverse or have deeply seated trauma, is the empowering of choice. Children choose when in the day they are feeling like engaging in workshops with coaches and if they feel that what they need is to move, to whittle, to garden, to grow then they can choose to do that and are supported to understand that they are still learning- be it experientially about science, sustainability, or how immersion in nature enhances their wellbeing and supports their focus.

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## From Awareness to Action: Loxton Primary School's trauma-informed transformation

**Ms Liza Gibbs<sup>1,3</sup>, Sally Wright<sup>2</sup>, Bernie Lipman<sup>1</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>Loxton Primary School, <sup>2</sup>Berri regional office, <sup>3</sup>Berri Education Office

Loxton Primary School is nestled amidst the stunning landscapes of the Riverland region in South Australia. Surrounded by dry lands and fruit-growing farms, our school shines as a hub of educational achievement, catering to a diverse and resilient community.

Our school is located 250kms from the city of Adelaide. We currently have approximately 270 students enrolled with the cohort consisting of 10% Indigenous students, 10% Students with disability, 2% Children in Care and 4% EALD (Students who do not use English as their first language). Our school community encompasses a diverse range of families, from farmers to local business owners, with 30% of households holding school cards.

We value the positive relationships we foster and build with students and families. We focus on strengths and encourage our students to be the best they can be.

At Loxton Primary School we began our journey because our data showed we had many disengaged students and families. We also felt we were ill-equipped to appropriately meet the growing complexities of an increasing number of students and families.

As a fresh leadership team bursting with enthusiasm for child-centred change, we found ourselves deeply troubled by the hours spent in the schoolyard, closely observing a distressed young boy without the necessary tools or skills to offer meaningful support. Recognizing the inefficiency of our reactive behaviour management approach, we were eager to transition towards a proactive model focused on educating students about their behaviours.

Aware of the need for a comprehensive shift in school culture to truly effect change, we embarked on a transformative journey guided by the TASI team. With open minds and a commitment to growth, we set out on the path from simply being aware of trauma to becoming fully trauma-responsive and ultimately trauma-informed. This ongoing journey reflects our dedication to creating a supportive environment where every student can thrive.

Our Vision 'Dream Believe Learn Achieve' provides us with the 'what' we want for our students, and this is clearly supported by our clear focus on our School Values, providing the 'how' we are going to achieve this. The values are embedded in everything we do from school awards to our behaviour education policy. Our School Values are:

Belonging, Caring, Learning, Persisting and Respecting.

Why?

BeCause Loxton Primary Rocks!

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## Animal-assisted services: Translating research to advance Australia's understanding of the impact of animal-assisted services.

**Ms Wendy Coombe<sup>1</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>*Animal Therapies Ltd, Australia*

ATL is an Australian health promotion charity that strives to advance health through promoting understanding, accessibility, and acceptance of Animal-Assisted (AA) services in Australia.

A 2019 Animal Therapies Ltd (ATL) Sector Needs Survey, community consultation and current literature revealed a prevailing gap in the understanding of the impact and effectiveness of animal-assisted (AA) services in Australian health outcomes.

Therefore, a project of Translating Research: Advancing the Australian Population's Understanding of the Evidential Impact of AA Services was conducted in partnership with ATL and two Monash University Students undergoing a masters degree in Occupational Therapy Practice.

This presentation will provide an overview of the project between ATL and Monash University in the undertaking of a global literature review of the benefits of animal-assisted services.

The presentation aims to educate stakeholders and the general population on the evidence-based benefits of AA services in relation to common health conditions and felt adversities. This project aspired to bring awareness to this particular health sector and its emerging evidential status.

The presentation will also provide an overview of the ATL Code of Conduct that has been developed as a result of the ATL's National Scientific Research Group undertaking an annual review of all studies relating to global standards in the delivery of animal-assisted services.

The ATL Australian Code of Conduct for the Animal-Assisted Services Sector details best-practice requirements for all persons engaged in the sector. The conduct standards have been designed to promote safe and ethical practice, and to provide the foundation for optimal protection of participating professionals, handlers, volunteers, clients, and animals.

ATL believes in promoting optimal wellbeing for all animals, however, the current Code pertains predominantly to horses, cats, dogs, and other small species, for whom scientific literature is available. Future iterations may address other species-specific issues as additional evidence arises.

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## A way through Trauma: Ozchild's TFCO-C Program -A collaborative, evidence-based approach

**Mrs Libby de Kok<sup>1</sup>, Ms Kylie Bell<sup>2</sup>, Mr Vincent Nuggin<sup>3</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>Ozchild, Dandenong, Australia, <sup>2</sup>Ozchild, Dandenong, Australia, <sup>3</sup>Ozchild, Brisbane, Australia

TFCO is an evidenced-based program, emphasises positive reinforcement, consistency, and predictability to create change cognisant of the impact of trauma on a child's life. Through collaboration and fostering partnerships, our goal is to enable children to return to home-based living arrangements, with either family, kinship care or a long-term foster care placement.

With these factors in mind TFCO serves to engage Aboriginal children in their education, immerse them in their culture and develop their connections. Predictability, consistency, and building relationships are KEY to our success. Educating the TFCO-C Team, and the TFCO-C Carers in being Trauma Aware and offering professional learning to our schools contributes to our successes.

While there has been some progress regarding the National Agreement on Closing the Gap, overall educational outcomes for Aboriginal students remain lower than those of non-Aboriginal students in Victoria. For Aboriginal children and young people in care, trauma-informed approaches need to acknowledge the accumulation of intergenerational trauma while also celebrating the strength and resilience of Aboriginal people.

Within the TFCO-C Team, the role of the TFCO teacher is to identify challenges that occur within the education setting.

According to the CCYP-Education Inquiry Report 2023, Student retention for children in OoHC is a major challenge, with increases in chronic absenteeism, up from 31% in 2018 to 52% in 2022. In 2022 one third of Aboriginal children in OoHC did not have a Cultural Support Plan.

Key to our success is that the TFCO-C Team works tirelessly to connect Aboriginal children to their culture; sustaining an active and healthy relationship with culture strengthens identity, builds resilience, and provides opportunities to connect with the past, underpinning the young people's ability to reach their full potential.

We 'Champion' this connection by flooding our Carers with training, guiding them toward opportunities to immerse the children in their care in their culture. By weekly visits to one our 4 Gathering Places to meet up with Elders, providing Aboriginal bedtime story books, growing native Australian plants in placement, cooking with Indigenous ingredients, visiting Indigenous restaurants, attending Aboriginal youth groups, being Deadly

OzChild's Dhiyaan Mirri Unit have been able to access supports from our Aboriginal Practice Leader in Victoria who continues to oversee and guide us. In collaboration with schools, we embed trauma awareness in practice. By valuing KESOs and close collaborations with DFFH and other agencies, that we aim for best possible outcomes for these vulnerable children.

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## Wellbeing Promotion in Tasmanian Schools: Have We Forgotten Support Teachers?

**Mrs Kristy-Lee Holzner<sup>1</sup>, Dr Lorraine Gaunt<sup>2</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>University of Southern Queensland, Toowoomba, Australia, <sup>2</sup>Charles Sturt University, Bathurst, Australia

Support teachers are responsible for educating students with disabilities who have complex needs and require additional resources. Because of the highly stressful nature of the role, support teachers are at greater risk of professional burnout, higher attrition rates, and impacts on wellbeing. There is a distinct lack of Australian or state/territory empirical evidence on strategies to promote support teacher wellbeing. In this exploratory qualitative study, we applied thematic analysis to interviews of Tasmanian support teachers to find that their wellbeing relies on principals' and leadership staff's support and implementation of wellbeing and inclusive education practices. Support teachers are experiencing stress, anxiety, emotional exhaustion, and depression caused by workload, accountability for funding, and poor leadership. School leaders who value wellbeing and inclusive practices foster a positive culture, demonstrating ecological theory. This study marks an initial step towards understanding how to nurture the support teachers of Tasmania.

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## Supporting students from refugee backgrounds to manage self-regulation and difficult emotions through student voice and advocacy

**Maria Mora<sup>1</sup>, Caroline Kajewski<sup>1</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>Foundation House, Brunswick, Australia

In 2019, Foundation House published 'School is where you need to be equal and learn: Insights from students of refugee backgrounds on learning and engagement in Victorian Secondary Schools'. This project was designed to identify barriers and facilitators for learning and engagement from student perspectives, as well as student-derived strategies in areas such as learning, peer and teacher relationships, multiple pressures around settlement and mental health supports and strategies. The foundation of this paper lay in Foundation House's Trauma Recovery Framework, which acknowledges the importance of reestablishing meaning, identity, and future as a recovery goal for survivors of refugee trauma. For those survivors at adolescent age, being able to advocate for and on behalf of their fellow new arrival peers has been a well-documented strategy to support recovery, meaning making and a sense of justice.

An iteration of these focus groups was piloted with Craigieburn Secondary College at the end of 2019 where outcomes of the pilot indicated the importance of student-led opportunities to advocate for their peers as a form of recovery to support their settlement. The development and success of the above initiatives has influenced how student consultations are facilitated and coordinated with schools participating in the Refugee Education Support Program (RESP).

An extension of this has been Foundation House's Education & Early Years team and Child Youth and Families Counselling programs co-designing/facilitating a student voice/managing difficult emotions integrated program with secondary schools who have participated in RESP. This program was inspired by the unique position of schools to support recovery, build resilience, and the need to help students from refugee backgrounds to feel safe to explore themes associated with their refugee journey and how to manage their mental health and wellbeing at home and at school while adjusting to a new learning environment.

The program takes a strengths-based approach to student voice and advocacy, introducing the participants as 'student experts', giving them the chance to influence and improve school and student experience for newly arrived refugee and refugee-like background students. This process creates safe and trusting environments to allow students to investigate and support how they can self-regulate and develop skills to manage difficult emotions associated with their refugee experience and resettlement in a new country.

This presentation explores some of the process and outcomes of the student voice/managing difficult emotions sessions, and what learnings and successes have come from taking an integrated approach.

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## Creating a trauma responsive peer mentoring program for cultural safety in a new-arrivals school

**Mr Paul Coats<sup>1,2</sup>, Mrs Emma Hills<sup>1,2</sup>**

*<sup>1</sup>Adelaide Secondary School Of English, West Croydon, Australia, <sup>2</sup>Trauma Aware Schools Initiative - Department for Education, Adelaide, Australia*

This workshop will explore issues of diversity, cultural and linguistic pride and safety, and intercultural understanding through a trauma responsive lens. Emma and Paul are child-centred will draw a focus to the strengths of young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds and their capacity for peer support.

In 2024 the Adelaide Secondary School of English (ASSoE) started enrolling refugees from war-inflicted Gaza, raising questions about how the school could help these young people feel proud of themselves and their culture, despite negativity in the wider community and media. Since borders were closed during covid times, the school grew very rapidly as larger numbers of migrants and refugee for many countries have been able to settle in Adelaide, albeit amidst a traumatising housing crisis. With their colleagues, Paul and Emma saw a strong need to empower students in their first language, and to the harness strength and resilience of student's experiences and nurture cultural pride to support a sense of belonging and safety in successive waves of newcomers.

With a strong commitment to participant co-design, a team of ASSoE teachers worked with students, staff, the Survivors of Torture and Trauma Assistance and Rehabilitation Service (STTARS) and Peer Mentoring Australia to develop a peer mentoring project. The project aimed to promote belonging and inclusion in the school community and supports students to support their peers with help-seeking and coregulation practice, conflict resolution and practical support with settlement challenges. It also fosters cultural and linguistic pride and safety alongside intercultural understanding and harmony.

The Workshop: Emma and Paul will share the approach and outcomes of collaborative developmental work creating and implementing this program in its very early stages. They will share insights about how to create programs in a responsive, child-centred way that affirm and celebrate cultural identity and resources.

In the workshop Emma and Paul will be asking participants to experience some of the learning activities from within the peer mentoring program, which include culturally sensitive and relevant forms of coregulation practice. We will also be asking participants to reflect critically on the unique cultural diversity of their own educational context to consider strengths and resources that can help build a sense of cultural safety and inclusion and a nurturing trauma-aware educational environment.

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## Investigating the perspectives of practicing and pre-service teachers on their experiences with trauma-responsive education training

**Dr Nicole Downes<sup>1</sup>**, Ms Jessica Ciuciu

<sup>1</sup>*Deakin University, Melbourne, Australia*

Many Australian children are coming to the educational environment with real experiences of trauma that are impacting their behaviour, relationships, learning and wellbeing. The Australian Childhood Maltreatment Study found that six out of 10 Australian adults have experienced at least one form of childhood maltreatment, and the Australian Institute of Health and Wellbeing Child Protection Report continues to show increases in the number of substantiated cases of all forms of child abuse. In addition, poverty, displacement, discrimination, and the collective experience of COVID-19 Pandemic lockdowns have resulted in experiences of adversity impacting children, families, teachers, and the whole community. Teachers play an essential role in responding to the manifestation of trauma in education settings, and yet many lack the confidence and capabilities to do so. Teachers require trauma training to equip them with the relevant knowledge and skills needed to address the increased disruptions, fractured relationships, diminished engagement, and poor child outcomes associated with trauma in education. In addition, teachers need to develop strategies to support their own wellbeing, to avoid the stress, burnout and the retention issues currently facing the teaching workforce. Various acknowledgements of the relative importance of such training exist disparately across education sectors. However, it remains unclear what type of deliberate, systematic trauma training and support should be in place for pre-service and practicing teachers. This research project aimed to investigate trauma training using semi-structured interviews within a case study methodological approach to gain rich insights that would reveal the lived experiences of teacher training and inform the development and delivery of effective trauma training that is needed for both pre-service and practicing teachers in early childhood education. A total of eight practicing teachers and four pre-service teachers participated in these interviews, with findings drawn from thematic analysis. This presentation will present and discuss the implications of the findings and explore how innovative and co-created models of trauma training can be used to develop and deliver effective trauma training that benefits children and teachers in early childhood education.



