

DEMANDING SPACE: ARCHITECTS OF CHANGE

STATE CONFERENCE:
20-21 NOVEMBER
2025

SPONSORS AND SUPPORTERS

Silver Sponsors

VATE acknowledges with thanks the generous support of the Silver Sponsors of this year's VATE State Conference.



The global leader in digital literacy and creativity.



ANZUK Education is committed to connecting high-quality educators with rewarding education jobs in classrooms and centres Australia-wide and globally.



Complete Works is an important creative component of the Victorian English and Arts curriculum, developing and touring live theatre and digital resources for secondary students.



The Melbourne Public Humanities Initiative at The University of Melbourne is a new place for applying specialist knowledge and approaches to a world tackling a crisis of humanity.

Official Conference Bookseller

[The Chestnut Tree Bookshop](#)

Join The Chestnut Tree teacher's newsletter

The teacher's newsletter is sent out each term and details relevant new releases and resources, plus includes invitations to exclusive teachers' and educators' events. Sign up [here](#)!



Teacher Inclusion Scholarship

VATE acknowledges and thanks VATE members and friends, including the following, who have generously donated payment for work they have undertaken for VATE either in 2024 or 2025.

Madeleine Coulombe, Faye Crossman, Andrew Duval, Leon Furze, Karen Graham, Karen Lynch, Howie Manns (Monash University), Amanda McGraw (Federation University), Luci Pangrazio (Deakin University), Carlo Perrotta (The University of Melbourne), Steven Roberts (Monash University)

The Teacher Inclusion Scholarship ensures that the annual VATE State Conference is accessible to as many English teachers as possible. This scholarship directly supports the English teaching community. To recognise and facilitate equity of access, VATE will prioritise members who identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, work with students from disadvantaged or low ICSEA backgrounds, and/or teach in rural and regional areas of Victoria.

CONTENTS

Sponsors and Supporters.....	2	Going Green: The greening of VATE Events.....	11	Accommodation options.....	63
Conference Schedule.....	6	Giving back: Supporting our wider community.....	13	Caterers.....	63
Conference Theme.....	7	Registration costs.....	15	Code of conduct.....	63
Teaching First Nations Perspectives.....	8	About VATE.....	61	Planning your trip to Deakin University.....	64
Acknowledgement of Country.....	9				

Thursday 20 November

Keynote

Matthew Keynes.....	17
---------------------	----

Guest speakers

GS1: Esther Anatolitis.....	18
GS2: Fiona Longmuir.....	19

Writers talk writing

WTW1: Melanie Cheng.....	20
WTW2: Sam Elkin.....	21
WTW3: Jes Layton.....	22

Session One workshops

TW1.01: Delivering a literacy block in a secondary setting LIVESTREAM	24
TW1.02: Flipping the formative LIVESTREAM	24
TW1.03: Stop teaching TEEL LIVESTREAM	24
TW1.04: Advocate or disappear: Writing characters who fight for themselves.....	24
TW1.05: Becoming AI-proof: Embracing our humanity in an age of change.....	25
TW1.06: Glimmers of opportunities in anti-racist education.....	25
TW1.07: Integrating digital literary studies into English education.....	25

TW1.08:

Language as power: Critical literacy for social justice.....	25
--	----

TW1.09:

Podcast potential.....	25
------------------------	----

TW1.10:

Teaching readers and reading.....	26
-----------------------------------	----

TW1.11:

The latent potential of the unassessed text.....	26
--	----

TW1.12:

The road (between us) is long.....	26
------------------------------------	----

Session Two workshops

TW2.01: Demanding space for literacy in the English classroom LIVESTREAM	27
TW2.02: The library unleashed: How we did away with text censorship LIVESTREAM	27
TW2.03: To discuss or direct, that is the question LIVESTREAM	27
TW2.04: Beyond the margins: Centring student voices in the English curriculum.....	27
TW2.05: Brainrot to bathos: Group poetry games to transform student attitudes towards writing.....	27

TW2.06:

Designing responsive English classrooms with full participation and retrieval practice.....	28
---	----

TW2.07:

From margin to centre: Using memoir and short stories to build student voice.....	28
---	----

TW2.08:

Improvisational ACs: Moving away from the formulaic in VCE English Language.....	28
--	----

TW2.09:

Mindset in motion: Routines that shape analytical learners.....	28
---	----

TW2.10:

Resisting change: The need for English teachers to embrace their inner luddite.....	28
---	----

TW2.11:

Restructuring the English classroom to be more inclusive for students with ADHD.....	28
--	----

TW2.12:

Unsettling the page: Writing as anti-colonial learning.....	29
---	----

Session Three workshops

TW3.01:

'But Miss – I saw it on TikTok!' The crucial role of the English teacher in readers' advisory **LIVESTREAM** 30

TW3.02:

Designing critical conversations about texts: Joint construction in the English classroom **LIVESTREAM** 30

TW3.03:

The eye of the storm: Empowering students for the VCE English exam **LIVESTREAM** 30

TW3.04:

Beyond the attic: AI-powered journeys through Jane Eyre 30

TW3.05:

English Language for Literature teachers: How to crack the linguistics code 30

TW3.06:

Ensuring a safe supportive learning environment for students 30

TW3.07:

How Greek is your English? The ancient cornerstones of literary analysis 31

TW3.08:

Stretch and shape: Teaching syntax to support writing voice and control 31

TW3.09:

The power of truth: Creating meaningful social justice through literature 31

TW3.10:

'Unruly language': Critical conversations about AI 32

TW3.11:

Weaving traditional and evolving literacies for 21st century learners 32

Livestream workshops

Session One

TW1.01:

Delivering a literacy block in a secondary setting **LIVESTREAM** 34

TW1.02:

Flipping the formative **LIVESTREAM** 34

TW1.03:

Stop teaching TEEL **LIVESTREAM** 34

Livestream workshops

Session Two

TW2.01:

Demanding space for literacy in the English classroom **LIVESTREAM** 35

TW2.02:

The library unleashed: How we did away with text censorship **LIVESTREAM** 35

TW2.03:

To discuss or direct, that is the question **LIVESTREAM** 35

Livestream workshops

Session Three

TW3.01:

'But Miss – I saw it on TikTok!' The crucial role of the English teacher in readers' advisory **LIVESTREAM** 36

TW3.02:

Designing critical conversations about texts: Joint construction in the English classroom **LIVESTREAM** 36

TW3.03:

The eye of the storm: Empowering students for the VCE English exam **LIVESTREAM** 36

Friday 21 November

Keynote

Tanya Notley 38

Panels

P1: What matters to you as an English teacher? 39

Amanda McGraw 39

Allie Baker 40

Kate Blandford 40

Graham Parr 41

P2: Avenues of advocacy: 'Selfie yachts', forums and social media The political activism of young people 42

Terry Hayes 42

Jules Arpula 43

Pablo Brait 43

Anhaar Kareem 43

Alix Livingstone 44

P3: A place at the table: Literature and representation in the English classroom 45

Karys McEwen 45

Ange Crawford 46

Michael Earp 46

Session One workshops

FW1.01:

Beyond the text: Skills-focused English teaching for sustainable practice **LIVESTREAM** 48

FW1.02:

Critical digital authorship: Ethics, identity and the English teacher **LIVESTREAM** 48

FW1.03:

The missing link: Phonics as a foundation for secondary students **LIVESTREAM** 48

FW1.04:

Connecting identity to voice in an EAL classroom 48

FW1.05:

Diverse text selection practices and LGBTQIA+ representation 48

FW1.06:

Feminist pedagogies for implementing Respectful Relationships Education in English 49

FW1.07:
Film in the English classroom:
Tools for confident teaching 49

FW1.08:
Knock-down, rebuild
and building from scratch:
Working to develop
English faculties 49

FW1.09:
Refocusing the reading lens 49

FW1.10:
Regulation, routines and rigour:
Enhancing agency in the
English classroom 49

FW1.11:
The world of fiction in
short stories: From Stephen
King to Shirley Jackson 49

FW1.12:
Voices of Country at NGV:
Enriching VCE Literature
through First Nations art 50

Session Two workshops

FW2.01:
Assessing the text
response essay **LIVESTREAM** 51

FW2.02:
Building consistent VCE
English assessing **LIVESTREAM** 51

FW2.03:
Syntax isn't scary: Teaching
beyond the right way to write
LIVESTREAM 51

FW2.04:
Back to the drawing board:
A case study of how one
school is managing the
English teacher shortage 51

FW2.05:
Creating space for students to
explore identity through text 51

FW2.06:
From data to dignity:
High-impact literacy for
every learner 52

FW2.07:
In defence of the novel:
The importance of sustained
reading in an age of distraction 52

FW2.08:
Love letter to Country:
Embedding connection
through writing 52

FW2.09:
Mutual feedback
model for writing 52

FW2.10:
Power of play:
Strategies for interactivity,
experimentation and joy 52

FW2.11:
Reading rebels: The power
of banned books 53

FW2.12:
Reclaiming the page: Teaching
for voice, power and joy 53

FW2.13:
Speaking with robots:
Reasserting the purpose
of writing in the age of AI 53

Session three workshops

FW3.01:
Activating critical thinking
LIVESTREAM 54

FW3.02:
Fighting dystopian data:
Infrastructure to support
English teachers in the
NAPLAN age **LIVESTREAM** 54

FW3.03:
Practical strategies to
embed First Nations literature
in Years 7 -10 **LIVESTREAM** 54

FW3.04:
A helpful guide to teaching
narrative texts 54

FW3.05:
Blueprints for reflective
writing in the classroom 54

FW3.06:
Bring stories to life
with Adobe Express 55

FW3.07:
Crafting texts: Transitions
from Year 10 to VCE 55

FW3.08:
Creating elective subjects
that engender change 55

FW3.09:
Cultivating the skills and 'habit
of mind' for literary analysis 55

FW3.10:
'Difficult' texts: What are they
and how might we teach them? 56

FW3.11:
Making space for more
voices: Text selection and
representation 56

FW3.12:
Writing the self, thinking the
world: Teaching auto-theory 56

Livestream workshops Session One

FW1.01:
Beyond the text: Skills-focused
English teaching for sustainable
practice **LIVESTREAM** 57

FW1.02:
Critical digital authorship:
Ethics, identity and the
English teacher **LIVESTREAM** 57

FW1.03:
The missing link: Phonics as
a foundation for secondary
students **LIVESTREAM** 57

Livestream workshops Session Two

TW2.01:
Assessing the text
response essay **LIVESTREAM** 58

FW2.02:
Building consistent VCE
English assessing **LIVESTREAM** 58

FW2.03:
Syntax isn't scary: Teaching
beyond the right way to
write **LIVESTREAM** 58

Livestream workshops Session Three

FW3.01:
Activating critical thinking
LIVESTREAM 59

FW3.02:
Fighting dystopian data:
Infrastructure to support
English teachers in the
NAPLAN age **LIVESTREAM** 59

FW3.03:
Practical strategies to
embed First Nations literature
in Years 7 -10 **LIVESTREAM** 59

CONFERENCE SCHEDULE

DAY ONE: THURSDAY 20 NOVEMBER

9.00 – 9.15am	Welcome to Country President's welcome
9.15 – 10.15am	Keynote Matthew Keynes
10.15 – 10.25am	Changeover
10.25 – 11.25am	Workshops (F2F / Livestream) TW1 WTW1: Melanie Cheng
11.25 – 11.50am	Morning tea
11.50am – 12.40pm	Guest speakers GS1: Esther Anatolitis GS2: Fiona Longmuir
12.40 – 12.50pm	Changeover
12.50 – 1.50pm	Workshops (F2F / Livestream) TW2 WTW2: Sam Elkin
1.50 – 2.40pm	Lunch
2.40 – 3.40pm	Workshops (F2F / Livestream) TW3 WTW3: Jes Layton
3.40 – 4.30pm	VATE Village Conference gathering

DAY TWO: FRIDAY 21 NOVEMBER

9.00 – 10.00am	Keynote Tanya Notley
10.00 – 10.10am	Changeover
10.10 – 11.10am	Workshops (F2F / Livestream) FW1
11.10 – 11.35am	Morning tea
11.35am – 12.35pm	Panels P1: Research Dialogue P2: Avenues of advocacy P3: A place at the table
12.35 – 12.45pm	Changeover
12.45 – 1.45pm	Workshops (F2F / Livestream) FW2
1.45 – 2.35pm	Lunch
2.35 – 3.35pm	Workshops (F2F / Livestream) FW3

Due to unforeseen circumstances, VATE will occasionally have to alter the program or workshops. On the day cancellations will be communicated to delegates. VATE will not accept liability for damages of any nature sustained by participants or their accompanying persons, for loss or damage to their personal property as a result of the conference or related events. The opinions expressed at the conference are those of the presenter and do not necessarily reflect the views of VATE.

DEMANDING SPACE: ARCHITECTS OF CHANGE

The VATE State Conference in 2025 asserts the active role of language and of English teachers to advocate, uncompromisingly, for our profession as we fulfil and explore our responsibilities to our students, inspiring, confronting, challenging and unsettling them. The tense is continuous, enacting our ongoing and persistent commitment. The verb puns into an adjective, creating a relationship both fraught and mutually active and responsive. Physical and metaphysical space offers endless yet daunting possibilities which reject the mundanity and narrowness exemplified by such fads as generic lesson plans in favour of the actions of building, creating, and redesigning our pedagogical infrastructure so that 'every classroom must function as a space that can support advocacy for and with the ingenuity of young people.'

Boundless space offers boundless possibilities; it offers untrammelled creation of language and relationships, with a place at the table for all. We are all spacefarers, all subject to 'the restless spirit of endeavour', all building a 'language adequate to the spectacle'.

From the 'everyday advocacy' of the classroom teacher, to the position of the English teacher in the school, to our place in the broad community and cultural space, to wider political expression, we create a fertile self-sustaining, above all safe (thus, open to risk-taking and rebellion) space, ambitious for our students and our subject. By speaking in the active voice, we claim autonomy; we value agency; like Audre Lorde, we 'shift language into action'. Just as the vision of outer space allows for the relative positions of the universe to be apprehended, our 'demanding space' is inclusive and interconnected, all stories heard.

In 1991 Garth Boomer said that English teachers are 'being asked to produce resilient, flexible, adaptable, communicative, enterprising, inventive and cooperative thinkers'. In 2025, we can add to this list, as our advocacy models, enables and equips our students to advocate, finding their own voices, turning the noun into a verb. 'The public narrative surrounding teachers is too often dismissive, demeaning, and just plain wrong.' Similarly, Mockler deplores the 'messages of contempt toward

teachers while also rendering their work simple and denying its complexity. All of which undermines teacher professionalism, normalising these attitudes for their readers.' The title of Boomer's address, *Pragmatism, Radicalism and Idealism in English Teaching – On Resistance*, speaks to us today. Faced with the hypernormalisation of political dysfunction and personal powerlessness, it is crucial to resist, to speak, to act, to defeat the 'ignorant armies [which] clash by night', but instead 'To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield'.

Lorde argues that silence is a form of violence; VATE 2025 is, like Prospero's island, 'full of noise', impossible to ignore. VATE's voice is a weapon of empowerment, hope and imagination, exemplified in Barrina South's poem, 'white margins':

from white margins

Blak words demand

space

each word, paragraph, sentence

uncovers

locates

place



TEACHING FIRST NATIONS PERSPECTIVES

Professional Learning Stream

The **Teaching First Nations Perspectives** program is designed to support English teachers to build their own Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural competency in order to provide their students with accurate, informed and culturally responsive context, knowledge, skills, language and pedagogies. The **Teaching First Nations Perspectives** program has delivered 10 on-demand videos with First Nations academics, authors, and commentators and complementary teaching resources that have been inspired by the 8 Aboriginal Ways of Learning pedagogy framework.

