



# 2025 IMPACT STATEMENT

VIC Learning Support Volunteer Kay Edwards



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EdConnect Area Manager Tamara



VIC Mentor Reno Demicoli

Students across Australia continue to face significant educational challenges. One-third of students do not reach expected reading proficiency<sup>1</sup>, one-third do not reach expected numeracy proficiency<sup>2</sup>, and on any given school day around 11% of students are absent (an increase of 57% since the 2014 rate of 7%)<sup>3</sup>. These challenges are disproportionately experienced by students from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Students who struggle are more likely to fall behind their peers, become disengaged from learning, and exhibit disruptive behaviour. Over time, this can lead to limited employment opportunities and reduced connection to society.

EdConnect Australia is proactively addressing these issues through the support of intergenerational volunteers who give their time in classrooms, as mentors, and as Big Buddies. As positive adult role models, volunteers enhance learning conditions, build student resilience, raise aspirations, and create meaningful connections. These supports strengthen school attendance, build confidence in learning, and foster a sense of belonging—each of which is essential for sustained engagement in education and for giving students the best opportunity to reach their full potential in learning and life.

## OUR 2025 IMPACT

**24,258**  
Students

**1,742\***  
Volunteers

**80,293**  
Volunteer Hours

**\$4,190,497\*\***  
Value of  
volunteering hours



VIC Learning Support Volunteer Kay Edwards

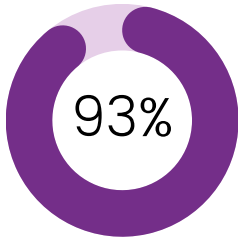
<sup>1</sup> Grattan Institute 2024: [The Reading Guarantee: How to give every child the best chance of success](#)

<sup>2</sup> Grattan Institute 2025: [The Maths Guarantee: How to boost students' learning in primary schools](#)

<sup>3</sup> Grattan Institute 2025: [Lifting school attendance should be an urgent national priority - Grattan Institute](#)

\*467 Mentors, 696 Learning Support, 36 both mentors and learning support, 22 Other, 301 Buddies, 220 combination of on hold and did not commence in 2025. \*\*\$4,190,491 (80293 hours x \$52.19 Centre for Volunteering).

## MENTORING & LEARNING SUPPORT



OF PARTNER SCHOOLS AGREED EDCONNECT MENTOR/LEARNING SUPPORT VOLUNTEERS INCREASED STUDENT SELF ESTEEM & CONFIDENCE



OF PARTNER SCHOOLS AGREED THAT STUDENT SOCIAL SKILLS HAVE IMPROVED THROUGH THE SUPPORT OF A MENTOR / LEARNING SUPPORT VOLUNTEER



SCHOOLS AGREED THAT LITERACY HAS IMPROVED



SCHOOLS AGREED THAT NUMERACY HAS IMPROVED



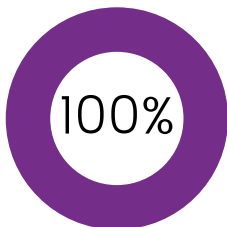
OF PARTNER SCHOOLS AGREED STUDENT PROSOCIAL BEHAVIOUR HAS INCREASED



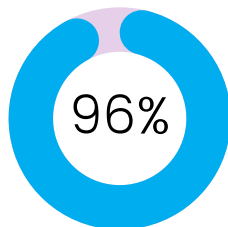
OF PARTNER SCHOOLS AGREED THAT STUDENT RELATIONSHIPS WITH PEERS HAVE IMPROVED

“Volunteers have been extremely valuable to support learning in the classroom. They positively impact classrooms by offering extra support, enhancing student engagement, and helping teachers provide more individualised attention. Our volunteers always present with enthusiasm and eagerness to support student learning.”  
**Ronya Baddour, Deputy Principal Hilltop Road Public School, NSW** ”

## LITERACY BUDDIES® & NUMERACY BUDDIES



OF TEACHER ACROSS THE BUDDIES PROGRAMS AGREED THAT THE PROGRAMS CONTRIBUTED TO INCREASED STUDENT CONFIDENCE TO ENGAGE WITH LITERACY/NUMERACY



