The Education State

Conversation Workbook

Melton City Council

Community Learning Board & Community

29 July 2015
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Conversation Workbook

This workbook will assist you in having an informed conversation about the Education State. Use the workbook to record your thoughts and ideas. Your host will take a record of the group’s conversation and submit it after the session. Your conversation will focus on questions in four areas:

1. The Education State vision
2. Achieving the vision
3. Student needs
4. Partnering
1 The Education State vision

“Education is the key to our own future. It unlocks creativity, opportunity and innovation. It’s what keeps young people engaged, the economy strong, our culture vibrant and society healthy” The Hon James Merlino MP, Deputy Premier and Minister for Education

Lifelong education through a strong education and training system is important to ensuring that where you are born or grow up doesn’t determine your life chances.

A high quality education system positively impacts peoples’ lives through better physical and mental health, creating more links and networks between people and their communities. Education is the foundation of a cohesive, healthy and prosperous society.

**Question 1: What will the Education State look and feel like to you? How would you define it?**

**Introduction**

The City of Melton Community Learning Board’s community conversation response to the Education State vision also incorporated the following questions:

- Why do we need schools, education and learning?
- What does the best school in the world look like?

Also incorporated in the groups response to the Education State Vision included some of the UNESCO Key Features for Learning Cities (2014) and the Mission of the City of Melton’s Community Learning Plan 2015-2018 (attached)

**The vision**

“The Education State should produce learners that leave a legacy for future generations” (Melton SC student)

The Education State generates lifelong learning opportunities that grow and nurture the social, cultural, economic, environmental and personal well being of all Victorian’s and their communities. The Education State:

- Promotes a vibrant culture of lifelong learning in all communities
- Facilitates, supports and resources lifelong learning programs across the life cycle
- Ensures social inclusion and cohesion and a better life for all
- Revitalises learning in families and communities
- Extends the use of modern learning technologies
- Provides and supports effective learning for and in the work place
- Enhances the quality and excellence in learning
- Improves individual lives, fosters personal growth, accomplishment and provides the tools, knowledge and skills to follow dreams.

“The best school does not look like our schools today. The best school looks like a community where there is learning through life, learning through experiences, travelling the world both physically and virtually.” (Conversation participant)

“The best school in the world looks like there is lots of learning going on and lots of opportunities for the kids.” (Kurunjang P.S student)
Question 2: As a learner, what is your experience of education and what impact has it, or will it have, on your life?

Introduction

In response to this question the City of Melton group also discussed the questions:

- What makes schools a better place?
- What aspects of learning do you like most?
- What would you like to see more of in the school and community?

The responses whilst indicating some past and present impacts largely focused on how education should impact on learners.

- Need processes to facilitate future thinking, future skills and abilities
- I like sport, math and writing
- Better planning tools for career, health and community life
- More opportunities to discover new things
- Capacity and flexibility to learn when you need to know
- Increased opportunities to engage in practical and applied learning
- A dynamic and safe environment where one can express ones personality
- Open challenges
- Open ideas and opportunities
- Learn something new everyday
- Acquiring new ways of thinking
- Too much disruption to learning

“Really fun, lots of work being done and no bullying” (Kurunjang PS student)
2 Achieving the vision

To achieve the Education State, we first need to understand the current challenges and opportunities facing the Victorian Education System. We need to understand our current performance and the key drivers which influence it.

Once we understand the state of play in the education system we need to determine the right interventions and solutions that will achieve a more equitable system across the whole State. To do this we need to reflect on the successes in the Victorian system and look abroad for replicable education system Interventions.

**Question 3: Do these strengths and challenges reflect your experience of Victoria’s education system?**

In response to this question the City of Melton group also discussed the question:

- What does the best education system in the world look like?

It is difficult to assess whether or not the strengths and challenges identified in the introduction to achieving vision have been totally addressed. The City of Melton participants generally reflected on what a world class education system should like and ought to do.

The most fundamental principle that any education system should recognize and embrace is that the need to learn is the human condition and all of us, whatever our background, ability, experience or circumstance, learn. Learning is in all that we do, wherever we are and whoever we are with. Given this, the Education State should take a whole of community approach to learning. Learning should not be isolated within the confines of schools or the various learning providers but integrated, connected and resourced across the local government area.

The strategic question for an education system is what learning is most important and how that learning is best made available to meet the current and future needs of individuals, families, local communities, regions, states, the nation and our position in the world as global citizens. What we learn in earliest childhood, in the kinder room, through our schooling and in our communities will impact on everything else; how inclusive and cohesive our society is, its health, creativity, sustainability and prosperity.

