



Australian Government

Department of Education, Employment
and Workplace Relations

Values in Action Newsletter

Number 3 May 2010

Highlights from the Values in Action Schools Project (VASP)

Welcome to the third Values in Action Newsletter!

The Values in Action Schools Project (VASP) formally finished in October 2009, ending a ten-month journey for the 15 clusters of schools involved.

This final newsletter reflects on the VASP, highlighting the Evaluation Summit held in October last year and focusing on the key activities from the day, including student artworks, cluster posters and reports.

The newsletter also offers reflections from some of the key stakeholders involved in the project since its inception, including the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR), one of the VASP University Advisors to the project, as well as the VASP Project Managers from Education Services Australia (the merged entity of Curriculum Corporation and Education.au). Values education initiatives and projects from the states and territories are similarly highlighted.

A reminder too, that there is a suite of values education resources available to support teachers and school leaders with the integration of values education into their school communities. Further details are available on page 10.

Finally, the publication of the VASP Final Report is imminent. This report will provide all Australian schools with more evidence and insights into the powerful impacts of good practice values education and its long-term benefits to students, teachers, parents and the whole school community.

Happy Reading!

In Focus: The Evaluation Summit

The culminating event of the VASP was a unique national gathering in Melbourne on 16 October 2009 to evaluate the project results. The VASP Evaluation Summit brought together parent, teacher and student representatives from the VASP clusters; Values Education State and Territory Project Officers; the University Advisors supporting the clusters; and representatives from DEEWR and Education Services Australia. In an action-filled day participants shared their experiences,

workshopped the significance of the VASP in relation to their local and national contexts, and made summative presentations.

The objectives of this Summit were to identify, share and celebrate outcomes from the 15 VASP projects. A key element of the Summit was participation in a Most Significant Change (MSC) story selection process, intended to inform the Final Report on the VASP to the Australian Government.

Welcome

The Education Services Australia Project Director of VASP welcomed the 114 participants with the following:

The VASP has been established and funded to support schools in implementing, documenting and reporting on what works in values education. We want to know about good practice in values education and then disseminate it. What does effective values education in schooling look like? What do we



One of the student group artworks produced at the Evaluation Summit by Josh B, Shauna, Samantha and Madison. As articulated by the artists on the day, 'Our group is called Interstellar Stars and we're here to tell you about our picture on poverty and peace. Children deserve to go home to a nice warm home, deserve to have a bed to sleep in at least ... Basically our story was about a child who learns about poverty and that it doesn't just happen in Africa but all around the world. So, we represented what every child wants. It doesn't matter what nationality or culture you come from, everyone wants peace, love and happiness ... The colours represent change. In the story the girl has changed her perspective on poverty.'

Student facilitator, Roger Holdsworth, with students at the Evaluation Summit discussing the Most Significant Change stories.

want from values education? How do we know it when we have it? What impacts does it have on students' learning and lives? How can values education produce higher quality schooling? How is values education developed, fostered and promoted?

In closing, he reminded the Summit that their work was critical and important in a much larger story about values education development for all Australian schools.

Poster Presentation

The welcome was followed by a poster presentation session from each cluster, which responded to four questions:

1. What were the goals of our values project?
2. Why were these the selected goals?
3. What did we do in our project?
4. What was achieved?

The poster session provided a concise summary of the project activity from each cluster for the Summit. The specificity of the questions encouraged clusters to use the poster as a collaborative and constructive way of reflecting on their projects. They identified their project achievements and how they might continue the work beyond the funded VASP activity. The posters are both an artefact and an evaluative analytical tool of the VASP.



Following the poster session, the students attending the Summit were invited to join two facilitators, Roger Holdsworth and Nada Jackson, to create six pieces of artwork depicting their interpretation of the impacts of the VASP in their schools. Twenty students from early primary to senior secondary, and from all parts of Australia – from Far North Queensland to Tasmania, and from remote regions to the inner suburbs of Sydney – formed six cross-age groups, mostly with people they had never met before.