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## Trauma sensitive leadership paves the way for trauma responsive practice in schools

**Dr Kate Renshaw<sup>1</sup>, Mr Garth Kydd<sup>2</sup>**

*<sup>1</sup>Play and Filial Therapy, Ballarat, Australia, <sup>2</sup>St James' Parish School, Sebastopol, Ballarat, Australia*

A trauma responsive approach to teacher-child relationships can enhance student access to Positive Childhood Experiences (PCEs). Research on Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), together with the results from the Australian Childhood Maltreatment Study (ACMS) indicate urgent change is needed to reduce adversity for future generations. Primary schools have a significant role to play in countering the potential future impacts of adversity. The seven years of primary schooling are the single longest period of schooling in a child's lifetime. And although research indicates that early intervention within the first 5 years is most beneficial, this opportunity is often missed; the primary school years are therefore a vital window of opportunity. Trauma sensitive school leaders recognize Whole Child Development (WCD) and trauma responsive teaching practices as foundational for student engagement in learning.

This presentation will share one school's trauma-informed approach that integrates a multi-tiered play therapy strategy. To bring to life what this school wellbeing strategy looks like on the ground, a member of the school leadership team together with a school-based play therapist will provide attendees with school-based examples for each tier. Play therapy is an evidenced-based form of child psychotherapy that is well researched for children 3-12 years of age. The multi-tiered play therapy strategy includes evidence-based interventions at each tier.

In Victoria, the Schools Mental Health Fund introduced the three tiers of support terminology which will be used in this presentation to demonstrate the scaffolded evidence-based play therapy approach taken by the school. Tier 1: Positive mental health promotion – teachers are trained and supervised in TORA and are encouraged to utilize this knowledge and skills in all relational interactions within the school day. The Teacher's optimal Relationship Approach (TORA) is a newly evidence-based school-wide play therapy approach. Tier 2: Early intervention and cohort specific support – for children with early mental health presentations a choice of filial therapy or group play therapy is accessible. Tier 3: Targeted support – for children with more complex mental health presentations, individual play therapy is offered, or they may access additional externally funded mental health supports that the school facilitates within school time.

This presentation will showcase how trauma sensitive leadership's integration of a multi-tier mental health strategy enables this school to provide PCEs universally, to both heal ACEs and potentially guard against the future impacts of adversity.

**245****Regulation & resilience: Trauma-aware, relational and sustainable approaches to student care****Ms Natalia Rachel<sup>1</sup>**<sup>1</sup>*Illuma Health, Singapore, Singapore*

Healing happens when we focus on regulating the nervous system, building resilience and finding boundaries that empower us to communicate, belong and co-create sustainable safety.

Educators who are in touch with their own nervous system and empowered to trauma-aware care will be primed for better wellbeing and minimize potential vicarious trauma and burnout.

In this session, we will explore:

- How trauma shows up in a) the body and b) relationship dynamics
- 3 core states of trauma and relational tools to increase safety
- Nervous system self-attunement
- Nervous System reading (pairs work)
- Self-regulation & Co-regulation Strategies

Expect: Conceptual sharing, actionable strategies, somatic inquiry, partner work.

Participants will leave feeling more in touch with themselves and empowered to help in ways that are impactful and sustainable.

This is the doorway to an education system where teachers feel well, empowered, and equipped to serve students in small ways every day. When every interaction becomes a gentle intervention, we co-create cultures of peace, power and wellbeing.

**246****Australian school staff's experiences: Secondary traumatic stress, protective factors and resilience following student suicidal behaviour.****Ms Melinda Phillips<sup>1</sup>, Dr Donnah Potts<sup>2</sup>**<sup>1</sup>*Compassionate Schools, Sydney, Australia, <sup>2</sup>Charles Sturt University, Port Macquarie, Australia*

This workshop will explore the resilience and protective factors experienced by Australian school staff following a workplace experience (student suicide or suicidal behaviour). Nearly 200 school staff participated in the author's 2019 psychology honours research which demonstrated that on average, school staff experience concerning levels of compassion fatigue/secondary traumatic stress after these events. The research also explored the role that self-care, mindfulness/detachment, compassion satisfaction and social support played in strengthening the resilience of school staff following traumatic events. Participants will have the opportunity to reflect on these protective factors in education and in other helping professions, and learn ways to proactively plan to maintain and enhance staff resilience and wellbeing at personal, school and system levels. Author was awarded Honours Class 1 for this research and is currently publishing related papers with her supervisor Donnah Anderson. Keywords: resilience, teacher wellbeing, principal wellbeing, self-care, mindfulness/detachment, compassion satisfaction, social support.

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## Children in care service: A systems improvement response in SA

**Ms Chelsea Carpenter<sup>1</sup>, Carissa Cosenza<sup>1</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>Department For Education- Children in Care Service, Australia

Children in out of home care face unique challenges in the education system, that at times can impact on their educational outcomes and well-being. The Children in Care service was developed in 2020 as a systems improvement response to improve outcomes for children in the care system.

In this session we will tell you more about the service by sharing some of our trauma-informed approaches with schools and how we work collaboratively with the Department for Child Protection around creating system level change. Collaboration lies at the heart of our approach.

We advocate that education is a priority for disengaged students and that schools can be a place of safety and belonging. Our advocacy work with schools and within policy in the Department for Education has resulted in children in care being a priority for the department. Last year we increased the visibility of at least 443 students in care that were referred to the service.

Participants will come away with some insights regarding how to create change in schools to support children in care, moving from a deficit-based model to one that fosters resilience, child-centred practice and positive educational outcomes.

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## Implementing a culturally safe unit of work on protective behaviours in a Darwin Primary School

**Dr Toni McCallum<sup>1</sup>, Dr Georgie Nutton<sup>1</sup>, Ms Kathryn Stanislaus<sup>2</sup>, Ms Sarah Porter<sup>2</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>Charles Darwin University, Darwin, Australia, <sup>2</sup>Manunda Terrace Primary School, Darwin, Australia

In Northern Territory schools there is a very high incidence of domestic and family violence and child sexual abuse and an urgent need to address this issue. Adopting a standardised protective behaviours curriculum from another state will not be as effective for the particular needs of the NT. According to the Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Reduction Framework 2018-2028: Safe, Respected and Free from Violence (Northern Territory Government, 2018) the Northern Territory has the highest rates of domestic, family and sexual violence in Australia with Northern Territory Police and emergency service responders attending to more than 61 incidents on a typical day (2018, p 12). Furthermore, Brown, Homan, Simpson & Lueng (2021) show that "Aboriginal women in the Northern Territory experience the highest rates of victimisation of violence in the world, overrepresented as victims of DFVS and are hospitalised at 40 times the rate of non-Indigenous women due to assault" (2021, p 11).

Early intervention education is a crucial step to bring about change in behavioural patterns in family and domestic violence. Young children learning to respect their bodies and each other and recognising what behaviours are unsafe are important foundational attitudes in countering family and domestic violence later on (Richards, 2011). There is clear evidence that young boys brought up in violent households are more likely to become adult perpetrators of family violence themselves, so changing attitudes around gender roles early matters (Richards, 2011)

To address the issue of family and domestic violence and child sexual abuse the researchers are evaluating the teaching of a culturally safe unit of work with a rights-based approach to protective behaviours in a socially disadvantaged, and culturally and linguistically diverse primary school in Darwin, the Northern Territory, begun in 2023. They are currently analysing the pilot data from the transition class (5-year-olds in their first year of school) already collected. This includes children's artwork depicting when they feel safe and when they don't, where in their bodies they feel fear, and family/care giver attitudes to safety and family and domestic violence. Engaging the community is a key part of implementation of this rights-based protective behaviours unit. A local Aboriginal man from the community works with the community and parents to raise awareness of domestic and family abuse and child sexual abuse in a non-threatening way. Community outreach days are held at the school, based on sporting activities the whole family can participate in.

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## Education Policy for OOHC Students and those with complex trauma: Features for Facilitating Successful Outcomes.

**Ms Celeste Musgrave<sup>1</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>*University Of Tasmania, Hobart, Australia*

The poor educational outcomes of children in Out of Home Care (OOHC) have been of great concern both nationally and internationally for several years. Local and overseas research has consistently revealed that low academic achievements, poor school attendance, higher rates of school suspension, higher rates of early school dropout and poor representation in post school education pathways are reflective of these students worldwide. Academically, students in OOHC, display some of the lowest levels of educational attainment, particularly in literacy and numeracy. These students are more likely to repeat a school grade, be enrolled in special educational needs programs and change schools more often, compared with their non-OOHC peers.

According to the most recent Australian Institute of Health and Welfare figures available, Australia has more than 60,000 children placed on care and protection orders. Although not all these children are of school age, 64 % of this figure does, however, represent children between the ages of 5 – 17 years.

Trauma-informed guidelines, implemented by both education sector policy makers and schools would go a long way with assisting the implementation of trauma-informed practices into school settings for students affected by complex trauma. A supportive trauma-informed school environment has the potential to support the academic, social and emotional needs of students in OOHC as well as students who have been the recipients of complex traumatic events.

Many Australian states are making extensive progress towards ensuring their schools are becoming trauma informed, with the complex needs of OOHC student and other trauma affected students being understood and supported through school policy recognition and staff training.

Based on an extensive thematic review of national and international literature pertaining to the poor education outcomes displayed by students in OOHC, this presentation will identify the key elements that need to be included in an effective trauma-informed education policy.

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## Pre-service Early Childhood Teachers, preparing for trauma-aware practice: An animal-assisted intervention

**Mrs Katharine Gronow Rajek<sup>1</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>Victoria University, Footscray, Australia

Early childhood teachers (ECTs) are at the forefront of human development, with 90% of brain development and the experiences influencing most behaviour, all occurring in the early years of life prior to school commencement, (Tierney & Nelson, 2009; StartingBlocks.gov.au, 2024). Children experience trauma at all ages, although statistics often focus on those aged over 5 years-old, (Childhood abuse, 2023). With 50% of 0-3 year olds attending an early learning service and 90% of 3-5 year olds attending a kindergarten program, (AIHW, 2021) the awareness has risen and resources more readily available, such as the School Readiness Program, (CTARE). However, are all pre-existing ECTs ready to implement these programs? (Bilbrey et al, 2024; Sun et al, 2024) and what about new ECTs?

Early childhood education (ECE) programs are responsible for pre-service teachers' preparation of trauma-aware practice, (L'Estrange & Howard, 2022; Bartlett & Smith, 2019). ECE programs enforce an inevitable need for self-reflection on one's own childhood, (VEYLDF Evidence Paper). Hence delivering programs focused on trauma-aware practice, evokes traumatic memories with pre-service teachers (PSTs), eliciting disclosures within the classroom environment, (Parker, Olson & Bunde, 2020.)

One in five adults have experienced childhood trauma (Childhood abuse, 2023) so chances are we will have 5 or 6 people in every tertiary ECE class who have experienced childhood trauma and others who have at least been exposed to it. Animal-Assisted Intervention (AAI) has been popularly researched for different education settings, (Smith & Bradley, 2016) and although there is AAI research in tertiary settings, it has been minimal and not specific to trauma-aware practice for early childhood education students, (Cooke et al, 2022).

This study aims to investigate the volume and nature of PSTs responses to trauma-aware early childhood program content, between a class of students (control) and a class (experimental) exposed to the presence of a therapy dog. Both classes will be delivered the same third year program, ECE3005 Equity, Social Justice and Diversity in Early Childhood Education, via in-person delivery mode across a 4-week period. Data collection will include number and nature of PST trauma-related disclosures, pre- and post- confidence levels of ECE trauma-aware practice and qualitative commentary on animal-assisted interventions. Data will be collected through interviews and focus-group questionnaires.

The results will inform the ECE programs within Victoria University, strengthen the graduate outcomes and offer insight into further research in using animal-assisted intervention to better prepare ECTs for trauma-aware practice.

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## Blocked care in education: Understanding shame to inform self-care for educators working with vulnerable children

**Miss Kimberley Bates<sup>1</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>*Act For Kids, Townsville, Australia*

Since the emergence of trauma informed practice, our understanding, awareness, and approaches in responding to the impact of trauma have been applied to a range of environments including the education sector. Consequently, more nuanced areas of research, therapeutic models, and tools have been developed to assist the barriers that may impact teaching and learning environments. Additionally, increasing demands placed upon education staff alongside the varying and complex presentations of children in classrooms and school settings, further complicates this ongoing impact. Conversely, these competing demands can lead to windows of prolonged dysregulation, reduced engagement, impact learning, and the activation of shame. Arguably this holds true not only for children but teaching staff and education systems alike. Considering the role of educators who often serve as temporary attachment figures for vulnerable children and the enormity this form of caregiving whilst teaching can carry, a sense of shame, it is argued, is even more likely. Further, these factors combined can lead to vicarious trauma. Adopting this perspective can be helpful to understand what lesser-known factors may influence effective teaching and learning spaces. Importantly, with the knowledge that vicarious trauma can lead to compassion fatigue and burnout and with a deeper understanding of the influence of shame, we can better explore and intervene to outcomes such as blocked care. Building off the concept of Blocked Care by Dan Hughes and Dr Johnathan Baylin (2012), this presentation serves to highlight the role of shame and contribute to our understanding of attachment and neuroscience-based theoretical underpinnings to revisit trauma responsive practice to address blocked care in education. This is achieved by discussing the importance of shame co-regulation for education staff as a viable point of intervention. This presentation draws from practice experience and insights working in consultation with schools, teachers, and education systems from the perspective of an Allied Health Practitioner as to what has helped when taking shame into account. Further consideration is given to the challenges that may impact professional self-care and suggestions offered as to what individuals, stakeholders, and the education sector can do to better support education staff. It is our hope that this practice contribution may support education systems with assisting the well-being of teachers and their teaching and learning environments. Importantly, is our shared goal of supporting the meaningful work that educators provide in creating safe learning environments with trauma responsive teaching modalities utilised for vulnerable children and families.

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## Dissociation: What is it? Why it is essential to understand dissociation to understand student behaviour

**Mr Graham Pringle<sup>1,2</sup>, Ms Jaimee Galloway<sup>3</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>*The EMU Files, Brisbane, Australia*, <sup>2</sup>*The International Society for the Study of Trauma and Dissociation, Arlington, USA*,

<sup>3</sup>*Youth Flourish Outdoors, Brisbane, Australia*

Dissociative responses to situations seem to be the key to understanding school behaviour and prevention strategies. This presentation will introduce dissociative responses, explain the main theories, provide examples for clarity, and will demystify this poorly understood presentation. Simple and effective strategies for both prevention and response will be provided, with examples.

