VCOSS – Department of Education Community Sector Education Forum 2025

BRIDGES TO LEARNING

Supporting children and young people's engagement and reengagement in education

Thursday 13 November, 9:00am – 4:00pm
Melbourne Town Hall

9.00	**Registrations and networking**	
9.45	**Welcome to Country**	**Uncle Tony Garvey** Wurundjeri Elder **Juanita Pope** Chief Executive Officer, VCOSS
10.00	**Video presentation** Vox pop video presentations of students sharing how Hester Hornbrook Academy has supported their re-engagement with education.	**Charlie, Salma, Nix, Jackson, Haz, Tasha and Levi** Hester Hornbrook Academy
10.10	**Welcome**	**Juanita Pope** Chief Executive Officer, VCOSS
10.15	**Department of Education Secretary address**	**Tony Bates** Secretary, Department of Education
10.20	**Panel discussion** **Strengthening education-family-community partnerships to support engagement and reengagement with education** In conversation with Gail McHardy, including audience question and answer.	**Facilitator: Gail McHardy** Chief Executive Officer, Parents Victoria **Panellists** **Dr Fiona Longmuir** Senior Lecturer, Educational Leadership, School of Education, Culture and Society, Faculty of Education, Monash University **Peter Jeans** Principal, Westall Primary School **Dr Stephane Shepherd** Professor of Forensic Psychology and Criminology, Alfred Deakin Institute for Citizenship and Globalisation, Deakin University

We acknowledge the traditional owners of Country and pay respect to Ancestors and Elders. Today's forum is taking place on sovereign, unceded Aboriginal land.

11.20	**Panel discussion** **What's the role of 'complementary settings' in our system? What can we learn and apply across the broader system to strengthen support for students at risk?** In conversation with Professor John Firth, including audience question and answer.	**Scene setting: Stephen Fraser**, Deputy Secretary, School Education Programs and Support, Department of Education **Facilitator: Professor John Firth** Vice-Chancellor's Strategic Fellow, Victoria University **Panellists:** **Debra Boote** Head of School of Education - Education & Creative Arts, Education, South West TAFE **Josie Howie** Principal, The Pavilion School **John Andrew** Principal, Ignatius Learning Centre, Jesuit Social Services
12.15	**Lunch**	
1.15	**Victorian Government address** In conversation with Juanita Pope, including audience question and answer using Slido.	**Facilitator: Juanita Pope** Chief Executive Officer, VCOSS **Panellists:** **The Hon Ben Carroll MP** Deputy Premier Minister for Education **The Hon Lizzie Blandthorn MP** Minister for Children
1.35	**Panel discussion** **How are schools supporting students to engage / reengage in education?**	**Facilitator: Riya Rajesh** Victorian Student Representative Council (VicSRC) **Panellists:** **Jude, Praneel and Terri**
2:00	**Afternoon Tea**	

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2.30 Breakout session

Supporting attendance and engagement in early childhood education — **Hoddle Room**

Facilitator: Dr Karina Davis, Chief Executive Officer,
Early Learning Association Australia

Panellists:

Anjee-Lee Bamblett, Early Years Manager,
Victorian Aboriginal Education Association Incorporated

Nicole Artico, Chief Executive Officer, Kids First Australia

The Missing Middle – a deep dive into how and why we're losing students in the middle years and what we can do to solve it. — **Condell Room**

Facilitator: Tim Warwick, Founder & Chief Executive Officer
Education Equity Alliance

Panellists:

Dr Jennifer Dam, Senior Project Coordinator,
Centre for Adolescent Health, Murdoch Children's Research Institute

Shane Elevato, Principal,
Surf Coast Secondary College

Partnerships and pathways for school engagement and reengagement — **Supper Room**

Facilitators: Scott Widmer, Deputy Secretary, Strategy and Secondary School Reform, Department of Education and **Stephen Fraser**, Deputy Secretary, School Education Programs and Support, Department of Education

Panellists:

Dr Jodie Long, Assistant Principal – Research and Advocacy,
David Scott School, Brotherhood of St Laurence

Helen Coventry, Manager, Navigator, Jesuit Social Services

3.40	**Reflective discussion** **Sharing key reflections from the breakout sessions and the day** In conversation with Juanita Pope.	**Juanita Pope** Chief Executive Officer, VCOSS **Dr Karina Davis**, Chief Executive Officer, Early Learning Association Australia **Tim Warwick**, Founder & Chief Executive Officer, Education Equity Alliance **Stephen Fraser**, Deputy Secretary, School Education Programs and Support, Department of Education
3.55	**Closing remarks**	**Juanita Pope** Chief Executive Officer, VCOSS