Other responses include the Education State supports:

- Student and client centred learning
- New ideas and innovation
- A system that is open to change
- Systematic evaluation, research and review to improve
- Opportunities for learners with different learning styles and needs
- Support for partnerships between community organizations, learning providers, business and industry and government at all levels
- Future thinking in a cutting edge curriculum with the tools to aid this learning in a relevant and timely way. An example of a future thinking question was given: “What will learning to drive look like when we have driverless cars?”
- Learning environments that suit students and their varied development needs and abilities

Inclusion issues where the ability to access latest technologies, computers, tablets, applications and the like are not based on an individual families ability to pay.
**Question 4: What other areas of our current performance do we need to address to help us become the Education State?**

A vision for a learning Victoria and Education state will also need future thinking with new policies that reflect this and new ways of looking at how programs are delivered. Ongoing research and evaluation implemented at the system and local levels to provide data to inform planning for improvement.

In response to this question the City of Melton group also discussed the questions:

- **How can the education system be improved?**

The City of Melton as an outer suburb of Melbourne is one of fastest urban growth areas in Australia. Melton needs to build two primary schools every two years. An Education State would give priority to infrastructure that is place making and facilitates learning. Performance in this area could be improved by:

- Allocating budget resources to outer suburbs where the population growth and infrastructure needs are greatest
- Providing new schools, kindergartens and community infrastructure and upgrading the same, including Melton Specialist school, in a timely manner
- Provide and improve public transport and transport connectivity generally but particularly to and within new communities including schools and community facilities
- Provide low cost child care close to and co-located with schools and community facilities

Growth areas are building new communities from the ground up. This provides State Government a marvelous opportunity to partner with local government to implement world’s best practice in place making and the opportunity to provide community infrastructure to necessary for learning cities. Performance in this area could be improved by:

- Building infrastructure around community hubs with schools, kindergartens, shared facilities and open spaces
- Co-locating services to support and partner with schools and the community
- Providing community and learning spaces in all new buildings and when upgrading facilities
- Identifying creative funding options including public private partnerships.
- Designing and building new schools and kindergartens according to world’s best practice and flexibly designed and placed around community hubs to future proof the facilities.

Create structures and support Universities and TAFE colleges to provide courses in local areas, particularly in outer urban growth areas like Melton and in rural areas. This may involve:

- State support for community organizations and local government to work collaboratively to identify learning spaces where Universities and TAFE colleges can deliver flexible, tailor made or boutique programs to a community;
- State support for Victoria University to identify and run course off of its Melton campus and to prevent its sale. It seems to be a retrograde step, poor business planning, to be closing a higher education and TAFE facility in such rapidly growing outer urban community.
Other responses include the Education State should:

- Providing a broader range of community learning options for young people in addition to schools and can articulate or transition into certificate and degree courses.
- A one system fits all approach does not meet the learning and social needs of all.
- Create structures, alternative learning settings and opportunities for those that have suffered learning disadvantage, disengaged from formal schooling and in need for remediation.
- Smaller class sizes review ratios between students and teachers
- Enabling the ability for schools provide flexible start and finish times
- Programs resources and facilities to support growing CaLD and refugee communities
- English language school opportunities CaLD young people and adults in Melton
- Improve support of schools to implement education policy.
- Listen to and engage parents, students and community
- Provide honest feedback and clarity around government policy, for example, the inconsistent messages to parents around zoning and parent choice of schools.

**Question 5: Are there areas of our performance that we need to know more about?**

In response to question 5 the conversation touched on some areas where performance could be improved but also made suggestions about the kinds of things the Education State should do.

The Education State needs to be above politics so that a long term plan can be implemented to improve Victoria’s social, economic, cultural and environmental strength. Tailoring support and learning programs to the needs of local communities and individuals alike is viewed as most desirable.

Participants identified that the Education State should:

- Increased investment in education, early learning, schools, TAFE and higher education, adult and community learning

  Increase local involvement in decision making and governance. Increase opportunities for student and family voices to be heard.

- Improvement needed in teacher education

  Train high quality educators and curriculum practitioners. A suggested method of achieving this was put forward. Form partnerships between DET, VIT, Universities and schools to align and integrate teacher professional development requirements and activities with the view that all teachers obtain a Masters Degree or PHD by the time they transition from being a beginning teacher to becoming an experienced teacher. Research and teacher training would be included in this.

