



# Wellbeing Literacy:

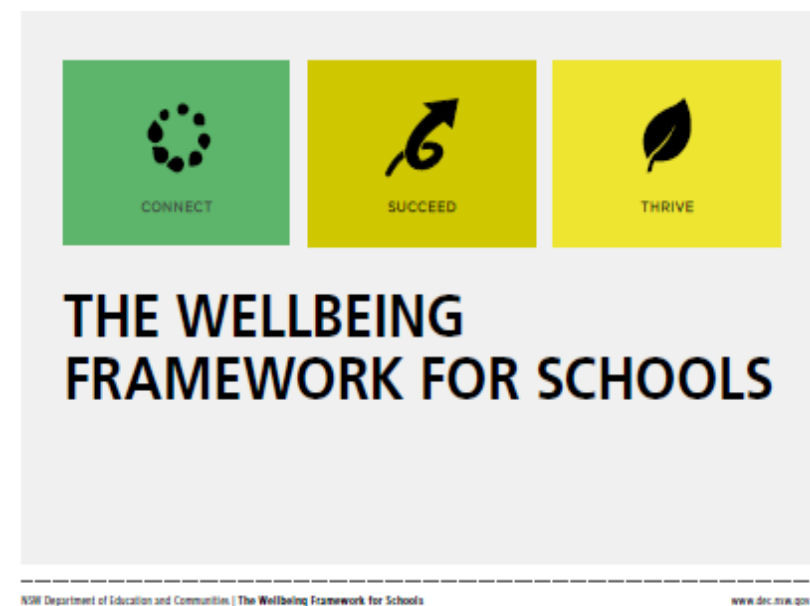
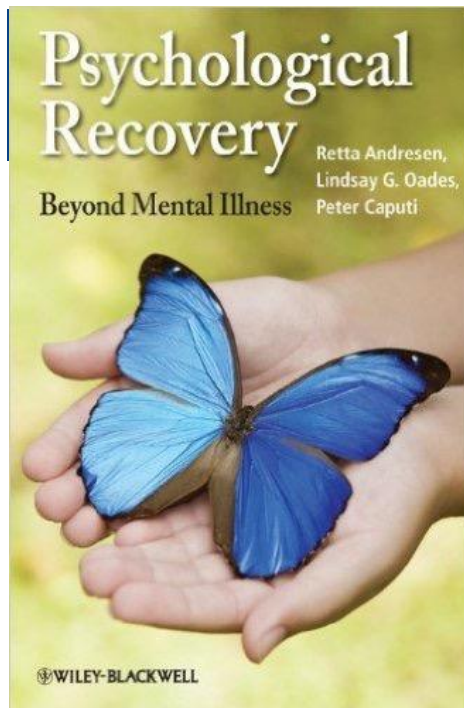
A capability for students to thrive

Professor Lindsay Oades

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Centre for Positive Psychology







# Wellbeing Literacy

- My argument in its naked form
- What is wellbeing literacy?
- Why focus on language?
- New Literacy studies and six modes of communication
- The capability model of wellbeing literacy
- All new data that links wellbeing literacy of students and their wellbeing
- What next?



# My argument in its naked form

- (1) The school education system is a key lever to create broad generational change in how we all conceptualise and experience wellbeing.  
*(yes its schools not health services!)*
- (2) The other pervasive lever is language itself, which not only describes but also shapes our possible realities and relationships.  
*(yes its language capabilities, not programs!)*
- (3) Therefore, developing literacy about and for wellbeing (ie wellbeing literacy) through the school system will lead to generational change in how we conceptualise and enable people to experience wellbeing.  
*(yes its a learning discourse not a medical discourse)*



## What is wellbeing literacy?

**“how we control the use of wellbeing language” (Oades & Johnston, 2017).**

**A generalised capability that subsumes vocabulary, knowledge and skills of wellbeing related communication (Oades, 2017).**

