



TAFE creates Melbourne

25

Victorian TAFE Association State Conference
Melbourne, 7 August 2025

Conference Program



Panel Pledge Advocate
This event is committed to gender balance



TAFEcreates25

Welcome to TAFE Creates 25, the hallmark event of the VTA calendar. This annual event provides a platform for members to engage and discuss challenges and opportunities and develop practical and actionable ideas.

We recognise the power of collaboration and networking, that's why **TAFE Creates 25** is a face-to-face event, proudly hosted by Melbourne Polytechnic.

The Victorian TAFE Association acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of Country throughout Australia and their connections to land, sea and community. We pay our respect to their Elders past and present and extend that respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples today.

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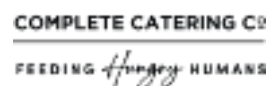
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Victorian TAFEs Can't Train Tomorrow's Workforce with Yesterday's Technology



Victoria has bold and ambitious plans for the future – from accelerating housing construction to leading the clean energy transition. Bringing these ambitions to life requires a skilled, job-ready workforce. Much of that pipeline will come from TAFE.

Across the state, TAFEs are preparing students to step into essential roles in construction, health, early childhood education, technology and more. But while the learning is future-focused, the systems underpinning it often are not. Legacy student management systems have largely become outdated.

Melbourne Polytechnic is an excellent case in point. An institute with a history spanning more than 100 years, Melbourne Polytechnic is embracing the future. In the past 12 months, they've opened Victoria's first all-electric TAFE campus in Collingwood and are collaborating with industry and government to address skill gaps in housing construction, bridging traditional trades with Modern Methods of Construction (MMC).

Melbourne Polytechnic Chief Executive, Frances Coppolillo says, "TAFE is entering an exciting new era of growth and innovation as we work with industry and government stakeholders to solve some of the most pressing workforce challenges facing our economy."

At ReadyTech, we're proud to be a long-standing technology partner to Melbourne Polytechnic. We bring deep expertise in vocational education to the partnership. We understand the importance of the student-centric focus, as well as the complexity of the dynamic vocational education landscape environment.

Vocational education isn't one of many industries we dabble in, it's our foundation. Our Ready Student platform was co-designed with Victorian TAFEs. It's cloud-native and designed for the compliance and operational complexity that makes this sector unique.

Across Victoria, we support a number of TAFEs and private RTOs, and national programs like the Australian Apprenticeships Support Network. That gives us an unparalleled view into how the system works and how it could work better.



By Trevor Fairweather
Executive General Manager,
Education

We believe innovation in TAFE is about more than state-of-the-art facilities, it's about the digital systems that enable them to run smarter. You can't unlock agility, data sharing, or future integrations on a closed system. That's why we built Ready Student with open APIs and a modular design. It's how you create real, lasting change, by designing specifically for the sector you serve.

Choosing a student system is not just an IT project, it's a strategic choice about who you want to become. One that can respond quickly to changing student expectations, government reform, and workforce demands.

Victoria now has a generational opportunity to reimagine what TAFE can be. The innovation is already happening on campuses like Melbourne Polytechnic's. Our job is to make sure the technology keeps pace.

TAFE can't train tomorrow's workforce with yesterday's technology. But with the right foundation, it can build a future that works for everyone.