The stimulus for the artwork was 11 Most Significant Change stories, written by students from a number of clusters. Roger worked with the students to tease out deeper understandings. The groups worked noisily, excitedly and in a focused way for a couple of hours, developing an artistic representation of their school values projects.

Six very different art pieces were created under Nada's guidance. Each piece sent a clear message that students had engaged with the VASP, understood the purpose and relevance of values education, and had ideas about how to put their values education knowledge into practice in their own lives.

At the end of the day, one of the teachers commented on the students' contribution to the Summit:

Good to see values in action – the students worked so beautifully together representing exactly what values are when enacted ... Students' insights were powerful and inspiring, reinforcing their engagement with values education ... The participation of the students was fabulous.

Most Significant Change Stories and Themes

While the students were engaged in this hands-on activity, the other Summit participants embarked on their key activity for the day – the Most Significant Change (MSC) story selection process.

The MSC process involved the selection of, reflection on and interpretation of significant change stories arising from the values education projects in the clusters. The stories were accounts of change from participants, in the projects. Toward the end of the project each cluster collected 24 stories of change from students, parents and teachers. In a systematic selection by participants the most significant of these stories were identified. The story numbers were filtered down to 12, then to 4 stories from each cluster. Sixteen stories, representing most of the clusters, were then chosen for discussion by participants at the Evaluation Summit. This selection process engaged participants in a critical assessment of *what* changes had occurred within their project and which of these constituted *the most significant* outcomes of their work.

The purpose and outcomes of this participatory social research technique were an integral

component of capturing evidence of the impact of VASP on participating clusters. At the Evaluation Summit, specialist MSC consultant Tracey Delaney worked with participants, who were divided into 14 mixed tables of parents, teachers and University Advisors from different clusters, to select one story from the 16 chosen across VASP which best summed up the most significant change resulting from the project. Each table group had to choose only one story and articulate their reason for that choice. In the end six stories emerged as *the most significant*.

The second element of the MSC was to collect and coherently group the

main themes arising from the story collection. Thirty-eight main themes of change emerged, including impacts on relationships; student empowerment; parent engagement; student wellbeing and resilience; shared values language; enriched pedagogy; teacher professional development; and whole school change.

At the conclusion of the Summit, the participants had selected VASP's Most Significant Change stories and the main themes of significant impacts. These stories and impacts have formed part of the evidence base for the VASP Final Report.



Evaluation Summit participants discuss which story represents to them the most significant change brought about by school activity in the VASP.



Where to Next?

The remaining task was to ask 'where to next?' Again the mixed groups spent time in discussion and sometimes debate, before making definitive statements. Key factors in moving forward with values education included a focus on pedagogy (common language, teacher training, the place of reflection); partnerships between school, parents, community and the students; explicit teaching of values; developing community engagement; and a partnership beyond the school gates. Participants were committed to continuing values education as a vehicle for relationship building, supporting student wellbeing and developing environments conducive to learning.

By this time, a huge volume of work had been completed at the Evaluation Summit. It was a busy day, with lots of food for thought and, most importantly, the Summit mobilised the energy and commitment of all present to return to their school communities to consolidate and continue their values education work in 2010 and beyond.

The main proceedings of the Summit were captured on video and key moments will be published on the Values Education website when the VASP Final Report is released.

The spirit and the outcomes of the Summit are encapsulated by the following comments.

- ‘An excellent way to learn what the other clusters have been working on. Conversely, a great way to highlight the similarities in thinking across the nation.’
- ‘Fantastic session to engage an audience in all the hurdles many teachers, schools and families have to deal with and all the positive outcomes and how they have been achieved.’
- ‘It was extremely interesting to see the broad range of activities and different focuses of each cluster – yet the outcomes were all ‘the same’.’
- ‘Encouraging and inspiring that values education can be the vehicle to effect change.’
- ‘Student voice is at the crux of who we are as educators and what we need to do. This sharing and the activity the students participated in was so powerful – a true reflection of values in action!’