**How we communicate about and for wellbeing (Oades, not long ago).**

**Mindful language use for wellbeing (Oades, today)**

Opinion

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# Wellbeing Literacy: The Necessary Ingredient in Positive Education



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## Abstract

Wellbeing can be viewed as a resource for life, resulting in individual skills and community assets. It is not surprising therefore, to see developing research presenting the benefits of integrating learning about wellbeing within educational contexts, with the potential outcome of building sustainable wellbeing literacy. Developing wellbeing knowledge is key to building core wellbeing literacy skills. This in turn can significantly impact employability post education, and therefore, life trajectory. Building and sustaining wellbeing through learning about wellbeing within educational contexts can provide timely, personalised, system-wide opportunities to build capacity in initiating, developing, contributing to and sustaining decision-making toward achieving successful wellbeing and life outcomes.

**Keywords:** Wellbeing; Wellbeing Literacy; Education; Health Promotion; Positive Psychology; Positive Education



# THINK BEYOND A METAPHOR FOR COMPETENCY

- Mental health literacy
  - Financial literacy
  - Health literacy
- 
- Emotional literacy





**To ponder:**

**Does language  
mirror reality or  
shape reality?**





*The limits of my  
language are the limits  
of my mind.*

Ludwig Wittgenstein

 @DrLindC



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# Arithmetic

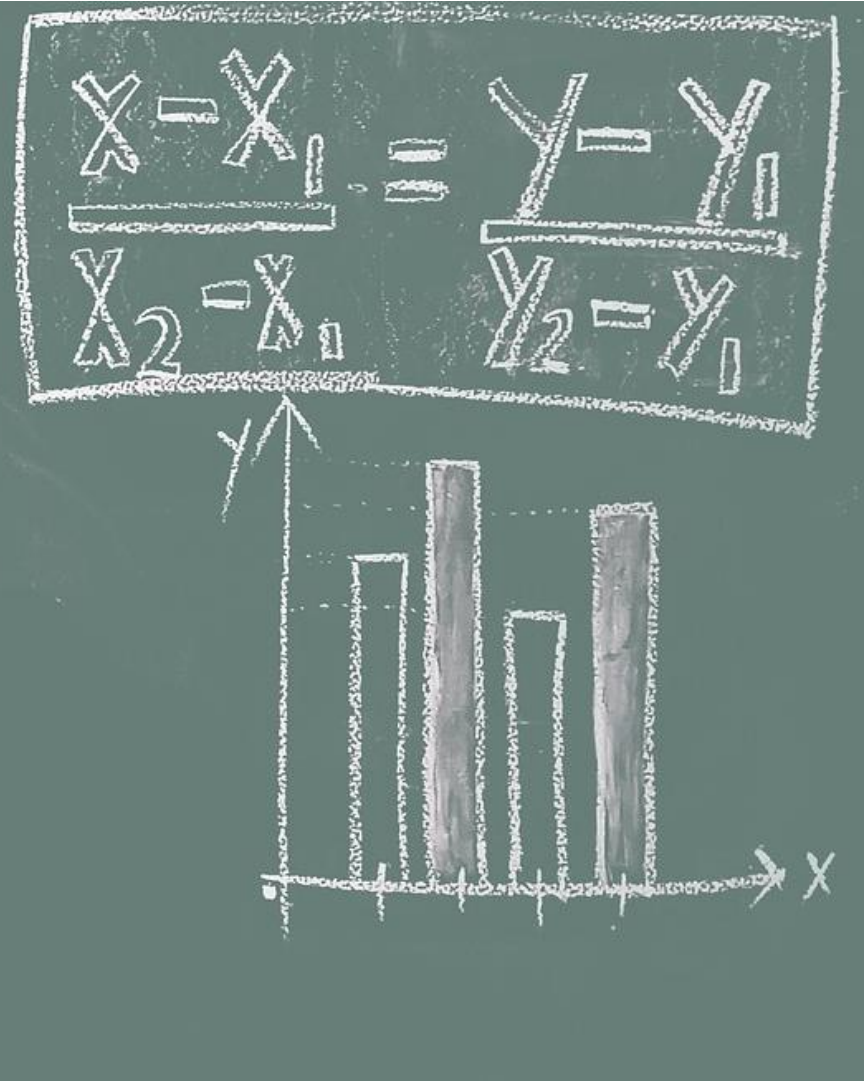
## What is 5-8?



