



THE AUSTRALIAN ASSOCIATION FOR FLEXIBLE & INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

ANNUAL REPORT
2019/20



ACKNOWLEDGMENT

Here, on this Great Island home of ours - now known as Australia, Aboriginal people have lived and practiced their culture for many thousands of years. Today each one of us who live on this land can be a part of this continuing ancient culture.

The Australian Association for Flexible and Inclusive Education acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the lands we all live, play and work on. We acknowledge the deep connection to the land and cultural authority of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people past and present and emerging. AAFIE respects the strengths that young people bring to flexible and inclusive learning programs, and to the Australian Community as a whole.

WELCOME

On behalf of the AAFIE Board we would like to welcome you to the AAFIE 2019/20 annual report. What a time it has been for all! Our thoughts go out to the young people and families, teachers, youth workers and all those that support education for our nations young people.

We send our heart felt thanks for the dedication, commitment, and empathy demonstrated in these complex times. AAFIE's aim is to provide voice to your work, your struggles, your ideas. We aim to be a place of sharing, of raising issues, of celebrating a place of common ground and a place ideas.

Please join with us as we continue to build the space that is AAFIE.

Prof Kitty Te Riele & Mr Dale Murray

Co-Chairs, AAFIE Board



"Flexible and inclusive learning programs come in many shapes and forms. But what they have in common is that they change the way they provide schooling to better suit young people for who traditional schooling approaches have not worked well".

Dale Murray, Co-Chair AAFIE

THE BOARD

The current AAFIE Board consists of 6 members, affiliated with 5 States and Territories of Australia. The Co-Chairs of the Board are Professor Kitty Te Riele, a researcher from Tasmania whose work focuses on supporting flexible and inclusive learning programs to support their students. Kitty's research informs both practice and policy, to improve opportunities for young people in disadvantage communities to participate and succeed in school education. And Dale Murray from Queensland who has over 30 years experience in the area of flexible education provision, as an educator and director of a major Australian flexible learning education and care provider.

They are joined by Simon Vaughan of the ACT, who is a public high school Principal whose work in schools has included flexible learning opportunities connected to, and within the school environment.

Julian Sefton-Green joins AAFIE from Victoria and is a Professor of New Media Education at Deakin University. He has researched and written widely on many aspects of media education, new technologies, creativity, digital cultures and informal learning.

From Western Australia, Peter Reynolds is the Manager for Engagement and Transitions with the WA Department of Education.

Also from Queensland is Glenda McGregor, a Senior Lecturer in the School of Education and Professional Studies at Griffith University, Brisbane, where she is currently Director of the Master of Secondary Teaching program.

As AAFIE matures, we aspire to have Board Member affiliation from all States and Territories in Australia.



LAUNCH AAFIE 2019

In July 2019 AAFIE hosted an e-launch. The e-launch acknowledged the national presence of AAFIE and the importance of inclusion for all professionals in the flexible and inclusive learning space by not holding a 'one-off' event in a single location. The e-launch featured a number of online opportunities to engage with and learn about AAFIE, hear about our vision for the sector and get involved.

The inception of AAFIE has been some years in the making. Driven by a host of people who identified the need for a Professional Association to support and represent the growing number of 'alternative' education option for young people, who have had trouble with traditional educational models. The concept of growing a Professional Body focused on the important work of flexible learning options is at the heart of AAFIE.



1. PUTTING THE
JIGSAW TOGETHER
(2014)



2. NATIONAL PICTURE



3. ANECDOTAL
EVIDENCE FROM THE
GROUND



4. DOING SCHOOL
DIFFERENTLY 2016 AND
2018



5. LAUNCH AAFIE – JULY
2019



DOING SCHOOL DIFFERENTLY

The 'Doing School Differently' conferences have been the pinnacle event hosted by AAFIE. The conference has focused on bringing together a range of participants from across education and academia, social work, psychology, wellbeing, community, family, youth services and indigenous and culturally and linguistically diverse specific practitioners to discuss the spectrum of flexible and alternative learning options for young people who don't always find engagement with mainstream systems easy.

