EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Background

Joining the Dots (JTD) is an action research project that aims to improve the transition between primary and secondary school for children and young people in Year 5 – Year 9 within the City of Yarra. To achieve this, over the past six years the Project has focused on identifying, implementing and evaluating a transition model for young people, their families, the community sector and schools that ensures young people remain engaged in education.

The Project commenced in 2012 as a key initiative of the Yarra Education Youth Commitment (YEYC) and finished under its current funding arrangement in December 2017. Initially named the Yarra Primary Secondary School Transition Project Year 5 – Year 9 (YPSSTP), in 2016 it became known as Joining the Dots.

The JTD Project was developed in response to concerns raised by Victoria Police, community organisations and Yarra educators that students were getting lost during their transition when travelling outside of Yarra to attend a secondary school. Across the duration of the Project approximately 50% of young people across the State and Catholic education systems have continued go to secondary school outside of Yarra, for a variety of reasons.

The Inner Northern Local Learning Employment Network (INLLEN), on behalf of the YEYC, secured two consecutive three year Investing in Community grants from the City of Yarra (totalling $129,000) to undertake this project.

To date, twenty-three stakeholders have played a significant role in the formation and ongoing governance of the Project as members of a cross-sectoral Steering Group. Each support primary secondary school transition within Yarra and include schools, the INLLEN, the City of Yarra, local community agencies, representatives from the Department of Education and Training (DET) and Catholic Education Melbourne (CEM).

The reach of the Project within the community was significant, with over 500 individuals and 130 organisations taking part in the twelve professional development events offered. The JTD Project more directly involved thirteen primary and secondary schools within the City of Yarra through participation in the Transition Review Process (TRP) and then as members of the Yarra Shared Learning Community. Similarly, through the implementation of three satellite projects in neighbouring Moreland and Darebin in the last three years of the Project, the number of TRP/Cluster schools has expanded to include a further twelve.

The Evaluation

From November 2017 to February 2018, Johns Education Consulting worked with the INLLEN JTD Project Manager to establish the scope of the evaluation, develop data collection tools and data analysis methodology and frame a plan for the report.

Guided by the evaluation brief and program logic, the evaluation aimed to answer these questions:

1. Is the Yarra Transition Model appropriate for need, reflective of current best practice, scalable, and replicable?
2. Has the Steering Group partnership provided effective project governance and support?
3. What has been the impact of this project on:
   a. the awareness by educators and community agencies in Yarra of the need for a well-supported transition to secondary school spanning Year 5 to Year 9
   b. the primary to secondary school transition practice/process by educators in Yarra
   c. the student and family engagement in learning in Yarra
   d. the coordination within and between sectors in Yarra (primary and secondary educators, and community agencies) to support transition and engagement.
4. What learnings from the Project can be shared to improve further/similar work in the area?
5. What recommendations for the next phase(s) of the Project can be made?

Data collected and analysed included documentation on the formation and development of JTD, two online stakeholder surveys, a focus group, phone interviews with stakeholders, in person interviews with key stakeholders, transition related data sets and feedback from school based and professional learning activities. The data analysis comprised analysing statistical trends for quantitative data, and thematic analysis of qualitative data.

Key Findings

Joining the Dots has had a number of significant impacts in the City of Yarra over the duration of the Project. These have included improved connection between primary and secondary schools, DET, CEM and community agencies; improved coordination between secondary and feeder primary schools; greater awareness about the importance of a good transition; improved structures for transition process; better family engagement around transitions; and a better evidence base. These outcomes are due to a number of interconnecting Project elements. Each of them has played a role in raising the profile of transitions and improving the practice of school and community agencies. These are described below.

Strong Governance

- JTD has had highly effective governance since the beginning of the Project, with a cross-sectoral Steering Group capped at twelve and well-subscribed throughout.
- Commitment to the Project has been demonstrated through the considerable in-kind support provided over the course of the Project by twenty-three organisations including State and Catholic primary and secondary schools, DET, CEM, local government and community agencies.
- Strong project management by INLLEN has been critical to the success of JTD. This has included exceptional coordination and strategic direction delivered by the Project Manager.

The JTD Transition Model

- The JTD Transition Model has considerably impacted upon the quality of transition related practice and understanding of the importance of a good transition within the City of Yarra.
- The five key dimensions (Strategic Approach, Community Partnerships, Building Capacity, School Based Programs and Support for Individual Students and Parents) have been developed to take into account the student, their family, the school, the community and the wider system context.
- The Model has provided a highly effective and comprehensive framework for primary to secondary school transition and student engagement in learning.
- Delivery of the Model from 2015 – 2017 has occurred through a comprehensive range of activities such as the Transition Review Process, the Shared Learning Community, capacity building events, data set collation and resource development. This has established JTD as a strong ‘brand’ in Yarra.

The Transition Review Process (TRP)

- By developing the TRP, JTD has created a strong self-reflective process that empowers schools to review current Years 5-9 transition and engagement practice with the aim of understanding areas for improvement.
- Thirteen schools have participated including Government and Catholic primary and secondary schools plus the Collingwood English Language School (See Appendix 9).
- The facilitated process is thorough, involving an audit of school transition and engagement practice; developing a visual representation of a school’s transition and engagement program using the four phases and five areas of transition framework; and creating a reviewable plan for action.
- By joining a local Transition Cluster upon completion, ongoing implementation of good transition practice is supported. This enables encouragement and accountability towards goals set.
- Feedback from schools who have taken part in the TRP is overwhelmingly positive, clearly indicating that it had greatly impacted upon the school’s understanding of the areas of strength and areas for growth for the school regarding the transition process.
**Shared Learning Community (SLC)**
- Set up in April 2014, the SLC is comprised of representatives from the thirteen schools who had undertaken the Transition Review Process.
- This group has enabled excellent opportunities for ongoing networking and has facilitated consistency in transition practices, shared professional learning opportunities and collaborative partnerships between schools to emerge.
- The SLC’s development and implementation of a common Online Transition Information Form has improved communication between primary and secondary schools and is now implemented with the JTD Moreland and Reservoir projects.
- It has led to agreed common and supportive language for school tours with a focus on informing parents about the relative strengths of each school.

**Data sets**
- Data sets have developed an evidence-based approach to exploring early anecdotal evidence regarding the number of young people moving from local Yarra primary schools to secondary schools outside of Yarra.
- By collecting data from the Catholic and the State system, cross-sectoral analysis has been possible, and a baseline established.

**Capacity building events**
- The JTD Forums, workshops and bus tours have built the capacity of schools and community agencies around transitions related practice.
- Over the duration of the Project, in total 511 participants from 133 individual organisations took part in three major forums, four bus tours and five targeted workshops.
- These have created a significant information sharing and networking opportunity for all practitioners that have attended them.
- Launching resources created through the Project at these events has facilitated better utilisation of the resource and awareness of the issue addressed (e.g. supporting parents with transitions).

**Resources**
- Resources developed throughout the Project have empowered school and community agency staff to better understand and be able to support the transitions of young people in Yarra.
- *Preparing for Secondary School - a Guide for Parents* has been used extensively by schools and agencies to support parents.
- *Joining the Dots Report 1 (2012) & 2 (2014)* both addressed critical issues providing a roadmap for the next stage of the Project. The first report focused on the data and research evidencing the need for the Project. The second report summarised all aspects of the first three years of work, outlined the recently completed Transition Model for Yarra and provided future recommendations.
- Additionally, valuable resources have recently been developed for JTD Moreland and Darebin, including two sets of digital case studies exploring transition from the perspective of student, parent and school, and a book about transition written by primary and secondary students.

**Recommendations for Future Action**
Most stakeholders report that Joining the Dots is a very important project for Yarra and has made significant improvements to their organisation’s transition and engagement related practices. There is strong evidence that the Joining the Dots Project has achieved its aims and should be continued. Moreover, its expansion into neighbouring LGAs has demonstrated that it is replicable and scalable. The following recommendations for JTD going forward are based on the evaluation findings, recommendations from stakeholders and current best practice research.

