



Lead the Way Conference 2026



Sponsorship Prospectus

2-3 September | Melbourne | Rydges

'Enduring Wisdom, Emerging Futures'



About

1000+ Attendees

**School Principals and
Leaders**

**Community Service
Executives**

**Mental Health
Professionals**

**Child and Family
Services**

**2 Days – of keynotes,
presentations, workshops,
networking events**

The Lead the Way Conference 2026 is set to bring together over 1000 attendees with i500 influential leaders across education, community services, child and family services, and mental health professionals attending in person and 500+ more online in our first hybrid version of the conference. Over two days of insightful keynotes, presentations, workshops, and networking events, this conference offers a unique platform for businesses and organisations wishing to engage with school principals and leaders, community service executives, mental health professionals, and child and family services to expand their reach, amplify their impact, and demonstrate their commitment to corporate responsibility in strengthening wellbeing and safety.

Watch 2025 Highlight Video







Welcome

The Lead the Way Conference 2026 is a premier event bringing together 1000+ professionals from education, community services and mental health professionals to explore evidence-based approaches to strengthening safety, wellbeing, and mental health for those we serve and our staff.

Two days of compelling keynotes, evidence-based research, practical case studies, and interactive workshops, attendees gain insights, tools, and strategies from across sectors to drive meaningful change in schools, community services, child and family services and mental health professions.

Sponsors will have direct access to primary school and secondary school principals and leaders, CEOs and directors of community service organisations and not for profits in child, youth and family services, government department leaders, academics, and researchers from across Australia.

As a sponsor, you have a unique opportunity to align your organisation with thought leadership, innovation, and best practice in whole-school, whole-organisation, community wellbeing and child safety. We invite you to partner with us to increase your brand visibility, engage with key decision-makers, and showcase your leadership in building safe and supportive communities.



Why Sponsor

Direct Access to Decision-Makers

Connect with 1000+ professionals, including school principals, community organisation executives and leaders, mental health professionals and university researchers.

Brand Visibility

Gain exposure across digital and print conference materials, social media, and high-traffic event spaces.

Thought Leadership Opportunities

Position your organisation as an expert through speaking engagements and panel discussions.

Exclusive Networking

Engage with delegates in a setting designed to foster meaningful connections and future collaborations.

Support a Meaningful Cause

Demonstrate your commitment to improving the wellbeing and safety of children, young people, and professionals across education, community service, family and child sectors.

Targeted Audience Reach

Engage directly with key decision-makers and influencers in education, community services, and government sectors to drive your brand's growth.



About

Across two days of keynotes, panel discussions, research presentations, and interactive workshops, the conference will explore:

- Cross-sector insights for strengthening safety and wellbeing.
- How evidence-based approaches improve outcomes.
- What real-world examples of practice look like across sectors.



Inspiring Keynotes

Experts on trauma, culture, child safety, wellbeing and leadership.



Cutting Edge Research

Evidence-informed insights for safer environments.



Real-World Case Studies

Examples of practice transforming schools and organisations.



Networking

Connect with leaders across sectors.

Last Years Keynote Speakers



Meena Singh
Acting Principal
Commissioner and
Commissioner for Aboriginal
Children and Young People



Joe Ball
Commissioner for LGBTIQ+
Communities



Prof. Leah Bromfield
Director
Australian Centre for
Child Protection
University of South Australia



Dr Ross Greene
Clinical Psychologist
New York Times
Bestselling Author



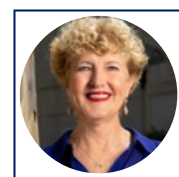
Prof. Pat Dudgeon
Professor
Indigenous Studies
University of Western Australia



Prof. Pasi Sahlberg
Professor
Educational Leadership
University of Melbourne



Prof. Anne Graham AO
Director
Centre for Children &
Young People
Southern Cross University



Dr Robyn Miller AM
Chief Executive Officer
MacKillop Family Services

Last Year's Guest Speakers



A/Prof Lisa McKay-Brown
Associate Professor
Diversity & Inclusion University of Melbourne



