

# 2023 VATE LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE

FRIDAY 5 MAY, RACV CITY, BOURKE ST, MELBOURNE

Join with other experienced and aspiring English department leaders to learn, grapple with and discuss opportunities for empowering students through their learning in the English classroom. At VATE's annual Leadership Conference, hear from a range of presenters as they explore the different ways they are leading departments, supporting colleagues, and inspiring students to embrace change, lean into challenges, and find their voice in English.

## Keynote speaker

### Dr Aleryk Fricker, Deakin University

Dr Aleryk (Al) Fricker is a proud and sovereign Dja Dja Wurrung man. He is a former History, Humanities, English, and junior Maths teacher, and he spent three and a half years in the primary and secondary classroom before leaving the profession. Prior to teaching, he worked for seven years in the print media industry. Currently, Al is a lecturer in the Nikeri Institute at Deakin University and teaches Indigenous Education in the Deakin School of Education for all of their education undergraduate programs. Al's research focus is on ways that the education system can begin to be decolonised to access the oldest teaching and learning techniques and knowledges to support the outcomes of all students regardless of their cultural contexts.



## Keynote address

### Decolonising the English classroom: Practical ways forward

We know that First Nations cultures are the oldest continuous cultures in the world. We also know that we are born into a culture, not with a culture. It stands to reason, then, that First Nations peoples are also the oldest teachers in the world, and have teaching and learning techniques and knowledges that are tried, true and tested, and have allowed us to thrive for tens of thousands of years. This presentation will explore the process of decolonisation in the English classroom for non-Indigenous teachers, that includes curriculum, pedagogy, place and space, policy, and community engagement. It is only through this process that we will allow all students, regardless of their cultural contexts, to access the oldest teaching methods and knowledges in the world and the benefits therein. At the conclusion of this session, teachers will have a tangible way forward to improve their practice in this space.

## Cost and registration

2023 Individual Member \$225 | Organisational Member \$255 | Concession Member \$225

Please [register online here](#) on the VATE website. Email [events@vate.org.au](mailto:events@vate.org.au) with any queries.

## Venue

RACV City Club, 501 Bourke Street, Melbourne. Location and directions available [here](#).

Please [click here](#) to view RACV hygiene guidelines and the most up to date information with regards to COVID-19.

## Program overview

From 8.30am		Registration, tea and coffee
9:30am	Keynote	<b>Decolonising the English classroom: Practical ways forward</b> Dr Aleryk Fricker, Deakin University
10:30am		Morning tea and networking
11:15am	Session 1	<b>1a: Jargon, gunk, and guff: finding leadership clarity in unclear times</b> Dylan Mead, Catherine McCauley College  <b>1b: Sustaining your team: English teachers' workload and wellbeing</b> Hugh Gundlach, Melbourne Graduate School of Education  <b>1c: First Nations content in Units 3 and 4 English: Getting ready for 2024</b> Dr Aleryk Fricker, Deakin University
12.20pm	Session 2	<b>2a: Setting achievable and actionable reading and writing goals</b> Hayley Harrison, Connect Literacy  <b>2b: Navigating challenging and sensitive textual content as an English Faculty</b> Vana Watkins, Geelong Grammar School  <b>2c: Writing with robots</b> Leon Furze, Furze Smith Consulting
1:20pm		Lunch and networking
2:00pm	Session 3	<b>3a: A shared vision and a common language: a whole faculty approach to teaching writing (Years 5 to 12)</b> Michelle Maglitto, Fintona Girls' School  <b>3b: Jump-starting your department meetings: more than booklists and cross marking</b> Joanna Boer, Ruyton Girls' School  <b>3c: Slaying the grammar monster: building teacher knowledge and collective efficacy through instructional leadership</b> Imogen Lazarus, Fitzroy High School
3.00pm		Conference concludes

## Workshop details

### Session 1

#### 1a: Jargon, gunk, and guff: finding leadership clarity in unclear times

We work in an industry filled in equal measures with wisdom and nonsense. In education, trends come and go, evidence mounts or collapses, but through it all subject English remains. So what to do? Do I pull from the 'student centred' basket of evidence, or the 'direct instruction' one? Am I coordinating a department of teachers, or am I coaching a team of educators? Am I leading a transformation, or simply coping with change? For leaders, distilling clarity from this cloudy ambiguity is not easy. This workshop seeks to cut through the dense language surrounding leadership and education in secondary school contexts. Intended for current and aspiring leaders of English, three key themes will be unpacked in order to parse the good from the bad: educational jargon, leadership of people, and leadership of change.

Dylan Mead, Catherine McCauley College

#### 1b: Sustaining your team: English teachers' workload and wellbeing

The global pandemic has only exacerbated the workload of teachers, particularly English teachers who teach all students, have a constantly changing curriculum and texts, and arguably the most time-consuming marking! With a shortage of teachers in Australia due to burnout and other factors, the retention and wellbeing of your team may become an additional responsibility of a Faculty Head in the near future. In this workshop, we will explore individual-, department- and school-level initiatives to promote wellbeing and manage workload, while maintaining or even improving student learning outcomes.