Having successfully delivered DSD in 2016 and 2018 with over 1000 delegates, presenting a range of offerings, including Masterclasses, Keynote presentations, Workshops, Conference Breakfast Presentations, Youth Streams, Yarning Circles and Indigenous Education focused sessions presented by a diverse group of local and international speakers – it was significantly disappointing to postpone the 2020 conference.

2020 was scheduled for June in Adelaide and was shaping up to be an amazing event showcasing a diverse range of practice, research and policy themes surface in presentations and workshops including – teaching and learning, pathways and transitions, wellbeing, young people and student experience, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and Professional Learning. However, it was just not to be due to the ever present COVID-19 pandemic – an international health crisis.

While the focus of the conference is squared clearly on showcasing how we 'Do School Differently' a number of other Practice, Research and Policy themes surface in presentations and workshops including – teaching and learning, pathways and transitions, wellbeing, young people and student experience, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and Professional Learning.

What did DSD
Delegates say?

"Superb quality -
content and
presentations"

"Great mix of content
and styles of
presenters. The
student perspectives
were exceptional"

"The opportunity to
network and learn
from others was
fantastic! Doing
school traditionally
does not work for
so many"

"Loved that the
conference is about
doing school
differently. That alone
was a huge benefit
and opportunity. It's a
unique and thought-
provoking
conference option"

"The collaborative
format of the
sessions allowed for
many different
opinions and thoughts
to be shared in an
open and accepting
environment"

MEMBERSHIP

AAFIE would not exist without its Membership and since our official launch in July 2019, we have been overwhelmed by the support you've shown us!

Membership with AAFIE is for everyone:

- Working in or supporting a Flexible Education Program
- Wanting to build connections with like-minded professionals in the Flexible Education space
- Seeking to be part of an innovative hub of excellence in Flexible and Inclusive Learning
- Seeking a voice on issues that affect young people disenfranchised from the education system

AAFIE's current membership structure consists of: Individual, Organisational, Student/unwaged and Supporter. To date AAFIE has 193 members, a mix of individual and organisational members. AAFIE aims to expand our membership base, however we understand that this aspect of our business is not a priority in this current climate.

We are excited about growing and nurturing our member base in the future. AAFIE aims to lead with courage and innovation as we advocate and highlight the strengths and needs of the flexible learning sector. AAFIE is focused on working to build our reputation and presence, to ensure that this significant sector in the education landscape has a national voice.

There were over 900 flexible and inclusive education programs which every year support over 70,000 young people to learn. The report's author, Professor Kitty te Riele from the University of Tasmania, and AAFIE explains "The large number of programs and their shared mission means that there should be such a thing as a flexible learning sector, but until now there has not been a national, member-based peak body to represent this sector".



STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

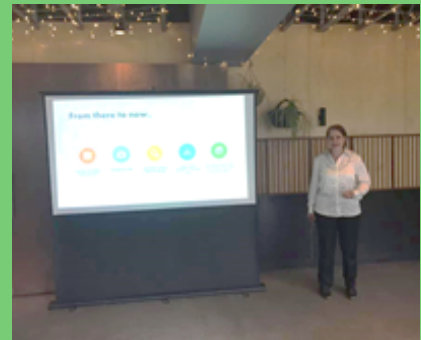
In addition to membership recruitment and engagement, a key priority of AAFIE is to seek opportunities to develop relationships with our stakeholders. This group of professionals and organisations is wide and diverse, and provides AAFIE with a broad view and opportunity to understand and contribute to the landscape that is alternative education.

AAFIE's stakeholder engagement strategy is to pivot off opportunities (i.e. board meetings) in each State and Territory and bring together groups that are engaged with and/or interested in contributing to the flexible education conversation.

In November 2019, the AAFIE Board hosted a reception in Melbourne bringing together our first stakeholder group at STREAT, a social enterprise supporting young people in employment who have experienced homelessness. In addition to building relationships and promoting the vision of AAFIE, guests at the reception contributed to a scoping activity to support the development of future directions for AAFIE. The table below has collated some of the ideas from this event that will inform our strategic planning.

2020 would have seen AAFIE deliver 2 additional stakeholder receptions for our Queensland and South Australian partners in Brisbane and Adelaide. However sadly, due to obvious reasons relating to COVID-19 we had to cancel these events. We thank the Hope Street Café, Brisbane and Youthlinks, Adelaide for their support. We look forward to being able to work alongside of your fantastic venues and programs when it is safe to do so again.

