#TraumaAware2026

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TRAUMA-AWARE
EDUCATION

# POSTER PRESENTATION

*Addressing the life impacts of trauma for Australian learners*

P101

# How student voice can inform change in the experience of school for autistic students

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Aim:
This paper explores the school experience of autistic students. It addresses the conference themes of lived experience voices and participatory approaches, and aims to inform researchers and educators working with young people with complex needs and vulnerabilities.

Background:
Autistic adolescents overwhelmingly have a poor experience of school, including social, emotional and academic challenges. Research into this area has been limited and seldom includes students' first-hand perspective.

Student voice was critical to this study's design. Findings revealed distinctly different views from the three participant groups. Students reported negative feelings about their school experience, whereas parents and teachers' view was that autistic students often enjoyed school. Teachers and parents reported that autistic students chose not to participate in extracurricular activities, however students said they wanted to participate with the right support.

Relevance:
Research design, methodology and findings are relevant to the theme of trauma transformation, illustrating the critical importance of student voice in driving transformation.

Contribution:
Omitting the autistic perspective from research into schooling means that this perspective rarely informs practices, policies and support aimed at improving their experience. This innovative research can inform research design, policies and practices aimed at improving school experience.

Description:
Using a Critical Participatory Action Research approach, this qualitative study elicited the perspectives of autistic students, parents and educators. Interview techniques were significantly adapted for students who gave iterative feedback on questions and themes.

Engagement:
This work is highly relevant to researchers seeking to work with complex, vulnerable cohorts and to all stakeholders in education.

P102

# Development of a trauma-informed employment and study support programme in youth community services in NSW

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Individual Placement and Support (IPS) is an evidence-based intervention to support people with severe mental ill health to engage in work or education. However, how it should be integrated into a service for young people with high levels of exposure to trauma is unclear. This project involved the development of a trauma-informed training and supervision model to augment IPS training and the implementation the trauma-informed- IPS (TI-IPS) training and supervision model TI-IPS into a youth community service in regional Australia. The aim of the research project was to understand how young people experienced receiving the TI-IPS model.

Methods: TI-IPS was implemented at Veritas House. Ten trauma-exposed young people who had received TI-IPS participated in in-depth qualitative interviews about their experiences. Results were analysed using Reflexive Thematic Analysis.

Results: Young people described how important trust in the TI-IPS worker was and how trust supported them in being motivated to look for work. They also described feeling safe interacting with their IPS worker. Young people talked about trauma with their IPS workers in a brief and contained way and experienced this as helpful and supportive. Some young people found that talking with their IPS worker about how trauma could affect their study or work was helpful as it offered a different perspective.

Conclusions: trauma-informed and work and study support models can be integrated successfully in youth services. Young people valued the relationship with their worker when undertaking TI-IPS. These findings highlight the importance of a trauma-informed lens in work and study support.

P103

# Trauma and Adolescent Behaviour: Understanding the Hidden Influences

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Adolescence is a critical developmental period marked by rapid physical, cognitive, social, and emotional change. For many young people, experiences of trauma — whether a single event, chronic adversity, or relational harm — can significantly shape how they think, feel, and behave. Trauma can alter neurobiological development, affect emotional regulation, and influence behaviour in ways that may be misunderstood in educational settings.

This presentation will explore how trauma influences adolescent experiences and behaviour, highlighting that many behavioural expressions commonly seen in schools — such as withdrawal, aggression, impulsivity, avoidance, or hypervigilance — may be grounded in survival responses. Trauma can disrupt executive function areas such as planning, attention, emotional regulation, and decision-making, leading to behaviours that interfere with learning and social connection.

Drawing on current evidence and trauma-informed principles, this session will unpack the link between adverse experiences and emotional and behavioural patterns in adolescents, emphasising that behaviours often labelled as “challenging” may be adaptive responses. Attendees will gain insight into how trauma responses can manifest differently across individuals, why typical behavioural management approaches may fail to address the underlying causes, and how adopting a trauma-aware lens can support more compassionate, effective educational responses.

Practical strategies for recognising trauma responses in the classroom, de-escalating distress, and fostering safe, predictable learning environments will be shared. Through reflection and discussion, participants will be encouraged to shift their viewpoint and perspective of behaviours, by reframing behaviour as communication and opening pathways to support healing, engagement, and positive school outcomes.

P104

# Experiencing Supervision: A Trauma-Aware Approach to Supporting Educators in Schools

Kharidi G[1]
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Aim:
To develop a clear understanding of supervision as a professional reflective practice, distinct from EAP, mentoring, therapy, or informal conversation. This workshop supports educators and leaders to recognise supervision as a trauma-aware structure that strengthens practice, reduces isolation, and provides a purposeful space for the emotional and cognitive load of school-based work.