Dissociation is now understood as a component of almost all complex trauma cases. This session will first explain the new landscape of mental health and behaviour, in which complex trauma is central, and will then explore dissociation. Participants will be introduced to publicly available, cutting-edge information they can share with colleagues.

A large proportion of workplace stress through being powerless in the face of disruptive behaviour, should be reduced by understanding cause and prevention. Although a complex presentation at the clinical level, dissociation is quite simple to both understand and respond to in everyday classrooms. The most vital tool is a regulated and confident teacher. This session seeks to Empower, Motivate and increase Understanding amongst front line staff.

Recognising, preventing, and responding to dissociative behaviour should be easier as a consequence of this presentation. Most importantly, teachers and school leaders will be able to make sense of confusing behaviours and should be re-assured that the humanistic purpose that brought them to teaching is the core of the solutions.

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## Barriers and facilitators to mandatory reporting of child abuse and neglect in early childhood education

**Ms Natasha Ayling<sup>1</sup>**<sup>1</sup>*QUT, Kelvin Grove, Australia*

ECEC educators in Queensland and Victoria in Australia have relatively recently become mandatory reporters of child maltreatment, and they are in a prime position to report their suspicions. Yet limited research has been conducted to understand the prevailing barriers and facilitators for educators that might influence how this child protection policy reform is being enacted. My MPhil study (Ayling, 2019) sought to develop and test a new mandatory reporter self-efficacy scale for early childhood educators, based on Bandura's Self-Efficacy Theory (1977). Results indicated that collegial support was a professional practice dimension for which educators reported lower self-efficacy for child maltreatment reporting. The study's quantitative findings were corroborated by qualitative comments that pointed to a lack of collegial support as one factor appearing to influence educators' choices to not make a report. My PhD study extends this work and will employ sequential exploratory mixed methods design to investigate the barriers and facilitators to reporting of child abuse and neglect in early childhood education and care (ECEC) services in Australia. It will closely examine the relationships between ECEC educators' child protection reporting behaviours and mandatory reporting self-efficacy, advancing upon my previous MPhil research (Ayling, 2019) by focusing on the collaborative or collective efficacy dimension to reporting of child abuse and neglect within ECEC services, in addition to reporting self-efficacy and intentions. The insights provided by this research hold potential to inform and significantly improve current child protection education and training of ECEC educators for their mandatory reporting role.

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## The Power of Post Crisis Responses in Schools

**Ms Stella Smith<sup>1</sup>**<sup>1</sup>*University of Western Australia, Perth, Australia*

Post Crisis Response (PCR) frameworks in schools are used as a means to respond and guide planning to reduce further harm toward staff and students following critical incidents. It is suggested that for PCR systems to be effective, a trauma-informed, ecological approach that encompasses appraisal styles of teachers, teachers' emotional competencies and personality traits, organisational culture and leadership approaches needs to be considered. PCR is also a domain in the Therapeutic Crisis Intervention - in Schools (TCI-S) system for working with schools to develop systems of care to respond to challenging behaviour. This presentation will summarise some of the current findings of PCR research in schools.

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## Connection at the heart of practice

**Miss Robyn Gaulton<sup>1</sup>, Miss Tanya Welsh<sup>1</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>Act for Kids (PELD Program), South Toowoomba/Gold Coast, Australia

Act for Kids is a for-purpose organisation delivering evidence-led professional therapy and support services nationally, to children and families who have experienced or are at risk of harm. We strive to help keep kids safe, heal from trauma and lead happy lives.

PELD Program – support families with children birth to 5, to counteract adverse childhood experience that support responsive relationships that can create a sense of safety and trust for the child. Supporting parental understanding of attachment and the development of skills to interact warmly and consistently with their child. Modelling and coaching parents on ways to play and interact with their child. Empowering parents to enrich routines and language interactions. Strengthen parental resilience, problem solving and parenting skills, reducing the child's exposure to toxic stress. Linking families to community and therapeutic supports. Ensuring children have regular connection in safe environments.

The significance of relationships and vulnerability of families is important for understanding the impacts on child development, attachment/bonding and parental attunement to their child. Unpacking the importance of sensory and emotional regulation, brain development attachment, attunement between parent/carer/educator and child. Whilst acknowledging parents as the child's first teachers and making connections to the Social Ecological Model where child is the center.

The Abecedarian Approach Australia (3a) underpins the PELD intervention and is complemented by the Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF). This an evidence-based approach that focuses the importance of parent and child interactions that are individual, frequent, and intentional, fostering joint attention between parent and child.

Components of the PELD program include home visiting, supported playgroups and allied health intervention. Supports community referral pathways such as linking families into early childhood education care programs, transitions to prep and therapeutic interventions. Focuses on child development and parent and child attachment that is individual, frequent, and intentional.



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## Circle Pedagogy: Nurturing our nervous systems and our wellbeing for safe, connected classrooms.

**Mrs Kristy Elliott***Restorative Pathways*

Circle pedagogy is a collaborative, democratic, and participatory model of teaching and learning. The practice of circles helps to build and maintain healthy classroom communities where educators and students feel safe, respected, and connected. Circles are a flexible pedagogy that can be used to teach curriculum content, to establish classroom expectations and norms, to build relationships, to model and support inclusion, to review and reflect on learning outcomes, and the list goes on. Importantly, circle pedagogy is a wellbeing strategy for schools as the structures used are rhythmic and predictable; when circles occur routinely, they contribute to the regulation of our nervous system.

Trauma-aware schools and educators understand that one of our greatest resources is the ability to regulate our nervous system and emotions. Regulation is a skill that is learned through patterned, repetitive experiences and opportunities to grow and develop in safe, supportive environments, first with trusted others (co-regulation) and then by us (self-regulation). Dan Siegel explains that our capacity to self-regulate aids us in navigating stress and challenge while remaining within our 'window of tolerance'. When we lack this skill, we are more likely to find ourselves operating outside of our window where our stress response system activates a flight, fight, freeze or fawn state.

Individuals exposed to adversity and traumatic events may experience a narrowing of their window of tolerance; their nervous system becomes hypervigilant and overreactive to stressors. Using circle pedagogy with students is a strategy that can aid in widening our window of tolerance and supporting a student's nervous system to regulate. Furthermore, it aligns with the principles of neuro-sequential processing. As Dr Bruce Perry explains, our brains are wired to process information from the bottom up – from the brainstem, through the mid-brain and finally reaching the cortex. In other words, our brains need to regulate and relate before we can reason.

In this experiential, hands-on workshop Kristy will guide participants through a flexible circle structure (adaptable for varying developmental levels), demonstrating by doing, the clear alignment between circle pedagogy, neurobiology, regulation, safety, and connection.

257

## Empowering educators: Navigating teacher efficacy, compassion fatigue, and wellbeing in the Australian context

**Mrs Glenys Oberg<sup>1</sup>***<sup>1</sup>The University Of Queensland, Australia*

Relationships with teachers have been shown to be fundamental not only for students' academic success but also for their levels of social and emotional wellbeing. Previous research has also found that teacher's levels of wellbeing correlate with the strength of these relationships. In Australia, there is a growing concern about the wellbeing of teachers as many are expressing their intention to leave the profession or indeed have already left. Various reasons have been suggested for this trend, with burnout being identified as one of the factors. This study investigates burnout in Australian teachers as one of the constructs which make up compassion fatigue (CF), which refers to a reduced ability to empathise with others. Additionally, it explores secondary traumatic stress (STS), which also contributes to CF and occurs when a person learns about the traumatic experiences of someone under their care. Both of these constructs can severely impact the ability of teachers to form close relationships with their students. As part of this study 1612 Australian teachers were surveyed about their quality of life, wellbeing, self-efficacy as teachers, and trauma awareness. In addition to the surveys, 57 teachers were asked to give detailed responses about their current levels of CF and the impacts of this on their work. The results of this study demonstrate that current levels of Compassion Fatigue, Burnout, and Secondary Traumatic Stress in Australian teachers are at an all-time high and this is impacting their work profoundly. Recommendations are made for further work exploring the barriers and enablers of CF and how to better prepare and protect teachers as they work with a cohort of students who are increasingly demonstrating symptoms of trauma and poor wellbeing.

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## Give Me a Break! Reducing Risk of Compassion Fatigue in Educators Working with Complex Trauma

**Mr Barry Morris<sup>1</sup>***<sup>1</sup>Evolve Therapeutic Service, Meadowbrook, Australia*

As the education systems become more and more trauma aware, the risk of compassion fatigue increases. Those investing in education and behavioural support for children are expanding their awareness of underlying causes of childhood behaviour issues. There is increasing insight into children's adverse experiences in their home environments and with their primary caregivers. With this knowledge and awareness can come a heavier perception of responsibility on educators to expand beyond their traditional roles to provide a higher level of care and support.

Without the necessary self-awareness, self-compassion, structured support, and care for their mental wellbeing, educators are at risk of burnout and compassion fatigue.

This presentation will explore the concept of compassion fatigue and how it impacts early education professionals. Tools and strategies will be discussed to buffer against the contagion effects of childhood trauma, including the need for educators to have their own brain breaks. The neurobiology of trauma will be drawn on to consider how this is experienced by educators, and to emphasise the need for regulation activities not only for the children, but for staff as well.

**259**

## The role of the Trauma-Aware School Counsellor

**Dr Meegan Brown***Queensland University of Technology*

In schools in Australia and around the world, there is a growing interest in trauma-aware education. Educators want to understand and know how to support students who have been through adverse experiences. School counsellors play a key role in supporting educators and working with students impacted by trauma, but their specific responsibilities in trauma-aware education can vary between different schools. This presentation will look at the research and important tasks of school counsellors in leading trauma-aware education in schools and supporting students who have been impacted by trauma. Even though we know how important it is to help students who are impacted by trauma, school counsellors often do not get enough training in this area. This presentation will show why it is crucial for school counsellors to be well-trained in trauma-aware practices so that they can effectively lead, and support students impacted by trauma to be successful at school.

**260**

## Introduction to Trauma Centre Trauma Sensitive Yoga

**Ms Feren Yen<sup>1</sup>***<sup>1</sup>Australian Trauma Education Centre, Melbourne, Australia*

Join us at the 2024 Trauma-Aware Education Conference for a 45-minute workshop introducing Trauma Centre Trauma Sensitive Yoga (TCTSY). This session includes a brief introductory practice, and an overview of the foundational theory behind TCTSY.

Engage in a main yoga practice tailored for trauma sensitivity, followed by a discussion on the theory underpinning the practice with transferrable learnings exploring how yoga can be integrated into classrooms to support student learning and enhance staff wellbeing.

The workshop will provide you with an introductory understanding of how movement can support trauma recovery and contribute to a nurturing educational environment followed by Q&A.

Participants do not need any yoga experience, fitness clothing or yoga equipment to attend. This yoga practice will be facilitated with options to practice standing or seated in a chair.

**300**

## What's next for Trauma-Aware education: Strategies for all schools to learn, apply and sustain

**Dr Tom Brunzell***Director of Education, Berry Street, Australia*

Trauma-aware education currently draws upon evidence emerging from allied and interdisciplinary scholarship from education, neuroscience, therapeutics, social care, and wellbeing when providing durable strategies for teaching and learning. But how do we proactively ensure that trauma-aware education continues to meet the evolving needs within our school communities and beyond? Given our collective goals to innovate and sustain trauma-aware education, Dr Tom Brunzell will propose future directions for schools, their leadership teams, and researchers alike, to leverage, develop, and sustain students' strengths whilst also supporting their differentiated and often complex unmet needs.

**301**

## Research findings in Trauma-Informed Alternative Education for Australia

*Mrs Jennifer Achari, Youth Futures Community School*

Alternative education programs (AEPs) have been increasing rapidly throughout Australia. Until now, there has been no overarching, trauma-informed framework for AEPs and research examining leadership and systemic influences on trauma-informed alternative education is lacking. The research from this doctoral study aimed to fill the gap in current research by examining trauma-informed practice within AEPs across Australia. This study used Levitas' (2013) Utopian Methodology to reimagine what alternative education could and should look like from a trauma-informed perspective, considering Bronfenbrenner's (1977) Ecological Systems Theory and Unger's (2017) Differential Impact Theory, by exploring societal understandings, expert opinions, and alternative education staff perceptions through three stages of data collection. The findings revealed in this presentation will display the 8 key elements recommended for a trauma-informed alternative education framework that may benefit AEPs seeking to implement trauma-informed approaches at a systemic level.

**302**

## Therapeutic Crisis Intervention and Trauma-Informed Positive Behaviour Support in a CARE school. A case study.

**Ms Stella Smith<sup>1</sup>***<sup>1</sup>Australian Independent Schools, WA (AISWA), Perth, Australia*

Therapeutic Crisis Intervention in Schools (TCI-S) is a therapeutic framework for working with students to develop systems of care to respond to challenging behaviour in the school setting. TCI is used internationally including across child protection organisations, juvenile detention sectors, mental health settings and more recently within specialist and mainstream school settings to reduce violence and staff burnout in schools. At TCI's core lies the principle that successful resolution of a child's crises depends on the environment's and the staff's therapeutic, restorative, trauma-informed and developmentally appropriate response. Trauma-Informed Positive Behaviour Support (TIPBS) is also a framework for providing an inclusive and trauma-informed approach to behaviour in schools. This presentation will consider the integration of a Trauma-Informed Positive Behaviour Support (TIPBS) framework with a Therapeutic Crisis response system within a Western Australian CARE school. The outcomes on student behaviour, engagement and staff wellbeing will be shared as a result of this innovative approach in schools.

**303****Trauma-Aware Education in the Early Years****Dr Lyra L'Estrange***Queensland University of Technology*

In this interactive workshop, Dr Lyra L'Estrange will introduce key principles and showcase current work in trauma-aware early childhood education and care in Australia. Participants will be invited to collaborate. The guided discussion will focus on key points for developing a systemic approach to trauma-aware education in the early years and inform the development of national guidelines.