Reflections on the VASP

Phases in the Values Education Journey

Concluding Address at the Evaluation Summit by Professor Judith Chapman

I have been involved in successive values projects for the last five years, working very closely with Education Services Australia and the various teams in values education. I have found the VASP Evaluation Summit a really wonderful experience and to me it has crystallised the worth of the work that has been done in the Values Education projects over the last 5 years.

I was trying to think of the ways in which I could characterise each of the three phases of the values work in Australian education over recent years, especially at this time when it seems that the nationally funded projects are coming to an end. It would seem to me that each phase had its own character and distinctive orientation.

The first phase, beginning in 2005, saw an emphasis on the implementation of the nine values, identified by research commissioned by the Australian Government and articulated in the National Framework for Values Education in Australian Schools. With Values Education Good Practice Schools projects being funded by the national

government, Phase one began as a top-down approach to educational reform, coordinated and managed by Education Services Australia and implemented by a small group of highly committed, innovative teachers, exploring the manifold ways in which values education could find expression in schools and classrooms.

The second phase of the Values Education Good Practice Schools projects yielded a clearer understanding of the principles of good practice. This was perhaps more academic and conceptual in its approach to educational reform, concentrating very much upon the relationship between values education and quality teaching.

But this third phase, I think, has been what values education is really about as we have focused on the ways in which values education can be used as a vehicle for helping young people to think more deeply about themselves, about their relationships with other people and about the ways in which they can find meaning or purpose in their lives. I think the presence of the young people at the Evaluation Summit today has very much epitomised the contribution that values education can make to young people's lives and to Australian education.

But there is still much work to be done, especially in 'engaging the disengaged' where we need to go beyond ourselves in thinking about how we engage young people, parents, and other fellow educators in the challenge of thinking deeply about themselves and others, in finding value, meaning and purpose. The teachers in the various clusters who have offered leadership of the highest calibre, the critical friends associated with Australian universities who have reflected on and researched the experience, and the students who have entered into the values work with such imagination and creativity are all to be congratulated on the achievements of the values reforms in Australian education. We trust that the Australian Government will continue to offer support for initiatives of this kind that bring together the various partners in Australian education, working in the interests of bringing value to the lives of young people and to our Australian community.

**Professor Judith Chapman (AM)
Professor of Education,
Australian Catholic University**

Values in Action – Voices of Significant Change

Reflections from the VASP National Project Managers at Education Services Australia

How do you design a process for capturing the richness of the experiences of 15 diverse school-based values education projects across Australia? And how do you communicate the outcomes or impacts from those projects more widely within the Australian education community?

Education Services Australia set about responding to these challenges when requested to develop a proposal for a third round of funded Values Education projects in August 2008.

VEGPSP 1 and VEGPSP 2, conducted from 2004 to 2008, were from-the-ground-up action research projects which delivered a range of data and advice on best practice values education approaches to Australian educators. In these projects, teachers reflected on their own values, explicitly taught the nine identified values from the *National Framework for Values Education in Australian Schools* (available at www.valueseducation.edu.au), and worked with a range of teaching and learning strategies and tools seen to support the



One of the student group artworks, produced at the Evaluation Summit by Tjakalia, Matthew, Brent and Sebastian. As the artists explained on the day, 'This painting represents cooperation and teamwork and it's based on other people's values journeys. You can see there's the hands which represent cooperation and the coming [together] of the group ... We've got the bigger hands and the smaller hands representing all the adults helping all the smaller kids as well.'

values-rich classroom. Teachers also reflected on their practice by writing journals, and sharing and producing thoughtful case studies about their work and learning. From this activity, the Values Education Good Practice Schools Projects – Stage 2 Final Report *At the Heart of What We Do – Values Education at the Centre of Schooling* (also available at www.valuededucation.edu.au), distilled ten good practices in values education.