**Continue Joining the Dots Project delivery locally**
- Consider ways to ensure that Joining the Dots continues to be delivered locally.
- Consider ways to utilise community momentum around the Project to create next steps.
- Consider reviewing annually to ensure reflective of current good practice and research.
Update Joining the Dots Transition Model
- Consider ways to emphasize and expand upon the Strategic Approach element of the Model.
- Consider ways to emphasize the Support for Individual Students and Parents and School Based Programs elements of the Model.

Support Shared Learning Community
- Consider developing a Terms of Reference and a Strategic Plan to refocus the SLC, focusing on such tasks as collaborative actioning of individual TRP Action Plans/Policy; documenting and improving transition programs to include reciprocal school visits by staff; and curriculum planning to build in transition related skills and wellbeing.
- Consider seeking funding for coordination of the SLC.

Support cross school curriculum planning
- Consider facilitating schools to work collaboratively to design a comprehensive transition program that includes all five areas of transition, with specific emphasis on in-class curriculum, not just students visiting and experiencing secondary schools.

Consolidate key knowledge into one resource
- Consider bringing together the knowledge gained so far into a single resource for schools that includes such things as basic information on transition; a suggested annual timetable of when to carry out transition activities; JTD resources such as student and parent books, guides and digital case studies; and the TRP documentation.
- Consider creating a Train the Trainer process to enable delivery of TRP with this documentation. This could be delivered by key organisations that work in the school transition space, such as other LLENs, the Catholic Education Office, regional DET offices and schools.

Support collaboration between LGAs
- Consider schools in Yarra, Moreland and Darebin continuing to utilise a local focus for a Transitions Cluster approach focused on locally relevant transition related topics specific to their schools.
- Consider forming an Inner North Transitions Network for professional development, networking and support with implementation of the Project to create economies of scale and to widen the support network for these schools
- Consider ways to set up this network in a coordinated, self-directed and self-funded manner to ensure its sustainability. This could be achieved by member schools contributing towards project management and coordination costs.

Scale up Joining the Dots
- Consider ways to scale the Project up, including the earlier mentioned resource package and leveraging off local momentum for the Project.
- Consider building Project advocacy goals with key education administrative and peak bodies into future objectives.

Seek further funding
- Consider securing further interim funding as the current funding period has ended. This will ensure that it can be sustainable from a project management perspective in the short-term.
- Consider researching longer term funding options, required to enable the Project to continue its excellent work and to promote the work more widely across Melbourne and Victoria.
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<td>CATS</td>
<td>Childhood to Adolescence Transition Study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CEM</td>
<td>Catholic Education Melbourne</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DEECD</td>
<td>Department of Education and Early Childhood Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DET</td>
<td>Department of Education and Training (Victorian)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FISO</td>
<td>Framework for Improving Student Outcomes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INLLEN</td>
<td>Inner Northern Local Learning and Employment Network</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JTD</td>
<td>Joining the Dots</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LGA</td>
<td>Local Government Area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MCRI</td>
<td>Murdoch Children’s Research Institute</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NAPLAN</td>
<td>National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy</td>
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<tr>
<td>NSW</td>
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<td>START</td>
<td>Student Transition And Resilience Training resource</td>
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<td>SES</td>
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<td>SLC</td>
<td>Shared Learning Community</td>
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<td>Transition Review Process</td>
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<tr>
<td>YEYC</td>
<td>Yarra Education Youth Commitment</td>
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<tr>
<td>YPSSTP</td>
<td>Yarra Primary Secondary School Transition Project</td>
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<td>Yarra Youth Commitment</td>
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<tr>
<td>VAGO</td>
<td>Victorian Auditor-Generals Office</td>
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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Overview

Joining the Dots (JTD) is an action research project that aims to improve the transition between primary and secondary school for children and young people in Year 5 – Year 9 within the City of Yarra. To achieve this, over the past six years the Project has focused on identifying, implementing and evaluating a transition model for young people, their families, the community sector and schools that ensures young people remain engaged in education.

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The JTD Project was developed in response to concerns raised by Victoria Police, community organisations and Yarra educators that students were getting lost during their transition when travelling outside of Yarra to attend a secondary school. Across the duration of the Project approximately 50% of young people across the State and Catholic education systems have continued go to secondary school outside of Yarra, for a variety of reasons. This was identified as an issue due to concerns that students were travelling long distances and transitioning on their own or with only one other student from their previous school, thereby increasing the risk of disengagement from school.

The Inner Northern Local Learning Employment Network (INLLEN), on behalf of the YEYC, secured two consecutive three year Investing in Community grants from the City of Yarra (totalling $129,000) to undertake this project.

To date, twenty-three stakeholders have played a significant role in the formation and ongoing governance of the Project as members of a cross-sectoral Steering Group. Each support primary secondary school transition within Yarra and include schools, the INLLEN, the City of Yarra, local community agencies, representatives from the Department of Education and Training (DET) and Catholic Education Melbourne (CEM).

The reach of the Project within the community was significant, with over 500 individuals and 130 organisations taking part in the twelve professional development events offered. The JTD Project more directly involved thirteen primary and secondary schools within the City of Yarra through participation in the Transition Review Process (TRP) and then as members of the Yarra Shared Learning Community. Similarly, through the implementation of three satellite projects in neighbouring Moreland and Darebin in the last three years of the Project, the number of TRP/Cluster schools has expanded to include a further twelve.

1.2 Background

At the end of 2010, the Yarra Education Forum was held. The Forum was planned and implemented by the Yarra Schools Support (YSS) Network. The Forum was the catalyst for the development of the YEYC - subsequently re-named the Yarra Youth Commitment (YYC). Commencing in 2011 and officially launching in 2012, the YYC’s vision was that all young people in the City of Yarra are supported to be the best they can be, are safe, healthy and engaged in learning, employment and their communities. Until its conclusion in 2016, this cross-sectoral partnership between schools, education providers, government agencies, community organisations and industry worked strategically to design, deliver and align local approaches that improved outcomes for young people in the City of Yarra.

Together with regional partners the INLLEN was instrumental in establishing the Yarra Youth Commitment and facilitated the development of the Joining the Dots Project in 2012 as a strategic response to issues identified for Yarra’s young people.
The INLLEN is an independent community organisation established to improve education, training and employment outcomes for young people in the municipalities of Darebin, Moreland and Yarra. As one of thirty-one LLEN’s in Victoria, their role is to broker partnerships between government, industry, education providers and the local community to develop local responses to improve education, training and employment outcomes for young people. The INLLEN was the auspice agency for project funding and coordinated the Project on behalf of the YYC. This role included the resourcing and development of the Steering Group from 2012-2017. INLLEN staff have worked to build the capacity of educators and community agencies across the region and have led and facilitated the Transition Review Process with more than twenty schools, building up a strong skill set around this critical transition work.

The YPSSTP was a major initiative of the YYC. It was launched in 2012, with funding from a three-year City of Yarra Investing in Community Grant of $15,000 per year. In 2015 a further three-year grant was confirmed at $28,000 per year. Over six years the total amount granted was $129,000. Table 1 outlines the activities carried out over the Project. Of note, from 2014 the Project aligned with the development of the Yarra Council’s Middle Years Strategy 2014 - 2017, the first of its kind for Local Government in Victoria. This strategy was created in response to an acknowledgement of a gap in services provided, with policies usually focussing on early years (ages 0-8) and young people (ages 12-25) (Yarra City Council, 2014).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YEAR</th>
<th>KEY ACTIVITY</th>
<th>DETAILS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 2012 | Background Research | • Desktop review  
| | | • Data collection - destination of Yarra primary students, attendance and agency support  
| | | • First report compiled and launched by Bernie Geary OAM, the Victorian Commissioner for Children and Young People |
| 2013-2014 | Building Capacity | • Cross-sectoral Project Steering Group formed  
| | | • Transition Review Process (TRP) developed and implemented in six Yarra schools  
| | | • Shared Learning Community established  
| | | • Fitzroy High School Demonstration Pilot Project  
| | | • Data collection  
| | | • *Preparing for Secondary School: A Guide for Parents* resource created  
| | | • First JTD Forum held (2013)  
| | | • Transition 101 Workshop for Agencies (2014)  
| | | • Transition Review Process Forum for Schools (2014) |
| End 2014 | Joining the Dots Model launched | • Model launched  
| | | • Second report launched |
| 2015-2017 | Model Implementation | • Steering Group  
| | | • Shared Learning Community becomes self-governing  
| | | • Data collection  
| | | • *Preparing for Secondary School: A Guide for Parents* updated and translated into four additional languages  
| | | • New branding and logo developed to reflect stand-alone project in 2017 (previously branded YYC).  
| | | • Biennial JTD Forum (2015, 2017)  
| | | • Support for Refugee Students in Mainstream Settings Workshop (2016)  
| | | • Middle Years Brain Development Workshop (2016)  
| | | • Parent and Family Engagement Workshop (2017) |
| Beginning 2018 | Model Revised | • Evaluation launched  
| | | • Third report launched |

*Table 1 - Activities by Year, Joining the Dots Project*
1.3 City of Yarra context

The City of Yarra covers an area of twenty square kilometres and is located in the inner east of Melbourne. It has a mix of residential, industrial and commercial activities. According to the 2016 Census data (.idcommunity, 2017), it has 4203 primary students (4.8% of its population, compared with 8.5% for Greater Melbourne) and 2874 secondary students (3.3% of its population, compared with 6.7% of Greater Melbourne).

