

Keynote

Professor Lea Waters AM PhD Psychologist, Researcher, Speaker, Author



Replenishing student wellbeing without depleting teacher energy

Running on empty - an apt phrase for educators right now. How can we revitalise our students in ways that also recharge us? Drawing on Positive Psychology and Neuroscience, I'll introduce the idea of 'Brief Emotional Uplifts' and show how small moments of connection (less than 2 minutes) can undo stress, expand our perspective, uplift others and protect us during adversity.

Order of Australia recipient, Professor Lea Waters holds a PhD in Organisational Psychology and been a psychology researcher at The University of Melbourne for 27 years, initially in the Business Faculty and then the Melbourne Graduate School of Education where she was the Founding Director of the Centre for Positive Psychology.

She has published more than 120 research papers and her research has been featured in The Wall Street Journal, TIME, The Atlantic, The Guardian, The New York Times, The Washington Post, and Vogue.

Her Visible Wellbeing program is being used by schools in Australia, Canada, South Africa, The Netherlands, India, Belgium, Hong Kong, UAE, China, and New Zealand. Lea has worked with the Catholic schools across all States and Territories in Australia. Visible Wellbeing has been endorsed by the South Australian Department of Education, is listed on the Victorian Department's Schools Mental Health Menu and is approved as an evidence-based provider by Beyond Blue.

Keynote

Andrea Downie

Educator | Wellbeing Scientist | Strategist



Simplifying the complexities to support learners, educators and the system to thrive

If wellbeing was that simple, everyone would be thriving all the time, but we know it's much more complex than that. Research suggests that when working to address complex problems, we need to invite our three ways of thinking.

With so much teacher and staff burn out, as well as complexities facing young people today, how do we focus on self, others and the system in a way that is productive and life giving? In this keynote, Andrea will address these three ways of thinking and simplify some of the complexities to create compassionate and aware 'wholebeings'.

Andrea is an educator, wellbeing scientist, action researcher and international keynote speaker who has worked with hundreds of schools and organisations on wellbeing science, systems leadership, education redesign and strategy.

Andrea is the co-founder of Project Thrive and an honorary fellow at the Centre for Wellbeing Science, Graduate School of Education at The University of Melbourne.

She has extensive experience working both in and on the education system in teaching and leadership roles as well as consulting internationally. She is dedicated to making education the best and most desirable system in the world where wellbeing, agency, authentic and meaningful learning as well as opportunities and excellence for all, is at the forefront.

Andrea has both education and psychology degrees and a Masters of Applied Positive Psychology with First Class Honours.

Masterclass

Therese Joyce, MAPP CLA, Future Leadership



Replenishing Leaders: Getting out of the weeds, tips to manage time and re-find your path

This masterclass will help leaders build capacity for themselves and their team. Take time to reflect on how and where you spend your time. Build high quality connections and explore practical ways to coach and empower others for accountability and action. Discover strategies for planning and prioritising that you can implement immediately. This is a highly interactive session for leaders. Bring a pen and notepad. Participants will walk away with a personal plan to get out of the weeds and re-find their path.

We are proud to measure the impact of our work. CLA's signature Breathing Space Leadership program in schools has led to a 13+ increase in psychological safety, 21% decrease in feeling overwhelmed and a 22% increase in flourishing (Keyes, 2002). CLA benchmark Participant indices include a 27% uplift in self-awareness, and 23% increase in confidence in abilities and impact as a leader.

Therese has over two decades experience in education management, including 9 years as Principal of an International School in Toronto, Canada. With a MSc Applied Positive Psychology, she is committed to the pragmatic, real-world application of leadership and wellbeing science. Therese was the inaugural Associate Director of the Centre for Positive Psychology at the University of Melbourne. She is passionate about making a difference and helping others to achieve their full potential and is an experienced facilitator and executive coach who excels at enabling leaders to identify their values, and to develop their teams to perform at their best.

Therese brings broad experience across a range of sectors, designing and delivering leadership solutions for the Department of Treasury & Finance, Metro Trains, genU, Baker Institute, Royal Victorian Eye and Ear hospital, Reece Group, local government, and the Asylum Seeker Resource Centre. She was an invited guest at the World Government Summit, Shaping Future Governments in Dubai, 2017. Within the education sector clients include Wesley College, Westbourne Grammar, Haileybury, Loreto Mandeville Hall, Assumption College, and Cornish College.