Background/Context:
While supervision is well established in counselling and allied professions, its application in education remains limited despite increasing recognition of educator stress, secondary trauma, and sustained emotional load. Educators frequently carry complex student-related experiences beyond the classroom without structured opportunities for reflection. This workshop challenges common assumptions such as “I just need to toughen up” and “informal conversations are enough,” repositioning supervision as a professional and sustainable support.

Relevance:
This workshop directly links trauma-aware practice with educator wellbeing by addressing where educators process ongoing emotional and cognitive demands, supporting more regulated, reflective responses in practice.

Contribution:
The workshop introduces supervision as a scalable reflective structure that can strengthen staff wellbeing, professional judgement, and organisational capacity within trauma-aware school environments.

Description:
Participants will engage in a structured, “micro-supervision” experience using a professionally relevant moment from their practice, supported by clear prompts and boundaries for safety.

Engagement:
Participants will actively experience structured reflection, enabling them to recognise its impact and leave with one practical next step for implementation.

P105

# Developing trauma aware early years educators through arts-based critical reflection

Murphy A[1]
[1]La Trobe University

Aim:
Developing trauma aware early years educators through participation in arts-based critical reflection.

Background/Context:
Critical reflection is central to effective early childhood education, particularly in responding to the complex needs of children who may have experienced trauma. Emerging research highlights arts-based practices as powerful tools for deepening reflective processes. These approaches create opportunities for educators to effectively engage with emotions, challenge assumptions, and explore multiple perspectives. Findings from stage one of PhD research conducted in the UK suggest that the art part is a valuable addition to the critical reflection process in the early years.

Relevance:
This submission demonstrates how incorporating creative methods in critical reflection can foster empathy, self-awareness, relational understanding and educator wellbeing. Strengthening these relational elements with self and others is a critical component of building the strong relational connections with children that are required in trauma responsive environments.

Contribution:
The work contributes to the field by offering an innovative intersection between arts-based methodologies and trauma-informed early childhood practice. It highlights the potential of creative reflection to strengthen educator capacity, promote inclusive and responsive environments, and improve outcomes for all children, inclusive of those who have experienced traumatised backgrounds.

Description:
A qualitative research methodology was employed, informed by critical theory, ecological systems theory and an arts-based practice approach. A comparative nested case study design was selected for research in the UK and Australia. A series of arts-based critical reflection group sessions using collage, plasticine and collaborative drawing were facilitated, followed by an arts-based individual interview.

P106

# Building compassion fatigue resilience in schools

Phillips M[1]
[1]Compassionate Schools

Aim:
The Compassion Fatigue Resilience model (Ludick & Figley, 2017) outlines a stressor-strain-resilience process in the face of compassion-fatigue related stressors. Elements of the model will be unpacked to aid in conceptualising how schools/organisations may design work and enhance workplace structures to promote protective factors and best support the wellbeing of their staff and leaders.

Background/Context:
The Compassion Fatigue Resilience model is an established (research and practice) secondary traumatic stress/ compassion fatigue model with numerous iterations, and is a key component underpinning author's current PhD study (Australian university) - Staff wellbeing and engagement in schools: What role do trauma-aware psychosocial workplace conditions and personal characteristics play?

Relevance:
Exploring the model provides a worthwhile professional learning opportunity for attendees to learn more about the approach of one of the original scholars in the secondary traumatic stress /compassion fatigue field (Charles Figley); and how its elements are now applied across a broad range of workplace sectors including school education.

Contribution:
Four protective factors (self-care, compassion satisfaction, detachment/ decentering, social support) will be explored, from the evidence base and in practice, that are immediately applicable in trauma-aware/ trauma-informed schools and organisations; alongside the other elements in the model.

Description:
Author's published peer-reviewed research applying the model in Australian schools will be referred to during the presentation.

Engagement:
Research, practical examples, and recommendations from a range of school contexts will be shared. Worksheet (hard-copy) provided to enable notes about protective factors to be considered for own professional context. Q&A invited throughout presentation.

P107

# Calm by Design: Practical Strategies for Safer, More Inclusive Classroom

McCluskey S[1]
[1]Billy Cart Behaviour

Aim:
To present practical, class-wide environmental strategies grounded in Positive Behaviour Support (PBS) and Low Arousal Approaches to improve outcomes for students with diverse learning and support needs.

Background/Context:
Students with disabilities, neurodivergent profiles, and trauma histories often experience environments that inadvertently increase stress and dysregulation. PBS and Low Arousal Approaches emphasise proactive, environmental, and relational strategies that reduce triggers, support regulation, and enhance participation. Rather than relying on individualised or reactive responses alone, there is growing recognition of the value of universal, classroom-wide supports that benefit all learners.

Relevance:
This poster aligns with trauma-informed education by focusing on predictability, safety, sensory considerations, and co-regulation. It highlights how environmental adjustments can reduce re-traumatisation, increase accessibility, and support emotional regulation across diverse student populations.

