Adelaide University

Ranked #63 in the world for Education*

*Ranked equal 63, QS World University Rankings by Subject 2026

Wellbeing for Learning Conference 2027

From Evidence to Impact

International Perspectives Transforming Learning, Teaching and Educational Systems

11 – 12 February 2027



The next chapter in wellbeing for learning

This second public symposium and one-day conference examines new international interdisciplinary research about wellbeing in schooling. We contend that wellbeing is not an educational add-on in schooling. It is a foundational condition through which learning becomes possible.

In 2026, Adelaide University convened educators, researchers, school leaders and policymakers to examine this proposition and launched the Wellbeing for Learning International Research Network (WLIRN).

In 2027, our focus moves from establishing the evidence to translating it into classroom practice, school leadership, policy and sustainable improvement.

Join us to explore emerging evidence, share implementation challenges and build practical collaborations across education, educational psychology, the humanities and the social sciences.

Ranked in the world's top 100 for education

#=63 QS World University Rankings by Subject (2026), Education and Training

#89 Times Higher Education World University Rankings by Subject (2026), Education Studies

#46 U.S. News Best Global Universities, Education and Educational Research



What the inaugural conference achieved

The inaugural 2026 symposium and conference demonstrated a strong interest in rigorous research connected to the everyday work of school leaders, teachers and educators:

- Over 380 registrations across the two events.
- 75 schools represented across sectors and five Australian states.

"This was one of the most intellectually engaging and practically relevant conferences I have attended in years."

— 2026 post-conference evaluation



Welcome messages



Professor Shane Dawson

Pro Vice Chancellor
College of Education, Behavioural and Social Sciences
Adelaide University

Welcome to the 2027 Wellbeing for Learning Conference program.

Last year, the inaugural conference launched the Wellbeing for Learning International Research Network. Adelaide University's Strategic Conference Sponsorship Fund supported this event. The program co-convenors had a clear ambition: to establish Adelaide University as an international hub for research on wellbeing and learning and create opportunities for industry to engage with new research.

From the outset, the Network has brought together researchers from five universities across Australia- Adelaide University, Monash University and the University of Melbourne; Singapore's National Institute of Education, an autonomous institute of Nanyang Technological University; and the country's national teacher education institute and the Chinese University of Hong Kong.

This year's theme, From Evidence to Impact, reflects what our College of Education, Behavioural and Social Sciences does very well. This brings us to a shared challenge: how do we translate interdisciplinary research into meaningful improvements in policy, professional practice and the systems and environments that support learning, development and wellbeing?

I thank our keynote speakers, partners and delegates, and congratulate the convenors on a program of genuine international standing.



Professor Susan James Relly

Dean, School of Education
Adelaide University

Welcome to Adelaide University for the 2027 Wellbeing for Learning Conference.

Building on the success of the inaugural meeting last year, this conference will bring together educators, researchers, policy makers and community partners to consider how wellbeing can be embedded into everyday teaching, learning and educational leadership.

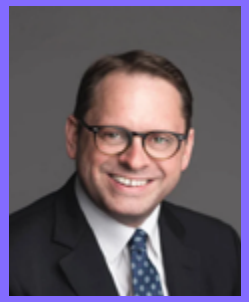
Education goes well beyond attainment of qualifications. From early years right through to lifelong learning the impact of the environment and the opportunities available to the learner is hugely influential in terms of their level of participation and confidence and the pathways they take.

To really understand these prerequisites you need rigorous research, evidence based teaching and genuine engagement with the communities that are actually implementing them.

This year's conference is all about teacher capability, relationships, culture and engagement. There are new questions arising around the humanities, Generative AI, social media use and the wider social determinants of wellbeing in schools.

I hope the discussions at our public symposium and conference have served to extend your professional networks, challenge your assumptions and in the process have inspired some practical and equitable approaches which will stick.

Thank you to our co-convenors, speakers, and delegates for their contributions to this important discussion.





Professor Mathew A. White and Dr Ruth Aston

Founding Co-Convenors, Wellbeing for Learning International Research Network

Welcome to Adelaide University and the 2027 Wellbeing for Learning Conference.

Our inaugural 2026 Wellbeing for Learning Conference explored the question: what changes when wellbeing is understood as a condition for learning rather than an additional program in schools?

We examined the value of an approach to wellbeing for learning that brings together growing evidence, teacher professional expertise and the social contexts in which learning takes place. Moreover, we proposed a new approach to wellbeing education focused on the foundations of wellbeing: understanding the landscape, building capabilities, teacher readiness, integration, systems and implementation.

The 2027 conference builds on this foundation. In designing this conference, we respond to Adelaide University's Signature Research Theme focusing on Personal and Societal Health, which aims to create a more equitable society. In addition, we have expanded the program's interdisciplinarity to explore creative and cultural questions from the arts and their role in creating flourishing communities. How do wellbeing and learning mutually influence one another? How do cultural, psychological, pedagogical and structural mechanisms shape wellbeing for learning? What are the institutional and educational conditions that support equitable, sustainable human flourishing in schools?

Our conference program responds to conference attendees' calls for new topics and extends the conversation into the humanities, the challenges of Generative AI, and the wider social conditions shaping wellbeing.

We invite you not only to hear the latest research but to help shape the next research questions, professional partnerships and implementation priorities of the Wellbeing for Learning International Research Network.