The City of Yarra is very diverse, with highly gentrified areas contrasting with areas of low SES, such as the public housing estates in Collingwood, Fitzroy and Richmond. There is a wide variety of education settings in Yarra. These include twenty-two primary schools (four Catholic, four Independent and fourteen Government), eleven secondary schools (two Catholic, two Independent and seven Government including two ‘alternative’ schools), and an English Language School. This includes the newly opened Richmond High School. Figure 1 shows the location of Yarra in regard to the City of Melbourne.

1.4 Victorian context

In Victoria, every year there are approximately 65,000 students that transition from Year 6 to Year 7. Along with their initial transition into Primary School and their transition out of Secondary School, this is one of the key transition points in their early life. According to the 2015 Victorian Auditor-General’s Office (VAGO) report Education Transitions, the transition from kindergarten to primary school is generally going well in Victoria.
It found that the Department of Education and Training had developed a comprehensive, well-researched framework to support early-years transitions, improving outcomes for children transitioning into Prep, including their developmental status and academic readiness for school. However, despite the DET Strategic Plan 2013-2017 emphasising the importance of middle years transitions, the audit found that DET provided little general guidance to schools on how to manage these transitions well. The DET START: Student Transition And Resilience Training Resource (Fuller, 2016) has gone some way to improving this, however the awareness of this resource is still low. This resource outlines a number of strategies and provides tools for supporting young people through transition.

The lack of a systematic approach is one factor leading to variable success across Victoria with primary to secondary transition. Good practice is reflective more of local innovation from individual schools rather than system wide responses. There are widely reported differences in how well girls and boys transition, with boys notably overrepresented in an increase in suspensions and a drop in academic results after transitioning to secondary school (Victorian Auditor-General, 2015). Yet there are still few gender specific resources. More encouragingly, parental satisfaction with transition has been improving as has student engagement with school (Victorian Auditor-General, 2015).

### 1.5 Middle years and transition

The transition from primary to secondary is much more than just the administrative tasks associated with moving from Year 6 to Year 7. Over recent years, both in policy and in research, it has been acknowledged that this transition should be viewed more broadly, spanning the period of Year 5 to Year 9. This age group is often described as the middle years.

According to the Good Shepherd Australia New Zealand report *Bridging the Divide* (McGuire & Maury, 2017, p17), the middle years are “…a period in a child’s or young person’s life that falls between childhood and adolescence.” ‘Tweens’, ‘pre-teens’ and ‘pre-adolescents’ are other terms used to describe this period, however these market-driven terminologies do not accurately capture that this is more than simply a period that comes before adolescence. Rather it is a “…distinctive developmental phase that is accompanied by particular challenges and needs” (McGuire & Maury, 2017, p 17). Some of these changes include the onset of puberty, major physical, emotional, neural, cognitive and social development stages, greater autonomy, changing peer and familial relationships, restructuring of the prefrontal cortex to enable higher order, conceptual thinking, and a period of significant identity formation (McGuire & Maury, 2017; Fuller, 2016).

In the midst of all of these changes, children go through the transition from primary to secondary school. This involves changes that can be both exciting and challenging. In the majority of cases, children successfully transition from primary to secondary school. Nonetheless, for many children and their families, it can be a stressful time. Research has found this to particularly be the case for early maturing girls and low achieving boys (Fuller, 2016).

The Murdoch Children’s Research Institute (MCRI) Childhood to Adolescence Transition Study (CATS) research is a longitudinal study following 1200 Melbourne students from childhood through adolescence. This study is exploring the significance of brain development during the middle years. Recent development in this area has led to the conceptualisation of the middle years as a complex phase of development and a period when there is the biological embedding of the social, emotional and learning environment (Murdoch Children’s Research Institute, 2017). Hence good experiences during this period have a direct effect on brain development.

The transition from primary to secondary school represents a major change for most students. Typically, it involves adjusting to a new, larger school where students go from being the oldest to the youngest. They experience multiple teachers in multiple classrooms, new classmates, an increase in workload and homework, different teaching styles, a change in travel to school, a change in the language used to describe key daily tasks and curriculum and significant changes in peer groups. There can be the loss of key friendships and difficulties making friends and fitting in (McCourt, 2017).
How well students transition can have noteworthy ongoing impacts. Poor adjustment to secondary school has been shown to contribute to disengagement and non-completion of school (Hanewald, 2013), and can contribute to the ‘dip’ in engagement in middle years (McCourt, 2017).

Poor transition can have a negative academic impact. This is most clearly demonstrated by a drop in NAPLAN writing results on entering secondary school, particularly for boys (Victorian Auditor-General, 2015).

To protect against the negative impacts of transition, it should be well staged. According to the *Education Transitions* report (Victorian Auditor-General, 2015), ideally a good transition should involve the following phases:

1. **Preparation** — this phase includes activities to prepare the child to move from primary to secondary school, ensuring they have the relevant social, emotional and developmental skills needed to progress to the next stage of their education.
2. **Transfer** — this phase refers to the period when the child actually transfers from one setting to another. Important activities include making sure that the child, their families and the receiving school have all of the information they need to ensure an effective transfer.
3. **Induction** — this phase begins upon entry to secondary school and involves orienting the child to their new learning environment. Students should be provided with additional support and have the expectations and operations of the school made clear.
4. **Consolidation** — this phase includes continuing to monitor the child’s learning and developmental outcomes well after the initial transfer and induction, focusing on the importance of engaging students in schooling.

JTD aligns strongly with these recommendations, taking into consideration and resourcing schools to respond to the VAGO report recommendations through the Transition Review Process and its professional development activities.

### 1.6 The evaluation

The Joining the Dots evaluation was carried out from November 2017 to February 2018. Data collection occurred in November and December 2017, with data analysis and report writing occurring in January to February 2018.

**Aims**

The evaluation had three core aims. Firstly, it aimed to determine whether the Yarra Transition Model (the Model) developed in 2014 is scalable; replicable; appropriate for the needs of schools, students and families and reflective of current best practice/research. This aim relates to the desire to see the Model replicated and scaled to other parts of Melbourne and Victoria.

Secondly, it aimed to capture the key learnings from the JTD Project and determine areas that could be improved upon for similar projects – both current and future. This included analysing the effectiveness of governance arrangements and understanding the impact of the JTD Project on transition practice in Yarra. This aim relates to the desire to see the Project informing transition practice within Yarra and the wider Victorian school system.

Thirdly, it aimed to provide clarity and insight for recommendations to be made to stakeholders for the next phase(s) of the JTD Project. This aim relates to the desire for a road map of sorts for the next possible stages of the Project.
Evaluation questions

This evaluation aimed to answer the following key questions:

1. Is the Yarra Transition Model appropriate for need, reflective of current best practice, scalable, and replicable?
2. Has the Steering Group partnership provided effective project governance and support?
3. What has been the impact of this project on:
   a. the awareness by educators and community agencies in Yarra of the need for a well-supported transition to secondary school spanning Year 5 to Year 9
   b. the primary to secondary school transition practice/process by educators in Yarra
   c. the student and family engagement in learning in Yarra
   d. the coordination within and between sectors in Yarra (primary and secondary educators, and community agencies) to support transition and engagement.
4. What learnings from the Project can be shared to improve further/similar work in the area?
5. What recommendations for the next phase(s) of the Project can be made?

