LILYDALE AND UPPER YARRA EDUCATION PLAN

ENGAGEMENT REPORT

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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In April 2017 the Victorian Government committed to transforming secondary education in the Lilydale and Upper Yarra area, beginning with the development of a new education plan.

The Lilydale and Upper Yarra Education Plan seeks to boost educational outcomes and equalize enrolment numbers. This would ensure financial sustainability of the three secondary schools in the area (Lilydale High School, Lilydale Heights College and Upper Yarra Secondary College) and create an environment where resources are shared equally.

We consulted community members and stakeholders in the Lilydale and Upper Yarra area during July, August and September 2017 to collect data that would assist to develop the education plan.

Community members and stakeholders were asked to identify what was working well and what could be improved in the education system in the area.
Engagement was carried out in two phases. The first invited principals, school leaders, school council members, teachers and students to workshops in July. The second, completed in August and September, invited input from community members, teachers, broader stakeholders and disability services providers.

In total:

- 85 community members and service providers participated in the engagement
- 21 school teachers completed an online survey
- 57 school community members participated in workshops, including principals, vice-principals, school council members, teachers and students.

We collated and analysed more than 1,920 individual comments across these engagement activities.

Consultation found that there are a number of aspects in which education is working well in the Lilydale and Upper Yarra area. These include the dedicated teachers and leaders of the local schools, the flexibility parents have when it comes to choosing a school for their child and the collaboration among schools and with the broader community.

People who participated in the engagement were passionate about making changes to improve outcomes for young people in the area. Ideas included greater collaboration to maximise school resources, measures for reducing the impacts of disadvantage, increasing professional development for teachers and raising the reputation and standard of facilities at the schools to foster a sense of pride.

The Department of Education and Training’s (DET) North-East Victoria Region is now considering this feedback and developing the Lilydale and Upper Yarra Education Plan.
2. ABOUT THE LILYDALE AND UPPER YARRA EDUCATION PLAN

Place-based education plans are an integral part of the ‘Education State’ reform agenda. DET sees such education plans as an opportunity to implement educational reform in communities with the greatest need to significantly improve learner achievement, engagement and wellbeing outcomes. The plans investigate how this can be achieved through teaching and learning changes, possibly combined with upgrades to school infrastructure.

The Lilydale and Upper Yarra Education Plan aims to transform and invigorate the provision of secondary education in the area by providing a holistic and systemic response to challenges faced by Lilydale High School, Lilydale Heights College and Upper Yarra Secondary College. The plan will help realign the imbalance of enrolments between the schools, and set a collective vision to transform education provision in the area. A governance structure has been established to oversee and inform development of the plan, including a Strategic Advisory Committee comprising members of the community and local educators.

A whole-of-community approach is key to the plan’s development. It’s essential for improving community engagement, teaching and learning, professional leadership, and embedding a positive learning climate across Lilydale and Upper Yarra schools. The plan will foster a culture of collaboration among schools and the broader community, and focus joint efforts to improve student and community outcomes.
The plan will identify solutions to achieve a more equitable spread of student numbers across the three schools. It will also consider how local education could be improved with upgrades to school buildings and facilities. This will allow schools to better cater for individual learning needs by sharing resources to deliver new learning options, opportunities and pathways for students. Families in the area will have a greater choice of schools and post-school pathways.

The plan will draw on feedback from the community engagement activities. Key findings will help shape the plan’s priority areas, in line with Education State targets.

**EDUCATION STATE TARGETS**

The Lilydale and Upper Yarra Education Plan will deliver on the Education State targets:

**Learning for life**
Excellence in reading, the arts, maths, science, critical and creative thinking. Equipping students with the broad range of skills they need to reach their potential, and achieve success in school and in life.

**Breaking the link**
Supporting more students to stay in education and breaking the link between disadvantage and poorer student outcomes. Ensuring more students develop the skills, knowledge and attributes they need to build healthy, happy and prosperous lives.

**Happy, healthy, resilient kids**
Building resilience and increasing physical activity in our kids and young people by focusing on building highly resilient students that are equipped with skills and strategies to tackle current and future challenges.

