VALUES IN ACTION:
Shaping positive futures

Report

June 2009
Values in Action: Shaping Positive Futures
2009 National Values Education Conference

REPORT
THE CONFERENCE

The National Values Education Conference 2009 was held at the Hotel Realm in Canberra on Thursday April 30 and Friday May 1, 2009.

Its purpose was to bring together keynote speakers, international panelists, stakeholders, teachers, parents, principals and students to:

• provide an update to participants on the Values Education Program;
• share good practice in values education in Australian schools;
• involve student voice in values education;
• draw together the research findings of the Program since 2005; and
• facilitate discussion about future directions for values education.

Workshops and presentations provided the impetus for discussion on current and future directions in values education in Australia and internationally with targeted input from speakers from the United Kingdom, India and Malaysia.

The Conference program along with background information on the keynote presenters is included as an attachment to this report.

Actions recommended by the Conference

1. That the report from this event be forwarded to the National Curriculum Board.
2. That a request be made that Values Education — its concepts as embedded in the National Framework, and its products as developed through this program — be included in instructions to those writing current and future elements of the National Curriculum.
3. That the reference group for Values Education and ACSA act as general agents for the promotion of Values Education.

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The Conference was organised and managed by the Australian Curriculum Studies Association (ACSA) on behalf of the Australian Government Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR). This report was prepared by David McRae on behalf of the Conference organisers.

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CONTENTS

Conference Opening
Opening Address: Dr Michele Bruniges, Deputy Secretary, COAG and Schooling, Australian Government, Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations

Keynote Addresses
Learning Power and Values: Reconciling the personal with the public in an inquiry-based curriculum: Dr Ruth Deakin Crick, University of Bristol, UK
What Works: Values and wellbeing pedagogy as best practice: Professor Terry Lovat, Pro Vice-Chancellor, University of Newcastle, NSW
Values Education: An Indian perspective: Ameeta Wattal, Principal, Springdales School, New Delhi, India

Workshop Sessions
Conversation with Ruth Deakin-Crick
Conversation with Ameeta Mulla Wattal
Values in Action Schools Project: Engaging the disengaged
Values in Action Schools Project: Values through ICT and philosophy
Practical strategies for developing cultural sensitivity in the classroom
Toward a Curriculum of Giving: Transforming education from within
The Living Values Educator Training Program
Values in Action Schools Project: Building inclusion
Values in Action Schools Project: Out of apathy
The Holistic Planning and Teaching Framework: An Indigenous perspective that explores the critical connections between land, language and culture
Resourcing Teachers of Philosophy and Critical Thinking: The Australian Philosophy Teachers’ Network
Students’ voices on cyber bullying
Different times, different places, different values?

The Student Experience

Updates and Overviews
Values in Action School Projects and Resources: Curriculum Corporation
Values Education: Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations
Interactive Session: The Australian Context: Where does Values Education fit with the ‘Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians’ and the National Curriculum?

Concluding Keynote Address
Riding the Rockies by Rail, and other journeys: The learning experiences that change lives: John Marsden

Concluding Session

Conference Program
Background Information on Keynote Presenters
CONFERENCE OPENING

After a brief introduction from the Conference facilitator Tony Mackay (Executive Director, Centre for Strategic Education), participants were welcomed to Country by Matilda House, a Ngambri woman. She confirmed the importance of education especially for Indigenous Australians. She had been at a ‘Dare to Lead’ function the day before where awards were made for excellent school performance in the education of Indigenous children and was very heartened by what she had seen and heard. ‘Wonderful things are happening. We all need the best for our children’, she said in expressing her best wishes for the outcomes of the conference.

Conference Opening - Dr Michele Bruniges, Deputy Secretary, Council of Australian Governments and Schooling, Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations

Dr Michele Bruniges began by welcoming everyone to this year’s conference. She noted that the global financial crisis can have a significant impact on young people, and that educators are in an important position of being able to shape positive futures for the students in their care. They can assist in developing and safeguarding the essential qualities of resilience, hope and empathy. She also made mention of the research indicating that the explicit teaching of values assists in developing skills and attitudes in young people that allow them to productively live, work and play in today’s society.

Dr Bruniges then welcomed this year’s national and international keynote speakers, dinner speaker and workshop presenters, whom she said would “lead us in reflecting how the Australian values education experience has grown in its understanding about what works in schools and communities”. She advised delegates that the speakers would bring to the conference a unique and varied perspective about values education.

Dr Bruniges moved on to talk about progress since last year’s conference. She named two highlights, one being the collaborative project based on the experience and information gained from consultations with Values Education project officers in all jurisdictions and educational sectors. This project was also supported by the peak bodies representing parents, principals and teachers, teacher educator groups, academic advisors and other stakeholders. This project, she said, has led to a professional learning package for all jurisdictions.

Secondly, she noted that the Government has also funded a Pilot to provide teachers with the opportunity to engage with Positive Psychology at two conferences held earlier this year. This built on the work of Professor Martin Seligman at last year’s National Values Conference, where he outlined the need for the explicit teaching of confidence, wellbeing and values as a method by which we can safeguard and develop resilience in young people.

Dr Bruniges related her experiences as both a teacher and a mother, and thinking about how to best prepare young people to deal with the many circumstances they may encounter. She was grateful that further research and resources now exist to help our students develop “not only an understanding of Pythagoras’ theories, but also, as Seligman would say, an understanding of mental wellness.”

Dr Bruniges then recognised the important role of schools and teachers play in developing student wellbeing. She stated that the various elements of the Values Education Program build on, and are complementary to, the Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians which, last year, confirmed values as a priority for Australian schools and young people. Like the Hobart and Adelaide Declarations before it, she said, the Melbourne Declaration is an important commitment from Education Ministers around the country on what they believe education should provide to the whole child. They affirm that “as well as knowledge and skills, a school’s legacy to young people should include national values of democracy, equity and justice, and personal values and attributes such as honesty, resilience and respect for others.” It is Dr Bruniges’ belief that the Values Education Program is well
placed to provide Australian schools and teachers with the resources, evidence-based research and professional learning needed to assist educators working towards providing young people with these values. In a time when terms such as ‘economic, social and personal resilience’ are used by the media and researchers to encourage people to develop protective factors in their lives, she said, it is important that all students “have opportunities to nurture their physical and mental wellbeing as well”.

With relation to research, Dr Bruniges discussed recent research in the UK, released by The Children’s Society in February this year, into what makes young people more resilient and able to lead healthy, satisfying lives. It examined what the conditions for a good childhood are, the barriers to achieving a good childhood, and the changes that could be made, on the basis of evidence, to improve things. Dr Bruniges shared a conclusion reached: that excessive individualism, manifested in high family break-ups, teenage unkindness and poverty, is causing a range of problems for children. She also said that the report shows the impact of poor mental health on young people and the growing costs this has for society. The work in the Values Education Program and programs such as Positive Education and MindMatters are therefore important in developing safeguards for young people who may be more vulnerable to developing mental health issues

Dr Bruniges then reminded conference attendees about the release of the Final Report of the Values Education Good Practice Schools Project Stage 2 ‘At the Heart of What We Do, Values Education at the Centre of Schooling’. She described it as the work of 25 clusters of schools across Australia who engaged in active projects that explored ways of improving approaches to the explicit teaching of values in schools and implementing the National Framework for Values Education in Australian Schools. It argues persuasively the capacity of Values Education to positively change school culture, attitudes and beliefs, and be at the heart of schooling.

The Good Practice Schools Project is being further expanded, Bruniges stated, by the new national project, the Values in Action Schools Project. She described it as building on the previous work, with a strategic focus on the development of interfaith and intercultural understandings; student wellbeing; sustainability; civics and citizenship; social inclusion; and learning outcomes. With its fifteen clusters comprising 86 schools and education centres from all jurisdictions and sectors and from metropolitan, regional, rural and remote schools, the project will impact on some 2500 teachers and over 38,000 students in these schools and thousands of parents and families in these communities. Dr Bruniges described the mix of clusters, which include cross-border projects, cross-sectoral projects, extremely remote areas in far north Queensland, and an innovative project working with young people in Youth Detention Centres. She was pleased to note that the day before the conference, the clusters met for the second time at a National Briefing Session in Canberra and shared their stories of progress to-date in creating an inclusive values-based school community.

Dr Bruniges then referred to the Government’s social inclusion agenda and how the Values Education Program and the explicit teaching of values make significant contributions to this wider goal. Values education is not a ‘one size fits all’ program, she said, but rather a contextual type of learning that underpins all that is done in a school. The nature of the program means it responds to individual school and community needs and works in a ‘ground up’ fashion.

She referred to Senator Ursula Stephens, Parliamentary Secretary for Social Inclusion, and her recent speech about the challenges of promoting and strengthening mutual understanding, acceptance and social inclusion among all Australians. Senator Stephens said this includes the role of intercultural education in building bridges among global citizens and helping young Australians to develop a critical appreciation of different belief systems and their impact on cultures, traditions and customs. This is work the Values Education Program is doing in a range of ways.

Senator Stephens acknowledged that “gaining intercultural understanding takes time and patience and is not always comfortable. But the rewards are great. A deeper and well-rounded understanding of those around us that in turn creates strong and vibrant
communities where people care for one another.” Dr Bruniges stated that this is true of the values education journey in this country. It was not initially comfortable to talk about values, she said, but there is now a common language, mutual understanding and evidence of great rewards in our schools as a result of values education.

Dr Bruniges took the opportunity to acknowledge the support of all those with an interest in the values area and the work being undertaken by jurisdictions and education sectors in delivering the Values Education Professional Learning Package. Dr Bruniges told the conference that Values Education Program’s stakeholders identified professional learning as a factor that needed strengthening in the national implementation of the Program. She described the Government’s response which was to provide funding for development opportunities for teachers, and outlined the work being delivered by stakeholders. This includes:

- The Australian Council of Deans of Education will conduct forums for teacher educators, linking with the Australian Joint Council of Professional Teaching Associations, on a project examining the links between Values Education and Quality Teaching and ensuring teacher educators are up to date with the latest research on Values Education.
- Principals Australia is developing online tools to provide school leaders with practical advice for promoting values education in their schools.
- The Australian Joint Council of Professional Teacher Associations is also maximising and sustaining the impact of their previous Values Education work with workshops and seminars.
- The Australian Council of State School Organisations with the Australian Parents Council is working to build strong partnerships based on shared understandings of Values Education with a strong interfaith and intercultural focus that will engage parents in a meaningful way.

She commended these organisations – noting there are many others – who are working diligently to ensure our schools and our teachers are well supported in leading values education across Australia.

In closing, Dr Bruniges stated that, like conference participants, the Australian Government is committed to building strong, resilient communities where everybody has the opportunity to fully participate socially and economically, particularly in disadvantaged communities. The Values Education Program, she said, is a successful, vital and vibrant part of achieving this goal. She thanked everyone for their commitment, passion and time in making values education a core part of Australian schools.

She stated that conference discussions over the next two days would be important with participants thinking about how they can take action to shape the positive futures of many young Australians. Dr Bruniges said, that after the conference, “it is your action that will provide hope, opportunities and a world class education for our young people and develop in them optimism, resilience, hope for the future and understandings about what it means to be an active and engaged citizen in this country. These endeavours are not easy and will challenge you on many levels. I hope that the steps you take will bring great rewards first and foremost to the students you work with and to you and your school communities.”
Learning Power and Values: Reconciling the personal with the public in an inquiry-based curriculum — Dr Ruth Deakin Crick, University of Bristol, UK

Ruth Deakin-Crick began by asserting that what was happening in Australia in Values Education was ground-breaking internationally. She introduced her presentation saying that it would cover three areas: How values are integral to learning and pedagogy, relevant findings from research, and finally an account of her own work in the Northern Territory and Singleton, NSW.

Can we define learning? Deakin Crick remembered this question emerging in a discussion with her learned academic colleagues at Bristol and the struggle there had been in finding any clear definition. And yet in a nursery school consultation on core values there had been much less difficulty. They had developed a language for learning through dance, music and drama. Deakin Crick illustrated this through a story about the role of a ‘making meaning spider’ in learning. To the tune of ‘Incey-wincey spider’ they sang:

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Web weaving spider
Had a silky thread
Connected all the thoughts
To make ideas in his head
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This photo shows the spider web of connections being constructed.

One of these students inspected a School Inspector and said, ‘Oi you, come here. You’ve been working hard all day. You’ve been resilient. How about a sticker?’ The sticker was a tortoise, the animal metaphor the students used for ‘resilience’.

These ideas had spilt over from the school into the community with mums learning and changing their habits, stepping back and ‘being like a wise owl’. They wrote a pamphlet about what was happening at the school (the Chief cleaner was a key player in this process of community connection), and found a shop where they painted a mural about what was being learnt, a pictorial representation of the process.
All this was going on below the radar of formal inspection and accountability processes. But what was developing was a coherent community approach to core values, stories people told and could tell themselves identifying what is really important — in fact, a complex ecology of understanding.

So what are values? A value is:

- A principle that guides how we behave;
- A focus for our attention and resources;
- A focus for public and private conversations;
- A vehicle for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development;
- A human investment - a verb — 'to value'; and
- An end in itself - a noun.

They are:

- Expressed in relationships between people;
- Carried in people’s hearts;
- Embedded in narratives - big, medium sized and little;
- Experienced and recognised;
- Encountered in the PROCESS and CONTENT of the curriculum;
- Negotiated in public and private dialogue; and
- And, of course, analysed by academics.

So what's learning?

- An outcome to be measured or evaluated;
- A process and a lifelong journey; and
- Almost the same as living and growing.

If attitudes are right, we learn. A Knowledge Worker developed learning power through attention to knowledge, skills understanding, competence and knowledge use in the real world AND values, attitudes, feelings, dispositions, motivation, identity, life stories and worlds. These two collections of ideas are irrevocably entwined.

Our research validates the idea that there are seven dimensions of learning power which have polar opposites.
Deakin Crick offered the observation that these dimensions all needed to come into play having found among some violent young offenders that they had very high levels of resilience but little of the other characteristics. She used the following descriptions to elucidate these ideas.

**Changing and learning v being stuck & static**

I see learning as something I can get better at, and myself as an improving learner. This often reflects a more general interest in ‘self-improvement’, and faith that this is possible. I have a sense of history and of hope. I tend to take ownership of my own learning, and like to be responsible for what I’m learning and how I go about it. I’m usually quite ready to ‘sign up’ to learning tasks that are presented to me.

**Critical curiosity v passivity**

I like to get below the surface of things and see what is really going on. I like to work things out for myself, and to ask my own questions. I tend to go looking for things to understand better, rather than just responding to problems that come my way. I am usually excited by the prospect of learning, and have a good deal of energy for learning tasks and situations. In general, I’m attracted to learning and enjoy a challenge. I value getting at the truth.

**Meaning making v data accumulation**

I tend to look for patterns, connections and coherence in what I am learning, and to seek links between new situations and what I already know or am interested in. I’m on the lookout for ‘horizontal meaning’. I like to make sense of new things in terms of my own experience, and I like learning about what matters to me.
Creativity v rule bound

I like new situations, and will sometimes create novelty and uncertainty 'just to see what happens'. I'll spice things up to stop them being boring. I like playing with possibilities and imagining how situations could be otherwise. I am able to look at problems from different perspectives. I like trying things out even if I don't know where they will lead. I sometimes get my best ideas when I just let my mind float freely, and I don't mind 'giving up mental control' for a while to see what bubbles up. I often use my imagination when I’m learning, and pay attention to images and physical promptings as well as rational thoughts.

Positive learning relationships v isolation or dependence

I like working on problems with other people, especially my friends. I have no difficulty sharing thoughts and ideas with others, and find it useful. I am quite capable of working away at problems on my own, and sometimes prefer it. I don’t feel I have to stick with the crowd for fear of being lonely or isolated, when I’m learning. I have important people at home and in my community who share with me in my learning. I am ready to draw on these when it seems helpful. I feel that I live within a supportive social context.