The Values in Action Schools Project (VASP) built on these 10 good practices and sought to better understand whether there was a connection between values education and increased wellbeing in school communities. It further wished to understand if values education approaches had a role to play in improving intercultural understanding in school communities and more widely.

Clusters of schools proposed projects around these general themes and work began in December 2008. So what was different about the VASP? What extra elements were added to the project activity? Returning to our two challenges, how would

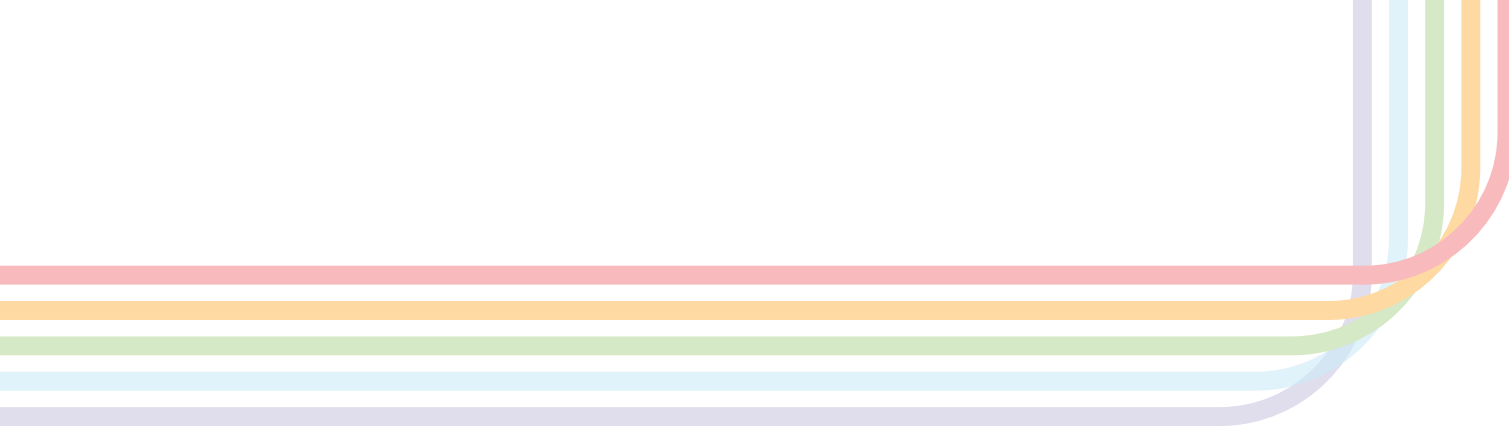
we capture what happened and communicate it to others? The project looked like a dialogical story-based technique called Most Significant Change (MSC). The appeal of MSC was its ability to capture the 'voice' of project beneficiaries. The MSC captured impacts across diverse but related efforts. Hence, when asked the question: 'Over the past nine months, what has been the most significant change that has resulted from your involvement in the [name values project],' answers were reflective, deeply personal and drawn from various perspectives.

As VASP Project Managers travelled around the 15 VASP clusters collecting these stories of change and recording them, it became apparent that the MSC story collection process engaged school communities in important discussions about what they felt were the significant impacts of their values projects. As well as uncovering 'significant changes' or 'impacts' from project implementation, the MSC process asked groups of parents, teachers and students why they ascribed significance to a particular story. This deeper level of inquiry invited

participants to clarify what was important to them and why. The process also enabled individuals and groups to focus on lessons learned from enacting their projects. Dialogue was at the heart of the technique. Importantly, parents were highly engaged in this process, and appreciated being a part of a discussion about the social and emotional wellbeing of their children.

When the MSC stories were given back to cluster communities as transcripts and they were asked to engage in a further selection process, the conversations about 'significant change' project impacts assumed another, deeper level and encouraged further discussions about what was 'valued' as a result of the projects.