Contribution:
The poster offers a practical, scalable framework for educators to implement inclusive strategies that do not rely on diagnosis or individual plans, promoting equitable access and reducing the need for restrictive or reactive practices.

Description:
The poster will outline key environmental strategies, including reducing sensory load, increasing predictability, adapting communication, and modifying demands. QR codes will link to downloadable tools, templates, and resources (e.g., visual supports, regulation strategies, environmental checklists) that can be readily implemented in classrooms.

Engagement:
Attendees will be invited to interact with the poster through QR codes, reflective prompts, and quick self-assessment tools to identify opportunities for change within their own settings.

P108

# Connection Before Correction: A DDP & DDP PACE Case Study in Trauma-Aware Education

Millward L[1]
[1]Resourceyourself

Trauma-aware education requires more than theoretical knowledge; it demands sustained relational practice, reflective capacity, and consistent adult attunement within school systems. This presentation explores the application of Dyadic Developmental Practice (DDP and DDP PACE) within an educational context through a de-identified implementation project designed to embed relational, attachment-informed approaches into everyday classroom practice.

The project involved the development of a "Champion Group" of educators who engaged in a staged process of professional learning and reflective practice within a school-based setting in which I was professionally involved. This included explicit teaching of attachment theory and developmental trauma, alongside targeted education in the DDP PACE principles (Playfulness, Acceptance, Curiosity, and Empathy). These principles formed the foundation for shifting adult responses to student behaviour toward increased relational safety, co-regulation, and connection-focused practice.

In addition to theory-based learning, the project incorporated ongoing coaching and reflective consultation to support educators in translating DDP and DDP PACE principles into live classroom interactions. This included structured reflection on moments of rupture and repair, scaffolding of attuned responses, and strengthening educators' capacity to remain relationally present during student dysregulation.

A de-identified case example will be used to illustrate the implementation process and the integration of DDP-informed practice within a school context.

This presentation argues that DDP-informed educational frameworks provide a practical and transferable approach to supporting educators in building relationally grounded responses that prioritise connection, safety, and regulation within learning environments that can sustain teacher satisfaction and engagement.

P109

# Trauma-informed adult education in Australia: preliminary findings on landscape and staff development needs

Yen F[1]
[1]Australian Trauma Education Centre | QUT

Aim:
To share preliminary findings from a doctoral study examining the current landscape of trauma-informed adult education in Australian higher education institutions and recommended approaches for staff development and learner support.

Background/Context:
A policy scan of publicly available documents revealed predominantly reactive policies supporting counselling, safe environments, and harassment prevention, with limited integration into teaching and learning. Student surveys highlighted insufficient communication, demand for mandatory paid staff training, and the value of academic flexibility and relational support. Staff surveys emphasised needs for foundational training, trauma-informed pedagogy, and enhanced student support pathways. Focus groups with professional and academic staff across vocational and university settings confirmed reactive identification, institutional barriers, including cultural oversights, and sessional workloads, alongside strong calls for culturally responsive training that incorporates Indigenous First Aid and Ngangkari healers, centralised referral portals, flexible credit transfer policies, and sorry business support.

Relevance:
The findings directly illuminate gaps in trauma awareness and trauma-informed practice for adult learners impacted by trauma within Australian higher education.

Contribution:
Evidence-based recommendations for mandatory culturally responsive staff development, centralised support infrastructure, flexible policies, and systemic integration offer practical pathways to strengthen learner outcomes and staff wellbeing sector-wide.

Description:
Mixed-methods design incorporating a policy scan, separate staff and student surveys, and focus groups with professional and academic staff in vocational and university settings in Australia.

P110

# Beyond Behaviour: A Developmentally Led, Trauma-Informed Approach to Primary School education in Regional Australia.

Sperling S[1]
[1]La Trobe University

Aim
This research examines how a developmentally led, trauma informed framework is implemented, experienced, and sustained in Australian primary schools. It explores whether such a framework supports students' social, emotional, and cognitive development, while amplifying the voices of students, families, and communities who are often marginalised.

Background / Context
Children experiencing complex often face significant disruptions across social, emotional, cognitive, and physiological domains, affecting attachment, regulation, learning, and engagement. While trauma informed education is increasingly recognised internationally, empirical research in Australia remains limited. This gap is evident in regional and rural contexts characterised by socioeconomic disadvantage, limited services, intergenerational trauma, and the ongoing impacts of colonisation on First Nations Peoples.

Relevance
This study addresses a critical evidence gap regarding trauma informed frameworks in Australian schools. It is highly relevant for regional communities and schools supporting First Nations students, where culturally responsive, relational, and developmentally informed approaches are essential. The research also responds to calls for whole school approaches that extend beyond behaviourist models.

Contribution
The study provides original empirical evidence by identifying enablers and barriers to trauma informed implementation. It advances knowledge through a critical, decolonising lens that foregrounds intersectionality, cultural humility, and systemic inequities, while centering community, family, and student voices.