An additional component of the **Teaching First Nations Perspectives** program is to subsidise **15 English teachers** from around Victoria to attend a day of curated professional learning taking place during VATE's annual State Conference on Thursday 20 November 2025. Participants will attend a day of learning that is responsive and proactive in assisting with the implementation of teaching of First Nations perspectives in the English classroom. Participants will hear from teachers who have facilitated a year-long inquiry into First Nations literature, knowledges and ways of learning as part of the VATE Fellowship. These teachers will share the results of their inquiries in their context. The day will be facilitated by Associate Professor Amanda McGraw and Emma Jenkins, critical friends to the VATE Fellowship.

There is no cost to be involved in the program, however, school principals must give formal approval for participation and support applicants' involvement in the program by providing release from school on **Thursday 20 November 2025**. Applicants must be VATE members and be willing and able to meet certain conditions of participation in the program, including completing pre- and post-event tasks. (NB: Participants can register for the second day of the State Conference at a discounted rate.)

Expression of interest

VATE is interested in hearing from members who are committed to Makarrata, truth-telling and listening, and using their privilege as an English teacher to promote reconciliation and champion a version of English education that is critical and creative and grounded in promoting inclusivity and equity. VATE welcomes applications from teachers who work with students who identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander, students from disadvantaged or low ICSEA backgrounds, students from rural or regional areas of Victoria, and students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

Please submit a 200 – 400 word reflection that responds to the following prompts:

- Your name, school and school's location
- Discuss your teaching and learning journey with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories, cultures and stories (this may include your own reconciliation journey)
- In what ways are you adopting a strengths-based approach to the sharing of histories, cultures and stories of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples?

Completed expressions of interest should be submitted to education@vate.org.au by **12pm on Friday 19 September 2025**. Successful applicants will be informed by Monday 29 September.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

VATE

VATE acknowledges the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung people of the Kulin Nation as the Traditional Custodians of the lands on which the VATE office is situated.

We pay our respects to Elders from all nations – and to their Ancestors and Elders past and present. We recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the first storytellers; and that knowledge transfer through storytelling is woven into the fabric of this Country.

We acknowledge all First Nations peoples who make contributions to teaching and learning communities. VATE is committed to working towards Makarrata and truth-telling – we strive to use language that recognises First Nations peoples' continuing connection to land, waters, and cultures.

We believe a better tomorrow is possible and VATE pledges our unwavering support to the First People's Treaty process in Victoria.

Deakin

We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the unceded lands and waterways on which Deakin University does business. We pay our deep respect to the Ancestors and Elders of Wadawurrung Country, Eastern Maar Country and Wurundjeri Country where our physical campuses are located. We also acknowledge all First Nations Peoples that make contributions to our learning communities.



VATE Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Language and Terminology Guide

VATE Council continues the important journey of truth-telling and reconciliation. Understanding that using respectful and inclusive language is an essential part of reconciliation, VATE commissioned Darby Jones to write the VATE Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Language and Terminology Guide which will inform our work and that of our writers and presenters. We encourage members to use this resource to build knowledge and awareness and guide your language choices in your teaching and learning. VATE members can access the guide on the website [here](#).



Darby Jones, Writer

Darby is a freelance writer and editor with matrilineal ties to the Kamilaroi mob in Southwest Queensland. He is an alumnus of the State Library of Queensland's black&write! Indigenous Writing and Editing Project. He has collaborated with several organisations across Australia, including *Griffith Review Literary Journal*, University of Queensland Press, Penguin Random House, Hachette Australia, *Kill Your Darlings*, Queensland Art Gallery, Reading Australia, Victorian Association for the Teaching of English, and the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies. As an advocate for diverse representation in literature, Darby has dedicated his career to amplifying the voices of marginalised peoples.

Deanne Gilson, Artist

Dr Deanne Gilson is a Proud Wadawurrung woman living on her ancestral Country of Ballarat in Victoria. Gilson works in many mediums including painting, clay (sculptural installation), fashion, textile and jewellery design, photography and drawing. Wadawurrung culture is celebrated through art as a living and continued knowledge of story-telling, ceremonial practices and by reviving traditional Victorian marks used by ancestors. Often depictions of Indigenous healing, food and medicine plants are painted in baskets made by family, alongside trees and birds taken from her Creation Story. Some species including birds and plants are highlighted to show the need for future generations to care for Country. Gilson's artwork is held in many public and private collections, including the National Gallery of Victoria, The Koorie Heritage Trust and the National Wool Museum.

2026 MEMBERSHIP

9000+ reasons to join



When you join VATE, you join a dynamic 9000+ strong community of English educators across the state. Through networks, professional learning, research, journals, and other resources, VATE strives to nurture a community committed to the advancement of the profession.

VATE exists to support its members in the continual process of renewal necessary to engage with the dynamic nature of both the profession and subject English.

Have your voice heard

VATE represents members on statewide and national education and curriculum panels and reference groups and seeks input from members to ensure that the voices of English teachers are heard. VATE plays a crucial role in advocating on behalf of its diverse membership.

Belong to AATE

VATE members also belong to AATE (Australian Association for the Teaching of English). AATE is a national professional association established and supported by state and territory English teaching associations.

Free digital subscription to VATE and AATE member journals

All members have digital access to two annual editions and past copies of the VATE journal, Idiom, and the AATE journal, Australian Journal of English Education.

Professional Learning

In an ever-changing educational landscape, attending a VATE professional learning event allows English educators a shared space to focus and reflect on their professional identity and practice, develop their pedagogical and disciplinary knowledge, and engage with questions and conversations within and beyond the classroom walls. Members leave with a strong sense of community and shared purpose, as well as strategies and ideas to inspire and rejuvenate their teaching. You will receive regular updates about VATE Professional Learning activities throughout the year.

Join online Networks

Join VATE's vibrant and active member-driven online Networks, including: VCE English; VCE EAL; VCE English Language; VCE Literature; Middle Years, and Vocational Major – Literacy. Members regularly correspond with questions and discussion, share resources and ideas for assessment, lesson planning and text selection.

VATE podcast: YA Book Stack

Listen to YA Book Stack, hosted by Karys McEwen, for interviews with new and diverse YA authors, including ways of using these texts in the English classroom.

Research/ing English

VATE's focus on research supports members to actively engage in inquiry and dialogue related to issues of contention and contextual concern. The research program includes the Research Snapshot, Discussion Paper, Dialogue Seminar and Longview Essay.

Online resources

Online access to a range of resources including Middle Ground, research, suggested text lists, and VATE's You Can Teach That: Teaching First Nations Perspectives series.

Regular communication

VATE's regular emails keep all members up-to-date with what's happening in the profession, including information about professional learning, teaching resources, news from partner organisations.

Get involved

There are many ways to get involved with the work of VATE. Present at one of our conferences, contribute to Idiom, write a book review, join one of our Working Parties, apply for a scholarship, respond to our surveys, and contribute to research.



VICTORIAN ASSOCIATION FOR THE TEACHING OF ENGLISH

GOING GREEN: THE GREENING OF VATE EVENTS

Climate change is real

To respond to the challenges of climate change, we need to address our individual, collective and systemic responsibilities.

At VATE we are committed to developing environmentally sustainable practices in order to minimise our carbon footprint at all VATE events. The key actions being undertaken are:

Minimising waste

This will be done through the reduction of waste such as no single serving containers and recycling (where possible) at each event.

Distribution of event material

We are committed to using paperless technology as much as possible and this includes the distribution of speakers' presentations and event information. We encourage our exhibitors and sponsors to distribute their promotional material in a paperless manner and/or on recycled paper where possible. VATE will not be distributing any paper flyers at the State Conference.

Conference satchels

Conference satchels with promotional flyers will not be available. Delegates are encouraged to bring their own bag.

Transport to the venue

To reduce carbon emissions, we encourage all participants to find the most environmentally friendly way to travel to the venue. This may include taking public transportation, sharing a car, riding a bike, or walking.

We look forward to you joining us on this journey.

MEMBER TEXT SURVEY 2025

Each year VATE surveys its member community about the texts currently being studied in Years 7–11 English, English as an Additional Language (EAL), and Literature. The list of texts is compiled and made available to VATE members, providing a snapshot of the texts being studied in Victorian secondary schools across sectors and regions.

Members are also invited to respond to survey questions on a topic related to the selection and study of texts in secondary English. We hope you find this information useful in planning your wide reading programs and finding ways to encourage and inspire your students to read. Read this year's [Text Survey](#).

All Text Surveys (2010–2025) are also available to members in Member Resources, in select editions of [Idiom](#), or by contacting the VATE office: publications@vate.org.au



We are Djirra

Djirra is an Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation with over 20 years' experience accompanying Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, and their children, on their individual journeys. We find solutions through women sharing their stories, journeys, and experiences. Djirra celebrates women's strength and resilience.

We are committed to a future without family violence.

Djirra offers services and supports to:

- people who identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander
- Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people who have experienced, or are at risk of, family violence

We deliver holistic, culturally safe, specialist family violence services and programs, including:

- cultural, wellbeing and personal development workshops and practical support through our Koori Women's Place and signature early intervention and prevention programs Sisters Day Out, Young Luv and Dilly Bag
- support and case management services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and their children
- legal assistance with intervention orders, child protection, family law and victims of crime matters for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people experiencing or at risk of family violence
- workshops, support and legal assistance for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women in prison

Donate to Djirra today



Amplify Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women's voices by donating via this code:



Sharing stories, finding solutions



To find out more visit our website

GIVING BACK: SUPPORTING OUR WIDER COMMUNITY

VATE is a not-for-profit subject association committed to a vision of subject English that is equitable, inclusive, robust, creative, responsive, and critical. Through collaboration and community, VATE serves its members and their students from all sectors and regions across the state of Victoria.

VATE is an important place of connection and community.

To reflect our commitment to sustainability and social solidarity, VATE no longer purchases delegate and presenter gifts and instead donates these funds to charities. We see this as an important act in supporting our wider community and reflects our responsibility to 'going green' and our core values of equity, inclusion, and social engagement.

We look forward to you joining us on this journey of connecting to community.

In 2025 VATE will be donating funds to the following two organisations: Djirra and Murray Art Museum Albury.



Djirra

Djirra is a specialist Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation in Victoria with over 23 years' experience accompanying Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, and their children, on their individual journeys.

Djirra finds solutions through Aboriginal women sharing their stories, journeys, and experiences. Djirra celebrates women's strength and resilience and is committed to a future without family violence.

Djirra offers statewide services and supports to Aboriginal people who have experienced, or are at risk of, family violence.

Aboriginal women's self-determination is Djirra's foundation.



Murray Art Museum Albury

MAMA is a vibrant contemporary art museum in regional NSW, just 3.5 hours from Melbourne. We present exhibitions that celebrate First Nations and contemporary art, and proudly host the prestigious National Photography Prize.

With a strong commitment to accessibility and learning, MAMA offers tours and activities that connect students and educators with artists, ideas, and the rich world of contemporary art. We invite all visitors to explore, learn, and connect through art in the heart of Albury.



MAMA

MAMA is a vibrant contemporary art museum in regional NSW, just 3.5 hours from Melbourne. We present exhibitions that celebrate First Nations and contemporary art, and proudly host the prestigious National Photography Prize.

With a strong commitment to accessibility and learning, MAMA offers tours and activities that connect students and educators with artists, ideas, and the rich world of contemporary art.

We invite all visitors to explore, learn, and connect through art in the heart of Albury.

MURRAY ART MUSEUM ALBURY



We are on Wiradjuri Country
546 Dean Street
Albury NSW 2640

mamalbury.com.au
[@mamalbury](https://www.instagram.com/mamalbury)

Weekdays: 10am - 5pm
Weekends: 10am - 5pm
Public Holidays: 10am - 4pm

FREE ENTRY

REGISTRATION COSTS

2025 Conference at 2024 prices!

One day registration

\$270

VATE concession member

\$290

VATE individual member

\$310

VATE organisational member*

Two day registration

\$405

VATE concession member

\$435

VATE individual member

\$465

VATE organisational member*

Please note: *Organisational member rates are per single staff member. If you or your school faces financial barriers that make attending this conference difficult, please contact [Kate Gillespie](#) to discuss options.

Livestream registration

This year's State Conference will be a hybrid event. We will be running eighteen workshops, as well as all keynotes, guest speakers and panels live via Zoom. Delegates wishing to register for the livestream component of the conference can do so through a separate [livestream registration portal](#). You will be able to select your preferences for the workshops that you would like to stream live. Livestream delegates will also get access to the recordings for all streamed sessions (subject to recording quality).



MIDDLE GROUND

The purpose of VATE's **Middle Ground** publication is to provide middle years' teachers (Years 7–10) with access to activities and lesson sequences that can assist with the teaching of English concepts, skills, knowledge, and ideas.

Each edition of **Middle Ground** is mapped to the Victorian and Australian curricula and is supported by materials including professional reading, media articles, audio visual material, as well as tables, handouts and worksheets.

The series title, **Middle Ground**, is designed to represent a focus on teaching the ideas, skills, concepts, and knowledge of English for fun and in connection with the lives and experiences of middle years students.

Middle Ground is free for all current VATE members. Available editions in 2025 include:

- Put engaging learning back in motion: A Year 7 English stop motion unit
- Poetic landscapes: Exploring local environments through poetry
- Ghostbusters: Why myths matter
- Slinging slang in the classroom
- Who's afraid of the patriarchy? Feminist ideas, texts and representations

DAY
ONE: THURSDAY
20 NOVEMBER



KEYNOTE

9.00 – 10.15AM



Matthew Keynes

Dr Matthew R. Keynes is a non-Indigenous historian, and Senior Research Fellow in the Faculty of Education at The University of Melbourne. Matthew is currently leading an international project on truth commissions, exploring how educators in Australia and the Nordic states

are engaging with truth-telling. His books include the monograph *Education and Historical Justice: Redress, Reparations and Reconciliation in the Classroom* (Bloomsbury, 2025) and *Historical Justice and History Education* (Palgrave, 2021).

‘A Twilight of Knowing’: Education and truth-telling in a post-truth era

How do we engage in truth-telling in a ‘post-truth’ society? Amidst rising backlash and denialism, how can educators navigate truth-telling in their classrooms and communities? Drawing from his global and local research, Matthew will explore the relationship of education and truth-telling; discuss teachers’ vital role in truth-telling, and related processes of treaty-making, reconciliation and self-determination. Connections between education and truth-telling are frequently invoked, including here in Victoria in recommendations made by the landmark Yoorrook Justice Commission. All eyes are now on how the unfolding

Treaty process – the first of its kind nationally – might influence educational reform. Australians of all ages identify school education as one of the most significant barriers to truth-telling and social change, and little is known about how school education can support truth-telling. Truth, in a settler society, remains a fickle thing. As historian Anna Haebich has argued, the Australian public drifts ‘in a twilight of knowing’ about the impacts of colonisation on First Nations people. How might educators engage in truth-telling, combat denialism and post-truth politics, and navigate the ethical challenges posed by truth-telling in the classroom?

GUEST SPEAKERS

GS1 / 11.50AM – 12.40PM



Esther Anatolitis

Esther Anatolitis works venturously across the cultural and civic fields that create Australia's future. As Editor of *Meanjin*, Hon A/Prof at RMIT School of Art, and a member of the National Gallery of Australia Governing Council, she is a highly respected champion of artists' voices. Across two decades, Esther has held arts and media leadership positions across all platforms and artforms. She has served many government policy bodies and arts boards, presented guest lectures all

over Australia, and is a former board member of the National Advocates for Arts Education. Her strategic consultancy *Test Pattern* honours the values of art, tenacity and democracy, working across Australia on strategic development, creative precincts and public policy. A prolific writer and broadcaster, Esther's work is published and translated widely, and she is a sought-after speaker and commentator on arts and civic matters.

Photo credit: Sarah Walker

English teachers have superpowers

There's a very telling question I'm fond of asking artists, writers and journalists about the single most critical factor responsible for that impactful career choice. Was it the school they went to? Was it their extra-curriculars? Was it their parents' influence? No. Nine times out of ten, it was their English teacher. That's right: where they are today is thanks to their English teacher's unique, creative and ambitious teaching style. That number one pivotal reason is you – every single day, you change lives. Right now, however, the ways students learn both within and beyond the classroom are under threat. Generative AI risks robbing students of creativity, spontaneity, critical thinking and even truth.