Within the history of the language of mathematics once we couldn't conceive of negative numbers, five minus eight made no sense.

Perhaps we are still in the period of no positive wellbeing, some people still cannot conceive of wellbeing as involving the positive ....

The new literacy of wellbeing is needed to complete this paradigm shift...think about how the general population talks about wellbeing-not those at this conference.



Much of our current language is a residual of the negativity bias





**Wellbeing exists  
in our  
conversations,  
not just in our  
heads**



## LITERACY

Cognitive

School based

Language as an event

Language as autonomous- no user or context

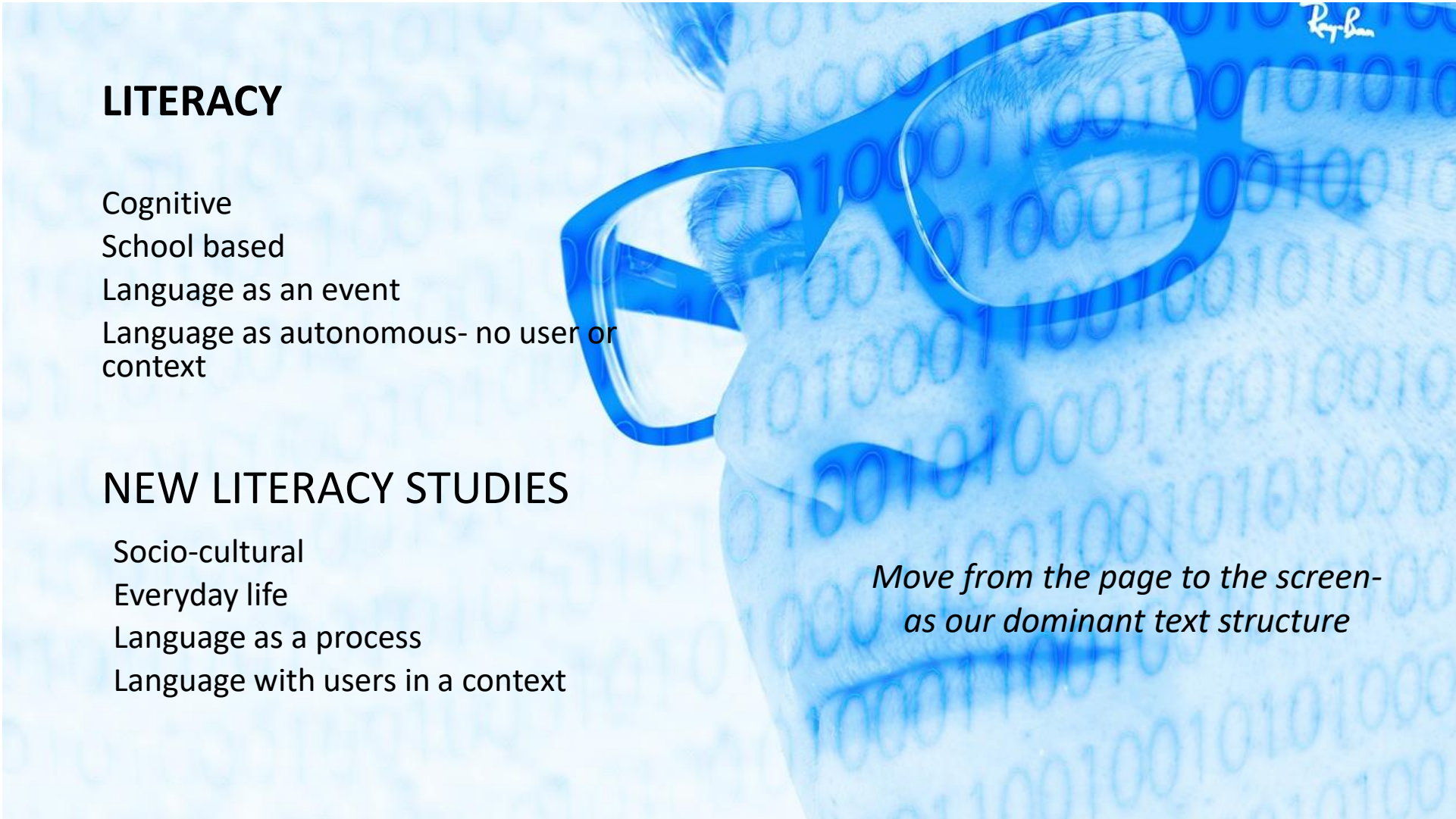
## NEW LITERACY STUDIES

Socio-cultural

Everyday life

Language as a process

Language with users in a context



*Move from the page to the screen-  
as our dominant text structure*

# Real world wellbeing literacy

*Sociocultural theories argue that literacy is usefully understood as “what people do with reading, writing and texts in real world contexts and why they do it” (Perry, 2012).*

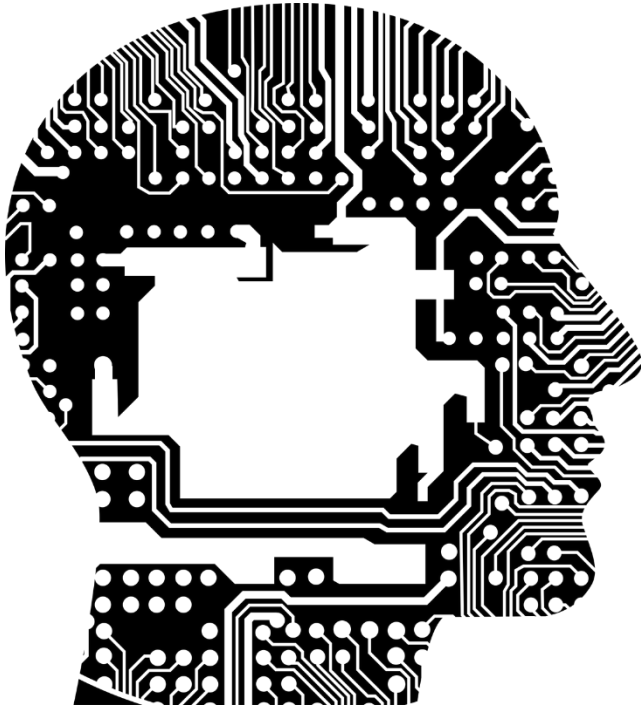
The “why” is wellbeing- by definition.