Description
Using a mixed method, transformative case study, the research involves two regional Victorian primary schools. Semi structured interviews are triangulated with quantitative data. Analysis draws on critical theory, attachment research, Polyvagal theory, and neurodevelopment to inform policy, practice, and systemic reform toward trauma sensitive, culturally responsive schooling.

P111

# Better Together: A journey of healing from domestic and family violence

Thiele M[1]
[1]The Benevolent Society

Aim: Support educators and other professionals to see how the overlay of these 2 models supports trauma-responsive approaches that can be transferrable to educational settings.

Background/Context: This presentation will demonstrate how we overlay the Safe and Together Model (S&TM) and Dyadic Developmental Psychotherapy (DDP) is used across our work with families who have experienced trauma/domestic and family violence. It demonstrates visual tools and practice concepts that we use and can also be used in home or educational settings.

Relevance: Currently in Australia 2 in 5 or around 40% of children are living in domestic and family violence (DFV). Children and young people are living in violence often with little to no supports for the impacts on learning, development, behaviour and social/community engagement. Educational settings are key opportunities to provide these essential supports and connections to children, young people and families.

Contribution: Resourcing educators with approaches without adding additional pressure can assist them in supporting inclusion and engagement as well as responding to the needs of students in non-punitive ways that make a big difference.

Description: Presentation demonstrates work with families/educators around key concepts of S & TM, how this responds to DFV increasing safety & stability and the dovetail of DDP PACE (playfulness, acceptance, curiosity and empathy) into our connections/engagements building stronger, supportive relationships with children, young people and their families. PACE is a way of being therefore is easily adaptable for use in classroom and other educational settings to connect and engage more effectively with children and young people

P112

# From behaviour to belonging through trauma aware practice, student voice and educator capability.

West P[1]
[1]Education Queensland

Aim:
To demonstrate how trauma-aware practice can be enacted through educator-led strategies that integrate student voice, relational pedagogy and targeted capability building to improve engagement, behaviour and wellbeing for students with complex and diverse needs.

Background/Context:
In response to increasingly complex and diverse student needs, a shift from compliance-driven behaviour management to trauma-aware, relationship-based approaches was implemented. This included strategies such as Positive Behaviour for Learning (PBL), restorative practices, structured check-in processes and student-led initiatives that promote agency, voice and participation.

Relevance:
This work aligns with trauma-informed practice by prioritising safety, connection and belonging as key conditions for learning, including insights from student voice and lived experience. It also supports trauma-aware educator wellbeing by strengthening staff confidence and consistency when responding to complex learners.

Contribution:
Drawing on practitioner insight, this practice reflection demonstrates measurable impact, including reductions in behavioural incidents and increased student engagement. It highlights the interconnected role of student voice, educator capability and trauma-aware practice in driving sustainable improvement across diverse educational contexts.

Description:
A structured trauma-aware approach was enacted through coaching educators, modelling differentiation, embedding relationship-based practices and creating opportunities for student leadership and participation.

Engagement:
Participants will engage through practical examples, guided reflection and strategies that can be immediately applied in classroom contexts.

P113

# Transitional Times: Trauma informed education in Australian Teacher Education

Cacciattolo M[1], Vicars M[1], Aronson G[1]
[1]Victoria University

Aim:
The purpose of this research project was to investigate the impact of implementing teaching and learning resources that explored trauma informed pedagogy (TIP), specifically in a Master of Secondary Teaching program. A central aim was to equip preservice teachers with trauma-aware skills and knowledge.

Background/Context:
An inability to regulate hyper-aroused states or hypo-aroused states can make it challenging for individuals to fully participate in learning situations (Howard, 2017). This study equips preservice teachers with skills and knowledge needed to support students who show signs of hyper/hypo arousal.

Relevance:
The study aligns with aims of a holistic, equity-oriented vision for education (UNESCO, 2015, 2025). The presentation is also relevant to ITE providers and academics.

Contribution:
Data findings indicated that PSTs valued the use of role-plays in exploring trauma informed pedagogies. PSTs' perceptions of the role and value of TIPs in reducing their own anxiety and stress, when working alongside school students who displayed signs of complex trauma, was also a central data theme to emerge.

Description:
Preservice teachers in the study were introduced to what TIPs look like in classrooms. PSTs were also introduced to neurodevelopmental research that extended their skills and knowledge of teaching and learning practices that cultivate safety, predictability, and regulation within classroom settings (Perry, 2009).

Engagement:
This presentation will employ a performative lens in order to bring to life the learning that participants undertook in the classroom. Audience members will have an opportunity to 'stand in the shoes' of learners as they are introduced to TIP.

P201

# Scared Straight:LGBTQIA+ trauma as worldmaking and breaking

Vicars M[1]
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Aim:
For many young LGBTQIA+ people transgression of the teleological narratives of gender and sexuality can script how being and belonging is imagined and becomes narrated. Young LGBTQIA+ people who can find themselves socially, culturally, emotionally marginalised negotiate stigmatizing relational dynamics which produce experiences of abjection, stigma, shame and anger .