Government-mandated lesson plans risk robbing teachers of the creativity and spontaneity that bring lessons to life, as well as dynamic approaches to critical thinking that help separate fact from fiction. English discipline professionals educate the thinkers, writers and citizens of the future, empowering them to apply creativity in venturous ways. Drawing on my work railing against the 'Content Mindset' and championing creative civic engagement, let's spend some time galvanising our professional autonomy and focusing our advocacy: for engaging educational experiences that transform lives and enrich the nation.

GUEST SPEAKERS

GS2 / 11.50AM – 12.40PM



Fiona Longmuir

Dr Fiona Longmuir is a Senior Lecturer in Educational Leadership and co-leader of the Education Workforce for the Future Impact Lab, School of Education, Culture and Society, Faculty of Education at Monash University. Fiona's research focuses on educators' working conditions, principals' emotional labour, and the role of school and system leadership in supporting student engagement and agency. She has expertise in crisis leadership, social cohesion, and social justice in education. She has published on topics including, teachers' working conditions and retention, leadership in complex contexts, and student agency in school reform. Fiona teaches in the Master of Educational

Leadership, specialising in social justice, policy enactment, and educational change. She led the Graduate Certificate of Principal Preparation from 2019 to 2021 and contributes to leadership programs for international school and system leaders. Previously, Fiona spent over a decade as Director of Research in Innovative Professional Practice at Educational Transformations, leading national and international studies on school leadership and system effectiveness. She also worked 15 years with the Victorian Department of Education and Training as a teacher, and curriculum, school and network leader. Fiona is a Victorian Fellow of the Australian Council for Educational Leaders.

Enhancing belonging to the profession: Rediscovering joy, connection and purpose in teaching work

Australia is facing a teacher shortage crisis. Only 30% of teachers report that they intend to stay in the profession until retirement. The reasons teachers give for wanting to leave include excessive and emotionally intense workloads, wellbeing and safety concerns, and declining respect for the profession. Despite these challenges, many teachers report a strong sense of belonging to the profession. Our research has found that the relational and care work of teaching is central to teachers' experiences

and influences their likelihood of remaining in the profession. In this address, I will explore possibilities for reprioritising joy, connection, and purpose in teachers' relationships with students and with each other. We will consider how prevailing discourses that focus on narrow measures of performance constrain the ways teachers can access such outcomes in their work – and how these constraints might be challenged to transform schooling experiences for both students and teachers.

WRITERS TALK WRITING

WTW1 / 10.25 - 11.25AM



Melanie Cheng

Melanie Cheng is a writer and general practitioner. She was born in Adelaide, grew up in Hong Kong and now lives in Melbourne. Her debut collection of short stories, *Australia Day*, won the Victorian Premier's Literary Award for an Unpublished Manuscript in 2016 and the Victorian

Premier's Literary Award for Fiction in 2018. Her most recent novel, *The Burrow*, was shortlisted for the Stella Prize, the Victorian Premier's Literary Award, the Age Book of the Year and the ABIA Small Publishers' Adult Book of the Year.

That glimpse of truth: Writing short stories

Join award-winning short story writer and novelist, Melanie Cheng, for a Writers Talk Writing Masterclass about the craft of short story writing. Melanie will share an easy to use 3 step framework for writing short stories that she has been applying in her Narrative Medicine workshops

at The University of Melbourne. The framework was inspired by a PBS interview with George Saunders. It is simple, fun and has been effective in generating high quality, moving flash fiction pieces from medical students with little to no experience in creative writing.

WRITERS TALK WRITING

WTW2 / 12.50 – 1.50PM



Sam Elkin

Sam Elkin is a writer, community lawyer and co-editor of *Nothing to Hide: Voices of Trans and Gender Diverse Australia* (Allen & Unwin). Born in England and raised on Noongar land, Sam now lives on unceded Wurundjeri land. Sam's essays have been published in the

Griffith Review, *Australian Book Review*, *Sydney Review of Books* and *Kill Your Darlings*. He hosts the 3RRR radio show *Queer View Mirror* and his debut book is *Detachable Penis: A Queer Legal Saga* (Upswell Publishing) is out now.

Helping your students find their voice

Whether it be fiction or memoir writing, helping your students find their voice on the page is a powerful tool to aid self-expression, literacy and a deeper understanding of the world we live in. In this Writers

Talk Writing Masterclass, we will undertake short writing exercises, examine texts and discuss some of the most memorable contemporary voices in Australian literature.

WRITERS TALK WRITING

WTW3 / 2.40 – 3.40PM



Jes Layton

Jes Layton (she/he) is the Executive Director and co-CEO of the Emerging Writers' Festival. As an author and illustrator, Jes has presented at a variety of local and national writers festivals, conferences and events unpacking queerness, fandom and pop culture. She has also authored essays, articles and comics, facilitated student workshops and hosted reading events contextualising and exploring fanfiction for both fans and those who may not be as familiar.

More of Jes' nonfiction, fiction and illustrative work can be found both online and in print with the likes of SBS, *Archer Magazine*, *Junkee*, *Voiceworks*, *Kill Your Darlings*, *The Big Issue*, Affirm Press, Fremantle Press, Black Inc, and Pantera Press among others. Jes' latest piece 'Breathe' can be found in *Spinning Around*; *The Kylie Playlist* (Fremantle Press, 2024) and 'Seeing Colour' in *Everything Under the Moon: Fairy Tales in a Queerer Light* (Affirm Press, 2024).

A room full of fans: Leveraging fanfiction as a tool for the classroom

Fanfiction is among one of the most hotly debated subjects in the world of literature, with just as many readers and writers praising it as condemning it. As polarising as it may be, fanfiction has been, and continues to be, the bread and butter of some of today's most successful authors: E L James, Cassandra Clare, Marissa Meyer, Neil Gaiman, Dante. But what is fanfiction exactly? And how can fanfiction lead to more engaged, meaningful writing tasks for students?

In this Writers Talk Writing Masterclass, author and artist Jes Layton will run participants through how they can critically engage with students using fanfiction, encouraging thoughtful creativity, rigorous textual analysis and engaged criticism in the classroom. Gain insight into how the things your students love can fuel – or frustrate – inspiration, and how this often overlooked literary form can allow students to master a host of literary and critical thinking skills, and maybe even birth an emerging writer or two.

VATE

VICTORIAN ASSOCIATION FOR THE TEACHING OF ENGLISH

BAD WRITERS CLUB

ENGLISH TEACHERS AS BAD WRITERS CLUB

ETBWC

WRITING COURSE RETURNS IN 2026

Join us to step into your writerly identity
Visit www.vate.org.au for more info

www.badwritersclub.com

WORKSHOPS

TW1 / SESSION ONE / 10.25 – 11.25AM

TW1.01:

Delivering a literacy block in a secondary setting LIVESTREAM

This workshop explores how to structure an effective literacy block for Year 7 and 8 students using evidence-based practice. Grounded in Anita Archer's principles of Explicit Teaching and Scarborough's Reading Rope, the workshop demonstrates how to build reading fluency, comprehension, vocabulary, and written expression. Participants will explore a model that dedicates one hour to reading and one hour to writing, spelling, and language development. The workshop will show how this block prepares students for deeper engagement in curriculum study, particularly when analysing set texts in the broader English program. In addition, the journey to this point will be explored as well.

Tegan O'Dea and Lauren Clapperton,
Warragul Regional College

TW1.02:

Flipping the formative LIVESTREAM

In the English classroom the drafting/feedback process is a necessity, but there are other ways to assess student progress. This workshop will be twofold; we will explore fun, interactive and sometimes silly low-stakes ways to build a classroom environment that is underpinned by student voice and interaction. Having established a baseline of collaboration we will then work through a variety of practical formative tasks. Some familiar, some new. Some snacks and some mains. But all tailored to the English classroom.

Rochelle Coyle,
Marymede Catholic College

TW1.03:

Stop teaching TEEL LIVESTREAM

Many teachers use the TEEL structure to teach paragraph writing, and this workshop will explore why that approach may not be the most effective. While TEEL provides a basic scaffold, it can sometimes limit students' ability to develop complex, nuanced arguments. In this workshop, we'll unpack the drawbacks of relying too heavily on formulaic structures and consider alternative strategies that promote deeper thinking and more authentic writing. You'll be introduced to flexible, purposeful models that better reflect how strong writers actually build paragraphs. Join us to explore practical ways to move beyond TEEL and strengthen students' analytical and writing skills

Chris Mason,
St Bernard's College

TW1.04:

Advocate or disappear: Writing characters who fight for themselves

At the heart of every great story is a character who wants something, and fights for it. In this fun and interactive workshop, we'll explore how character agency fuels transformation, both on the page and in the reader. You'll learn how your protagonist's choices, goals, and resistance create emotional depth and narrative momentum. Through discussion, examples from literature and film, and practical writing exercises, we'll break down what it means for a character to advocate for themselves, and why it matters. You'll discover how personal stakes and meaningful conflict shape powerful arcs, how to craft characters who act (not just react), and how to make their struggle feel urgent and resonant. By the end, you'll have fresh tools to clarify a protagonist's desires, obstacles, and drive, so your story doesn't just move, it matters.

Donita Richards and Amanda Falson,
Bad Writers Club

WORKSHOPS

TW1 / SESSION ONE / 10.25 – 11.25AM

TW1.05:

Becoming AI-proof: Embracing our humanity in an age of change

'They told me I was everything. 'Tis a lie, I am not agree-proof.' – King Lear. As the corporate world embraces AI in every facet of their business, teaching feels unshakeable. Kids need human teachers... don't they? While AI is making many elements of English teaching easier, we must retain our humanity. When budgets get stretched thinner and technology develops at breakneck pace, teachers will soon join other professions in having to prove the worth of their salaries. This workshop will get to the heart of what teachers need to emphasise, develop, and nurture to make our profession AI-proof.

**Courtney Langton and Leah Kemp,
Strathmore Secondary College**

TW1.06:

Glimmers of opportunities in anti-racist education

English teachers engaging with the Victorian Curriculum 2.0 are meant to create safe spaces where students can traverse a breadth of experiences across different cultural and historical landscapes. Discussions around identities, empathy, how language can empower and disempower can lead us into tricky terrain in our classrooms. Choosing challenging texts raises challenging issues. Navigating this is incredibly complex, nuanced and difficult human leadership. Anti-racist is an active term, to be anti-racist is about action, thus anti-racist education is

active pedagogy in the classroom and school. Anti-racist education is also care work which must include not only student wellbeing but also teacher wellbeing. This is a practical, guided workshop about how to meet your students at their point of need whilst balancing the context specific needs of your school and the curriculum.

**Preeti Maharaj,
Brinbeal Secondary College/
Victoria University**

TW1.07:

Integrating digital literary studies into English education

University-level digital literary studies has flourished, embracing innovative approaches to literature in the digital age. From exploring born-digital texts and electronic literature to employing computational tools for large-scale textual analysis, scholars have expanded the boundaries of traditional literary studies. This workshop will explore ways to translate these academic innovations into engaging classroom activities for secondary school English. We will offer practical suggestions for integrating digital literary study, such as analysing multimodal texts, exploring online reading communities, and leveraging social media platforms for literary engagement. These activities aim to bridge the gap between students' digital lives and their formal English education, fostering a more relevant and engaging curriculum.

**Alexander Bacalja,
The University of Melbourne**

TW1.08:

Language as power: Critical literacy for social justice

This workshop empowers English teachers to equip students with critical literacy skills that challenge dominant narratives and foster social justice in the Australian context. Participants will explore how language shapes power, identity, and ideology through media texts, literature, and everyday discourse. Drawing on contemporary issues and diverse voices, participants will engage with practical strategies to help students deconstruct texts, create their own powerful responses, and develop their own critical lens. This workshop positions English classrooms as transformative spaces where students become active and ethical participants in society.

**Heath Armstrong,
Parade College**

TW1.09:

Podcast potential

Podcasting has had a meteoric rise in the last decade, and its influence can't be underestimated. How might we use podcasts to their full potential in our classrooms? This workshop will consider and show teachers how to utilise podcasts as texts, teaching tools, and tech-savvy tasks to support and stretch students. Whether to enhance literary commentary in the senior years, develop voice in the middle years, or encourage collaboration and hone speaking and listening skills in the junior years, podcasts offer a multitude of ways to foster the 'ingenuity' of our young people.

**Anna Carrig and Jacinta Walsh,
Northcote High School**

WORKSHOPS

TW1 / SESSION ONE / 10.25 – 11.25AM

TW1.10:

Teaching readers and reading

As teachers in secondary schools, many of us are not 'reading' teachers, yet students in our classes read every day. Research into reading has uncovered effective ways of teaching reading in secondary classes as well as strategies for supporting striving readers in their journey to improved literacy. In this workshop, I will share what I have learned about reading over the last few years and things I have done in both English and Literacy classes to support readers and reading.

Catherine Malcolm,
Wellington Secondary College

TW1.11:

The latent potential of the unassessed text

The unassessed text in Year 12 Literature exists as paracurricular material and therefore offers a unique opportunity for the development of literary skills and knowledge over the course of the school year. It provides a space where the teacher can facilitate student discursive practice, removed from the time pressures of formal assessment. This lends itself to the burgeoning of rich, student-led interpretation, which is then supported by the composition of 'quick writes' at the end of each workshop. Over the year 'quick writes' expand student written capacity and stamina, which is followed up by focused, targeted feedback from the teacher.

Shamira King,
Upwey High School

TW1.12:

The road (between us) is long

An interactive workshop on bridging the divide between rural, regional and city schools. A workshop that looks critically at the current picture and explores ideas to ensure that we are all closer to the same page. In this workshop I will offer and explore solutions to create a synergy between schools that has at its heart successful student performance for all regardless of their location. To walk away with an established advocacy group that continues to work towards bridging the divide for our students and us to feel that location is no longer an insurmountable barrier to success.

Emma Rudge,
Bayview College

WORKSHOPS

TW2 / SESSION TWO / 12.50 – 1.50PM

TW2.01:

Demanding space for literacy in the English classroom LIVESTREAM

As English teachers, we understand how our curriculum is centred around the essential skills to read, write, speak and listen. Yet every school I work with laments the time available to support the literacy gaps they face. How can we find the space to teach, consolidate and extend students' handwriting, spelling, syntax, punctuation, or phonemic awareness, fluency (reading and writing!), vocabulary and comprehension skills? During this workshop we will work through a traditional Year 9 text response unit and uncover not only the opportunities to teach and experiment with foundational reading and writing skills, but the space to prioritise literacy development.

Hayley Harrison,
Connect Literacy

TW2.02:

The library unleashed: How we did away with text censorship LIVESTREAM

Maryborough Education Centre is a large regional P-12 and specialist school, in a town with significant socioeconomic disadvantage and limited access to literature. Josie and Matt are the literacy specialists who transformed MEC's library and classroom shelves from aging reference sections to dynamic, highly valued spaces...

starting with doing away with the censorship of students' reading choices. This workshop is a rallying cry for educators ready to fight for unrestricted access to books in school classrooms and libraries. Discover the tools and tactics you need to dismantle outdated policies and ensure students of all ages can freely explore any and every book on the shelf.

Josephine Harris, Maryborough Education Centre and Matthew McCabe, Seymour College

TW2.03:

To discuss or direct, that is the question LIVESTREAM

How can we respond to the emphasis on explicit direction instruction while keeping student agency, choice and voice at the forefront of our practice? This workshop aims to affirm the professional choices of English teachers in relation to VCE Areas of Study while challenging participants to reflect on the purpose of English education. We will examine how dialogic teaching can foster curiosity, confidence and deeper learning. Participants will have an opportunity to design and share activities which create the space for flexibility in approaches to teaching and learning with the aim of achieving an appropriate balance between discussion and direct instruction within a lesson.

Sarah Stone and Cindy Sullivan,
Hume Central Secondary College

TW2.04:

Beyond the margins: Centring student voices in the English curriculum

At a time when students are seeking stories and experiences that speak to their lived realities, educators are tasked with identifying gaps in representation, advocating for shifts, and ensuring the texts we teach offer students a seat at the table, rather than leaving them standing at the margins. This workshop will explore the English curriculum and examine how intentional unit design and text selection can centre student identities, critique dominant narratives, and create culturally safe spaces. Through practical examples, and reflections from classroom contexts, this presentation will provide a framework for evaluating and diversifying the way we teach English.