# Six modes of communication

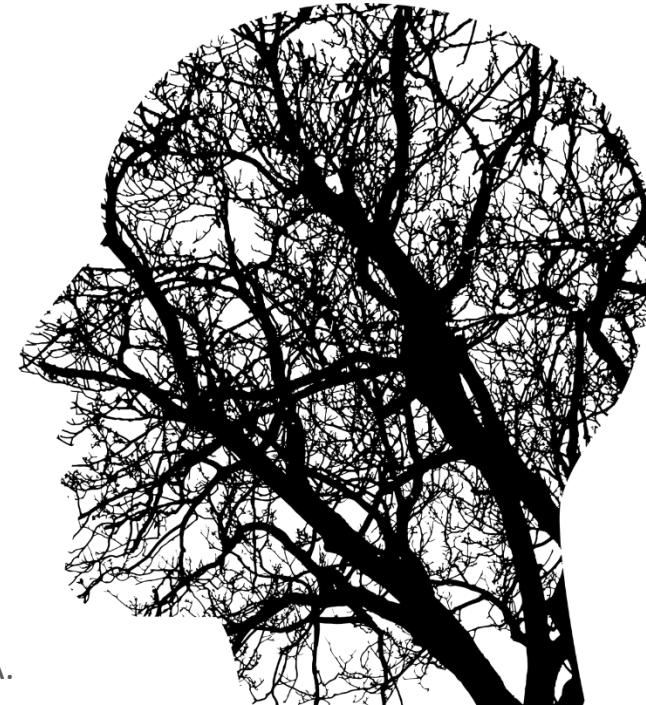
## COMPREHENDING TEXT

Listening  
Reading  
Viewing



## COMPOSING TEXT

Speaking  
Writing  
Creating



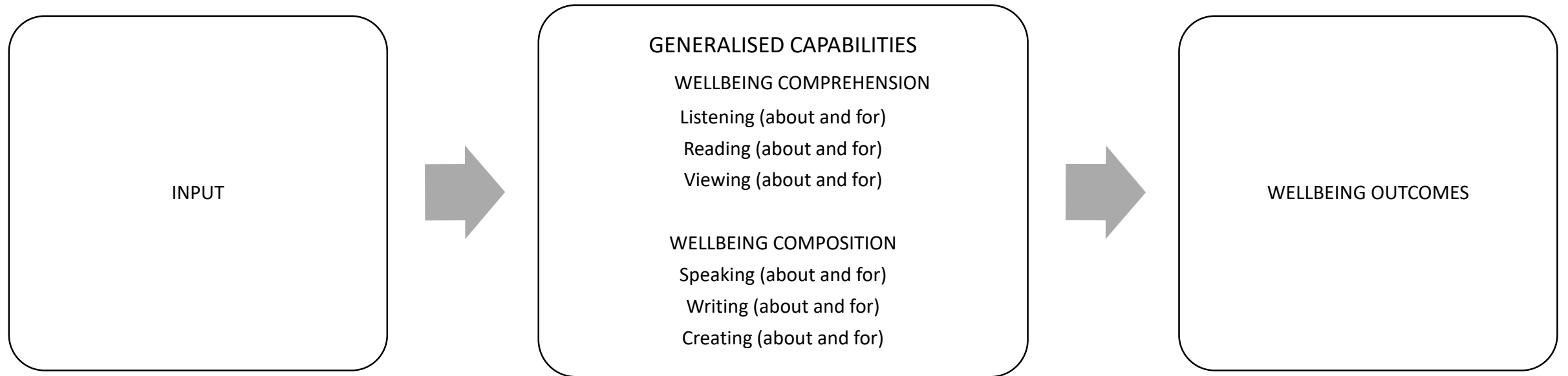


## YOUR TURN

Discuss with a partner to create school based examples for how each of the six the modes of communication are used *about and for* wellbeing

Reading, Writing  
Listening, Speaking  
Viewing, Creating

# The Capability Model of Wellbeing Literacy



Amyrta Sen- Capability is what *we can be and do*, not what *we have been and done*



