# PESA
# Board of Directors

## Leonie Abbott (Chair)



GCert BusAdmin, BEd, MAPP
Head of Student Wellbeing, Wesley College St Kilda Road Campus

Leonie Abbott is a highly regarded professional who converts theoretical concepts into practical tactics. With expertise at the intersection between trauma-aware and wellbeing pedagogies, she has influenced pedagogical change in thousands of classrooms.

Her current role as Head of Student Wellbeing provides Leonie with on-the-ground experience working with students and teachers. Leonie's considerable experience working as a Senior Consultant at Independent Schools Victoria (ISV) and Assistant Director, co-founder & co-author of the Berry Street Education Model has strengthened her resolve towards influencing change generally and especially in education. She has spent the last few years applying a trauma-aware perspective as a teacher practitioner in her current leadership role at Wesley College.

Leonie has faithfully served on the PESA board for two terms and is keen to continue this service for a final term. Leonie see's that PESA has the energy to unite all sectors nationally and further wellbeing outcomes for our young people and those who work with them.

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## Emma Grave (Deputy Chair)



GradDipEd, GradDipArtsMgmt, BPA, MEd
Principal, SCOTS PGC College, Warwick QLD

Emma is a passionate and enthusiastic leader, committed to the pursuit of wellbeing for all. As a multi-talented, dynamic, and seasoned Educational Leader with highly perceptive insight into the needs and views of students and staff, Emma is known for identifying problem areas and developing innovative curricula, programs, policies, and solutions to maximise educational outcomes. With a career in both Victoria and South Australia, Emma enjoys the creativity of the modern classroom.

Emma is recognised for excellence in delivering adaptive leadership and strategic planning to provide an inclusive, innovative, and supportive environment that fosters academic achievement in students and professional growth for staff while encouraging community involvement. Equipped with exceptional communication and interpersonal skills with a robust reputation for fostering a positive team culture, high staff morale, and alignment to best practice.

Emma has proudly served on the PESA Board since 2020, bringing a forward-thinking yet practical vision, along with extensive experience and a deep passion for implementing holistic wellbeing programs that benefits the entire school community. She has been instrumental in shaping PESA's new strategic direction, placing educator capability at its core. Emma is eager to continue her service on the Board to help turn this vision into reality and further support the wellbeing of educators and students alike.

## Simon Martin (Treasurer)



GDipAppFin, BBus

Private Wealth Manager & Philanthropist

Simon Martin is a seasoned Private Wealth Manager with extensive experience managing investments for individuals and not-for-profit organisations. He specialises in advising clients on establishing financial structures to support charitable initiatives, reflecting his deep commitment to philanthropy and community impact.

Simon is also the Chairman/ Director of the Blackwood Foundation. The Blackwood Foundation's approach to mental health and wellbeing focuses primarily on preventive initiatives for young people up to the age of 18. Through this role, he continues his family's legacy of philanthropy, focusing on creating opportunities and enhancing lives.

In addition to serving as Treasurer of the Positive Education Schools Association (PESA) board, Simon is a long-standing member of Rotary International and has been recognised with the Paul Harris Fellow award for his contributions to fundraising and projects that assist the less fortunate. Simon's passion for education and mental health drives his dedication to supporting initiatives that enhance student wellbeing.

Simon holds a Bachelor of Business (Accounting) and a Graduate Diploma in Applied Finance and Investments. He is a regular sailor on Sydney Harbour and a long term member of the Sydney Swans.

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## Elizabeth Bate



B.A. Dip. Ed., MaPP

Principal, Tuggerah Lakes Secondary College, Tumbi Umbi Campus, NSW Department of Education

As a proud Principal within the public schooling sector, Elizabeth brings a valuable and unique skill set to the PESA board. Her experience in successfully introducing and implementing positive education in two comprehensive high schools has equipped Elizabeth with a deep understanding of both the challenges and opportunities facing public schools today.

Elizabeth is well-versed in the intricacies of the public education system and possess the necessary knowledge and skills to help schools navigate and overcome these challenges. Her commitment to continuous learning enables her to effectively coach and support schools in adopting and benefiting from positive education practices.

Having served on the PESA Board since June this year, Elizabeth has brought her strengths of honesty, social intelligence, leadership, and perseverance, which have been invaluable in shaping PESA's new strategic plan. These qualities, already proven as instrumental in her ability to drive positive change within schools, have offered fresh perspectives to the PESA board.

As an established, confident school leader based in Newcastle and working on the Central Coast, Elizabeth is eager to further develop her skills while contributing with enthusiasm to her passion for positive education and to the ongoing success of PESA.