In addition to the MSC, the VASP clusters also made very effective use of the University Advisors. Many clusters made a particular point of creating more direct engagement with parents and in developing locally based data. A pre- and post-teacher survey delivered across all clusters provided another means of collecting meaningful data. All of these components, together with



each of the cluster's own project reports, delivered to Education Services Australia a rich account of VASP activities and outcomes.

As reflected by Dr Jenny Wajsenberg, one of Education Services Australia's Co-project Managers for VASP:

The Values in Action Schools Project was both a powerful and empowering undertaking for the cluster schools. As one of the Project Managers, I was struck by the way in which VASP brought the three partners [students, parents and teachers] together in a common purpose. To me, one of the most powerful and constructive ways of putting this in action was the Most Significant Change story collection. The MSC stories clearly demonstrated that the technique of concentrating on the most important change enabled participants to articulate transformations in learning and putting values into daily practice.

More importantly, this kind of tool created a safe and real learning environment which extends beyond the formal classroom. Parents who previously had little contact with the school spoke openly about the ways

in which home and school were working together. Children heard their parents express admiration for the kinds of conversations and behaviours that were now happening in the home as a result of the values education work at school. Teachers also described how their own practice and relationships with students have been affected. The Most Significant Change stories highlighted these transformations which have touched heads, hearts and hands.

Jane Weston, the other Education Services Australia Co-project Manager reflected:

The Values in Action Schools Project delivered powerful and moving stories about the ability of values-centred approaches to produce a range of positive impacts in school communities. I felt privileged to witness parents, students and teachers reflecting on some of these impacts. Perhaps the impact that was most noticeable to me was the power of a shared values language to begin important conversations about the place of values in classrooms and more broadly in communities. Certainly,

parents often reported feeling like they were part of the 'curriculum conversation', rather than peripheral to it. It was apparent in all clusters that what we implicitly assume about values understandings in school communities needs to be made explicit in many ways. The VASP Final Report will explore these issues in some detail, and has much to say about the importance of shared understandings and ongoing engagement around important values propositions.

The findings of the VASP, including data from the MSC, the Evaluation Summit, University Advisors' observations, online surveys, and cluster reports to Education Services Australia, have been analysed and the VASP Final Report is in development. The Final Report will encapsulate the key impacts of the VASP and include evidence for those impacts. The report is due for completion by Education Services Australia at the end of May. Once it has been presented to and accepted by DEEWR, the Executive Summary and full report will be made available to all schools and published on the Values Education website.

Values Education Resources for All Australian Schools

A reminder to teachers and school leaders that there is a rich repository of values education resources for Australian schools to support the integration of values education into Australian classrooms and school communities. The Values for Australian Schooling resources were developed and delivered to all schools in 2005–2009.

Building Values Across the Whole School

Distributed to the principals of all Australian schools in early 2009 (following online publication in late 2007), this series contains three books: *Teaching and Learning Units: Primary*; *Teaching and Learning Units: Secondary*; and the *Professional Learning Program*.

The Teaching and Learning Units include units of work that support the integration of values education across a range of learning areas in the classroom. The Professional Learning Program provides three modules to support teachers to become efficient and confident values educators.

Supporting Student Wellbeing Through Values Education: A Resource Package

Also distributed to schools, first online in 2007 and then in print in early 2009, this resource aims to develop student responsibility, social skills and wellbeing.

Containing two books, one for primary and one for secondary, each is made up of two sections. Understanding Values: Dilemmas focuses on primary and secondary dilemmas linked to the Key Learning Areas (KLAs); while the Values in Action: Modules links values education with extracurricular activities for outside the classroom.

Values Education in Intercultural and Global Contexts

These resources are designed to support primary and secondary schools to foster explicit values learning, inclusiveness and intercultural understanding.

They include:

- *Side by Side*: A big book for lower primary to promote intercultural understanding and community relationships. Delivered to all Australian primary schools in late 2009.
- *World of Values*: A student-centred website that offers a rich variety of digital resources to explore values through personal, intercultural and global perspectives. Published online in late 2009.
- *Values-centred Schools – A Guide*: A website to support school leaders in building a values-centred school culture using a whole school approach. Provides practical advice, case studies and resources from schools involved in the Values Education Good Practice Schools Project. Published online in late 2009.