- Consider a variety and balance of life and work experiences and diversity in backgrounds when recruiting teachers

- Enable schools to also become community resources not island fortresses within communities. Assist schools to overcome some minor technical blockers, for example, security systems and people with time to manage community engagement.
• Facilitate up to date and future thinking curriculum is supported and implemented

• Provide larger classroom spaces, flexible and a greater variety of learning spaces…

• Ensure different abilities and skills are identified and individual plans developed to support each individual reach their full potential

• Begin a process for educating children on issues of bullying, including the ability to negotiate, working together and life skills.

• Resource schools and communities to implement programs that develop the learning & life skills needed to successfully and productively participate in modern society. These skills include, social, leisure, health, digital, civic, financial & employment capabilities

• Ensure well researched and consistent structures in curriculum delivery across the system; early childhood, primary and secondary education

• Ensure a variety of course options are available to students. Particularly at senior secondary level and including certificate courses

• Fund more facilities for music, visual and performing arts and sport

• Evaluate for continuous improvement

• Clarify and provide consistent advice about zoning and parent rights of choice of schools No zoning parent choice of schools

• Build more P-12 schools to avoid transition issues

• Fund Melton specialist school to undertake a major upgrade or rebuild

• Build a new primary school to service the Eynesbury community and overcome overcrowding, services and utilities issues faced by Exford Primary School.
**Question 6: Should we measure our performance against both local and global measures of success?**

It was generally agreed that it is important to measure against both local and global measures of success. Local strategic actions and considerations can inform and contribute to global actions and considerations particularly if broad objectives of systems and organizations are aligned. Globalization is a reality and should, in part at least, guide local action and any evaluation strategy, including measures of performance. It is important that the Education State produces active global citizens.

The nature of the measures and what the measures look like was varied.

It was considered that standardized testing should not drive pedagogy or overly influence curriculum planning or the resources allocated to meet the learning needs of students and community. It is suggested a **value added** model of measuring to be implemented not simple raw scores or the creation of ‘league tables’.

Measuring performance in the Education State should be based on sound research and aligned with international research particularly with organizations like the OECD and UNESCO.

Melton City Council’s Council Plan 2013-2017 and the Community Learning Plan 2015-2018 identify social and economic challenges for the Melton community. Various data sources including ABS Census data, employment data, the Australian Early Development Census, SEIFA, the Schools On Track Survey and Literacy and Numeracy data (NAPLAN and PISA) as well as other economic and social data and local research are gathered and collated. It has been suggested that for system improvement to occur there needs to be improvement at the local level where each individual community’s unique issues are addressed.

The data shows some particular long term and inter generational challenges for the Melton community, for example, the high number of residents that have no qualifications 48.1% (ABS Census 2011) or the numbers with lower than state, national and global average literacy and numeracy levels (NAPLAN and PISA). The City of Melton recognizes that no single organization can create large-scale lasting social change alone. There is no quick solution to systemic social problems, and these problems cannot be solved by simply, testing and measuring in isolation, scaling or replicating one organization or program. Strong organizations are necessary but not sufficient for large-scale social change.

Performance needs to measure against how well a community can:

1. identify its core issues;
2. develop local benchmark data to measure improvement against; and
3. A community learning plan with measurable targets to be achieved
4. Agreements between community stakeholders to work together to collectively meet the challenges.

In summary, whilst it is important for the Education State to hold an international, national and State policy and system performance perspective, it is how well improvements can be made at the local level that will have the most significant impact. Think globally act locally.
3 Student needs

Victoria will fulfill its Ganske obligations by targeting more funding at the students who need it the most. This will be done by focusing efforts at children in primary school who are from disadvantaged backgrounds as well as high school students whose education levels are well below what they should be for their age.

To move from a good education system to a great education system we need to learn from our success in Victoria as well abroad. This means implementing the right interventions across the state to meet the needs of our students and teachers.

**Question 7: What would you like to be different when you visit early years services, kindergartens, schools, TAFEs and training providers – now and in the future?**

“Lots of fun, lots of work getting done.” (Kurunjang PS student)

“School would be a better place if they gave us more opportunity to do things like art, sport and music as well as academic things” (Kurunjang PS student)

A systematic and community approach that focuses on learning throughout life, beginning with prenatal learning, through maternal child and health, early learning, kindergarten, primary and secondary schooling and pathways into training, higher education and full time employment, community life and into older age.