## Kayla Blakeney



B. Bus (Honours)

Business & People Transformation Managing Director, Sydney

Kayla Blakeney has joined PESA's Board as a Co-Opted Director. Kayla has been volunteering her skills with PESA since 2022. As someone who cares deeply about education and the wellbeing of young people, Kayla brings to PESA over 15 years' experience leading transformation across both the private and public sectors in Australia in her role as a Managing Director in the Strategy and Consulting Practice of a global professional services company.

Her expertise spans across developing and implementing forward-thinking strategies that not only enhance performance but also build resilient and adaptive cultures. Kayla's signature character strengths are Fairness, Kindness, Curiosity, Bravery and Social Intelligence.

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## David Bott



BA, PGradDipEd, PGradDipPsych

Co-Founder of the Wellbeing Distillery

David Bott is a sought-after speaker, author and education consultant who works with government organisations and some of the world's leading schools to help guide wellbeing vision and strategy. As an expert in applied wellbeing science, David has supported thousands of educators from hundreds of schools around the world in designing and implementing system-level approaches to wellbeing and cultural change.

David has been a dedicated and highly valued member of the PESA Board since 2020. With his strong educator mindset, he consistently prioritises the needs of educators in every decision the board makes. His commitment for accelerating wellbeing education in Australia has significantly shaped PESA's strategic initiatives to enhance our relevance and impact. Throughout 2024, David has continued to advocate for PESA at multiple international and national conferences and events.

David is the Co-Founder and Director of The Wellbeing Distillery, based in Melbourne, Australia. An addition to his Directorship of PESA, David was a founding member of the UAE Government's Dubai Future Council for Education, and has published in academic journals and industry periodicals. David's bestselling book, 10 *Things Schools Get Wrong: And How We Can Get Them Right* was published in 2020.

David's current work is informed by his five years as Associate Director at the Institute of Positive Education and his 15 years of practical teaching experience in Australia and the UK where he held senior pastoral and academic leadership positions. During this time, David was invited to guest lecture into the University of Melbourne's Professional Certificate in Positive Education.

David holds Post-Graduate Diplomas in Psychology and Education, and a Bachelor of Arts (Psych).

## Dr Debra Perich



BPE, Dip Ed, ProfCertPosEd, PhD
Wellbeing Lead, Catholic Education WA

Dr. Debra Perich is the Wellbeing Lead in the Psychology Safety and Wellbeing team at Catholic Education Western Australia (CEWA). In this role she shares responsibility for the ongoing development and implementation of the Wellbeing Strategy for CEWA. This strategy aims to foster wellbeing individually, collectively, and organisationally within a Catholic educational context. In this position, Debra provides specialist skills to support schools to promote and sustain the wellbeing of all staff and students within CEWA through evidence-based approaches.

Debra has a passion to help organisations and young people flourish and is committed to making this a reality. A keen researcher, she is always broadening her knowledge and seeking the very latest in research to support the best practice in the wellbeing domain. She successfully modelled this in her previous role as the Director of the InsideOut program at Perth College, where she initiated a whole-school evidence-based approach to creating a flourishing organisation.

Debra has delivered regular Professional Learning sessions, including several at PESA national conferences. She has also been an active member of the WA chapter of PESA since its inception.

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## Andy Skidmore



B. Arts, MSc. Coach Psych
CEO - The Youth Impact Foundation

Andy is the CEO of The Youth Impact Foundation (TYIF), which houses Burn Bright and nine other early intervention programs grounded in positive psychology, reaching over 190,000 young people annually across 500 schools in Australia and New Zealand. With over a decade of experience in youth wellbeing and education, Andy leads a team of 40 across multiple states and countries to deliver impactful programs that address the diverse needs of Government, Catholic, and Independent schools in various contexts.

As a long-standing member of PESA's NSW Chapter Committee, Andy joined the PESA Board in June this year. He is deeply passionate about PESA's work, which he has demonstrated since joining the Board by committing his time and expertise to growing PESA's presence in philanthropic networks in NSW. In addition, Andy has provided invaluable knowledge in shaping PESA's strategic plan, specifically leveraging his expertise in managing and growing for-purpose organisations for long-term impact.

Andy holds a Master of Coaching Psychology and completed his honours thesis in prosocial behaviour interventions, which he presented at the 2023 IPPA World Congress on Positive Psychology. He has also studied Social Entrepreneurship at Stanford University, furthering his ability to balance innovation with sustainability in the non-profit sector.