Hugh Gundlach, Melbourne Graduate School of Education

#### 1c: First Nations content in Units 3 and 4 English: Getting ready for 2024

This workshop will explore the new VCE English Study Design scheduled to be implemented in 2024. Importantly, this new Study Design requires teachers and students to engage with texts authored by First Nations authors. This presentation will explore the four framework ideas and how First Nations concepts, and in turn, texts could be incorporated to reflect and explore these ideas. This workshop will also explore the First Nations texts that are on the list provide some insight for teachers preparing for the new Study Design.

Dr Aleryk Fricker, Deakin University

### Session 2

#### 2a: Setting achievable and actionable reading and writing goals

Knowing what gaps, areas for improvement or places for extension in student reading and writing can be complex as there are so many factors at play. Even when you work out what their needs might be, providing strategies for students to independently work towards these goals becomes even more torturous! But this is exactly what English teachers should be doing everyday: identifying points of teaching and learning and scaffolding skill development. In this workshop we will look at how to diagnose some common reading and writing gaps, confusions and points of extension and how to set reading and writing goals that specify these areas and provide students with actionable strategies. Be prepared to walk away with resources to share with your team around reading and writing conferences that identify and scaffold student skill development most effectively.

Hayley Harrison, Connect Literacy

#### 2b: Navigating challenging and sensitive textual content as an English Faculty

English teaching and the content we put before our students is subject to intense scrutiny from a variety of stakeholders. This workshop presents a range of strategies for engaging with sensitive textual content in a way that is proactive, collaborative and trauma-informed. The presenter will share protocols for bringing students safely into and out of sensitive texts. This workshop will cover strategies for enhancing teachers' cultural competence and confidence in engaging with sensitive texts, and a bespoke process for documenting textual content that can be shared with colleagues in pastoral roles, in order to enable communication and collaboration without breaching student confidentiality.

Vana Watkins, Geelong Grammar School

#### 2c: Writing with robots

With the release of ChatGPT in late 2022, Artificial Intelligence hit the mainstream. Large language models like GPT can produce human-level text in a vast range of styles and voices. In the media, we saw a wave of panic over the use of these technologies for cheating, with some going as far as suggesting we'd seen the 'end of high school English'. Half of the battle with AI is cutting through the myths and magic to get to the truth of the technology. This workshop will explore the realities of AI in English, from ethical concerns and limitations, through to approaches which could revolutionise how we teach.

Leon Furze, Furze Smith Consulting

## Workshop details

### Session 3

#### **3a: A shared vision and a common language: a whole faculty approach to teaching writing (Years 5 to 12)**

With a renewed focus on writing in the Australian Curriculum 9.0 and the VCE English and EAL VCAA Study Designs (Crafting Texts units of study), a need to refocus our attention on teaching writing from Years 5 to 12 was established. Creative writing is something that has always been valued at Fintona but over the last four years, we found due to time constraints and a focus on expository/analytical writing, that our emphasis shifted from supporting students with their creative writing. As such, in 2022 and 2023 we have implemented specific teaching strategies and reimaged our curriculum from Years 5 to 12 to ensure we share a vision and a common approach to teaching and supporting students with their creative writing. This workshop focuses on the process and strategies we have implemented to enact this renewed focus on the craft of writing.

**Michelle Maglitto**, Fintona Girls' School

#### **3b: Jump-starting your department meetings: more than booklists and cross marking**

How can we prompt engaged, thoughtful reflective collaboration in meeting times that seem positioned to tip teachers over the edge? Sweet treats are not the only answer! This workshop is designed to support Learning Leaders/Heads of Faculty in English departments in making their meetings purposeful and productive, with a focus on how to manage the demands of administrative and operational workloads that can threaten the opportunities for true collaboration in meeting times. Participants will come away from this workshop with a clear sense of how to construct an effective agenda and how to manage some of the challenges that can threaten effective meetings, with an appreciation of this for an English teaching specific context, and some practical suggestions about how to alleviate and respond to these pressures.

**Joanna Boer**, Ruyton Girls' School

#### **3c: Slaying the grammar monster: building teacher knowledge and collective efficacy through instructional leadership**

We are asked to teach grammar, but few of us were actually taught the nuts and bolts of language during our own time at secondary school. This workshop will explore how English and Literacy leaders can create a space in which 'not knowing' is okay and in which teachers work together to build knowledge about language. The workshop will outline the tools at our disposal to increase teacher knowledge, improve student outcomes, and enhance collective efficacy. This will include discussion about building professional trust, team teaching, using data, and facilitating professional learning.

**Imogen Lazarus**, Fitzroy High School