**Pride and confidence in our schools**
We want Victorians to be proud of the great government schools in their communities. We will be improving outcomes for every student, in every classroom, and for every community.
3. THE ENGAGEMENT PROGRAM

We consulted with stakeholders, local parents and the broader community over two phases, from July to September 2017. We asked community members and school stakeholders to identify what was working well and what could be improved in education in the Lilydale and Upper Yarra area.

We held a mix of targeted workshops to engage different groups, and a survey was available online via the Engage Victoria website. Almost 1000 people visited the page during the consultation period, with 58 contributions to the survey and six responses to the comment board question ‘What is your vision to improve education in the Lilydale and Upper Yarra area?’

We also asked local teachers to complete a survey specifically targeted to teachers who were unable to attend any of the workshops. Twenty-one teachers took part in this survey.
How we analysed the data

More than 1,920 individual comments were captured across the engagement activities and analysed. The most prominent themes were then drawn from the comments and further categorised into subthemes. This report presents the key themes, and includes quotes from individuals to illustrate those challenges and opportunities that are front of mind for the local community when it comes to education in the Lilydale and Upper Yarra area.

Note: Quotes are displayed verbatim. Some quotes have been edited to provide clarity, and where edits have been made they are displayed in [square brackets].

How people could get involved and how many participated

In July, we consulted with internal stakeholders connected with Lilydale and Upper Yarra secondary schools. Engagement activities included four separate workshops for invited school leaders (principals, vice-principals and team leaders), school council members, teachers and students. Participants were asked questions that sought to identify what was working well and what could be improved across a range of aspects of education provision.

Phase One

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ACTIVITY</th>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>LOCATION</th>
<th>PARTICIPANTS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Leaders workshop</td>
<td>Tuesday 25 July</td>
<td>Box Hill Institute, Lilydale</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School council</td>
<td>Tuesday 25 July</td>
<td>Box Hill Institute, Lilydale</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers workshop</td>
<td>Wednesday 26 July</td>
<td>Box Hill Institute, Lilydale</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students workshop</td>
<td>Wednesday 26 July</td>
<td>Box Hill Institute, Lilydale</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Phase Two

The second phase of engagement was carried out in August and September and sought the views of local community members, teachers, primary school principals and disability services providers, as outlined below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ACTIVITY</th>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>LOCATION</th>
<th>PARTICIPANTS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lilydale family and community workshop</td>
<td>Tuesday 29 August</td>
<td>Box Hill Institute, Lilydale</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upper Yarra family &amp; community workshop</td>
<td>Wednesday 30 August</td>
<td>Upper Yarra Secondary College</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engage Victoria survey</td>
<td>21 August – 8 September</td>
<td>Engage.vic.gov.au</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local teacher online survey (anonymous)</td>
<td>28 August – 11 September</td>
<td>Direct link distributed to teachers</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary principals’ workshop</td>
<td>Monday 21 August</td>
<td>Box Hill Institute, Lilydale</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disability services workshop</td>
<td>Wednesday 20 September</td>
<td>Box Hill Institute, Lilydale</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As with engagement during phase one, participants in phase two were asked to identify what was working well and how education outcomes in the area could be improved. A further question was asked to help identify what steps could be taken to deliver these improvements.

We also created an online survey which asked community members eight questions, covering aspects of education in the area they are most satisfied with and where they thought it could improve. We asked how we could increase post-school pathways for young people; reduce impacts of disadvantage; and improve inter-school collaboration, community engagement and school buildings.
Who participated

**Phase One**

Participants at three of the four workshops were asked to identify the schools they represented. There was a good mix of participants from all schools in the area.