# How well do you do?

*I have many words I can think of to communicate about well-being.*

*I know a lot about well-being.*

*I know how to improve my well-being.*

*I have the skills to understand information about well-being.*

*I have the skills to express myself about well-being.*

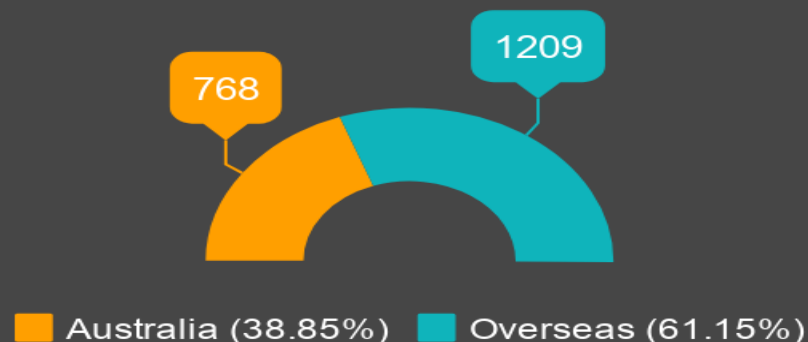
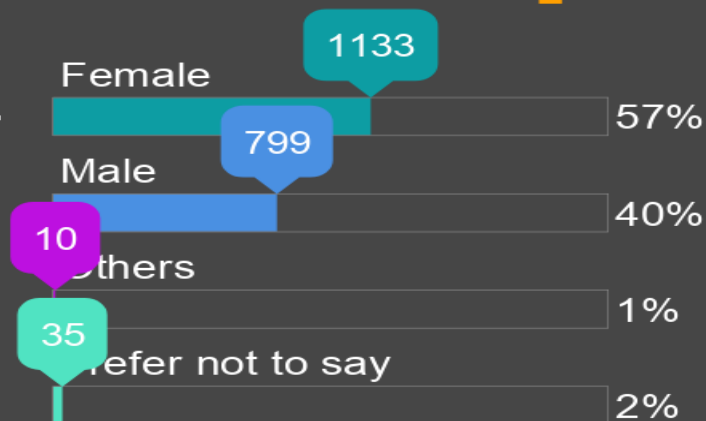
*I can communicate about well-being in multiple ways (e.g., writing, listening, drawing) to suit the needs of my audience.*

# About Participants

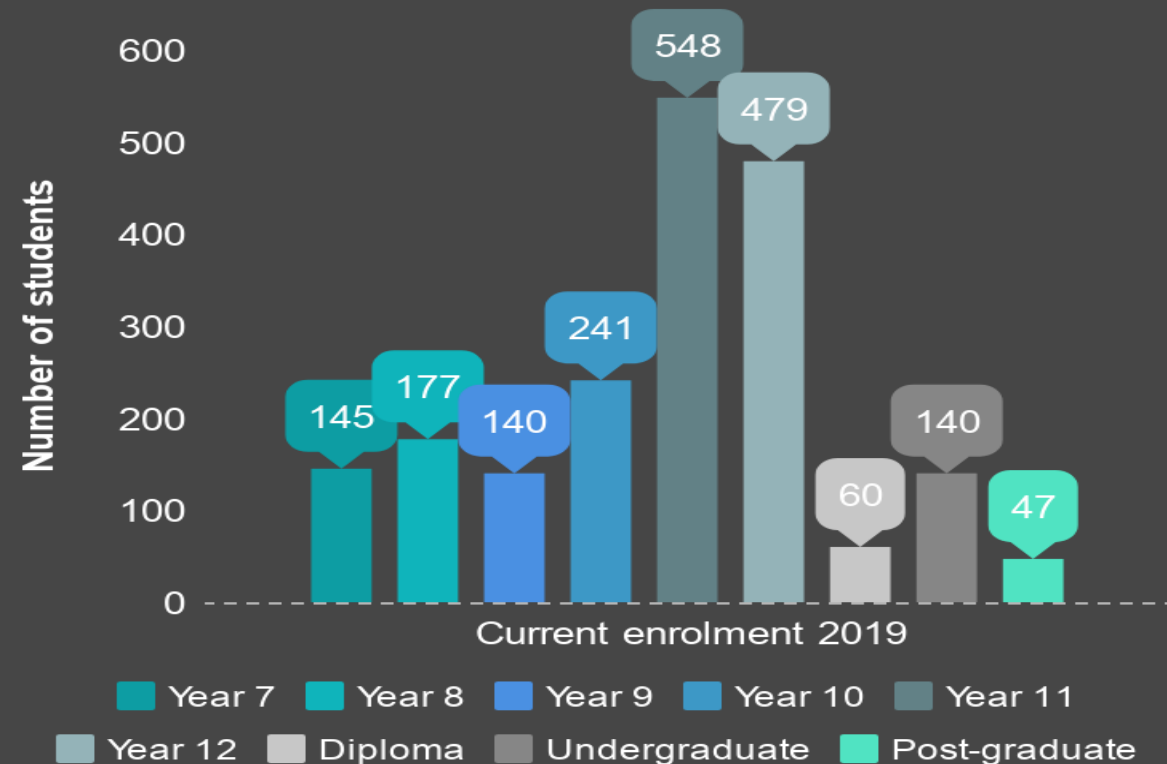
## How many?