Masterclass

Trent Cotchin Co-Founder of PosiSchools



Teaching wellbeing skills through inspiring stories

Discover the crucial role of storytelling and the immense impact of positive thinking in adolescents' lives. Gain insights from Trent Cotchin, a Triple Premiership captain and the founder of PosiSchools, along with experts from 'The Wellbeing Distillery'. Trent will share evidence-based strategies, skills, and knowledge designed to empower students in effectively navigating life's challenges. Supported by globally accomplished athletes such as Ash Barty, Nedd Brockman, Trent Cotchin, and Sam & Alise Willoughby, PosiSchools offers a robust framework for fostering student well-being. Don't miss this opportunity to delve into the transformative potential of positive narratives and wellbeing techniques for young individuals.

Trent Cotchin is the founder of PosiSchools and is also a three-time Premiership captain at the Richmond Tigers in the AFL. Throughout his time as a professional athlete navigating the highs and lows, Trent developed a program he believes can help everyone, from children through to adults, when it comes to educating the importance of a positive mindset.

Trent is extremely passionate about helping others develop the skills required to navigate life's ups and downs, being a good human first and having a growth mindset.

PosiSchools is an initiative designed to improve the mental health of children through educating participating students on the power of a positive mindset.

We believe that children need to be taught the power and importance of a positive mindset more than anyone. Their opportunity to establish positive thinking habits is critical for not just a child's present, but also their future.

PosiSchools is a 21-day program consisting of engaging content and classroom activities, featuring learnings and inspiring stories from some of Australia's most renowned athletes.

Masterclass

Dr Michelle McQuaid

The Wellbeing Lab / The Michelle McQuaid Group



Using A Strengths-Approach To Manage Psychosocial Hazards & Burnout

To reduce burnout and support wellbeing, new workplace legislation requires leaders to identify and minimise psychosocial (emotional and social) hazards in our schools. Rather than simply managing the risks, how can you use this opportunity to embed a strengths-based approach that builds on our wellbeing strategies and incorporates these requirements into your existing ways of working?

In this session we will:

- Understand the new Safe Work Australia requirements to educate leaders and workers on psychosocial risks.
- Discover the most frequently experienced psychosocial hazards in Australian schools and learn how you can spot the risks in your schools.
- Walk away with a practical, evidence-based toolkit of strength-focused wellbeing actions at the “Me” (individual, “We”, (team), and “Us” (school) levels you can immediately use to minimise psychosocial hazards in your school.

Dr. Michelle McQuaid is a best-selling author, workplace wellbeing teacher and playful change activator. An honorary fellow at the University of Melbourne’s Graduate School of Education, in addition to hosting the highly acclaimed weekly podcast, Making Positive Psychology Work, which features leading researchers and practitioners from around the world, Michelle blogs for Psychology Today, The Huffington Post and Thrive, and her work has been featured in Forbes, The Harvard Business Review, The Wall Street Journal, Boss Magazine, The Age and more.

Masterclass

Ben Scholl Co-founder, Toolbox Education



Thinking Traps: Helping students and staff catch anxious thoughts

Have you noticed yourself, your colleagues or your students being drawn into unhelpful thinking patterns? Whether it's thinking someone hates us, wondering why that person didn't get back to our text message, or even worrying about how an event will play out, we can all be overtaken by thinking traps. This engaging, interactive and thought-provoking workshop will give you a set of tools in a unique and memorable way to catch unhelpful thoughts before they spiral – both in the classroom, in the staffroom and at home.

Toolbox Education takes the tools someone would learn with a psychologist and teaches those tools to students and staff before they need them through engaging and relatable workshops. Ben Scholl is the co-founder of Toolbox Education. Ben is a dynamic and engaging facilitator who has been involved in designing, managing and running educational experiences across the world for the last 10 years.