Wellbeing for Learning International Research Network

Our research agenda: from evidence to action

1. Foundations: understanding the conditions for learning

The network understands wellbeing as an interdisciplinary, ecological, developmental and relational condition for learning. Explore how culture impacts wellbeing, student experiences and the suitability of social and emotional learning programs. Investigate the ethical implementation of wellbeing education.

2. Professional capabilities: what teachers and leaders need

The network examines how teaching practices shape students' academic and social-emotional wellbeing. These practices include task structure, feedback, support for autonomy and competence, and positive teacher–student relationships. Identify the professional capabilities teachers and school leaders already possess for wellbeing education, and how they can use them to improve learning outcomes.

3. Implementation and evaluation: what works, for whom and in which contexts

Schools are expert implementers and evaluators of curriculum, assessment and pedagogy. But wellbeing education and mental health programs may bring unfamiliar expectations and ethical challenges. The network explores strengths-based school readiness. This is achieved through interdisciplinary partnerships, program fidelity and evaluation to support the sustainability of initiatives.

4. New frontiers: humanities, gen AI, technology and social conditions

The network extends the discussion to dialogic flourishing. This year we explore secondary English and literature programs, alongside drama and creative writing; the impact of generative AI, social media and wellbeing in schools.



"This conference moved wellbeing from the margins to the centre of educational effectiveness."

— Anonymous participant, 2026 post-conference evaluation

Thursday 11 February 2027

Free public symposium

Location: Elder Hall, Adelaide University, City Campus East
Time: 5:30pm – 7:30pm
Cost: Free

To register, scan the QR code or visit:
events.humanitix.com/wellbeing-for-learning-free-public-symposium-thursday-11-february-2027-adelaide-university

A public discussion for teachers, school leaders, families, community organisations, policymakers and anyone interested in how learning environments can support wellbeing. The symposium explores new research perspectives and will connect the evidence with the experiences of schools and communities. The symposium will explore new research about the relationship between wellbeing, motivation, engagement and academic achievement. The panel will explore the challenges of translating research into effective classroom practice, evaluating impact, sustaining whole-school approaches, and future directions for integrating wellbeing into curriculum and pedagogy, advancing international collaboration, and shaping research, policy, and practice.

Public symposium panel:

- Dr Ruth Aston (Adelaide University)
- Associate Professor Wan Har Chong (National Institute of Education, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore)
- Professor Janet Clinton (The University of Melbourne)
- Professor Rebecca J. Collie (Monash University)
- Associate Professor Ronnel B. King (The Chinese University of Hong Kong)
- Professor Jon Quach (The University of Melbourne)
- Professor Susan Sawyer AM MBBS MD FRACP FAHMS, The University of Melbourne
- Professor Mathew White (Adelaide University)

Moderator:

- Professor Susan James Relly (Dean, School of Education, Adelaide University)

Running order:

Time	Session
5:30 – 5:35pm	Welcome
5:35 – 5:50pm	Opening perspectives
5:50 – 7:00pm	Moderated panel discussion
7:00 – 7:20pm	Audience Q&A





Friday 12 February 2027

Full-day conference

Location: Function Room 1, Union House (UH505), Adelaide University, City Campus East
Time: 8:30am – 4:00pm
Cost: From AU$229 per person
To register, scan the QR code or visit:
events.humanitix.com/wellbeing-for-learning-conference-friday-12-february-2027-adelaide-university