OF BIG BUDDIES FELT THAT THEIR WORKPLACE MADE A POSITIVE CONTRIBUTION THROUGH THE LITERACY / NUMERACY BUDDIES PROGRAM

## EDCONNECT MEMBER SCHOOLS REPORTED



**93%**

of schools agreed that student self-esteem and confidence have increased



**88%**

of schools agreed that student social skills have improved



**85%**

of schools agreed that student prosocial behaviour has increased



**80%**

of schools agreed that student relationships with peers have improved



**96%**  
OF PARTNER SCHOOLS AGREED THAT  
EDCONNECT IS A VALUABLE PART OF THE SCHOOL  
COMMUNITY



**74%**  
OF PARTNER SCHOOLS AGREED THAT  
RELATIONSHIPS WITH TEACHERS HAVE IMPROVED



**83%**  
OF PARTNER SCHOOLS AGREED THAT STUDENT  
ENGAGEMENT IN EDUCATION HAS IMPROVED



**73%**  
OF PARTNER SCHOOLS AGREED THAT  
PARTICIPATION IN SCHOOL ACTIVITIES HAS  
INCREASED

## WHEN ASKED TO RANK BENEFITS OF THE EDCONNECT PROGRAM

**1**

**'BEING ABLE TO OFFER ONE TO ONE ASSISTANCE TO THOSE WHO NEED IT MOST' WAS RANKED AS THE NUMBER ONE BENEFIT OF THE EDCONNECT PROGRAM**

“At Thornlie Senior High School, the EdConnect program has become a key support structure for EALD and low-literacy learners. The program provides personalised reading, writing, oral communication, and confidence-building support.

Sekeena Ajam, School Coordinator, Thornlie Senior High School, WA

EdConnect’s Learning Support program connects trained volunteers with students who benefit from extra one-on-one or small group support in the classroom. Working alongside teachers, volunteers provide additional encouragement and guidance in areas such as reading, writing, numeracy and building confidence with learning.

The program is designed to complement, not replace, classroom teaching—helping to create more opportunities for students to feel seen, supported and capable. By fostering positive relationships and consistent support, Learning Support helps students build essential skills, improve engagement, and develop a stronger sense of belonging at school.

At its core, Learning Support is about unlocking potential—ensuring every student has the chance to thrive with the right support around them.



**23,197**  
**STUDENTS**



**732**  
**VOLUNTEERS**

**49%** of learning support volunteers focused on literacy support

**16%** of learning support volunteers focused on numeracy support

“EdConnect volunteers provide 1-1 reading with students who don’t participate in home reading. The impact is noticeable by students’ data.”

**Leanne Anderson, School Coordinator, Monmia Primary School, VIC**



**90%** OF TEACHERS AGREED THAT STUDENTS SEEMED MORE ENGAGED IN SCHOOL BECAUSE OF THE LEARNING SUPPORT VOLUNTEER



**97%** OF TEACHERS AGREED THAT STUDENTS ENJOY HAVING A LEARNING SUPPORT VOLUNTEER IN THE CLASSROOM



**90%** OF TEACHERS AGREED THAT THE LEARNING SUPPORT VOLUNTEER HAS HELPED IMPROVE STUDENTS' SKILLS, KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING



**82%** OF TEACHERS AGREED THAT THE LEARNING SUPPORT VOLUNTEER HAS HELPED IMPROVE STUDENTS' LITERACY AND/OR NUMERACY



WA EARLY LITERACY TRAINING SESSION

## Telethon Great at Eight - Early Literacy Volunteer Program

Through EdConnect's Great at Eight Literacy Training, our volunteers are trained and skilled to provide one-on-one literacy support, helping children build confidence and capability in their reading. These sessions not only equipped volunteers with valuable tools and strategies, but inspired them, leaving them better prepared and more motivated to make a difference in the lives of local students.