**304****Polyvagal equine assisted interventions: Enhancing your toolbox****Miss Jaycee Dugard & Dr Rebecca Bailey***Polyvagal Equine Institute*

In this masterclass, join Jaycee Dugard and Dr. Rebecca Bailey as they delve into the transformative realm of Polyvagal Equine Assisted Interventions. Drawing from their combined expertise in trauma recovery and equine therapy, Jaycee and Dr. Bailey will guide participants through an exploration of how equine-assisted interventions can enhance their therapeutic toolbox. Through a combination of personal insights, professional knowledge, and practical techniques, participants will gain a comprehensive understanding of how to integrate Polyvagal Theory into their equine therapy practices. From establishing safety to fostering connection and promoting emotional regulation, this masterclass offers invaluable guidance for mental health professionals seeking to elevate their work with trauma survivors and other vulnerable populations.

**305****Moving across the Indigenous Cultural Responsiveness continuum in Teacher Education****Dr Justine Grogan<sup>1</sup>***<sup>1</sup>Australian Institute For Teaching And School Leadership (aitsl), Melbourne, Australia*

Over the last four years, the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) has had the privilege of facilitating work on behalf of the Commonwealth Department of Education to explore cultural responsiveness in the Australian teaching workforce. This important work brings together findings from extensive research and consultation efforts. Consultation was wide-ranging to capture the diversity of First Nations Education experts and stakeholders that make up the teaching workforce. It is clear that teachers must do more than simply know and deliver Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural content. AITSL's recently released Indigenous Cultural Responsiveness toolkit was developed to provide teachers with a foundational tool to enhance culturally responsive practice. The aim of the self-reflection toolkit is to provide the Australian teaching workforce with the necessary resources and tools to create encouraging and supportive environments for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and staff and increase cultural safety in Australian schools. AITSL is currently conducting a literature review, environmental scan of free national professional learning resources, and an implementation trial across 40 schools nationally. The trial aims to gather insights into how teachers use the tool, whether their beliefs and awareness of cultural responsiveness changes, whether they change practices in and outside of the classroom, and whether there were barriers to implementation that can be addressed with further updates to the tool or with additional resources. AITSL intends to share these research findings and discoveries with everyone involved in the field of education.

**306****Trauma-Aware restorative practices****Mr Joe Brummer<sup>1</sup>, Ms Margaret Thorsborne<sup>2</sup>***<sup>1</sup>Joe Brummer Consulting, <sup>2</sup>Margaret Thorsborne and Associates*

Join Joe and Marg for an exploration of a three-path journey towards becoming a trauma-informed restorative educator – one who challenges old beliefs and habits regarding how we connect with, teach, and support the lives and skills of our students. They will discuss how this transformation requires educators to examine their own lives and skills and the impact that this approach can have on what they do in the classroom and their relationships with others. Marg and Joe suggest that this is needed as we tackle the breadth of social justice issues across the wider school community and beyond.

**307****The contagious nature of trauma: The why and how trauma-related stress impacts you, your colleagues and your organisation as a whole****Ms Sarah Ralston***Reboot*

Trauma is contagious and unless this contagion is effectively addressed, we witness the inevitable decline of staff wellbeing, performance and morale. It is becoming increasingly clear that trauma aware practices in the classroom can only flourish when staff are happy and healthy. Common patterns of perception and behaviour emerge that undermine any attempt at new practice. In this practical session we will explore both why and how trauma-related behaviours and disclosures impact on individuals, our collegial relationships and organisational operations. Discover the common symptoms and behaviours of those effected by traumatic stress. We will explore regulatory drift; the "Window of Tolerance" in staff (signs that staff are impacted by emotional burnout, compassion fatigue and/or vicarious trauma) and how trauma-based dynamics and operations sabotage best intended plans. Join us to discover why new practices aren't sticking and how to ensure a whole-school trauma aware approach includes the staff community and daily operations.

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## Ready or Not? Embedding a Trauma-Aware Unit in a Masters of Secondary Teaching Course

**Assoc Prof Marcelle Cacciattolo<sup>1</sup>, Assoc Prof Mark Vicars<sup>1</sup>, Dr Greg Aronson<sup>1</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>Victoria University, Melbourne, Australia

Preservice teachers (PSTs) involved in teaching in schools and early childhood centres/kindergarten have consistently reported the need for a training component that will prepare them to work with young people and children who have experienced and/or are experiencing trauma. In response to these calls for greater trauma awareness, academic staff at Victoria University who teach into the Masters of Secondary Teaching, created a specific unit, Professional Practice and Student Wellbeing. The unit addresses trauma informed teaching and learning approaches in secondary school settings.

The purpose of this research project was to evaluate the experiences of PSTs in this unit of study to better understand what skills and knowledge Masters of Secondary Teaching PSTs required to develop a trauma aware teaching and learning mindset. Using focus groups and semi-structured interviews two cohorts of Masters of Secondary Teaching PSTs were interviewed and were differentiated by those who have completed the unit, and those who had not.

Data from the interviews shows the benefits to PSTs of completing a unit of study specifically tailored to develop their awareness and understanding of trauma in educational settings. PSTs who had completed the unit expressed several benefits to their professional identity and skill set. Respondents particularly noted how learning from the unit assisted with trauma awareness and support during their placements. Conversely, those PSTs who completed the course prior to the introduction of the trauma informed praxis unit, reported low trauma awareness. They also expressed personal and professional concerns about working in trauma contexts without having received specific training in working with children and young people who have been impacted by trauma.

This research project is part of a larger scale research project that is investigating trauma education in initial teacher education programs and youth work programs at Victoria University. This project has been approved by the Chair of Ethics at Victoria University.

309

## Fostering Staff Well-being in a Healing-Oriented Program of Education (HOPE)

**Mr Cameron Rowe<sup>1</sup>, Amanda Amato<sup>1</sup>, Benji Gersh<sup>2</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>Hester Hornbrook Academy, <sup>2</sup>Greater Space

Hester Hornbrook Academy is school done differently for young Victorians disengaged from mainstream education. Our healing oriented learning programs enable every young person equal access to tailored quality education, supporting our students to reach their full potential

HOPE equips staff look to support young people with their healing and personal growth. Working with young people in our context can expose staff to vicarious trauma while engaging them in learning for wellbeing and wellbeing for learning.

Hester Hornbrook Academy has an extremely high staff retention rate and is viewed as an employer of choice and shortage of applications for advertised positions in the time of a School Staff Shortages. This session delves into practical strategies and initiatives aimed at fostering staff well-being within our HOPE.

310

## Becoming Trauma Responsive: Practical Tools for Implementation

Ms Fiona Waites<sup>1</sup>, **Mrs Lyn Harland**<sup>2</sup><sup>1</sup>TACT Training and Consulting, Brisbane, Australia, <sup>2</sup>Carinity Education, Rockhampton, Australia

Many phrases in relation to trauma are used, for example, 'Trauma-Informed'; 'Trauma-Aware'; 'Trauma-Sensitive'; 'Trauma-Responsive'. Yet, the question lingers: What does it look like, practically in a school environment?

Carinity Education have been working towards doing this in their school campuses. The key focus is transitioning from knowing about trauma to responding to the needs of those with trauma – both students and staff. Through the use of the Therapeutic Crisis Intervention System for Schools, a balance between being driven by theoretical concepts and practical application has been established. This is found through not only how adults respond in the moment, yet the structures, support and accountability set within the school community day-to-day. By considering a systematic approach to behaviour support, which incorporates prevention, de-escalation and opportunities to grow for students and staff alike, Carinity Education have been able to experience outcomes for students that include academic achievement, development of social & emotional skills, with students experiencing a learning environment that accepts them unconditionally, using all behaviours as a learning and growth opportunity within the school community.

This presentation is an opportunity to reflect on the concepts that underpin a school engaging from a trauma aware perspective, particularly in creating a systematic approach to not only support students and staff, yet gain higher levels of outcomes as well. Practical examples of how Carinity Education has engaged students to experience these outcomes, and the concepts they are grounded in will be shared. A tool to assist School communities to identify areas of improvement in crisis prevention and intervention will be provided.

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## Reimagining classroom design to foster connection, belonging and a deep sense of safety

**Ms Stephanie Blunt**<sup>1</sup><sup>1</sup>The Y Schools Queensland, Australia

What comes to mind when you think of a classroom? Most people would say desks and chairs, whiteboards and screens, teachers and teacher-aides. When we think of the modern day classroom, we know how they look, how they feel and even how they smell. But what if we were to reimagine what a classroom can be; that it can look and feel completely different, offering a new and fresh experience of education and learning? Imagine if classrooms became a central point of connection and belonging, where sense of safety is prioritised over traditions we take for granted. All schools have the power to create a trauma-aware environment, where real learning can occur. One that meets the needs of all of students, including those with heightened or different sensory experiences.

This includes many young people who have experienced childhood trauma. This can lead them to feeling unsafe, getting into survival mode and ultimately unable to cognitively engage with learning. The Y Schools Queensland have challenged traditional ideas of what a classroom should be, by developing a range of innovative learning spaces, where a new sensory experience is created and students' sense of safety is paramount.

The Y Schools have challenged two main assumptions about traditional classrooms: How they should look and feel, and who should be leading them. For young people who have disconnected from mainstream school, or become disenfranchised from the education system, previous negative experiences at school can be one of the biggest barriers to re-engaging. The sensory memories of traditional classrooms mean that they face significant barriers to engagement even before they step into the room.

Classrooms are a focal point of healthy connections and adult-student relationships. Youth Workers in classrooms is an intentional practice in many alternate education settings, where social emotional support is an essential element of classroom engagement. The Y Schools classrooms are led by a teacher – youth worker team, who work together to ensure students have the best chance at learning by creating classrooms that prioritise connection, belonging and sense of safety. Together they co-create classrooms that are safe to try new things, safe to be vulnerable and safe to build a new idea of school. This workshop will explore what sensory focused classrooms can achieve when coupled with relational practice that builds connection, belonging and safety.

**312****Hope Hybrid: Reflections on a new innovation for Hester Hornbrook Academy****Ms Alyssa McNeilly<sup>1</sup>, Mr Milton Henriquez<sup>1</sup>, Mrs Jane Norton<sup>1</sup>, Mrs Yvette Oswald<sup>1</sup>, Ms Marise DSouza<sup>1</sup>**<sup>1</sup>*Hester Hornbrook Academy, Melbourne, Australia*

The HOPE Hybrid class is an innovation for the Hester Hornbrook Academy, based in Melbourne, Victoria. Hester Hornbrook is a registered Special Assistance School, that is committed to providing flexible learning opportunities for young people. This commitment extends to the establishment of a Hybrid classroom. This involves our young people learning online two days per week, and attendance at class (in-person) for three. This class also involves the ability to offer extensive support for young people, which includes the ability to offer assertive outreach and opportunity to deliver learning interventions in the home.

This class has been designed with careful consideration for supporting the wellbeing of young people who would benefit from having a balance of on-line and in-person learning opportunities, through enriching differentiated curriculum options (specifically the Victorian Pathways Certificate) and engagement activities, encompassing all the elements of our Healing Oriented Program of Education.

This presentation will share learnings of this team, including details about the design, student profile, development, and execution of this class. Whilst still in the introduction phase for this class, the early data relating to attendance and engagement has been something to celebrate. Feedback gained from families will also be shared.

The team will unpack their reflections on how aspects of the HOPE model of Education have been enhanced to deliver supports that seek to address the barriers that may have been identified as contributing to a young person previously not attending school. Reflections on how the design of this class can ensure that the 4 pillars of HOPE, student agency, engagement and enjoyment, safe environment and positive relationships will be explained. And finally, tips for anyone wanting to build their own form of 'hybrid learning' will be shared.

**313****Early Education through a Trauma Lens****Ms Mel James<sup>1</sup>**<sup>1</sup>*Social Care Solutions, Brisbane, Australia*

The landscape of early childhood education itself has changed significantly over the past few decades, with the majority of parents returning to work after having children, in part due to cost-of-living pressures. This has directly increased the need to enrol children into early education services at much younger ages, for more days, for longer hours, than we have ever seen or experienced before. Educators in child care centres, day cares and kindergartens are spending more time with children than the children's own parents in some cases. Yet, this incredible responsibility – being an essential partner with parents in the role of caring for the next generation – is left in the hands of often under-trained, under-resourced and over-stretched service providers. These critical attachment figures are doing significantly more than 'just babysitting' children. They are tasked with the enormous role of providing education and promoting a love of learning through play; as well as building, maintaining and deepening the safe, secure attachment schemas children need, and in the past gained only from their primary attachment figures, in order to develop into healthy, adaptive, resilient adults.

As a community, we need to invest in the next generation. The Australian Child Maltreatment Study (ACMS), released in 2023, starkly reminded us of the widespread, long-term, negative effects of such trauma on children. This research was clear; we need to invest in the wellbeing of children in order to reduce poor mental health, poor physical health and poor social outcomes for young people and adults later in life. Educators are sharing the responsibility of supporting the emotional, physical and academic growth of children in partnership with parents and carers. Early childhood professionals need to excel in how best to care for children, holistically. Early childhood professionals need to be highly skilled and trained in understanding trauma and its effects on developing brains. Early childhood educators need to be respected, because of their training, so as to provide expert care, advice and support for children going through trauma, children who are neuro-diverse and children who are experiencing behavioural difficulties, whatever the reason.

Early childhood educators need to be invested in; because to do so, means we are investing in the future of the country.



**314****Practical approaches to creating trauma aware environments in early childhood: A model to share****Mrs Amandah Taylor**<sup>1</sup><sup>1</sup>*Victoria University, Melbourne, Australia, <sup>2</sup>Yuille Park Children's Centre, Ballarat, Australia*

This presentation offers practical activities and strategies that can be used in Early Learning contexts to support children who have experienced trauma, to engage in learning and social environments. It has been developed from many years working with children at Yuille Park Community College which is situated in a highly vulnerable area of Ballarat, Victoria. This school caters for a majority of children and families from trauma backgrounds, as does the kindergarten (3-4 years old pre-school) which is located on campus with the primary school. The kindergarten has a National Quality Standard Excellent rating.

Participants will gain an insight into behaviours that indicate trauma in young children, and will be encouraged to think about their actions and interactions with young children who have experienced trauma. The aim is to introduce practical ways to support inclusion and belonging that can counter the negative effects of trauma.

**315****Nurturing Resilience: Integrating Play Therapy Strategies in Early Childhood Settings to Support Children with Trauma****Mrs Sarah Harwood**<sup>1</sup><sup>1</sup>*Queensland Institute Of Play Therapy, Brisbane, Australia*

This presentation demonstrates the profound impact of play therapy strategies on children navigating trauma. Recognizing the sensitive and formative nature of early years, the session underscores the significance of creating a safe and nurturing environment where children can heal, thrive, and develop resilience in the face of adversity.