1977

participants



## Where do participants live?



# Wellbeing Literacy

## Sample mean

### Vocabulary

I have many words I can think of to communicate about wellbeing

4.90

SD=1.30

### Knowledge

I know a lot about wellbeing

4.79

SD=1.33

### Skills

I know how to improve my wellbeing

4.98

SD=1.31

### Comprehension

I have the skills to understand information about wellbeing

5.27

SD=1.24

### Composing

I have the skills to express myself about wellbeing

5.01

SD=1.31

### Literacy

I can communicate about wellbeing in multiple ways to suit the needs of my audience

4.86

SD=1.36

## Reliability

.88

Cronbach's Alpha

7-point rating scale: 1 = Strongly disagree to 7 = Strongly agree



# Let's see what wellbeing literacy is related to?

## **Positive indicators include:**

Life Satisfaction  
Happiness  
Perception of significant relationships  
Peer connectedness  
Parent connectedness  
Connectedness to community

## **Capabilities:**

Attention regulation  
Mindful acceptance  
Goal striving  
Competency  
Emotion regulation - Reappraisal  
Resilience  
Autonomy  
Self-efficacy

























## **Risk factors:**

Emotion regulation - Suppression  
Loneliness  
Negative Peer Pressure  
Bullying  
Cyber-bullying

## **Mental health outcomes:**

Depression  
Anxiety  
Stress

# Wellbeing Literacy & its correlates

	Positive Indicators	Capabilities	Risk Factors	Mental Health Outcomes
<b>Vocabulary</b> I have many words I can think of to communicate about wellbeing	 .25 to .37	 .12 to .44	 -.10 to -.17	 -.11 to -.19
<b>Knowledge</b> I know a lot about wellbeing	 .26 to .34	 .14 to .41	 -.06 to -.16	 -.07 to -.16
<b>Skills</b> I know how to improve my wellbeing	 .28 to .48	 .19 to .48	 -.14 to -.25	 -.24 to -.34
<b>Comprehension</b> I have the skills to understand information about wellbeing	 .28 to .40	 .18 to .48	 -.06 to -.27	 -.11 to -.21
<b>Composing</b> I have the skills to express myself about wellbeing	 .31 to .46	 .21 to .53	 -.17 to -.24	 -.21 to -.32
<b>Literacy</b> I can communicate about wellbeing in multiple ways to suit the needs of my audience	 .25 to .38	 .18 to .42	 -.10 to -.15	 -.12 to -.20



**By focussing on what students learn, rather than “wellbeing interventions” we place positive education in a learning discourse rather than a health/illness discourse.**

**Importantly, we escape the negativity bias trap that inevitably comes with medical/health discourse ie the trap of seeing positive education only as illness prevention or protective.**





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# *Teach rather than Treat*





*Educate rather  
than medicate*



# Where to next?

- (1) Wellbeing literacy and language research stream at Centre for Positive Psychology
- (2) Wellbeing literacy is one of several capabilities (or “thriveabilities” within Thriveability Theory)
- (3) More data being collected within Wellbeing Profiler
- (4) PhD student Hanchao Hou developing more comprehensive measure of Wellbeing Literacy
- (5) Workshop on WB Literacy at forthcoming IPPA World Congress in Melbourne
- (6) Looking to develop “embodied pedagogy” methods for teachers to use based on the six modes of communication about and for wellbeing
- (7) Ultimately aiming for an Australian state government to develop a “wellbeing literacy continuum” for all schools within a state