Background/Context:
Anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) generate intense emotions, and avoidance of situations and are sites of primal trauma. These are situated as the material for exploring being scared straight.

Relevance:
Research has indicated the enduring trauma on LGBTQIA+ individuals who experience the effects of adverse childhood experiences. In this presentation LGBTQIA+ trauma is interwoven with(in) the messiness of the marginality, identity, materiality of gay/queer lives in youth.

Contribution:
In this chapter the storying of the personal shows how the straight cultural imaginary is encountered in the context of the family and community and situates the practice of  a trauma approach in youth work as a professional safeguarding against physical, psychological and emotional vulnerability.

Description:
Storying the personal come very close to the life as lived, and experienced. The narration of lived experience has a particular structural nexus; as being part of a system of contextually related experiences. Stories can privilege the primacy of lived experience in the on-going construction of an individual’s life story.

Engagement:
In this presentation LGBTQIA+ trauma is explored through the narration of embodied narratives.

P202

# Implementing trauma-informed research in partnership with schools: the YOTES in Schools project

Greaves K[1], Chinnery G[1], Whiting J[1], Gao C[1,2], O'Sullivan S[1], Bailey S[1,2], D'Alfonso S[3], Gleeson J[4], Bendall S[1,2], Killackey E[1,2], Alvarez-Jimenez M[1,2], Simmons M[1,2]
[1]Orygen, [2]Centre for Youth Mental Health, University of Melbourne, [3]School of Computing and Information Systems, University of Melbourne, [4]Healthy Brain and Mind Research Centre, Australian Catholic University

Aim
This session explores how organisations can partner with schools to implement trauma-informed research projects, drawing from Orygen's experience partnering with a specialist independent school to deliver the YOTES in Schools project.

Background/Context
Orygen partnered with a specialist independent school to trial the Youth Online Training and Employment System (YOTES), a strengths-based digital career intervention integrating tailored, mental health informed vocational content and real-time support from career specialists and youth peer workers (Simmons et al., 2021).

Relevance
Because this intervention was delivered in a specialist independent school with significant expertise in trauma-informed practice, we were fortunate to collaborate with staff in embedding this throughout the project implementation. Development and maintenance of relationships, strengths-based and person-centred approaches, and use of trauma-informed strategies were integral to the success of the project.

Contribution
While the YOTES in Schools project highlights the benefits of digital enhancements to complement in-person career development support, it also contributes insights into how research organisations can work in partnership with schools to embed trauma-informed practice in program implementation.

Description
The YOTES in Schools study involved a mixed methods approach focused on the implementation of the intervention within a school-based curriculum. Surveys and qualitative research interviews were conducted to explore usage and implementation of the intervention.

Engagement
The session is of direct relevance to schools and organisations who partner on program delivery and evaluation. They will be engaged through the sharing of practical insights that they can put into practice in their own settings.

P203

# Supporting Families Through Trauma-Informed, Neurodiversity-Affirming Occupational Therapy

Armstrong T[1]
[1]Eli's Place Allied Health

Children and families who have experienced trauma often present with complex emotional, behavioural, and sensory needs. When these experiences intersect with neurodivergence, traditional approaches to intervention may inadvertently overlook the individual's lived experience and sensory profile. This presentation explores how occupational therapists can integrate trauma-informed practice and principles, with a neurodiversity-affirming approach to provide safe, respectful, and effective support for children and families. Drawing on current research and clinical practice examples, this session will unpack the core principles of trauma-informed care — safety, trust, collaboration, empowerment, and choice — and demonstrate how these align with neurodiversity-affirming values such as acceptance, autonomy, and strengths-based practice. Participants will be guided through practical strategies for adapting therapy environments, communication, and goal-setting to reduce further traumatic experiences and enhance engagement. The presentation will highlight the occupational therapist's role in recognising sensory and emotional regulation needs, supporting co-regulation, and fostering family understanding and connection. Through reflective discussion and real-world examples, attendees will gain practical tools for embedding compassion, safety, and empowerment into everyday occupational therapy practice.

P204

# Improving Educator Secondary Traumatic Stress, Burnout and Compassion Satisfaction through Professional Development: National survey insights

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[1]The Flourish Movement

Aim:
Examining Impact and effectiveness of Professional Development (PD) for Educators in relation to management of Secondary Traumatic Stress (STS) across 2285 Australian educators.

Background/Context:
Educator Professional Development (PD) requires significant time and financial investment. Reviewing its effectiveness in reducing Burnout (BO), STS and increasing Compassion Satisfaction (CS) is critical in supporting educators working in high trauma environments.