Beginning with an exploration of the complex dynamics of childhood trauma, participants will gain insights into the profound effects trauma can have on young minds and bodies. Through a trauma-informed lens, the presentation elucidates the importance of fostering environments that prioritize safety, predictability, and connection, essential for mitigating the lasting effects of trauma.

Moreover, the presentation emphasizes the role of the educator as a secure base and supportive ally in the child's journey. Participants will explore strategies for building trusting relationships, providing consistent emotional support, and validating children's experiences in a compassionate and empathetic manner. By fostering a secure attachment and responsive caregiving, educators can empower children to develop a sense of safety, agency, and self-worth essential for resilience.

The session also addresses the importance of collaboration and partnership between educators, families, and mental health professionals in supporting children with trauma. Through effective communication, shared understanding, and coordinated intervention strategies, participants will learn how to create a holistic support network that addresses the multifaceted needs of traumatized children within the early childhood setting.

In conclusion, this presentation advocates for the integration of play therapy strategies as a transformative approach to supporting children with trauma. By harnessing the power of play and nurturing relationships, educators can create environments that promote healing, resilience, and hope, laying the foundation for a brighter and more promising future for young children affected by trauma.

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## Trauma-Aware best practice in early childhood education and care: Enhancing learning outcomes for traumatised children

**Ms Alma-Jane O'Donnell<sup>1</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>Goodstart Early Learning, South Australia, Australia

Goodstart Early Learning's vision is for all Australian children to have the best possible start to achieve the learning, development, and wellbeing outcomes they need for school and life. Our inclusion goal is to ensure that those children at greater risk of falling behind, such as children that have experienced trauma have an opportunity to learn and grow through early learning.

High quality early learning settings can offer an opportunity to create a safe place for a traumatised child's development to progress. To meet the needs of their most vulnerable children and improve early learning outcomes, Goodstart developed trauma informed policies, procedures, and practices to be implemented nationally. A 12-week Intensive Individual Support Plan is now offered to children at risk of exclusion due to presenting with extreme volatile behaviours or withdrawal behaviours. The Intensive Plan provides trauma informed training to implement educational practices and intensive weekly support for the centre team and child. An out-of-ratio educator supports specific objectives with the child, to help make sense of their world and others when in a heightened and/or aroused state and learn self-regulating strategies. The trauma informed practices are shared with the whole team. Since 2015 Intensive Individual Support Plans, have successfully supported over 450 children nationally. Recently, we have been able to transfer the model, to be delivered in a private sector Early Learning Service, showing that this approach can be successful in other ECEC services.

Goodstart engaged The University of Adelaide to conduct an evaluation of the approach which found the approach to be a very robust, effective, evidenced-based intervention for reducing aggressive and withdrawal trauma behavior's in children attending ECEC. The children also respond positively to the intervention by being more capable of playing with peers. The evaluators also observed that children, increased their ability to name their emotions, improved their language skills, had increased capacity to participate in learning experiences and demonstrated more empathy towards peers. The study also found that over the course of the intensive, educators developed their emotional understanding of the child, were protective and caring towards the child, collaborated with the child's family, and grew in confidence in their practice.

This workshop will use a case study to step participants through the process of the implementation of an Intensive Individual Support Plan and share everyday trauma informed ECEC practices.

**317****Harmony in understanding: Forging strong partnerships between schools and communities for Trauma Aware support****Mr Mathew Portell<sup>1,2</sup>***<sup>1</sup>PACES Connection, United States, <sup>2</sup>Trauma Informed Educators Network, United States*

Join Mathew to explore the dynamic interplay between schools and communities in fostering trauma-informed support systems. He will discuss the pivotal role of collaboration in creating a supportive environment for individuals affected by trauma and will delve into the essential elements that pave the way for effective partnerships, emphasizing the need for schools and communities to harmonize their efforts. This discussion will highlight the mutual benefits that arise when schools and local communities come together to create a unified, trauma-aware support network. Drawing from real-world examples and successful case studies, Mathew will showcase the transformative impact of cohesive partnerships. From shared resources and knowledge to the development of joint strategies, he will explore how these collaborations can create a nurturing environment that supports individuals dealing with trauma.

**318****Students speak: A co generational model for empowering youth voice in educational decision making****Prof Michael Gregory***Harvard Law School, USA*

Students are in the best position to understand what they need. Yet decisions about schooling are often made without listening deeply to students. This disconnect can amplify the feeling of powerlessness many students feel and even exacerbate traumatic symptoms. Conversely, increasing opportunities for student voice and agency in decision making processes can enhance students' feeling of belonging and improve their academic achievement.

This Master Class will introduce Students Speak, an initiative of the Trauma and Learning Policy Initiative (TLPI) that supports students from historically marginalized groups in the U.S., including many who have endured traumatic experiences, to raise their voices about what they need in order to do well in school while strengthening their advocacy skills. The session will share the details of an innovative mentoring process that supports students of all backgrounds and abilities to prepare and deliver testimonial statements about their school experiences to lawmakers.

Participants will learn Students Speak's protocol for supporting students to

- 1) create and share stories about their school experiences;
- 2) develop self-knowledge from these stories about what they need in order to do well in school;
- 3) prepare and deliver written testimonial statements to lawmakers; and
- 4) identify key themes in their statements that resonate with common themes articulated by other students.

Participants will also understand key priorities that secondary school students in the Boston, Massachusetts area have identified as important for them to do well in school. Finally, participants will become familiar with and practice applying Hart's Ladder of Participation, a framework for understanding and creating ethical and empowering youth-adult collaborations.

Group conversation in the session will focus on

- 1) surfacing participants' expertise and experiences with centering the voices of young people in their own work and
- 2) discussing the implications of these efforts for trauma-sensitive practice.

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## Safeguarding our schools: Addressing and preventing harmful sexual behaviours

**Kelly Humphries<sup>1</sup>, Melinda Tankard Reist<sup>2</sup>, Maha Melhem<sup>3</sup>,**

*<sup>1</sup>Survivor, Author, Advocate, Former School Based Police Officer, <sup>2</sup>Writer, Speaker, Advocate, <sup>3</sup>Melhem Legal & Consulting*

All children have the right to be safe at school. However, an increasing number of students, primarily girls, are reporting routine sexual harassment and abuse by male peers. Schools have become frontlines for Harmful Sexual Behaviours (HSB) with increasing rates of peer-on-peer offending.

Girls report being subjected to touching, sexist taunts, body shaming, sexual moaning, gestures and intimidation, rape threats and image-based abuse. Recent research identifies child sexual abuse by known adolescents as the most common form of sexual offending against children, with adolescent males offending at the highest rates.

Early pornography exposure has been identified as a significant factor driving attitudes that fuel this abuse. AI weaponization, nudifying/undressing apps, deep-fake nudes and sextortion have introduced new forms of abuse and sexual intimidation.

Adding to these challenges, the dynamics of complex familial abuse may be played out at schools with younger girls at risk of being groomed by older male peers. This can also result in trafficking into criminal sex trade activities, including through technology-facilitated exploitation and abuse.

Schools have a duty of care to protect students and must adhere to legal and moral obligations to ensure an educational environment free from sexual harassment and abuse. Meeting these obligations presents significant challenges, and schools may face legal liability when harm occurs in their settings.

### Masterclass Overview:

This session aims to promote the capacity of educators, policymakers, and safeguarding professionals to address HSB and create safer school environments. This unique 2-hour masterclass will provide you with knowledge and tools to better:

- Understand:
  - The nature, severity and prevalence of HSB in schools, drawing from first-person accounts of young people, lived experience and global research.
  - The coercive underpinnings which pervade HSB in the form of grooming, gaslighting and emotional abuse.
  - Vulnerability and re-traumatisation.
- Engage:
  - With children who are subjected to HSB and their families
  - With children who engage in HSB towards others, and their families
  - Through understanding the coercive nature of HSB/Sextortion/Trafficking – you will be able to engage more powerfully and identify the ‘hook,’ and then adequately respond
- Respond:
  - The legal obligations of schools and other institutions, and the challenges in addressing risks and incidents of HSB
  - Safety Planning
- Prevent/Protect
  - Practical strategies and policy recommendations to protect students from HSB
  - Risk management and critical incident response
  - Accountability
  - Confidentiality
  - Media Management

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## Facilitating collaborative relationships with parents and carers of students experiencing “school can’t” (school attendance difficulties)

**Ms Tiffany Westphal<sup>1</sup>, Louise Rogers<sup>1</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>*School Can't Australia*

School Can't Australia (SCA) is a charity that runs a national support group for parents and carers supporting children and young people who are experiencing school can't (school attendance difficulties). SCA's December 2022 research showed that parents and carers in the group experience significant stress while supporting their children and young people. Rogers and Westphal will discuss the parent carer experience and how schools can support families and facilitate collaborative relationships.

They will discuss proactive strategies to support collaboration between home and school, including:

- Creating shared understandings about the nature and experience of school can't,
- Recognising the knowledge that parents have about their child and their child's story,
- Acknowledging and responding with compassion to the lived experience story of the student and their family, and
- Facilitating and establishing communication channels that are accessible and responsive to student and family needs.

They will challenge you to consider:

- The nature of the caring role of those supporting a child/ young person experiencing school can't,
- The parent experience of navigating service and supports,
- The impact of power differentials on parents and carers,
- The language used to talk and write about attendance difficulties, mental health and disability and the impact this has on the way we understand and try to solve problems,
- Ways to support 'felt safety' in meetings with parents and students,
- How we respond to children and young people in distress, and
- How we respond to parental concerns.

More information about School Can't Australia: [www.schoolcantaustralia.com.au](http://www.schoolcantaustralia.com.au)

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## Cultivating change: Elements for embedding trauma-informed practices in South Australian education systems

**Ms Leanne Cornell-March, Ms Jane Harrison, Ms Karina-Michelle Yeend**

<sup>1</sup>*Dept For Education South Australia, Adelaide, Australia*

In 2018 the South Australian Department for Education developed a systems approach to trauma-informed practice in education (TIPiE). Since then, the department has trained thousands of educators and support staff and supported over 250 schools and preschools to implement whole school trauma-informed approaches.

This presentation offers an overview of the Department's journey towards implementing a system-wide approach to trauma-informed practice in South Australian education, building upon the progress made since our last update at the 2022 conference. We will highlight our approach to sustainable change and the importance of building knowledge of trauma-informed approaches, supporting educator practice change and explicit implementation strategies to embed trauma-informed principles into schools and the broader education system.

We will reflect on the work of our schools on successful implementation of these three elements (knowledge, practice and systems) including the role of school implementation teams, site-based contextualization, explicit teaching practices and trauma-informed site documentation. Additionally, we address challenges encountered in leveraging data-based evidence to support these efforts. Drawing upon these lessons learned from schools and preschools over a six-year period, we outline plans for the continued evolution of our approach.

Leanne and Jane lead the department's statewide support to schools and pre-schools through the Trauma-Aware Schools Initiative; developing packages of training and support with our panel of providers and then supporting schools through whole site implementation. You can also hear from South Australian schools at the conference.

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## Students speak: A co generational model for empowering youth voice in educational decision making

**Prof Michael Gregory**

*Harvard Law School, USA*

Students are in the best position to understand what they need. Yet decisions about schooling are often made without listening deeply to students. This disconnect can amplify the feeling of powerlessness many students feel and even exacerbate traumatic symptoms. Conversely, increasing opportunities for student voice and agency in decision making processes can enhance students' feeling of belonging and improve their academic achievement.

This Master Class will introduce Students Speak, an initiative of the Trauma and Learning Policy Initiative (TLPI) that supports students from historically marginalized groups in the U.S., including many who have endured traumatic experiences, to raise their voices about what they need in order to do well in school while strengthening their advocacy skills. The session will share the details of an innovative mentoring process that supports students of all backgrounds and abilities to prepare and deliver testimonial statements about their school experiences to lawmakers.

Participants will learn Students Speak's protocol for supporting students to

- 1) create and share stories about their school experiences;
- 2) develop self-knowledge from these stories about what they need in order to do well in school;
- 3) prepare and deliver written testimonial statements to lawmakers; and
- 4) identify key themes in their statements that resonate with common themes articulated by other students.

Participants will also understand key priorities that secondary school students in the Boston, Massachusetts area have identified as important for them to do well in school. Finally, participants will become familiar with and practice applying Hart's Ladder of Participation, a framework for understanding and creating ethical and empowering youth-adult collaborations.

Group conversation in the session will focus on

- 1) surfacing participants' expertise and experiences with centering the voices of young people in their own work and
- 2) discussing the implications of these efforts for trauma-sensitive practice.

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## Reframing behaviour through the lens of Neuroscience

**Ms Susan Driscoll**, Crisis Prevention Institute, USA

In this session Susan Driscoll will present neuroscience principles that are essential for a trauma-aware approach: neuroception (and fight, flight, freeze); brain development; interoception and self-regulation; co-regulation; and intentional practices for building relationships.. The presentation will also highlight neuroplasticity – what happens to us when we are exposed to prolonged trauma, but also what is possible with the implementation of trauma aware practices. The presentation will also highlight the specific perspective of neurodiverse individuals who, merely by living in a neurotypical world, are more likely to experience a lack of felt safety and the unintentional stress responses that result.

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## A Whole of University Approach to Trauma Informed Pedagogy in Higher Education

**Dr India Bryce**<sup>1</sup>, Professor Jessica Gildersleeve<sup>1</sup>, Dr Kate Cantrell<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>University Of Southern Queensland, Toowoomba, Australia

University educators have an ethical responsibility to address and pre-empt re/traumatisation in the classroom. In a national survey of 6,500 Australian university students, Stallman (2010) found that 84% reported elevated levels of general distress, which is significantly higher than the general population (29%), concluding that “targeted interventions are needed to enable students to reach their academic potential and career aspirations”. The COVID-19 pandemic further compounded the complexity of the student experience and exposed the need for universities to develop trauma-informed approaches to teaching that support students’ emotional, social, and physical wellbeing during times of crisis and stress. As academics in a regional area with rural and remote students, our research team are acutely aware that regional universities specifically are uniquely impacted by traumatic stressors and risk factors for trauma, such as floods, drought, poverty, geographical isolation, and our students are often located in underserved communities with regard to critical mental health support and social services.