Method

Project scoping, planning and background document review

The first stage of the evaluation involved meeting with the Project Manager and scoping the extent of the evaluation. This was followed by mapping the evaluation to the Program Logic (Appendix 1) and reviewing background documents, including the following existing reports and data sets:

- Fitzroy High School and Community Demonstration Pilot Project Report (2014)
- Professional Development Series Report (2016)

Data collection

Data collection occurred in five stages.

1. Surveys

Two surveys were created using Survey Monkey and distributed to the Steering Group and the Shared Learning Community. The Steering Group survey consisted of nineteen questions within five sections. These sections were Introduction; About the Steering Group; Improving Outcomes; Impact of Joining the Dots; and Next Steps. The Shared Learning Community survey consisted of seventeen questions within five sections. These sections were Introduction; About You; Shared Learning Community; Impact of Joining the Dots; and Next Steps.

See Appendix 2 and 3 for more details on the surveys.

2. Focus group

A focus group was conducted with the Joining the Dots Steering Group, with five members present. The focus group took place after a JTD Project review meeting, consisted of eight questions and went for 30 minutes. Notes were typed during the Focus Group. Notes were also taken during the broader Steering Group meeting that were relevant to the evaluation questions. Additionally, two members were spoken to later individually for additional input and one absent member provided typed responses to the questions.

See Appendix 4 for questions.
3. Phone interviews

Phone interviews were carried out with three Steering Group members and five Shared Learning Community members (one of whom was also a Steering Group member). Members were emailed an invitation to participate and organise a time to speak. Interviews lasted between twenty and thirty minutes in length and covered seven questions. Interviews were transcribed during the phone call. See Appendix 5 for questions.

4. Key stakeholder interviews

Two face-to-face in-depth interviews were carried out with key stakeholders. Each interview lasted for one to one and a half hours and consisted of nine questions. Interviewees were:
- Rochelle Darby (INLLEN): Manager Transitions and JTD Project Manager.
- Zita Pinda (Seven Ways Consultancy): author of Joining the Dots Reports 1, 2 and 3, and JTD Project founding member.

See Appendix 6 for questions.

5. Additional document analysis

Additional document analysis occurred as the evaluation progressed and other relevant documents emerged. These included the 2017 Data Summary, and the Professional Development Series Report (2017).

Data analysis and report writing

Qualitative data including interviews and surveys were analysed for common themes. Quantitative data such as the data sets were analysed to examine trends. Transcripts from all interviews and focus groups were analysed for key themes and trends. All data was examined in reference to the evaluation questions (such as key impacts and future directions) and for unexpected results. Drafting of the report took place in January 2018 with final report writing occurring in March 2018.
2 HOW HAS JOINING THE DOTS ACHIEVED ITS IMPACTS?

2.1 The JTD Transition Model

The JTD Transition Model (the Model) is arguably the key output for the entire Joining the Dots Project. The first three years of the Project informed the development of the Model. In September 2014, the second Joining the Dots Report and the Model were launched. The Model is intended to provide a comprehensive framework for primary to secondary school transition and student engagement in learning, that is both replicable and scalable. As shown by Figure 2, the Model is made up of five key dimensions:

1. **Strategic Approach** – this area includes governance, clear strategic direction and evidence-based work
2. **School/ Family/ Community Partnerships** - this area focuses on school, family and community partnerships, including cross-sectoral networking and school-school partnerships
3. **Building Capacity** - this area focuses on leadership development, Professional Learning forums, training and report writing
4. **School Based Programs** - this area focuses on activities at the school level under the categories of Preparation (such as parent information sessions and open days), Transfer (such as effective enrolment processes and visits to new secondary school), Induction (such as Year 7 induction and camps) and Consolidation (such as management of learning and engagement/wellbeing activities)
5. **Support for Individual Students and Parents** - this area focuses on early identification of students at risk, mentoring programs and homework clubs.

All five key dimensions revolve around **Effective Transition for young people and their families/carers** – in other words, the young person is at the centre of the Model. They sit within the JTD governance model of the Steering Group, Project Manager and the YYC Youth Engagement in Learning and Transition Action Group and more widely within the Yarra Youth Commitment.
With the conclusion of the YYC, the Model was updated in early 2017 (see Figure 3) to ensure the Model worked visually with the new branding and website for the now stand-alone Project. This changed it to a linear rather than circular design. Key stakeholders agree that whilst this is more pleasing to the eye, it no longer visually shows the young people and their family/carers at the heart of the Model. It has been identified that both versions recognise the key transition areas but not the interconnectedness between the areas so well. The new diagram also struggles to represent that Strategic Approach (previously represented at the top of diagram) and Governance (previously surrounding the Model) play an overarching role rather than a stand-alone component. It is anticipated that this visual model will be further developed.

Figure 3 – Updated JTD Transition Model diagram (2017)
Source: Salinger Photography & Communications

2.2 Governance – Steering Group

Since the beginning of the Project, governance has sat with a cross-sectoral Steering Group whose membership was capped at twelve. Over the course of the Project some 23 organisations including State and Catholic primary and secondary schools, the Department of Education and Training, Catholic Education Melbourne, local government and community agencies have provided considerable in-kind support. This has included presenting at and facilitating workshops, sharing organisational resources, providing venues for meetings and organising catering. This group met six times per year to review the progress of the Project, plan for upcoming events (such as Forums), set goals for the upcoming period and evaluate strengths / challenges of the Model. See Appendix 7 for the formal Terms of Reference it operated under. See Appendix 8 for Steering Group Members over the course of the Project.

2.3 Project Management

The INLLEN has provided strong project management over the period of the Project, including the provision of the Project Manager, and significant in-kind support. As noted by a wide range of stakeholders, without this level of dedicated project management, the Project would not have been as successful. This has been in addition to the significant in-kind contribution of the Steering Group to the management of the Project. The Joining the Dots Project has been one of the main activities carried out by the INLLEN over the duration of the Project, with the contribution of time and resources equalling approximately twice the funding provided. This level of support was needed to get the Project off the ground initially.
2.4 Transition Review Process

The Transition Review Process is another key output from the JTD Project. This self-reflective process allows schools to review their current transition practice for Years 5-9 with the aim of understanding areas for improvement. This is a highly valuable process for schools to complete with some stakeholders stating that it has transformed the way the school thinks about and approaches its transition practice. It leads to a completed strategic action plan enabling changes that can be implemented within the school community to strengthen transitions and engagement practice. This is to be reviewed regularly.

Once a school has completed the facilitated TRP process, they join a local Transition Cluster to support the ongoing implementation of good transition practice. In Yarra, this is known as the Shared Learning Community. To date, thirteen Yarra schools have completed the TRP. In addition, it has expanded to Darebin (seven schools) and Moreland (five schools) LGAs in 2015 to 2017. See Appendix 9 for the schools that took part in the TRP.

2.5 Shared Learning Community

The Shared Learning Community (SLC) was set up in April 2014. It is now comprised of representatives from the thirteen Yarra schools who have undertaken the Transition Review Process. This group was created to enable opportunities for ongoing networking, enabling consistency in transition practices, shared professional learning opportunities and collaborative partnerships to strengthen transition of students between their schools.

From 2014 – 2017 the SLC met up to four times per year. A key output from this group has been the development and implementation of a common Online Transition Information Form. This form has played a crucial role with improving communication between primary and secondary schools regarding student transition. It has also led to agreed common and supportive language for school tours, minimising competitiveness between secondary schools. This common form has now been implemented with the JTD Moreland and Reservoir projects at Pascoe Vale Girls College and William Ruthven Secondary College. Meeting regularly also created a valuable opportunity to keep track of young people who had left one setting, helping to prevent them from falling through the cracks.