A/Prof Tim Moore
Associate Professor
Institute of Child Protection Studies
Australian Catholic University (ACU)



Zoë Robinson
Advocate for Children and Young People
Office of Youth



Krushnadevsinh (Kano) Ravalji
CEO
Third Culture, Victorian Youth Multicultural Commissioner



Esmai Manahan
National Director,
Nanyubak Unit: First Nations Practice and Partnerships
MacKillop Family Services



Jocelyn Bignold OAM
CEO
McAuley Community Services for Women



Jahin Tanvir
CEO
Australian School of Entrepreneurship



David Burroughs
Founder
Australian Psychological Services



Rabbi Zalman Kastel AM
Founder
Together for Humanity



Fiona McCallum
General Manager
MacKillop Seasons



Dr Beau Hu
National School Partnerships Manager
Together for Humanity



Dr Gemma McKibbin
Senior Research Fellow
University of Melbourne



Annette Schneider
CEO
Together for Humanity



Dr Phil Lambert PSM
Adjunct Professor
University of Sydney



Simangaliso Nyoni
Multicultural Practice Lead
MacKillop Family Services



Allison Wainwright
CEO
Family Life



Louise Hall
National & International Partnership
MacKillop Seasons



Josh Darby
Project Lead
Whanungatanga Fire & Emergency
New Zealand



Dr Nikki Jamieson
Defence - Strategic Advisor
Suicide Prevention, Lived Experience and Moral Injury



Matthew Spicer
Director
Clinical Training Services
The Centre for Positive Behaviour Support (CPBS)



Keeva Mostyn
Seasonsfor LifeLead
MacKillop Seasons



Cameron Burgess
Program Director
Sanctuary



Dr Trixie James
Lecturer
School of Access Education
CQUniversity



Douglas Russel
Senior Research Officer
Institute of Child Protection Studies, ACU



Kathy Karatasas
Founder & CEO
CulturalWorks

Last Year's Guest Speakers



Cleo Westhorpe
Founder, PIVOT
Professional Learning



Jas Perry
National Leader Foster
Care Development
MacKillop Family Services



Dr Tracy Castileno
Founder
ShantiWorks



Tammy Wallace
Strategic Manager
Engagement and Inclusion
Churches of Christ



Kate Martin
Head of Practice Quality
and Impact
Endeavour Foundation



Clare Pritchard
Trauma Center Trauma Sensitive
Yoga Facilitator (TCTS-Y-F)



Emma Esposito
School Social Worker
Coburn Primary School



Hayley Wainwright
PhD Candidate
Australian Research Council
Grant Monash University



Dr Justine Grogan
Senior Advisor for Aboriginal and
Torres Strait Islander Education
Australian Institute for Teaching
and School Leadership



Kathleen McInnes
Student Wellbeing Case
Manager
Coburn Primary School



Phil Slade
Co-founder
Switch4Schools



Selba-Gondoza Luka OAM
CEO
Afri-Aus Care Inc.



Lee Bromley
Founder
Eternity Aid



Deb Tsorbaris
CEO
Centre for Excellence in
Child and Family Welfare



KA McKercher
Founder
Beyond Sticky Notes



Robert Boucher
Principal,
Swifts Creek P-12



Peta Simpson
eSMART Engagement
Manager
Alannah & Madeline



Kathy Warwick
Head of Trauma Consulting
Alannah & Madeline



Genevieve Bloxson
Researcher
University of Melbourne



Camille Schloeffel
Founder
The STOP Campaign



Justin Roberts
National Program Director
ReLATE



Dr John Molineux
Senior Lecturer
Deakin Business School
Deakin University



Alex Dalton
Peer Researcher
Orygen



Smeeta Singh
National Program Director
Power to Kids



Alison Parolo
Principal
Baldivis Secondary College

Last Year's Guest Speakers



Tegan McDonald
Principal,
St Patrick's Primary School



Shona Loudon
Assistant Principal,
St Patrick's Primary School



Ian Hamm
Chairperson
Indigenous Land and Sea
Corporation



Taryn Hopper
School Counsellor
Xavier Catholic College



Hannah Jamieson
Seasons forLifeCoordinator
VIC/TAS - MacKillop Seasons



Anish Varghese
Project Manager
Afri-Aus Care Inc.