Friday 12 February 2027: Program

Time	Session
8:30 – 8:35am	**Acknowledgement of Country and welcome** **Professor Susan James Relly, Dean, School of Education** **Adelaide University**
8:35 – 8:40am	**Opening remarks** **Professor Mathew White, Conference Co-Convenor** **Adelaide University**
8:40 – 9:10am	**Keynote 1** **Professor Susan Sawyer AM MBBS MD FRACP FAHMS, The University of Melbourne** *Clicks, brands, bodies and minds: selling out adolescent health*
9:10 – 9:40am	**Keynote 2** **Associate Professor Ronnel B. King, The Chinese University of Hong Kong** *Growth mindsets and resilience: insights from large-scale international assessments*
9:40 – 10:10am	**Keynote 3** **Associate Professor Wan Har Chong, National Institute of Education–Singapore** *Rethinking school-based wellbeing: culture, development and relationships in Singapore*
10:10 – 10:35am	Morning tea and networking, Level 5 Union House
10:35 – 11:10am	**Panel 1: Beyond the classroom: health and the conditions for learning** Chair and moderator: Dr Elisa Di Gregorio, Adelaide University **Professor Susan Sawyer AM MBBS MD FRACP FAHMS, The University of Melbourne** **Associate Professor Wan Har Chong, National Institute of Education–Singapore** **Professor Sally Brinkman, Adelaide University** **Dr Jennifer Dam, Murdoch Children's Research Institute**
11:10 – 11:35am	**Keynote 4** **Professor Janet Clinton, The University of Melbourne and Dr Ruth Aston, Adelaide University** *Expert implementers in unfamiliar territory: a strengths-based approach to school readiness for wellbeing programs*
11:35 – 12:00pm	**Keynote 5** **Professor Jon Quach, The University of Melbourne** *Symptom or the cause: unpacking student wellbeing, learning engagement and attendance*
12:00 – 12:40pm	**Panel 2: Australian evidence on adolescents' digital lives and AI use, online safeguarding, motivation and classroom practice** Chair and moderator: Dr Ruth Aston, Conference Co-Convenor, Adelaide University **Professor Russell Brewer, Adelaide University** **Professor Rebecca J. Collie, Monash University** **Professor Jon Quach, The University of Melbourne**
12:40 – 1:20pm	Networking lunch and PhD poster viewing, Level 5 Union House Dr Elisa Di Gregorio, Chair of the PhD Poster Sessions, Adelaide University
1:20 – 1:45pm	**Keynote 6** **Professor Rebecca J. Collie, Monash University** *The role of everyday teaching practices in students' wellbeing*
1:45 – 2:10pm	**Keynote 7** **Professor Mathew White, Adelaide University** *The eudaimonic turn in schools: positive humanities, wellbeing education and the case for flourishing*
2:10 – 2:50pm	**Panel 3: Positive humanities: teaching English, drama, music and the humanities for flourishing** Chair and moderator: Dr Elisa Di Gregorio, Adelaide University **Professor Mathew White, Adelaide University** **Professor Anne Pender, Adelaide University** **Professor Patrick Flanery, Adelaide University** **Dr Emily Dollman, Adelaide University**
2:50 – 3:50pm	**Panel 4: Evidence to impact: how can schools and education systems improve wellbeing for learning? Evaluation, implementation, classroom practice and structural determinants** *Chair and moderator: Dr Ruth Aston, Adelaide University* **Professor Sally Brinkman, Adelaide University** **Professor Janet Clinton, The University of Melbourne** **Associate Professor Ronnel B. King, The Chinese University of Hong Kong**
3:50 – 4:00pm	**Thanks:** Dr Ruth Aston, Conference Co-Convenor, Adelaide University **Closing remarks:** Professor Mathew White, Conference Co-Convenor, Adelaide University

Graduate research: Electronic PhD poster presentations

This year the conference will provide an opportunity for PhD candidates to share emerging research through electronic poster presentations. Dr Elisa Di Gregorio (School of Education, Adelaide University), Chair of the PhD Poster Sessions, will lead the review and selection of doctoral poster submissions and host the poster viewing during lunch.







2027 Keynotes

Wellbeing for Learning: Evidence into Practice



Professor Susan Sawyer AM MBBS MD FRACP FAHMS

Geoff and Helen Handbury Chair of Adolescent Health Department of Paediatrics, The University of Melbourne

Director, Centre for Adolescent Health, Royal Children's Hospital and Murdoch Children's Research Institute

Keynote 1

Clicks, brands, bodies and minds: selling out adolescent health

From targeted social media advertising about unhealthy products to influencing attitudes towards gender, intimacy, migration and violence, powerful commercial influences are shaping the physical and mental health of Australian young people, most notably through digital media.

The physical, social and emotional development that characterises adolescence makes young people particularly vulnerable to these influences. This presentation will review Australia's social media minimum age policy and its early effects in the context of what we know about how best to counter the commercial (including digital) determinants of health. This presentation explores the various roles of governments, schools and families in balancing keeping young people safe online with their existential need for self-expression.

2027 Keynotes



Associate Professor Ronnel B. King

Department of Curriculum and Instruction,
Faculty of Education
The Chinese University of Hong Kong

Keynote 2

Growth mindsets and resilience: insights from large-scale international assessments

This research examines how growth mindsets contribute to students' motivation, resilience, wellbeing and achievement, and asks when, for whom and under what conditions these effects are most likely to emerge.

Moving beyond a simple focus on whether growth mindset 'works', we draw on large-scale international assessments, meta-analytic approaches and qualitative research to investigate both the generality and heterogeneity of growth mindset effects. Using data from nearly half a million students across 70+ education systems, our work shows that growth mindset is positively associated with academic achievement and perseverance, as well as with more adaptive social and school experiences. However, the magnitude of these associations varies considerably across educational contexts and student groups. A second strand of this research focuses on growth mindset as a personal resource for resilience, examining how beliefs about the malleability of ability may help students respond to academic setbacks, uncertainty and failure.

More recent work extends this perspective to higher education, situating growth mindset within broader systems of demands and resources rather than treating it as an isolated psychological attribute. Qualitative reports from participants suggest that growth mindset is an important resource in dealing with setbacks but also highlight the critical importance of environmental and structural supports. Across these studies, our overarching goal is to develop a more contextualised account of growth mindset, one that recognises both its potential contribution to positive functioning and the social and cultural conditions that shape its emergence.



Associate Professor Wan Har Chong

National Institute of Education
Nanyang Technological University, Singapore

Keynote 3

Rethinking school-based wellbeing: culture, development and relationships in Singapore

Social and emotional learning is increasingly embedded in education policies and curricula to support young people's wellbeing. In Singapore, the Ministry of Education's 2021 Character and Citizenship Education framework provides a structure for schools to design affective education programs. However, approaches developed in other cultural contexts may not fully reflect the experiences of young people in Singapore and across Asia.

This keynote explores how context shapes the relevance and impact of school-based wellbeing initiatives. It highlights three priorities: recognising cultural differences in emotional expression and distress; understanding youth development and wellbeing within context; and strengthening social and emotional learning through teachers' social and emotional competence and supportive teacher–student relationships.