Strategic Awareness v Robotic

I tend to think about my learning, and plan how I am going to go about it. I usually have a fair idea how long something is going to take me, what resources I am going to need, and my chances of being successful. I am able to talk about the process of learning – how I go about things – and about myself as a learner – what my habits, preferences, aspirations, strengths and weaknesses are.

Resilience v dependence and fragility

I tend to stick at things for a while, even when they are difficult. I don’t give up easily. I often enjoy grappling with things that aren’t easy. I can handle the feelings that tend to crop up during learning: frustration, confusion, apprehension and so on. I have quite a high degree of emotional tolerance when it comes to learning. I’m not easily upset or embarrassed when I can’t immediately figure something out. I don’t immediately look for someone to help me out when I am finding things difficult, or when I get stuck. I’m usually happy to keep trying on my own for a while. I don’t mind if there’s nobody around to ‘rescue’ me.

Deakin Crick showed how these ideas had become part of a testing instrument which can produce a result like this.
This is the result from a young adolescent at some risk. She illustrated a range of ways in which these data could be collated and rendered, for example through bar graphs and pie charts using a class or even a school as a cohort.

Deakin Crick noted that 14-16 year-olds tended to produce the lowest levels of learning power, and that this may have something to do with biology but also something that happens to young people at school. At tertiary level her research has shown that the highest levels of learning power are found in mature students going back to education with clear goals in mind, and that 18-21 year-olds going straight on from school tend to have lowest levels.

Her research has found that learning power is positively associated with:
- Attainment;
- What teachers do AND what they believe; and
- Learner centred practices.

Underachieving students consistently tend to score low on four of the seven dimensions. Tentatively at this time, her research suggests that such students are characterised by:

- Passivity in learning dispositions;
- Accepting things at face value;
- Lacking strategic awareness – of thinking, feeling and planning/doing;
- Not looking for meaning and sense making in their learning;
- Being ‘stuck and static’ in their sense of themselves as learners; and
- Being unable to ‘tell their story’, or telling it in “Facebook” fragments.

Deakin Crick suggested that there are four ‘stations’ in the learning journey.
Typically, at school we attend to the third; the primary location of learning power is in the second. The first station is the self and unique. One of the best ways to engage young people who haven’t moved beyond this point is through their life story. The fourth station suggests the competencies which systems of education are supposed to deliver. Unless we move between the personal and public in our pedagogies we limit what we can achieve. The question for Values Education is, how to effectively integrate Stations 1 and 2? Significance is achieved when the self is engaged.

The Effective Lifelong Learning Inventory (ELLI) is an assessment event that provides a framework for a mentored conversation that moves between SELF and TEXT (curriculum) or between self reflection and a negotiated and publicly assessable learning outcome. It is a coaching relationship that encourages self reflection rather than that of expert and acolyte. We know that students can be self-reflective in very thoughtful and insightful ways as illustrated by these examples.

I used to be quite bored; now I can always find things to do. I’m in charge. We control our own minds, so we can do it if we want to (11 year old)

I want to get better at being a learner; grow up and enjoy life. I want to learn! (10 year old)

Now I can ask questions, instead of wondering what the answer is. (10 year old)

(What matters most is…) knowing all I can do; I’ve got all these things in my head that can help me. (six year old)

Deakin Crick showed various inventive ways in which teachers had adapted this framework for use in their classroom work — finding suitable and meaningful language, using graphic symbols and so on — and some very strong positive responses from students.

She then turned to focusing in on ‘Cultural synergy through metaphor, imagery, signs, symbols and story’ and provided an example of this at work with a group of Aboriginal students from Singleton in NSW.
Deakin Crick worked with this group, beginning by establishing a language for learning that was couched in their own lives and experiences. They developed animal icons for the seven dimensions and provided their own explanations of the relationships. For example:

- ‘Changing and learning’ became a **snake**, because a snake sheds his skin, dislocates his mouth/jaw to fit in food, uses venom & constriction to capture its prey, and changes shape to adapt to its environment; and
- ‘Critical curiosity’ became an **emu**, because an emu is always looks up to see what is around its environment, is curious, explores and is adventurous, stares and is proud and strong.

Deakin Crick explained that the symbol mediates between experiential knowledge, traditional stories and knowledge about learning and co-creating in the global information age. The dynamics of this learner-driven enquiry include:

- Personal Choice: concrete place/object;
- Observation – description;
- Generating questions;
- Uncovering Narratives;
- Mapping;
- Connecting with existing knowledge;
- Interface with curriculum requirements;
- Assessment – validation; and
- Application in the real world.

The personal choice element of this process meant students making that choice and then developing questions, matters they would like to investigate. Deakin Crick provided an example of Sonny, who had chosen his dog as the subject of investigation. He questioned:

- Why do animals end up in shelters?
- Why do they lock people up?
- Does locking people up make a difference?
- How have they got the power to lock people up?
- What are their rights?

Sonny was a shy student and when asked about the reasons for his choice he said the following.
Yeah, I had to pick my top thing and then do one of those things about it.
So we picked…?
My dog Toby.
I notice he’s got a lovely heart around him. ..tell me why you picked him?
Well because I got him from my Mum’s cousin and I haven’t saw her for a long time, yeah and yeah, that’s probably it.
So what's special about Toby?
We’ve had him for a bit over three years and yeah, I just like him I guess.
So has sharing the objects and talking to your [teacher] helped you understand yourself as a learner?
Yep.
So what do you think has been the most important lesson there?
How much I like Toby.
What makes Toby special?
He’s the only dog that when he runs away, he comes back. (LAUGH)
Oh well I’ll tell you, most of them run away don’t they?
Yeah, because all my other dogs run away and then they don’t come back.

Students used various means to express their personal stories including this collage. You can see aspects of their iconic animals and birds. Deakin Crick provided other examples of how students had used this enquiry method to investigate topics and matters of importance to them.

The students worked together to develop a story that would provide a narrative to illustrate the interweaving of the values they had been thinking about. After some time, they decided to put themselves in the place of the animals and birds and pooled their thinking and gifts to develop the ‘Taronga Zoo Break Out’. Deakin Crick finished with an extract from that story.

This is a story about some animals that lived in a zoo called Taronga which is in Guringai country. Most of these animals came from different nations that were all over the land that is now called Australia. All the animals would dream about the time when they could return to their own country, hear the stories from the elders, learn the laws, know the ways of their land. At night when all the people were gone they would gather in their language groups and talk about the old ways, the good ways, when there were no fences and
captivity. One group of animals were from the Wonnaruah nation and had their own names in the language. A willy wag tail or didijiri, the emu or kungkurung, the snake or ta nipanga, the eagle or ka-wul, the echidna or kuntji kukan, the platypus or pikan and some ants or yunrring that were nearly always too busy to stop and talk. Always the talk would turn to their dreams and of the country that they all wished to return to. …

For the first time since Willy Wagtail told him about his dreams, Snake felt a stirring of excitement wriggle all the way down his coils. He was beginning to get it. He started to feel himself grow and change. He was already learning to ask questions and be curious, like Emu. Now he was learning how important it is to be patient and stick at things, like Echidna. His skin felt tight all of a sudden. …

A shape flashed across the light of the moon and its shadow fell momentarily on the scene. All the animals fell silent. The Eagle landed, a little higher up the leaning gum tree, spread her wings magnificently and folded them away with a shake of her feathers. No one spoke. They were all curious to hear what the Eagle was going to say.

‘The moment has arrived. We have anticipated it. Now, everything is in place. Under the full moon, I have called you together to combine your strengths, summon the power of all your learning and fulfil your dream. I have planned for this night. I see everything, from the smallest ant to the whole zoo, the city and the vast bush, stretching out West as far as the eye can see. I see each moment: how it arrived on the wings of the past and how it will launch into the great sky of the future. Learn from me as you have learned from each other. I give you your purpose, your direction, your focus and, most important of all, your readiness to accept your responsibility to yourself to achieve your dream.’

All the animals breathed a deep breath of the midnight air and solemnly vowed to accept their responsibility to themselves and the group. They knew that, before the night was over, if they all played their part, they would be free. …

One day, they got together again and agreed that they should leave the bush. One dream had been fulfilled. The city children had been sad to lose them. The bush would always be there when they needed to go back to it. They had learned how to travel. They had all survived crossing the F3 the busiest road in their world, to get back to country. It had taken skill, determination and courage to do it but together they had made it, and had learnt together how to do it.

Now, they knew they would go on learning for the rest of their lives. They would never go back to the zoo. They had returned home to the Hunter Valley, home to the Wonnaruah people, their home. Today the animals are working around the schools of the Singleton area, helping children and students to grow and change by passing on their truths and being everlasting symbols of what they discovered on their adventure.

Before public airing, this story was provided to the Wonnaruah Elders for consideration. With some changes, they agreed to its release. Its truth and meaningfulness is evident. It is a fine example of learning power in action.
What Works: Values and wellbeing pedagogy as best practice
— Professor Terry Lovat, Pro Vice-Chancellor, University of Newcastle, NSW

Professor Terry Lovat took the audience on a journey through what had happened with Values Education in Australia since 2002 from his personal perspective. He rejected the tag of ‘expert’ but as his talk progressed it was clear that it was a story of deeply developing immersion and interest.

He was engaged in 2002 as a consultant to the program. His task was to read an initial report and make comment. He remembers thinking at the time that this was an area which would probably remain marginal, ‘boutique’ and not be likely to influence mainstream practice. But in this report he found much to interest and engage him. He was struck by dealing with something so fundamental to good education. It was concepts like this from the 2003 Values Education Study that leapt out at him.

Lovat then provided some dot points about the concepts that had struck him in his reading of the Values Education Study, which included:

- Student welfare
- Social justice
- Community service
- Human rights
- Intercultural awareness
- Environmental sustainability
- Mutual respect
- Cohesion and peace
- Social, emotional and behavioural wellbeing
- Building communities
- Student self-discipline
- Student resilience
- Pedagogical strength
- Improved outcomes
- Student engagement
- ‘Doing well’ at school
- Student self-management
- Building a learning community

He singled out resilience, pedagogy, learning communities, engagement, and … improved outcomes! This was obviously a matter of some interest.

The other matter that caught his attention was that ‘you didn’t have to do much in terms of the big agendas — computers, class size, and other issues related to resource bids — to make a difference.’ What was needed was some time to rethink, relate, think about content and language and behavioural strategies. Those were the things at the heart of it.

In 2005 when he was the Chair of the National Council of Deans of Education, the National Framework for Values Education in Australian Schools was published. This has been a great document he felt, standing the test of time and, perhaps more importantly, a major corrective to where education had been going. He drew attention to the words with which it begins (with his own emphases).

“Australia’s future depends upon each citizen having the necessary knowledge, understanding, skills and values for a productive and rewarding life in an educated, just and open society. High quality schooling is essential to achieving this vision … Schooling provides a foundation for young Australians’ intellectual, physical, social, moral, spiritual and aesthetic development.”

These powerful words are from the Adelaide Declaration, a MCEETYA document from 1999 which had had a major impact on Australian schooling. He thought that in the 1990s Australian schools at the time were caught up in policy thinking that had drifted towards a low
level estimation of what education was about based on instrumentalist competencies. But this was about values, and the Declaration asserted that:

*Education is as much about building character as ... equipping ... specific skills.*

The 2003 Values Education Study made the claim that Values Education could strengthen:

- Optimism;
- Self-esteem;
- Commitment to personal fulfilment;
- Ethical judgment; and
- Social responsibility.

This moved the debate into a different arena more closely associated with the real problems confronting young people, taking a wider and more essential view.

This was also the time when the ‘Quality Teaching’ push began. Lovat wasn’t intimately involved but he did make appointments at Newcastle to support this, notably Jim Ladwig and Jenny Gore, whose work in Queensland and then later in NSW became influential. Lovat began to follow this work more closely and started to see connections, tentative at first, with Values Education. The first of these was the overwhelming confidence in the power of a teacher to make a difference, an underpinning of optimism and certainty about the contribution teachers can and do make to society.

This was in line with the work of the US Learning Task Force (Carnegie 1994) on Student Achievement. Widely criticised at the time, for example, for looking at the ‘wrong’ research and thinking, providing political offence and challenge to the orthodoxies of stakeholders over time, it proposed among other things that we might think about schools, rather than students, failing, and challenged the ideas of Talcott Parsons, Jencks and Plowden whose very influential presentiments suggested a structural powerlessness. Schools couldn’t make a difference; they were only there for those who could achieve. There was also an idea, common in government schools but also Lovat thought in the non-government sectors that values had little place in schooling. Yet here was an influential report proposing that values-based, ‘whole person’ learning can engage and make the difference, and redefine learning.

And suddenly the connections with quality teaching appeared to Lovat to be much more profound. Here was a redefinition of learning based on careful research which included:

- Intellectual Depth;
- Communicative Capacity;
- Empathic Character;
- Reflective Powers, including self-reflection;
- Self-management; and
- Self-knowing.

The whole person must be considered, the whole intellect, social, moral and spiritual. This is the hook on which quality teaching hangs. It is important to think about this as a complex, multi-layered matrix rather than a two-dimensional entity.

At the same time Lovat was reminded of the work of Newmann et al, ‘a very rich source for understanding teaching and learning’, who proposed among other things that the ‘pedagogical dynamic needed for sound teaching’ included:

- Sound techniques
- Teacher professional development
- Catering for diversity
- School coherence
- ‘Creation of a trustful, supportive ambience’. 
These build in interest, Lovat suggested, with ‘Creation of a trustful, supportive ambience’ as the cherry on the cake. ‘Such an obvious thing to say, but how often it is ignored in the punitive, harsh, competitive environments that schools can become.’

At more or less the same time (1997) Linda Darling-Hammond was producing her groundbreaking studies of how quality teaching under these sorts of definitions could overcome significant challenges.

Lovat reflected on his presentation at the 2005 Values Education Forum, where he thought ‘we were on the track of something. But looking back we were very tentative about the sorts of connections we were making. It made sense. It was touching the buttons of the issues that people were dealing with. It was by no means ‘marginalised’ and certainly not ‘boutique’. We were fairly and squarely in the mainstream!’

In 2006 Lovat decided to be bolder and, influenced by Newmann and Carnegie, began to develop a critique. He was concerned that these ideas did not become regularised and standardised. He was aware of what happens to great ideas when they become captured by systemic education.

But then the Final Report of the Values Education Good Practice Schools Stage 1 was released and, again, Lovat noted, this was not marginal stuff. There was a buzz about it, teachers were rediscovering teaching and its pleasures and impact, sometimes for the first time. This was the result of a holistic agenda with strong and central messages like this.

The Final Report indicated that values education was having a profound effect on the total educational environment of a school, affecting:

- Relationships of care and trust;
- Teacher practice;
- Partnerships with parents and the community;
- Classroom climate and ethos;
- Student attitudes and behaviour;
- Student resilience and social skills;
- Intellectual depth of teacher and student understanding; and
- Student achievement.

Evidence was beginning to emerge of these sorts of things occurring.