**Phase One workshops: participation by school**

- **Leaders**
  - Lilydale High School: 33%
  - Lilydale Heights College: 33%
  - Upper Yarra Secondary College: 7%
  - not specified: 7%

- **Teachers**
  - Lilydale High School: 57%
  - Lilydale Heights College: 36%
  - Upper Yarra Secondary College: 7%
  - not specified: 7%

- **Students**
  - Lilydale High School: 41%
  - Lilydale Heights College: 22%
  - Upper Yarra Secondary College: 37%
  - not specified: 7%

School council members who attended a workshop were asked to identify their local suburb. The majority nominated Lilydale.
School leaders, teachers and school council representatives and disability service workshop participants were also asked the introductory question: ‘What is unique about the local area?’ Participants consistently commented on the surrounding natural environment and the semi-rural location. These aspects were explored through comments referencing locals’ easy access to outdoor activities, nature and open space, as well as the ‘small town’ feel of the area. The natural environment was also referenced in comments which noted the large geographical spread of the area, with some noting that this presents challenges for student access and transport to school.

The makeup of the community was also raised, with many respondents noting that the area has traditionally been quite monocultural, but with increasing numbers of new families moving to the area, the community is becoming more diverse. A number of participants also discussed the socio-economic variance in the area, with a perception that there are a large number of lower-income families among the local community.
Phase Two

Online Survey

Community members were invited to contribute to an online survey on the Engage Victoria website. The survey was well supported receiving 58 responses. To help better understand the profile of participants, some demographic questions were asked in the survey.

We asked respondents were asked to nominate the postcode where they live. Most nominated Lilydale or other localities in the Yarra Ranges.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>POSTCODE</th>
<th>SUBURB</th>
<th>RESPONSES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3140</td>
<td>Lilydale</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3139</td>
<td>Seville, Launching Place, Wandin East, Seville East, Woori Yallock, Wandin North, Yellingbo, Don Valley, Hoddles Creek, Beenak</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3797</td>
<td>Three Bridges, Powelltown, Gladysdale, Gilderoy, Yarra Junction</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3796</td>
<td>Mount Evelyn</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3777</td>
<td>Castella, Badger Creek, Healesville, Chum Creek, Mount Toolebewong, Healesville Main Street, Toolangi</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3799</td>
<td>McMahons Creek, East Warburton, Big Pats Creek, Wesburn, Warburton, Reefton, Millgrove</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3116</td>
<td>Chirnside Park</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3138</td>
<td>Mooroolbark</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3134</td>
<td>Ringwood, Heathwood, Warranwood, Ringwood North, Warrandyte South</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3166</td>
<td>Canterbury, Camberwell East</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3770</td>
<td>Coldstream, Gruyere, Yering</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3136</td>
<td>Croydon, Croydon Hills, Croydon North, Croydon South</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3132</td>
<td>Mitcham, Mitcham North, Rangeview</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3767</td>
<td>Mount Dandenong</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3113</td>
<td>Warrandyte, North Warrandyte</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Respondents were invited to select up to two options expressing why they were interested in the Lilydale and Upper Yarra Secondary Education Plan. There were 81 responses to this question. As the graph below indicates, most respondents were parents or guardians of school-aged children (34 responses / 42%).

Why are you interested in secondary education in Lilydale and Upper Yarra?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Option</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a parent / guardian of school-aged children</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>community member</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>an educator</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>other</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a school student</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>an employer</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a job seeker</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a tertiary student (enrolled in TAFE, university or other</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The survey asked respondents whether they spoke a language other than English at home. Only one of the 58 respondents said yes – stating they spoke Tok Pisin (a Melanesian language widely used in Papua New Guinea).

Survey respondents were also asked whether they identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander. All respondents answered ‘no’ to this question.

Survey participants were also asked how they heard about the opportunity to get involved, and how satisfied they were with the process. Results of these questions can be found at Appendix 1.
How Phase Two engagement was promoted

Mailouts and brochure distribution
- 19,457 postcards were mailed out to the residences of the Lilydale and Upper Yarra area.
- A further 3000 postcards were sent home with students of Lilydale Heights College, Lilydale High School and Upper Yarra Secondary College.
- 60+ postcards were distributed at pop-ups run in the Yarra Junction shopping centre and the Lilydale Marketplace.
- 100+ postcards were distributed to primary principals attending our Primary Principals Workshop.
- 3000 brochures were distributed to Lilydale Heights College, Lilydale High School and Upper Yarra Secondary College.
- 1000 brochures were distributed to local council, businesses, and attendees of the pop ups at Yarra Junction Shopping Centre and Lilydale Marketplace.