Our a cross-disciplinary team working at the intersection of the helping professions, the humanities, and the creative arts, our students’ disciplines are as disparate as education, psychology, criminology, counselling, English literature, and creative writing. Despite our dynamic and diverse student body, which includes both school leavers and mature-age learners, there is one commonality that cuts across our praxis: our students self-report ongoing difficulties in their engagement with traumatic content, and these difficulties manifest as disengagement and distress culminating in early withdrawal, high attrition, and academic failure. We set out to collaborate to develop a whole of university approach to address this pervasive issue in 4 targeted areas across our institution, first-year students, students studying ‘sensitive topics’, students identified as ‘at risk’ of exclusion or suspension from their programs, and HDR cohorts.

Drawing on the theme of Trauma-Aware higher education, this workshop seeks to share insights and interventions from our research stemming from the voices of students, academics and professional staff at our institution, and to facilitate robust discussion regarding trauma-informed approaches that increase access to higher education for students who have experienced trauma. This workshop will provide tertiary educators with a space to examine this important challenge for higher education and to discuss targeted approaches to trauma-informed learning that promote student safety, resilience, and success. This workshop is suitable for all tertiary educators, particularly those delivering sensitive, traumatic, or ‘triggering’ material (ie social work, counselling, human services, psychology, criminology, history, and literature).

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## Critical reflection complexity: Identifying and deepening trauma-aware approaches in higher education

**Dr Amy Cloughton<sup>1</sup>, Dr Amy Walker<sup>2</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>Federation University Australia, Ballarat, Australia, <sup>2</sup>Federation University Australia, Ballarat, Australia

Despite the recognised importance of adopting a trauma-informed lens for educators in early childhood, primary and secondary school settings, the responsibility of tertiary educators to build this framing into their teaching practices is still in its infancy stage. The overall image that emerges from the literature is that these practices are important, particularly as educators within universities have changed due to the global pandemic.

Yet, instilling a trauma-informed lens within the context of already full Initial Teacher Education (ITE) programs is challenging when there is little time (or money) for regional tertiary educators to attend professional development in this area. Further complicating this matter, they must specifically address areas curriculum from mandated accreditation requirements and teaching standards. There is a dual challenge of informing Higher Education teachers on trauma-informed pedagogies to infuse their practices, while also educating pre-service teachers on these same pedagogical approaches.

This research focuses on two Early Career Researchers (ECRs) seeking to examine our current understandings of praxis through a trauma-informed lens. Evidence was collected through collaborative narrative inquiry and ongoing conversations and journal entries during the past three years, where we reflected upon our experiences as we both taught in and managed ITE undergraduate and post-graduate programs.

The analysis of our collected data yields information that both complement and complicate how we recognise and employ trauma-informed practices, one of us having notably more experience in this area. Significant themes that emerge are 1) acknowledging the structural constraints within the university when ECRs attempt to employ trauma-informed practices, 2) identifying (personal) teaching habits as barriers to trauma-informed responses and 3) recognising imposter syndrome as a barrier for the self-care of ECRs. Through our analysis, we discover how critical it is for ITE ECR educators to examine practice in this way. Through our discourse, we challenge habitual teaching practices within universities to contribute to a larger social justice imperative. This study forms part of a growing acknowledgement in education research around the need for research areas of praxis and critical reflection to contribute and inspire the need for trauma-informed practices within tertiary settings.



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**Bridging the trauma theory to practice gap for pre-service teachers through applied theatre: A co-learning event.****Dr Anne Southall<sup>1</sup>**<sup>1</sup>*La Trobe University, Melbourne, Australia*

There is a disconnection between the trauma informed education preservice teachers (PST) receive at university and what they are able to apply in practice during their placement experience in schools. Traditional approaches emphasising PST's imitation of mentor teacher practices and the separation of content knowledge offered by universities perpetuate this gap. The creation of co-learning spaces bringing together mentor teachers, pre-service teachers and academics for more effective change in practice is gathering (Templeton et al., 2023). Educative mentoring supports mentor teachers and PSTs to make connections through reflecting together on new insights from theory and integrating them with the realities in the field. This expanded learning offers mentors and PSTs the opportunity to co-create new practice together for future longer term change. This presentation reports on the findings of a full day co-learning event in trauma-informed education staged for 50 mentor teachers and their preservice teacher mentees by La Trobe University. The professional development experience included a live theatre performance about a 14-year-old boy in out of home care and his experience of school. The neuroscientific understandings delivered prior to the performance and the facilitated critical reflection after it, provided the opportunity for participants to co-create the complex interpersonal changes needed to support the teacher-student relationship and develop classroom climates that fostered safety, empathy and empowerment.

The presentation explores the value of student voice in trauma-aware education, applied theatre as a professional learning tool and educative mentoring processes in trauma-aware higher education.

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## **Introducing the Trauma-Informed Practice Lab at the University of Tasmania**

**Dr Carmel Hobbs**

*University of Tasmania*

The Trauma-Informed Practice Lab, situated within the School of Education at the University of Tasmania (UTAS), is dedicated to advancing research, education, and practice in the field of trauma-informed practice. The lab addresses the profound impact of trauma and excessive stress on learning, emotions, behaviour, and overall wellbeing, particularly among children and young people. By fostering a compassionate and informed approach, the lab aims to transform the futures of those affected by adversity and trauma.

Communities in Tasmania have faced significant adversity and trauma, affecting the lifelong health and wellbeing of many individuals. The Trauma-Informed Practice Lab was established to respond to these challenges by integrating trauma-informed practices into educational settings and beyond. The lab collaborates with educators, researchers, and community partners to develop and disseminate knowledge that can improve outcomes for those impacted by trauma.

The primary objectives of the Trauma-Informed Practice Lab are to:

1. Conduct cutting-edge research on trauma and its effects on individuals and communities.
2. Develop and evaluate trauma-informed educational programs and interventions.
3. Provide professional development and training for educators, school leaders, and other professionals.
4. Advocate for policies and practices that support trauma-informed approaches in various sectors.

The Trauma-Informed Practice Lab at UTAS is at the forefront of efforts to understand and mitigate the effects of trauma. Through research, education, and advocacy, the lab is making a meaningful difference in the lives of individuals and communities, paving the way for a more compassionate and informed approach to trauma care. In addition to research and evaluation activities, the lab is embedding trauma-informed pedagogy within initial teacher education at UTAS. By educating future teachers about the effects of trauma and effective response strategies, the lab ensures that new educators are prepared to create supportive and inclusive learning environments. Future directions include expanding research collaborations, developing new interventions, and continuing to advocate for trauma-informed policies at local, national, and international levels.

In this presentation, Carmel will share the context that led to the establishment of the lab, an overview of the structure and purpose, and the challenges faced along the way. Insights into the research activities of the lab, the role of a Community of Practice, and details of an innovative, hands-on program for final year Initial Teacher Education students will round out the presentation.

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## **Berengarra School – Developing a trauma informed education model in a specialist school setting.**

**Ms Mitzi Sneesby**<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>*Berengarra School, Box Hill North, Australia*

Berengarra School is a small independent specialist educational setting located in Melbourne. It is coeducational and consists of two campuses catering for up to 83 students in Years 7-12. All students enrolled present with social and emotional disabilities and have experienced barriers to education. Students present with co-morbidities of Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Pathological Demand Avoidance (PDA), Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD), Oppositional Defiance Disorder (ODD), depression, anxiety and trauma. The Box Hill campus caters for students in Years 7-10 with a curriculum drawn from the Victorian Curriculum (2017) offering skills-based, outcome-based units. Year 10-12 students at the senior Chadstone campus are catered for by the Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE) Vocational Major (VM) and Vocational Pathways Course (VPC). Over the last five years, we have investigated and adopted a trauma informed approach to policy, process, wellbeing, and teaching and learning. This has been combined with a Restorative Practice focus. This presentation will introduce you to our school community and discuss some of the challenges and benefits of delivering a trauma-informed approach in a specialist education setting.

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## Co-designing Trauma-Informed Organisations (TIOs): Promoting a thriving workforce in early childhood education

**Mr Mitchell Bowden**<sup>1</sup>, Melissa Martin<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Health and Social Care Unit School of Public Health and Preventive Medicine, <sup>2</sup>Trauma Consultancy Service / Alannah & Madeline Foundation

Experiencing trauma in early childhood can have serious and long lasting negative effects on children across their life span. It can also directly impact the personal and professional wellbeing of adults educating and caring for them. Trauma-informed programs in Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) are increasing, with promising effects on children's social-emotional competence, behaviour; and teachers' knowledge, attitudes, self-efficacy and practice (Sun et al., 2023). However, these interventions predominantly focus on training educators, with few pursuing organisational change (Sun et al., 2023). Without simultaneous system-level action, individuals face barriers adopting and sustaining new practices such as trauma-informed strategies (Douglass, 2016). Recognising this, our TIO intervention has sought to build organisational capacity and capability to promote experiences of safe and consistent support for everyone across ECEC services. This presentation will describe our intervention, its iterative and participatory development journey, and evaluation insights.

The guiding methodology for the development, implementation, and evaluation of our TIO is Intervention Mapping (IM) - a 6-step systematic and practical framework (Eldredge et al., 2016). For the ECEC sector where implicit knowledges are often privileged, IM provides an opportunity to engage key stakeholders (e.g., educators, parents, leaders) in participatory design processes, while systematically integrating theory and evidence to support decision-making throughout program development (O'Connor et al., 2018).

The intervention components include a comprehensive Organisational Guide offering practical guidance and self-audit tool to embed trauma-informed practice within and across ECEC organisations, and Community of Practice (CoP), both delivered virtually. Components were customised using theory, evidence and practice wisdom to address ECEC organisations' bespoke needs. To our knowledge, this is the first trauma-informed intervention focused specifically on organisational change in ECEC, contributing meaningful knowledge to an understudied area. The participatory approaches used also built cross-sector empathy and promoted shared understandings, practice reflections and common goals for trauma informed practice.

Working with children impacted by trauma in ECEC can be stressful, overwhelming, and negatively impact staff wellbeing (Alisic, 2012). Under the current global early childhood workforce crisis where shortage and high turnover is concerning, the need for trauma-informed ECEC organisations to better support educators is evident. Through a Community of Practice, ECEC leaders and managers are supported to translate this intervention's organisational guide and apply a transformational trauma-informed lens.

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## **Nurturing hearts and minds: A journey towards trauma-awareness and cultural inclusivity in early years kindergarten - a model from South Australia.**

**Mrs Timsy Jyoti<sup>1</sup>**, Ms Karina-Michelle Yeend<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Modbury North Kindy, <sup>2</sup>Trauma-informed practice and child safety team, Dept for Education

This presentation encapsulates Modbury North Kindergarten's remarkable journey towards becoming culturally inclusive and trauma-aware. Their proactive response to the profound impact of trauma on children's lives and its transformative journey with the Department for Education's Trauma-Aware Schools Initiative in South Australia. A transformative process guided by dedication, collaboration, and an unwavering commitment to the holistic well-being of their students.

Understanding the profound impact of cultural diversity and trauma on early childhood development, Modbury North Kindergarten embarked on a purposeful quest to create an environment that fosters inclusivity and supports children who have experienced adversity. This journey was not merely about implementing policies; it was about cultivating a culture of empathy, respect, and understanding. At the heart of their journey lies a collaborative approach involving educators, families, and the broader community. Recognising that cultural competence is a continuous learning process, the kindergarten staff were committed to ongoing learning to equip them with the knowledge and skills necessary to create culturally responsive learning environments.

Central to the commitment to trauma-informed practice/awareness was its decision to participate in the Department for Education's Trauma-Aware Schools Initiative. This initiative provided foundational training and implementation support (Life Buoyancy Institute) a structured framework and comprehensive resources to support educators to foster intentional practices that are trauma-sensitive promoting growth/resilience among children who have experienced adversity.

Modbury North Kindergarten embraced trauma-informed practices, prioritising safety, trust, and emotional regulation. Through LBI's training educators gained insights into the nuanced needs of children who have experienced trauma, allowing them to develop individualised growth action plans and provide support tailored to each child's unique experiences. We will share the incredible progress and benefits from enriched learning experiences tailored to their individual needs enabling children to thrive and flourish at kindergarten. With benefits extending to educators' reported increased confidence and efficacy in their practice, families felt valued and supported, with stronger connections forged between home and kindergarten.

Key to their success was the integration of culturally inclusive and trauma-informed practices into every aspect of their environment, curriculum, pedagogy and daily routines. Moreover, fostering strong partnerships with families, valuing their diverse perspectives and insights. By engaging families as active participants in their children's education, the kindergarten created a supportive network that reinforced cultural identity and growth.

The 55 placement 6 hour a day kindergarten's journey towards cultural inclusivity and trauma awareness stands as a testament to the transformative power of collaboration, empathy, and continuous learning.

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## **Reframing Behaviour through the Lens of Neuroscience**

**Ms Susan Driscoll**

*Crisis Prevention Institute, USA*

In this session Susan Driscoll will present neuroscience principles that are essential for a trauma-aware approach: neuroception (and fight, flight, freeze); brain development; interoception and self-regulation; co-regulation; and intentional practices for building relationships.. The presentation will also highlight neuroplasticity – what happens to us when we are exposed to prolonged trauma, but also what is possible with the implementation of trauma aware practices. The presentation will also highlight the specific perspective of neurodiverse individuals who, merely by living in a neurotypical world, are more likely to experience a lack of felt safety and the unintentional stress responses that result.

**332****Staying strong and calm: Practical and proven ways to build individual and collective resilience across your organisation****Ms Sarah Ralston***Reboot*

When working in highly demanding settings self-care alone isn't enough. This practical session draws from research and work with over 6000 educators to go beyond self-care with daily trauma aware strategies to boost both individual and collective resilience. Discover keyways that individuals can reduce the impact of trauma-related work and minimise levels of compassion fatigue, relationship breakdowns and factionalism at work, vicarious trauma and emotional burnout. We will focus on the whole-brain strategies to bring greater joy and productivity to trauma-aware work including somatosensory approaches, morning routines, self-regulation mini practices throughout the day, forms of compassion and practices to reduce accumulated stress loads. As collective resilience has been shown to have significant influence over individual wellbeing, we will also discuss the practical ways organisations can embed trauma-aware approaches to enhance whole staff wellbeing and collegiality. This Master Class will also address dealing with acute crisis events and supporting stressed staff.