Learning in the early years and careers, pathways planning and transition support were seen as particularly important. The Education State needs to:

- Ensure there are support programs and tracking data are provided at all transition points. No one should fall through the cracks at any transition point. Maternal child health into kinder, kinder to primary, primary to secondary or junior secondary to senior secondary and into post school options.
- To inform this work data also needs to be gathered and collated and reported on, by local government area, showing the number of early school leavers, and their destinations, prior to year 12. This would also include retention and completion data that is gathered, collated and reported.
- “Resource kindergarten places for all families.” (Melton conversation participant)
- It was generally considered that a strong focus in early childhood learning, building families’ capacity to support learning will have best long term social and economic benefits.
- “Support and implement initiatives that assist our families to provide a supportive and rich learning and developmental environment for their children” (City of Melton Community Learning Plan 2015-2018)
- The Education State would incubate and support local initiatives that provide flexible quick local education and training responses to existing and emerging local employment skill needs.
- “Quick turnaround training responses to where the new and emerging jobs are.” (Melton conversation participant)
- Well resourced expert careers counseling services are made available in schools and across communities. Industry and workplace experts employed to facilitate school and community links into and with industry.
Other areas discussed included:

- Increased resourcing for music, performing arts and language programs in schools
- Opportunities to showcase talents of students, teachers and community learning practitioners
- That there is a vibrant well managed Melton Campus of Victoria University
- Less crowded curriculum
- Part time schooling options
- Mentors coaches and buddies employed or as volunteers across sectors and ages
- Training and programs to foster and maintain teacher student relationships

**Question 8: What targets do you think we need to set to measure our progress towards becoming the Education State?**

“Help the kids more!” “…give kids more individual attention.” “Prepare kids for the next year” (Kurunjang PS students)

“Link schools, communities and systems” (Melton conversation participant)

The City of Melton Community Learning Board and the Education State conversation participants offered range of options to measuring performance giving consideration to academic performance, literacy and numeracy levels and system wide approaches to learning delivery for social and economic improvement.

To creation of the Education State will require policy changes that enable lifelong learning to become a key policy component across all areas of government and organizations working in communities. Benchmark performance targets should be developed at the local level addressing local issues and needs. This local first approach will impact improvement for all of Victoria.

The City of Melton as a Learning City has embraced the UNESCO Framework of Key Features of Learning Cities and joined the UNESCO Global Learning Cities Network. Melton has also embraced the Australian Centre of Excellence for Local Government’s Learning as a Driver of Change: Learning Community Framework. This is reflected in the City of Melton Community Learning Plan 2015-2018.

An increasing number of Local Governments are appointing lifelong learning officers and developing community learning plans. The number of cities across the world declaring themselves as learning cities is increasing rapidly, particularly in Asia and South America. Local Governments are well placed to play a role in bringing stakeholders in learning together to address local social and economic needs. Some suggested targets around this are offered for consideration:

- The number of Victorian local governments that declare themselves as learning cities or learning communities and have a community lifelong learning plan aligned to the Education State vision, a community governance structure and allocated staff and resources.
- The number of local governments or LGA’s that the Education State provides with support and resources to bring community stakeholders together to collectively implement lifelong learning strategies.
- The number of learning cities/communities joining with the national and internal networks such as the Australian Learning Communities Network and the UNESCO Global Learning Cities Network.
The City of Melton has developed the Collective Impact Assessment Tool to measure impact that the Community Learning Board partnerships are having on agreed and measurable targets identified in their learning plan. This could be made available to all communities and organizations that utilize partnerships to achieve measurable goals.

It was generally agreed that it is desirable schools to be engaging more closely with community organizations and business and industry for mutual benefit. The key issue for schools is the lack of people with flexible time to undertake this work. A suggested target measure for progress:

- *The number of schools that have been resourced to develop community and business partnership links with organizations brought together to coordinate lifelong learning across the community.*

Other targets identified included:

- *The number of local strategies supported by the State that provide training to meet current and future knowledge skills needed for local jobs*

- *That a benchmark figure for investment in or funding for, the Education State be made as a % of per capita GDP. This figure be reviewed and benchmarked against the world’s best systems.*

- *A coordinated effort to bring together key data sources to identify priority areas for action and assist decision making eg schools data, pathways and transitions data, ABS CENSUS, SEIFA, literacy and numeracy (PISA and NAPLAN), AECD etc…*
4 Partnering

Achieving the Education State will require a journey together with students, families, teachers, education providers, the Department and the Government. There will be unique challenges and opportunities for different sectors. We will need to work together to achieve an equitable Education State that encourages lifelong learning.