**89** WA volunteers participated in the Literacy Training

**98%** of participants rated the training as either Excellent or Good



**98%** of volunteers advised the training was useful in their role

“ Tamara (EdConnect facilitator) was wonderful and very knowledgeable. As a future educator I learnt things from her that haven't been touched on at uni, so great. I'll be back for more workshops. ”

*Volunteer Mia*

VOLUNTEERS TASMANIA

## Learning Support expands into Tasmania



Through the support of the Tasmanian Community Fund, EdConnect expanded its Learning Support program into the North West of Tasmania in 2025, with volunteers providing literacy and numeracy support in classrooms. Across Tasmania, low levels of student literacy and numeracy have been well documented, with the Grattan Institute<sup>1</sup> reporting in 2025 that approximately 40% of students were performing below expected levels. In the North West region, high levels of socioeconomic disadvantage further compound these challenges and negatively impact student learning outcomes.

In its inaugural year, five Tasmanian partner schools joined the program, and 14 EdConnect volunteers were welcomed into classrooms to provide 403 students with additional literacy and numeracy support. The EdConnect volunteers provided students with “consistency of a familiar adult in the classroom to support the learning of students - especially those that struggle with literacy and numeracy - to access the curriculum and learning activities<sup>2</sup>.”

The Tasmanian Community Fund has committed to 7 years of funding, which will allow EdConnect to partner with 20 schools and develop a strong volunteer base.

Tasmanian volunteer Lynn has been warmly welcomed into the classroom at Hillcrest Primary School and each week the students genuinely look forward to working with her. She has made a noticeable impact—particularly in fostering a love of reading. Several students who were previously reluctant readers now approach reading activities with renewed confidence and enthusiasm, a testament to Lynn's strong relationship-building skills and dedication.

1. Grattan Institute 2024 Tasmania's reading challenge  
2. 2025 Tasmanian School Coordinator, end of year survey.

## MENTORING

EdConnect's Mentoring program connects students with caring, consistent adult role models who provide guidance, encouragement and a listening ear. Through regular one-on-one or small group sessions, mentors support students to build confidence, develop social and emotional skills, and navigate challenges both inside and outside the classroom.

Focused on building trust and positive relationships, mentoring creates a safe space where students feel heard, valued and supported. This connection can have a powerful impact on a young person's sense of self, helping them to strengthen resilience, improve engagement with school, and feel more connected to their community.

At its heart, the Mentoring program is about empowering students to believe in themselves and their future—one meaningful relationship at a time.



**670**  
**MENTEES**



**503**  
**VOLUNTEERS**



**OF SCHOOLS AGREED MENTEE SELF-ESTEEM AND CONFIDENCE HAD INCREASED**



**OF SCHOOLS AGREED THAT MENTEE SOCIAL SKILLS HAD IMPROVED**



**OF SCHOOLS AGREED THAT MENTEE ENGAGEMENT IN EDUCATION HAD IMPROVED**

WA Mentor of the Year Ruth Cathcart

“

*Over the years I have had the privilege to engage with a number of very dedicated EdConnect Mentors. Each one of them has contributed to the improvement of their mentee's mental health. Without their care the outcomes for these students would have placed them at severe risk.*

”

**Vivien Baxter, School Coordinator,  
Belmay Primary School, WA**



## MEET WA MENTOR CHRIS

When you meet EdConnect mentor Chris, his calm and gentle nature immediately puts people at ease. This comes as no surprise given his background as a secondary teacher in Western Australia and Canada, followed by a career in HR that included mentoring programs.

Over the past three years, Chris has supported students with diverse stories and needs. One powerful example is a refugee student he was matched with in the later years of secondary school, after the student fled a war-torn homeland and experienced significant trauma.

Through weekly mentoring sessions, Chris helped the student build literacy skills, which progressed to writing a résumé, securing part-time employment and exploring pathways to tertiary education. The student's knowledge of, and interest in, pursuing a particular career, was vastly enhanced through trust, goal-setting and belief.

By giving his time and care, Chris helped focus and reinforce his mentee's aspirations and opened a future filled with opportunity beyond school, into university and future pathways.

When asked why Chris mentors, he says "I have always remained passionately interested in education and feel I could contribute to supporting students who would benefit from additional care and contact."