technology¹



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Conference Program

Thursday, August 7, 2025 – Melbourne Polytechnic

TIME	SESSION	
8:00 am – 8:45 am	Registration and networking breakfast	
8:45 am	Conference opening MC: Claire Field	
8:50 am	Welcome to country: Wurundjeri Elder – Annette Xiberras	
9:00 am	Welcome to TAFECreates at Melbourne Polytechnic Speakers: Allison Jenvey OAM Frances Coppolillo	
9:15 am	Minister Keynote: The Hon. Gayle Tierney MP, Minister for Skills and TAFE	
9:35 am	Sponsor welcome: ReadyTech	
9:40 am – 10:40 am	Panel: Social, economic and political insights for TAFE leaders Facilitator: Claire Field Speakers: Ben Foster Jemma Horsley	
10:40 am – 11:10 am	Morning tea	
11:10 am – 12:10 pm	Stream 1: Reimagining TAFE: AI-powered solutions for industry- relevant training and empowered TAFEs Facilitator: Michael Fung Speakers: David Diviny Hayley Horan Danny Liu	Stream 2: The next generation TAFE workforce Facilitator: Claire Field Speakers: Tamie Cousins Dr Tabatha Griffin Elcin Gul
12:10 pm – 12:55 pm	Lunch	
12:55 pm	Welcome back. Sponsor – TechnologyOne	
1:00 pm – 2:00 pm	Panel: Empowering pathways: Student voices shaping the TAFE experience Facilitator: Claire Field Speakers: Neville Atkinson Laura Macpherson Professor Sandra Milligan	
2:00 pm – 3:00 pm	Stream 3: Solutions for TAFE- Industry Partnerships Facilitator: Michael Fung Speakers: Janelle Arena Trent McCarthy Loris Venzon	Stream 4: Transforming vocational education and training Facilitator: Claire Field Speakers: Lauren Conceicao Cherie Diaz John King Craig Robertson

Conference Program

Thursday, August 7, 2025

TIME	SESSION
3:00 pm – 3:20 pm	Closing insights with Department of Jobs, Skills, Industry and Regions Secretary Speaker: Matt Carrick
3:20 pm – 3:30 pm	Closing remarks Speaker: Allison Jenvey OAM
3:30 pm – 4:00 pm	Afternoon tea
4:00 pm – 6:00 pm	Melbourne Polytechnic showcase (including transport time and transfer to dinner venue)

Official Dinner

Novotel Melbourne Preston

TIME	SESSION
6:00 pm	Official dinner Welcome drinks and canapés Location: Novotel Melbourne, Preston
6:45 pm	Guests seated
6:50 pm	Welcome MC: Claire Field Speaker: Allison Jenvey OAM
7:00 pm	Welcome to Darebin Speaker: Cr Kristine Olaris OAM
7:10 pm	Conference dinner
7:45 pm	Dinner keynote Speaker: Anthony Mackay AM
8:45 pm	Fireside chat Speakers: Michael Harkin (Teacher) Morayo Adeyemi (Student) Joshua Presta (Student) Lily-Grace Toohill (Student)
10:00 pm	Conference dinner concludes

Melbourne Polytechnic Showcase

Advanced Manufacturing Centre of Excellence



Melbourne Polytechnics' new Advanced Manufacturing Centre of Excellence (AMCOE) brings together the very best of manufacturing technology with world-class training to support the Advanced Manufacturing industry.

Advanced Manufacturing is a growing multi-billion-dollar industry and a pillar of Victoria's economy, providing diverse careers for the engineers of the future.

Victoria is home to over 23,000 manufacturing businesses and employs over 260,000 people. Through AMCOE, Melbourne Polytechnic students have the opportunity to gain a thorough understanding of traditional manufacturing processes together with the latest technologies. Students will enter the workforce with a holistic knowledge of manufacturing processes and be indispensable partners to future employers.

The AMCOE facility sits within Melbourne Polytechnic's Heidelberg campus in the impressive centre of excellence manufacturing hub.

Beekeeping Training Unit

Melbourne Polytechnic's Beekeeping Training Unit is a mobile beekeeping classroom. With the looming threat of the Varroa mite and other challenges, protecting our bee populations and nurturing the next generation of beekeepers has never been more crucial.

The Beekeeping Training Unit is a mobile training facility tailored to deliver comprehensive courses to aspiring beekeepers across Victoria. Equipped with a specialised classroom built into a customised truck trailer, the unit brings apiary training to regional and metropolitan Victoria.

It has been co-designed in collaboration with the Victorian Beekeeping industry and funded by the Department of Education and Training's Regional Specialist Training Fund (RSTF) program.

Unlike traditional setups, the Beekeeping Training Unit doesn't transport bees or hives. Instead, it travels to locations where beekeepers are actively working. Melbourne Polytechnic partners with Victorian apiarists and industry organisations who manage hives, ensuring a seamless learning experience for students.