- Intellectual depth among students demonstrated by a willingness to become involved in complex thinking across the curriculum;
- Greater levels of student engagement in mainstream curriculum;
- Pedagogical approaches that match those espoused by ‘Quality Teaching’;
- Taking a ‘whole school approach’;
- Quality relationships within and between the schools of the cluster;
- Modelling, living out and practising the values that are being enunciated in the curriculum;
- Greater student responsibility over local, national and international issues;
- Greater student resilience and social skills, and improved relationships of care and trust;
- (Students developed) a greater sense of awareness and a personal sense of right and wrong;
- Values Education involves change … (it results) in major development of curriculum and pedagogy;
- Enabled teachers to develop what they had already been doing (ie. implicitly) into something more explicit … teacher buy-in and personal ownership;
- (Enabled staff) to critically reflect on their teaching … am I walking the talk …
- Develops higher order thinking skills;
- Difference in behaviour and expectations;
Changes to teaching and learning, school practices;
The way that most teachers model behaviour to the students has changed; the way many teachers speak to students has changed;
Since curriculum and pedagogy are inextricably linked, teachers are also having to review their practices;
Values Education (is) concerned with educating our students to think well;
A catalyst for conversation, a coat-hanger for ideas and a platform from which to build (values) projects;
Provided) opportunities … to explore from within and reflect on our identity and purpose;
Since curriculum and pedagogy are inextricably linked, teachers are also having to review their practices;
Numerous positive spin-offs … (students) settled into their work more readily …
Created an environment where (the agreed values) were constantly shaping classroom activity, student behaviour was improving, teachers and students were happier, and school was calmer.
Offered (to students) a sense of belonging, connectedness, resilience and a sense of self … reflective change … has occurred in the participant teachers and schools.
A measurable decline … in the incidence of inappropriate behaviour … (elevation) in (the students’) awareness of the need to be tolerant of others, to accept responsibility for their social interactions and their ability to communicate knowledge of the importance of values
One of the biggest achievements is the development of the students’ ability to articulate feelings and emotions … emotional development of the students is clearly evident … transference … becoming evident in all aspects of classroom teaching and in the students’ ability to deal with conflict in the playground.
Overall feeling in the class is calmer and more cohesive … (has provided) a framework for our class to feel comfortable to discuss emotions and … a specific language to talk about how they are feeling.
The school is ‘a much better place to be’. Children are ‘well behaved’, demonstrate improved self-control, relate better to each other and, most significantly, share with teachers a common language of expectations of values;
I have learned the necessity of asking questions that evoke students’ deep thinking, and I now value the need to create interpersonal intimacy and trust within my classroom;
Evident in the linking of values with a sense of personal achievement, a responsibility to share, a sense of self-belief, commitment, self efficacy and confidence;
Everyone in the classroom exchange, teachers and students alike, became more conscious of trying to be respectful, trying to do their best, and trying to give others a fair go. We also found that by creating an environment where these values were constantly shaping classroom activity, teachers and students were happier, and school was calmer … student learning was improving.

With the Values Education Good Practice Schools Project Stage 2, Lovat noted new learning and understandings were emerging.

The first step was to improve ambience. If the classroom ambience was not right, then arguably, nothing else will happen. Students pick up on hypocrisy in an instant. But Lovat argued, if that’s all there was to it we mightn’t need schools. We could just have welfare centres.

The second step to take was: Can you teach virtue? So the task became two-fold.

1. Establishing an environment of respect, trust and care
   (on the basis that modelling values impels change), but as well
2. Teaching values
   (focusing on student learning for self-empowerment and ownership).
Dewey, of course, had said this a long time ago, that the nub of schooling was moral induction; and it is at the core of Vygotsky’s thinking that the implicit must be made explicit in language. If a school doesn’t do this, it doesn’t get done.

Lovat advised that he and his team were working on the evidence that was coming in from the Values Education Good Practice Schools Stage 2 Projects. The language was becoming stronger and more confident. There was much more talk, Lovat noted, about explicit forms of pedagogy and common themes were emerging. Lovat provided examples of this explicitness:

*The principle of explicitness applies more broadly and pervasively than has been previously recognised.*

... values-based schools live and breathe a values consciousness. They become schools where values are thought about, talked about, taught about, reflected upon and enacted across the whole school in all school activities.

Values … explicitly taught across all key learning areas and articulated in all co-curricular activities. They are also explicitly present in the physical school environment, its signage, ceremonies and rituals as well as policies, administration and key documents. The explicit values become ubiquitous, and values ‘teaching’ and values ‘learning’ become part of the embedded consciousness within every school activity.

‘reflective journals … used to develop students’ higher order thinking skills, such as analysing problems, understanding and debating different perspectives, and developing solutions.

Developing a common language for students to discuss, reflect and act on their learning … has had positive, exponential effects that go beyond communicative competence. Having a shared language seems to be at the centre of developing deeper understandings … as it allows students to engage in discussions, clarify their thinking and develop socially constructed connections.

... having a metalanguage provides a pivotal reference point from which students can explore, consolidate and build values-related knowledge.

values-focused pedagogy produced … focused classroom activity, calmer classrooms with students going about their work purposefully, and more respectful behaviour between students… improved student attendance, fewer reportable behaviour incidents … outcomes all testify to good practice at work.

... values education at its best contrasts with traditional didactic, teacher- and content-centred pedagogies … Once started, the pedagogies used for effective values teaching and learning evolved into ‘values-focused pedagogies’ (in general).

Through the ACDE work on *Values Education and Quality Teaching* we had found a double helix with strands interacting to mutual benefit. Andy Furco provided a third strand — Service Learning. Lovat advised that he had not been familiar with this tradition of research and practice, but statements like this provided a clear link and the third component of what we now think of as ‘the Troika’.

*The strongest, most robust, and most consistent finding across service learning experiences are positive impacts on students’ engagement, motivation, self-esteem, empowerment, and pro-social behaviours …*

... the link (is) between these positive impacts and their relationship to academic achievement. Thus … service learning impacts the mediating factors that help students do well academically (Furco, 2008).

‘Moving towards the measurable’ titled the next section of Lovat’s presentation. He began by talking about the status of the evidence which had emerged from the work undertaken in
cluster schools, but Lovat provided some disclaimers about rigid certainty with the evidence. What he felt he could claim on the basis of this evidence was a very high degree of probability. Positive numbers were being attached to effects such as:

- a decrease in poor behaviour referrals;
- more respectful conversations;
- quieter and more focused assemblies with greater respect shown by all;
- students being more independent in their approach to tasks; and
- working more cooperatively and taking greater pride in their work.

The Australian Government then provided funds for a research project. The project to ‘Test and Measure the Impact of Values Education on Student Effects and School Ambience’ (DEEWR, 2009) was conducted by a team led by Lovat and they could now report the following supported by quantitative data.

(Evidence suggests) … a well crafted values education program, functioning as best practice pedagogy … has potential to impact on a range of measures normally associated with student achievement and effective schooling.

These measures include school ambience, student-teacher relationships, student and teacher wellbeing, and student academic diligence.

(School Ambience)
‘calmer’ environment with less conflict and with a reduction in the number of (behaviour-related) referrals

(Student-teacher Relationships)
rise in levels of politeness and courtesy, open friendliness, better manners, offers of help, and students being more kind and considerate

(Wellbeing)
safer and more caring school community, a greater self-awareness, a greater capacity for self-appraisal, self-regulation and enhanced self-esteem

(Academic Diligence)
substantial quantitative and qualitative evidence (of) … observable and measurable improvements in students’ academic diligence, including increased attentiveness, a greater capacity to work independently as well as more cooperatively, greater care and effort being invested in schoolwork and students assuming more responsibility for their own learning.

The jury is in, Lovat suggested. And this is the verdict.

[that]… within the limits imposed by the nature and timing of the study, it is evident that the central question that drove the study, namely,

Can the impact of Values Education on teaching and school ethos, as well as student achievement and behaviour, be tested empirically and observed reliably?

has been answered in the affirmative.

He reiterated the interactive effect of the elements of the troika working together for student wellbeing. Lovat explained that ‘the two original elements of the helix have been tested and not been found wanting. Service learning is an effective additional element.’

To conclude he noted the extraordinary upsurge of interest in Values Education and cited the places he had been invited to speak and the interest in publications on the topic with which he was involved.
In thinking about what works, Lovat offered the following: That there was an energy and dynamism about the Values Education Program and its outcomes have confirmed the assertions contained in the National Framework for Values Education in Australian Schools. Lovat argued that the National Curriculum has to be thought about, but he expressed the same reservations as earlier in his speech about the adoption of any set of ideas by systemic education. He thought that it was critical to saturate teacher education with the findings from the Values Education Program and practical ideas for implementation. He likened Values Education to ‘secret business’, something that the initiates, all teachers he thought, could control by themselves.
Values Education: An Indian perspective
— Ameeta Wattal, Principal, Springdales School, New Delhi, India

After salutations and a memory that her school, Springdales in New Delhi, had a relationship with a Canberra school [Narrabundah College] going back many years, Wattal produced and rang a bell that had been in her family for more than 400 years. It had been present at the invasion by the Moghuls, survived the British colonisation and been moved to many parts of India. But it spoke to her of justice, freedom, fraternity, the values we all strive for.

Wattal came from a poor family but at 16 had taken on a mission, a vocation of service, and became a ‘beater teacher’ keeping 110 children sitting under a tree in order while the ‘teacher teacher’ tried to teach them; a colonial construct she suggested, based on spare the rod, spoil the child. But she lost her job and went back to the convent where she had been educated to begin more education.

She was reminded of this history when she read what one of her students wrote for his graduation valediction.

I do not have to go to Sacred Places, the grounds of my school are holy land. Here my pilgrimage starts and ends. It is here where my universe with its loops and bends lies, each seed that grows, each fist of earth, brings a tiny miracle to birth. A place where the present, past and the future blend together. Where everyday is a beginning and tomorrow never ends. With learning without limitation and a continuity that contends. Here there lies a self always in the making, occupied with possibilities, potential and a vision ready for the taking. Where education is celebrated, where an atmosphere of enlightenment and integrity are created and students brim with joy and divisions are ended and discipline and freedom are clearly comprehended.

Wattal argued that education goes way beyond the classroom. This student’s parents were burnt to death during religious riots in Gujurat. Springdales was supporting students in the area to complete preparation for the Central Board exams at the time. He was one of them. When the time came to leave he asked if he could come with us and arrangements were made for a Hindu family in New Delhi to take this Muslim boy in. It took him some time to get rid of his demons. But, Wattal said, ‘something must have worked’.

Wattal explained that ‘this is the story of my school where education goes beyond the classroom and values rule.’

She argued that the basic concern of education is to enable children to make sense of life and develop their potential, to define and pursue a purpose and recognise the rights of others to do the same. These time-tested tenets are the foundations of any meaningful education, even today. There can be no education which is value-neutral or value-free. The great Indian educationist Dayananand Saraswati said, “In the transaction of education, you are either a mercenary or a missionary.” Society at large speaks a different language and we are all constantly grappling with that. It is about caring for children in a very complex, holistic way. It places on us a huge moral responsibility.

Wattal spends some of her time in legal battles with Right To Information requests, from people wanting to know why did you do this, that and the other. Everyone is so desperate about education.

India’s psyche is strange, Wattal commented. She explained that ‘we don’t have gods, we have teachers. The greatest of these teachers — Gandhi, Buddha, Christ, Mohammed, Nanak and others — never taught in classrooms. They operated without blackboards, maps or charts, books, registers; they used no subject outlines, kept no records, gave no grades.'
Their students were often poor and their methods differed depending on who came to hear and learn. But they opened eyes, ears and hearts with faith, truth and love — and unconditional positive regard. They won no honours for their wisdom or expertise, and yet these quiet teachers fulfilled the hopes and challenged the lives of millions.

Wattal then explained the social constructs of India and asked the question ‘What is India?’

In her view, even before we begin to speak about the integration or inclusion of values in the current system in a school community, especially in the Indian context — we have first to understand the complexity that is India, the world’s largest but not very literate democracy.

Wattal argued that India is layered by caste, a system of division of the society that is unfair, oppressive and undemocratic in nature. It is also a society of class variations due to economic disparities, religion, linguistic difference and gender inequality.

A national survey revealed that despite the recommendations of the Knowledge Commission set up by the government of India:

• 37% of the people of India lack literacy skills;
• 53% of children drop out of school at elementary stage;
• 75% of our rural schools are multi grade which means students from 7 to 20 years of age may be in the same class; and
• only 50% of the children who appear for the School Leaving Examination pass out of the secondary school system.

Despite these statistics, the largest number of annual tertiary graduates in any country in the world is found in India.

Across communities and identities, the Indian population today is young. About 30.8% of India’s 1.1 billion people are under 14 years of age. By 2020, India will have one of the youngest populations in the world. This vast resource will shape the nation, and the world. Its primary values, aspirations, knowledge and abilities, skills and dilemmas will have their bearing on their choices and indeed on the world they will inherit.

Schooling systems in India are greatly layered like the society itself. They include:

• Kendriya Vidyala’s centrally-run schools for civil servants;
• Military schools for defence personnel;
• Private schools run by proprietors and corporate bodies for the urban elite;
• Federally-run Navodaya schools for the rural elite;
• State schools;
• Sarvodaya regional schools; and
• Last but not least, schools run by minority communities.

Fifty years ago elite schooling in India was dominated by the missionaries, both Protestant and Roman Catholic, who established their schools all over the country. In fact, Wattal explained she came from such a tradition, where Moral Science classes were taken and the Christian students attended Catechism. Moral Science classes were taken for those of us who were not Catholic, through talks, discussions and contemporary examples.

Over a period of time the Moral Science classes came to be called Values Education and became interconnected with Community Service with all the dynamics to promote respect for sustainable development, religious tolerance, gender sensitivity, peace and reconciliation initiatives and so on.

These issues became integral to Values education and were tabled in the National Curriculum Framework which is like a scripture of all educational reforms and practices in the country, irrespective of the kind of school a child studies in. Both the educationists and policy makers felt that every subject should become a value-enabled/value-ended subject. This is
how Values Education moved from a stand-alone topic to become an inclusive part of the whole school system.

It became easier in secular India to deal with religious differences by adopting a non-controversial position which had its common purpose as the collective good of people, to aid nation building and was also inclusive of the world outside.

Value Education then took on a dual approach as:

- an integral part of every subject taught; and
- a community service endeavour.

In fact, Wattal argued, many of the values in the National Curriculum Framework have been taken from Mahatma Gandhi’s Nai Taleem (New Education) in which he conceptualised the basic objectives of Value Education even before India gained freedom. A lot of Nai Taleem’s objectives resonate with the *Nine Values for Australian Schooling*. The emphasis on self-reliance, dignity and awareness in Ghandian thought finds its reflection in ‘care and compassion’, ‘responsibility’ and ‘doing your best’ — some of the core values in the *National Framework for Values Education in Australian Schools*. His stress on non-violence and equality is akin to the ‘fair go’ of the Australian system. Finally the ‘integrity’, ‘honesty’ and ‘trustworthiness’ that you are familiar with, are part of the transformative vision that Ghandi had for the child.

All these connections are a reinforcement of all that we share, and remind us of the poignant lines within the United Nations ‘Rights of a Child’.

*There are children raised in sorrow on the scorched and barren plains.*
*There are children raised in sorrow beneath the golden sun.*
*There are children raised in sorrow beneath the water and the land.*
*They all cry out their voices raised as one*

*I need to live*
*I need to know*
I need to be
I need to grow

I want to see what I can give
I need to live. I need to live.

The four pillars of education—learning to know, learning to do, learning to be and learning to live together—that find their echoes in the Dolores Report of the UNESCO should become the core values of Values Education.

Wattal maintained that education is a value that provides us with an identity. Once we realise this identity we have to move beyond the self to the other. It is a teacher who recognises and value’s the child’s identity. The Father of our Nation, Mahatma Ghandi, who gave the world the idea of Ahimsa (non-violence), began his struggle against colonialism and imperialism in South Africa. It is from our association with South Africa that we learnt about the culture of Ubuntu which is deeply ingrained in the South African psyche. It means 'we are people because of other people'. In fact the most common greeting among the Africans, equivalent to 'hello' in English, is the expression Sawu bona. It literally means, 'I see you'. To such a greeting one replies: Sikhona, meaning 'I am here'. The order of the exchange is important. Until you see me, I do not exist. It’s as if, when you see me, you bring me into existence. It’s the same with children. If we don’t bring them into existence they will remain invisible.

Hence at the core of any value-building endeavour is the positive visibility of children.