WA Mentor Chris Jeffery

## WHAT OUR MENTEES SAY

*“My mental health has improved since starting mentoring and I feel more comfortable at school.”*  
**STUDENT MENTEE**

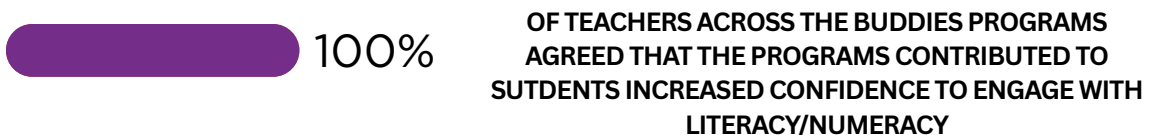
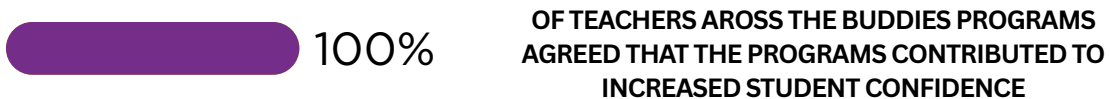
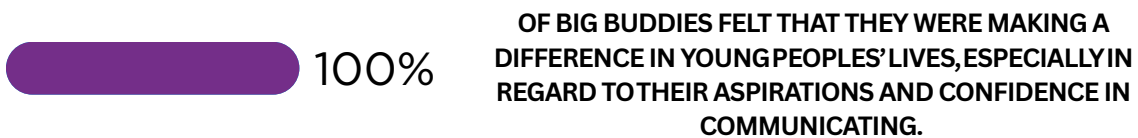
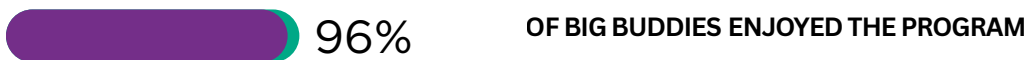
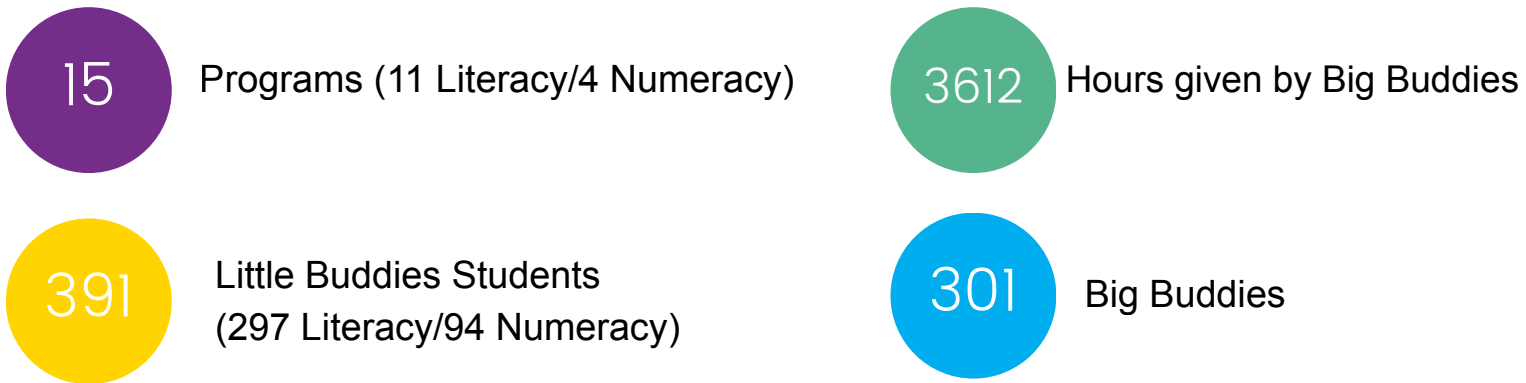
*“I have gotten better at math, reading and connecting with friends.”*  
**STUDENT MENTEE**

*“When I remember I have a session with my mentor I often get up and come to school more where I wouldn't before.”*  
**STUDENT MENTEE**

*“It allows me to talk about my hopes and dreams with someone that has similar interests.”*  
**STUDENT MENTEE**

## BUDDIES

Literacy Buddies® & Numeracy Buddies was delivered in 4 states in 2025, bringing EdConnect to Queensland for the first time. The pen-pal initiative connects workplace volunteers with children. Little Buddies in primary or early secondary schools are matched with Big Buddies from a workplace. Throughout the year the Buddies engage in meaningful letter exchanges and participate in two face-to-face visits – one at the school and one at the workplace. Both programs are letter exchanges, but Numeracy Buddies also includes a short numeracy question for the Little Buddies to solve.