Jacque Bourtzis,
Islamic Museum of Australia

TW2.05:

Brainrot to bathos: Group poetry games to transform student attitudes towards writing

Students hate poetry when it's treated as a puzzle to be solved as opposed to an art to be enjoyed. As an art, poetry is about the pleasures of playing with language and sensing someone else's thoughts and feelings. In this workshop, we will play group poetry writing games that can help you and your students loosen up and enjoy language for the pure sensory musicality of it and get even the most cynical students writing about themselves in thoughtful and honest ways.

Andrew Duval,
Writelike.org

WORKSHOPS

TW2 / SESSION TWO / 12.50 – 1.50PM

TW2.06:

Designing responsive English classrooms with full participation and retrieval practice

The heart of teaching is knowing your students and empowering their voice. Yet in busy classrooms, it's easy for quiet gaps in understanding to hide behind confident smiles or borrowed voices. This workshop will explore how full participation and retrieval practice can bring every student's thinking to the surface. Through Years 7–12 examples, you'll see how to build quick retrieval moments into reading, writing and discussion tasks and pivot lessons in real time based on what students recall. Because the more we understand about what students know, the more flexibly we can respond to what students need.

Melanie Aquilina and Simon Gitson,
Mackillop College Werribee

TW2.07:

From margin to centre: Using memoir and short stories to build student voice

Based on Amra's own work as a memoirist and short story writer (*The Cuckoo's Song*, *Things Nobody Knows But Me*, *Growing up Muslim in Australia*), this workshop explores how personal narrative can be scaffolded in the classroom to validate students' lived experiences. Participants will explore writing prompts, classroom activities, and scaffolds that allow students to 'demand space' through their own stories.

Amra Pajalic,
St Albans Secondary College

TW2.08:

Improvisational ACs: Moving away from the formulaic in VCE English Language

This hands-on workshop will help teachers guide their students through an English Language analytical commentary without having them fall back on formulaic paragraphs or rehearsed structures. With a strong toolkit and sharper instincts, students can face whatever text comes their way, because when the script goes out the window, real analysis begins – no template, no panic, just insightful and relevant analysis.

Selina Dennis,
Coburg High School and
Natalie Gleeson, Kambrya College

TW2.09:

Mindset in motion: Routines that shape analytical learners

Share in our collaboration on the development of students' analytical thinking skills. Epitomising students as active and valued participants in the classroom, we illustrate recognition for student thinking as a legitimate output. We will share a series of classroom routines that foster autonomy and independence amongst learners. We will explore skills-based activities to extend classroom discussions and relationships. We will examine formative assessment strategies that enrich student metacognition. By reflecting on observations of student engagement and written responses, we aim to inspire your approach to student thinking in the classroom.

Justine Douglas, Xavier College
and Kelly Warneck, Cheltenham
Secondary College

TW2.10:

Resisting change: The need for English teachers to embrace their inner luddite

In a world that has become increasingly dominated by technology and capitalism, education has not remained immune. Whom does this technology benefit? Not our students, whose reading and writing achievement levels have not improved thanks to technology, and whose wellbeing has plummeted (as per Haidt's *The Anxious Generation*). This workshop is a call to arms to fight back and to share ideas about how to resist screens and AI in the English classroom and to demand technology that serves us, not the other way around, reclaiming the Luddite tradition, as outlined in Jathan Sadowski's *The Mechanic and the Luddite*.

Blair Mahoney and
Marlowe Wynne-Woodley,
Melbourne High School

TW2.11:

Restructuring the English classroom to be more inclusive for students with ADHD

Oftentimes in our classes we have one student with ADHD and we made modifications for them. What happens when a fifth of the class has ADHD? What changes would be made to the structure of the class to make it truly inclusive? This has been my journey this year as an experienced teacher. I have had to adjust, change and challenge myself in order to help my students achieve success. I will share the strategies I used, the research underpinning it, and both my successes and my failures.

Michelle McRae,
St Joseph's College Geelong

WORKSHOPS

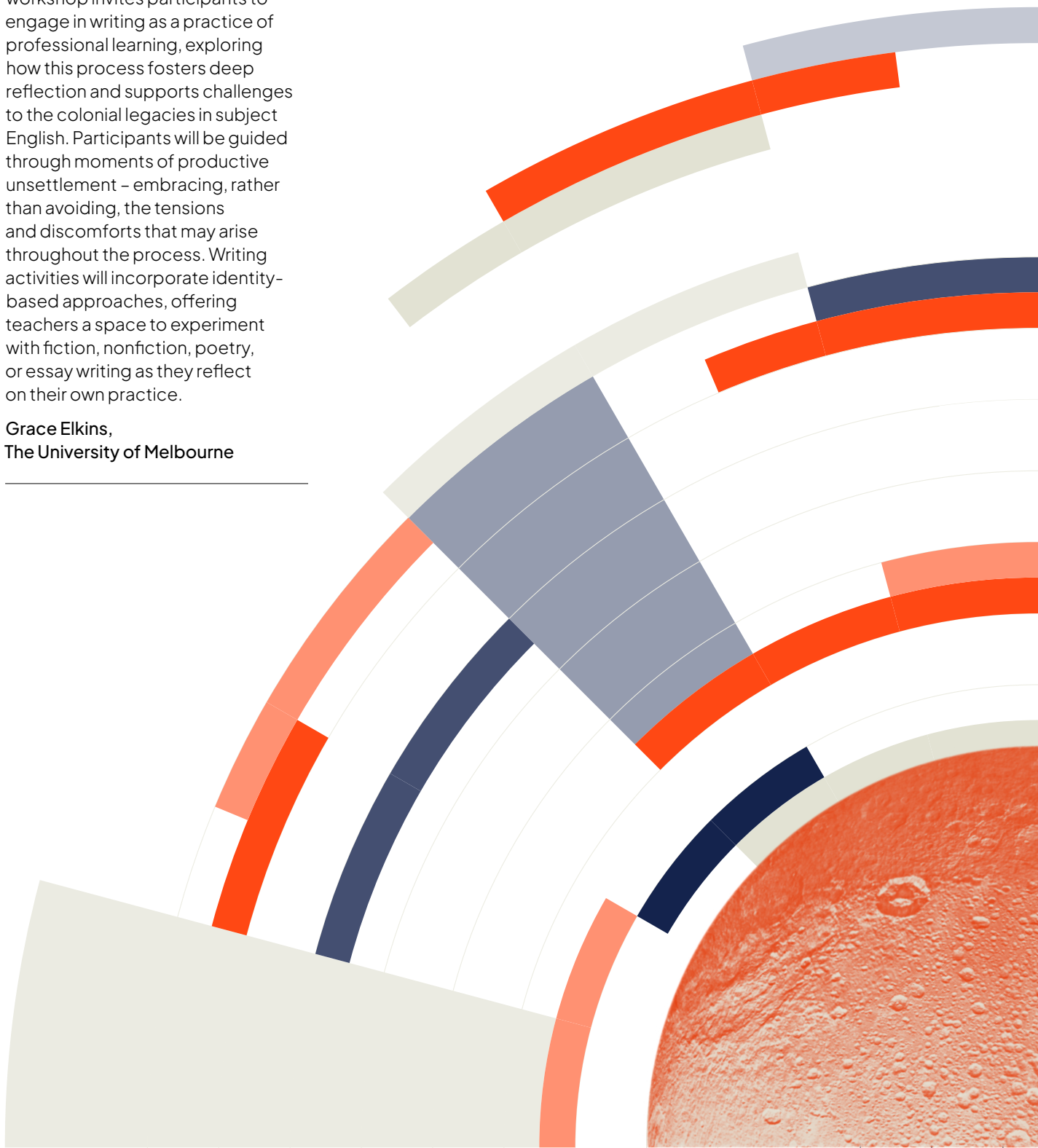
TW2 / SESSION TWO / 12.50 – 1.50PM

TW2.12:

Unsettling the page: Writing as anti-colonial learning

How might creative writing serve as a tool for critical self-reflexivity in English teaching? This interactive workshop invites participants to engage in writing as a practice of professional learning, exploring how this process fosters deep reflection and supports challenges to the colonial legacies in subject English. Participants will be guided through moments of productive unsettlement – embracing, rather than avoiding, the tensions and discomforts that may arise throughout the process. Writing activities will incorporate identity-based approaches, offering teachers a space to experiment with fiction, nonfiction, poetry, or essay writing as they reflect on their own practice.

Grace Elkins,
The University of Melbourne



WORKSHOPS

TW3 / SESSION THREE / 2.40 – 3.40PM

TW3.01:

'But Miss – I saw it on TikTok!' The crucial role of the English teacher in readers' advisory

LIVESTREAM

As English teachers, we want our students to read confidently, independently, and broadly. But how confident are you in recommending 'just right' texts? This workshop will explore the role of the English teacher in readers' advisory: How do you ascertain student need and interest? How do you model text selection strategies? And – importantly – how do you know which texts to recommend? Technology, social media, and the 'new adult' phenomenon have all shaped your students' reading experiences. This workshop will strengthen your understanding of the current YA landscape: books to read, books to avoid, and books to promote.

Lauren Kyte,
Salesian College Sunbury

TW3.02:

Designing critical conversations about texts: Joint construction in the English classroom

LIVESTREAM

How do teachers design effective learning sequences and foster critical conversations about texts? English teachers need knowledge about language and need to provide support for the learner during the joint construction of texts. In this presentation we discuss how to hand control over to students during the joint construction phase. We will offer a framework to develop a metalanguage about the language features of texts and share pedagogical techniques that facilitate the joint construction process. We will work with persuasive and narrative texts.

Claire Nailon, Nazareth College and
Kate Cash, Kardinia International
College and Anne Dalmau

TW3.03:

The eye of the storm: Empowering students for the VCE English exam

LIVESTREAM

This will be a highly interactive and informative workshop detailing ways in which we prepare our students for the final English exam. We will systematically 'unpack' each section and explain how we empower our students to aggressively attack each section – looking at the key skills each aspect of the paper is demanding.

Simon Ross and Emily Bleeker,
Parkdale Secondary College

TW3.04:

Beyond the attic: AI-powered journeys through Jane Eyre

'Conventionality is not morality. Self-righteousness is not religion... prejudice is not reason,' Charlotte Brontë declared in her preface to *Jane Eyre*. In this spirit, this workshop will reimagine *Jane Eyre* through AI-enhanced pedagogy, positioning Brontë's revolutionary Victorian text alongside contemporary technology. Teachers will gain practical knowledge of using AI to create customised materials, engaging content, differentiated activities, and comprehensive unit plans. The workshop explores how innovative technology can honour the novel's revolutionary spirit while transforming student engagement with classic literature.

Julia Bonifacio,
Caulfield Grammar School

TW3.05:

English Language for Literature teachers: How to crack the linguistics code

As English Language continues to gain increasing popularity among VCE students and schools, many teachers – without formal tertiary training in linguistics – are being called upon to teach the subject for the first time. This workshop explores the intersections and divergences between mainstream VCE English and VCE English Language, highlighting some of the key challenges involved for teachers assimilating new disciplinary knowledge. Aimed at those teaching English Language for the first time and educators new to the subject, this workshop seeks to open up discussion on how we can best support one another through this often-daunting transition.

Rosa Holman,
Ruyton Girls School

TW3.06:

Ensuring a safe supportive learning environment for students

How can educators ensure a safe and supportive learning environment for students when studying texts that contain mature and potentially triggering themes? This workshop presents an exploration into studying *The Crucible* and *Jojo Rabbit* – texts with potentially triggering themes – in middle years English. We will cover how to develop a practice whereby fostering student agency and independence in their own learning are used to create engaged, 21st century citizens. In this way, we'll see how challenging the nature of the language and the concepts pose an opportunity for socio-emotional growth and academic development.

Meg Lindsay,
St Michael's Grammar School

WORKSHOPS

TW3 / SESSION THREE / 2.40 - 3.40PM

TW3.07:

How Greek is your English? The ancient cornerstones of literary analysis

Allegory, metaphor, analogy, anthropomorphism, onomatopoeia... How many of your everyday teaching tools were first used to build and analyse ancient stories over 2000 years ago? English literature is replete with terms and phrases that have etymological foundations in ancient Greece, while many contemporary stories depend on an implicit classical architecture of myths and heroes. In this presentation Tom and Jo from the Hellenic Museum will demonstrate how through understanding history, students can develop a deep, critical, and creative perspective on the methods and stories encountered in English, Literature and English Language in Victoria.

**Jo Clyne and Tom Harris,
Hellenic Museum**

TW3.08:

Stretch and shape: Teaching syntax to support writing voice and control

This workshop explores sentence level instruction as a powerful lever for improving student writing fluency, cohesion, and voice. Through hands-on strategies, including sentence combining, imitation and expansion, participants will engage with mentor texts to explore how grammar, vocabulary and morphological understanding can elevate both analytical and narrative writing. Aligned with VTLM 2.0 and the Victorian Curriculum, the workshop unpacks practical applications for Years 7–10 that foster inclusive, creative classrooms. With a focus on writing growth, differentiation, and language play, participants will leave equipped to embed sentence craft in any unit, building confident, expressive student writers through meaningful syntactic choices.

**Nicole Case,
Department of Education**

TW3.09:

The power of truth: Creating meaningful social justice through literature

Literature is one of the most powerful forces we have for creating empathy and understanding for one another, and especially for marginalised groups. How to best create classrooms and curriculum that harness this power? This workshop will discuss approaches towards text selection and pedagogy which allow us truly to create positive change in our society. It will begin with a guided exploration rooted firstly in philosophical theories regarding literature and art, and secondly in reflections upon lived experience. It will then broaden into an open discussion concerning the question of how we can truly create classrooms conducive towards justice.

**Vincent Chiang,
Melbourne Grammar School**

WORKSHOPS

TW3 / SESSION THREE / 2.40 - 3.40PM

TW3.10:

‘Unruly language’: Critical conversations about AI

As English teachers, our discipline histories, practices and understandings provide us with a unique standpoint from which to make sense of the increasing presence of synthetic texts in society, online, and even in our classrooms. Drawing, in part, on conversations taking place within a network of Victorian English teachers grappling with these issues, this workshop includes opportunities to engage dialogically with a range of texts to open up spaces for critical and creative thinking about AI and its implications for the teaching of writing. These texts and approaches could be used to foster critical conversations in staffrooms and classrooms about what it means to write, and resist, in these complex times of increasing automation.

Natalie Bellis,
St Paul’s Anglican Grammar School

TW3.11:

Weaving traditional and evolving literacies for 21st century learners

In this workshop, we explore the evolving nature of literacy in secondary English, focusing on integrating diverse literacies to prepare students for a complex world. We will examine a unit on decolonising the curriculum, featuring Indigenous texts and strategies to support EAL students. This approach celebrates cultural diversity, promotes understanding, and enhances language skills. Participants will gain insights into research-informed practices and innovative literacy instruction methods, equipping students to navigate both digital and traditional landscapes. Join us to reimagine literacy education and empower students with essential skills for success in an ever-evolving world.

Jennifer Sze,
The University of Melbourne



Prepare your students for VCE and beyond at State Library Victoria.

As students transition into VCE, it's important they have the skills they need to succeed in their final years of study. State Library Victoria can help.

Hands-on workshops. Research guides. Free resources.

The Library's education program is designed by teachers, for teachers. All workshops have direct curriculum links and encourage a love of learning.

Whether you join us at the Library or tune in from the comfort of the classroom, your students will come away with the know-how to navigate VCE.

Book your visit now.



Visit slv.vic.gov.au/schools to find out more.