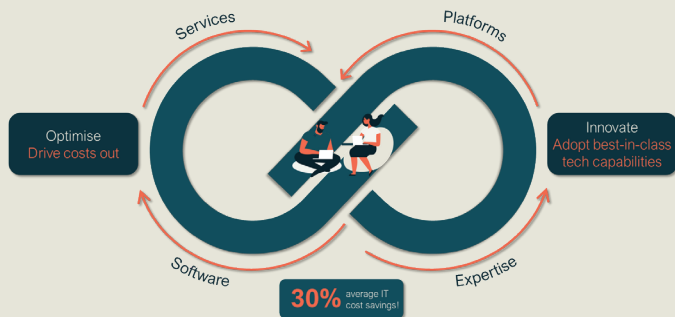
This initiative, supported by the Victorian Government, aims to empower qualified and skilled individuals to contribute to Victoria's flourishing beekeeping and pollination services industry.





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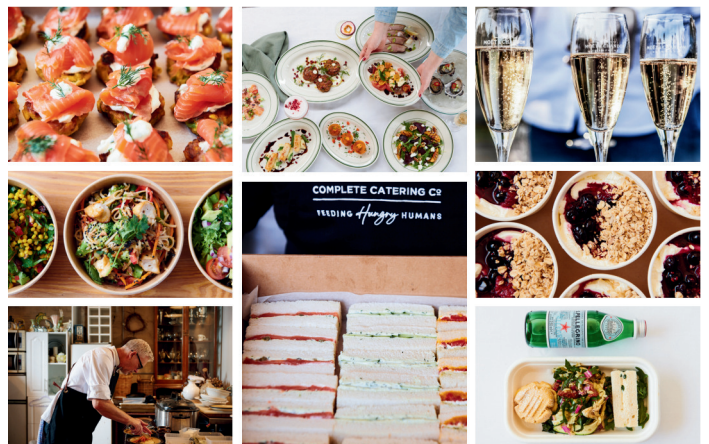


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SCAN FOR MENUS!

2025 Speakers



**The Hon. Gayle
Tierney MP**

Minister for Skills and TAFE,
Minister for Water

With over 8 years as Minister for Skills and TAFE, Minister Tierney is a strong advocate for post-secondary education and that TAFE and University are equal first choices.

She has helped reform and shape the Victorian TAFE Network and introduced the Nation's first Free TAFE program.

Minister Tierney has overseen a significant reform agenda that has established a world class Skills, Training and Higher Education System throughout Victoria and returned thousands of Victorians to vocational education.

Key reforms include the introduction and continued expansion of Free TAFE to remove barriers of access, and the establishment of Apprenticeships Victoria, The Victorian Skills Authority and the Office of TAFE Coordination and Delivery to promote a joined-up system.

Minister Tierney understands that quality underpins a world class system, which is driven by a holistic approach. The Minister has been determined to create a tripartite system where Adult Community Education, TAFEs, Industry RTOs, Universities, Unions and members of industry all have a lead role to play.

The Minister has overseen the delivery of over 80 Free TAFE and other short courses and negotiated a Landmark five year National Skills Agreement with the Commonwealth Government that unlocks significant funding for the Victorian System.

Minister Tierney is committed to skilling the in-demand workforces required to deliver the Albanese Government's policy priorities including the clean economy, the housing statement and the care sector.



**Cr Kristine Olaris
OAM**

Mayor
City of Darebin

Cr Kristine Olaris OAM is the Mayor of Darebin, and Councillor for the Central Ward.

Having called Darebin home for nearly 35 years and with a proud a Macedonian migrant background, she is committed to ensuring Darebin is an inclusive, sustainable and connected community.

Throughout her career, Mayor Olaris has been an influential leader in the not-for-profit sector, with substantial experience in legal, women's, community, and health organisations, previously serving as the CEO at Fitzroy Legal Service, and Women's Health East. She holds a Master of Health Administration and has completed the AICD Directors Course.

Mayor Olaris has two decades of governance experience, working with a range of organisations from neighbourhood houses to peak bodies, and government boards and committees. She currently is a member of the Our Equal State Reference Group, providing advice to the State government on the implementation of the Victorian Gender Equality Strategy and Action Plan.

Driven by a commitment to social justice, equity and inclusion, Mayor Olaris was awarded the Order of Australia Medal in 2024 for outstanding service and contributions to the Victorian community.

