

SMCFA & SMFVRIC

Child and Family Working Group (0-10)

Morning Series Summary: Blue Light Victoria

Tuesday 25th February 2025

**Guest Speaker: Emma Johansson- Business
Development and Engagement Officer & Elissa
Scott- CEO**

Our Acknowledgements

Acknowledgement of Country: We acknowledge the people of the Boonwurrung, Bunurong and Wurundjeri tribes of the Kulin Nation who are the traditional owners and custodians of the Aboriginal land of our region. We recognise their continued connection to the land and waters and acknowledge that sovereignty was never ceded. It always was and always will be Aboriginal land.

We embrace diversity in all its forms, and respect everyone's strengths and contributions irrespective of gender, ethnicity, culture, religious beliefs, sexual orientation and political views.

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W: www.bluelight.org.au

For additional information:

What is Blue Light Victoria

Blue Light Victoria is a not-for-profit organisation, established in 1976 that delivers a range of early intervention and prevention programs for children and young people across Victoria.

Blue Light Victoria partner with Victoria Police, Ambulance Victoria and Bank Vic. Blue Light also partner with other local health and fitness providers and community services agencies to deliver programs using locals from each community.

They work with the Assessment and Evaluation Research Centre at Melbourne University to undertake extensive evaluation of their programs to ensure they meet the needs of young people and positive outcomes.

Programs

- **Blue Edge**

Brings together small groups of up to 20 young people ages 7-9 years. Led by specialist facilitators across 8-week program 2-hour sessions, with Police and emergency services participating in each session. Each session consists of fitness activities, a shared meal and workshop. Workshops focus on key capabilities including mental health and wellbeing, safe decision making, emotional regulation, resilience and connection. Schools choose from a range of workshops that cater to their group needs. On mental health menu- school funded.

- **DASH**

(Dynamic activities, Active voices, Safe communities & Health engagement)

Is a fun and interactive whole term 90-minute sessions program for classrooms of students in years 5 & 6. It deepens community connections and belonging for young people, increasing their awareness of and trust in local services and supports and each other, Facilitated by BLV specialist facilitator with police and emergency services. At the heart of DASH is the development of a student-led community project. This sees students, police, emergency services and other local stakeholders come together to raise awareness or resolve a community concern. DASH gives young people a voice and can be tailored to meet the needs of each school community. Funded community program, aligned with school curriculum. Partners first come in not in uniform to build connection first and break down set ideas.

- **1:1 Positive Pathways**

Targets young people aged 10-17 who are involved in or at risk of involvement in the youth justice system, including criminal offending, anti-social behaviour or as victims of crime. The program involves a community mentor or positive role model (police/emergency services staff) eight structured individual gym sessions over four weeks with a dedicated fitness instructor supported by a Blue Light Victoria Youth worker. Following completion of the program, participants have access to weekly drop-in gym classes. Program welcomes referrals from youth workers, courts, parents, police, schools and community organisations.

- **Blue Edge +**

Adapted from Blue EDGE (educate, develop, grow & empower) program. Blue EDGE + is designed for students in years 7-9 and is delivered over 8 sessions in a group setting led by a Blue Light Victoria facilitator. Program involves fun and interactive workshops covering topics related to wellbeing, confidence and social connections. The content is tailored to different environments to ensure

accessibility and engagement for marginalised students, with support from community partners such as police and or emergency services who act as positive role models.

- **CoRE (Connected, Resilient & Engaged)**

New program which aims to enhance student self-awareness and build their engagement with peers and community. Program builds on insights from DASH and Blue EDGE programs. This school/community-based program is delivered over 8 weeks students in years 9-11, facilitated by Blue Light Victoria with the involvement of community partners including police and emergency services staff acting as positive role models. Using an engaging, active learning approach, each workshop tackles addressing anti-social behaviour, encouraging healthy and safe decision making, building personal resilience and improving connection with their local community. Funded for schools.

The Program concludes with "Community Connection Day" where students actively give back to the local community

Presentation Notes:

- Elissa Scott explained her background in Youth Work started as Mental Health Social Worker and has gone on to become a Lawyer in criminal defence space so has worked with a lot of young people to implement prevention an intervention for young people.
- Elissa and Emma showed a video explaining Blue Light from the beginning and referred to Blue Light discos which was an early program a lot of people may remember. There were also 2 testimonials from young people who have engaged in Blue Light programs and shared their success stories.
- Elissa emphasised the importance of acting early, building the connections to community and meeting positive role models.
- Programs assist young people to thrive and benefit communities. In Blue Light's 50 years they have helped 950,000 young people through the discos and beyond to programs and other events.
- In the last 5 years Blue Light has transformed into program-based model, they are a registered charity with 19 branches across Victoria.
- Blue Light Victoria's focus areas are on physical, mental, social wellbeing.
- Staffed by volunteers, in 2024 Blue Light Victoria had 229 volunteers.
- Aim to build protective factors for long term positive impact.
- Blue Light is the only youth focused organisation collaborating with Australian Federal Police, Victoria Police and Emergency Services. Always collaborate with these people in the local community of the program to provide that local knowledge. Building trust with young people and showing them positive role models.
- Blue Light is not a Case Management service they work specifically with group work as well as some 1:1 program.
- Over 2024 assisted nearly 15,000 young people, had 617 police and emergency services partners.
- 126 in school programs, a 48% increase from 2023 financial year. 79% programs delivered in regional VIC.
- Blue Light Victoria hosted 158 branch activities (discos, camps, fitness activities, barista training etc in 2024 and are looking to expand for 2025.
- Inclusive organisation, YP aged 10-21 years, and working with some Tafe's currently and looking to broaden reach. Program target disengaged, vulnerable young people but inclusive to all. Programs can be tailored for cohorts. 12% of participants identify as neurodiverse (Blue EDGE program) 7% of participants identify as Aboriginal.

- The team are all child safe trained, background in social work, disability support, teaching and more providing a variety of skills and backgrounds. The team go through thorough induction process such as trauma informed practice. There is also ongoing support and supervision and ongoing training, observation and feedback.
- Blue edge (program description above) program impact established from 2 evaluation by Melbourne University mostly recently a 3-year study finalised in 2024 found- 89% responded would recommend, 91% now know how to talk and communicate with people different from themselves, 95% felt heard and valued at Blue EDGE.
- DASH (program description above) DASH's community partners include Victoria Police, CFA, Ambulance Victoria, SES, Triple Zero, Department of Energy, Environment and Climate, Local councils, Local neighbourhood houses. Impact after 2-year study by Melbourne University found 90% of students and 100% of teachers agree that students had a better understanding of others perspectives after the program. 89% of teachers agree the program was engaging and 90% of students responded that they felt part of something worthwhile.
- Some of the community project examples have been supporting rough sleepers with a sleep pack of essential comfort items. A mental health scavenger hunt supporting connection through mindfulness and mental health education clues and Welcome Boxes helping new students who have faced trauma feel welcomed and connected to the community.
- Local councils are often involved in the community projects which has led to ongoing projects within community involving the council.
- CoRE (program description above) is a newer program so not impact statistics yet.
- Positive pathways (program description above) has been piloted in Bendigo for last 4 years and seeing great results. One example shared was a young person who had 120 contacts with police and since program has had none for 2 years. This program runs for 12 months and participants can be as young as 10 but typically around 12-17 years. Have had some older participants of 19-21 years on court orders. This program gives the young person someone to disappoint, who is going to invest in them and builds a trusting relationship.
- Programs have been shown to assist with re-engagement in school, participants often attended school to go to Blue Light program.