- *Teaching for Intercultural Understanding: Professional Learning Program*: A PDF drawing on the intercultural understandings highlighted in *Side by Side* and *World of Values*, this online resource supports teachers in educating about values in intercultural contexts. Published online in late 2009.

Accessing the Resources Online

With the exception of *Side by Side*, all resources are available to use and/or download from the Values Education website www.valueseducation.edu.au using the online access key, which is available by contacting Education Services Australia.

Schools are permitted to download the resources to their school intranet or to make print copies for educational use. Please note that third-party copyright restrictions prohibit the distribution and/or publication of the access key or resources on a publicly accessible website or via email.

Additional copies of *Side by Side* are available for purchase from Education Services Australia's online shop at www.curriculumpress.edu.au/main/goproduct/12896.

Additional Information

For additional information regarding the suite of Values for Australian Schooling resources, or if you require assistance to access them, please contact the values team at Education Services Australia via email at valuesresources@esa.edu.au.



The States and Territories

Taking Values Education Further

As part of the national Values Education Program (2008–2009), the Australian Government funded a number of state and territory managed initiatives to support values education in Australian schools.

As highlighted at the Values Education State and Territory Officers Meeting in Canberra in December last year, the past 14 months have seen a myriad of values activity. With an emphasis on sustainability and a whole school community approach, these have included professional development activities for teachers, workshops, resource promotions, school grants for small action research projects, forums and conferences.

Highlights from the states and territories include the following.

- ACT: 14 school-based values education action research projects were funded. A New Educator Support Program delivered professional learning in values education for newly appointed teachers, and a series of lectures and tutorials on values education were also delivered to pre-service teachers at the Australian Catholic University.
- TAS: Values education focused professional learning workshops were conducted across such focus areas as Sustainability, Middle School Literacy, Asian Studies, Intercultural Understanding, Civics and Citizenship, Health and Wellbeing, and Cyber Safety.
- NT: Grants were distributed to schools to implement the Effective Lifelong Learning Inventory (ELLI) project. Professional learning and support for teachers in ELLI was extended to schools across the Territory, including to remote areas and cross-sector contexts. Through self-reflection, ELLI assists students in identifying themselves as learners; understanding their personal learning styles; taking responsibility for their learning; and building resilience, independence and confidence.
- NSW: Across the sectors, professional learning workshops were conducted in areas of student agency; bullying; whole school change; service learning; values, wellbeing and learning; student wellbeing and resilience; values in the classroom; and values in Creative Arts. These workshops were designed to improve teachers' ability to identify, disseminate and promote the use of good practice models of values education.
- QLD: A range of professional development initiatives, including values education workshops, education leadership breakfasts, a state values education expo and a values education resources workshop for teacher librarians, were conducted. School-based projects included community action and service learning, moral compass development, social and emotional learning, 'You Can Do It' program facilitation, a 'Rock and Water' program, and self-narrative explorations.
- VIC: The three focus areas were teacher professional learning, resources, and the integration of values education across Civics and Citizenship, Asian Studies and Multiculturalism learning areas. Projects included the *Talking it Through* DVD resource, the Values Are Invaluable Project by the Catholic Education Commission and *Relating Values to the Victorian Essential Learnings (VELs): An Exploration of ANZAC*.

• WA: A number of workshops to support school leaders with the implementation of the Values for Australian Schooling resources, as well as workshops focusing on values through Asia-literacy and the Australian Sustainable Schools Initiative were delivered. Grants to schools also focused on teacher professional learning activities, which led many schools

and clusters to adopt programs such as MindMatters, PATHS and Choose Respect.