2025 Speakers



Morayo Adeyemi

Certificate III in Horticulture
Melbourne Polytechnic

Morayo is a Landscape Architect and newly qualified horticulturalist. She has had an eclectic career working in various roles within the Built Environments and Community sectors. Going back to study has exceeded her expectations for creating a meaningful occupation that brings together her skill sets, experiences and passion for healing gardens. Her new qualification has given her the skills and confidence to pursue freelance work (Afara Studio).

Through her work at Afara Studio, she aims to bridge people and communities by utilising cultural traditions and the restorative beauty of nature.



Janelle Arena

Chief Industry and
Education Officer
Bendigo Kangan Institute

Janelle is an experienced education sector senior executive with over 20 years working in Vocational and Higher Education. A career educator, Janelle has performed leadership roles in both public and private sectors, establishing innovative and future focused education solutions to meet industry needs.

Janelle has extensive experience developing and executing strategy for complex operating environments, transforming educational delivery models, managing large, distributed portfolios, and forging strong industry partnerships across multiple sectors and regions.

As the Chief Industry and Education Officer at Bendigo Kangan Institute (BKI), Janelle oversees one of the largest TAFE footprints in Victoria, Australia, spanning both Bendigo TAFE and Kangan Institute. Her role is responsible for ensuring the alignment of BKI's educational offerings with skills demands, industry and government priorities and oversees industry engagement, business development and product development.

Janelle is driven by the vision of creating a culture of excellence and innovation that empowers learners and staff to achieve their full potential.



Neville Atkinson

Executive Manager,
Programs and Policy
Victorian Aboriginal
Education Association
(VAEAI)

Neville is a Bangerang man from North-East Victoria. With VAEAI, he plays a key role in improving education, training and employment participation outcomes for Koorie peoples in Victoria.

Neville has worked in senior leadership roles within Aboriginal community-controlled and prescribed body corporate organisations.

He is passionate about working with the business and broader community to achieve economic and social change for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

2025 Speakers



Matt Carrick

Secretary
**Department of Jobs,
Skills, Industry
and Regions**

Matt was appointed Secretary of the Department of Jobs, Skills, Industry and Regions in March 2025.

Prior to this role he was CEO of V/Line, Victoria's regional rail operator.

Before joining V/Line Matt was the CEO of State Trustees, Victoria's Public Trustee. Previously Matt was the Deputy Secretary for Investment and Economic Projects in the Victorian Government's Department of Economic Development, Jobs, Transport and Resources.

He is an experienced senior government executive with a particular focus on delivering organisational change and building workplace culture.

Matt holds a double degree in Commerce and Arts from the University of Melbourne and is a Victorian Fellow of the Institute of Public Administration Australia.



Lauren Conceicao

Managing Director
Skills Frontier

Lauren Conceicao is the founder of Skills Frontier, a consultancy shaping the future of workforce strategy, skills policy and vocational education.

With a career spanning executive roles in government, education and industry including as Executive Director, Strategic Planning and Policy at TAFE NSW and former CEO of the National Apprentice Employment Network, Lauren has led high-stakes reform from the inside out.

Known for her clarity, systems thinking and ability to connect policy with real-world impact, she now partners with organisations across Australia and internationally to deliver insights that inform, influence and drive change.

Her work with clients like Jobs and Skills Australia, Jobs and Skills Councils, state government, the Defence Teaming Centre, and national training providers positions her at the forefront of skills system transformation.

Lauren frequently engages with governments, industry and training providers across the nation to explore the future skills pipeline for Australia's maritime and AUKUS workforce, licensing implications on skills mobility, and critical major project workforce pipelines, ensuring all stakeholders in the system are aligned to deliver the critical skills required.

2025 Speakers



Frances Coppolillo

Chief Executive
Melbourne Polytechnic
VTA Board Member

Ms Coppolillo is the Chief Executive of Melbourne Polytechnic. As an experienced senior education leader in Victoria, she has led the strategic development of programs and services in Vocational Education and Training and in Higher Education for both local and international student cohorts. Ms Coppolillo has held numerous roles in TAFE including Deputy CEO, Deputy Director Programs-Teaching and Learning, and Associate Director of the Faculty of Further Education.