Additional opportunities in 2019 and early 2020 to engage have seen our Board Members attend various forums, meetings and training sessions to discuss the vision of AAFIE and build a strong support base.



Question 1: what you see as key priorities for AAFIE as an emerging Peak in the 'flexi' space?

- Continuing to become a 'presence' and reach out to support 'beginners' in the sector – particularly rural and remote
- Continue to advocate (budget & resources – state and federally) to generate visibility of the sector, including the intersections between the sector and other sectors of E & T.
- A platform for research in the sector and promotion of evidence-based programs
- Be the 'go to' people/organisation for media enquiries.

Question 2: Are you in a position to get others involved to support the work of AAFIE? Who?

- Universities can use this as part of their community engagement – those of us in the sector need to introduce colleagues to AAFIE
- Growing relationships with ITE programs to enable pre-service teachers to undertake placements with flexi schools
- Collaborate research to resolve best practice (peer-reviewed, evidence-based)
- One participant noted: can be a connector to the 31 LLEN's in Victoria (on the exec)

Question 3: What topics should AAFIE pursue (e.g. as Special Interest Groups or activity)? How would you like to be involved?

- Recruitment & development of staff
- Teaching and teaching in flexi/alternative schools
- Set up a 'basecamp' where on the ground staff can connect and discuss topics.

Questions 4: What are your suggestions for the biennial 'Doing School Differently' Conference?

- Enable 'zooming' in to keynotes and other speakers
- Connecting remotely via zoom with rural organisations during the event
- Hearing from young people
- A stream that helps the leaders
- Leaders forum/workshops – networking & mentoring

Question 5: What things can you commit to doing to support the flexible and inclusive learning sector? How can AAFIE help you achieve this?

- Promote locally, including at our Dec Flexible Learning Conference
- Advocate – promote inclusive practice (push into mainstream schooling)
- Applied research mentoring & partnering to support organisation to design & build they own research/evidence cultures
- Advocate around transitions in & out of flexi settings

Further strategies to engage a broader audience in the work of AAFIE includes a growing social media presence on Facebook, relevant and current website information, an ongoing member survey, monthly e-newsletter and the maintenance and promotion of the **National Flexible Learning Options (FLO) Database**. The information within our Flexible Learning Options database is aimed at young people (and their parents, youth workers and teachers) to help them find a program that suits them – and at programs, so that they can learn about and from each other.

AAFIE is continually seeking further opportunities to engage with stakeholders; however now it is in an online capacity!



Website

www.aafie.org.au



Facebook
@aafie

DOING SCHOOL DIFFERENTLY 2020

What would have been our 3rd biennial Conference, Doing School Differently 2020 was just not to be. Due to the ever-changing nature of COVID-19 pandemic, the decision was made to move the event to 2021 in order to give clarity to Speakers, Sponsors, Presenters and Delegates. The decision by the Board of AAFIE to postpone the 2020 event was based on the advice from the State and Federal Government and health officials. Unfortunately due to the ongoing uncertainty surrounding COVID-19 it become extremely difficult to progress, as there is and continues to be too much uncertainty surrounding too many elements of the conference, not the least being 500 plus people being allowed to gather in one place.

While DSD has been rescheduled for June 2021, AAFIE continues to monitor the situation and is mindful of the various stages of COVID-19 response our States and Territories are operating at. We will always keep the health and safety of our delegates central to our decision making processes moving forward with DSD.

COVID-19 RESPONSE

Earlier in 2020, when the majority of Australian students were learning from home as a health and safety response to COVID-19, AAFIE focused developing a specially curated selection of resources to support flexible ways of learning for children, young people and families. AAFIE made these resources publicly available through the website and shared widely. These resources are still available and offer great insights and ideas that are just as relevant for students and educators learning at school, not just at home. Topics range from traditional subjects with a twist, including history, art and science based virtual tours, hands on learning activities, that are fun, creative and innovative. First Nations specific resources are also available, along with resources focused on supporting positive health and wellbeing for our communities.

located at: aafie.org.au/learningathome/