**333****What's in a name? Redefining trauma survivor experiences: Focusing the clinical lens on survivors****Miss Jaycee Dugard & Dr Rebecca Bailey***Polyvagal Equine Institute*

In this illuminating masterclass, Jaycee Dugard and Dr. Rebecca Bailey collaborate to redefine trauma survivor experiences by refocusing the clinical lens. Through a blend of personal narratives and clinical insights, they navigate the complexities of trauma recovery, shedding light on the nuanced needs and experiences of survivors. Participants will explore innovative approaches to trauma therapy, delving into the significance of language, identity, and empowerment in the healing journey. With a keen focus on fostering resilience and reclaiming agency, Jaycee and Dr. Bailey offer practical strategies and profound perspectives to support mental health professionals in providing holistic and empowering care to survivors. Join us for an enlightening exploration that transcends traditional paradigms, empowering clinicians to honor the unique narratives and strengths of trauma survivors.

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## Teachers are agents for change in a traumatised child's life

**Mrs Beck Thompson**<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>*Teacher, Author, Lived Experience, Founder of the Trauma Informed Teachers Australia Facebook Group*

We cannot ask children to be something that they were never taught to be. We cannot ask children to feel safe when it's something they've not felt.

Traumatised children, with more experience in fear, insecurity, instability, isolation and abandonment feel abundantly limited in their ability to see the world, to explore the world with confidence and the safety to take risks that promote growth and resilience. That is because they do not have a foundation in safety.

Teachers who show up consistently with students over time, have the opportunity to create a sense of security in children, who would otherwise not have that exposure.

Neuroscientist say that the brain makes association early on in life as to who is safe, what does a safe relationship look and feel like. They say that this becomes the template for future relationships.

With teachers who are kind, caring, nurturing and supportive over time, they are creating safe relationships whilst dismantling unhealthy ones.

I am living proof of such relationships. As someone with lived experience childhood trauma at the hands of my primary caregivers and extended trusted family, teachers became the only model of what safe relationships were. In fact it was these key relationships that encouraged me to seek out similar relationships right throughout my schooling and beyond.

Teachers were the agent for changing my life. Their presence opened up my world of possibilities for my life, for my future.

Without consistent nurturing relationships we do not grow, we do not develop. Instead we live in fear, we live limited lives. Teachers are in a vital position to change and influence so many lives, like they did mine.

I want to share the details of my experience of what happens to a child and the absence of love and why a teacher's influence is so important.

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## Youth Voice, be the voice for others: Join members of a youth-led advocacy group fostering healing and growth for refugee and migrant young people.

**Miss Huda Akhlaki<sup>1</sup>, Miss Mahbooba Azizullah<sup>1</sup>, Mr Ahmed Yusufi<sup>1</sup>, Miss Mary Ball<sup>1</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>Youth Voice, Brisbane, Australia, <sup>2</sup>QPASTT, Brisbane, Australia

Youth Voice is a youth led advocacy group supported by Queensland Program of Assistance to Survivors of Torture and Trauma (QPASTT). Youth Voice members are young people aged 15–25 who are passionate about advocacy, change and growing through passion projects that foster community healing and change.

In this presentation, Youth Voice will amplify the narratives and lived experiences of young individuals throughout their educational journeys. These personal stories are vital components of the discourse surrounding trauma aware education, offering profound insights to educators of the challenges faced by young people from diverse backgrounds.

Our narratives encompass a spectrum of themes, ranging from encounters with racism, discrimination, and systemic inequities within the educational landscape to confronting issues of bullying. The presentation will underscore the imperative of dismantling existing harmful cycles pervasive across all facets of the education sector, including the critical areas of:

**Navigating Intersectional Trauma:** We will explore the intricate web of challenges confronting young people, particularly focusing on the experiences of newly arrived youth within the Australian education system. Additionally, we will highlight the diverse experiences of refugee and migrant student cohorts, underscoring the profound impact of socio-political and economic shifts on their educational trajectories. Central to our discussion is the imperative of amplifying student voices to foster understanding and support.

**Student Privacy and Institutional Barriers:** Within educational institutions, educators and mentors serve as crucial points of contact for many students. However, there exists a significant barrier to students' willingness to share their personal challenges. We will address the pervasive issues surrounding student privacy, emphasizing the need for a supportive environment where students feel empowered to voice their concerns. Furthermore, we will critique euro-centric perspectives that overlook cultural differences and fail to recognize the external responsibilities shouldered by students beyond their control.

This presentation aims to contribute to the dialogue at the conference, through advocating for a more inclusive, empathetic, and trauma-informed approach to education.

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## Self-regulation and learning: An exploration of trauma-informed practice in distance education

**Penny Evans<sup>1</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>Finigan School Of Distance Education, Crestwood, Australia

There is growing awareness that trauma-aware education aligns with best practice in meeting the learning and social-emotional needs of young people. With increasing rates of school refusal correlating with an increase in access requests to distance education, it is essential that educators are equipping young people with the skills needed to face the challenges life throws at them. Distance education poses significant challenges in building connections between students and school, especially when students come from a place of long-term disengagement with their schooling and at times school-associated trauma. This workshop will allow participants to explore the impact of trauma on the learning experience and identify practical strategies to support the development of student self-regulation to maximise learning outcomes. The positive impact of teacher and school-wide factors in mitigating the adverse effects of ACEs will also be discussed. The workshop will explore:

- Behaviour as a stress response
- The skillset for self-regulation
- A case study of trauma-informed positive education in the distance education setting
- Measuring impact (attendance and engagement)
- The mitigating effect of PCEs on ACEs

**337****Trauma-Aware restorative practices****Mr Joe (Samuel) Brummer<sup>1</sup>, Ms Margaret Thorsborne<sup>2</sup>***<sup>1</sup>Joe Brummer Consulting, <sup>2</sup>Margaret Thorsborne & Associates*

Join Joe and Marg for an exploration of a three-path journey towards becoming a trauma-informed restorative educator – one who challenges old beliefs and habits regarding how we connect with, teach, and support the lives and skills of our students. They will discuss how this transformation requires educators to examine their own lives and skills and the impact that this approach can have on what they do in the classroom and their relationships with others. Marg and Joe suggest that this is needed as we tackle the breadth of social justice issues across the wider school community and beyond.

**338****Harmony in understanding: Forging strong partnerships between schools and communities for Trauma-Aware support****Mr Mathew Portell**, PACES Connection Educators Network, USA

Join Mathew to explore the dynamic interplay between schools and communities in fostering trauma-informed support systems. He will discuss the pivotal role of collaboration in creating a supportive environment for individuals affected by trauma and will delve into the essential elements that pave the way for effective partnerships, emphasizing the need for schools and communities to harmonize their efforts. This discussion will highlight the mutual benefits that arise when schools and local communities come together to create a unified, trauma-aware support network. Drawing from real-world examples and successful case studies, Mathew will showcase the transformative impact of cohesive partnerships. From shared resources and knowledge to the development of joint strategies, he will explore how these collaborations can create a nurturing environment that supports individuals dealing with trauma.

**339****The Murri School Way – A culturally-safe, trauma-informed staff wellbeing model****Ms Tanya Saltner & Mr David Newman***Murri School*

Culturally appropriate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led strategies are critical to improving the educational outcomes of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students (Graham et al., 2022). Recognising the role trauma plays in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander lives and communities is essential for safe and respectful practice (Tujague & Ryan, 2021). Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture is a source of strength and resilience, integral to developing effective models for working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, staff, families, and communities (Tujague & Ryan, 2021). It is crucial that school staff are trauma-informed, as implementing culturally safe, trauma-informed practices creates a safe environment for everyone, fostering respectful, kind, and caring interactions. Additionally, acknowledging that staff have their own trauma histories that may influence their interactions is important.

At the Murri School, we recognise that to implement culturally safe trauma-informed practices across the school, we must prioritise the wellbeing of our staff. This presentation will share the journey of developing our culturally safe trauma-informed staff wellbeing model, which is an integral part of the Murri School Way. By focusing on staff wellbeing, we aim to create a supportive and resilient school community that can better serve our students and their families.



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## Time Trails Kowanyama: The production and performative evaluation of a film to support remote school educators

**Ms Helen Travers<sup>1</sup>, Ms Danielle Williams<sup>1</sup>, Dr Ernest Hunter<sup>1</sup>, Mr Alden Raymond<sup>2</sup>**

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This presentation features the production and evaluation of a film for educators: challenging the mainstream narrative and stimulating critical reflection to develop 'context-informed' teacher agency for those new to remote schools.

Time Trails: Kowanyama History & Families in Remote Far North Queensland

This resource aims to address some of the major challenges for teachers in remote schools – adapting to new cross-cultural postings, understanding the difficult behaviours they experience in the classroom, and developing authentic relationships with students and community members.

The film was created in Kowanyama in 2021. Framed by a socio-historical presentation by Dr Ernest Hunter, community members share stories from their lived experiences of events featured in the presentation.

In it, Dr Hunter responds to a common school and clinical presentation – a fourteen-year-old student from a home context of instability and disadvantage in crisis – expanding the scope of understanding to encompass three generations of dramatic social change, highlighting the far-reaching impacts of socio-historical factors on family life and child development. The story is framed within a history of the Queensland Government's management of Indigenous populations in Cape York and integrates 30 years of locally-specific mental health research findings.

TAKE TWO: Performative evaluation of Time Trails: Kowanyama

Nobody knows where the saying it takes a village to raise a child originated, other than from somewhere in Africa. But it applies to communities around the world and is perhaps most obvious where it is the ties of family and bonds of tradition, rather than the social accoutrements of privilege, that are foundational – such as remote Aboriginal communities like Kowanyama on the western coast of Cape York.

The institutions of the wider society that are tasked with supporting optimal child development can only effectively do so through relationships of trust that are built on respect and reflection. To support such relationships the SUN program has engaged teachers in workshops to clarify the intercultural historical contexts that inform the current circumstances – and challenges – confronting contemporary students and their families.

Time Trails is a digital record of that process in which the presentation is grounded through the voices of Kowanyama residents across three generations. The performative evaluation seeks to document that process and explore the challenges of integrating the historical record with lived experiences. It is as much – if not more – about the process that brought us together, as the digital product that resulted.

**341****Yaki wingku (Deep breath – Kurna lang): Trauma-aware practice in a culturally-sensitive, interdisciplinary early years setting****Ms Catherine Cavouras<sup>1</sup>**<sup>1</sup>South Australia Department for Education

Taikurrendi is a calm, kind and grounded place of learning. The name Taikurrendi was gifted to us by Elders before we were built, and comes from the Kurna language meaning, 'to be mixed together' which has provided the songline of, learning, culture and community mixed together.

We have developed over time a range of teaching and learning approaches which support inclusion and diversity, embedded with cultural responsiveness and humility. This is informed by our desire to delve deeper with our understanding about brain development, trauma informed practice, ethics and rights based education and educator responsiveness and reflection. We draw on the expertise within our team and across disciplines, always guided by the provocation of ensuring we bring to our context what our own First nation knowledge holders can inform. Our whole site approach to learning has been informed by engagement with the DfE Trauma Informed Schools Initiative, Berry Street Model of Education including a collective of aligned approaches which we draw on to scaffold and drive learning outcomes for children. We recognise the strengths of our community and are also tuned into the very real challenges which exist. We make a commitment every day for every child to provide an environment for them, to be ready to learn, to experience wonder, and have connection and a sense of agency in their learning.

The Taikurrendi interdisciplinary team consists of educators and administrative support, allied health practitioners and DHS family support team of an Aboriginal family practitioner and community development worker.

We offer full time preschool for 60-80 children and sessional occasional care, and early entry 3 year olds (Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander children, children in out of home care) and children with additional rights. We are a site which has a large cohort of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander children and families who engage with our education and care and family support programs.

When I reflect on the impact on children's learning in our site, how our families engage and fostering a learning community, it is always in the context of the work the Taikurrendi team undertake together. In the workshop I look forward to sharing, with a sense of reciprocity, trauma informed strategies that we have embedded in our practice, challenges and delights we have experienced as an interdisciplinary team working alongside our children, families, colleagues and community and how we aspire every day to honour children in our learning environment.

**342****Exploring Cultural Safety when working with First Nations young peoples****Miss Amy Farrell<sup>1</sup>**<sup>1</sup>The Hester Hornbrook Academy, Melbourne, Australia

This workshop will explore the principals of cultural safety when working with First Nations peoples from both a macro and micro perspective. Participants will have the opportunity to engage in reflective practice to understand what Cultural Safety means in the education setting and how we can move away from tokenism and into meaningful engagement. This workshop will support participants to identify current gaps in policy and practice, and provide strategies for education professionals on how to increase Cultural Safety for First Nations young peoples.

# POSTERS

## P101

### School counsellors' reporting child maltreatment: A rapid review of empirical evidence

Dr Meegan Brown<sup>1</sup>, **Ms Jordan Bowyer**<sup>1</sup>, Professor Kerryann Walsh<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>*QUT, Brisbane, Australia*

Within schools, school counsellors are often delegated the responsibility for reporting child maltreatment. In this poster presentation, we present findings of a rapid review of empirical studies investigating what is known about school counsellors' reporting of child maltreatment. Thematic categories identified include school counsellors' training, knowledge, factors influencing reporting, and reporting experiences. These themes appear to act independently, in overlap, or collectively as facilitators and barriers to school counsellors' effective reporting practices. The rapid review findings will guide future education and training initiatives to prepare school counsellors for their work in schools. Directions for future research are proposed.

## P102

### The school counsellor's role in supporting students who have experienced complex childhood trauma

**Mrs Septinda Dewanti**<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>*Qut, Australia*

The impact of complex childhood trauma includes physical, emotional, and sexual abuse, severe neglect, and exposure or involvement in family violence. As international awareness of the trauma-informed practice and the importance of the role of the school counsellor grows in supporting students who have lived through complex childhood trauma, it is timely to examine the role of the Javanese school counsellor in this work. This study aims to investigate the role of the high school counsellor in Java-Indonesia in supporting students who have lived through complex trauma by examining the influence of culture on their practice. The research implements an explanatory mixed-method design and uses an online survey and interview for data collection. The participants of this study are school counsellors who work in public high schools and are of Javanese ethnicity in Indonesia.