Ms Coppolillo is a values-based leader, working to strengthen connections to community and industry. She is the Interim Chairperson of NorthLink, a strong regional partnership of industry, education, health and government working to grow economic opportunities for individuals and business in Melbourne's the Northern region. International education as always been championed by Melbourne Polytechnic, Frances has represented TAFE in the Victorian International Education Advisory Council. As a founding director on the Board of the TAFE Development Centre (now the VET Development Centre) Frances has a strong interest in enhancing the development of the VET professional educators, managers and leaders.

Ms Coppolillo's qualifications include a Bachelor of Education (Arts) Secondary, University of Melbourne and Masters Social Science (Policy & Management) RMIT.



Tamie Cousins

Director of Professional
Teaching Practice
Melbourne Polytechnic

Tamie Cousins is the Director of Professional Teaching Practice at Melbourne Polytechnic. She leads a high-performing team focused on advancing excellence in learning and teaching across VET, Foundation and Higher Education programs, with a strong emphasis on developing educator and leadership capability.

With over 12 years of educational leadership experience across TAFE and government sectors, Tamie brings significant expertise in high-quality learning and teaching, workforce development, professional learning design, and empowering educators to drive innovation and inclusion in their practice. She is deeply committed to improving outcomes for learners by fostering teaching excellence and supporting educators to thrive.

Tamie holds a Master of Education and is an EMCC accredited coach and mentor.

2025 Speakers



Cherie Diaz

Executive Director,
Education Innovation
**Western Sydney
University**

Cherie Diaz is the Executive Director, Education Innovation at Western Sydney University.

Joining in 2022, Cherie heads up a range of initiatives focused on developing highly differentiated, market-driven micro-credentials and programs, with curriculum co-created with industry and focused on the emerging up-skilling needs of the workforce.

She is a member of the NSW Digital Skills & Workforce Compact, and the Business Council of Australia Skills, Education & Migration Committee.

Cherie is a Non-Executive Director of MEGT (Australia) Ltd, and Board Advisor to the Future Skills Organisation.



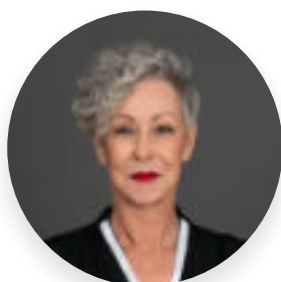
David Diviny

Chief Data and Analytics
Officer and Head of AI
Nous Group

David is Nous' Chief Data and Analytics Officer and Head of AI. He is a recognised leading thinker on the application of data and analytics and AI in the tertiary education sector and has worked across both providers and government.

David has led the delivery of AI and machine learning projects in the tertiary education sector to provide novel insights on large datasets.

He also leads Nous' AI Studio, developing internal tools that embed GenAI in group-wide processes, while also creating bespoke, project-specific solutions for individuals and teams.



Claire Field

Principal
Claire Field & Associates

Claire is the Principal of Claire Field and Associates, an independent consulting practice offering advice across higher education, VET, international education, and GenAI/EdTech.

Claire previously held senior positions in education agencies in the NSW and Australian governments, as well as in the public, private and non-profit tertiary education sector.

In 2023 Claire was awarded the International Education Association of Australia' (IEAA) Excellence in Professional Commentary Award. She is the host of the 'What now? What next? Insights into Australia's tertiary education sector' podcast, and is undertaking a PhD at Torrens University Australia writing the history of the university's first 10 years.

2025 Speakers



Ben Foster

Managing Partner
FMRS Advisory

Ben is a leading expert in government advisory, stakeholder engagement and communications strategy.

Over the last 15 years, he has been a trusted adviser to some of Australia's most senior political leaders, holding roles across the Australian Government, the Victorian Government and the Australian Public Service.

As a senior member of the leadership team in Premier Daniel Andrews' office, Ben led whole-of-government stakeholder engagement, working closely with business, unions, the community sector and other key groups.

As an exceptional relationship builder, Ben understands that the most enduring partnerships are built on trust, discretion and frank, open dialogue. He has a proven ability to build coalitions of interest and find common ground between parties to deliver strategic outcomes.