Recently the SLC has moved to a self-governing model creating some challenges. In particular, the current model relies on the goodwill of one member to convene the meetings and act in the role of chair/administrator. The time required to build relationships with other school staff and set the strategic direction for this group is substantial. It is challenging for this role therefore to rest on one school staff member, hampering the sustainability of the group.

2.6 Transition related data sets

An important factor in the genesis of the JTD Project was anecdotal conversations regarding the number of young people moving from local Yarra primary schools to secondary schools outside of Yarra. Hence a key early commitment was to develop an evidence-based data set comprised of three key indicators - attendance, destination school and community agency caseload data. Since 2015 other data sets have been added to what is analysed, including Real Retention (tracking a student entering a school at Year 7 and exiting at Year 12 – added in order to understand how well secondary schools retain their students), DET Attitude to School (added in order to track changes to attitude towards school post-transition) and Year 7 class composition (added to track destination schools from Yarra primary schools).

Data has been gathered from both DET and CEM, enabling the accurate collection of data from both Government and Catholic sectors and cross-sectoral analysis. This has created a baseline of data upon which future success can be gauged. There have been a range of challenges with this data collection however, as both the DET and CEM databases are limited to students that stay within their systems.
Additionally, over the course of the Project there were changes made to what data was gathered at a regional and central level.

2.7 Fitzroy High School and Community Demonstration Pilot Project

The Fitzroy High School and Community Demonstration Pilot Program (the Program) was developed in response to recommendations from the YPSSTP Report ‘Joining the Dots’. The Program ran from May 2013 – June 2014, included a school-community action team and focused on four key areas - Primary Secondary School Transition; Research and Capacity Building; Advocacy Case Management; and Parent and Family Engagement.

A key finding of this pilot project was the importance of working collaboratively with community agencies to provide additional support when needed. Their additional knowledge and resources can assist in building the capacity of schools to meet the challenges of effective transitions, particularly for disadvantaged young people. This strengthened the wider focus on collaboration with the Joining the Dots Project. This project resulted in the school reviewing both wellbeing and transition and led to a significant change in the school leadership structure. New roles of Wellbeing Leader and Pathways and Community Leader were created, with the Pathways role having whole school oversight for transition into, within and out of the school.

2.8 Capacity building

Building the capacity of schools and community agencies around transitions was a key strategic focus for the Project. This has consisted of three primary activities – forums, workshops and bus tours. These activities have seen over 500 individuals and over 130 organisations participate – an impressive reach. See Appendix 10 for the list of organisations that took part in these activities.

1. Forums

Three forums have been held (2013, 2015 and 2017). These forums have been well attended (2013 = 55 participants, 2015 = 94 participants, 2017 = 89 participants) with an excellent cross section of school staff, community agencies, Yarra Council, government, CEM and DET representatives attending. The Forums have provided an opportunity for a cross-sectoral audience to hear from knowledgeable keynote speakers (such as Tom Brunzell, Senior Advisor, Teaching and Learning, Berry Street Childhood Institute), to share good practice and to build professional networks. Interactive workshops have enabled educators and agencies to share information about their transition and engagement practice, leading to new ideas and a greater understanding of that organisation’s approach to transition.

Participants had the following to say about these forums.

Yet again another extremely beneficial JTD Forum hearing about what is working and being able to work with new ideas in our school setting. (Participant)

Disappointed that there wasn’t an opportunity to attend more workshops. It was difficult to choose between which workshop to go to - would have loved to hear Sydney Road Community school but it conflicted with the Murdoch workshop. (Participant)
2. Workshops

The Forums have been supported by five smaller workshops from 2015-2017. Workshops have covered a range of topics including Supporting Refugee Students, Transition 101, Understanding Middle Years Brain Development and Parent and Family Engagement.

Participants and presenters had the following to say about these workshops.

*Thanks, Rochelle. Fabulous to be engaged in learning conversations across education sectors. Wish we could work this way more often.* (Presenter)

*One of the best discussion sessions I’ve been to. There are a number of people I will contact in the future.* (Participant)

*The format and ability to discuss and network with others was great. These opportunities enable us to gather ideas and improve our practice.* (Participant)

3. Bus tours

In 2015, 2016 and 2017 bus tours were conducted offering opportunities for school and community agency staff to go on walking tours of Yarra primary and secondary schools. The aim was to gain a better understanding of their teaching and learning environment to make some all-important connections with key staff. Each school visited had 45 minutes to show staff around the school, visit a class and interact with students and teachers. Time was dedicated to opportunities to ask and answer transition related questions. This was such a valuable process that some participants wanted “more time with others on the tour to discuss what we have seen at the end.”

One school host had the following to say about these workshops.

*I went on the tour in 2016 to the secondary schools and I found that valuable because then I was able to give more feedback to families about the schools when they asked me.* (Host)
2.9 Preparing for Secondary School - a Guide for Parents

The *Preparing for Secondary School - a Guide for Parents* resource was developed in 2014 to better assist Yarra parents in supporting their children in the transition process. This outstanding resource has since been translated into four additional languages, Arabic, Chinese, Somali and Vietnamese, to assist parents from other communities to better understand the Victorian transition process.

The Guide has two sections. The first section has general information about what to expect when exploring the transition into secondary school. The second section has a detailed listing of all secondary schools in the City of Yarra.

This resource has been used extensively by schools and agencies. A major not-for-profit stated that they use the first section of this resource across the state – a testimony to the usefulness of the resource.

2.10 Project Reports

Other key outputs of the Project have been two project reports (2012 and 2014). Titled *Joining the Dots Reports 1 & 2*, they have given a comprehensive overview of the many elements of the Project and recommendations for future direction.

The first report focused on the data and research evidencing the need for the Project. It also looked at the concerns, raised by Yarra educators, of students getting lost in transition. The second report summarised all aspects of the first three years of work, outlined the recently completed Transition Model for Yarra and provided future recommendations.

The third and final report will bring together all six phases of this project, include an updated Transition Model and recommendations for JTD in 2018 and beyond.
3 WHAT IMPACTS HAS THE JOINING THE DOTS PROJECT ACHIEVED?

3.1 Introduction

Joining the Dots has had a number of significant impacts in the City of Yarra over the duration of the Project. Given that it has been going for a relatively short period of time (six years), it has become very embedded in the local education and community agency landscape and is now considered to be, in the words of one stakeholder, “an established brand”.

All stakeholders consulted for this evaluation gave an overall sense that there was great value from the JTD Project for each organisation represented, be they a school, community agency, local government or wider sector departments (such as DET and CEM). All stakeholders agree it’s been a worthwhile long-standing project, outlasting other initiatives and creating value throughout that flowed through to the young people of Yarra. There was wide spread agreement that the way it has been led and project managed by INLLEN has played a significant role in the impact of the Project.

Impacts have included schools being significantly better networked; transition processes within Yarra being refined; agencies being better connected to schools; and secondary schools experiencing enhanced links with their feeder primary schools. When asked in a survey if Joining the Dots was addressing a real need in Yarra, respondents said that as a result, schools have conducted transition audits and have developed greater awareness of transition issues across the area. One stakeholder put it this way.

*Yarra is so diverse and there is such a multitude of agencies, schools and sectors in the area... that this has provided a critically important function in our area - bringing together all stakeholders and holding them accountable in their strategic response to the area of transition. (Steering Group Member)*

Another noted that since the JTD Project, schools are more aware of the need to support their students and their families as they transition to new schools. The communication has improved between schools so that students experience a smoother move into their new schools. In addition, the JTD Project has worked with schools that have vulnerable cohorts. It is providing support for them, in turn ensuring that the transition point risks identified by the VAGO report are addressed. One stakeholder noted that there is strong evidence to suggest young people transitioning between primary and secondary schools in Yarra are vulnerable on many levels and that the JTD Project helps to strengthen the systems around them.

3.2 Impact of the Yarra Transition Model

Overall, feedback on the usefulness of the Yarra Transition Model is extremely positive. In the Steering Group survey, 83% of respondents said the Transition Model was very useful or extremely useful for their organisation. Respondents stated that their involvement with the Model had resulted in a wide range of benefits to their organisation and to improving practice and awareness regarding transitions within Yarra. Despite this overall satisfaction with the Model and the positive impact that it has had, key stakeholders have identified that the Model has areas that still require further development. As it stands, the Model has been developed based on the Project activities completed in the first three phases (2012-2014). Some stakeholders felt that perhaps the final model should be developed from all that has been learnt, extracting the essential elements for the Model.
The evaluation examined four key questions in detail regarding the Yarra Transition Model to help to gain a sense of where to next.