Bringing these priorities together, the presentation invites educators and policymakers to consider how social and emotional learning can become more responsive and better suited to the communities it serves.

2027 Keynotes



Professor Janet Clinton

Professor of Evaluation
Academic Director, Strategic Partnerships
Faculty of Education, The University of Melbourne



Dr Ruth Aston

School of Education
College of Education, Behavioural and Social Sciences
Adelaide University

Keynote 4

Expert implementers in unfamiliar territory: a strengths-based approach to school readiness for wellbeing programs

Schools are expert implementers. Every day, they introduce new curricular and assessment practices and pedagogical programs drawing on their professional knowledge of how to impact student outcomes. Yet when schools adopt wellbeing and mental health programs for students, teachers and leaders, it is unfamiliar territory. They work alongside allied professionals such as psychologists and doctors, whose disciplines bring different evidence standards, language and ethical frameworks. Integrating them into the school system is complex.

This keynote takes a strengths-based view of school readiness. Drawing on education implementation models and evidence from implementation science, it shows where existing school capabilities transfer well and where gaps emerge, particularly in fidelity, adaptation and accountability for outcomes. It concludes with an applied way forward, suggesting that school leaders need to use their education implementation expertise to build the partnerships, structures and evaluative capacity needed for structurally sound wellbeing and mental health programs to benefit students and staff and be sustained over time.



Professor Jon Quach

School of Learning Sciences,
Faculty of Education
The University of Melbourne

Keynote 5

Symptom or the cause: unpacking student wellbeing, learning engagement and attendance

Student wellbeing, learning engagement and attendance are deeply interconnected, each significantly influencing educational outcomes.

This presentation explores current research on the relationships among these three aspects, showing how wellbeing shapes students' motivation, participation and capacity to learn meaningfully. Attendance patterns often reflect broader challenges in wellbeing and engagement. The session will highlight schools' and teachers' collective responsibility to create supportive learning environments where all students can thrive. It will examine evidence-informed practices and policies that strengthen student wellbeing, engagement and attendance, while considering the practical implications for schools.



Professor Rebecca J. Collie

Professor of Learning Sciences
Monash University

Keynote 6

The role of everyday teaching practices in students' wellbeing

Students spend a large part of their waking lives in classrooms, which makes everyday teaching one of the most powerful, and often overlooked, levers for supporting their wellbeing. In this presentation, Professor Rebecca Collie will share findings from research on how routine teaching practices shape students' wellbeing. She will consider two complementary sets of practices. The first set focuses on learning, such as how teachers structure tasks, give feedback, and support students' sense of autonomy and competence.

The second set focuses on building positive teacher–student relationships. Drawing on recent studies, Rebecca will show how these practices relate to students' academic and social-emotional wellbeing. She will conclude by highlighting key practices that teachers and school leaders can embed in daily classroom and school life. Together, the findings suggest that supporting student wellbeing can be built into the daily work of teaching and learning.



Professor Mathew White

Professor of Education
Dean, International and Engagement
College of Education, Behavioural and Social Sciences, Adelaide University

Keynote 7

The eudaimonic turn in schools: positive humanities, wellbeing education and the case for flourishing

Positive humanities is the branch of learning concerned with culture's relationship to human flourishing. The positive humanities call for a eudaimonic turn: an intentional focus on human flourishing as a central theme and aim. The humanities challenge each generation to explore and develop ways to flourish; ours has been described as one of polycrisis.

Previous wellbeing education research suggests the humanities can occupy a key role in helping young people live meaningfully in society. However, the pedagogical processes through which secondary school English studies and literature may contribute to flourishing are significantly undertheorised.

This keynote explores how humanities, English and creative writing education can holistically support student outcomes and flourishing. English and literature curricula invite students to encounter plays, novels, poetry, film, essays and graphic novels from canonical, contemporary, First Nations and international perspectives. Rather than treating this range as a curricular problem, the keynote argues that it offers an opportunity for learning for wellbeing, the conceptual counterpart to wellbeing for learning. To develop this argument, the keynote lays out a framework of dialogic flourishing. Drawing on the Victorian, New South Wales and South Australian senior secondary literature curricula, the keynote explores how dialogue across texts and perspectives can develop students' interpretive capabilities, autonomy and understanding of others. It concludes by positioning disciplinary English teaching, and the discipline of literary studies itself, rather than an added wellbeing program, as a potential condition for learning for wellbeing.



Wellbeing for Learning Research Network Founding Scholars, February 2026. Left to right: Professor Mathew White, Professor Janet Clinton, Dr Ruth Aston, Professor Rebecca Collie, Associate Professor Wan Har Chong, Professor Susan Sawyer AM, Professor Jon Quach and Associate Professor Ronnel King

About the Wellbeing for Learning Network

WLIRN launched in February 2026, with links to researchers at Adelaide University, the National Institute of Education at Nanyang Technological University, the Chinese University of Hong Kong, the University of Melbourne and Monash University. Its goal is to connect universities and schools annually to examine new evidence and influence policy and practice through transdisciplinary international research partnerships.

Wellbeing as the foundation for learning

The Wellbeing for Learning Network is an international research initiative advancing theoretical and applied research at the intersection of wellbeing science and education. An academic initiative founded and co-led by Professor Mathew White and Dr Ruth Aston from the School of Education in the College of Education, Behavioural and Social Sciences at Adelaide University, the Network convenes leading scholars from multiple disciplines to investigate how wellbeing functions as a foundational condition for learning.