Since co-founding FMRS in 2024, Ben has advised clients through complex corporate restructures and administrations, driven public policy change at the federal level, and led strategy for sensitive disclosures and crisis communications projects.



Michael Fung

Partner
KordaMentha

Michael Fung is an experienced advisor to TAFEs, universities, government departments, and other educational institutions.

He specialises in independent financial and commercial advice and has advised TAFEs on matters including financial forecasts, cash flows, performance improvement, business cases, and commercial transactions. He has attended several VTA conferences over the years and is a strong supporter of TAFEs and vocational education generally.

Michael is a Partner at KordaMentha having recently joined to strengthen its expertise in the education and restructuring sectors.



Dr Tabatha Griffin

Team Leader
NCVER

Tabatha is a Team Leader and senior researcher in the Research and Data Analytics branch at NCVER. She has undertaken research on a wide range of topics, including: quality in the VET sector, the use of online training before, during and beyond the COVID-19 pandemic, and the barriers and enablers of VET delivery in regional, rural and remote Australia.

Recent work has investigated teaching and learning strategies for diverse learners and effective student support. As an experienced research manager, Tabatha has overseen a broad variety of projects at NCVER.

2025 Speakers



Elcin Gul

Educator
Melbourne Polytechnic

Elcin Gul is an educator at Melbourne Polytechnic, delivering the Certificate IV in Training and Assessment with a strong focus on fostering engaging, student-centred learning experiences. She is committed to creating inclusive and empowering environments that support learners to succeed and grow with confidence.

With over a decade of teaching experience in the VET sector, Elcin began her career in early childhood education before transitioning to adult and vocational training. Her practice is underpinned by a belief that positive learning relationships and tailored support are key to meaningful learner outcomes.

Elcin holds a Master of Adult and Vocational Education and brings a deep understanding of learner engagement, educator development, and evidence-based teaching approaches.



Michael Harkin

VET educator
Melbourne Polytechnic

Michael Harkin is a registered plumber and VET educator at Melbourne Polytechnic. He began his career as an apprentice plumber and spent 23 years running a successful plumbing business in Ireland before returning to Victoria to continue his trade. Toward the end of COVID, Michael embraced the opportunity to join Melbourne Polytechnic as a Teacher Under Supervision, successfully completing the Certificate IV in Training and Assessment.

A passionate educator committed to lifelong learning, Michael continually refines his practice to better support student success. Proud to be a dual professional, Michael brings the same dedication and pursuit of excellence to teaching as he has always brought to his trade.

Currently completing the Associate Degree of Vocational Education and Training at Federation University, Michael is focused on building a meaningful and impactful future in vocational education.



Hayley Horan

Microsoft Industry
Executive for VET ANZ
Microsoft

Hayley is responsible for developing and implementing Microsoft's strategy to support and empower the VET sector, which is vital for the economic and social development of the region. She has a personal connection to VET, as is a proud graduate of a VET program in New Zealand.

Hayley has a diverse background in international trade, digital transformation, and the SaaS industry. She was the New Zealand Trade Commissioner in Singapore, where she helped New Zealand businesses expand their presence and partnerships in Southeast Asia. She also led the Digital strategy at Te Pukenga, New Zealand's largest tertiary education provider, where she oversaw the Strategic Partnerships and shaping of the Digital Strategy.

Hayley is passionate about sharing her insights and expertise on how VET can drive growth, innovation, and inclusion in the post-pandemic world.

2025 Speakers



Jemma Horsley

National Skills Schools and
Early Childhood Lead Partner
KPMG Australia

Jemma is KPMG's National Skills and Schools Lead Partner where her work with Government Departments, Agencies and TAFEs has been instrumental in guiding leaders through the evolving landscape of vocational education and training. Her insights into economic trends, social changes, and political developments provide invaluable perspectives that help educators and administrators make informed decisions.

Jemma holds a Master's degree in Public Policy and Management from the University of Melbourne, her research has been published in numerous academic journals, and she is a regular contributor to industry publications. Jemma's commitment to advancing the skills agenda and her dedication to supporting TAFE leaders inspires critical thinking about the challenges and opportunities facing educational institutions today.