Facebook and twitter
The VSBA published five targeted Facebook posts and two Tweets to promote the engagement and remind people to attend a workshop or take the survey.

Facebook
- Total reach: 36,524
- Total reactions, comments and shares: 50
- Click-throughs: 571

Twitter
- Impressions: 469
- Retweets: 1
- Click-throughs: 8

Pop-Ups
Members of the community engagement team hosted pop-up stalls in the local area, to promote the opportunity to get involved or chat to the project team.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Thursday 24 August</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yarra Junction Shopping Centre</td>
<td>12-2pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lilydale Marketplace</td>
<td>3-5pm</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4. WHAT WE HEARD

4.1 Overview

The feedback we received painted a clear picture of strengths to build upon, and a desire to improve opportunities for young people in the area.

One of the strongest themes to emerge across consultation was the high standard and contribution made by teaching staff and school leadership in the Lilydale and Upper Yarra area. Teachers and principals were valued not only for their skills as educators but also their commitment and interest in the students they work with.

Participants spoke highly of existing collaboration between schools and engagement with the broader community. In particular, partnerships and links with local organisations were strongly valued as an area working well.

The provision of schools in the area was also positively discussed during engagement. Participants felt there was an adequate mix of schools catering to diverse needs and with favourable geographic coverage.

Participants raised access, transport and subject choices as areas for improvement. They wanted improved transport to schools for those who live across the area, as well as improved access to extra-curricular activities.

Participants also wanted extra services and programs that support student wellbeing and welfare. They suggested examples such as more opportunities for pastoral care, and education in cyber-bullying, as ways schools could enhance the resilience of their students.

Participants advocated for a wider range of subjects to be offered at local schools, saying there was a need for subjects that “better prepare students for life”. Basic finance, budgeting and social interaction were some of the life skills promoted. These ideas were particularly prominent among community members (in workshops and the online survey).

Another frequently identified area for improvement, particularly among teachers and school leaders, was professional development for school staff. Participants regarded this and access to best-practice training as being crucial to improving student outcomes.

Finally, participants raised the status of buildings and facilities at schools in the Lilydale and Upper Yarra area. Students, community members and teachers agreed that existing facilities needs to be improved and modernised to lift education outcomes. This theme of school improvement extended to raising the reputation and profile of the schools more broadly – generating a sense of pride and trust in local schools.

These themes are explored further below, with the ‘Opportunities for improvement’ section grouping themes as they relate to the four Education State objectives. The following table shows the identified themes and where they are discussed in this report.
## What’s working well

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme 1</th>
<th>Theme 2</th>
<th>Theme 3</th>
<th>Theme 4</th>
<th>Theme 5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Quality and contribution of teaching staff and leadership</td>
<td>Variety of subject choices and learning options available</td>
<td>Engagement and collaboration among schools and the broader community</td>
<td>Smooth transitions from primary to secondary school</td>
<td>Range of choice of schools in the area</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Opportunities for improvement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme 1</th>
<th>Theme 2</th>
<th>Theme 3</th>
<th>Theme 1</th>
<th>Theme 2</th>
<th>Theme 1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Learning for life</td>
<td>Happy, healthy and resilient kids</td>
<td>Breaking the link</td>
<td>Supporting student wellbeing and welfare needs</td>
<td>Transitions through the school years</td>
<td>Access and transport</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subject choice and teaching skills for life</td>
<td>Engagement with community and parents</td>
<td>Engaged and collaborating</td>
<td>Modernise buildings, facilities and learning environments</td>
<td>Raising the reputation and profile of schools</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Collaboration among teachers and schools</td>
<td>Transitions through the school years</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Teaching and leadership development</td>
<td></td>
<td>Access and transport</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Enhancing post-school pathways</td>
<td></td>
<td>Removing financial barriers to learning</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Student engagement</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.2 What’s working well

Theme 1: Quality and contribution of teaching staff and leadership
Participants highly regarded the standard of teaching and leadership in the Lilydale and Upper Yarra area. Many commented on the “high quality” of teaching and the “genuine care” of teachers. These sentiments featured across the online survey, teacher survey, and workshops.