Workshops

Presenter(s)	Organisation	Workshop Title	
Lisa Baker, Jacqui Francis	Centre for Wellbeing Science, Melbourne Graduate School of Education, University of Melbourne.	Replenishing educational possibilities through wellbeing literacy.	To replenish our students and ourselves, and indeed our wellbeing education systems and contexts, we need to evolve from wellbeing interventions to wellbeing literacy. Education is an increasingly complex field, with demands mounting on educators, families, governing bodies and students alike. We cannot navigate this space without building capabilities for all to intentionally communicate about and for their wellbeing. From early childhood to VCE, from educators to families and support staff, we must build a shared literacy for wellbeing. This session will introduce and explore the theory of wellbeing literacy, the validated measure (the Well-Lit 6) and practical applications in education contexts. Attendees will be invited to comprehend and compose about wellbeing in multimodal ways (reading, writing, listening, speaking, viewing and creating), building their personal and professional capability to communicate about and for wellbeing, intentionally and in contextually sensitive ways. Relevant for teachers, researchers and other working in education.
Tate Belej & Lydia Sinclair	Mildura South Primary School	Bringing Positive Education into point of need learning	The Point of Need approach is a learning method providing educators with data on the learning profile of each individual student, thus allowing data-informed decisions to be made about a students' learning. This approach looks at the academic continuum but also where a student sits on the developmental continuum. Mildura South Primary School has been using this method for Literacy and Numeracy for 5 years and in 2023, the school evolved this approach. Using the personal and Social Capabilities strand from the curriculum, a continuum was developed and aligned with SEARCH, for teachers to place each student along the SEARCH pathways. Educators follow a process of 'praise' and 'prompt' to assist each student in knowing what they need, to be successful. This workshop will take the audience through how MSPS aligned multiple wellbeing frameworks, fostered interconnection between teachers and inclusion, and are bringing wellbeing into a 'point of need' approach.
Jennifer Hanson-Peterson & Cat Lamb	Geelong Grammar School's Institute of Positive Education	Cultivating ecosystems that support wellbeing: Empowering educators for positive impact	There has been a growing recognition of the importance of prioritizing educator wellbeing in the mainstream discourse - and for good reason. Teaching can be a demanding profession and the last few years have been particularly challenging. Effective student support also begins with educator self-awareness and self-care. Educators should be empowered with skills and strategies which support their own wellbeing and that of their students. In this interactive workshop, Jen and Cat will draw on their own extensive experience as wellbeing educators to make a compelling case for prioritising meaningful professional learning for teachers. Providing evidence-based insights and practical research, this workshop will equip participants with the knowledge and tools to advocate for a holistic approach to educator wellbeing that extends beyond isolated and ad hoc activities. Participants will engage with successful experiential learning strategies which they can implement in their unique school context.
Sarah Roney	THRIVE Positive Education Network	From surviving to thriving: A community approach to wellbeing.	THRIVE is a positive education framework that has been developed by a network of public primary and secondary schools. This workshop will share how to incorporate the science of Positive Psychology into existing practice, to create a whole school and community approach to wellbeing. Together we will explore examples of how Positive Psychology fits with the Victorian Curriculum, health promotion, inclusion support and managing complex mental health concerns. You will also receive recommended resources to support the implementation of positive education in your setting.