- Is it scalable?
- Is it replicable?
- Is it appropriate for the needs of schools and students/families?
- Is it reflective of best practice?

Stakeholder feedback on these questions will be looked at in detail below.

**Is it scalable?**

In general, feedback indicates that stakeholders see this as a scalable model – that is that it could be delivered across a wider area. In terms of the scale, opinion indicates that the Model would be scalable to a cluster or LGA level, or to scale to multiple models within a region. However, it was thought the Model is not scalable to a regional level as it would be too unwieldy. One suggestion was to scale it based on the number of students or schools in area. Certain stakeholders stated that it needs to be well connected to local key stakeholders if it is to succeed. One stakeholder noted that they felt it could be used from an individual school level right through to system level, and that sometimes, as one stakeholder put it, “you can’t transplant a whole model but just aspects of it”. A key aspect for this to occur is coordination. Stakeholders involved in the evaluation made it clear that there is the need for dedicated resourcing as without this backbone support, the Project will not have longevity.

Some barriers to successfully scaling up the Model include the regular change of transition staff in primary schools; instances where information resulting from the TRP is not shared between staff members as a result of it not being embedded in school practice as an annual review and update process; and the challenge to get CEM and DET to come on board to roll out a ‘branded’ resource.

**Is it replicable?**

Again, the majority of feedback indicated that stakeholders felt that the Model is replicable. As a Model, it has already been replicated into the areas of Darebin and Moreland, however it is worth noting that both areas have the same Project Manager; a key component in the success and stability of the Project.

*It is not so specific that it can’t be adapted. Key components are both scalable and replicable, including the SLC, the TRP, the Steering Committee and the building capacity sessions (such as the forums). However, it needs to take into account the nuances of local area.* (Steering Group Member)

One stakeholder responded that it could be replicated as long as there was adequate documentation, so that someone outside the Project could pick it up and run with the key elements. One way of ensuring this in a school is to create a Transition Policy that contains all key information – hence this is an important output from the TRP. Another stakeholder noted that you can replicate a model anywhere but without the expertise it won’t work. A crucial aspect to make it replicable as a model is to ensure that coordination is carried out by someone with expertise who is adequately time resourced.

Finally, some key stakeholders felt that the Model needs refining before it could be successfully replicated. This was reflective of the fact that whilst the Model has been developed carefully over several years, there is still room for it to be developed in the light of current and new research.
Is it appropriate for needs of school and students/families?

Overall, feedback indicated the Model is appropriate for the needs of schools and students/families. Key processes such as the TRP were noted to have greatly increased the capacity of schools to think through and respond to transition related issues. In addition, capacity building activities such as the forums, workshops and bus tours gave schools a much greater understanding of issues relating to transitions, as well as the skills and tools to respond effectively to these issues.

A few stakeholders noted that to ensure the Model is appropriate, it should be aligned with the Framework for Improving Student Outcomes (FISO). Areas that could be explored include looking at whether the JTD Project could link with schools’ two FISO priority areas as key drivers in a school’s annual review process. The question was posed as to whether different transition points could be mapped to the FISO process. If so this would further embed the take-up of the Project within schools.

As for families, significant outcomes included the way in which the networking between the schools created better relationships, leading to the opportunity to have better quality information for parents. An example given was from a primary school staff member who reflected that his increased knowledge of local high schools enabled him to let parents know where to go and who to speak to if they were investigating a particular school as an option for their child. This was information he did not previously have to the same extent. Additionally, the development of the Preparing for Secondary School Guide for Parents equipped schools and community agencies to better support parents to understand transition.

Is it reflective of best practice?

Stakeholders commented that they felt the Model was reflective of best practice. Arguably the key current benchmarks for transition practice within Victoria are answering the key transition points and recommendations given in the VAGO report and incorporating the best practice from the START resource. The JTD Project is both advocating for and resourcing schools to roll out the recommendations made in the VAGO ‘Education Transitions’ report, including the implementation of structures to support the four phases of transition as described in the report (Preparation, Transfer, Induction and Consolidation).

In addition, key recommendations from the NSW Education Department are being met. One example of how JTD aligns with best practice comes from the recommendations made in the recent NSW Government report ‘The role of student engagement in the transition from primary to secondary school’ (McCourt, 2017). It states,

*The evidence suggests that the relationship between secondary schools and feeder primary schools is an important factor in the transition between primary and secondary school ... examples of practice that may strengthen these relationships are ... holding cluster meetings for senior primary and junior secondary teachers and having joint professional learning.* (p.5)

Within the limits of what a Model that is external to schools can do, the JTD Project has carried out a range of activities recommended in research to improve transitions. As such it is an example of a model that is reflective of best practice.

Whilst JTD is doing an excellent job of linking to best practice, there are always emerging concepts that could be further embedded within the Model. One stakeholder identified that it should be strongly linked in with the ongoing MCRI CATS research. This longitudinal study is researching the current understanding of middle years brain development and its effect on engagement. In a recent JTD Workshop presentation by the MCRI CATS team, questions such as why the middle years are a sensitive phase of development and what this means for learning and school engagement were explored. By linking JTD with such ongoing research, evidence-based approaches can be developed and promoted. It also allows for the ‘cross pollination’ of ideas to occur.
3.3 Impactful governance

A key feature that made Joining the Dots a successful project was impactful governance by the Steering Group. When surveyed, 75% said the Steering Group has been effective or highly effective in both leading the JTD Project and in setting the strategic direction for the JTD Project.

There was a clear sense that time spent on the Project was well structured, strategic, deliberate and productive. One stakeholder commented that they had “very clear direction about the parameters for the group” and that they were “clear about what we wanted and needed to achieve, and we put time into planning our actions and priorities.” Several Steering Group Members commented on this as indicated by the following quotes.

Every meeting and activity organised has been highly strategic. Meetings have been exceptionally productive and well conducted. (Steering Group Member)

It was an inclusive group which had been very strategic in how it targeted improving transitions. (Steering Group Member)

A number of Steering Group members and other stakeholders noted the importance of the leadership of the Project Manager and more widely the INLLEN. This leadership was very clearly a highly important factor in the success of the JTD Project. It was made clear by a number of stakeholders (both from the Steering Group and more widely) that this project would not have been so successful without this, and that any future projects needed to be similarly well driven.

Projects like this only really work when they are well resourced and facilitated. INLLEN ... has done an outstanding job in this role, and the Project would simply not have had the same level of impact without (the Project Manager) driving it. (Steering Group Member)

I think (the Project Manager) has been an exceptional leader and has communicated extremely well. (Steering Group Member)

Being part of the Steering Group had a positive impact upon the organisations that were involved. Members commented that positive impacts on their organisation included the following.

A sense of understanding about the diverse range of student needs relating to transition and how best to support engagement from a community perspective.

Increased connections with others involved with schools in Yarra. Affirmation that the way we are working with our students to keep their attendance high is working.

Greater understanding of local context in the area of transition, best practice and what is happening in this area in the locality.

Greater insight into transition from primary to secondary school; stronger relationships with key local partners; and (from funder’s perspective) better understanding and oversight of the Project.

(4 Steering Group Members)

Steering Group members reflected that it had really good engagement from a varied group of stakeholders across schools, community organisations, and government. This wide spread sectoral representation strengthened the governance of the Project, as well as benefiting the members of the Group regarding the building of relationships beneficial to their organisation.

One key benefit of having the INLLEN involved as an independent broker was that they were able to utilise their impartiality to bring together DET, CEM, schools and agencies to work collaboratively. Over the course of the Project the LLEN has brokered many stakeholders to the table. This was identified by stakeholders from DET and CEM as something that both organisations would have struggled to do alone. Both CEM and DET stakeholders have identified the value of taking the “collective intelligence (of the Group) back” to their organisations.
3.4 What are schools doing differently as a result?