Wattal reflected that with the emergence of globalisation, a dilution of boundaries—cultural, social, economic and political—has taken place creating both interdependence and insecurity. In fenceless societies like those in the metros, the strong and the weak, majority and minority, rich and poor, feel equally threatened by the other, creating distrust and divide. In a classroom situation also, in order to bring about peaceful coexistence, it has become important to create image-building activities that lead children to each other. Discussing issues of integrity, giving voice and initiative will help in bridging the enormous diversity that lies in the classroom. Perhaps in Canberra, Australia is the classroom. So also in Delhi, India is the classroom.

The paradigm of education is undergoing a great change, Wattal explained. The educator’s role in global dynamics is changing and new societal perspectives, with the students as co-learners, parents as stakeholders, are being explored as we go forward.

Schools somehow, have been the centre of salvation, not only in the minds of parents and children, but also in those of the community at large. If our children have to co-exist in this world then we have to create a dialogue of deeds on the basis of shared values.

In schools all over India an endeavour is being made through various initiatives to ensure that a sense of universal values is integrated into the system.

In order to foster values in a multicultural society sharing of a world-wide vision is essential. Wattal described the educational construct of her school which encourages creative learning and thinking and an active self-directed learning where staff and students continually challenge assumptions, ask questions and learn from past mistakes. The attempt is to survey practices globally and adapt them locally into the school’s system. The challenge, as Wattal sees it, is not only to be forward-looking but to prepare children for the future. Values that identify emerging trends and critical uncertainties within and outside boundaries foster growth. The nature of knowledge in the future would be faster changing, larger in breadth, available worldwide through electronic communication and with greater dependence on global languages.

Also with the emergence of information technology in every walk of life, the knowledge society of the future is likely to see a great sense of alienation and loneliness where perhaps the only interaction the children may have will be with machines.
There is, however, a space that lies above the hardware, cyber or virtual reality, where a sense of values resides which we can access. Wattal encouraged the audience to ‘create more such spaces to enter into a rapidly transforming world, where the future depends on our ability to access knowledge through values.’

Her school, Springdales (a multi site school with approximately 5,000 students), aims to go beyond just being a laboratory of academia and aims at becoming a place of empathy, understanding and compassion, a school that serves as a centre for integration and tolerance. Wattal described the various experiments that the school has been involved with over the past 54 years. The school’s motto is *Vasudhaiva Kutubakam*, ‘The world is a family’, which in itself is inclusive and has fostered a great culture of internationalism.

Through this, the school has developed a variety of international clubs and exchange programs. Wattal described how the school, as a learning school society, have always stood up against oppression and violence and set up peace clubs and initiated education for peace. The international clubs in her school are actively involved in promoting global citizenship. Some of them are:

- the Gorkhy Club;
- the Goethe Club;
- UNESCO Club;
- The Hiroshima Club; and
- The Green Brigade (for sustainable development).

Wattal described the enthusiasm for a dedicated program of Values Education which is conducted by a co-group of peace activities and interfaith leaders to bring an understanding of human dignity and life by creating a world free of prejudice through the Ghandian Vision. She explained how Springdales is connected with innumerable schools abroad in order to integrate non-violence into the curriculum and make it a way of life. The Mahatma Ghandi Obershule in Berlin has had innumerable exchanges with us over the last 20 years, as also with schools in Russia, Japan, Australia, England, United States, Singapore and Pakistan.

Springdales’ international endeavours have been closely involved with the Anti-Apartheid movement in South Africa, with children writing letters to Nelson Mandela during his imprisonment on Robben Island, and keeping up the pressure until the time of his release. As well, the school has been privileged to have African freedom fighters Oliver Tambo and Walter Sisulu visit us, and when South Africa was liberated Madiba was amongst us. His Excellency, Thabo Mbeki, President of South Africa has also visited Springdales in order to facilitate our effort in the movement.
Over the years children from Springdales have played a vital role in generating awareness of the African freedom movement. Wattal then outlined some of the activities the students undertake. ‘We continue to profess our solidarity for the African cause’, she said. ‘We have been organising signature campaigns, painting posters, staging demonstrations, writing songs, poems and forming clubs like the Africa Club which unite students to support developing nations. What our children do is an unfailing objective to champion the ideals of equality and truth. Our new generation in the classrooms is imbibing the spirit of anti-colonialism and anti-segregation. All are endeavours that bring about Values Education through experimental learning.’
Besides Africa, Wattal explained the close involvement with the sister nations of the South Asian Association for Regional cooperation, as well as other Asian nations — Turkey, Palestine and China. ‘Last September’, she said, ‘we attended the Mondialogo Symposium in Beijing, China — one of the largest global contests on intercultural dialogue and exchange, an initiative by Daimler and UNESCO for schools, that marked the culmination of the Third Mondialogo School Contest. Our school was one on the 25 selected among 2,600 teams worldwide.’

At Springdales the Three Languages Formula has been adopted, whereby the children have been introduced to several foreign languages. Along with Languages, the Arts — dance, painting, drama, music — have provided the medium that created multiple and lateral thinking systems, diffused rigid boundaries and created personal spaces for children to work with. Children are natural artists. Incorporation of art in the school environment helped the students to imbibe values that were not possible only through talking about them. Wattal then shared the following:

> Often we think why is it my child cannot read and write.  
> But why do we stop worrying there?  
> What do we not worry that they can’t dance?  
> Can’t paint? can’t breathe, can’t meditate, can’t relax, can’t cope with anxiety, aggression, envy?  
> Can’t express tenderness and trust?  
> Why do we not spare concern that they do not know who they are, or even that they have no self to find?  
> If the basic skills have nothing to do with all this, then let’s admit they have nothing to do with their health, happiness sanity or survival, but only with employability.  
> Whose interest, then, is our education serving?

Monthly programs are conducted at Springdales on issues which deal with trauma induced by religious violence, communal tension, riot victims and child refugees. Through the medium of peace and reconciliation endeavours, peace marches, seminars, meetings, panel discussions, presentations, interaction with civil society and the media, children are sensitised to incorporate peace learning within themselves and the community. All the above activities are conducted either by the children or for them, within or outside the school.

Springdales, Wattal explained, has coordinated with the army-sponsored Sadbhavana (peace-building) program, a venture for the children of the Gujjars and Bakawal (shepherd communities) in Kashmir. These communities have always been at the forefront of the battle, since they inhabit the border areas between the boundaries of India and Pakistan. A hundred students accompanied by 15 teachers visit the school yearly for a twinning at child to child level. This exchange is carried out annually in observation of the UN Human Rights Day (10 December).

As well, the school is actively involved with the AIDS awareness program through the UNESCO Club. Photo exhibitions, talks, playlets and presentations are conducted by experts and children to develop awareness about the illness whose victims near us are street children.

The school participates annually in the Model United Nations Program where the agenda is discussing:

- children in armed conflicts;
- international cooperation on humanitarian assistance by sensitising children;
- child rights; and
- environmental awareness.

Wattal then explained the environmental stewardship operating at Springdales. ‘Our programs on sustainable development have helped in bringing about awareness through projects on paper recycling, water harvesting, air monitoring, waste management, garbage disposal etc’ she said ‘We continue to work at innumerable levels nationally and in the poorer community to create a safer and more peaceful atmosphere for the economically-deprived
sections that live in the poorer ghettos around our school. As a result of our initiatives
children have stopped using plastics and spending money on fire crackers during Diwali and
are contributing towards the cause of tree planting and recycling. We are the Lead School in
Delhi for Environmental Awareness, and also part of a project to clean Delhi for the 2010
Commonwealth Games.’

Wattal also elaborated on the teacher training programs at Springdales. She spoke of how
these programs are conducted to ensure the sensitisation of every teacher as a peace
educator. The school programs, co-curricular activities, functions, ceremonies and
celebrations are designed to internalise concepts and practices of Values Education. Wattal
explained how the school spread awareness among the students’ community about the ill
effects of tobacco and alcohol, drug and substance abuse. Conducting programs in jails had
also been part of the learning they derived from these experiences.

The eight houses in the school, of which every child is a member, are named for values:
Endeavour, Freedom, Peace, Equality, Friendship, Amity, Felicity and Unity — all values we
strive for.

The spirit of volunteerism is closely linked to the work done in the community. Our school has
adopted two neighbourhood village communities of Dasghara and Todapur with whom we
have worked through several initiatives with great success.

Wattal explained an innovative literacy program in the community that the school ran. ‘We
are very involved in the community through literacy projects especially the ‘each one teach
one’ program where each child has to create as many learners as he/she can in the school
term, the learner being from a different religion and a poorer section of society’ she said.
‘Over the last few years, thousands of such learners have been made literate and the school
has won many awards nationally for the scheme.’

The ‘Adopt a Gran’ project is another endeavour by which intergenerational ties have been
created in order to focus on the plight and problems of the aged. This pioneering work for the
cause of the neglected elderly in India is through a community-based project. Wattal
explained that the school received the President of India Award for the outstanding work for
creating an environment of peace and security for the elderly and fostering intergenerational
ties. Annual Blood Donation camps are held in the school in order to sensitise the community
in a ‘living is giving’ endeavour.

Open School programs for school dropouts of poorer and minority communities were also ran
by the School. There are training programs for Schedule Castes or Tribes, people who belong
to the marginalised sections of society. Over the last 50 years, Wattal advised, ‘we have
brought in the poorest of the poor into our school system educating over 5000 students.’ The
work that the school does in the community through women and child development program,
vocational training, inclusive education, special needs, social work schemes are innumerable
and it is difficult to explain the complete spectrum of peace and community-building work that
the school is involved with because for us, she explained ‘education is for life and goes
beyond classroom teaching.’

‘No amount of work and experience can ever be enough to counter the danger which is faced
by our children living in these troubled times. We continue to work ceaselessly in bridge
building,’ she said.

In closing, Wattal spoke of her belief that ‘the mind is a garden that contains seeds of
understanding, forgiveness and love along with seeds of ignorance, fear and hatred, that
allows us to behave at any given moment with violence or peace, understanding or
intolerance. It is only an enriched, nurturing environment, created by enlightened endeavour
or a parent, that will help to water the positive seeds allowing the negative ones to grow
weaker. This is how a thinking school can create a learning environment filled with
compassion and communication.’
Wattal argued that 'schools play a great role in creating children who acquire an understanding of truth, beauty, justice which helps them to judge their own and our society’s virtues and imperfections. A wise rabbi once said:

   If I am not for myself, who am I?
   If I am only for myself, then what am I?
   If not now, when?

Finally, Wattal concluded, in the words of Mother Theresa: ‘We can’t all do great things but we can do small things with love.’

‘So, friends,’ Wattal challenged the audience, ‘let’s respond to the moment.’
WORKSHOP SESSIONS

Conversation with Ruth Deakin Crick

In response to a comment about the range of instruments available to drive and assess learning, Deakin Crick went over the background to the development of the ELLI instrument and the comprehensive data base of professional knowledge and research on which it is based. She noted that there are endless ‘lists’ in education and that if you use them you need to find ones with solid foundations.

Deakin Crick was asked about the interaction between individualised learning and collaboration, both spoken as good in and by themselves. Her response was that this ‘might be resolved by rehabilitating ideas of community and place in education.’ Our first hand experience of learning is all derived from place, and that might provide a way of moving beyond the isolating effects of individualism. The question: What’s important around here? is a good place to start. She reminded us of the mix of processes in the development of the Taronga Zoo story, and noted that its rootedness in place was what made it so powerful.

In response to another question she reiterated her distinction between virtues and values, as an example comparing truthfulness with the strategic awareness and curiosity that would enable us to be more truthful, while noting that ‘values’ was in itself a slippery and variously defined term.

A further question was asked about whether mathematics teachers could be Values teachers? Deakin Crick responded that she ‘could see readily how social and emotional learning can be embedded, for example, in a leadership course, but there is a challenge in embedding those values in the rest of the curriculum given how much teacher identity is bound up with their specialisations. But it can be done. Programs can be reviewed and the points where values have an obvious role identified. An example is the story of the development of blood transfusions and other ‘science stories’ which can increase the memorability of the drier aspects of science. It does suggest, however, sometimes profound change in conventional pedagogy. A good start is to conduct professional learning in which a degree of risk and openness is involved.’

Deakin Crick offered a warning about the effects of the first National Curriculum in the UK: squeezing out good teaching, encouraging teaching to the test and rigidity. She would argue for the lightest touch in prescription starting perhaps with higher order thinking skills. The problem with a prescribed curriculum is that can take up all your teaching time. Deakin Crick felt that you need a balance of prescription combined with personal enquiry. In this context she introduced a sentiment from Habermas — one of the pathologies of modernity is strategic rationality in the service of money and power.

Deakin Crick spoke for authentic assessment and the avoidance of the ‘learning faces as masks’ produced by testing. If we get down to the central questions with our parents and communities — what do you want? What matters around here? — and you get results, it’s very hard for external authorities to interfere. Well-performing schools set their own targets and carefully collect their own evidence to examine their own performance. Something like this can be seen occurring in the UK.

Conversation with Ameeta Mulla Wattal

Wattal began by noting that togetherness makes us what we are and connects us to the mission of values.

She went on to an informal question about assessment she had received after her talk. She described the testing systems in India, their rigour and their powerful influence. There is in India a deep concern about employability and credentials which makes test results crucially important. She noted that at her school this is mediated to some degree by SUPW — socially
useful productive work — an element of the curriculum in which all students engage. But ‘we can’t just do whatever we want. We must and we do set standards for excellence’. School results draw front-page attention from the national media. In the light of this she spoke of her engagement with the parent community who often come to school in a state of huge stress.

She outlined some of the issues with relation to catering for the enormously wide range of students her school has, including students with special needs, and the two highly disadvantaged communities with which her school has had a long standing relationship.

Wattal made reference again to the extraordinarily wide range of programs in which her students engage, especially those with a service orientation: environmental concerns, literacy development, direct service, peace and reconciliation activities and so on.

In response to a question Wattal described the school’s timetable. From 7am – 2pm the school runs its mainstream timetable, from 2-4pm additional support is provided for mainstream students, from 4-6pm staff voluntarily coach poor young people from surrounding areas. From 6-8pm a Labour Ministry initiative runs a one year training for lower caste 18-25 year olds. In the afternoons, the school’s vocational centres providing training for adults also run. An open school for children who have dropped out of school runs on Sundays. During the summer holidays the school is open for children from the local communities.

She talked briefly about funding and the ways in which the (low fee) school was able to maintain such a wide range of activity. In response to a question, she noted she was able to choose her own staff and that this wasn’t a school for people without a missionary disposition. ‘They must be ready to extend themselves, and never put their phone off’ (!). But the staff are so significant. It is they who do the work’, she said.

Finally Wattal spoke about the way the whole school environment is constructed to support its ethos — mottos, flags, displays, resources, murals, decorations. All children belong to one of eight houses, each of which is named after a value. She commented also that sport was a very important part of the school and its drive to produce children with strong and lived values.

**Values in Action Schools Project: Engaging the disengaged — Australian Juvenile Detention Centres School Cluster**

This workshop was presented by Gerri Walker and Richard Manning. Walker is a principal within the Department of Education and Children’s Services in South Australia working in a juvenile justice centre. Manning is a school leader from the Murrumbidgee Education and Training Centre in the ACT.

Their presentation began with a description of the background and context of the project which draws together ten schools in juvenile detention centres across Australia. The focus of the project is to implement values education approaches with an emphasis on student resilience and wellbeing within a positive and engaging whole-school learning environment.

Some of the strategies and resources being trialled by the schools were shared. These related to three main themes.

1. Providing opportunities and engaging students in activities that require ‘giving of and beyond themselves’.

2. Engaging students in an active process of reflection and interrogation of the nature of values by supporting them to develop a vocabulary that identifies and names values (Values for Australian Schooling) with a focus on their actions in association with these values, and supporting students to articulate their own values.