The first data collection was drawn from a survey with 107 participants. Data analysis results: 37% of the participants have little knowledge of complex trauma and trauma-informed practices, 34% have a fair understanding, 17% have no previous knowledge, 10% are quite informed, and only 2% have an excellent understanding. Data also shows that most of the participants perceived their work in supporting students who have experienced CCT as their priority (n=90, 84.2%), requiring the highest amount of work (n=83, 77.9%), and they mostly value their role in helping the trauma-impacted student (n=88, 82.7%).

Following the survey, interviews with 20 Javanese school counsellors were implemented. Reflexive thematic analysis was conducted to analyse the interview's result, and three main themes were found: understanding, perceptions, and roles. An understanding of impacts, causes, and punishment and the misunderstanding of students impacted by complex childhood trauma explained the theme of understanding. The theme of perceptions is explained by the strengths and barriers of Javanese school counsellors in supporting trauma-impacted students. The theme of roles is explained by two sub-themes, including the role they have done and the role they want to do if they can. From this study, we understand that Indonesian school counsellors know that helping students who have experienced CCT is an essential part of their roles. However, they need more support to improve their understanding of complex childhood trauma and trauma-informed practices.

## P103

### Viva Las Vagus - Let's regulate

**Ms Kerri Chard<sup>1</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>*Little Stars Foundation, Brisbane, Australia*

This dynamic workshop is not just for Elvis fans, offering a fresh perspective on managing dysregulated behaviours not just in children, but also in adults, and provides strategies to enhance participants own well-being. This session is ideal for educators, carers and professionals who find themselves perplexed by the challenging behaviours of those they support and are in search of immediate, effective strategies. Additionally, it holds significant relevance for professionals supporting adolescents and adults, equipping them with tools to foster self-regulation and resilience.

Centred around the principles of polyvagal theory, this workshop demystifies the complexities of the autonomic nervous system. Participants will gain an accessible framework that aids in interpreting the subtle cues of threat and safety that our bodies process beneath the threshold of conscious awareness. Understanding these processes is crucial, as it influences our interactions and the way we respond to perceived behavioural challenges.

Expect an engaging, movement orientated session - without the stress of role playing. Instead, we will focus on experiential learning that emphasises the body's innate signals and responses. This approach not only enhances the ability to read and strengthen a child's (or adult's) capacity for regulation but also empowers participants to transform their own reactions and become a "Jedi of Calm".

This workshop provides innovative, playful, and immediately applicable interventions designed to coregulate and stabilise dysregulated behaviours. By participating in "Viva Las Vagus", attendees will leave with a deeper understanding of the biological functions that govern our reactions and behaviours, equipped with practical skills to apply both professionally and personally. Join us to learn how to harness the power of the vagus nerve, enhance your professional toolkit, and personally thrive by befriending your nervous system.

## P104

### A helper helping helpers to help

**Mr Benji Gersh<sup>1</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>*Greater Space, Melbourne, Australia*

There is unanimous agreement in the education and helping sectors that supervision is required for safe, effective practice and to support worker wellbeing (Hawkins & McMahon, 2020). Much of the research related to wellbeing in the education sector (for example) speaks to the need for supervision to support teacher wellbeing and discusses the hope for programs to be implemented and appraised for efficacy (Stapleton, Garby & Sabot, 2020). The path seems clear, the agreement that it should be studied is there, and yet, Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs) have been offered to teachers, with minimal take up or appraisal. Given teachers are over-represented in terms of mental health issues, and have disastrously low rates of EAP participation ([data.cese.nsw.gov.au](http://data.cese.nsw.gov.au)) - the current approach doesn't seem to be working.

As a qualified teacher and counsellor I have piloted, implemented, reviewed and grown a program of counselling and supervision initially with one school just prior to the pandemic, and now with over 40 organisations from the education and helping sectors. Utilising trauma-informed, person-centred approaches to hold space for helpers to reflect on themselves and their practice, the program has answered the question that research papers hypothesised. The suggestion of research papers that it would be useful, has been demonstrated time and again with phenomenal results both in short and long term engagement.

In this presentation the insights gained into how to effectively supplement and support organisational wellbeing efforts will be shared. The key ingredients that have allowed us to successfully facilitate thousands of sessions with hundreds of clients will be distilled so that participants can think broadly about how to best support their colleagues in their own context. From what type of practitioners are best suited to supervision, to the underlying therapeutic modalities that have been most successful, to some of the key trends that have arisen from the past few years. There are insights and answers that I've learned from an innovative approach to the field.

**P105****Get real on wellbeing - a small, practical step to school attachment****Dr Veronica Graham**<sup>1,2</sup>, **Mr Stuart Todd**<sup>1</sup>, Ms Laura Kling<sup>1</sup>, Ms Rita Sinclair<sup>1</sup><sup>1</sup>Carinity Education Shalom, Townsville, Australia, <sup>2</sup>James Cook University, Townsville, Australia

Get Real on Wellbeing (GRoW) was a deceptively simple school-based program to promote hygiene (in the first instance) which we tried to make as fun as possible. GRoW produced rich two-way learning for both staff and students, and created space for more comprehensive place-based wellbeing strategies that are sensitive to intergenerational trauma and socio-educational disadvantage.

Carinity Education Shalom (Shalom; ICSEA = 698) is school for around 180 Prep-Year 12 students (>90% Indigenous) with connections to Palm Island and remote Queensland. A high proportion of the 31 Year 7-8 students participating in the program had experienced functional or actual loss of one or both parents.

Often overlooked in school-based health programs, environmental health and hygiene are lynch pins for reducing inflammatory gum disease and skin infections that contribute significantly to our students' current and future excess health burden, and that of their children. Childhood and adolescence are also a time to establish nutrition, exercise, and minimal substance misuse. Responsive place-based programs to support these goals depend on a healthy attachment to the school mediated by strong relationships with staff. The organisational and social capital held in schools presents an opportunity to implement strengths-based approaches to promote wellbeing, early in the life course with a view to influencing long-term outcomes.

Students were invited to participate in practical oral and skin hygiene workshops, and partners from the local community-controlled health service delivered workshops exploring intimate hygiene and health. The term culminated in a full-make-over and restaurant lunch.

All student participants reported approval for GRoW, including agreement that staff were kind to them.

Staff agreed that the program was acceptable, accessible, and feasible. Moreover, GRoW provided:

- 1) A safe place-based intervention to model and normalise hygiene behaviours for vulnerable students with limited resources.
- 2) A format where staff practiced a relational, conversational approach, gaining insight into the realities of vulnerable young people's lives.
- 3) A foundation for consultation and partnership to sustain school-based, curriculum-aligned strategies to close gaps in student health.

'It gives you a chance to relate to the students on a different level...and for them to see you as a person not just as a teacher.' Teacher, 2023

The GRoW pilot demonstrated Shalom's opportunity to promote health literacy, reduce stigma and address the social and environmental determinants of health among its most vulnerable students.

**P106****Harnessing curiosity and joy to shift identities of education students in high stakes maths testing****Dr Emma-Lee Steindl<sup>1</sup>, Mr Sky Woodlands<sup>1</sup>**<sup>1</sup>Queensland University Of Technology, Brisbane, Australia

We demonstrate how an engaging and inclusive program run at the Queensland University of Technology supports undergraduate Education students in Maths by addressing traumatic educational and learning experiences. You will experience a hands-on workshop from this program and learn actionable strategies to promote curiosity and joy in your trauma-informed learning environment.

Education students across Australia are required to achieve the standard in the high stakes Literacy and Numeracy Test for Initial Teacher Education (LANTITE) prior to finishing their university degrees. Since 2019, Education students at the Queensland University of Technology have participated in a multi-faceted LANTITE preparation program run by the Student Success and Teaching Advancement team. The program incorporates online and in-person workshops, self-paced learning, a supportive online learning community, and individual sessions with students in-person and online. Within the Numeracy workshops, it is a regular occurrence for students to share beliefs that they are not good at Maths, do not have Maths brains, or hate Maths. These beliefs are often linked to negative and sometimes traumatic experiences with teachers, parents, and other testing environments. Sometimes there are undiagnosed learning difficulties that are only being recognised in the high stakes and pressured world of university.

While on the surface the LANTITE workshops, programmes, and one-to-one sessions look like pure content and knowledge practice, there is a deeper lesson being explored. In our sessions, the unhelpful mindsets and core beliefs around Maths and the identity each student holds about themselves as a learner are discussed and reframed through nurturing rapport and trust with educators. Students need holistic support and content delivered at their level of understanding. By incorporating curiosity and joy as part of this process, negative and fixed mindsets can be reframed. This entails providing connections for students within a strengths-based educational environment, and challenging long-held beliefs about their capabilities as a learner. Empathy and understanding from peers, educators, and family plays an integral role in developing student well-being and fostering confidence and resilience. By opening a window into a worldview of Maths which sparks curiosity and joy, educators can encourage shifts in identities and foster success in higher education.

## P107

### Circle Pedagogy: Nurturing our nervous systems and our wellbeing for safe, connected classrooms.

**Mrs Kristy Elliott<sup>1</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>*Restorative Pathways, Heathmont, Victoria, Australia*

Circle pedagogy is a collaborative, democratic, and participatory model of teaching and learning. The practice of circles helps to build and maintain healthy classroom communities where educators and students feel safe, respected, and connected. Circles are a flexible pedagogy that can be used to teach curriculum content, to establish classroom expectations and norms, to build relationships, to model and support inclusion, to review and reflect on learning outcomes, and the list goes on. Importantly, circle pedagogy is a wellbeing strategy for schools as the structures used are rhythmic and predictable; when circles occur routinely, they contribute to the regulation of our nervous system.

Trauma-aware schools and educators understand that one of our greatest resources is the ability to regulate our nervous system and emotions. Regulation is a skill that is learned through patterned, repetitive experiences and opportunities to grow and develop in safe, supportive environments, first with trusted others (co-regulation) and then by us (self-regulation). Dan Siegel explains that our capacity to self-regulate aids us in navigating stress and challenge while remaining within our 'window of tolerance'. When we lack this skill, we are more likely to find ourselves operating outside of our window where our stress response system activates a flight, fight, freeze or fawn state.

Individuals exposed to adversity and traumatic events may experience a narrowing of their window of tolerance; their nervous system becomes hypervigilant and overreactive to stressors. Using circle pedagogy with students is a strategy that can aid in widening our window of tolerance and supporting a student's nervous system to regulate. Furthermore, it aligns with the principles of neuro-sequential processing. As Dr Bruce Perry explains, our brains are wired to process information from the bottom up – from the brainstem, through the mid-brain and finally reaching the cortex. In other words, our brains need to regulate and relate before we can reason.

In this experiential, hands-on workshop Kristy will guide participants through a flexible circle structure (adaptable for varying developmental levels), demonstrating by doing, the clear alignment between circle pedagogy, neurobiology, regulation, safety, and connection.

## P108

### Constructing a complex trauma-informed pedagogy

**Mr Graham Pringle<sup>1</sup>, Mr Andrew Travis<sup>2</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>*The Emu Files, Brisbane, Australia*, <sup>2</sup>*Education Queensland, Kilcoy, Australia*

The workshop will show how Stanley River EEC, built a complex trauma-informed pedagogy and will provide a model, and a kick start, for teachers and school leaders to construct their own.

Graham will provide an evidenced framework designed to reflect world leading complex trauma-informed processes in a pragmatic, framework that is readily adapted by schools and teachers, to suit their local needs. The framework Empowers, Motivates and fosters Understanding (EMU) which enables cultural change and whole of school contribution to the school mission.

Andrew will show how Stanley River adapted the practice framework to their centre. This framework and pedagogy was co-created by community, particularly the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Custodians of Country through which Stanley River operates. Copies of aspects of the framework and pedagogy will be provided, with a template to guide pedagogical planning.

The workshop will move from cutting-edge complex trauma theory through a worked example, to a plan for each participant's adaption. This workshop will inspire and suggest opportunities to get in front of behaviours and community concerns. Andrew and Graham will show how participants can create a home away from home in the educational setting.

## P109

### Is emotional intelligence the key to everything?

**Mrs Roshelle Weir**<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>*Switch4schools, Brisbane, Australia*

What does the research say is more important than IQ, socio-economic status, personality, cultural background or school prestige in determining academic results and life success? Emotional intelligence. The ability to perceive, understand, manage and use emotions. But when traumatic experiences trigger such strong emotional reactions in our students subconsciousness, is it actually possible to rewire their brains to help overcome this threat response? How do we encourage emotional control in those who seem to be beyond any self-regulation. And how do we do this in a way that doesn't require specialist teams of psychologists to intervene, particularly when access to such services is rare or non-existent?

For more than 10 years, psychologist Phil Slade has taken this challenge head on, developing tools and resources (including the powerful Switch4Schools platform now used by more than 25,000 Australian school students every day) to empower parents, teachers, and other adults already in the students trust circle to help shift the dial on emotional regulation.

In this session we will go through the neuro-science of emotions and decision making, pick through the research behind the real-life application of this work, and look at practical strategies that can be used immediately for significant impact across the board. This is translational research in action, creating learning loops for maximum impact.

## P110

### Crisis Prevention: The Ecology of Caring and Responsive Classrooms

**Ms Fiona Waites**<sup>1</sup>, **Mrs Lyn Harland**<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>*TACT Training and Consulting, Brisbane, Australia*, <sup>2</sup>*Carinity Education, Rockhampton, Australia*

Creating a sense of safety in the classroom is the first step to creating a true learning environment. Considering ecological systems theory, as well how this can be applied in both the school community and specific classroom settings provides teachers and administrators skills and direction to prevent crisis. Factors which impact the ecology of a caring & responsive classroom are external to the space as well as internal, also considering the unique individuals within the classroom. Therefore, caring and responsive classrooms are created by assessing the physical, social, cultural, emotional and ideological space where students and adults engage.

Journey through each of these spaces found within a caring & responsive classroom, gaining insight into the aspects to be mindful of, with examples from Carinity Education of how to adjust the conditions in each space to prevent crisis.

Put the information into practice as you reflect on your own classroom, aiming to make challenging behaviour and traumatic stress responses less likely to occur.



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