“High quality teachers - new grads are innovative and passionate.”
Community workshop participant

“Leadership of secondary schools in the area is outstanding”
Online survey participant

“Exciting, energetic, inclusive, helpful teachers.”
Student workshop participant

Theme 2: Variety of subject choices and learning options available
Increased subject options was suggested as an area of improvement, however, a large number of responses also highlighted the variety of subject choices and learning options available in the Lilydale and Upper Yarra area. This theme was particularly prominent in the online survey and community workshop responses. Many participants explicitly referred to subjects they valued such as Media, English and Art, while student workshop participants also referenced the range of extracurricular programs and activities available at school as a positive element of the learning experience.

Participants in the disability services workshop almost exclusively spoke about how well schools and services in the area support their students, particularly noting the value of the ATEAST program.

“Great variety of subject choice, great sports opportunities, strong VET program.”
Online survey participant

“ATEAST placing kids in roles whilst still in school.”
Disability services workshop participant

“The wide range of subjects available to meet various student interests.”
Student workshop participant
Theme 3: Engagement and collaboration among schools and the broader community

Engagement and collaboration between schools and the broader community was commonly identified by participants as an area of secondary education that is working well. This sentiment appeared most frequently in the community workshop and survey responses, where community members valued opportunities for schools to connect externally.

“Connections and networking with local organisations.”
Community workshop participant

“Strong connections to community.”
School council workshop participant

“Community involvement.”
Online survey participant

Theme 4: Smooth transitions from primary to secondary school

Student transition from primary to secondary school was nominated in all feedback methods as an area that participants believe to be working well. They commented that relationships between primary and secondary schools are strong and that this is a key aspect of smooth transitions. This was most prominently identified by school leaders, as well as by community members in workshops. Participants from the disability services workshop valued the practice of sharing information about students when they transition from primary to secondary.

“Good quality transition programs.”
Primary principals’ workshop participant

“Transitions from primary to secondary.”
Community workshop participant

“Info from primary school (students transitioning) is passed on.”
Disability services workshop participant
Theme 5: Range of choice of schools in the area

Community members strongly identified the choice and variety of schools available in the Lilydale and Upper Yarra area as an aspect of secondary education working well. Participants in community workshops were pleased with the range of schools within the local area and the flexibility they are afforded in being able to choose where to send their children according to their needs. Likewise, disability services workshop participants valued the variety of schools supporting students with additional needs.

“There are several choices. There are catholic secondary schools available that may be suitable for my child (however I’d prefer to send them to public secondary schools).”

Community workshop participant

“Choice of schools, many not just zoned, so you can choose the school to suit your child, not just the one you are [near].”

Community survey respondent

“Variety of schools that support special needs kids.”

Disability services workshop participant
4.3 Opportunities for improvement

We asked participants to identify areas of education provision that they believe can be improved. They were also asked how these improvements could be delivered.

These responses were captured, analysed and classified under the four Education State objectives.

4.3.1 Learning for life

The ‘Learning for Life’ Education State objective is about actions that will "equip students with the broad range of skills they need to reach their potential, and achieve success in school and in life".

A variety of responses relevant to this were analysed during the engagement. They covered the following themes:

- Subject choice and teaching skills for life
- Engagement with community and parents
- Collaboration among teachers and schools
- Teaching and leadership development
- Enhancing post-school pathways
- Student engagement

Theme 1: Subject choice and teaching skills for life

Participants across all forms of engagement suggested that subject offerings could be enhanced, and this was the most prominent area for improvement identified by community survey respondents.

Some participants nominated aspects of learning and particular subject choices that need to be enhanced, with references to VCE subject offerings and STEM subjects, as well as skills that were previously taught in tech schools. More broadly, there were numerous suggestions for students to be taught skills that would equip them for life after school, particularly when considering how we can best help students reach their potential and transition to work or further study.

Students also offered suggestions for improving subject choice and inter-school collaboration, suggesting that the three schools could combine subject offerings to increase the range of choice available in the area.

"Better choices of subjects that teach life skills for those not going to uni for example basic finance skills."