**CREATIVE
VICTORIA**



THURSDAY LIVESTREAM WORKSHOPS

TW1 / SESSION ONE /
10.25 – 11.25AM

TW1.01:

Delivering a literacy block in a secondary setting

LIVESTREAM

This workshop explores how to structure an effective literacy block for Year 7 and 8 students using evidence-based practice. Grounded in Anita Archer's principles of Explicit Teaching and Scarborough's Reading Rope, the workshop demonstrates how to build reading fluency, comprehension, vocabulary, and written expression. Participants will explore a model that dedicates one hour to reading and one hour to writing, spelling, and language development. The workshop will show how this block prepares students for deeper engagement in curriculum study, particularly when analysing set texts in the broader English program. In addition, the journey to this point will be explored as well.

Tegan O'Dea and Lauren Clapperton,
Warragul Regional College

TW1.02:

Flipping the formative

LIVESTREAM

In the English classroom the drafting/feedback process is a necessity, but there are other ways to assess student progress. This workshop will be twofold; we will explore fun, interactive and sometimes silly low-stakes ways to build a classroom environment that is underpinned by student voice and interaction. Having established a baseline of collaboration we will then work through a variety of practical formative tasks. Some familiar, some new. Some snacks and some mains. But all tailored to the English classroom.

Rochelle Coyle,
Marymede Catholic College

TW1.03:

Stop teaching TEEL

LIVESTREAM

Many teachers use the TEEL structure to teach paragraph writing, and this workshop will explore why that approach may not be the most effective. While TEEL provides a basic scaffold, it can sometimes limit students' ability to develop complex, nuanced arguments. In this workshop, we'll unpack the drawbacks of relying too heavily on formulaic structures and consider alternative strategies that promote deeper thinking and more authentic writing. You'll be introduced to flexible, purposeful models that better reflect how strong writers actually build paragraphs. Join us to explore practical ways to move beyond TEEL and strengthen students' analytical and writing skills

Chris Mason,
St Bernard's College

THURSDAY LIVESTREAM WORKSHOPS

TW2 / SESSION TWO /
12.50 – 1.50PM

TW2.01:

Demanding space for literacy in the English classroom LIVESTREAM

As English teachers, we understand how our curriculum is centred around the essential skills to read, write, speak and listen. Yet every school I work with laments the time available to support the literacy gaps they face. How can we find the space to teach, consolidate and extend students' handwriting, spelling, syntax, punctuation, or phonemic awareness, fluency (reading and writing!), vocabulary and comprehension skills? During this workshop we will work through a traditional Year 9 text response unit and uncover not only the opportunities to teach and experiment with foundational reading and writing skills, but the space to prioritise literacy development.

Hayley Harrison,
Connect Literacy

TW2.02:

The library unleashed: How we did away with text censorship LIVESTREAM

Maryborough Education Centre is a large regional P-12 and specialist school, in a town with significant socioeconomic disadvantage and limited access to literature. Josie and Matt are the literacy specialists who transformed MEC's library and classroom shelves from aging reference sections to dynamic, highly valued spaces... starting with doing away with the censorship of students' reading choices. This workshop is a rallying cry for educators ready to fight for unrestricted access to books in school classrooms and libraries. Discover the tools and tactics you need to dismantle outdated policies and ensure students of all ages can freely explore any and every book on the shelf.

Josephine Harris, Maryborough Education Centre and Matthew McCabe, Seymour College

TW2.03:

To discuss or direct, that is the question LIVESTREAM

How can we respond to the emphasis on explicit direction instruction while keeping student agency, choice and voice at the forefront of our practice? This workshop aims to affirm the professional choices of English teachers in relation to VCE Areas of Study while challenging participants to reflect on the purpose of English education. We will examine how dialogic teaching can foster curiosity, confidence and deeper learning. Participants will have an opportunity to design and share activities which create the space for flexibility in approaches to teaching and learning with the aim of achieving an appropriate balance between discussion and direct instruction within a lesson.

Sarah Stone and Cindy Sullivan,
Hume Central Secondary College

THURSDAY LIVESTREAM WORKSHOPS

TW3 / SESSION THREE /
2.40 – 3.40PM

TW3.01:

'But Miss – I saw it on TikTok!' The crucial role of the English teacher in readers' advisory

LIVESTREAM

As English teachers, we want our students to read confidently, independently, and broadly. But how confident are you in recommending 'just right' texts? This workshop will explore the role of the English teacher in readers' advisory: How do you ascertain student need and interest? How do you model text selection strategies? And - importantly - how do you know which texts to recommend? Technology, social media, and the 'new adult' phenomenon have all shaped your students' reading experiences. This workshop will strengthen your understanding of the current YA landscape: books to read, books to avoid, and books to promote.

Lauren Kyte,
Salesian College Sunbury

TW3.02:

Designing critical conversations about texts: Joint construction in the English classroom

LIVESTREAM

How do teachers design effective learning sequences and foster critical conversations about texts? English teachers need knowledge about language and need to provide support for the learner during the joint construction of texts. In this presentation we discuss how to hand control over to students during the joint construction phase. We will offer a framework to develop a metalanguage about the language features of texts and share pedagogical techniques that facilitate the joint construction process. We will work with persuasive and narrative texts.

Claire Nailon, Nazareth College and
Kate Cash, Kardinia International
College and Anne Dalmau

TW3.03:

The eye of the storm: Empowering students for the VCE English exam

LIVESTREAM

This will be a highly interactive and informative workshop detailing ways in which we prepare our students for the final English exam. We will systematically 'unpack' each section and explain how we empower our students to aggressively attack each section – looking at the key skills each aspect of the paper is demanding.

Simon Ross and Emily Bleeker,
Parkdale Secondary College

KEYNOTE

9.00 – 10.00AM



Tanya Notley

Dr Tanya Notley is Associate Professor in the School of Humanities and Communication Arts at Western Sydney University. She is recognised for her 25+ years of experience working with NGOs, government agencies, public cultural institutions, universities and the United Nations in the areas of digital inclusion and media literacy. Tanya has led 10 media literacy research projects since 2017 including collaboration with more than 20 industry partners. She leads two longitudinal national

surveys: one on adult media literacy (2024) and one on young people's news literacy (2023). She also leads a national project that examines the role media literacy can play in addressing misinformation. Tanya is a founding member of the Australian Media Literacy Alliance and served as the co-chair from 2020 to 2023. She serves on the media literacy project advisory panels for several organisations including the National Film and Sound Archive of Australia and the Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia.

Digital news literacy in the classroom: Supporting informed and engaged young citizens

Young Australians aged 13–16 have grown up alongside the rise of social media platforms. Not surprisingly, social media is the main source of news for teens, after friends and family. News engagement has long been established as an important pre-cursor to civic engagement. Young Australians who are interested in news are more likely to leverage technology to improve their school or town, get involved in social issues or help other people. However, the Australian Government has legislated to ban anyone under 16 from using popular social media platforms and it remains unclear what impact this will have on teens' news and civic engagement. News literacy education can increase young people's engagement with

news while developing their critical, social and technological capabilities. This is important since most teens are not confident that they can identify misinformation online and are unsure how algorithms shape online news engagement. Although teens are interested in learning more about these topics, only one in four say that they are receiving annual news literacy lessons in school to help them decide who and what to trust online. This keynote will examine innovations in news literacy pedagogy and consider what we know about how effective interventions are when it comes to developing and supporting informed and engaged young citizens.

References

- Blakstone, A., Chambers, S., & Notley, T. (2025, in press). Young people, algorithms and news: Exploring the relationship between algorithmic literacy and news literacy. *Journal of Youth Studies*.
- Notley, T., & Dezuanni, M. (2018). Advancing children's news media literacy: learning from the practices and experiences of young Australians. *Media, Culture & Society*, 41(5), 689–707. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0163443718813470>
- Notley, T., Zhong, H. F., Dezuanni, M., & Gilbert, S. (2022). Comparing children's and teens' news engagement practices and affective news experiences. *Journal of Youth Studies*, 26(7), 878–893. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13676261.2022.2053667>
- Notley, T., Chambers, S., Zhong, H. F., Park, S., Lee, J. and Dezuanni, M. (2023) News and Young Australians in 2023: How children and teens access, perceive and are affected by news media, Research Report, Western Sydney University. <https://apo.org.au/node/324686>

What matters to you as an English teacher?

Exploring the connections between teacher identity, agency, wellness, workload and sustainability.

In teaching, who you are matters. The personal and the professional are intrinsically entwined. While there are few opportunities to explore teacher identity in schools, research shows that teacher identity can directly influence sense of purpose, agency, growth, wellbeing and ultimately the motivation to remain in the profession (Rushton et al., 2023; Sachs, 2005; Varadharajan & Buchanan, 2021).

This Dialogue Seminar, the third in a VATE series that brings teachers and researchers together, will examine the notion of teacher identity and its link to maintaining a positive, healthy and thriving workforce. The following key questions will focus the discussion: What sustains English teachers and enables long-term commitment to the profession? What is the relationship between identity development and teacher agency? If teacher identity is situated, relational and dynamic, what contextual factors powerfully shape and shift who we

are in schools? What tensions and paradoxes do teachers currently confront as they make decisions about how to act and how to be? Do issues of workload and wellness force teachers to compromise on aspects central to identity? And finally, how can we support teachers to engage in meaningful 'identity work' so that they better understand what they do, feel and believe – and can share this with others?

References:

- Rushton, E., Rawlings Smith, E., Steadman, S., & Towers, E. (2023). Understanding teacher identity in teachers' professional lives: A systematic review of the literature. *Review of Education*, 11, e3417. <https://doi.org/10.1002/rev3.3417>
- Sachs, J. (2005). Teacher education and the development of professional identity: Learning to be a teacher. In P. Denicolo & M. Kompf (Eds.), *Connecting policy and practice: Challenges for teaching and learning in schools and universities* (pp. 5–21). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203012529>
- Varadharajan, M., & Buchanan, J. (2021). The recruitment, support, retention and attrition of teachers in Australia. In *Career change teachers: Bringing work and life experience to the classroom* (pp. 9–30). Springer. <https://link.springer.com/book/10.1007/978-981-16-6038-2>



CHAIR

Amanda McGraw, Federation University

Associate Professor Amanda McGraw is a VATE Life member and VATE Council's Research Officer. Amanda uses a range of research methods to tap into life stories including extended conversation, and visual and shared analysis of artefacts. Her research interests include a focus on teaching reading and writing in English,

dispositions in teaching, school/university partnerships, and teacher professional learning. She has expertise in developing communities of practice involving practising teachers who use practitioner inquiry to learn deeply about teaching and learning processes.

PANELS

P1 / 11.35AM – 12.35PM



PANELLIST

Allie Baker, Beechworth Secondary College

An educator for more than 20 years, Allie has worked in classrooms in Australia, Japan and the United Kingdom. She is passionate about supporting teachers to be invigorated and inspired and to stay in our profession. Her approaches make classrooms accessible for all, particularly those with high literacy needs and students from diverse language backgrounds. After leaving

Melbourne for a 'tree change' in 2019, Allie has led a dynamic team to successfully improve the culture and literacy outcomes at her local school in north-east Victoria. Allie continues to work across Australia and overseas, offering workshops and consultation in schools. Her work has been endorsed and published by Drama Victoria, Pearson Education, VATE, and the VCAA.



PANELLIST

Kate Blandford, Hoppers Crossing Secondary College

Kate Blandford is an experienced educator and leader with a strong foundation in subject English, instructional leadership, and curriculum development. She has served on the VATE Council since 2023, bringing insights from her work in the Government education sector and her roles as Director of English, Senior Curriculum Leader and currently, Assistant Principal – Curriculum. Kate has led whole-school curriculum initiatives, school improvement teams, and

teacher development programs, underpinned by a commitment to high-impact teaching and system-wide improvement. A long-standing contributor to VATE, she regularly presents on VCE English, supports the Leadership Network as a critical friend, and has served on both the VCE Exam Working Party and as convener of the VCE Review Working Party. Kate's professional interests include equity, educational leadership, and curriculum innovation.

PANELS

P1 / 11.35AM – 12.35PM



PANELLIST

Graham Parr, Monash University

Graham Parr is a Professor of English Education in the School of Curriculum, Teaching and Inclusive Education, Faculty of Education, Monash University. He taught English, literature and drama in secondary schools in Melbourne and the US for 14 years; since then has been a teacher educator in universities for over 25 years. Through this time, he has been an active member of VATE and AATE. His research interests include dialogic English teaching, professional identity, praxis-based professional learning, and English

teacher education. He has led numerous praxis-based partnerships with English teachers and professional associations, including the *stella2.0* project in which professional writing communities of English educators reflected upon their professional practice. In 2018, he was named a national research leader in literature education by *The Australian* newspaper. Currently, he is a member of the VATE supported research team investigating the sustainability of the English teaching profession in Victoria.

Avenues of advocacy: 'Selfie yachts', forums and social media The political activism of young people

In a recent *Sydney Morning Herald* opinion piece, '[Activists like Greta Thunberg care more about fame than facts](#)', journalist Susanne Moore savaged Greta Thunberg for what she called her 'Insta-activism', a form of advocacy more interested in publicity fame than facts, more concerned with the phenomenon of 'omnicause' in which activists like her flit from one disparate cause to the next, be it 'eco stuff, trans rights and Free Palestine' rather than engage in sustained, well researched activism. Moore says it is a '... moronic vacuum where analysis goes to die'. The piece provoked considerable controversy with many correspondents defending what they saw as the altruism of 'youth activists' like Thunberg. As one correspondent wrote, such activists have been provoked into action because of the inaction of previous generations.

One such activist is Anjali Sharma, best known for her work in climate change when, as a 15-year-old, she participated in a High Court action against the then Environment Minister Sussan Ley for the latter's failure to exercise duty of care in protecting young people for the future effects of climate change. In a recent *The Saturday Paper* article, '[Young voters demand bold politics](#)' she cited the way young people considered issues thoughtfully

and voted strategically as a way of putting pressure on the Labor government to take action on issues important to their generation.

In a previous *Age* article '[Social media helped me find my voice. It's a shame others won't have the same chance](#)' (18 September 2024), Sharma foregrounded the importance of social media in enabling that activism, both in increasing her knowledge base, and developing networks for both advocacy and action. In that context, while recognising the obvious dangers implicit in the misuse of social media, she saw the Labor government's proposed bans and restrictions on such for young people under 16 as short sighted and counterproductive. 'The proposal to ban young people from social media amounts to a strangulation of our political capital, of our ability to engage meaningfully in political processes that affect our lives and futures.'

This panel invites a number of young people to discuss matters related to their political activism. What issues engage them? What avenues of advocacy do they utilise? What role has social media played in allowing them to 'find their voice'? And how might we, as educators, respond to young people's activism?

CHAIR

Terry Hayes, VATE Council and Life member



PANELS

P2 / 11.35AM – 12.35PM



PANELLIST
Jules Arpula

Jules Arpula is a VCE student at Mt Alexander College and a member of Socialist Alternative. In the past couple of years, Jules has picketed in support of striking Woolworths workers and boycotted the Land Forces Expo. She has campaigned for Victorian Socialists at local and national elections and was one of

the organisers for Students Strike for Palestine. Jules believes that political action should be informed by a concrete analysis of the world and a theory of how to change it. She says politics determines strategy so political clarity is vital when fighting in certain campaigns and for a socialist world.



PANELLIST
Pablo Brait

Pablo Brait is Campaigns Director at Foundation for Young Australians (FYA). His team's work at FYA is focused on supporting young people to fight for the change they want to see in the world, by providing training, networking, specialist campaign support and

funding. Over the last few years they have supported youth-led campaigns across a range of issues including voting rights, Palestine, welfare access, housing, tax reform, LGBTQIA+ rights and carceral system reform.



PANELLIST
Anhaar Kareem

Anhaar is a writer, debater, public speaker, and advocate for social justice issues. An 18-year-old Australian Muslim woman of Egyptian heritage, she is currently studying Law and Media at the University of New South Wales. Her advocacy has been featured in major media outlets including ABC, *The Guardian*, and AMUST News. She is also the Founder of the Islamic Women's Welfare Association. Youth Committee and has been involved in numerous youth organisations, including the

Make It 16 campaign, the Wellbeing Health and Youth Committee, and the Federal Youth Steering Committee. Through the Make It 16 campaign, Anhaar appeared on ABC's Q&A in 2023 and presented to a parliamentary commission in 2024. Her community work has been recognised by the Centre of Volunteering, 7 News Young Achievers, Crescent Wealth, and the Zest Awards. She is currently a research assistant at UNSW and a law clerk at Birchgrove Legal.