3. Supporting students to transfer their understanding of values beyond the school and to apply them more broadly in the context of their own lives.
**Values in Action Schools Project: Values through ICT and philosophy**
— Cross Border Values Community Cluster

Mark Sparvell, Principal of Kadina Primary School in South Australia, coordinates a unique Values Education Cluster across NT, WA, Tas and SA schools (state, independent, primary, area and secondary). Innovative use of ICT has enabled this virtual community of learners to collaborate and explore Values within the context of environmental education and, now, to examine philosophical inquiry as a tool for exploring moral and ethical underpinnings of our thoughts and actions.

As he suggested: Where else could you find… A professor logged in from Jerusalem? A teacher, mobile broadband and dolphins? A surfing safari for kids who have never seen the ocean? Kids examining and challenging BIG questions and ideas across the nation?

Mark shared the story of his project including ideas about content and procedure, what has been learnt from its operation, and its aspects which can be applied to any setting regardless of the access to technology. His summary: practical and just a little bit revolutionary!

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**Practical strategies for developing cultural sensitivity in the classroom**
— Dagmar Turnidge, University of Melbourne

This workshop focused on ways of developing cultural sensitivity and intercultural understanding. Participants explored practical strategies drawn from the work Turnidge currently does with pre-service teachers in the Humanities classroom, noting that these activities could be adapted for use in subjects other than SOSE/ Humanities.

Successful ideas for developing interfaith understanding used in the “Harmony through Understanding” Project involving Year 5-8 students, were also presented.

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**Toward a Curriculum of Giving: Transforming education from within**
— Dr Thomas Neilsen, University of Canberra

This workshop focused on a powerful way of developing resilience and positive whole-school learning environments.

The underlying theory is that when students have opportunities to give to something beyond themselves and display altruistic behaviours, it increases their mental, emotional and even physical health, which in turn has implications for academic diligence and learning in general. Some studies (Post & Neimark 2007) show that giving is the highest predictor of increasing one’s health – not even exercising four times a week is as healthy as giving.

Nielsen drew on his own research on giving and also highlighted links to Martin Seligman’s positive psychology (2002) and Stephen Post’s ‘new science of love’ (2007). Synthesising personal and current research, Nielsen illustrated how a curriculum of giving might be one of the most effective ways to develop individual and communal wellbeing, and in turn, optimal learning environments in our educational institutions.

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**The Living Values Educator Training Program**
— Shahida Abdul-Samad, IQRA International Institute, Malaysia

Abdul-Samad described the Living Values Education Program and the activities curriculum which is written for educators and other adults working with children who want to create an environment where children get to experience the classroom and the world around them in a
positive way. Already a success in over 80 countries, the Living Values Education Program
offers age appropriate activities that promote self-esteem, critical thinking, emotional
intelligence and creative expression – skills that will enable children to think, respond and
make decisions based on humanistic values in a society that is becoming more and more
materialistic and inhumane.

The experience and results from conducting many trainer facilitation workshops were
discussed, indicating the importance of the trainer being genuine and highly emotionally
intelligent to be an effective values education trainer. Similar training has been conducted for
corporate senior management and highly technical people in the Oil & Gas industry. The
objective of these workshops was to help the team leaders create work environments where a
global and diverse workforce feels valued and accepted. The importance of the Team
Leaders becoming more self-aware and emotionally intelligent, was critical to achieve
inclusion which leads to increased productivity in the organization.

Abdul-Samad suggested that this facilitation process helps to establish a solid foundation for
quality which is based upon the shared values & beliefs of all stakeholders in the schools.
Using this approach, the stakeholders have ownership in bringing about the change from the
existing environment to a desired state as it is derived from their own shared values.

Techniques and skills that have been successful were shared and experienced by the
participants.

**Values in Action Schools Project: Building inclusion**
— Reporting Values Cluster

Veronica Morcom, an experienced primary teacher from WA, presented this workshop.

The objectives of the project in which she is involved are to develop:

- a common values language that can be supported with observable behaviours for
  reporting values, and
- an appreciation of the importance of values education as fundamental to good
  schooling.

The cluster schools involved in the project currently use 17 descriptors for ‘attitude, behaviour
and effort’ issued by the Department of Education and Training, WA, to report to parents on
values. Five core shared values (Curriculum Council, 1998) are incorporated in these reports
but teachers have concerns about collecting valid evidence to make consistent judgements
(‘consistently, sometimes or seldom’). A cohort group of teachers is using an action research
process to examine how to develop a shared values language and collect evidence to report
to parents about values. Parents have provided feedback about their understanding of how
values are being taught and assessed.

The context of the school sites was explored in relation to values education as they do not
currently have a ‘whole school approach’. Therefore the project challenges may be perceived
to be different from schools that engaged in values education to solve school based problems
such as ‘bullying’. The cluster school communities do not perceive a ‘deficit’ that needs to be
addressed by values education.

Morcom illustrated the work of the teachers, students and their parents to ‘report values to
parents’ and engaging all stakeholders to talk about values, and invited feedback from
participants to advance the project.

**Values in Action Schools Project: Out of apathy**
— The Beenleigh Believe, Achieve, Succeed Cluster
Brenda Little manages student support services and is driving the social/emotional learning agenda at Beenleigh State High School.

Little proposed that apathy abounded in the Beenleigh (Brisbane, Queensland) cluster's four low-socio-economic school communities, rooted in a large number of students' (and in many cases staff and parents) lack of self-belief in their ability to change their own life circumstances or to positively impact on the world around them.

Based around the caricature of Habermas' theory of knowing, that "there is no knowing without the knower" and the knower is oneself, this project aims to address this issue of deep-rooted lack of self-belief and self knowing.

Selected staff and students from a secondary school and three primary schools are engaging in a series of self-discovery workshops where the Performing and Visual Arts are providing the vehicle for self-expression. Parents and school staff will become the audience for students to emerge and tell the world 'who they are', 'what they stand for' (values), 'what they are capable of' and 'how they relate to the world around them' as part of a multi-arts presentation.

The project is built on a cascading model where teachers, trained by an Arts Therapist, are facilitating the secondary students' program. The secondary students will then become facilitators/mentors for the primary students.

Finally, to demonstrate that they are capable of making a difference to the world around them, all participating students are asked to identify and research a significant need and work together on a project that will make their local community a better place to be.

This workshop provided an insight into the reasons behind adopting such an approach to Values Education, an interim report on their journey thus far and some hands on ideas for use in the classroom.

The Holistic Planning and Teaching Framework: An Indigenous perspective that explores the critical connections between land, language and culture — Ernie Grant, Far North Queensland Indigenous Schooling Support Unit

Ernie Grant works with the Queensland Education Department as a cultural officer/adviser, contributing to anthropological research and studies as well as developing his own historical resources.

Grant is a member of the Jirribal tribe from the Tully area in Far North Queensland. He was raised in the traditional culture of his people. Ernie has an encyclopaedic knowledge of the Tully area. Its history, geography, geology and biology are second nature to him.

His understanding, experiences and involvement in both cultures has resulted in The Holistic Planning and Teaching Framework, a resource initially designed to provide a focus for Local Area Studies for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies Curriculum. This Framework is also an educational scaffold that considers how Indigenous students learn which is in turn related to how they view the world — holistically. The Holistic Planning and Teaching Framework uses the organisers: Land, Language, Culture by contextualising Time, Place and Relationships.

Grant presented a DVD and acted as a guide as he took his audience through the Holistic Planning and Teaching Framework showing how these organisers interact. He used the topic of "Ernie Grant" to demonstrate the effectiveness of the model and then showed examples of its use in a number of unrelated and widely varied situations, including primary and secondary classrooms.
Resourcing Teachers of Philosophy and Critical Thinking: The Australian Philosophy Teachers’ Network
— Peter Ellerton, Queensland Academy Science, Mathematics & Technology

Philosophy and critical thinking are generally acknowledged as significant curriculum areas. It is the case, however, that (free) clear and concise resources for teaching these subjects are difficult to come by through the Internet. This is in part because there is a plethora of material that talks about critical thinking and how important it is, or gives vague curriculum outlines, but only a small percentage of direct teaching aids. It is also a result of the skills of critical thinking being poorly articulated and hence not explicitly addressed. Where worksheets are found, they are almost exclusively aimed at areas in the junior curriculum, rather than targeting the higher-level critical thinking that might be found in senior schools.

Ellerton suggested that the Australian Philosophy Teachers’ Network (APTN) and its online presence PACTISS.org (Philosophers and Critical Thinkers in Senior Schools) has attempted to address this issue.

The PACTISS.org website is a fully searchable database of teaching resources targeting senior schooling level philosophy and critical thinking. It comprises a database of free resources ranging through booklets, teaching material, student worksheets, media articles, cartoons, web links, PowerPoint presentations and other multimedia, senior syllabuses and assessment items (available on request). Anyone can download or upload resources. There is also a section of the site dedicated to updating interested parties about what is happening in individual states written by some of the major figures in philosophy and critical thinking education. What distinguishes PACTISS.org is that it is a completely free service devoted entirely to making it easier to establish new courses and to resourcing existing courses.

The APTN is also about to embark on a new phase of expansion, involving new programmes and initiatives designed to bring teachers, academics, students and education departments in closer and more productive contact.

This presentation was designed to raise awareness of the APTN, PACTISS.org and the ways in which educators may contribute to the project and benefit from the experiences of others.

Students’ voices on cyber bullying
— Dr Debora Brown, Child Health Promotion Research Centre, Edith Cowan University

More than 200 Year 10 Western Australian students’ voices were heard at the Cyber Friendly Student Summit in October 2008 on what they believe young people, adults, schools, Government and Industry should do to improve cyber safety and reduce cyber bullying.

The Child Health Promotion Research Centre at Edith Cowan University conducted the Summit as part of the Cyber Friendly Schools Project, a world-first study into cyber bullying funded by the Public Education Endowment Trust. The culmination of the Summit was the ‘Cyber Friendly Communities’ Declaration against Cyber Bullying among Children and Young People’, that was presented to the Western Australian Government in February 2009.

This session presented results from the Summit and discussed how students’ voices will continue to be heard through the development of the Cyber Friendly Student Reference Committee which will provide input and recommendations into intervention materials and further research being conducted at the Child Health Promotion Research Centre in 2009 and 2010.
How does a writer balance the desire to involve contemporary readers but at the same time convey an authentic sense of how it was to be a child at a different time in history?

Dubosarsky discussed how she went about writing the young adult novel *The Red Shoe*, set in Sydney in the 1950s during the Petrov spy scandal; and *Tibby’s Leaf*, a story for early primary school readers set in small town Australia at the beginning of World War One. She also spoke about the mysterious process of turning a myth from Tibet into the picture book for modern Australian children, *The Terrible Plop*. 
THE STUDENT EXPERIENCE

The three students invited to participate in this section of the program were:
- Ellin Bye from Lanyon High School in the ACT;
- Wassim Dakarmanji from Punchbowl Boys High School in NSW; and
- Kelsey Turner from St Monica’s College in Victoria.

Each made a short presentation describing some of the activity which had taken place in their clusters and describing a highlight which had meant something to them personally.

Kelsey began. She explained that for most of her life she had lived, learnt and socialised within Catholic communities, however due to the interfaith and intercultural program at her school she experienced learning in a culturally diverse environment. St Monica’s College, Epping, together with King David School, Armadale; Australian International Academy, Coburg; Thornbury High School & Siena College have collaborated on a project for the last 3 years.

Kelsey was considerably apprehensive before the first Inter-schools Values gathering. Her unease was quickly put to rest when a student from a Jewish school boldly proclaimed that, "we didn’t kill your guy!" referring to Jesus. The statement eradicated tension and the students were able to confront the issue of stereotyping. Kelsey indicated that naming the stereotypes and generalisations that still existed in their community was an important step in the success of the program. With the elephant in the room removed a barrier was also removed and the students were able to have an in depth discussion about life, school, interests and of course religion. They had begun to build friendships.

Kelsey went on to explain that critical communication skills were further developed during Socratic circle, discussions. The inner circle focused on exploring a relevant theme, for example “What makes a good Australian citizen?” this developed broader thinking techniques whilst exposing participants to different viewpoints. The outer circle was encouraged to listen to the discussion and then comment at its end, on what was good, interesting or perhaps what may have worked better. They explored deeply, issues related to Australian identity and society; community engagement and social cohesion.

Kelsey stated that she believed that cultural heritage shapes who we are, and who we will become. She said that listening to other people’s stories is a great way to not only understand but to gain perspective on how your own life should be lived whilst developing an individual identity. The students used important family objects as the basis for their stories. Kelsey said, ‘each person had such different life experience and it was captivating to learn the importance and history behind such inanimate objects. For example the angel placed each year on top of the Christmas tree, the candle that burns in respect for the dead within the Jewish faith, the kohl eyeliner holder that has been passed through generations of Egyptian women and the scarf that has travelled through the relocation process from Italy to Australia. These items refer to the memories that have shaped people and creates a unique educational experience, an education that doesn’t revolve around textbooks and classrooms, but an education of one’s own personal character, morality and wisdom and most importantly understanding.’

Kelsey went on to say that, ‘to articulate the influence our personal stories have in shaping our community we completed dramatic performances and artwork. These activities encouraged teamwork and freedom of expression. The most powerful image I can recall is a painting of a man dressed to riot, his face is covered with a bandana and his body is tensed to strike. Surprisingly in his hands is a bunch of flowers. This image was so in tune with our view of the world, it’s addiction to stereotyping and expectation and what we as school children were trying to achieve that it became a sort of motif that expressed our personal view of the essence of interfaith and intercultural dialogue.

It was moments like these that enabled us to realise that although we may not all have the same beliefs, we all have the same vision for the future. We as the youth of Australia realise that there is too much focus on our differences, and to ensure positive relationships in the future we must all try to focus on our similarities.’

‘Whilst we had discovered this amazing reality we did, as typical members of generation Y,
require a physical representation of our achievement and purpose. We were able to work with accomplished author Mr Arnold Zable who expresses the importance of stories in his own published workings. He guided us in our writings and encouraged our literary creativity. We created artwork, which was presented during an art exhibition– this was an incredible opportunity to see our work being looked upon as something of worth to the wider community and we were involved in interfaith World Youth Day peace by piece events.

Kelsey thought the Values Education program emphasised student involvement and led to students having a significant voice and running the days to guarantee maximum involvement. She said one such example of this was the Day of Understanding, a student run and organised, with help from the teachers, event at the Melbourne Exhibition centre. A large selection of multi faith and public schools were present. The day was a positive expression of how the voice of youth is heard in the wider community and encouraged positive relationships.

Kelsey felt that her involvement in the interfaith and intercultural cluster over the past three years has enabled her to develop critical communication skills and life experience. ‘I have gained perspective on what is truly important, a strong individual identity, purpose and family. Most importantly it has allowed me to gain the confidence to live my faith through my relationships with others and whatever life demands.’

Ellin followed. She began by recalling a unit of work she had undertaken with her classmates two years ago. It was based on values in Australian History but focused on the idea of respect, initially thinking about ‘what we knew from our own lifetime experiences’.

“This was a new process for us. We had to respond to statements about respect and decide whether we agreed or disagreed. We had to think about the idea that you should treat people how you would like to be treated, and you could challenge other people’s ideas and discuss what you thought. This was hard for some people for a start but we got used to the idea” she said.

Ellin advised that ‘we were asked to think about what it would have been like to go through the experiences of the Indigenous people who were part of the Stolen Generation. We watched ‘The Rabbit Proof Fence’. One of the things in that film was the mother who became so traumatised by the experience that she did harm to herself. Some kids laughed at that and made racist jokes. Our teacher stopped the film and we had a discussion about taking what had happened to her seriously. We watched more of it soon after and there was more realization that this had really happened and how would we feel if we were confronted by something like that.’