Relevance:
Commonly accessed PD for educator STS were evaluated for effectiveness by 2285 Australian Educators. This research correlated the effectiveness to the STS, BO and CS scores to determine impact. PD that was rated as not effective had poorer outcomes on STS, BO and CS than those who had no PD. This demonstrates that poor PD is not effective and even detrimental to individuals. Highly effective self-care training had the greatest positive impact across all three constructs over other forms of PD, clearly demonstrating a protective effect.

Contribution:
This research provides strong evidence about the impact and effectiveness of different types of PD for positive impact on STS, BO and CS. This is important to allow educators, Schools and System wide services to choose their training wisely, not only to meet their needs but of a quality that has positive outcomes.

Description:
A national survey with interviews explored both the prevalence of STS, and impact of training on STS. Analysis identified PD that had protective and detrimental effects for STS, BO and CS.

Engagement:
Highly Engaging/interactive presentation style; sharing key findings in the type of PD with implications for individual, school and system wide PD strategies.

P205

# Beyond Strategies: How Trauma-Aware Professional Learning Shapes Teacher Identity, Mindset, and Sustainability

Moffat R[1]
[1]Alphacrucis University College, [2]Queensland University of Technology

Aim:
This presentation introduces an emerging doctoral study investigating how early-career teachers interpret trauma-aware professional learning and how these experiences shape their developing professional mindset, beliefs, and identity.

Background/Context:
Trauma-aware education is increasingly embedded within policy, professional learning, and school reform initiatives. However, existing research has predominantly focused on student outcomes, program evaluations, and implementation frameworks. Far less attention has been given to how teachers themselves experience and make meaning of trauma-aware professional learning, particularly during the formative early years of practice when professional identity and pedagogical beliefs remain fluid.

Relevance:
Understanding teacher interpretation is critical for trauma-aware practice. Trauma-aware education places significant relational, emotional, and cognitive demands on educators, yet professional learning models often assume knowledge acquisition naturally translates into practice change. Examining teachers' lived experiences provides insight into the tensions, uncertainties, and meaning-making processes that shape sustainable trauma-aware pedagogy.

Contribution:
This research offers a shift in focus from program effectiveness to teacher meaning-making. It highlights trauma-aware professional learning as identity work involving belief negotiation, emotional labour, and professional self-construction. Findings aim to inform the design of professional learning, induction, and educator wellbeing frameworks.

Description:
The study adopts a hermeneutic phenomenological approach, using semi-structured interviews and reflective journals to explore early-career teachers' lived experiences.

Engagement:
The presentation will engage participants through reflective prompts and applied examples that connect research insights to professional experience.

Keywords:
Trauma-aware education; early-career teachers; professional learning; teacher identity; meaning-making

P206

# From trauma awareness to trauma-aware action: building nervous system literacy in education

McNab L[1]
[1]Fleur Ot

Trauma-aware education has increased understanding of trauma, neurodiversity, and regulation across education and community settings. However, many educators report difficulty translating this awareness into consistent, effective practice, particularly in environments characterised by high demand, complexity, and workforce fatigue. As expectations on educators continue to increase, current models that rely on individual capacity and the accumulation of strategies are proving unsustainable.

This presentation introduces RISE, a nervous system literacy framework that supports educators and organisations in moving beyond awareness toward accurate, moment-to-moment interpretation of behaviour under pressure. Rather than focusing on behaviour management or regulation strategies, RISE prioritises the ability to read nervous system state before responding, recognising that misinterpretation often drives escalation, burnout, and ineffective intervention.

Grounded in occupational therapy and neuroscience, the framework offers a future-focused approach to trauma-aware practice by shifting responses upstream. Participants will explore how factors such as cumulative load, exhaustion, and reduced capacity influence behaviour, and how small shifts in interpretation can significantly reduce effort while improving outcomes.

Practice-based examples demonstrate how nervous system literacy can be embedded at an organisational level to support consistency across teams, reduce reliance on individual resilience, and protect educator wellbeing. This session positions nervous system literacy as essential infrastructure for the future of trauma-aware education, supporting sustainable practice in increasingly complex systems.

P207

# Weaving the Web of Trauma Awareness

Powe G[1], Longaretti L[1], Downes N[1], Bennetts S[1]
[1]Deakin University

Aim
This presentation reports preliminary findings from a cross-disciplinary study exploring university staff understandings of trauma awareness and perceived needs for a coordinated, cross-disciplinary approach aligned with academic and industry expectations.

Background and context
Australian universities are operating in environments of increasing psychosocial risk, with widespread staff stress and burnout reported nationally. At the same time, university staff across multiple disciplines frequently engage with trauma impacted students, colleagues, and industry partners, particularly in teaching, leadership, professional placements, and student facing roles.

Relevance
Although accreditation frameworks and professional standards across fields such as health, education, social sciences, law, and business emphasise trauma-aware practice, there are limited university-wide approaches to trauma aware education across disciplines. Instead the responsibility for developing trauma-aware capability is often devolved to individual disciplines, programs, or staff. Establishing a baseline understanding of trauma awareness across university and industry contexts is critical to the development of trauma-aware education for staff and students that responds to industry needs.