Frazer Bekele
School Community Liaison Officer
Afri-Aus Care Inc.



Margaret Hepworth
Founder - The Gandhi
Experiment
Vic Education Coordinator
- Together for Humanity



Nicole Lempriere
School Nurse - Druin
Secondary College



Renae Pettit
Seasons forLife
Coordinator NSW/ACT -
MacKillop Seasons



Karen Evans
LeadPastoral Care
Services,
Diocese of Lismore
Catholic Schools



Amanda Glenwright
GeneralManager Health
Services,
YourTurn/Standby Support



Chris Proctor-Abraham
National Training Manager,
Stand Tu Maia



Gaye Titcombe
Assistant Principal,
South Lismore Public School



Skye Staude
Co-Principal
MacKillop Education



Kristen Douglas
Head Headspace & Schools
Headspace



Tanja Hirvonen
Interim Chief Executive Officer
Thirrilli



Trish Quig
Family Support
Reiby Youth Justice Centre



Larissa Polak
Principal
South Lismore Public School



Kris Bardon
Principal
MacKillop Education



Brona Walsh
Director-Education Engagement
Programs
MacKillop Education



Jose de la Garma
Learning&DevelopmentManager
MacKillop Family Services



Daphne Yarram
Chief Executive Officer
Yoowinna Wurnalung Aboriginal
Healing Service



Nina Levin
SpecialistClinical Advisor
Yoowinna Wurnalung Aboriginal
Healing Service



Graham Briggs
Chief Executive Officer
Kirrip Aboriginal Healing Service

Previous Presenting Organisations



2025 Sponsors

Gold Sponsor

advancedlife
school photography & print specialists



2025 Exhibitors



2025 Donors



Conference Streams and Topics

Sessions across the two days are grouped to match the role of audience members, but real impact comes from cross-sector learning. Attendees are encouraged to explore all streams, gain fresh perspectives, and strengthen practice by learning from colleagues in other sectors.

Below are some of the topics from the 2025 conference.

STREAM A: EMPOWERED SCHOOLS: WELLBEING, SAFETY AND INCLUSION IN EDUCATION	STREAM B: STRONGER COMMUNITIES: CHILD, FAMILY AND COMMUNITY SERVICES IN PRACTICE	STREAM C: THRIVING WORKPLACES: CULTURE, LEADERSHIP AND MENTAL HEALTH
<p>Grappling with Diverse Beliefs, Identities and Cultures</p> <p>Cultivating Cultural Responsiveness</p> <p>Supporting Identity and Belonging for Young People</p> <p>Equipping Young People for the Future</p> <p>Wellbeing, Inclusion and Opportunity through Entrepreneurial Education</p> <p>Building Emotional and Grief Literacy</p> <p>Supporting Whole-of-School Communities Following a Suicide or Other Loss Event</p> <p>Best Practices for Therapy Dogs in Schools</p> <p>Secondary Trauma and Educators' Pathways to Mitigating its Impacts</p> <p>We Belong</p> <p>The Practical Implementation of Collaborative Practice in Schools</p> <p>Empowering Educators to Have Brave Conversations</p> <p>Power to Kids in Schools and the Role of Staff in Safeguarding Children</p>	<p>Grief Support</p> <p>Building Capacity to Support the Grief Experiences of Children & Young People Living in Out-of-Home Care</p> <p>Belonging, Identity & Mental Wellbeing</p> <p>A Roadmap for Young People</p> <p>Responding to Harm, Building Safety</p> <p>Co-Designed Prevention Strategies for Harmful Sexual Behaviour in Child and Youth Services</p> <p>Culturally Humble Collaborations</p> <p>Cultural Humility, Responsiveness and Belonging</p> <p>It takes a Village Community to Keep a Child Safe</p> <p>Financially Coerced "self-produced" Child Sexual Exploitation Material: How Do We Intervene?</p> <p>Safe-at-Home: Intervening Early to Support the Safety and Wellbeing of People Experiencing Family Violence</p>	<p>Psychosocial Safety in Practice</p> <p>The Whanaungatanga Program</p> <p>A New Approach to Mental Health Prevention Across Workforces</p> <p>Family Life - Safe, Connected and Thriving: Trauma Capable Models of Community and Systems Healing</p> <p>Contemporary Leadership for the Human Services/Professions: Safe Harbours or Turbulent Seas?</p> <p>How Organisations Change: Beyond Change Theory to Change Practice</p> <p>Reflective Leadership in Unprecedented Times</p> <p>Whole-of-Self Affirming Care</p> <p>Understanding Moral Injury in the Workplace and its Impacts on the Helping Professions</p>