**PANELLIST****Alix Livingstone, Founding Director of Defend the Wild**

Alix Livingstone is the Founding Director of Defend the Wild. She is motivated by a desire to address the complex challenges confronting Australian wildlife. Alix is highly skilled in crafting high-impact public awareness campaigns aimed at reshaping public perceptions and driving positive change. She actively participates in lobbying efforts targeting Government and peak industry bodies to advocate for legislative and policy reforms that prioritise the welfare of communities, wildlife, and the environment.

Alix spearheaded the development of Defend the Wild's Dingo campaign, which was featured on ABC's 7.30 program, shedding light on the government-sanctioned treatment of Dingoes across Victoria. Additionally, she played a pivotal role in launching the #DropCroc campaign, featured on Channel 10's *The Project*, unveiling the practice of factory farming Saltwater Crocodiles under the guise of conservation.

A place at the table: Literature and representation in the English classroom

'A place at the table' is more than a metaphor for inclusion: it's a call for advocacy, equity, and action. It's not just about being present in the room; it's about having a voice that shapes the conversation. For students, it means seeing themselves reflected in the stories they read, being invited to share their own narratives, and being empowered to speak up and push back against systems that silence or exclude. For educators, it's a reminder that inclusion doesn't happen by accident – it requires intentional choices, courageous conversations, and a deep commitment to building classrooms where every student feels seen, heard, and valued.

In this dynamic panel discussion, two authors will reflect on their own journeys to claim a seat at the table – through storytelling, resilience, and the power of voice. They'll share how literature can act as both mirror and catalyst, sparking empathy, fostering inclusion, and inspiring critical thinking, and give educators practical ideas for how to include diverse texts on their booklists and celebrate representation in meaningful ways. With a focus on identity, voice, and representation, this conversation will challenge and inspire educators to think deeply about the stories they teach and the voices they centre.



CHAIR

Karys McEwen

Karys McEwen is a school librarian, children's author, bookseller, vice president of the Victorian branch of the Children's Book Council of Australia, and education advisor for the Melbourne Writers Festival. She is passionate about the role libraries and books can play in the wellbeing of young people, and she is currently writing a Substack newsletter for

educators and parents called *I Read A Lot*. Her debut middle grade novel, *All the Little Tricky Things*, was published by Text Publishing in 2022, and her second middle grade novel, *The Paperbark Tree Committee*, was published in April, 2025. She is the host of VATE's podcast, YA Book Stack.

PANELS

P3 / 11.35AM – 12.35PM



PANELLIST

Ange Crawford

Ange Crawford (she/her) is a queer, autistic writer, editor and PhD candidate living on unceded Wurundjeri land. Her debut contemporary young adult novel, *How to Be Normal*, won the inaugural Walker Books Manuscript Prize, and was released in March 2025. *How to Be Normal* explores themes including coercive control, coming of age, and finding yourself, through the perspective of formerly home-schooled, musically-inclined (and somewhat awkward) Astrid. Ange also recently contributed an

experimental essay to *Someone Like Me: An Anthology of Non-fiction by Autistic Writers* (UQP). In her doctoral research at RMIT, she is exploring gestural writing and porous authorship as ways of creating a sense of ambiance in creative writing. She also has a background in the publishing industry. Currently, she is the managing editor of *Books+Publishing*, the Australian book trade publication, and she is involved in the Australian Publishers Association's working group for diversity and inclusion.



PANELLIST

Michael Earp

Michael Earp is a non-binary writer and bookseller living in Naarm. They are editor of, and contributor to *Everything Under the Moon: Fairy tales in a queerer light*, *Kindred: 12 Queer #LoveOzYA Stories*, *Out-Side: Queer Words and Art from Regional Victoria* and co-edited *Avast! Pirate Stories From Transgender Authors* with Alison Evans. Their writing has also appeared in *Archer*, *The Age*, *PopMatters*, *The Victorian Writer*, *Aurealis* as well as the anthologies *Borderlands: Riding the Slipstream* and *Underdog: #LoveOzYA Short Stories*. For over twenty years they have worked between bookselling and publishing as a children's and

young adult specialist. Their role managing *The Little Bookroom*, the world's oldest children's bookstore saw them named ABA Bookseller of the year. A passionate advocate for LGBTQIA+ literature for young people, they established the *#AusQueerYA Tumblr* to catalogue all Australian young adult fiction containing queer content and characters. Representation of all people in the literature available to readers of all ages is the ethos that motivates their entire career. They have a Masters in Children's Literature and a Teaching degree and previously served as committee chair for the *#LoveOzYA* campaign. Tea is the source of all their power.

Teacher. Author. Classroom.

YA Book Stack is an in-conversation podcast series highlighting new and diverse voices and texts for students in the middle years.



Hosted by Karys McEwen

A graphic featuring several black birds in flight, connected by white, swirling lines. The background includes a large blue cloud-like shape and a red heart-like shape. The title 'YA BOOK STACK' is written in large, pink, outlined letters with a black drop shadow.

YA BOOK STACK

VATE



Listen on
Apple Podcasts



Listen on
Spotify Podcasts

WORKSHOPS

FW1 / SESSION ONE / 10.10 – 11.10AM

FW1.01:

Beyond the text: Skills-focused English teaching for sustainable practice LIVESTREAM

Planning learning for discrete literacy skills rather than text-specific content can transform both teacher workload and student outcomes. This workshop demonstrates how skills-based planning, successfully implemented in VCE English Language, creates reusable lesson frameworks that reduce preparation time while building transferable reading and writing skills in students. Drawing from practical classroom experience, we'll showcase how teaching analytical reading strategies, writing fundamentals, and language analysis skills – independent of specific texts or outcomes – enables students to confidently approach and respond to any material. Participants will explore ready-to-implement planning templates and formative assessment tools that emphasise skill development over 'teaching the text'. Learn how this approach can be implemented in the F-10 curriculum, and also in the VCE Englishes, to ensure that students are systematically prepared for the VCE exams and beyond (while also minimising your planning workload).

**Bianca Prendergast
and Dani Cantor,**
Balwyn High School

FW1.02:

Critical digital authorship: Ethics, identity and the English teacher LIVESTREAM

VATE 2025 challenges us to 'shift language into action.' But what happens when our students – and we ourselves – write with machines? This workshop brings together insights from sociocultural research, digital literacy, and teacher practice to unpack the ethical tensions of authorship, identity, and automation.

Leon Furze,
Furze Smith Consulting

FW1.03:

The missing link: Phonics as a foundation for secondary students LIVESTREAM

Many secondary students continue to struggle with reading due to gaps in foundational decoding skills – but too often, phonics instruction is viewed as the domain of early years. This workshop challenges that misconception and explores how explicit, systematic phonics instruction can and should play a vital role in secondary literacy programs. We'll explore real-world examples of how our school is implementing phonics in Years 7–8 including: how to identify students who need support, select appropriate diagnostic tools, and embed targeted instruction into existing programs. We'll also discuss practical and age-appropriate strategies for embedding phonics into the secondary classroom – whether through small-group intervention, whole-class routines, or cross-curricular reinforcement.

**Willisa Osburn and
Melissa Ramos Amaya,**
Kambrya College

FW1.04:

Connecting identity to voice in an EAL classroom

How often do you find EAL students regurgitating a memorised piece of writing in an assessment? Are you tired of your encouragement for authentic writing returning to you empty in an EAL classroom? Or, are you at your wits' end trying to convince students to leverage on their invaluable cultural lens to validate and articulate their worldviews? This workshop provides a toolkit for senior school EAL teachers to empower students to discover their own identity and cultural heritage for authentic student voice in creative writing. Examining the opportunities aligned to the 2024 English/EAL Study Design, this marries the academic purpose to a practical life skill of authentic self-expression.

Rhoda Fu,
Carey Baptist Grammar School

FW1.05:

Diverse text selection practices and LGBTQIA+ representation

This workshop advocates for text selection practices in schools to recognise the link between affirming LGBTQIA+ representation and student wellbeing to unsettle the trend for cis heteronormative narratives to dominate our curriculum. I draw upon a report submitted as my Masters research thesis (2025) that analysed the 190 texts featured across 25 years of state-prescribed text lists (2001–2025) designed for Unit 3 and 4 Literature in the Victorian Certificate of Education.

Jared Prentis,
Kolbe Catholic College

WORKSHOPS

FW1 / SESSION ONE / 10.10 – 11.10AM

FW1.06:

Feminist pedagogies for implementing Respectful Relationships Education in English

This workshop provides a curriculum planning framework for teachers to feel equipped to implement the whole-school approach to Respectful Relationships Education through the English classroom. Drawing on feminist pedagogies and critical literacies, the framework embraces 'affective intensities' – where students have a strong response that ignites their learning. The workshop focuses on 3 texts (*We Have Always Lived in the Castle* – Year 12, *The Simple Gift* – Year 9, *Flora and Ulysses: The Illuminated Adventure* – Year 7) to model how this important work can happen across year levels. Participants will leave the workshop feeling confident to incorporate elements of RRE into classes.

Elizabeth Little,
Deakin University

FW1.07:

Film in the English classroom: Tools for confident teaching

Teaching film in English requires a distinct lens, one attuned to the specifics of film language as well as narrative and theme. This workshop offers a model for approaching film as text, focusing on how key techniques – mise-en-scène, cinematography, sound, and editing – work together to create meaning. Through close analysis of selected scenes, participants explore ways to guide student responses, sharpen interpretative skills, and deepen classroom discussion. Designed for teachers looking for a more purposeful way to teach film, the workshop provides adaptable strategies that build confidence and ensure film study is in-depth and rewarding.

Susan Bye, ACMI

FW1.08:

Knock-down, rebuild and building from scratch: Working to develop English faculties

In this era of change for the ways that English is read, understood and written, there are challenges for leaders of English faculties working to make the subject relevant and vibrant for communities with a wide multicultural base. One of those challenges is to develop curriculum that can be taught by teachers from a wide range of skillsets, experience and educational backgrounds. Anne and Mark will discuss the ways that scaffolds and faculty wide initiatives have helped deliver a bespoke solution to the question of how to build an English faculty that balances pragmatic solutions to contemporary problems with preserving the beauty of the subject.

Mark O'Sullivan,
Nazareth College and Anne Schmidt,
Clyde Secondary College

FW1.09:

Refocusing the reading lens

Against a backdrop of declining interest in reading for pleasure and engagement in school set texts, this workshop outlines a universal approach to reading that can be developed in Years 9 to 12 to improve analytical skills. The ability to utilise a universal lens to read all texts and to mirror that approach when unpacking essay topics generates authentic reader engagement rather than relying on pre-written responses. Attendees will be given the opportunity to apply the universal framework to their own texts of study. The purpose is to teach students *how* and *why* to read the *what* of all texts.

Rick Mason,
Camberwell Grammar School

FW1.10:

Regulation, routines and rigour: Enhancing agency in the English classroom

Our workshop explores the building blocks for genuine student agency and voice in the English classroom by starting with the benefits of self-regulated teachers and students. To build on this, we will explore tried and tested thinking routines that equip teachers with knowledge to be receptive to the learners in their classroom, and the ways in which this leads to enhanced agency for our young people. Participants will explore and trial thinking routines and feel empowered to implement these in their own English classrooms.

Kathleen Whitechurch
and Rhiannon Ward,
Luther College

FW1.11:

The world of fiction in short stories: From Stephen King to Shirley Jackson

From Stephen King to Shirley Jackson: *The World of Fiction* in Short Stories is Year 10 Elective delivered at Lauriston Girls School. The course uses short stories to develop student agency by nurturing competence in literary analysis skills, preparing them for the exploration of prose fiction literary texts in VCE English, VCE Literature, and IB. The workshop will provide participants with an overview of the aims, the approach, the texts, and the materials. It will outline the elective's focus on literary elements, the writing of ghost stories, and the text analysis of Stephen King's *Children of the Corn*.

Julian Lee-Holman,
Lauriston Girls School

WORKSHOPS

FW1 / SESSION ONE / 10.10 – 11.10AM

FW1.12:

Voices of Country at NGV: Enriching VCE Literature through First Nations art

Explore how First Nations artworks in the NGV Collection can deepen students' engagement with VCE Literature Unit 2: Voices of Country. Discover how visual storytelling can illuminate key themes such as connection to Country, cultural identity, and the impact of colonisation. Gain practical strategies to support rich, contextual analysis of texts and help students consider the enduring power of First Nations voices through both art and literature.

Jenny Isaac,
National Gallery of Victoria



WORKSHOPS

FW2 / SESSION TWO / 12.45 – 1.45PM

FW2.01:

Assessing the text response essay

LIVESTREAM

This workshop is a space to discuss and challenge assessment practices of the traditional text response essay. With a particular focus on VCE assessment, I will share ways of designing and marking student essays (and invite you to share yours). This is about moving beyond (maybe even abolishing?) TEEL, this is about designing rubrics that prioritise critical thinking and brainstorming, this is about easing our marking workloads and designing curriculum that helps students help themselves, this is about you being exposed to some new ways of thinking and doing so that you can decide what works best for you.

Emily Frawley,
The University of Melbourne

FW2.02:

Building consistent VCE English assessing

LIVESTREAM

This very practical and collaborative workshop is aimed at both current and prospective VCE Year 12 and 11 English teachers. It aims to assist, clarify and reassure participants about productive and supportive approaches to internal VCE English assessing of SACs and internal exams, seeking to clarify and highlight the key facets of VCE English assessing across all Areas of Study. It recognises the importance of establishing assessing benchmarks and the key professional learning which

emanates from such considerations. It recognises the challenge in many schools to ensure a consistent approach to both SAC and trial exam assessing. It will strategically outline the core principles of such assessing, offer strategies for ensuring calm and collaborative benchmarking and outline team-building approaches. It will draw from experience in assisting VCE teams in schools to assess in a shared and consistent manner.

Ross Huggard

FW2.03:

Syntax isn't scary: Teaching beyond the right way to write

LIVESTREAM

This workshop takes a descriptivist approach to teaching syntax, encouraging students (especially in middle years) to experiment with grammar and construct unique voices that mirror identities, rather than mimic what is 'correct'. Vic Curric 2.0 Years 9/10 involves discussions of, and experimentation with, differing sentence types/ structure and how these contribute to the creation of voice. Teachers will leave this workshop with practical ways to teach identification of voices in writing, and have students experiment in creating their own. This will prepare them for greater success in units like creating texts and argument analysis.

Mary McCarthy,
Werribee Secondary College

FW2.04:

Back to the drawing board: A case study of how one school is managing the English teacher shortage

In this workshop we will unpack and share the strategies that our school has developed in the wake of an unprecedented shortage of English teachers. By utilising the resources we DO have, drawing on outside support (Hayley Harrison from Connect Literacy) and thinking well and truly outside of the box, we have been able to maintain a functioning and (dare I say) thriving English faculty. Knowing that there are many other schools (especially in regional areas) facing similar changes, we wish to share our resources and learnings from this challenging year.

Jane Nankivell,
Monivae College

FW2.05:

Creating space for students to explore identity through text

How can we, as English Language teachers, create spaces for our students to meaningfully engage with texts that both mirror and reflect elements of their own authentic identities? This interactive workshop will explore a range of strategies to allow students to analyse short examples drawn from contemporary Australian creators to consider the ways that individuals use language to reflect and showcase specific elements of their identity. We will also consider the ways that teachers can support students to make the most strategic metalanguage choices when they are analysing examples of contemporary Australian language in an analytical commentary or essay.

Stephanie Schepton,
St Michael's Grammar School

WORKSHOPS

FW2 / SESSION TWO / 12.45 – 1.45PM

FW2.06:

From data to dignity: High-impact literacy for every learner

In this workshop, we will explore how structured, data-informed literacy supports can improve outcomes for secondary students while maintaining their dignity as learners. Discover how explicit instruction in phonics, vocabulary, and comprehension can be embedded meaningfully within a secondary classroom and aligned with the 7–10 Victorian Curriculum. Using scaffolded routines, diagnostic tools, and high-impact teaching strategies, this approach enables students to access targeted support while engaging deeply with texts and tasks. Rather than treating literacy as a separate intervention, it becomes a purposeful, integrated practice, one that is rigorous, respectful, and inclusive for all learners.