Members of the Shared Learning Community from both primary and secondary schools reported a wide range of changes to their practice as a result of involvement with the Joining the Dots Project. The variety of activities described in the section above (ranging from school-based activities such as the Transition Review Process and the Online Transition Information Form, through to the capacity building activities such as the forums and the bus tours), have embedded the Project into the City of Yarra and created a strong dialogue around the importance of good transitions. They have inspired schools to review and improve their practice in this area and equipped them with a range of tools to do so. The Project has also brought into focus for schools that they are part of the City of Yarra. As one SLC Member put it,

(We now have a) greater awareness that we’re in Yarra – this wasn’t really a factor previously that was considered. This Project has brought this to the fore. Before schools identified as part of a wider education system, not as a part of Yarra. As a result, the obligation to meet needs of local kids has become a more important thing.

The evaluation focused on four potential areas of impact from Joining the Dots. They were as follows:

- the awareness by educators and community agencies in Yarra of the need for a well-supported transition to secondary school commencing in Year 5 through until Year 9
- primary to secondary school transition practice/process by educators in Yarra
- student and family engagement in learning in Yarra and
- the coordination within and between sectors in Yarra (primary and secondary educators, and community agencies) to support transition and engagement.

These four areas are explored in detail below.

1. Increased awareness of the need for a good transition

The Joining the Dots Project has had a highly significant impact on the awareness of the need for well supported transition spanning the time from Year 5 to Year 9, not just Year 6 to Year 7. When surveyed, 100% of the Steering Group members said the JTD Project had either a high or very high impact in increasing the awareness of the need for a good transition (37% high, 63% very high). Participants in the evaluation talked of how the importance of transition has been given some ‘teeth’. As one SLC Member put it,

By being a part of this project, it has sent a message to our whole staff that the need to support students in their transition is not simply an in-school need but a recognised need in our area. It has led to better policy, curriculum and communication in each of these areas.

The way that the JTD Project addressed the issue of transitions based on data was an important factor as this gave both the Project and the topic greater legitimacy within schools and the community. Additionally, the way in which the initial, anecdotal evidence that primary to secondary transition was poor was confirmed by the first report. This was an important step both in raising the profile of transitions within Yarra and also for planning a response. One SLC Member stated,

Kids were going out of Yarra to schools with ‘nice uniforms’. (Now) kids are not going out of Yarra so much where it’s harder to track (and support) them.
2. Improved process around transition

Stakeholders surveyed and spoken to all agreed that the Joining the Dots Project has had a significant impact on improving the primary to secondary school transition practice and process by educators in Yarra. Key enablers of this include the developed Online Transition Information Form (see Case Study 2 for details), practice that was developed at the capacity building forums and workshops, greatly improved relationships between key personnel at different schools, better linkages with both State (DET) and Catholic (CEM) personnel, and the impact of being involved with the Transition Review Process on improving practice within the school.

Of these various enablers, arguably it has been schools’ involvement with the Transition Review Process that has made the most significant impact. The feedback from schools who have taken part in this process is overwhelmingly positive, clearly indicating that it had greatly impacted upon the school’s understanding of the areas of strength and areas for growth for the school regarding the transition process. The four figures below contain data taken from feedback forms completed by nine schools that have completed the TRP.

As shown in Figure 8, all but one of the nine schools stated the TRP process improved their awareness of the strengths and areas for improvement for the school’s transition and engagement program. One critical element of the TRP that impacted schools was the ability to sit down and talk about transition in detail with all of the key personnel present. One TRP participant stated,

The most valuable aspect of this process was to map our entire transition process on one document.

Case Study 1 – Increased awareness within secondary schools

One major secondary school in Yarra experienced a greatly increased awareness of the importance of transitions as a result of the Project. This school had a very significant change to the running of the school – namely changes that occurred to their leadership structure as a result of the involvement with the Project. A staff member commented,

Our leadership structure changed to incorporate responsibility for transition. The importance of transition has been elevated within the school. (Steering Group Member)

They went on to discuss how there was “…definitely raised awareness and understanding among schools and other local partners.” This was significant as it made the process of enabling transition of students into the school easier.

Another Steering Group member commented that the Project had resulted in a better understanding amongst staff at the school about how to work with parents to support a positive transition.

People have a better understanding of the difficulties for parents, especially non-English Speaking Background parents, in their child’s transition to secondary school. (Steering Group member)

This increased awareness of the complexities that parents from non-English speaking backgrounds face when considering transitions was of particular value due to the highly diverse communities that certain schools in Yarra are part of, such as Fitzroy, Collingwood and Richmond.
Figure 8 – Impact of TRP on awareness of strengths and areas for growth

Figure 9 shows the impact that the TRP had in regard to utilisation of the four phases and five areas of transition. As the TRP goes into detail looking at each of these areas, it enabled schools the opportunity to reflect on their current actions and to put a plan into place. One TRP participant gave feedback that the next steps for the school were,

... putting our ideas into action – for example preparing our students more for high school by having them participate in high school like activities in Year 5 and 6 ...we have experimented with this, by having our 4/5/6 class complete a 4-week individual research project, which gets them thinking about their organisation and time management skills, as well as research skills which they will need for high school.

Figure 9 – Impact of TRP on utilisation of four phases and five areas of transition
As shown in Figure 10, all but one of the nine schools that gave feedback increased their recognition of need to look at primary and secondary transition prior to Year 6 and beyond Year 7. For many staff involved in the TRP, whilst they may have given some thought to the concept that transition spans a wider age than just Year 6 to Year 7, it was the in-depth nature of the TRP that solidified this concept. One staff member from a primary school who took part in the TRP commented that this was the most useful part of the TRP, stating,

*Learning more about the transition process and thinking about transition as being a process before Year 6 and continuing after Year 7, rather than just focusing on the Year 6-7 transition (was useful).*

One SLC Member reflected that after doing the TRP at the start of their journey,

*... we realised we were doing a reasonable job with the transition process but needed to look at other things. We now do Grade 5 and Grade 6 (transition related) activities more and use the START resource.*

As shown in Figure 11, all schools but one reported that their involvement with the TRP had an impact on the development of a revised Transition and Engagement program that was reflected in the School's Strategic Plan. One school stated that moving forward from the TRP, having a plan from Prep through to Year 12 was a key goal. Another TRP participant stated that as a result of the TRP there were a wide range of new initiatives, including the following.

*The transition support and program is growing for the (two school) cohorts of students who are moving into the shared senior program. We are continuing to run two transition days for new Year 7s, as well as the family welcome picnic. However, this will be expanded next year to include an additional meet all the teachers. Transition information from primary schools and families will be shared with advisory teachers and referred to in regular Year 7 team meetings. The focus on transition in Advisory for first term will continue. The mapping of all our transition activity has been shared with all year level and team leaders. We have reviewed and updated our Year 7 Transition Guide, and the team leader has created a Year 7 Handbook for students.*
Additionally, the professional development received through the Project had made an impact on process, including schools picking up and utilising aspects of training delivered, such as the Berry Street Education Model, as a result. One school leader identified that it’s the one professional development that all staff will definitely engage with each year and that this is now reflected in teachers’ action plans. In summary, stakeholders reported that the TRP template had created a clear model for their schools to follow. This is captured in the following quote.

_The focus on building the capacity of school and agency personnel has led to more targeted and strategic approaches in schools and agencies. The Transition Review Process has been an exemplary approach to ensuring a clear model is addressed in each school._

It also allowed them to go back each year and review both their progress against their original goals and to set goals for the next year in regard to transitions (an annual audit and planning tool).

![Figure 11 – Impact of TRP on the development of revised Transition and Engagement program](image)
3. Better student and family engagement in learning

Stakeholders that participated in the evaluation broadly agreed that they were less certain about positive outcomes regarding better student and family engagement in learning occurring as a result of the JTD Project. In the words of a Steering Group Member it was “hard to determine (as there are) lots of influences on this”. This is captured in the following quotes.

(This is) very difficult to measure. Evidence is from those who attended professional learning and that was positive. How it translates to changed outcomes is very difficult to comment on at this stage. (Shared Learning Community Member)

I think improved educational outcomes is an effect of improved transitions at times. I believe it will contribute to improved educational outcomes, however I’m unsure as to whether that can be seen so clearly at the moment. (Steering Group Member)

It may take some time to see any major impact from the Project in this area, particularly parent engagement, as this only had project time dedicated to the topic in 2017. The Parent Guide was a key start to this and intended to build the knowledge of school staff and parents alike.