The wellbeing for learning knowledge gap

Rising inequity, teacher attrition and declining retention continue alongside growing concerns about student wellbeing and accomplishment. Despite decades of wellbeing education initiatives in schools, Education Studies lacks a coherent theoretical framework to explain how wellbeing enables learning at the individual, classroom, school and system levels. In many cases, initiatives treat wellbeing as a curriculum add-on or adopt it with limited interrogation of the theory and evidence supporting whole-school approaches. We argue that an enduring knowledge gap has implications for education policy, teacher professional practice, leadership preparation, teacher education and system design.

What makes the Wellbeing for Learning Network different

For more than two decades, the dominant strategy for wellbeing in education has been to explore how learning from psychology can improve schools. This has produced multiple curriculum programs, character education, resilience education and novel support services. Many have been delivered within or alongside existing educational structures. These advances have developed teachers' understanding of the role of wellbeing and built stronger practitioner communities. But the underlying assumption of these approaches remains unchanged: wellbeing is something added to education.

International research partnerships

The Network connects researchers across cultures, contexts, institutions and education systems. We aim to foster transnational investigation of the wellbeing–learning relationship. From the outset, we aim to adopt cross-cultural designs. The Network operates as a free, open-access platform supporting interdisciplinary dialogue, policy engagement and collaborative research.

Current initiatives

Forthcoming edited volume

Following the 2026 conference, the team has secured a contract to publish *Wellbeing for Learning: Transnational Perspectives on Teachers' Capabilities to Support Student Wellbeing*. This volume will be edited by Mathew White (Routledge, 2027).

Invited American Educational Research Association (AERA) national symposium representing the Australian Association for Research in Education

The Wellbeing for Learning research team of Ruth Aston, Mathew White, Laura Smith and Janet Clinton secured an international symposium at the 2026 AERA meeting. This symposium was then selected for co-sponsorship with AERA Division E (Counseling and Human Development) and the Australian Association for Research in Education (AARE). The symposia combined leading researchers to explore innovative approaches to wellbeing education, research–practice partnerships, teacher readiness, wellbeing literacy and sustainable whole-school implementation. Our discussant was Professor Ronnel B. King, The Chinese University of Hong Kong.

Realising a new vision for wellbeing education: driving impactful professional learning through research–practice partnerships

- Dr Ruth Aston, Adelaide University
  Understanding the success of whole-school wellbeing education approaches: building criteria for implementation and sustainability
- Professor Mathew White, Adelaide University
  Using appreciative inquiry to create a new vision for wellbeing: an industry–university partnership
- Ms Laura Dainton Smith, The University of Melbourne
  Informing a thriving future: understanding teacher readiness to support student mental health and wellbeing.
- Professor Janet M. Clinton, The University of Melbourne
  Constructing a multidimensional hierarchical model of wellbeing literacy: reenvisioning wellbeing education research
- Discussant: Associate Professor Ronnel B. King, The Chinese University of Hong Kong.



Future initiatives

Transnational research collaboration.
Comparative studies across education systems investigating the wellbeing–learning relationship.

Teacher wellbeing and capability studies.
Empirical research on early career teacher retention and the role of wellbeing conditions in professional sustainability.

Policy and governance frameworks.
Translational research connecting evidence to system-level decision-making.

Knowledge mobilisation.
Open-access resources supporting research-informed practice in schools and education systems.

2026 in pictures

Wellbeing for Learning Conference, 19-20 February 2026

380+
registrations across two events

75
schools, five states



Professor Susan James Relly, Dean, School of Education, opens the 2026 conference







Wellbeing for Learning Research Network Founding Scholars. Back row, left to right: Professor Susan James Relly, Dr Ruth Aston, Professor Mathew White, Professor Rebecca Collie. Seated, left to right: Associate Professor Ronnel King, Associate Professor Wan Har Chong, Professor Susan Sawyer AM, Professor Janet Clinton, Professor Jon Quach



Associate Professor Wan Har Chong

Speaker biographies



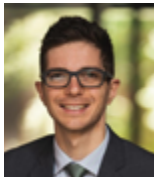
Dr Ruth Aston

Co-Founder and Co-Director, Wellbeing for Learning International Research Network

Senior Lecturer in Education Program Director, Master of Education
Adelaide University

Dr Ruth Aston is a Senior Lecturer in Education and Program Director in Adelaide University's School of Education. She has 15 years of research experience across educational evaluation, health systems and health services research. Her work includes evaluations for government and community organisations, including South Australia's Integrated Demonstration Hubs Initiative.

Previously at the University of Melbourne, she contributed to evaluations of the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers and major Victorian education initiatives. She holds honorary appointments at the University of Melbourne and the Centre for Adolescent Health at the Murdoch Children's Research Institute. Her PhD examined implementation indicators and success criteria for complex school-based public health interventions. Ruth is Co-Founder and Co-Director of the Wellbeing for Learning International Research Network with Professor Mathew White. She completed her PhD at the University of Melbourne.