Contribution: The baseline data generated by this study provides a foundation for the development of coordinated, university-wide, industry focused, trauma aware education.

Description
The findings from this mixed-methods study highlight shared and discipline specific needs for trauma awareness, demonstrating relevance beyond individual roles to organisational and industry contexts.

Engagement
This presentation will provide an opportunity to engage in interactive discussion, inviting participants to reflect on trauma-aware practice within their own professional and industry contexts.

P208

# From behaviour to engagement: A trauma-aware framework for secondary schools

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Aim:
To present a practical, secondary school-based professional learning framework that supports trauma-aware practice through a focus on student engagement, relationships, and staff sustainability.

Background/context:
In secondary settings, student disengagement is often understood and responded to as behaviour, rather than as a reflection of underlying needs related to regulation, connection, and context. while trauma-aware approaches are increasingly recognised, there remains a challenge in translating these approaches into consistent and sustainable everyday classroom practice. this project draws on leadership experience and postgraduate research to develop a trauma-aware professional learning framework implemented in a secondary school, with design principles adaptable across diverse educational contexts.

Relevance:
This work responds to the need for trauma-aware approaches that are developmentally appropriate and sustainable for educators. while grounded in a secondary context, the framework reflects challenges common across settings, including the need for consistent, relational approaches to behaviour and engagement.

Contribution:
The framework provides a staged model that supports shared language, consistent responses to behaviour, and reflective practice. developed in a secondary school, it offers a transferable structure that can be adapted across settings, demonstrating how trauma-aware principles can be embedded within existing systems without adding to workload.

Description:
The framework is delivered through a series of modules across the school year, supported by baseline and follow-up staff data. it integrates neuroscience, restorative practice, and relational pedagogy, with a focus on practical application.

Engagement:
The session will include guided reflection, discussion prompts, and opportunities for participants to apply ideas to their own contexts.

P209

# Evaluating a whole-of-school trauma-aware initiative: Student and educator findings from the Trauma Aware School Village

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Aim:
To examine the immediate impacts of the Trauma Aware School Village (TASV) — a co-designed, whole-of-school trauma-informed program — on students' and educators' psychosocial outcomes, and whether effects were moderated by baseline trauma exposure.

Background/Context:
Childhood trauma is highly prevalent in Australian schools, with consequences for mental health, learning, and wellbeing. Despite growing adoption of trauma-aware approaches, few whole-of-school models extend beyond teacher training to meaningfully engage students and caregivers. The TASV is grounded in Polyvagal Theory and was implemented across three Australian primary schools.

Relevance:
This study addresses trauma-aware practice in education, examining a model designed to support students, educators, and caregivers within a single, coordinated framework.

Contribution:
Findings provide preliminary evidence for the feasibility of a whole-of-school trauma-aware approach and offer early insight into the relational pathways through which such programs may produce change. Results highlight the importance of accounting for trauma histories in universal program design and implementation.

Description:
A pre-post survey design was employed, with data collected one week before and after an eight-week program. Participants included students (n = 82, years 3–6) and educators (n = 97). Outcomes — emotional awareness, self-regulation, psychological safety, and social connectedness — were analysed. At baseline, 37-76% of educators and students reported childhood exposure to traumatic events. Post-intervention, students showed significant improvements in social connectedness. Students with higher trauma exposure demonstrated greater gains in self-awareness and compassion; those with lower exposure showed greater gains in social connectedness. Educators showed significant improvements in emotional contagion and drive to improve.

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# Presence over Presents - When Success Masks Relational Deprivation

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Aim:
To professionally equip educators and school leaders to identify, prevent, and respond to relational and developmental trauma, specifically focusing on the masked presentation of affluent neglect through a culturally responsive and trauma-informed lens, particularly in high socioeconomic and culturally diverse educational settings.

Background/Context:
Affluent neglect, a form of relational trauma, is frequently obscured by markers of success like material provision and academic achievement. In diverse school communities, this harm is further concealed by varying cultural norms regarding parenting, achievement expectations, and social stigma surrounding emotional vulnerability. Manifestations such as hyper-independence, perfectionism, emotional restraint, or high-functioning anxiety are often misattributed as resilience or cultural traits, rather than indicators of unmet attachment needs. This means traditional safeguarding frameworks, which often prioritise visible disadvantage, may fail to detect covert relational trauma in some educational settings.

Relevance:
A comprehensive, trauma-aware educational approach must extend identification protocols beyond socioeconomic adversity to ensure equitable and accurate recognition of relational harm across all culturally diverse and high-performing school environments.

Contribution & Description:
Grounded in attachment theory and interdisciplinary research, this session will delineate actionable strategies for prevention, early identification, and systemic, trauma-informed responses. It provides educators and leaders with evidence-based, practical tools designed to enhance early identification, align policy, and implement culturally responsive safeguarding practices that effectively recognise hidden relational trauma.