As a result of this experience, the class, Ellin said, ‘started to look at tolerance and the ideas of how you would behave if you were tolerant. We watched some short films made for Tropfest about the Cronulla riots and these really got the students going. We had discussions about what we tolerate and how important it is to be tolerant of people who are different to us, and what we should and shouldn’t tolerate.’

Ellin explained how ‘this was a massive step for us. These issues became open to discussion with more people joining in and being honest about how they felt. And how you need to feel included in friendship groups and with families and with other groups of people who you normally would not be connected with.’

The unit finished with writing about values. Ellin wrote a script with some other students which was an interesting way to show what we had learnt which she found an extremely beneficial way to develop ideas and attitudes which will change many of the students for their lifetime.

The third presentation was from Wassim.

Wassim stated that ‘values education has given me an opportunity to reflect on what it is to contribute to society. We were thinking about respect and interfaith and intercultural
understanding.’

Wassim explained he is ‘an Australian of Lebanese Muslim background and the way we are portrayed in the media is having no values whatsoever. That’s not true. We have values, but it makes you think what values are most important and which ones we all share.’

Wassim described his school’s project where ‘we worked in interfaith and intercultural understanding in values education. What we did was to prepare and give lessons to young students in Years 3, 4, 5, and 6 as well as some adults to increase their knowledge of these two things. We did it by teaching and discussing what we thought. The background idea all the time was that we all need to show respect and to be responsible. They are things that are common to all of us. But you have to show this and to listen to others and appreciate the differences in other people. It’s part of leadership and developing a better understanding of how things are. Finally, and importantly’ Wassim reflected, ‘every voice should be heard and have their say.’

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Mackay then asked each of the students to ‘describe the biggest impact this experience had had on them.’ For Ellin it was the change she noted in her classmates, how they had become more honest and were able to express and share their views more openly — their shift from negativity. Kelsey said, ‘It was as though a veil had been lifted. You can be presented with different views and so on, but to actually meet and interact with other people from widely different social and religious backgrounds makes it real, and you do understand. You are struck by the similarities rather than the differences.’ Wassim thought it was the fact that the experience went on after the program. The activity was kept up, and he liked the chance to pass on his ideas to younger people.

There were some questions from the floor. How important was the role of the teacher?

Kelsey was the first to answer. She said, ‘We didn’t get ‘taught values’. It was us reflecting on our own and our new companion’s values. It was more giving us the stimulus to become involved in the process and setting it up for us.’ Ellin thought her teacher had been wonderful and especially to tackle this sort of program. Wassim noted that each of the classes they had conducted had had ‘different activities but they were still based on cooperation, communication and getting to know each other. The feedback from the younger students was extremely positive.’

Mackay then asked ‘are students today influenced too much by television, the media, and the internet?’

This brought a variety of views. Wassim thought that it was the job of the media to attract attention to issues and concerns but wasn’t sure how well they did this. Ellin reflected on the influence of her teachers and what a big influence they had on helping you decide for yourself what was good and bad, but also to act as role models for various sorts of behaviour. Kelsey felt that these media were extremely influential and noted ‘how they created opinion from the versions of truth that they provided.’

The audience expressed its appreciation to the students for the lively and thoughtful contributions they had made.
Values in Action School Projects and Resources
Curriculum Corporation

Values Education Good Practice School Stage 2 Project

David Brown began this presentation, which he titled ‘Ends and Beginnings’, with ‘a view of the landscape … twelve months on’.

Brown noted that the Final Report of Stage 2 of the Values Education Program had been completed and was available on the Values Education Website. The defined purposes of Stage 2 of the Values Education work were:

1. to undertake projects that identify and exemplify good practice in values education and use the National Framework; and
2. to help realise the vision for school provision of values education in a planned and systematic way so values becomes a core part of schooling.

The projects working to these purposes were conducted in 25 clusters by 143 schools from October 2006 to April 2008 bringing the number of schools engaged in both Stages of the program to 309.

He described these projects as eclectic, and locally based to reflect the circumstances of differing contexts and needs. They were school-driven and ground-up in the nature of their impetus, in each case pursuing an action research approach. Their operation could be seen as an extension of Stage 1 work but in differing contexts.

Outcomes from these projects were not developed through a centrally-designed and controlled quantitative research methodology. Qualitative findings from multiple, non-standardised sources had been sought. The way in which the methodology operated was to identify good practice from meta-evaluation of cluster reports and qualitative data. Clusters were provided with tools to capture information and their data were presented via case studies, case writing, accounts from members of the University Advisers network, and supplementary reports. The analysis took an interpretive approach looking for recurring themes and evidence for claims made elsewhere for the impact of program’s operation.

The central feature of the key findings from this Report suggest a shift from the more tentative ‘inferences’ of the previous Stage 1 Report to firmer recommended principles for schools to become values-centred. These principles include the need to:

1. establish and consistently use a common and shared values language across the school;
2. use pedagogies that are values-focused and student-centred within all curriculum;
3. develop values education as an integrated curriculum concept, rather than as a program, an event or an addition to curriculum;
4. explicitly teach values so students know what the values mean and how the values are lived;
5. implicitly model values and explicitly foster the modelling of values;
6. develop relevant and engaging values approaches connected to local and global contexts and which offer real opportunity for student agency;
7. use values education to consciously foster intercultural understanding, social cohesion and social inclusion;
8. provide teachers with informed, sustained and targeted professional learning and foster their professional collaborations;
9. encourage teachers to take risks in their approaches to values education; and
10. gather and monitor data for continuous improvement in values education.

The second principle, related to pedagogies, can now be further unpacked by reference to these characteristics:
• student-centred rather than teacher/content-centred;
• open, non-didactic, constructivist, risky;
• engage students through thinking, imagination, feeling, activity and reflection;
• empower students and share control of the teaching learning situation (student agency);
• engage student through real and authentic experiences;
• enable student action and provide opportunities to enact the values in real ways;
• consistent, congruent modelling of the values; and
• provide safe and supportive environments.

In noting that this was a time when the task of shaping positive futures is increasingly challenging for schools, Brown quoted from the Stage 2 Report (p. 10):

‘values-focused pedagogies … support students to live as enabled and resilient individuals in the real world of the twenty-first century: a world beset with climate change, personal and societal insecurities, shifting certainties, rapidly changing forms of social interactions and intensifying intercultural and interglobal realignments.’

Brown acknowledged the work of the many people who had contributed to the success of the program: the 143 school communities, system and sector values education officers, members of the University Advisers Network, the cluster mentors, the Values Education Project Advisory Committee, the VEGPS team at Curriculum Corporation: Barbara Bereznicki, Leanne Compton, Ron Toomey, Jane Weston and Maureen Gustus.

He concluded by referring to current issues he thought were relevant in the changing landscape. These included:
• the place of Values Education in the Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians, the National Education Agreement and the new National Partnerships;
• whether or not Values Education would have a place at the table in the development of the National Curriculum, and if so what sort of place?;
• the role of Values Education in fostering student wellbeing, student resilience;
• the continuing quest for evidence-based outcomes and approaches;
• what role Values Education could play in closing the gap for Indigenous and low SES students
• Values Education and the ‘Digital Education Revolution’;
• how Values Education might get beyond the school gates, bridging community-family-school divides; and
• perhaps most telling, the link between Values Education and better academic outcomes. Does this imply reframing the function of schooling?

**Values in Action Schools Project 2008-09**

Jenny Wajsenberg described this element of the Values Education Program which has a range of purposes consonant with the Good Practice Project and is building on what has been learnt through that means.

This element of the Program began in December 2008 and will end in October this year. Projects again are school-devised and developed from the ground up. One or more of the 15 clusters (involving 86 schools) exist in all states and territories.

It targets specific interest areas defined by the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations. These consist of:
• student wellbeing and resilience;
• positive education;
• social inclusion;
• civics and citizenship;
• Indigenous education contexts;
• interfaith and intercultural understanding, and
• developing whole school approaches.

Wajsenberg gave some examples to illustrate the eclectic nature and topics of the new projects: several related to the use of ICTs, engaging disengaged students, development of student voice through the arts, and aspects of service education.

To gather further evidence of impacts of values education, one of its distinctive features is the addition of centrally-designed research across all clusters in a focused quest for evidence of impacts. This is occurring in collaboration with University Advisers, and system and sector values education officers. Clusters will be provided with more direct on-site support in a process of co-construction. Research will be both nationally- and locally-focused and introduce quantitative and as well qualitative data collection procedures. Pre and post-project teacher surveys will be conducted to identify key perceptions of values education and changes which might have occurred in these perceptions. Locally-based data sets will be collected including parent and student valuations. Wajsenberg noted that the voice of parents was often referred to but not often carefully investigated. University Advisers and Curriculum Corporation personnel will provide observational accounts, and the ‘Most Significant Change Technique’ will be used to locate and interpret the key stories of change.

The Project Timeline was described with several briefing sessions for schools included. An ‘Evaluation Summit’ is planned for 16 October this year.

**Values for Australian Schooling resources**

Wajsenberg also provided an account of curriculum and professional learning resources which have been developed for Values Education. Many of these resources are available online at [www.valueseducation.edu.au](http://www.valueseducation.edu.au), the national portal for Values Education. She noted that a vast amount of values education material had been developed since 2005 including newsletters, KLA lesson plans, co-curricula resources, National Forum papers, research, reports and updates on national activity.

A suite of values education curriculum and professional learning materials, in development since 2005, has been made available to all schools in Australia in both hardcopy and online formats. The components of this suite are:

- **Values for Australian Schooling Kit** (2006);
- **Building Values Across the Whole School: Teaching and Learning Units** (online 2007, hardcopy 2009);
- **Building Values Across the Whole School: Professional Learning program** (online 2007, hardcopy 2009);
- **Supporting Student Wellbeing through Values Education: A Resource Package** (online and hardcopy 2009); and
- **Values in Intercultural and Global Contexts** (online and hardcopy 2009).

Online access to the resources is available via a ‘closed repository’ on the Values Education website access to which requires use of access key/code. A school access code has been provided in a letter to principals. All materials are down-loadable to school intranets for copying.

And in breaking news, Wajsenberg announced, the new **Values for Australian Schooling Stage 1 and 2 resources** were arriving in schools now. They will be in all schools for the commencement of Term 3, 2009. These will include:

- teaching and learning units for primary and secondary schools
- Three modules for school-based teacher professional learning programs focused on integrating values education into classroom practice
- **Supporting Student Wellbeing through Values Education – A Resource Package**.

Units and co-curricula modules consisting of

1. **Understanding Values**: curriculum-based dilemmas for both primary and secondary years; and
2. **Values in Action**: modules supporting co-curricula/extra-curricula activities, again for both primary and secondary years

It is intended that these can be used in Civics and Citizenship, English, Health and Physical Education, ICT, Studies of Society and Environment, Global Education and Asia Education, as well as extra curricula areas such as Service learning and Community projects.

**Values in Global and Cultural Contexts: Resources**

Jane Weston took over to talk about the resources for exploring values in intercultural and global contexts, shaped by a focus on cultural literacy, intercultural understanding and global education, which have been developed by Curriculum Corporation.

There are three of these: **Side by Side**, a Values-focused ‘big book’; **A World of Values** online resources; and **Teaching for Intercultural Understanding**, a professional learning program.

**Side by Side** is a shared text for Early Years students with narrative highlighting diversity and intercultural relationships within a neighbourhood community over time. It includes teacher notes to support student discussion and learning and has an explicit values focus: tolerance, respect, care and compassion, honesty and understanding. There are additional pdf-based teacher notes with references to digital resources on the values education website.

Weston explained **A World of Values** by reference to the role of The Le@rning Federation as a major digital curriculum initiative of all Australian and New Zealand governments. Since 2001, just under 9,000 items of digital curriculum content have been made available free to schools in these countries. These items include learning objects, television documentaries, film, still images, audio files and other artifacts.

Fifty of these items across five themes have been selected for **A World of Values**. Teacher focus group research pointed to the need for stimulus material in the area of intercultural understanding, global education and issues around identity, self-esteem and resilience.

**The themes and year levels**

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<th>Yrs 3-4</th>
<th>Communities</th>
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<td>Yrs 5-6</td>
<td>The Peacemakers: Conflict and Reconciliation</td>
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<td>Yrs 7-8</td>
<td>Negotiating a place in the world: Our own and other’s boundaries</td>
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<td>Yrs 9-10</td>
<td>Future Makers</td>
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<td>Yrs 11-12</td>
<td>The Big Question: On meaning and identity</td>
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These items include stories, narratives and expositions, including Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australian voices which encourage students to look beyond their own world view. They also contain teaching and learning activities focused on values clarifications and the actions they invite. Teachers’ notes have also been made available.

Weston played clips from and showed notes for the films ‘Happy Feet’ and ‘My Mother India’ to illustrate their potential for Values Education.

**Teaching for Intercultural understanding** is a self-paced or mediated professional learning program with a focus on teaching for intercultural understanding. It is published online in pdf format including resources such as PowerPoint, notes and reflective activities. It draws on **Side by Side** and **A World of Values** to exemplify ideas and supports teacher use of the new resources. It is structured so it can be used by teachers at each of the identified schooling levels including Early years.
Values Education
— Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations

Ms Amanda Day, Assistant Director, Student Engagement Section, spoke on behalf of the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations and commented on the quality of the discussion and learning that had taken place so far. She began by asking participants to recall the comments of Dr Neil Hawkes when he spoke at the 2006 conference. Hawkes had spoken of Victor Frankl’s book Man’s Search for Meaning and his belief that all things could be taken from humans, except for their right to choose their attitude. Day referred to these sentiments as a link to current society and our need for purpose. She referred also to educators and the influence they can have on students in their care.

Day then moved on to talk about the ‘why’ of Values Education. It is the desire, she believed, of all stakeholders in this area, to help students lead fulfilling lives. It is students who are at the heart of this program, and our work with young people, Day suggested, is important in shaping positive futures. She again referred to Hawkes and his idea that the purpose of Values Education is to have the “conversations between one generation and the other about the things that matter”.

Day provided an overview of achievements in the Values Education Program. Firstly, she spoke of Minister Gillard’s approval of a refreshed policy direction and work plan, and informed participants of the Government’s wish to continue this work in Values Education in 2008 and 2009 to build on the 2007 review of the Program.

Day then advised delegates about the funding to states and territories for the development of a Professional Learning Package for teachers, which focuses heavily on the Government’s Values Education resources. This work has been very positive and has involved much innovation, flexibility and collaboration between and within education sectors. Stage 1 and 2 Curriculum Teaching and Learning Resources, Day said, are currently being distributed in schools and uploaded on the Values Education Website. Stage 3 Resources have a focus on intercultural understanding, and are due to arrive in schools in September 2009. The Values Education Website, also managed by Curriculum Corporation, has been maintained as the information portal for Values Education in Australia.

Day also briefly outlined the Department’s agreements with other peak stakeholder groups, including principals, teachers, teacher educators and parents. These groups are developing a range of programs designed to support and complement the work being done at the national and state levels. She thanked ACSA, particularly facilitator Tony McKay, and Kathy Schoo and her team, for organising and managing this conference. She complimented them on bringing together such a high level of speakers and workshop presenters who are all engaged with the notion of developing hope and resilience in young people.

Another element of the Government’s 2008-2009 funding is the Values in Action Schools Project, managed by Curriculum Corporation on behalf of DEEWR. This Project, Day explained, was conceived as targeted and directed action research allowing schools to build on the outcomes of the Values Education Good Practice Schools Project Stages 1 and 2. Fifteen clusters are engaged in projects that have a specific focus or intent that assesses how Values Education supports social inclusion, student wellbeing and resilience, and improving the social outcomes of young people. There is also a strong focus on evaluation and gathering evidence, and University Advisers have been engaged to assist the clusters in their journeys. Day thanked the clusters for their involvement and gave special thanks to David Brown and his team at Curriculum Corporation for their hard work.