Professor Russell Brewer

Professor of Criminology

Director, Australian Cybercrime Observatory

School of Society and Culture,
Adelaide University

Professor Russell Brewer's research examines adolescents' digital lives, technology and AI use, online grooming and technology-facilitated harms. Russell's research spans the technological and human dimensions of cybercrime. This work investigates the risk factors driving (cyber)criminal behaviour, while developing AI-driven tools to identify perpetrators and detect emerging trends across large-scale online environments.

His program of work is supported by nationally competitive grants and sustained through strong partnerships with law enforcement, defence and leading industry stakeholders. This research has been published in leading books, academic and trade journals. His PhD is from the Australian National University.

Speaker biographies



Professor Sally Brinkman

Professorial Research Fellow

Director, Fraser Mustard Centre
Adelaide University

Professor Sally Brinkman is a Professorial Research Fellow at Adelaide University and Director of the Fraser Mustard Centre, a research and policy partnership with the South Australian Department for Education. She is an internationally recognised child development researcher whose work focuses on improving children's development, learning and wellbeing, particularly among those experiencing social and economic disadvantage.

Her research bridges epidemiology, education and public policy, combining population-level monitoring, longitudinal data and pragmatic randomised controlled trials to understand developmental inequalities and identify effective, scalable interventions. She has played a leading role in developing and implementing major population measures of child development and wellbeing, including Australia's national early childhood development census (AEDC) and the Wellbeing and Engagement Collection (WEC) in South Australia and Tasmania. Internationally, she has led the development and implementation of the early Human Capability Index (eHCI), now used in more than 15 countries. Working closely with governments and international organisations, including the World Bank, UNICEF and UNESCO, Sally's research spans Australia, Asia, the Pacific, Latin America and the Middle East. Her work is distinguished by its emphasis on translating research into policy and practice to improve outcomes at the population and systems level, particularly in disadvantaged and resource-constrained settings.

With over 200 publications, including in *The Lancet and Nature Medicine*, Sally is widely recognised for her contributions to child development measurement, intervention evaluation and evidence-informed policy. She regularly advises governments and international agencies on strategies to improve children's developmental outcomes. Her PhD is from the University of Western Australia.



Associate Professor Wan Har Chong

National Institute of Education

Nanyang Technological
University, Singapore

Associate Professor Wan Har Chong is based in the Psychology and Child & Human Development Department at the National Institute of Education, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore, where she is Co-Head (Evaluation) at the Centre for Assessment and Evaluation. Her research focuses on student motivation, engagement and wellbeing, particularly among at-risk learners, as well as program evaluation and implementation science.

She has led research on social-emotional learning, rapid-cycle evaluation, inclusive education and early intervention. She co-leads a Singapore Ministry of Education-funded research program comprising five projects examining how positive psychology can strengthen motivation, engagement and wellbeing among low-progress learners. Her contributions to educational research and evaluation have been recognised with NIE's Excellence Award in Research.



Professor Janet Clinton

Professor of Evaluation

Academic Director, Strategic Partnerships
The University of Melbourne

Professor Janet Clinton is Professor of Evaluation and Academic Director, Strategic Partnerships, in the Faculty of Education at the University of Melbourne. An internationally recognised leader in program evaluation, she has led more than 120 national and international evaluation projects across education, health and other fields. The University of Melbourne recognises this as an exceptional record of large-scale evidence generation and policy impact.

Her work includes evaluating the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers, as well as research on teacher effectiveness, evaluative thinking and the implementation of sustainable school wellbeing and mental health initiatives. She is a Chief Investigator on the Australian Research Council projects Game-Changers and Designing Learning Spaces for Diversity, Inclusion and Participation. Her PhD is from the University of Western Australia.

Speaker biographies

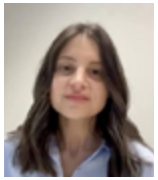


Professor Rebecca J. Collie

Professor of Learning Sciences
Monash University

Professor Rebecca J. Collie is Professor of Learning Sciences at Monash University and Adjunct Professor of Educational Psychology at UNSW Sydney. A former primary school teacher, she researches motivation, wellbeing, and students' and teachers' academic and social-emotional development. Her work examines everyday teaching practices and school conditions that support high-quality learning.

She has secured more than $6 million in research funding, including an Australian Research Council Future Fellowship, and her research has been cited in 130 policy documents, including publications from the OECD and UNESCO. Ranked among the world's top 50 education researchers, she regularly works with schools and writes for practitioners to advance evidence-informed teaching. Her PhD is from the University of British Columbia.



Dr Elisa Di Gregorio

Chair, PhD Poster Sessions

Lecturer, School of Education
Adelaide University

Dr Elisa Di Gregorio is a Lecturer in the School of Education at Adelaide University and a former secondary school teacher. Her research examines educational inequality, school funding policy, school choice and equity funding for marginalised students, including students with disability.

Her work on the politics of inclusion and school funding received the Australian Association for Research in Education's 2024 Postgraduate Researcher Award. At the Wellbeing for Learning Conference 2027, she is Chair of the PhD Poster Sessions, overseeing the review and selection of poster submissions from doctoral candidates and hosting the lunchtime poster viewing. Her PhD is from the University of Melbourne.