Allison Jenvey OAM

Board Chair
Wodonga TAFE
VTA Board Chair

Allison is the current Board Chair of the Victorian TAFE Association. She holds this position in her capacity as Board Chair of Wodonga TAFE. She joined the Wodonga TAFE Board in late 2015 and has been serving in the position of Chair since 2016.

Allison is a retired public practice accountant, having been a director of a firm in Wodonga that offered taxation and financial advisory services. She has significant governance experience on local Boards and Committees. Along with chairing the Board of Wodonga TAFE and the VTA, she also chairs the Board of BankWAW (a regional customer owned bank). Allison has also previously served on the Board of Albury Wodonga Health, has been President of the Wodonga Chamber of Commerce, and chaired the Rural Housing Network Board (now Beyond Housing). She has also served on local advisory committees from time to time.



John King

Managing Director
**National Centre for
Vocational Education
Research**

John was appointed Managing Director of the National Centre for Vocational Education Research in July 2024.

He has led the use of evidence in social policy. In his previous role as Chief Data Officer at Seer Data and Analytics, he helped community organisations to access and use data effectively. As Executive Director of Analytics, Evaluation, and Research at the Victorian Departments of Health and Families, Fairness and Housing, he helped pioneer the use of linked data, advanced analytics, and evaluation in health and human services policy and programs.

He also brings a strong background in skills policy, with senior executive roles in the Victorian and South Australian public services.

2025 Speakers



Danny Liu

Professor
(Education Focused)
The University of Sydney

Danny is a molecular biologist by training, programmer by night, researcher and academic developer by day, and educator at heart.

A multiple international and national teaching award winner, he works at the confluence of artificial intelligence, learning analytics, student engagement, educational technology, and professional development and leadership.

He is a Professor of Educational Technologies in the DVC Education Portfolio at the University of Sydney, co-chairs the University's AI in Education working group, and leads the Cogniti.ai initiative that puts educators in the driver's seat of AI.



Anthony Mackay AM

Co-Chair
**National Centre on
Education and the
Economy**

Anthony Mackay AM is immediate past CEO and current Co-Chair of the Washington DC-based National Centre on Education and the Economy.

Anthony is Deputy Chancellor Swinburne University, Melbourne, Honorary Senior Fellow, Melbourne Graduate School of Education at the University of Melbourne; Adjunct Professor, Faculty of Education Southern Cross University, Australia; and Visiting Professor, International Centre for Educational Enhancement, University of Bolton UK.

Anthony is Co-Chair of Learning Creates Australia. He is the immediate former CEO, Centre for Strategic Education, Melbourne. Anthony is immediate past Chair and current Board Director of the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER). Anthony was the inaugural Chair of the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) and inaugural Deputy Chair of the Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA).

Anthony is co-founder of the Global Education Leaders Partnership (GELP) and was Foundation Chair of the Innovation Unit UK. He is an Expert Advisor to OECD, to the WISE Leadership Network & the Global Cities Education Network. He is a Fellow of the Salzburg Global Seminar and co-convenor of the Brookings / NCEE Knowledge Exchange.

Anthony is Moderator for the annual International Summit on the Teaching Profession and Co Moderator of the High Performing Systems for Tomorrow Program.

2025 Speakers



Laura Macpherson

CEO
TAFE Gippsland
VTA Board Member

Laura Macpherson is an ambitious and dynamic executive leader.

With a domestic and international career spanning Government, top ASX-100 companies, the VET sector and strategic advisory, Laura has a unique perspective derived from strategic consultancy and strong leadership that ensures solutions are practicable and implemented with skilful guidance.

Leading TAFE Gippsland for the past 2 years, Laura is passionate about continuing and building on the organisation's proud 95-year history of education and training excellence in the region.

An advocate for end-to-end education and training solutions, Laura is leading her team at the forefront of industry changes and challenges and adapting training to suit industry needs, leading to productive employment outcomes and driving investment throughout Gippsland.

With her team, Laura is achieving ground-breaking work to achieve TAFE Gippsland's vision of a skilled and thriving Gippsland, leading the way in the transition of workforces into clean energy and beyond.

Laura is a change champion who has delivered innovative, impactful and sustainable economic and social outcomes for community and industry stakeholders.