Sponsorship



Sponsorship Packages Overview

OFFICIAL CONFERENCE PARTNER

Our highest-level partnership. Gain premier visibility as our exclusive Conference Partner, with unmatched brand exposure, high-level speaking and engagement opportunities, and a platform to demonstrate your leadership in supporting school and community wellbeing.

\$20,000

GOLD SPONSOR

Position your organisation as a leader in safety and wellbeing by becoming a Gold Sponsor, with prime branding opportunities, speaking engagements, and direct engagement with key decision-makers across sectors.

SOLD OUT

~~\$10,000~~

SILVER SPONSOR

Showcase your commitment to fostering safe and supportive environments as a Silver Sponsor, with strong branding, networking opportunities, and the chance to exhibit your services to influential professionals.

\$5,000

NETWORKING FUNCTION SPONSOR

Host the exclusive Networking Drinks & Canapés event, gaining high-profile exposure and direct interaction with industry leaders in an informal and engaging setting.

\$7,000

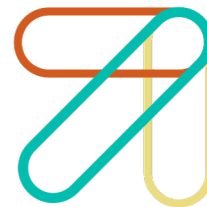
EXHIBITION SPACE/TRADE STALL

Engage with conference attendees and showcase your products, services, and expertise through a dedicated exhibition space, strategically positioned for maximum visibility and engagement.

\$3,000

Sponsorship

Additional Opportunities



COFFEE CART SPONSOR

Banner at coffee cart, logo in the program and conference materials, flyers/merchandise next to coffee cart

\$2,000

SPEAKER/WORKSHOP SPONSOR

Logo on session slides and in the program, acknowledgement at beginning and end of session, flyer/merchandise in session.

\$500

MORNING/AFTERNOON TEA SPONSOR

Banner at food stations, logo in the program and conference materials, acknowledgement by MC before tea break, flyer/merchandise next to food stations.

\$5,000

LUNCH SPONSOR

Banner at food stations, logo in the program and conference materials, acknowledgement by MC before lunch, flyer/merchandise next to food stations.

\$7,000

DONATIONS AND VALUE-IN KIND

We welcome in-kind contributions to support the Lead the Way Conference 2025. VIK sponsorships allow businesses to provide products or services that enhance the event, while gaining brand visibility. In return, sponsors receive benefits like logo placement, program acknowledgment, and promotional opportunities. Contact us to learn more.



Inclusions

Official Partner Sponsor

- 2x Speaking opportunities during plenaries and networking session
- Exclusive branding/banner on stage & registration desk Recognition
- (logo and official partner) on all conference materials Full-page ad in conference program Complimentary registration for two representatives EDM to conference delegates Prime Exhibition space in pre-function area of main plenary room for both days Promotional materials of your choice and merchandise distribution in delegate bags Availability to present 1 x concurrent session (35 minute presentation or 60 minute workshop)
-

1
Available

\$20,000

Gold Sponsor

- Fullpage advertisement in the conference program
- Logo/about information and recognition in all conference materials
- Complimentary registration for two representatives Premier exhibition space for both conference days Promotional flyer and merchandise distribution in delegate bags Availability to present 1 x concurrent session (35 minute presentation or 60 minute workshop)