Dr Jennifer Dam

Postdoctoral Fellow,
Centre for Adolescent Health
Murdoch Children's Research Institute

Department of Paediatrics
The University of Melbourne

Dr Jennifer Dam is a Postdoctoral Fellow at the Centre for Adolescent Health at the Murdoch Children's Research Institute, where she works to improve adolescent health and wellbeing through evidence-informed policy, practice and systems change. She co-leads the Healthy Learning Systems team, coordinating local and regional initiatives that support whole-school approaches to health promotion and wellbeing in educational settings.

Drawing on the WHO and UNESCO Global Standards for Health-Promoting Schools, her research explores how education systems can create the conditions for school environments that support student wellbeing, learning and educational equity. Working in partnership with stakeholders across the education, health and community sectors, she has particular interests in knowledge translation, systems change and meaningful youth participation in research and policy.

Jennifer also holds an academic appointment in the Department of Paediatrics at the University of Melbourne, where she teaches in the Master of Adolescent Health and Wellbeing program, including subjects focused on systems change and leadership in adolescent health.



Dr Emily Dollman

Head of Music Education and
Co-Graduate Research Coordinator

Elder Conservatorium of Music and School of Performing Arts, Adelaide University

Dr Emily Dollman is the Head of Music Education and Co-Graduate Research Coordinator at the Elder Conservatorium of Music and School of Performing Arts, Adelaide University. Emily is a member of the Board of Directors for the Australian Music Examination Board Ltd, a Council Member for the Australian Society of Music Education (SA & NT), and a member of the Advisory Board for the International Journal of Music Mediation. Emily was a member of the Specialist Advisory Group for the recent AMEB Teaching Syllabus (2023) and was founding Artistic Director of the Open Music Academy (2018–2022).

Emily's key research areas include music and wellbeing, the community engagement and education programs of leading music organisations, and music curriculum development at the tertiary and school level. Her monograph *Opening Doors: Orchestras, Opera Companies and Community Engagement* was published by Routledge in 2023.

Speaker biographies



Professor Patrick Flanery

Chair of Creative Writing, Adelaide University

Director, JM Coetzee Centre for Creative Practice

DPhil, University of Oxford

Patrick Flanery is Professor and Chair of Creative Writing and the current Director of the JM Coetzee Centre for Creative Practice at Adelaide University. He previously held professorships at the University of Reading and Queen Mary University of London. A novelist, critic and scholar, his work explores literary fiction, creative nonfiction, film, memory, identity and the ethics of representation.

He has written four novels: *Absolution* (2012), *Fallen Land* (2013), *I Am No One* (2016) and *Night for Day* (2019). He is also the author of the creative-critical memoir *The Ginger Child: On Family, Loss and Adoption* (2019). Absolution won the Spear's/Laurent Perrier Best First Book Award and was shortlisted for major international literary prizes. His creative work has been supported by fellowships and residencies including the Rockefeller Foundation's Bellagio Center, MacDowell and the Stellenbosch Institute for Advanced Study. He completed his DPhil at the University of Oxford, after studying at New York University and Oxford.



Associate Professor Ronnel B. King

Associate Professor, Department of Curriculum and Instruction, Faculty of Education

The Chinese University of Hong Kong

Associate Professor Ronnel B. King is an Associate Professor in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction, Faculty of Education, at the Chinese University of Hong Kong, where he leads the Positive Psychology and Education Lab. His research examines the factors that underpin motivation, socio-emotional learning and wellbeing, and how positive psychology and positive education interventions can strengthen these optimal states.

Three questions drive his work: what motivates students to learn and engage; what drives teacher and student wellbeing; and how to design interventions that enhance motivation, socio-emotional competencies and wellbeing. He has published more than 250 journal articles in leading educational psychology journals, including *Learning and Instruction, Journal of Educational Psychology, Educational Psychology Review, Educational Psychologist, Contemporary Educational Psychology, Journal of School Psychology* and *British Journal of Educational Psychology*.

He is recognised as one of the most prolific educational psychology researchers in Asia and globally, with citations in the top 0.05% of the field. He is Associate Editor of the *British Journal of Educational Psychology, Psychology in the Schools* and *The Asia-Pacific Education Researcher*. He completed his PhD in Educational Psychology at the University of Hong Kong.



Professor Anne Pender

Kidman Chair of Australian Studies, Adelaide University

Gough Whitlam and Malcolm Fraser Chair of Australian Studies, Harvard University (2027–28)

Professor Anne Pender is Kidman Chair of Australian Studies at Adelaide University and has been appointed Gough Whitlam and Malcolm Fraser Chair of Australian Studies at Harvard University for the 2027–28 academic year. This follows a Fulbright Senior Fellowship at Harvard in 2018. She is a leading scholar of modern and contemporary Australian literature, theatre, biography and comedy, and has held international fellowships at King's College London and the University of Copenhagen.

Her books include *One Man Show, a biography of Barry Humphries*; *Seven Big Australians*; and *The Cost of Comedy and the Future of the Arts in Australia*. She is a Chief Investigator on the Australian Research Council-funded Comedy Country project, exploring Australian performance comedy as an agent of change. A former Director of the JM Coetzee Centre for Creative Practice, she has held Fulbright and National Library of Australia fellowships. Her PhD is from the University of New South Wales.