Teagan Spence,
Hampton Park Secondary College

FW2.07:

In defence of the novel: The importance of sustained reading in an age of distraction

There is worldwide concern about falling literacy rates amongst teenagers, with many decrying their belief in the end of reading, blaming young people's addiction to screens. Alongside this, fewer novels are being studied in the English classroom, despite research's finding of the 'fiction effect'; that deep reading of fiction positively

correlates with concentration skills, critical thinking and academic success. While noting the role of digital citizenship, this workshop will examine the vital importance of English teachers at the frontline in the war against digital distraction, arming participants with an understanding of recent research on reading and practical solutions for the classroom.

Kate Rees,
Plenty Valley Christian College

FW2.08:

Love letter to Country: Embedding connection through writing

This workshop invites English educators to explore powerful ways of embedding First Nations perspectives into writing programs. Through an immersive sequence inspired by DRMNGNOW's 'Get Back to the Land' and Professor Mick Dodson's concept of Country, participants will experience embodied learning activities, rich visual prompts, and scaffolded writing tasks that culminate in a personal 'Love Letter to Country'. This hands-on workshop empowers students to connect with place, identity, and language, while deepening respect for Country as both concept and lived experience. Leave with practical tools to enrich your classroom with culturally responsive, emotionally resonant writing experiences.

Jane Carter,
Cranbourne Secondary College

FW2.09:

Mutual feedback model for writing

This workshop empowers educators to transform feedback into a mutual process which strengthens students' ownership of their writing. Primarily targeted towards new teachers, this workshop will work through real classroom strategies to reduce the feedback burn out experiences by teachers and encourage them to shift the scale in favour of a healthy collaborative relationship through peer feedback workshops, teacher checklists, student stamp checklists, and student reflections on models and the value of conferencing over copious annotations. This approach dismantles the passive mindset that teachers are the sole source of feedback where writing becomes a dialogue, not a monologue.

Ashleigh Cavalin,
Haileybury

FW2.10:

Power of play: Strategies for interactivity, experimentation and joy

Plato recognised the power of play and is attributed as saying, 'you can discover more about a person in an hour of play than in a year of conversation'. Informed by the work of Harvard University's project, 'The Pedagogy of Play', we will explore a range of practical strategies for bringing interactivity, experimentation, and (most importantly) joy to the English classroom. During a time when technology permeates every aspect of young peoples' lives, it is more important than ever that we carve out space to communicate, navigate conflict, solve problems and express feelings and ideas through experiential learning. Come play with us!

Kylie Price

WORKSHOPS

FW2 / SESSION TWO / 12.45 – 1.45PM

FW2.11:
Reading rebels:
The power of banned books

This workshop shares our experiences using banned books to increase reading engagement and spark rich, critical discussion – especially with reluctant readers. It will go beyond reflection to include practical classroom activities, resources, and strategies for using banned books effectively. Together, we'll examine who has the power to ban books in the 21st century, the importance of diverse voices in literature, and how these texts can challenge and reshape student thinking. In today's global and cultural climate, English teachers must be bold – leading students through thoughtful, courageous conversations about censorship, inclusion, and the lasting impact of the stories we choose to teach.

Naomi Weiler and Tegan Kearney,
Casey Grammar School

FW2.12:
Reclaiming the page:
Teaching for voice,
power and joy

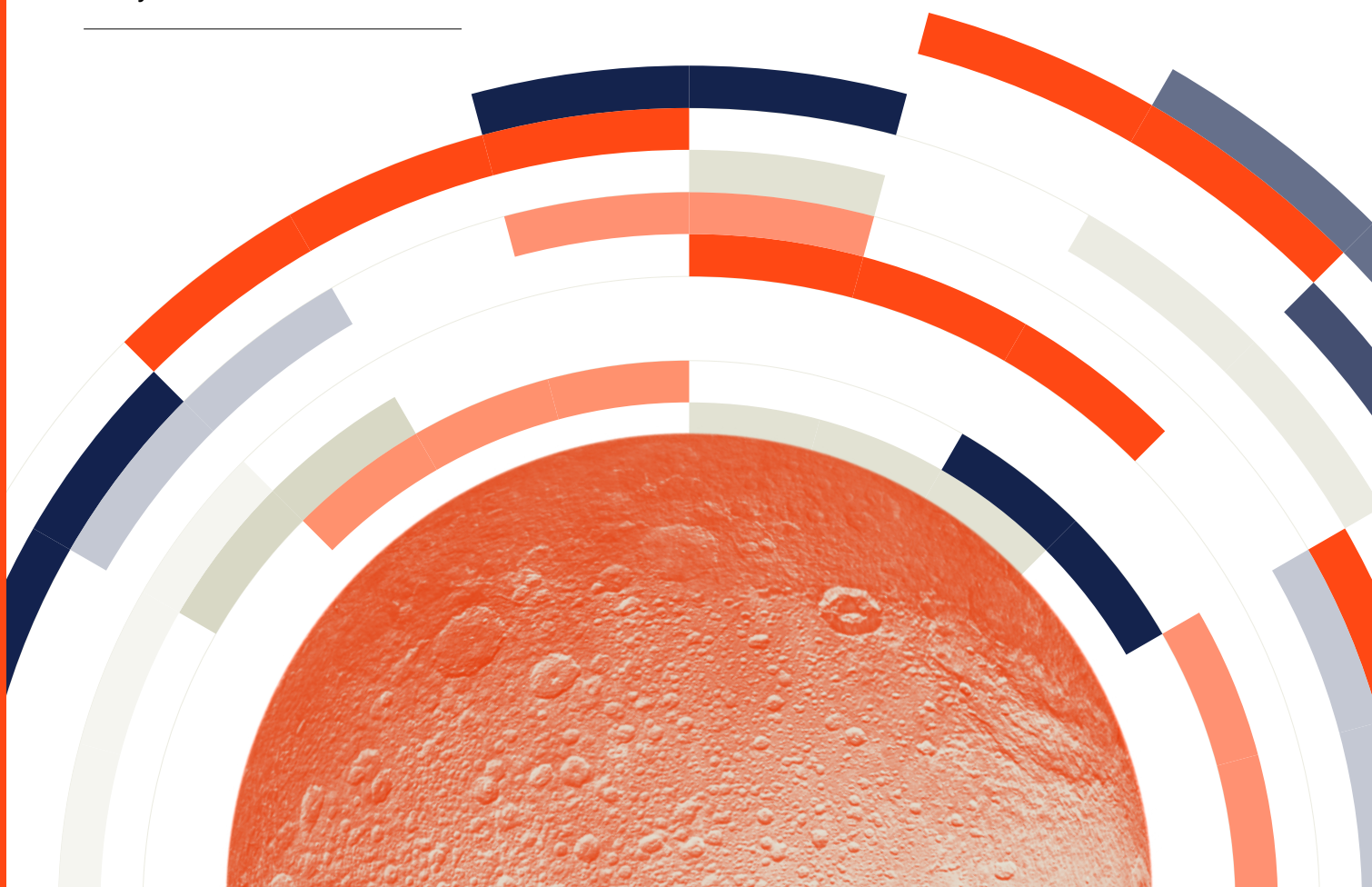
In an era of scripted lessons, over-assessment and narrowing curriculum, how do we keep the English classroom a place of critical thinking, intellectual freedom and joy? How can we position ourselves – and our students – as voices of resistance against the normalisation of educational conformity?

Shemalah Anthony,
St Mary's Coptic Orthodox

FW2.13:
Speaking with robots:
Reasserting the purpose
of writing in the age of AI

This workshop will explore the purpose of writing and its place in our lives. We will examine the threat and potential of large language model AI software and reflect on why writers write. Participants will be provided with practical strategies and resources to engage students with the writing process as a generative, playful and reflective experience that fosters communication, connection and expression of the creative self.

Nyree Wilson,
Dandenong High School



WORKSHOPS

FW3 / SESSION THREE / 2.35 – 3.35PM

FW3.01:
Activating critical thinking LIVESTREAM

There has never been a more important time to recommit to critical thinking skills. As noted in the 2025 Global Risks Report, disinformation and misinformation are now regarded as the greatest threat to humanity and responding to the world's myriad crises will require more than 'known knowledge', such as AI presents. Thus, the imperative for genuinely creative and unchartered, human thinking is needed to fill these gaps. To resist these risks, targeted education remains one of our best lines of defence, as long as we prioritise teaching students the value and the art of critical, systemic and creative thinking. In this workshop, we will provide replicable strategies and text-based work to amplify critical thinking in your classroom.

David Pargetter and Catherine King,
Kingswood College and
Katrina Renard,
Carey Baptist Grammar School

FW3.02:
Fighting dystopian data: Infrastructure to support English teachers in the NAPLAN age LIVESTREAM

Why is English seen as a less 'data driven' discipline in many schools? In an educational climate where standardised testing data is king, how can we empower ourselves as English teachers to resist the datafication of the English curriculum? This workshop will unpack a case study from our school in regional Victoria before opening the floor to a 'data driven' discussion

around what artefacts English teachers already use in their practice. Thus offering practicable strategies to formalise this great wealth of information to fight back against a system that tries to tell the story of the English classroom in ones and zeros.

Bri Hassett and Jake Watson,
Catholic College Sale

FW3.03:
Practical strategies to embed First Nations literature in Years 7 –10 LIVESTREAM

This workshop equips Years 7–10 teachers with practical strategies to embed First Nations literature through the Victorian Curriculum F–10. This workshop aims to tackle the practical constraints of school timetables by offering modular units that can be integrated into English schedules without overloading staff. Participants will receive a clear scope-and-sequence, mapped to curriculum content descriptions and supported by VCAA's Koorie Cross-Curriculum Protocols to ensure respectful, community-engaged practice. Text choices and teaching resources foster inquiry into First Nations languages, storytelling, colonisation, and cultural knowledge. Practical implementation tools are PLC-ready, enabling sustainable integration within semester planning and timetables – ensuring culturally responsive pedagogy aligned with curriculum standards and protocols.

Maya Mulhall,
Blackburn High School

FW3.04:
A helpful guide to teaching narrative texts

The workshop will be an interactive workshop that provides a guide to teaching narrative texts and how to build a strong unit on text analysis. I will use a clear process that includes the use of a lotus diagram. Using the lotus diagram as a starting point allows analysis of texts to be boundless and opens texts up to discussion of ideas. This breaks away from just comprehension of texts and helps students delve deeper into analysis and broader understanding of ideas explored by the author. The process can help students of all abilities access texts for analysis and essay writing.

Susan McCormack,
Billanook College

FW3.05:
Blueprints for reflective writing in the classroom

This workshop will provide practical strategies to guide students in crafting authentic reflective essays that are both symbolically rich and conceptually grounded. Through two scaffolded strategies, participants will learn how to support students in creatively harnessing figurative imagery to represent conflict and develop a central contention. By drawing on a range of student samples, teachers will leave with adaptable tools to foster a form of essay writing that articulates affective complexity and the contours of lived experience.

Timothy Hines,
Oakleigh Grammar

WORKSHOPS

FW3 / SESSION THREE / 2.35 – 3.35PM

FW3.06:

Bring stories to life with Adobe Express

Recently hailed by an English teacher as the ultimate multi-modal text tool, Adobe Express is revolutionising the way we teach and engage students. This browser and app-based platform offers premium access free for all K-12 schools, making it an invaluable resource for educators. Adobe Express is incredibly user-friendly yet powerful, perfect for creating digital stories, slide presentations, posters, videos, animations, and much more. In this workshop, Tim Kitchen from Adobe will guide you through the various features of Adobe Express, demonstrating how to captivate and inspire your students. By the end of the workshop, each participant will have the opportunity to earn the internationally recognised Adobe Creative Educator (ACE) micro-credential, enhancing your teaching toolkit and professional development.

Tim Kitchen,
Adobe Express

FW3.07:

Crafting texts: Transitions from Year 10 to VCE

This workshop will look at how to evolve your Year 10 curriculum with a focus on crafting texts to build the skills necessary for VCE English. The workshop will look at strategies for building foundational skills to help students feel ready, confident and creative. Participants will explore practical strategies on how to choose appropriate mentor texts and how to develop curriculum based on the needs of the students with a focus on context, audience, purpose and voice. The workshop will demonstrate how to provide opportunities within the classroom for students to explore their own experiences and what they value in a creative manner, as well as providing authentic student choice in assessment.

Nurdan Tabak and Kayla Pulice,
Hume Central Secondary College

FW3.09:

Cultivating the skills and 'habit of mind' for literary analysis

Strategies to develop the habits of mind that underpin literary close analysis and help students assemble the beast that is often a new, unwieldy, and amorphous skill. Creative approaches, combined with analytical strategies to support students in finding personally meaningful readings, depth and precision of interpretations, and the ability to express these fluently. Approaches to sequencing the teaching of close analysis skills over Units 1 – 4 and discussion of challenges and potential ways to address them. This workshop will suit those new to teaching VCE Literature, as well as more experienced teachers wanting to consider and discuss different approaches.

Joanne Foley and Louise Bossio,
Northcote High School

FW3.08:

Creating elective subjects that engender change

Alex and Tom are English and History teachers who have been working to fight the creep of disinformation outside of the standard curriculum. This workshop will explore two elective subjects they created and step through the strategies they employed to help engage students' critical thinking. 'Reporting On Your World' introduces students to the everyday practicalities of running a newsroom, and explores the complexity that comes from reporting on current events. 'Taking Political Action' is an elective that focuses on forging the students' individual political beliefs and values, and how to implement those ideas in the real world.

Tom Stammers and Alex Pitcher,
Tintern Grammar

WORKSHOPS

FW3 / SESSION THREE / 2.35 – 3.35PM

FW3.10:

‘Difficult’ texts: What are they and how might we teach them?

Stories animate the plot of humanity, and it is through stories and sharing them that we make sense of the world and its multiplicities. Stories invite our humanity to come into concert with that of others, and in this interaction, to pose questions of what it is to live amidst cataclysmic change, vulnerability, despair and grief, counterpointed by appreciation of beauty, hope and the sublime. English teaching professionals unavoidably encounter difficult knowledge texts as part of their work. Furthermore, they must anticipate and account for the range of textual content that students may find confronting in some way. With a practical focus, this workshop will invite participants to engage in literary analysis that frames texts in an appropriate and supported way, enabling choice and agency for teachers and their students. Teachers will gain a blueprint for pedagogy and protocols that are co-designed and iterative. Attendees will be invited to contribute to the presenter’s ongoing doctoral research into approaches to difficult knowledge texts in the English classroom.

Vana Watkins,
Geelong Grammar School

FW3.11:

Making space for more voices: Text selection and representation

The stories we consume shape how we see the world and whose voices we learn to value. As English and Literature teachers, we are the gatekeepers of the voices our students encounter. Each text we choose amplifies some perspectives while silencing others. Our research examines which voices are present and which are missing in the VCAA Literature text list. In this workshop, we will introduce a database we’ve developed: a quick-reference tool to help educators compare texts and make informed, inclusive curriculum choices. In doing so, we move beyond the single story and toward a literary landscape as complex and diverse as our students themselves.

**Michelle Maglitto, Fintona Girls’
School and Hugh Gundlach,
The University of Melbourne**

FW3.12:

Writing the self, thinking the world: Teaching auto-theory

This workshop explores the bold potential of auto-theory – a hybrid genre of personal narrative and critical reflection – as an approach to creative writing in Year 10 English. The unit is a bridge to Crafting/Creating Texts in VCE, empowering students to explore diverse perspectives and recognise storytelling as a catalyst for societal change; importantly, it encourages them to challenge literary boundaries. By reframing writing as a site of philosophical and personal exploration learners are pushed into spaces of resistance, advocacy, autonomy and creativity. Participants of this workshop will explore what auto-theory is and why it matters; engage in a creative reflection activity; receive examples of student work, task design and how to find voice.