• SA: There was a strong cross-sectoral focus with support provided by the Values Education Management Committee comprising representatives from each education jurisdiction, plus an intersectoral consultant. Professional development events

included a Values and Inclusion Conference; Making the Link – Citizenship and Values; Values Education Multiple Perspectives; Values Education, Citizenship and Student Action; and Values Education and Student Engagement.



The Values Education State and Territory Project Officers meet with representatives from DEEWR and Education Services Australia in Canberra, December 2009.



The National Landscape

Values Education – Thoughts from the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations

The Australian Government's Values Education Program, especially as expressed in the Values in Action Schools Project, has to date been a good demonstration of how the development of resources and the explicit teaching of values can guide schools in helping their students develop self-esteem, optimism and commitment to personal fulfilment, and to exercise ethical judgement and social responsibility. In the VASP, 86 school communities have been given opportunities to explore, act on and reflect about values, attitudes and beliefs in a positive and explicit manner.

Values education has been shown to provide a pathway to student wellbeing, which is strongly linked to learning. A student's level of wellbeing at school is indicated by their satisfaction with life at school, their engagement with learning and their social-emotional behaviour. It is enhanced when evidence-informed practices are adopted by schools in partnership with families and community.

Optimal student wellbeing is a sustainable state characterised by predominantly positive feelings and attitude, positive relationships at school, resilience, self-optimisation and a high level of satisfaction with learning experiences.

Research commissioned by the Australian Government indicates that Australian schools engaging in values education have students more engaged in learning and improved broad learning outcomes.¹

The VASP is a shining example of the demand for involvement in projects aimed at the practical application of the values principles. After announcing invitations to the project, applications were received from a total of 149 clusters, comprising 745 schools, 21,000 teachers and 317,000 students. Unfortunately only 15 clusters were able to be selected to take part in the project. These, nevertheless, comprised 86 schools and education centres from diverse metropolitan, regional, rural and remote locations from every state and territory. The clusters collectively involved approximately 2,500 teachers and almost 40,000 students in innovative, community-based action research values projects.

The Values Education Program, and in particular VASP, have highlighted the benefits of positive professional collaborations and partnerships in the project. DEEWR has worked productively with Education Services Australia, who in turn has collaborated very effectively with the state and territory officers, the universities, the Project Advisory Committee and the schools themselves to deliver a very worthwhile and engaging project that meets the needs of Australian schools. The findings of the VASP will be released in the Final Report, and will build on the experiences, lessons and evidence of the preceding Values Education Good Practice Schools projects.

¹ Lovat, Professor Terence, et al. 'Project to Test and Measure the Impact of Values Education on Student Effects and School Ambience', Final Report for the Australian Government Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) by the University of Newcastle, 2009.

Acknowledgements

A Message from Education Services Australia

There is a cheerful celebration and a certain sadness in coming to the end of a project such as VASP. At Education Services Australia we wish to celebrate the notable successes of this intense and demanding project. And with sadness we come to the end of another stage in what has been an extraordinary journey in education. From VASP we have taken away many new understandings and fresh hopes for further implementation of values-centred schooling.

Among the most enriching aspects of VASP have been the professional relationships and the powerful collaborations of so many people who have made the work possible and so productive.

On behalf of the VASP project team, Education Services Australia gratefully acknowledges the professional contributions of:

- all the members of the Values Education Project Advisory Committee who provided generous, timely and rigorous advice that expanded the project scope and reach
- Professor Judith Chapman (AM) (Australian Catholic University) and Professor Terry Lovat (University of Newcastle), who as the VASP Academic Advisors provided critical support and advice throughout the life of the Project
- the many teacher educators who worked beside teachers and coordinators as University Advisors to the VASP clusters

- the Values Education State and Territory Project Officers who supported the clusters and Education Services Australia throughout the project, and
- the clusters of schools whose project coordinators, teachers, students, parents and communities are both the subjects and the enactors at the heart of the VASP endeavour.

Thank you all for your contribution to a nationally significant educational program that has delivered so much of value to all Australian school communities.

David Brown
VASP Project Director,
Education Services Australia