~~**4**~~
Available

\$10,000



Silver Sponsor

- Quarter-page ad in the conference program
- Logo/about information and recognition in all conference materials
- Complimentary registration for two representatives
- Exhibition space to showcase services/products on both days
- Promotional flyer and merchandise distribution in delegate bags

3

Available

\$5,000

Networking Function Sponsor

- Branding and banners at Networking Drinks & Canapés
- Recognition and logo/about information in conference program
- 5-minute speaking opportunity at networking drinks
- Complimentary registration for two representatives
- Exhibition space for both conference days
- Promotional flyer and merchandise distribution in delegate bags

1

Available

\$7,000

Exhibition Space/Trade Stall

- Dedicated exhibition space for engagement
- Two exhibitor passes for both days
- Logo placement in the conference program
- Flyer/branded merchandise in delegate bag

10

Available

\$3,000



Audience

Our delegates represent a cross-section of professionals committed to improving safety and wellbeing across education, community sectors, child and family sectors, mental health and those working to support children, young people, community members and staff.

School Principals & Leadership Teams

Primary and secondary school leaders from across Australia.

Community Service Leaders

CEOs, Directors, and Program Managers in child, youth, and family services.

Government & Policy Professionals

Decision-makers influencing education, social services, and child protection policy.

Academics & Researchers

Experts studying trauma-informed practice, education, and wellbeing.

Mental Health & Wellbeing Practitioners

Psychologists, counsellors, and therapists working with children and families.





Audience

LEAD THE WAY 2025 AUDIENCE DEMOGRAPHICS BY PERSONA

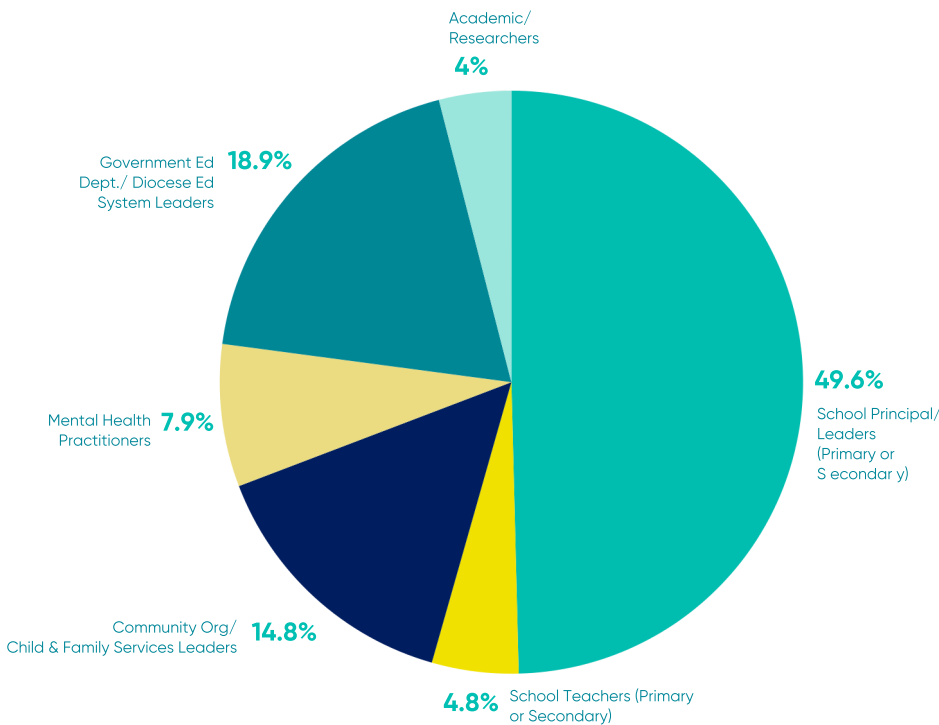
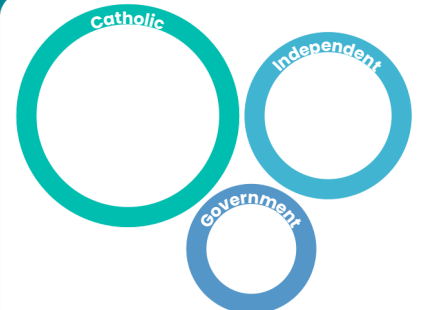