Trent McCarthy

Director Clean Economy,
Engagement and
Experience
Melbourne Polytechnic

Trent McCarthy is Director Clean Economy, Engagement and Experience at Melbourne Polytechnic (MP). Trent leads engagement, collaboration and innovation across MP to achieve net zero, align course delivery to clean economy goals, facilitate vibrant precincts and improve the student, staff, industry and community experience. Trent is currently overseeing two Victorian Government Skills Labs focused on residential building and construction, and circular design and manufacturing.

Prior to joining MP, Trent led the Victorian Local Learning and Employment Networks, served as chief executive of a youth-focused community organisation and managed industry engagement projects for Monash Sustainable Development Institute. Trent also served as a Darebin City Councillor from 2008-2024, kickstarting the climate emergency movement in 2016 with the world's first declaration and the creation of Climate Emergency Australia.

2025 Speakers



Professor Sandra Milligan

Executive Director of
Melbourne Metrics
University of Melbourne

Professor Sandra Milligan is the Executive Director of Melbourne Metrics, at the University of Melbourne. She was previously director of the Assessment Research Centre at the Melbourne Graduate School of Education.

Her research focuses on development and construction of, scalable, robust, valid, comparable and trusted approaches for assessment and recognition of learning. These new approaches are particularly suited to assessment of the transferable learning competencies that equip learners to flourish in a changing, uncertain, world, or competence in complex domains of performance.

Originally a STEM teacher, Sandra is also a former Director of Curriculum in an Australian state education department and has held senior research, management and governance positions in a range of government authorities, not-for-profits, and domestic and international corporations.



Joshua Presta

Certificate III in Plumbing
Melbourne Polytechnic
2025 Apprentice of the Year

Joshua started his career working for his father in civil construction, but soon realised he wanted to pursue a licensed trade. Plumbing appealed to him because of its variety and the structured learning pathway it offered.

“Plumbing stood out to me because there’s so many different parts to it,” he said. “From drainage to roofing and everything in between, you’re always learning something new.”

Joshua enrolled in the Certificate III in Plumbing at Melbourne Polytechnic and quickly immersed himself in both theory and hands-on training. Over three and a half years, he developed strong skills across all areas of the plumbing trade, supported by teachers with extensive industry experience.



Craig Robertson

CEO
Victorian Skills Authority

Craig Robertson is the CEO of the Victorian Skills Authority. The authority is tasked by the Victorian Government to plan for post school education and training to support a growing economy and good jobs for Victorians.

Previously, Craig was the CEO of TAFE Directors Australia, representing the TAFE model nationally and internationally. Craig has worked for over 30 years with the Commonwealth Government in areas of school funding, employment policy and most aspects of tertiary education and in 2015 and 2016 worked in the Victorian Government.

Craig holds an Executive Masters in Public Administration and Bachelor of Education (Primary).

Craig is leading the VET Qualification Reform Design Group, a tri-partite group which is examining modernisation of VET qualifications to meet the needs of students and industry in the context of changing economic, work and social expectations.

2025 Speakers



Lily-Grace Toohill

Certificate III in Jewellery
Manufacture
Melbourne Polytechnic
Worldskills
Gold Medal Winner

Lily-Grace is a talented emerging Jeweller based at Lacy Jewellery Studio and Gallery in Meeniyar. Since beginning her apprenticeship in 2022, she has studied at Melbourne Polytechnic, where she completed her Certificate III in Jewellery Manufacture in 2025.

Known for her commitment and drive, Lily-Grace was awarded Apprentice of the Year in her first year of study and now winning a gold medal and Best in Nation award at the 2025 Worldskills nationals event in Brisbane is a testament to her passion and work ethic. Lily-Grace is known for consistently pushing herself and striving for excellence.



Loris Venzon

Strategic Policy Lead
Victorian Skills Authority

Loris Venzon is strategic policy lead at the Victorian Skills Authority. A large part of Loris' role at the VSA has involved understanding the VET system implications and response to changing technological, political and social trends.

Loris has led several initiatives that involve a close partnership between TAFEs, learners and industry, including the creation of skills labs.

Previously, Loris led the initiation of important reviews of the Victorian education system, including the Macklin and Firth reviews.



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