Speaker biographies



Professor Susan James Relly

Dean, School of Education
College of Education, Behavioural and Social Sciences, Adelaide University

Professor Susan James Relly is the Dean of the School of Education in the College of Education, Behavioural and Social Sciences. Susan's entire career has been in education in various forms: she taught in secondary schools in Australia and England before starting her academic career. She is an Honorary Research Fellow and former Deputy Dean of the Department of Education and Associate Head (Education) of the Social Sciences Division at the University of Oxford.

Her research interests include technical and vocational education and training policy, vocational excellence, apprenticeships, the tertiary landscape and the skills economy. Susan is Deputy Presiding Member of the SACE Board and a Board Director of TAFE SA. Susan completed a Bachelor of Education at Queensland University of Technology (QUT) and read for an MSc in Comparative and International Education and a DPhil in Education at the University of Oxford.



Professor Jon Quach

Professor, School of Learning Sciences
The University of Melbourne

Professor Jon Quach is a professor in the School of Learning Sciences in the Faculty of Education at the University of Melbourne. His research works at the interface of education and health, recognising that children's wellbeing, development and learning are intrinsically linked. He co-designs and evaluates approaches that help preschool and primary schools support student mental health, development and learning.

His work investigates how effective interventions can be adapted and sustained across diverse contexts and how changes in teacher and school practice endure over time. Through collaborative, evidence-informed research, he contributes to educational environments that promote holistic child development. He undertook PhD research in Community Child Health at the Murdoch Children's Research Institute (2007–2010), conducting a randomised controlled trial of a behavioural sleep intervention designed to reduce sleep problems in children commencing school. His PhD is from the University of Melbourne.



Professor Susan Sawyer AM MBBS MD FRACP FAHMS

Geoff and Helen Handbury
Chair of Adolescent Health

The University of Melbourne

Professor Susan M Sawyer AM MBBS MD FRACP FAHMS is an academic paediatrician whose developmental expertise spans childhood, adolescence and young adulthood. Her research, education and advocacy efforts have helped advance the field of adolescent health in Australia, the Asia-Pacific region, and globally.

Susan holds the Geoff and Helen Handbury Chair of Adolescent Health in the Department of Paediatrics at the University of Melbourne. She is director of the Centre for Adolescent Health, a World Health Organization collaborating centre at the Murdoch Children's Research Institute and Royal Children's Hospital. Susan is a member of the eSafety Commissioner's Academic Advisory Committee that is overseeing the evaluation of Australia's social media minimum age restriction. She has a particular interest in schools' role in health and wellbeing.



Professor Mathew White

Dean, International and Engagement, College of Education, Behavioural and Social Sciences

Professor of Education
Adelaide University

Professor Mathew White is Professor of Education and Dean, International and Engagement, in the College of Education, Behavioural and Social Sciences at Adelaide University, and Honorary Principal Fellow in the Faculty of Education at the University of Melbourne. His research examines wellbeing education, positive humanities and whole-school improvement. He has published more than 80 research outputs, including Understanding Wellbeing and Inclusion in Education (Routledge, 2026).

Mathew spent two decades as a secondary teacher of English literature and French, including nine years leading whole-school wellbeing reform. His awards include the University of Adelaide's Stephen Cole the Elder Award and the Australian Council for Educational Leaders' National Leadership Award, Hedley Beare Award for Educational Writing and Distinguished Contribution to Research in Educational Leadership Award.

He is past President of the Education Division of the International Positive Psychology Association, a Fellow of the International Positive Psychology Association, a Fellow of the Australian College of Educators, a Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts and a Senior Fellow of Advance HE (UK). He holds a PhD in Education from the University of Adelaide.

Venue information

Locations

Adelaide University, School of Education,
City Campus East, North Terrace, Adelaide SA 5005

- Thursday 11 February 2027, Free Public Symposium: Elder Hall
- Friday 12 February 2027, Conference: Function Room 1, Union House (UH505)

Registration

Scan the QR code on pp. 6 and 8, or visit:

Thursday FREE Symposium: events.humanitix.com/wellbeing-for-learning-free-public-symposium-thursday-11-february-2027-adelaide-university

Friday Conference: events.humanitix.com/wellbeing-for-learning-conference-friday-12-february-2027-adelaide-university

Conference pricing (per person, AU$)

Ticket	Early Bird (until 18 December 2026)	Standard
Individual	**$259**	**$339**
Group of 3–4	**$249**	**$319**
Group of 5–9	**$239**	**$309**
Group of 10+	**$229**	**$299**

Accessibility

All venues are fully accessible. Please contact EBSS People and Operations at EBSS-PeopleOps@adelaide.edu.au for specific accessibility requirements.

Technology

Wi-Fi access is provided to all attendees. Evening Symposium livestreamed when capacity reached.

Enquiries

Email: EBSS-PeopleOps@adelaide.edu.au

Acknowledgements

Place of Learning

Adelaide University is proud to be the first university in Australia to have provision for an Aboriginal name in its founding legislation and has been bestowed the Kaurna name, Tirkangkaku, meaning Place of Learning.

Traditional Owners Acknowledgement

Adelaide University respectfully acknowledges the Kaurna, Boandik and Barngarla First Nations Peoples and their Elders past and present, who are the First Nations' Traditional Owners of the lands home to our campuses in Adelaide, Magill, Mawson Lakes, Waite, Roseworthy, Mount Gambier and Whyalla.

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QS World University Rankings by Subject 2026, Education and Training: #=63 | Go8 Member

Adelaide University

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