Figure 1. % Attendee Personas to date for 2025 Lead the Way

46.6%

ATTENDEES

School Principal/
Leaders
(Primary or Secondary)



2025 SCHOOL LEADER
REGISTRATIONS TO DATE
BREAKDOWN BY SECTOR

REACH & ENGAGEMENT FY 24-25:

17,799

31,395

3,896

Email Subscribers: 31,395

16,623

EDM Open Rate: 70.80%

EDM Click-Through Rate: 3.86%

40,376

TOTAL
FOLLOWERS



Audience

REACH & ENGAGEMENT FY 24–25:

Table provides an overview of the percentage of attendee locations in ticket sales to date for 2025 August 11 and 12th Lead the Way.

Category	VIC	NSW	QLD	SA	TAS	ACT	WA
School Principal/ Leader	72.1%	7.2%	4.7%	10%	2%	2%	2%
School Teacher	40.2%	41.5%	4.7%	0	4.5%	9.1%	0
Community Organisation, Child and Family Services	16.7%	18.6%	6.3%	16.7%	25%	16.7%	0
Mental Health Practitioner	78.5%	7.2%	0%	0	7.1%	7.2%	0
Government/ System Leaders	78%	11%	4%	6%	1%	0	0
Researcher or Academic	40%	20%	20%	10%	0	8%	2%



Venue

The Lead the Way Conference 2025 will take place at the recently renovated **Rydges Hotel Melbourne**, a premium event space in the heart of the city, offering state-of-the-art facilities and a vibrant networking environment.

Lead the Way will have exclusive use of two dedicated conference floors in a prime location and professional setting.

Attendees gain exclusive access to discounted accommodation rates and parking.

Location: 186 Exhibition Street, Melbourne VIC 3000

Accessibility: Public transport, on-site parking, step-free access

Networking Spaces: Rooftop terrace, exhibitor lounge, and dedicated breakout areas





Sponsor

How to Become a Sponsor

Sponsorship opportunities are limited and allocated on a first-come, first-served basis. To secure your sponsorship package:



1

Select Your Package

Choose from the available sponsorship levels.

2

Chat with our team

One of our team members will reach out to you to discuss your expression of interest.

For all sponsorship enquiries, please contact:

Email: Christopher.higgins@mackillop.org.au

Phone: 0499 521 461



Who we are

MacKillop Family Services is a leading provider of education, child and family support, and out-of-home care services across Australia. Guided by our values of justice, hope, and collaboration, we are committed to supporting vulnerable children, young people, and families by delivering programs that promote healing, resilience, and long-term wellbeing.

At MacKillop Family Services, we are committed to supporting some of Australia's most vulnerable children, young people, and families. Across 53 locations, our 2,300 dedicated staff deliver integrated family services, out-of-home care, disability support, and trauma-informed education to over 16,000 families each year. All our programs aim to create safe, nurturing environments for children, families, and the staff who support them.

Our work is grounded in evidence-based practice, research, and community engagement, ensuring that we provide effective, sustainable solutions to complex social challenges. The Lead the Way Conference is an extension of our mission to empower professionals with the tools and knowledge they need to drive change within their organisations and communities.





Have Questions? Contact Us

For sponsorship enquiries, please contact:

Christopher Higgins

Director

The MacKillop Institute

M 0499 521 461

christopher.higgins@mackillop.org.au

■ mackillopinstitute.org.au

■ [linkedin.com/company/themackillopinstitute](https://www.linkedin.com/company/themackillopinstitute)

Sponsorship terms and conditions available at -

<https://www.mackillopinstitute.org.au/sponsorship-ts-cs/>



MacKillop Family Services acknowledges the Traditional Custodians and their Elders in each of the communities where we work.



As a Rainbow Tick organisation, MacKillop values an inclusive culture where lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, queer, gender diverse, intersex and asexual people (LGBTIQA+) have the right to be safe.