Online survey participant

"Life skills, how to manage money, travel, social interaction. A lot of what we teach is academic which is great but there are some kids who don’t get the lessons at home on how to live."

Online survey participant

"LHS (Lilydale High School) doesn’t have a VCAL program so visit schools for education while enrolled at original school."

Student workshop participant

"What we heard"
Theme 2: Engagement with community and parents

While participants valued existing connections between schools and community, feedback also highlighted the need to increase collaboration between the schools, the community and parents to enhance student learning outcomes. Phase 1 workshop participants identified the limited capacity for schools to undertake this work. In Phase 2, participants suggested schools resource a community liaison officer for this purpose.

Participants recognised the role parents and the broader community play in a child’s development. Much of this feedback called for direct community involvement in learning by providing community access to schools and introducing programs that take teachers and students into the community. In their workshop, school leaders extended this idea by identifying opportunities to link schools with local employers and industry.

“Parent Involvement - more opportunities for parents to take up roles.”
Community workshop participant

“Make connections with community groups and local councils to develop programs. There is a lot of support out there. Allocate time for teachers and students to be able to take part in developing these programs with partners.”
Online survey participant

“Links with local industry, technology, recycling, agriculture, sustainability, forestry, master-catchment (authorities eg. Melb Water)”
Leaders workshop participant

Theme 3: Collaboration among teachers and schools

Participants explained there was a need for increased collaboration between teachers across schools in the Lilydale and Upper Yarra area. This view was prominent among school leaders who advocated sharing of best practice and professional development opportunities and knowledge. Teachers also expressed a desire for more collaboration opportunities. These groups acknowledged that this is a key area in which they can contribute, to better support local education.

Students also offered a range of suggestions about how the three local schools can better collaborate, with extracurricular activities being a common suggestion. Ideas included inter-school competitions in sport, arts and music, as well as joint programs in these areas, such as bands, school productions and joint Student Representative Councils.

“Sharing best [practice] across schools, leaders, teachers and students.”
Leaders workshop participant

“I loved when we had YVeLC [Yarra Valley eLearning Community] and the schools worked together, did professional development together. We learnt so much from each other and had the opportunity to see what is happening outside our own school.”
Teacher survey participant

“An emphasis on networking between teachers from different schools. Establishment of a formal teachers’ network that develops shared lesson plans and interschool programs.”
Online survey participant
Theme 4: Teaching and leadership development

Closely linked to discussions around collaboration among teachers was a specific need for greater investment in teacher training and professional development. Disability services workshop participants indicated that teachers should receive specialist training to equip them to adequately support diverse student needs. A key theme emerging from the school leaders workshop was about enhancing teacher capacity to deliver high quality education.

“Training, development & recruitment.”
Community workshop participant

“Mainstream school teachers lacking the expertise to educate students.”
Disability services workshop participant

“Providing teachers with time and learning to best know their students and how to improve learning.”
Leaders workshop participant

Theme 5: Enhancing post-school pathways

Participants commonly raised the need for a range of post-school options. Across all engagement methods, they suggested that greater preparation for ‘hands-on’ trades career options, while also promoting tertiary options, was crucial to successful post-school transitions. Discussions around pathways highlighted the need to raise student aspirations and provide opportunities that harness students’ strengths. Interestingly, many participants in the online survey identified the importance of enhancing and supporting student wellbeing and resilience in preparing them for life after school. While this theme is explored in greater detail in the following section, it is important to note its relevance to students’ success after leaving school.

“Promote tertiary aspirations more. Make schools more accountable for the educational culture they promote in schools. Yes, it’s important to encourage and support tradie skills, but I feel the area has gone too far that way to the point that tertiary aspirations is seen as for the ‘elitist’ only.”
Teacher survey participant

“Not sufficiently training people for trades. Lack of tech schools.”
Community workshop participant

“Utilising wellbeing teams and chaplains to run workshops within school hours could improve relationships and student pride. This will not only help them transition to work or further study, but into life as an adult.”
Online survey participant
Theme 6: Student engagement

Though not a significant area of discussion among participants, the need to improve student engagement was referenced in discussions about student outcomes. Some suggestions for improvement included ‘early intervention’ and rewarding student efforts to encourage continued engagement with learning.