Hannah Watts,
Woodleigh School

FRIDAY LIVESTREAM WORKSHOPS

FW1 / SESSION ONE /
10.10 – 11.10AM

FW1.01:

Beyond the text: Skills-focused English teaching for sustainable practice LIVESTREAM

Planning learning for discrete literacy skills rather than text-specific content can transform both teacher workload and student outcomes. This workshop demonstrates how skills-based planning, successfully implemented in VCE English Language, creates reusable lesson frameworks that reduce preparation time while building transferable reading and writing skills in students. Drawing from practical classroom experience, we'll showcase how teaching analytical reading strategies, writing fundamentals, and language analysis skills – independent of specific texts or outcomes – enables students to confidently approach and respond to any material. Participants will explore ready-to-implement planning templates and formative assessment tools that emphasise skill development over 'teaching the text'. Learn how this approach can be implemented in the F-10 curriculum, and also in the VCE Englishes, to ensure that students are systematically prepared for the VCE exams and beyond (while also minimising your planning workload).

**Bianca Prendergast
and Dani Cantor,
Balwyn High School**

FW1.02:

Critical digital authorship: Ethics, identity and the English teacher LIVESTREAM

VATE 2025 challenges us to 'shift language into action.' But what happens when our students – and we ourselves – write with machines? This workshop brings together insights from sociocultural research, digital literacy, and teacher practice to unpack the ethical tensions of authorship, identity, and automation.

**Leon Furze,
Furze Smith Consulting**

FW1.03:

The missing link: Phonics as a foundation for secondary students LIVESTREAM

Many secondary students continue to struggle with reading due to gaps in foundational decoding skills – but too often, phonics instruction is viewed as the domain of early years. This workshop challenges that misconception and explores how explicit, systematic phonics instruction can and should play a vital role in secondary literacy programs. We'll explore real-world examples of how our school is implementing phonics in Years 7–8 including: how to identify students who need support, select appropriate diagnostic tools, and embed targeted instruction into existing programs. We'll also discuss practical and age-appropriate strategies for embedding phonics into the secondary classroom – whether through small-group intervention, whole-class routines, or cross-curricular reinforcement.

**Willisa Osburn and
Melissa Ramos Amaya,
Kambrya College**

FRIDAY LIVESTREAM WORKSHOPS

FW2 / SESSION TWO /
12.45 – 1.45PM

FW2.01:

Assessing the text response essay

LIVESTREAM

This workshop is a space to discuss and challenge assessment practices of the traditional text response essay. With a particular focus on VCE assessment, I will share ways of designing and marking student essays (and invite you to share yours). This is about moving beyond (maybe even abolishing?) TEEL, this is about designing rubrics that prioritise critical thinking and brainstorming, this is about easing our marking workloads and designing curriculum that helps students help themselves, this is about you being exposed to some new ways of thinking and doing so that you can decide what works best for you.

Emily Frawley,
The University of Melbourne

FW2.02:

Building consistent VCE English assessing

LIVESTREAM

This very practical and collaborative workshop is aimed at both current and prospective VCE Year 12 and 11 English teachers. It aims to assist, clarify and reassure participants about productive and supportive approaches to internal VCE English assessing of SACs and internal exams, seeking to clarify and highlight the key facets of VCE English assessing across all Areas of Study. It recognises the importance of establishing assessing benchmarks and the key professional learning which emanates from such considerations. It recognises the challenge in many schools to ensure a consistent approach to both SAC and trial exam assessing. It will strategically outline the core principles of such assessing, offer strategies for ensuring calm and collaborative benchmarking and outline team-building approaches. It will draw from experience in assisting VCE teams in schools to assess in a shared and consistent manner.

Ross Huggard

FW2.03:

Syntax isn't scary: Teaching beyond the right way to write

LIVESTREAM

This workshop takes a descriptivist approach to teaching syntax, encouraging students (especially in middle years) to experiment with grammar and construct unique voices that mirror identities, rather than mimic what is 'correct'. Vic Curric 2.0 years 9/10 involves discussions of, and experimentation with, differing sentence types/structure and how these contribute to the creation of voice. Teachers will leave this workshop with practical ways to teach identification of voices in writing, and have students experiment in creating their own. This will prepare them for greater success in units like creating texts and argument analysis.

Mary McCarthy,
Werribee Secondary College

FRIDAY LIVESTREAM WORKSHOPS

FW3 / SESSION THREE /
2.35 – 3.35PM

FW3.01:

Activating critical thinking LIVESTREAM

There has never been a more important time to recommit to critical thinking skills. As noted in the 2025 Global Risks Report, disinformation and misinformation are now regarded as the greatest threat to humanity and responding to the world's myriad crises will require more than 'known knowledge', such as AI presents. Thus, the imperative for genuinely creative and unchartered, human thinking is needed to fill these gaps. To resist these risks, targeted education remains one of our best lines of defence, as long as we prioritise teaching students the value and the art of critical, systemic and creative thinking. In this workshop, we will provide replicable strategies and text-based work to amplify critical thinking in your classroom.

David Pargetter and Catherine King,
Kingswood College and
Katrina Renard,
Carey Baptist Grammar School

FW3.02:

Fighting dystopian data: Infrastructure to support English teachers in the NAPLAN age LIVESTREAM

Why is English seen as a less 'data driven' discipline in many schools? In an educational climate where standardised testing data is king, how can we empower ourselves as English teachers to resist the datafication of the English curriculum? This workshop will unpack a case study from our school in regional Victoria before opening the floor to a 'data driven' discussion around what artefacts English teachers already use in their practice. Thus offering practicable strategies to formalise this great wealth of information to fight back against a system that tries to tell the story of the English classroom in ones and zeros.

Bri Hassett and Jake Watson,
Catholic College Sale

FW3.03:

Practical strategies to embed First Nations literature in Years 7 –10 LIVESTREAM

This workshop equips Years 7–10 teachers with practical strategies to embed First Nations literature through the Victorian Curriculum F–10. This workshop aims to tackle the practical constraints of school timetables by offering modular units that can be integrated into English schedules without overloading staff. Participants will receive a clear scope-and-sequence, mapped to curriculum content descriptions and supported by VCAA's Koorie Cross-Curriculum Protocols to ensure respectful, community-engaged practice. Text choices and teaching resources foster inquiry into First Nations languages, storytelling, colonisation, and cultural knowledge. Practical implementation tools are PLC-ready, enabling sustainable integration within semester planning and timetables – ensuring culturally responsive pedagogy aligned with curriculum standards and protocols.

Maya Mulhall,
Blackburn High School

curiouser and curiouser

Victoria (Velda) Elliot, Oxford University

Kirk Docker, *You Can't Ask That*

Victoria Kuttainen, James Cook University

Graham Akhurst, *Borderland*

Trish Dowsett, ACER

Perth

8 - 11 July, 2026

ABOUT VATE

Ambition

VATE is a not-for-profit subject association committed to a vision of subject English that is equitable, inclusive, robust, creative, responsive, and critical. Through collaboration and community, VATE serves its members and their students from all sectors and regions across the state of Victoria.

Purpose

VATE exists to support its members at all stages of their English teaching career in the continuous process of renewal necessary to engage with the dynamic nature of both the profession and subject English. Through professional networks, advocacy, research, journals, professional learning, and resources, VATE leads and nurtures a community of teachers of secondary English committed to their students and the advancement of the profession.

Commitments

VATE is committed to Makarrata and Truth-telling. VATE acknowledges that we work, teach and learn on unceded land. Our work will recognise and celebrate the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples of Australia as the first teachers and storytellers. For a fair and just society, we will promote and advocate for truth-telling in the English curriculum and collaborate with First Nations people and organisations to co-create programs and resources.

VATE will advocate for the English teaching profession and our students in a range of educational contexts and the wider community. We will develop and provide policies and programs that underpin our advocacy work.

VATE will strengthen and nurture learning communities, professional networks, collaborative inquiry communities, and other professional learning contexts which allow teachers to reflect collaboratively, creatively, and critically on current practices and future directions for English teaching.

VATE will continue to develop effective professional learning programs for teachers to ensure continued development in the learning and teaching of English at all secondary levels. We will strengthen our commitment to equity of access for all members by delivering professional learning through a range of modes.

VATE will initiate, support, identify, and disseminate research to our members through our journal, *Idiom*, and other publications and resources.

VATE will strengthen and expand our suite of publications. We will commit to developing new resources that are freely available to our members.

To benefit its members, VATE will develop strategic partnerships at state and national levels with other teaching and subject associations, bureaucracies, statutory bodies and organisations.

To respond to the challenges of climate change, VATE will develop environmentally sustainable practices to minimise our carbon footprint at all VATE events and in all aspects of our work.

RESEARCH/ING ENGLISH

Research/ing English is a series of initiatives that link explicitly to VATE's ongoing focus on effective professional learning and renewal, supporting members to make evidence-informed decisions related to teaching and student learning in English.

VATE's focus on research aims to empower English educators with new knowledge, to enhance advocacy and agency, and to create opportunities for English teachers to engage in, share and value school-based practitioner inquiries. Recent topics of research focus have included **Teaching Reading** and **Digital Media Literacies**.

The **Research Snapshot** is a curated email of free-to-access research about a specific topic including links to recommended reading, brief annotations and discussion questions.

Led by a panel of experts, the **Dialogue Seminars** include discussion and active contributions from members who wish to interrogate some of the ideas presented in the Research Snapshot.

Discussion Papers provide members with access to contemporary and enduring thinking and research written by experts in the field of secondary English education.

The **Longview Essay** will provide members with academic commentary that can assist with the pedagogical and philosophical demands of teaching English in Victoria.

VATE Publications

VATE publications are prepared by an experienced team of teacher-writers and editors drawing on their knowledge and expertise in English education. Written for a teacher-audience, VATE publications are designed to support classroom teachers, helping them interpret the curriculum, including the VCE Study Designs, and offering practical suggestions for classroom activities, assessment tasks, texts, and recommendations for reading and other resources. VATE publications are available for purchase in VATE's [online store](#).



VICTORIAN ASSOCIATION FOR
THE TEACHING OF ENGLISH

Inside Stories



VATE's Inside Stories guides are updated every year for new texts on the VCE English text list, supporting the teaching of VCE English Unit 3 and Unit 4: Areas of Study 1 – Reading and responding to texts. The 2026 Inside Stories are now available for the following new texts: **Selected Poems – Langston Hughes, Orbital, Regeneration, We Come with This Place.**

Literature Perspectives



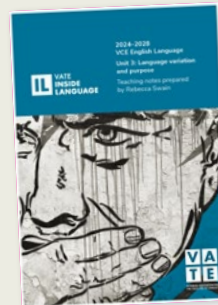
To support the teaching of Units 3–4 VCE Literature, VATE produces **Literature Perspectives** guides on all the new Literature texts each year. Closely aligned with the VCE Literature Study Design, each guide offers an introduction to the text as well as practical suggestions for teaching and assessing the text across the Areas of Study.

Inside Frameworks



VATE's Inside Frameworks guide supports English teachers planning for and teaching the Creating texts Area of Study in VCE English. It is intended to supplement the Study Design, the List 2 mentor texts, and other support material provided by VCAA, exploring different ways of approaching each of the Framework Ideas – Personal journeys, Play, Country and Protest.

Inside Language



VATE's Inside Language is a series of guides supporting the teaching of VCE Units 1–4 English Language. Each guide explores the content, including the required metalanguage, and offers practical advice and suggestions for teaching strategies, classroom activities, sample texts, ways of assessing and recommended resources.

Activating Reading Capabilities in English



This practical book introduces the framework of reading capabilities developed by the authors, inviting teachers to reflect critically on their practice. It includes reading activities designed to activate the capabilities and engage students to think deeply about texts, collaborate with peers, and respond with imagination and scrutiny. Also includes samples of student work.

Into the Woods: Finding your way through literary theory



Into the Woods is your essential guide to using literary theory in your English curriculum, empowering teachers and students to approach texts in different ways. Theories include: reader-response, ecological, feminist, queer, Marxist, and postcolonial. Featuring classroom activities, glossaries, and further reading.

ACCOMMODATION OPTIONS

Burwood Serviced Apartments

300 Burwood Hwy,
Burwood VIC 3125

(03) 8820 6161

burwoodapartments@outlook.com

- \$169 p/night one bedroom
- \$229 p/night two bedrooms
- \$329 p/night three bedrooms

Reference the Deakin University
Conference with VATE when booking
to access a discount.

Quest Burwood East

315 Burwood Hwy,
Burwood East VIC 3151

(03) 9069 6888

questburwoodeast@questapartments.com.au

- \$165 p/night studio
- \$200 p/night one bedroom
- \$320 p/night two bedroom

Please use 'VATE2025' when
booking to receive the above rates.

Quest Mont Albert

741 Whitehorse Rd,
Mont Albert VIC 3127

(03) 8843 1500

questmontalbert@questapartments.com.au

- \$205 per night/one bedroom
apartment including parking
- \$305 per night/two bedroom
apartment including parking

To access this rate either:

- Mention "**Deakin Conference 2025**" when booking via
phone or email
- Use **Deakin2025** when booking [online](#)

CATERERS

The Healthlink Crew

Disclaimer: Levels to reactions of allergens vary, with some reactions being simply due to proximity (airborne) and others occurring only after consumption of the allergen. VATE is therefore unable to guarantee there are no allergens in the food and beverages being served at this event.

CODE OF CONDUCT

VATE is committed to providing a safe, productive, and welcoming environment for all our in-person and online professional learning events where everyone may learn, network, and socialise in an environment of mutual respect. All participants, including but not limited to attendees, speakers, volunteers, exhibitors, traders, VATE staff members, and service providers, are expected to abide by this Code of Conduct. This Code of Conduct applies to all VATE professional learning events, including those sponsored by organisations other than VATE but held in conjunction with VATE.

VATE has zero tolerance for any form of discrimination or harassment. If you experience harassment or hear

of any incidents of unacceptable behaviour, please contact [Kate Gillespie](#) or a VATE staff member in attendance.

Unacceptable behaviour is defined as the following:

- Harassment, intimidation, or discrimination in any form.
- Verbal abuse of any attendee, speaker, volunteer, exhibitor, trader, VATE staff member, service provider, or other guest, examples of which include, but are not limited to, verbal comments related to gender, sexual orientation, disability, physical appearance, body size, race, religion, or national origin; and, inappropriate use of nudity and/or sexual images in presentations.

- Disruption of presentations during sessions – all participants must comply with the instructions of moderators, facilitators, speakers, and VATE online event staff.
- Inclusion of promotional materials, special offers, job offers, product announcements, or solicitation for services in presentations, postings, and messages; VATE reserves the right to remove such messages.

VATE reserves the right to take any action deemed necessary and appropriate, including immediate removal of a participant violating this Code of Conduct without warning or refund, in response to any incident of unacceptable behaviour.

The map shows the University of Birmingham campus with the following features:

- Holland Ave**: A major road running vertically on the left side of the map.
- Morgan's Walk**: A road running diagonally from the center towards the bottom right.
- Registration Desk and Exhibition Hall**: A large blue building at the top center.
- Library**: A large white building in the center.
- Bus Drop-off and Pickup**: A green arrow pointing to a specific area near the bottom center.
- Entrance 1: Burwood Highway**: A red arrow pointing to the bottom left corner.
- Car Parking**: A large orange rectangular area at the top center.
- Various Buildings**: Labeled with letters like HE, HD, HC, X, I, and B.
- Route**: A red dotted line with arrows indicating the path through the campus.
- Other Labels**: P (Parking), B (Bus), and T (Train) are scattered throughout the map.



Hoops of Steel

An ETAQ Podcast



Hosted by Julie Arnold



Listen in to connect with fellow English teachers through conversations about language, literature, and learning.



VICTORIAN ASSOCIATION FOR THE TEACHING OF ENGLISH

1/134–136 Cambridge Street
Collingwood VIC 3066

T 9411 8500
E events@vate.org.au

ABN: 22 667 468 657
Inc No A0013525E

www.vate.org.au