Engagement:
Participants will engage in high-impact activities, including case analysis, guided cultural reflection exercises, and a structured safeguarding self-audit, to facilitate the direct application and successful implementation of learning within their specific professional contexts.

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# Benefits of Trauma-Informed Individualised Regulation in Education.

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Aim:
The Dalwood Spilstead Family Intervention and Support Service (DSS Service) provides a trauma-informed tertiary service for families facing inter-generational trauma and child protection issues with young children.

Background/Context:
The Spilstead Model (SM) has been designed to maximize the benefits of key Evidence-Based practice within a client centred, trauma-informed approach with services for both parents and children provided from the one team.

Relevance:
Consistent with international research children referred commonly present with delays in both developmental and emotional regulation (60% - 85%). A therapeutic preschool program is therefore offered focusing on “bottom-up” intervention targeting regulation, relationship and individualised education. Children between 12 months - 6 years attend two days per week in small groups with allied health support.

Contribution:
A 10-year longitudinal study of families from the DSS Service, evaluating the effectiveness of SM, showed sustained improvement in parent-child relationships, child-wellbeing and reduction of parent stress (large effect size between 0.77–1.67 ($p<0.01$)). Further data from the NSW, Child Protection Service indicated that the SM had a 96% engagement and participation rate with families referred from the child protection service, 33% higher than the 63% state-wide average.

Description:
The SM, founded on attachment theory and the Neuro-sequential Model of Therapeutics (NMT) case planning framework, is underpinned by team cohesion providing consistent, co-regulating relational experiences. Circle of Security (CoS), Marte Meo and Highscope approaches further support the model and are integrated into the psychoeducation and family counselling services for parents.

Engagement: Incorporating mixed media (oral, slideshow, and video) presentation.

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# Embedding Trauma-Informed and Culturally Responsive Practice: A Whole School Approach to Engagement and Regulation.

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[1]Department Of Education, [2]Department of Education

Aim:
To present a whole-school, trauma-aware approach that integrates cultural connection, co-regulation, and proactive engagement to improve outcomes for students with complex needs.

Background/Context:
In a school community with high levels of trauma (35%+ First Nations, high unemployment and domestic violence), student behaviour presented as dysregulation, volatility, and disengagement. A case study of four upper primary boys highlighted entrenched patterns of absconding, aggression, and unmet needs (connection, food, movement, identity), with limited success from traditional disciplinary approaches.

Relevance:
This work demonstrates how trauma-informed practice shifts the lens from behaviour management to understanding function, prioritising safety, connection, and regulation. It emphasises culturally responsive practice, particularly for First Nations students, and the importance of co-regulation and belonging as foundations for engagement.

Contribution:
The initiative offers a practical, scalable model for schools, combining whole-school reform with targeted intervention. It highlights the impact of embedding trauma awareness into daily practice, staff learning, and system structures, resulting in improved attendance, reduced conflict, and enhanced wellbeing for students and staff.

Description:
Key strategies included establishing a daily food program, creating safe and engaging spaces (e.g., music, boxing, sensory and play areas), and embedding cultural practices through First Nations staff and community partnerships. A structured program for the student focus group incorporated shared meals, physical activity, cultural learning, and gradual re-engagement with class. Whole-school changes included revised behaviour processes, expanded break-time activities, and a unified support team using a proactive, co-regulation approach within a Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTTS) framework.

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# Addressing a Critical Gap: Trauma-Aware Training for Teacher Aides, Chaplains and Youth Workers

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Aim:
To advocate for trauma-aware professional learning opportunities tailored to teacher aides, chaplains and youth workers in schools ('support staff').

Background:
The Cairns & Hinterland Ed-LinQ team, comprised of Senior Child & Youth Mental Health Clinicians (a speech pathologist and social worker), designed and delivered a one-day event tailored specifically to school support staff. This event has now been implemented twice in the Cairns & Hinterland region.

Relevance:
Support staff are often the first adults that students turn to, yet they have limited opportunities for role-relevant trauma-aware training, or cannot attend due to staffing and rostering constraints. This training integrates the neurobiology of trauma, the impact on learning, and skill-building activities around relational safety and connection. The training has been informed by the evidence-based frameworks of Stephen Porges, Bruce Perry, Dan Siegel and Dan Hughes. The result was a professional learning experience that was immediately applicable.

Contribution:
Support staff are uniquely positioned to identify emerging mental health concerns, and respond early when students show signs of distress. As such, support staff play a vital role in early intervention in mental health.
The feedback (an average of 4.8 out of 5 across all participants) emphasises the need for dedicated trauma-aware professional learning for support staff.

Description:
A distinct professional learning for school support staff, composed of evidence-based theory and skill-building activities. An online reflective session is offered 2-4 weeks after the training to reinforce confidence, reflection and continued application of skills.

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