“It has definitely had a positive impact on student aspirations! My Little Buddy shared that after their visit to our office and my letters detailing my time in high school, it has inspired him to work harder in his studies to achieve his ambitions.”  
*Big Buddy Volunteer*

## Big Buddies who agreed or strongly agreed with the statements:

74%

Students have increased confidence to try new things

79%

Students have increased confidence in reading and writing

88%

Students have increased ideas of what is possible for them in the future

84%

Students have stronger skills in connecting, communicating, and interacting with people from outside their social circles

96%

Volunteering with this program was rewarding for me personally

96%

I feel that my workplace/organisation is making a positive contribution through the Literacy / Numeracy Buddies program

75%

I feel more engaged with my workplace/organisation as a result of participating in the Literacy/Numeracy Buddies program



2025 BUDDIES VISITS

“Many of our students who usually require 1:1 support to complete writing tasks were able to plan and publish their letters completely independently, and this confidence has transferred to other areas of their learning.”

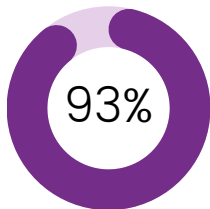
**Buddy School**



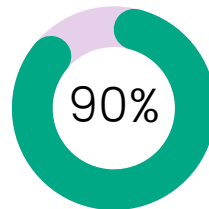
WA EDCONNECT VOLUNTEERS

## Roles of EdConnect volunteers

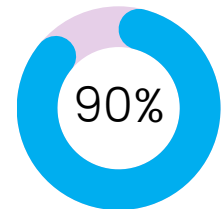
- 47% learning support
- 31% mentors
- 2% both learning support and mentors
- 20% Big Buddies



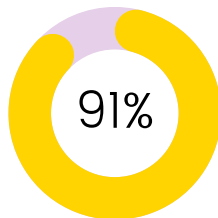
OF VOLUNTEERS RATED THEIR OVERALL EXPERIENCE AS EXCELLENT OR VERY GOOD



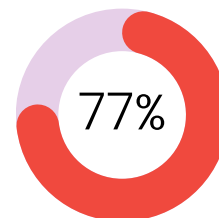
OF VOLUNTEERS AGREED VOLUNTEERING ENHANCES THEIR MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING



OF VOLUNTEERS ENCOURAGE OTHERS TO VOLUNTEER FOR EDCONNECT



OF VOLUNTEERS AGREED THAT VOLUNTEERING HAS HELPED THEM FEEL PART OF THEIR COMMUNITY, INCLUDING THE SCHOOL



OF VOLUNTEERS AGREED THAT VOLUNTEERING HELPED THEM DEVELOP A NEW SKILL

*“Our volunteers provide unconditional support to students who need it most, helping to encourage better school attendance”*  
**Secondary School Coordinator, WA**

Average tenure of EdConnect volunteers is 2 years and 9 months

**1 hour 38 minutes**  
 average amount of time given each school week from learning support and mentor volunteers

*“EdConnect volunteers bring so much value to our school. Whether they’re offering learning support or mentoring, their time and care make a real difference. They help students feel seen, supported and capable, building confidence and life skills to be an active member of the community.”*  
**Georgia Perry, Principal, Hillcrest Primary School, TAS**



## PARTNERS

EdConnect wish to acknowledge the contributions of our 2025 funders and supporters.



## REFERENCES

EdConnect end of year school survey received 136 responses from 123 unique schools (of a possible 266), representing a 46% response rate. EdConnect Volunteer end of year survey 534 unique responses (of a possible 1003) were received, representing a response rate of 53%. 39 teachers completed the 2025 Learning Support Teacher survey from 29 schools (15% of schools). EdConnect Literacy Training Survey 2025, 61 responses. Tasmanian School Coordinator, 2025 end of year survey.



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