This dedication is also evidenced in the publication At the Heart of What We Do, Values Education at the Centre of Schooling, the Final Report of the Values Education Good Practice Schools Project Stage 2. This Report represents the efforts of 25 clusters over 20 months of intense work in developing Values Education initiatives. The Report highlighted a series of ten principles that provide guidance on best practice in Values Education. Day reminded us of Dr
Bruniges reflection on Principle 4, which examines the notion of the explicit teaching of values.

Day informed participants that the importance of teaching values explicitly is also echoed in the research of Professor Terry Lovat and his team. This research demonstrated that within the targeted schools, change occurred within schools that gave Values Education priority as the school’s core business with alignment between school-wide-policies and practices. The publication of the ‘Project to Test and Measure the Impact of Values Education on Student Effects and School Ambience’ validated the experience of many present at the conference that the promotion of values must be followed by teacher modelling and enacting of values, and that to be successful, it must be taught explicitly. Day thanked Professor Lovat, Dr Ron Toomey and all those involved with the research, which she described as a cornerstone piece of work for the Values Education Program. A further highlight of 2009 was the publication of a second monograph associated with the Values Education Program. ‘The Troika’ – a work of the Australian Council of Deans of Education, led by Professor Terry Lovat and Dr Ron Toomey, presents case studies and insights into how Values Education makes an impact in school communities. Day encouraged participants to read this work.

Day described how the explicit teaching of values was a key to cultural change in schools and in society. She linked the work of researchers, school clusters, stakeholders, and states and territories as evidencing this change. In recent times, she said, the thinking has been that a major purpose of schools should be to develop good and happy people. Day reminded delegates of Professor Martin Seligman’s question to participants at the 2008 conference as to what they wanted for their own children or those in their care. The answers focused on love, health and happiness. Asked what the education system provided, people responded with primarily knowledge and skills. Seligman argued that these two responses need to overlap and challenged people to think that both could occur. That is, that schools could provide students with the knowledge and skills they need and contribute to happiness, love and fulfilment.

In discussing values and their relation to happiness, Day referred to the work of Professor Lord Richard Layard who co-authored the Children's Society February 2009 report and is a renowned British economist at the Centre of Economic Performance in London. His other work argues that society is currently in a moral vacuum and that a good society is one where the people are happiest. The challenge for Australia, Day suggested, is what implications does Layard’s research and thinking, the work of Lovat, who also references happiness as a component of the values program, and happiness as a core value of some cluster schools, have for policy makers, educators and others?

Day then outlined Layard’s 4 principles of reform. The first is that it should be an explicit aim of schools to train students’ character and provide moral education, secondly, that this aim should include the employment of specialists trained to teach values, thirdly, that a scientific approach should exist to educate young people about the path to a happy society, and finally, that the curriculum should provide for active values exploration of a range of issues. Day stated that reflecting upon the Australian Values Education journey since the Values Education Study of 2002-2003, it is interesting to note that values educators who explicitly engage in teaching values, are well on the way to contributing to the reform agenda that Layard sets out.

She stated that, firstly, schools that are engaged in values education are explicitly providing character training and a moral education. The evidence from VEGPSP 1, 2 and the University of Newcastle research supports this. Secondly, professional learning that is developed at the local, state and national level, although not as rigorous as perhaps a pre-service teaching approach to training people in values education might be, is still developing in teachers the skills and specific training needed to understand the reasons why the explicit teaching of values is important and beneficial. Thirdly, Australia is developing a scientific approach through the academic research that is undertaken and particularly through the influence of speakers at all the National Forums since 2005. These include Andy Furco, Martin Seligman, Ruth Deakin-Crick, Terry Lovat, Neil Hawkes and a range of others who have all indicated the necessity of scientific and plausible data to their findings. And finally, through a range of
measures such as the Stage 1 to 3 teaching and learning resources, through local resources and other adoptions of values into the curriculum, there are many Australian schools that are actively engaged in pursuing a values-based curriculum that allows for the exploration of issues in a safe and meaningful way.

In concluding, Day reflected that it is perhaps at this point the impact of the last few years of Values Education activity in Australia will realise the connections between research, theory and practice. If happiness means feeling good – enjoying life and feeling it is wonderful, then the Values Education work that participants are doing in their communities will contribute significantly to the overall wellbeing and happiness of young people in this country. She reminded us of Headly Beare’s story of Angelica, in the educational theory book, ‘Creating the Future School’, and that it is perhaps pertinent to us today. Values education, Day said, is one way that that you can equip students in Australian classrooms today, for their world and for the long, long future that awaits them.

INTERACTIVE SESSION
The Australian Context: Where does Values Education fit with the ‘Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians’ and the National Curriculum?

This session was led by Tony Mackay with a panel consisting of Dr Ruth Deakin Crick, Ameeta Wattal, Andrew Blair (President of the Australian Secondary Principals Association and President of the International Confederation of Secondary Principals) and Nigel Brown (Department of Education, Tasmania).

Mackay provided an introduction to this session from his perspective as Deputy Chair of the National Curriculum Board. He noted the significance of the role of values in the ‘Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians’ and the way in which that represented an evolution from the other two Declarations in Adelaide and Hobart. ‘We have that and we didn’t 20 years ago. The country has said this is serious.’ He also provided a brief update on work related to the National Curriculum which includes explicit references to general capabilities and cross-cultural knowledge. He suggested that in each of these two areas strong resonances of the values education work could be found.

But he started with the question: if you wanted to make sure the fullest expression of what we are talking about here became a widespread reality, would you use the term ‘Values Education’?

Deakin Crick began. She thought that what was happening in Australia might be unique in the world, but it needs to be integrated more widely with practice. There is a profound fault line in education and the top-down idea belonged to modernity. But the National Framework starts from another point and speaks of persons, place and relationships. It is a brave and radical step to explore how knowledge creation and use is about values. Values can be just an add-on that makes us feel better. Bottom-up procedures, valuing the personal, without losing the rigour of what we expect, may well provide a more effective way of thinking about the incorporation of values.

Brown asked if we should use the term ‘Values Education’. His answer was ‘Yes’. He argued that far too much has happened to change this. We risk losing years of credibility, losing a lot of champions and giving heart to the skeptics. But we should keep the book open and be prepared to learn and change in terms of what we know now. The result is like something warm and fuzzy but with teeth. What we are talking about should be felt deep in the heart and widely connecting. Maintaining Values Education as core business is vitally important. It has status on the national agenda. Governments of both persuasions appear committed to it. We have made significant progress against the goals they set for us.

Wattal reflected on her connections with the Asia Education Foundation as an example of the success of a lobby group and asked if Values Education had been as effective. She felt you
needed to link the macro with the micro, while noting she felt uncomfortable with the word ‘excellence’ (used by Mackay when referring to a component of the *Melbourne Declaration*) in a document about values. ‘If you don’t come up to that, you’re a failure. That’s terrible. You must do your best. We must be who we are, but the best version of that, respecting the identity of others.’ But, she confessed, she wasn’t used to documents. ‘We try to live out our ideals.’

Blair speculated whether we had traveled anywhere in the past five or ten years. He felt we had, while confessing concern when he still saw posters of Simpson and his donkey. Where have we gone? He felt that both the Adelaide and Hobart Declarations were underwhelming, but that the Melbourne Declaration seemed to suggest that the education of young people was not a ‘school only’ function. He found this an absolute irony given that young people are learning 24/7 in a society which was seriously fractured — the reason why, he suggested, that the idea of Values Education had come about in the first place. Young people are looking for a place in the world that is far less controlled by institutions like schools. How in this sort of world do we hold anyone to account? Are young people’s voices heard, and listened to? Where are the structures and resources to make all this work? Schools are increasingly less important. Schools are less and less relevant. We must acknowledge that, and try to build structures and relationships to allow access to learning 24/7 in the community.

There were several comments and questions from the floor. One suggestion was for an accountability framework for school leaders based on their introduction of and support for Values Education in their schools. A comment was made that Values Education reframes the function of schooling, and brings together and helps shape the community. This drew agreement with the caveat offered by one participant that there are lots of agendas from all sorts of quarters. Can we bring them together to avoid the ‘not another thing’ response from teachers and schools? Another participant said how much he appreciated the Melbourne Declaration, agreeing that it was a step on from the previous Declarations. But, ‘there is not an action there for a school to follow. How do we do it? We need an action framework.’

Another contributor thought that the lack of assessment in Wattal’s school allowed the freedom to pursue this agenda (note this was from Wattal’s comments on this in her workshop conversation), and that a regime of less assessment should be actively pursued. ‘Examples have to come from outside this [our] culture.’ The final offering was that ‘education needs to work at the level of the whole person.’
CONCLUDING KEYNOTE ADDRESS

**Riding the Rockies by Rail, and other journeys: The learning experiences that change lives**
— John Marsden, author and Principal, Candlebark School, Romsey, Victoria

“Imagine a journey through the Canadian Rockies by train; a slow two days with plenty of stops. Spectacular scenery and extraordinarily abundant wild life. A fellow Australian appears at lunch on the train. You make an offhand remark about Japan, and he replies, ‘They all look the same don’t they.’ You are too startled to respond and make an effort to avoid him elsewhere on the journey. But in a hotel at breakfast the next morning, he’s there. Out of the blue he says, ‘They don’t have the housing we do, do they? Not the size.’ You are not aware that you are immersed somehow in an international architectural competition.

You can avoid him perhaps, but it is difficult to avoid the hostesses in each cabin who direct your behaviour as though they were infant mistresses from the 1950s. ‘We’re coming up to Moose Lake. Why do think it might be called that?’ ‘There is a photo opportunity coming up in 90 seconds. No. Don’t take photos yet. We’ll count it down … seven, six … two, one. Now. Click click click. You go to the viewing platform to avoid this, but there is your countryman. And he has more information for you. ‘They don’t have the birds we do…’ Another international competition, won by the home side before the game has begun. Australia will always win. It will have the best he will ever see.’

That’s the story John Marsden began his talk with. On the plane home from this experience he reflected on this experience. What is it that brings people to this position?

Life, he thought, ‘was a journey from the station of ignorance travelling along a line to the destination, which we will never reach, of wisdom and understanding. We will never reach it, but the prospect, nonetheless, remains deeply satisfying and beguiling. This is one of life’s great paradoxes. If we think in terms of schooling, the journey might be described as one from ignorance to knowledge, and we will pick up knowledge on the way. It might be cardiac resuscitation or how to fix a carburettor or the many other things that are valuable and helpful to know. But if it is only a journey with that character we may be making a grave mistake of omission, and that is failing to make wisdom and understanding the true, if inaccessible, destination.’

He then turned to his own experiences, four years previously, of setting up Candlebark, a school at Romsey in rural Victoria.

Marsden reflected that he ‘wanted to start my own school, as close to perfect as possible of course, filled with vigour and imagination — with the support of fine adults. I took a different tack with my staff advertising and tried to inject a note of humour: no Carlton supporters and so on. I thought the people who would respond to such an advertisement might be more comfortable with what I had in mind, and be less rigid and orthodox. I also wanted them to have achieved things outside of schooling.’

Marsden remembered a teacher he had worked with who had gone to that school, trained at university, spent a year elsewhere and then returned to the very same school. He felt he didn’t want teachers like that. He wanted people who had ‘displayed some additional enterprise and initiative in other environments.’

As a school needs students, he created an advertisement for them as well. He asked the students themselves ‘to explain why they wanted to come to Candlebark.’ He wasn’t sure if he wanted a primary or a secondary school, and was prepared to be persuaded by the numbers requesting enrolment. In the end the predominant group of 52 students was in the
primary years, but Marsden had been so moved by some of the stories students in the secondary years had told that he extended the enrolment first to Year 7 then Year 9.

The school began after a year of difficult negotiation. Marsden wondered if, perhaps, he was establishing a nuclear waste plant rather than a school. More seriously he was struck by the demonisation of children this represented. The ‘shrill voices’ of young children laughing was deemed offensive.

One couple questioned the school on the grounds that undesirable children might be bussed in. When Marsden asked about the meaning of ‘undesirable’, it was suggested that they may be from ‘undesirable backgrounds’. This couple later repented. They asked Marsden for afternoon tea to talk through and apologise for what they had said and offered their support and assistance. Marsden was grateful to see their capacity to appraise their own behaviour and acknowledge their mistake.

Marsden reflected that ‘beginning a school offers the uncommon chance to establish rather than reform a culture’ As mentioned the prospective students were asked to fill out their own applications forms and respond to a request to write down what they hoped for from their new school. Overwhelmingly they asked for two things: the first was teachers who treated them with kindness, and the second was that they wouldn’t be bullied. These sentiments were expressed in simple poignant language.

On the day before the school opened Marsden read a letter in ‘The Times’ from a retired teacher who posed the question: why do we tell students they are behaving badly when they already know how to behave and that what they are doing is wrong? He resolved to avoid the unnecessary hectoring which children often experience.

Another bit of useful advice came from staff at Fitzroy Community School and has become the central and well understood rule at Candlebark: no excluding.

Four years later, he asked, how are we doing? He read from a most complimentary letter from parents who had visited the school seeking admission for their child. These parents:

‘.. had been struck by the respect shown for teachers and for learning. Their Grade 5 boy had liked the fact that ‘it was beautiful’ and that the principal seemed nice and funny and that it was ‘go go go’ at the school. He had seen preps eating bickies and cheese. He liked the space.’

Marsden was cheered but not surprised that the boy had responded to the attractive surroundings and buildings. He took this to reflect the strong and often unacknowledged aesthetic sense that exists in children.

Marsden asked ‘ss the school doing something sensational?’ He responded that ‘it isn’t.’ In many respects it is a very conventional school. Students learn literacy and maths as they do at other schools. There are some differences that would be noticed in the timetable. From Grade 2 students move from teacher to teacher as they do in secondary school. They think this makes learning more interesting. There are regular free reading times as there are in many schools. But for 50 minutes on Tuesday afternoons everyone plays chess. There are electives, including guerrilla warfare, on Friday afternoons and on Wednesday afternoons from midday there is free time when children do what they want: reading, just talking, playing games, riding bikes, skateboarding. It is genuinely free time and the students do things they mightn’t do in other schools for reasons of safety. Not that there is no concern for safety, but the boundaries are thoughtfully constructed and liberal.

Some parents complained about students riding on the back of a quad bike and in the back of a ute. Marsden’s response was he was driving, he goes slowly and tells them to hang on tight. But apart from that, they have to learn to be responsible and safe themselves. They must learn from experience and, if they fall out of a tree, they will be more careful next time.
At the end of the day all students and staff clean the school which takes about 20 minutes. If it's your mess you clean it up. The local mayor brought a Japanese visitor to the school. The mayor was startled by this process; the Japanese visitor was not. It is standard practice in Japan.

‘We feed kids,’ he said. ‘Generously. Being generous with food is tremendously important. We self-cater on trips for that reason, but at school every day they might have 60-80 choices of food and if they don’t like what has been cooked they can make themselves something they would like. They eat what they eat at home. This sends some strong implicit messages.’

There are lively, good humoured relationships between students and staff. Our staff have this capacity when they come or learn it very quickly. He overheard a conversation between students saying that all the teachers at the school were very nice, and another saying she regretted how nice they were because you couldn’t pull tricks on them.

But he has regular visits from disgruntled parents, often people who move their children from school to school frequently, ‘serial school choosers’ as he described them. One year 8 girl was on her 14th school. Another piece of advice from Fitzroy Community School was, don’t change the school for them; they'll be gone soon.

He referred to John Hattie’s book *Visible Learning* which defines 148 factors which research says influence learning. Only five of these are negative. One is shifting schools. (Three of the other four are being kept down, watching too much TV and having parents on welfare.)