**Question 9: What opportunities exist in our communities for learning outside of the formal education system, for example in our libraries, museums and community centres?**

The City of Melton as a Learning City provides learning spaces in its new infrastructure. Learning is delivered out of its libraries and community facilities. This is done in conjunction with Universities, TAFE for profit and not for profit learning providers and informal community based programs.

Melton has formed a Community Learning Board as an advisory Committee to Council. Its membership is made up of community organizations, NGO's, community organizations, learning providers, government, community members and business and industry. The Learning Board provides a community governance structure and partnerships to make a collective impact on agreed priority improvements areas. A four year Community Learning Plan is developed, implemented and evaluated to do this. The current learning plan is Melton’s sixth.

 Appropriately resourced by the Education State, Local Government is ideally placed to take on the role of bringing stakeholders together to take a coordinated or collective approach to resolving their community’s various and often unique challenges through lifelong learning.

Further related areas to partnerships were mentioned:

- **Resources be made available to enable community partnerships to be developed and maintained**
- **Guidelines for resource sharing, particularly between government funded organizations, examples of MoU’s and resource agreements be developed**
- **Resources made available to businesses to assist them with the time to engage with schools local government and community**
- **Resources made available to ensure CaLD communities, people with disabilities, seniors and other equity groups can fully participate**
- **Play groups and kindergartens be included in community partnerships**
- **State and federal government engagement at the local level**
- **Assist schools to set up and maintain sister school programs and make links with schools nationally and internationally**
- **Promote and support local, regional and global learning networks and partnerships.**
- **Engage with existing global and national learning networks, for example, UNESCO Institute of Lifelong Learning (UIL) and its Global learning Cities Network, Australian Learning Communities Network (ALCN) and Adult Learning Australia**
- **Enable sharing between education systems teachers and students connecting and learning from each other**
Question 10: What is the most important thing you could do, and Government can do, to help Victoria become the Education State?

As organizations we are resourced and empowered to make agreements to work together, align our strategic objectives and share resources with the view collectively making a positive impact on our community’s social, economic, cultural and environmental challenges through lifelong learning.
5 Other

Please provide any other feedback, comments or ideas you may have about the ideas in the ideas in the School Consultation Paper

“Free, accessible, future thinking and relevant education for all.” (Melton conversation participant)

Melton a Learning City: Community Learning Plan 2015-2018 attached
6 Conversation form

Contact details

As a host please ensure that you fill out the following details about your consultation event.

Personal information

- Full name: Peter Blunden
- Position: Lifelong Learning Coordinator and Executive Officer to Community Learning Board.
- School/organization: Melton City Council
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Event information

- Date/time: 29 July 2015
- Location: Kurunjang Primary School
- Number of attendees: 53
- Overview of attendees:
  - Parents
  - School staff (primary and secondary)
  - Indigenous Victorians
  - Members of the general community
  - Culturally and linguistically diverse Victorians
  - Students (primary and secondary)
  - Early childhood educators
  - Early childhood providers
  - TAFE/VET/Higher Education Students
  - Other (please specify)
    - U3A
    - Local State Member
    - Melton City Council Officers including the Mayor
    - Higher Education Providers
    - Adult Learning Providers (Learn Local)
    - Neighbourhood Houses
    - Community and Non Government Organisations

Date: 29 July 2015

Signed: Peter Blunden

Full name: Peter Blunden

Please submit your feedback via email: educationstate@edumail.vic.gov.au
7 Privacy Statement

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All comments and submissions are public documents and maybe accessed by any member of the public unless you request and your comments are given confidential status. You can request access to your personal information by contacting the DET’s Freedom of Information Unit by telephone (03) 9637 0000.

Privacy options

Please select an option:

Comments made in my/our feedback are being made by a school/organisation and I understand that it will be disclosed and/or published, including the name of the school/organisation.

- I agree that my group’s feedback can be published openly with my name and suburb/town but no other detail

Important: Selecting the last option in the privacy options above does not guarantee that confidentiality will be granted. DET will consider requests for confidentiality on a case-by-case basis. Please provide reasons why your comments should not be disclosed and/or published and also state whether you would like your comments or submission to be published anonymously or withdrawn if you are not granted confidentiality.