Students were asked for suggestions about how the three local schools can work together to make school more fun and a better place to learn. As discussed above, inter-school collaboration is viewed by students as a key aspect of school enjoyment, and extracurricular activities as well as subjects such as sport, music and arts are viewed by students as integral to their school experience.

“Offer more school opportunities e.g. leadership roles.”
Student workshop participant

“Engage students from low socio-economic and disadvantaged backgrounds. Strive to raise academic standards and create a culture of learning and achievement.”
Teacher survey participant

“Keeping students engaged and stimulated, rewarding them for their efforts and expecting higher academic standards.”
Online survey participant
4.3.2 Happy, healthy, and resilient kids

This Education State Objective calls for “building resilience and increasing physical activity in our kids and young people – focusing on building highly resilient students”. Relevant themes that emerged from participant responses were:

- supporting student wellbeing and welfare needs
- transitions through the school years.

Theme 1: Supporting student wellbeing and welfare needs

Participants consistently identified the need to improve the emotional and holistic support provided to students at schools. Many participants commented that improving student outcomes can only occur if student needs are acknowledged, understood and supported through tailored approaches, noting the diverse and sometimes difficult backgrounds of young people in the area.

Respondents highlighted the role that schools can play in developing children's resilience, believing it to be crucial to their wellbeing while they are at school and in life afterwards. This was particularly noted by participants in the disability services who indicated that co-locating community services at schools could be a key aspect of creating exceptional secondary education in the area.

Enhancing support for student wellbeing was one of the most prominent areas for improvement noted among community members in the online survey and in workshops, with participants feeling strongly that this is a critical aspect of education provision.

“Resilience, particularly when it comes to the cyber-verse and mental health.”

Online survey participant

“Listening is a great place to start. Young people from challenging backgrounds are reporting to me that they don't feel listened to or valued. They are punished for not wearing uniform, when they can't because [...] they have no washing machine. Told off for being tired in class, when they couldn't sleep [due to their home situation]. I work with young people in the community and the level of resentment and feelings of being a burden and unwanted in the school system, is incredibly high. Something as simple as listening, and helping where you can will do a lot to improve engagement.”

Online survey participant

“Their education has to start with dealing with the disadvantages they have had to deal with and build robust and resilient young people ready to engage in education and productive lives. This is going to take a holistic and community supported approach [...] ‘It takes a village to raise youth to adulthood’ and the community (industry, education and support services) need to step in and support our youth.”

Teacher survey participant
Theme 2: Transitions through the school years

Transitions between primary and secondary school years was identified as an area that is working well. However, participants expressed a different view about transitions from year level to year level within schools (e.g. Year 8 to 9). This was an area seen to be requiring improvement.

“Focus on transitions in school beyond primary school to secondary school i.e. 8-9, 10-11, 3-4 etc.”

Primary principals workshop participant

“Better preparation for VCE for example exams from year 7 to give them lots of exam practice.”

Online survey participant
4.3.3 Breaking the link

This Education State Objective is focused on “supporting more students to stay in education and breaking the link between disadvantage and poorer student outcomes”. Two aspects for improvement closely linked to this objective were:

- access and transport
- removing financial barriers to learning.

Theme 1: Access and transport

Access and transport to schools in the region was raised on numerous occasions and in nearly all of the workshops. Participants in workshops identified the need to improve the cost, frequency and availability of local buses, citing the large geographic spread of the area. Others called for a subsidized or free transport model to overcome cost barriers. Numerous participants said that a lack of suitable transport options could be a barrier to school engagement and attendance for many students. These calls were echoed by participants at the disability services workshop, who cited the unique mobility challenges for students with disability.

“Cost of transport to get to school, many students catch public transport as it’s the only one available.”

Online survey participant

“Provide transport for students so they can participate in programs offered at other schools - perhaps a bus that can be paid off by the school over time.”