Students are ‘exposed’ at the school. In classes of 8 to 11 students, it is difficult to hide. Some kids find this uncomfortable. Beyond that it is a normal bunch of kids with the same sorts of problems that all kids have. Bullying has not been stamped out. There are the usual sorts of playing up, not doing the work and so on. ‘But we talk it through. We talk and we talk. We don’t punish.’ He referred to a major incident at the school where a girl student with cerebral palsy had been disturbed on the toilet by mistake but then the boy student had brought his friends back to bother the girl. Parents were looking for punishments for this incident which, he suggested, caused a pall to hang over the school for some time, perhaps as long as six months. But he resisted this. Marsden didn’t want to introduce mindless punishments. He wants to produce young people who will grow up to be good men and women. So they talked and talked. He feels that the boy who was the ring leader has shifted his understanding of what has happened. It is often hard for the victim to understand the absence of punishment, but Marsden still feels he is doing the right thing.

To finish he told the story of how he had backed into the letterbox of a neighbour and bent it over. He sent his maintenance person to back to fix it as quickly as he could, but too late. The neighbour was there already looking at the bent letterbox. Young hooligans! she said.

In concluding. Marsden suggested that ‘we want young people to lead lives which are spiritually enriching; and trying to protect them from physical injury is just one mistake of many in this process. A lingering spiritual death is achieved by wrapping them in cotton wool. To ignore young children’s sense of the aesthetic is to abuse them. They should be surrounded by empathy, imagination and kindness. The greatest wisdom is kindness. It is this which will enable them to become the kind of adults we want them to be.’
Concluding Session

Participants were invited to suggest actions arising from the Conference proceedings. It was suggested that this process needed to speak to school leaders and teachers as well as policy-makers, but there did need to be some strategically-targeted call for action.

There was a general sentiment that the work needed to be continued, supported inter alia by the contents of the *Melbourne Declaration*. But also what had been learned needed to be fed into current policy initiatives — ‘not as something warm and fuzzy, but as core business’. With relation to the work on the National Curriculum, this meant influencing the day-to-day work of the people developing the studies and infusing this work with Values Education. There was no view for it to be separate subject or subject area.

Tony Mackay suggested that, from what had been expressed during the past two days, the following actions would be appropriate.

1. That the report from this event be forwarded to the National Curriculum Board;
2. That a request be made that Values Education — its concepts as embedded in the National Framework, and its products as developed through this program — be included in instructions to those writing current and future elements of the National Curriculum; and
3. That the reference group for Values Education and ACSA act as general agents for the promotion of Values Education.

General approval was expressed by participants without any obvious dissent. Kathy Schoo, Executive Director ACSA agreed to pursue the idea of ACSA acting as an agent for Values Education.

There were several other statements. One participant had been excited by the notion of Service Learning and wanted to be sure it would be included in any action. ‘We’ve got to get it out there. It could so easily be incorporated.’

Another expressed a concern about the rigidity of assessment regimes and the negative impact that they had on Values Education in general and following from the previous speaker Service learning in particular.

There were comments made about the sort of pedagogies implied by Values Education and how we might explore them in more depth, possible tensions for example between knowledge and skills. This evolved into another discussion on the demands on teachers’ time. A response suggested that the divide between content and pedagogy was artificial, and that there had to be a capacity for teachers to take these ideas on in their own ways.

A request was made for better treatment of the teaching of religion and religious issues in the classroom. There was an emphatic statement that it was critical to keep measuring the outcomes of Values Education, and that it was essential to keep defining essential learnings and ways of working.

Time pressed on these large issues, and it was time to close with the agreement that participants would like to get together again.
ATTACHMENTS

Conference Program
Background Information on Keynote Presenters
VALUES IN ACTION:
Shaping positive futures

Hotel Realm, 18 National Circuit, Barton ACT
Thursday 30 April and Friday 1 May 2009
Thursday 30 April 2009  Hotel Realm, Barton ACT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Session/Activity</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8.30 am</td>
<td>Registration and arrival tea and coffee</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>SESSION 1</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>9.00–9.45 am</td>
<td>Introduction and Welcome — Tony Mackay</td>
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<tr>
<td>NATIONAL BALLROOM</td>
<td>Welcome to Country — Matilda House</td>
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<td><strong>Official opening</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>9.45–10.45 am</td>
<td>Keynote address — Learning Power and Values: Reconciling the personal with the public in an inquiry based curriculum — Dr Ruth Deakin Crick, University of Bristol, UK</td>
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<td><strong>MORNING TEA</strong></td>
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<td>10.45–11.15 am</td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>SESSION 2</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>11.15 am–12.45 pm</td>
<td>11.15 am Workshops</td>
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<tr>
<td>NATIONAL BALLROOM 1</td>
<td>Conversation with Ruth Deakin Crick</td>
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<tr>
<td>NATIONAL BALLROOM 2</td>
<td>Values in Action Schools Project: Engaging the disengaged — Australian Juvenile Detention Centres School Cluster</td>
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<td>NATIONAL BALLROOM 3</td>
<td>Values in Action Schools Project: Values through ICT and philosophy — Cross Border Values Community Cluster</td>
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<tr>
<td>NATIONAL BALLROOM 4</td>
<td>Practical strategies for developing cultural sensitivity in the classroom — Stigmar Turnidge, University of Melbourne</td>
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<tr>
<td>HIGH COURTYARD SOUTH</td>
<td>Toward a Curriculum of Being: Transforming education from within — Thomas Nielsen, University of Canberra</td>
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<td>HIGH COURTYARD NORTH</td>
<td>The Living Values Educator Training Program — Shahida Abdul-Samad, IGRA International Institute, Malaysia</td>
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<td></td>
<td>12.00 pm Workshops</td>
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<tr>
<td>NATIONAL BALLROOM 1</td>
<td>Values in Action Schools Project: Building inclusion — Reporting Values Cluster</td>
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<tr>
<td>NATIONAL BALLROOM 2</td>
<td>Values in Action Schools Project: Out of apathy — The Beenleigh Believe, Achieve, Succeed Cluster</td>
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<tr>
<td>NATIONAL BALLROOM 3</td>
<td>The Holistic Planning and Teaching Framework: An indigenous perspective that explores the critical connections between land, language and culture — Ernie Grant, Far North Queensland Indigenous Schooling Support Unit</td>
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<tr>
<td>NATIONAL BALLROOM 4</td>
<td>Resourcing Teachers of Philosophy and Critical Thinking: The Australian Philosophy Teachers’ Network — Peter Ellerton, Queensland Academy Science, Mathematics &amp; Technology</td>
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<tr>
<td>HIGH COURTYARD SOUTH</td>
<td>Students voices on cyber bullying — Dr Debra Brown, Child Health Promotion Research Centre, Edith Cearan University</td>
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<tr>
<td>HIGH COURTYARD NORTH</td>
<td>Different times, different places, different values? — Ursula Dubosarsky, author</td>
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<tr>
<td>12.45–1.45 pm</td>
<td><strong>LUNCH</strong></td>
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<td><strong>SESSION 3</strong></td>
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<td>1.45–2.15 pm</td>
<td>The student experience — Senior school students reflecting on their involvement with values education</td>
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<td><strong>SESSION 4</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>2.15–2.30 pm</td>
<td>Keynote address — What Works: Values and wellbeing pedagogy as best practice — Professor Terry Lovat, Pro Vice-Chancellor, University of Newcastle</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.15–3.45 pm</td>
<td><strong>AFTERNOON TEA</strong></td>
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<td><strong>SESSION 5</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>3.45–4.45 pm</td>
<td>Update on Values in Action School Projects and Resources — Curriculum Corporation</td>
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<tr>
<td>7.00–10.00 pm</td>
<td><strong>CONFERENCE DINNER AT THE NATIONAL PRESS CLUB</strong> — Dinner speaker — Eliza Breeton, Principal, Camberwell HS / Sunnerv Heights High</td>
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**Friday 1 May 2009**  
*Hotel Realm, Barton ACT*

**8.30–9.00 am**
**THE GALLERY**

Arrival tea and coffee

**SESSION 5**
9.00–10.00 am
**NATIONAL BALLROOM**

Keynote address
Value, Vision, Harmony: An Indian perspective  
— Ameeta Watal, Principal, Springdales School, New Delhi, India

**SESSION 7**
10.00–11.00 am

Values Education Overview  
— Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations

The Australian Context: Where does Values Education fit with the “Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians” and the national curriculum?  
— Tony Mackay — interactive session with questions from delegates

**11.00–11.30 am**

Morning tea

**SESSION 8**
11.30 am–1.00 pm

**11.30 Workshops**

**NATIONAL BALLROOM 1**

Conversation with Ameeta Watal

**NATIONAL BALLROOM 2**

Values in Action Schools Project: Engaging the disengaged  
— Australian Juvenile Detention Centres School Cluster

**NATIONAL BALLROOM 3**

Values in Action Schools Project: Values through ICT and philosophy  
— Cross Border Values Community Cluster

**NATIONAL BALLROOM 4**

Practical strategies for developing cultural sensitivity in the classroom  
— Dagmar Turnidge, University of Melbourne

**HIGH COURTYARD SOUTH**

Toward a Curriculum of Giving: Transforming education from within  
— Thomas Nielsen, University of Canberra

**HIGH COURTYARD NORTH**

The Living Values Educator Training Program  
— Shahida Abdal-Samad, IDRA International Institute, Malaysia

**12.15 pm Workshops**

**NATIONAL BALLROOM 1**

Values in Action Schools Project: Building inclusion  
— Reporting Values Cluster

**NATIONAL BALLROOM 2**

Values in Action Schools Project: Act of empathy  
— The Geelong Believe, Achieve, Succeed Cluster

**NATIONAL BALLROOM 3**

The Holistic Planning and Teaching Framework: An Indigenous perspective that explores the critical connections between land, language and culture  
— Ernie Grant, Far North Queensland Indigenous Schooling Support Unit

**NATIONAL BALLROOM 4**

Resourcing Teachers of Philosophy and Critical Thinking: The Australian Philosophy Teachers’ Network  
— Peter Ellerton, Queensland Academy Science, Mathematics & Technology

**HIGH COURTYARD SOUTH**

Students’ voices on cyber bullying  
— Dr Deborah Brown, Child Health Promotion Research Centre, Edith Cowan University

**HIGH COURTYARD NORTH**

Different times, different places, different values?  
— Ursula Dubosarsky, author

**1.00–1.45 pm**

**LUNCH**

**SESSION 9**
1.45–2.45 pm

Keynote address
Riding the Rockies by Rail, and other journeys: The learning experiences that change lives  
— John Marsden, author and Principal, Cannaberry School, Riemsay, Victoria

**SESSION 10**
2.45–3.15 pm

Key messages from the Conference  
— Tony Mackay

**3.20 pm**

First bus departs for Airport
This work was funded by the Australian Government Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations under the Quality Outcomes Program. The views expressed at the 2009 National Values Education Conference do not necessarily represent the views of the Australian Government Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations. The Conference was managed by the Australian Curriculum Studies Association.
Background Information on Keynote Presenters

Dr Ruth Deakin Crick

Ruth Deakin Crick, Cert Ed. MEd. M.A. PhD. FRSA., is a Senior Research Fellow at the Graduate School of Education, University of Bristol, UK.

Deakin Crick originally trained as a teacher of Music and Physical Education with 7-16 year olds. Following fifteen years in school leadership, her doctoral work explored the links between self-management of schools and head teachers’ vision and values. She has Masters Degrees in School Leadership and Applied Theology. She is an academic member of the Society for Organisational Learning. Her early academic work focused on school based research which explored approaches to values education, spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils and citizenship. She went on to become one of the originators of the ELLI Learning Power assessment tools and led the research program which followed, working in research, professional learning and social enterprise around the theme of learning, change and growth in individuals, organisations and communities. Her current research projects include the development of indicators for learning to learn with the European Union, personalised pedagogies, the relationship between values and learning and the learning profiles of underachieving students.

Deakin Crick is a founding member of ViTaL Partnerships, which is a charitable company that links research and practice, specializing in values education and learning how to learn. She is interested in the ‘ecology’ of learning and the development of assessment practices which integrate personal development with academic achievement. She is the author of several books on values and learning, including:

Transforming Visions, Managing Values in Schools, Bristol, Middlesex University Press.
Distributing Leadership for Personalising Learning, London, Continuum.

Professor Terry Lovat

Professor Terry Lovat is Pro Vice-Chancellor (Education and Arts) and a member of the Senior Executive Group at The University of Newcastle. He is a former Dean of Education at Newcastle and President of the Australian Council of Deans of Education (ACDE) nationally. He is also a former school teacher who taught in both public and private schools.

Terry Lovat has been involved as a project manager and researcher in the Values Education program and its projects from 2003 to the present. He regularly receives invitations to address or advise in the public and private sectors. He is particularly involved at present in work around the issue of the impact of Muslim and non-Muslim schooling on Muslim youth. He is a regular keynote presenter at national and international conferences, including most recently in the areas of religion, values and Islam at government sponsored conferences in Russia and Ukraine.

Ameeta Wattal

Mrs Ameeta Mulla Wattal is the Principal of Springdales School in New Delhi, India. She has worked in the sphere of Education, Creative Arts and Peace Studies for over three decades. She has held several posts in India and abroad, at both school and university level. A multi-talented educator, who has worked in the area of special needs education, communicative English, creative arts, street theatre and women's education. Her work at the International Study Group, Beijing, with children in the field of mild autism, Attention Deficiency Disorder and Dyslexia, helped in bringing inclusive education in many schools in China & North Korea. Her papers on education and women's developmental issues have been published in several journals all over the world.
She is a recipient of the prestigious National Teachers Award 2005 from the President of India, Dr. A. P. J. Abdul Kalam on teachers day (along with many others). She has recently received ‘Order of the Star of the Italian Solidarity’ Award for her work in the area of Renaissance art of Italy by the Italian Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs. Her work in the field of interfaith and peace education has placed her on the steering committee of the Project 'Towards the creation of a Spiritual Forum for World Peace at the United Nations'. She is a member of the panel of experts at the Oslo Coalition, in collaboration with UNESCO, for peace education. She is on the UNESCO committee in Geneva for education of peace and human rights.

Ameeta Wattal is on the Managing Boards of several schools throughout the country. She is involved in innumerable initiatives in education with the UK, Europe and SAARC Nations.

She is currently pursuing her Doctorate in “Gandhian Symbolism : A Vehicle for Education for Peace” under the guidance of Prof. Mushirul Hasan – Historian & Vice Chancellor Jamia Millia Islamia.

**John Marsden**

Born in 1950, son of a bank manager, John Marsden had a typically Australian middle-class upbringing at government and private schools. After leaving school his life started to deviate from the norm however, as he tried to find a path which suited him. At the age of about 28 he started a teaching course, and after graduation worked as a full-time English teacher. He became Head of English at Geelong Grammar’s Timbertop campus, a bush boarding school for Year nine boys and girls.

In 1987 his first book, *So Much to Tell You*, the fictional diary of a traumatised girl with elective mutism, was published. It won the Australian Children's Book of the Year Award, and in the USA, the Christopher Medal, awarded for media that “affirm the highest values of the human spirit.”

More than 40 books have followed, of which the most successful have been the *Tomorrow When the War Began* series, *Letters from the Inside*, *Winter*, *Everything I Know about Writing*, and *Secret Men's Business*.

After years of touring Australia and south-east Asia to talk about books and to teach writing, John purchased the Tye Estate, an 1100 acre property of native bush close to Melbourne. The protection and preservation of this property has been a major interest ever since. The Tye Estate became a well-known centre for writing, with hundreds of writing camps and courses for young people and adults, until 2006, when John opened his own school. This school, Candlebark, has 87 Prep to Year nine students, and aims to teach an adventurous, enlightened curriculum in a good-natured, good-humoured atmosphere, on a campus surrounded by natural beauty.

In 2008, John published two books, *Hamlet*, a novelisation of the play, and *Home and Away*, a controversial picture book promoting a more humane approach to refugees and so-called "illegal immigrants" to Australia. *Home and Away* is shortlisted for the 2009 Australian Children's Picture Book of the Year award.