Workshops

Presenter(s)	Organisation	Workshop Title	
Tyson Greenwood & friends	URSTRONG	A Whole-School Friendship Strategy: The Heart of Wellbeing	Explicitly teaching children how to develop healthy friendships and manage conflict in a positive way is at the heart of helping them flourish. These important social skills are the key to bullying prevention, creating safe, caring learning environments, and inspiring kinder, happier children. In this presentation, Tyson Greenwood (Director of URSTRONG) will share how URSTRONG Schools around the world are creating cultures of kindness through the Friendology friendship skills curriculum and whole-school friendship strategy. Educators from Wesley College will share how they are bringing URSTRONG's unique 'language of friendship' to life with students, teachers, and parents.
Saraid Doherty	Yarra Primary School	"It's the little things..."; Harnessing micro-moments to replenish teacher wellbeing: A government school perspective.	Positivity resonance is a momentary experience that occurs when two or more people have an interpersonal connection characterized by three features: (1) shared positive affect, (2) mutual care and concern, and (3) behavioural and biological synchrony (Fredrickson, 2013, 2016). Referencing Fredrickson's theory this presentation will identify ways in which leaders and principals can leverage the 'micro-moments' to build and strengthen their own and their teacher's wellbeing. Utilising Lea Waters' Visible Wellbeing SEARCH framework (with a focus on Emotional Management and Coping) participants will learn ways in which seemingly small adjustments can make a big difference to strengthen and buffer a school's positive culture (with evidence including school performance data). Participants will be supported to identify and select practical strategies that align with their own and their organisation's strengths.
Stephen Mason	Awards Victoria	Strengthening student belonging and engagement and creating a school culture of growth and celebration through non-formal education.	This workshop will explore the latest research and evidence for how non-formal education builds vital social and emotional capabilities, critical to fostering student wellbeing, particularly those that need replenishing post pandemic, such as student belonging and engagement. It will also explore the unique benefits of non-formal education for fostering more positive relationships between teachers and their students, and how recognition of student contributions and achievements through non-competitive, individualized programs can contribute to a more positive school wide culture of growth and celebration.
Adrienne Baucke & Jesse Blowers	Forest Hill College	Reigniting the Spark in Our Students and Teachers	Forest Hill College have recently embarked on targeted Professional Learning around the effectiveness of strong classroom routines, positive primers, brain breaks and high expectations. This came about after noticing that the staff and students were struggling to get back into high quality teaching and learning, after experiencing the unsettled years of covid and subsequent teacher shortages. In this workshop we will share our journey and the science behind the strategies we introduced and why we chose to focus on them. We will introduce a number of positive primers, brain breaks and routines that can be applied directly to any classroom with ease. We will share recently collected data and discuss the difference these simple changes have made to staff and students since we implemented the change.

Workshops

Presenter(s)	Organisation	Workshop Title	
Dan Church	Wesley College	Wesley College ROAR Sport Framework -- Wellbeing in Action	This workshop delves into the genesis of how The Wesley College Wellbeing program has been adopted and imbedded into Sport at Wesley College. Wesley College Sport has embraced ROAR Wellbeing (Respect Opportunity Achievement Resilience) as pillars in its philosophy and operations across all sports. With the help of Integral Theory and the work of American Philosopher Ken Wilbur, our quadrant model has become a valuable tool for our coaches and students in the delivery, execution, and reflection of our program. This structure takes wellbeing and places it directly onto the sporting fields and all interschool competition.
Michelle Tuck	Raise Foundation	Building a mentoring culture in your school	Too many young Australians are experiencing an increasing number of challenges that impact their well-being including mental illness, disengagement from education, unemployment, bullying, and family breakdown. Unfortunately, many of these young people lack strong social connections and are unable to access support. This workshop will look at what is best practice youth mentoring in schools and how a mentoring culture can be established in your school to assist in addressing this urgent social problem. We will use the evidence from our Raise Youth Mentoring Program as a reference.
Sam Wright & Suzi Hyland	Padua College	Respect @ the Whole School Level	Respect for the environment – Respect for self – Respect for your community. Workshopping how the use of language and interventions of Positive Education can be used to build a culture of expectation and norms that are based around RESPECT. Further development of the workshop delivered at the international PESA conference we will share how we have leveraged the extensive wellbeing data to build social, emotional and mental health literacy through our 4 campuses and enhance the capacity of our staff embrace this challenge. Teaching the students and staff to value themselves and seeing how that affects their own world and has a ripple motion that affects their entire community. Giving them confidence to try new and different things and feel valued as they explore how to be the best versions of themselves.
Aimee Bloom	The Wellbeing Distillery	Harnessing the Power of Mindfulness – Personally and Professionally	This hands-on workshop will introduce the concept of Mindfulness, and how it can be of benefit both personally and professionally. We will provide an overview of the relevant research, explore the associated physical and psychological benefits, and discuss how you could successfully integrate relevant practices into your classroom. Participants will engage with a range of activities, practices, and tactics. They will also be given sample activities and mindfulness scripts to take back to their schools. An opportunity will be provided for participants to collaborate and share their own tried-and-tested ideas.
Stephanie Silver	I Am Mindful	Mental Health Coping Skills	This workshop will introduce people to the prevention focused and evidence-based mental health coping skills primary and secondary school program, I Am Mindful. Through practical and hands on learning, we will showcase how Positive Psychology, DBT Therapy, ACT Therapy and Sensory Modulation are inextricably intertwined in the I Am Mindful school program, assisting students to cope with big feelings and sticky thoughts in a fun, healthy and effective way.