Teacher survey respondent

“Transport particularly challenging for people with disabilities”

Disability services workshop participant

Theme 2: Removing financial constraints to learning

The cost of learning opportunities and resources was identified on numerous occasions as a barrier for many disadvantaged students and their families. Participants raised the challenge that modern teaching methods can bring about for low-income families, with technology becoming a fundamental teaching and learning tool that some can’t afford. A number of participants also noted that the cost of extra-curricular activities can mean that some students are missing out on the key learning experiences these activities provide. They suggested subsidizing parts of the education experience or making opportunities more accessible.

“School is expensive with the introduction of iPads etc. This can have a big impact on disadvantaged youth who don’t have the access to the resources required at school, it also puts strain on the school in supplying what they can. Look at more accessible resources such as library borrowing of technology?”

Online survey participant

“Provide electives at no cost to low income earners.”

Online survey participant

“Access to cheap, inner city excursions and resources. Get education groups to come to the Yarra Valley.”

Teacher workshop participant
4.2.4 Pride and confidence in our schools

This Education State objective seeks to “establish pride among Victorians for the government schools in their communities”. Two areas identified for improvement that are linked to this objective were:

- modernising buildings, facilities and learning environments
- raising the reputation and profile of local schools.

Theme 1: Modernise buildings, facilities and learning environments

Participants stated that they want to see school facilities modernised and buildings improved. They felt that investing in schools and raising the standard of their physical spaces would promote pride and value in schools and raise student aspirations. Specific suggestions focused on developing modern, flexible and functional spaces that allow for 21st-century teaching and learning.

Teachers made a notable contribution to this area of feedback. These respondents explained that upgrading facilities would result in greater student engagement, noting that high quality learning environments are fundamental to students remaining focused and interested at school. Students also raised the need for greater internet capacity and functionality.

“A focus on creating more engaging physical learning environments, with updated rooms and resources, as well as no leaking roofs when it rains. Creating a more positive environment will allow students to create a stronger, more positive, connection to their school, and will help garner a deeper respect for their education.”

Teacher survey participant

“Safe learning spaces that reduce tripping hazards and are disability friendly. Modernisation of the buildings, whilst retaining the character of the area and setting.”

Online survey participant

“Have improved internet”

Student workshop participant
Theme 2: Raising the reputation and profile of local schools

A number of community members, as well as teachers and school leaders identified the need to raise the reputation and profile of schools in the Lilydale and Upper Yarra area. Some parents commented that they believe Upper Yarra Secondary College has a poor reputation that means they don’t consider it an option for their children.

A common suggestion was to raise the profile of local schools through celebrating student achievement and having joint events, such as sport carnivals and musicals. The joint promotion and marketing of the three schools in the community was also another suggested method for improving their profiles.

“Changing community attitudes towards schools”
Teachers workshop participant

“Improve community perception”
Leaders workshop participant

“Changing community attitudes towards schools”
Teachers workshop participant

“Getting out in the community and talking about the school - students having pride in schools.”
School council workshop participant
5. NEXT STEPS

The two phases of engagement and consultation activities will help develop the Lilydale and Upper Yarra Education Plan.

The education plan will make recommendations for future local education provision. This will enable a collaborative approach to improving teaching and learning that harnesses effective community and school leadership. It will generate a more positive climate to improve learners’ outcomes and narrow gaps in achievement. Accordingly, the plan will also address the imbalance of enrolments across the schools.

The Victorian School Building Authority will scope and assess any possible future capital works improvements that will support the implementation of the plan.

The North Eastern Victoria Region will prepare the education plan in line with Education State objectives of learning for life; happy, healthy, resilient kids; breaking the link, and pride and confidence in our schools.
APPENDICES
APPENDIX 1:
ADDITIONAL ENGAGE VICTORIA SURVEY QUESTIONS

We asked participants (responding to the online survey in Phase Two) how they learned about engagement opportunities, and how satisfied they were with the engagement process.

How did you hear about the Lilydale and Upper Yarra Education Plan?

- **40%** social media
- **14%** local school
- **30%** other
- **2%** poster

How satisfied are you with the current engagement process in terms of opportunities to get involved and provide your views?

- **37%** neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
- **33%** satisfied
- **16%** very satisfied
- **6%** dissatisfied
- **8%** very dissatisfied
Further information

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