Despite this, when surveyed, the majority of the Steering Group felt that the JTD Project had a positive impact student and family engagement in learning, with 63% saying the Project had some impact, 25% saying it had a high impact, and 12% saying it had a very high impact. One stakeholder stated that the Project led to “...better engagement at school and increased skills/capacity among staff, (which) contributes to improved educational outcomes.”
A Steering Group Member put it this way,

*Students who experience a better managed and supported transition have more chance of remaining engaged in education beyond the initial induction phase in secondary school.*

One key change that had occurred within schools that might lead to better student and parent engagement in learning, was a change in pedagogy and curriculum planning, with school staff speaking of approaching teaching in a different way, particularly at Year 5 and 6 levels, to better prepare students for the style of teaching at secondary school. One school staff member put it this way,

*Transition is a focus for Grade 5 and 6 students in particular now as part of curriculum planning and delivery.*

Other staff members spoke of the JTD Project inspiring changes to the physical set up of primary classrooms, with classrooms now more closely resembling a secondary classroom than before. This included the introduction of lockers – one of the key anxieties that young people were expressing about going to secondary school. This was complemented by increased opportunities for primary students to visit secondary schools to solidify their understanding of what the experience might be like. One school had increased its transition days from one in December (as was standard across the state) to having a second day in November, enabling students to participate if they missed the December date. It also meant that the days were not so rushed, with a focus on relationship building and ‘getting to know each other’ on the first transition day.

Several stakeholders spoke about better engagement with families in general around the quality of information and the way in which this was communicated around transitions. Tools such as the *Preparing for Secondary School - a Guide for Parents* resource empowered conversations with parents about how the transition of their child could be supported by the parent and the school.

Lastly, there were a range of ideas generated from workshops and forums about how to integrate transitions into teaching and learning activities within schools. Staff that attended commented on how there were a range of ideas presented that would influence their teaching practice, such as the Berry Street Education Model. They also commented on gaining practical tips such as how to approach homework for primary aged students to prepare them for secondary school homework tasks.

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**Case Study 3 – Student and family engagement in learning**

The JTD Project has resulted in higher levels of student and family engagement in learning, better supporting some of the most vulnerable young people attending school in Yarra. One Yarra secondary staff member described a young person that went to a local primary school from “an at-risk family, with a terrible history of attendance and no parental involvement”. When the student started at the secondary school, the knowledge of the family was greatly improved due to the processes that had been established as a result of involvement with the JTD Project. This included the very important link with The Smith Family who were able to both provide relevant information on how to best support the child, and practical resourcing to assist with this.

These improved processes helped to find the right program for this child and their siblings, including accessing applied learning programs and adjusting curriculum to their needs. The ability to support not just the one child but the whole family was significant. As one school staff member reflected,

*There is now a better shared responsibility between the local primary and secondary schools. Before, each was running their own show, whilst now there is more a sense of shared ownership between them.*
4. Better coordination between schools and agencies

The Project has clearly had a positive impact on better coordination between schools and agencies. When surveyed, 100% of the Steering Group members said the JTD Project had either a high or very high impact on improving the coordination between schools and agencies (63% high, 37% very high). As a Steering Group Member commented,

*By engaging community and health workers along with educators, this project has significantly helped us to form a targeted, strategic response to improve the systems and communication in place in our schools to support young people.*

In addition, Joining the Dots has resulted in a number of other sectors and transition stakeholders experiencing improved coordination. These have included:

- Improved collaboration between the Catholic and State school systems
- Better connection and coordination between different Yarra Primary Schools
- Better connection and coordination between different Yarra Secondary Schools
- Better connection and coordination from Yarra Primary feeder schools to Yarra Secondary Schools.

One Shared Learning Community Member noted that improved relationships assisted both with having information available at transition days and in the ability to support at risk students, stating,

*Yarra Youth Service attend our two Year 7 transition days and after school and other services provided by other agencies are shared with families at the Year 7 Information Night. Our relationship with The Smith Family as a partner school has had a significant impact on our shared ability to support more vulnerable students.*

There were a number of opportunities within the Project for key stakeholders to network and share good practice. These included the forums, workshops, bus tours, SLC meetings and Steering Group meetings.

These all resulted in many more opportunities to have the critical conversations needed as a Local Government Area (LGA) that enable better transition practice and coordination between services. As one SLC Member put it,

*By sharing best practice and needs, we have all learnt from each other and improved what’s happening in our schools significantly.*

The bus tours encouraged schools to ‘check each other out’ and together with local agency workers, created an opportunity to learn more about the way things are done in a diverse mix of Yarra primary and secondary schools. SLC Members commented that having a formal opportunity to engage with this idea meant that they actually got around to it and that it created reciprocal opportunities to learn and share practice. This is captured in the following quotes,

*There’s always the opportunity to book a school tour but it’s just not something you get around to. It’s good to go along with other people and start talking to them about what they do.* (Shared Learning Community Member)

*I went on one (a bus tour) last year and then hosted one at my school the next year. This created a mutual opportunity to learn from others and explain what my school does.* (Shared Learning Community Member)

It is worth noting that this better connection only worked when schools actively engaged with the Project - not all schools in Yarra did. Broadly however SLC members felt that schools were definitely better connected now, both in formal and informal ways.
3.5 Other impacts

**Staying within Yarra**

One goal of the JTD Project was to increase the numbers of students staying within the City of Yarra. Anecdotally stakeholders reported that this seemed to have been the case, as illustrated by the following quote.

_We have seen more of our students transitioning to secondary school in Yarra, whereas at the start of the Project very few of our students remained in Yarra for their secondary schooling. Fitzroy High and Collingwood College are now first choice for many kids._ (Steering Group Member)

This may be the case for individual communities, however statistically it has remained quite similar. The government system has seen a slight dip in retaining students from Yarra since 2011 when the JTD Project started collecting statistics. In 2011, data collected from DET by the Joining the Dots Project showed that 53% of all government primary students from Yarra remained in Yarra government schools after transitioning to secondary school. From 2012 to 2015, this fluctuated from a high of 56% to a low of 47%. In 2016, this figure sat at 50%. In contrast, the Catholic system saw a slight increase in retaining students from Yarra since 2012 (the first year of statistics for this system). In 2012, 43% of Catholic students remained in Yarra Catholic schools. From 2013 to 2015, this fluctuated from a high of 66% to a low of 50%. This figure sat at 46% in 2016, however, only two Catholic schools supplied data, thus skewing results somewhat.

When looking at the whole base cohort of all students in Yarra, we can see from Figure 12 that in 2012, 37% of the students transitioning from a Yarra primary school stayed within Yarra to go a government or Catholic secondary school. From 2013 – 2015, this fluctuated between 34% and 39%. In 2016 this percentage was 35%.

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**Case Study 4 – Strengthening relationships**

The JTD Project played a significant role in strengthening the relationship between schools and community agencies. The worker from one of these agencies who took part in the evaluation described how they now had a strong relationship with schools resulting from JTD and that this was representative of Yarra. As they put it,

_Services and schools are really communicating really well now – this has got much better over the years. All being able to work together and identify issues and concerns is really important._ (Community Agency Representative)

The worker went on to describe how they had noticed over this time that the transition programs have opened up to agencies. Additionally, they had noticed as someone who had contact with many schools that more young people connected with the community agency were choosing local high schools.

Where the agency had pre-existing partnerships in schools, these had been strengthened by the Project. As an external agency, their ability to provide essential wellbeing support to help young people had been reinforced through the Project.
One area where the trend has been encouraging is a reduction in the number of students transitioning to a government school by themselves or with only one other student from their school. This has been shown to be a risk factor in experiencing a successful transition, as knowing less people typically equates to travelling further and being more disconnected from local supports and familiar settings. Figure 13 shows this trend.

Real Retention

Another key statistic that has been captured by the JTD Project has been Real Retention. This describes the number of students who have stayed within the City of Yarra at their secondary school from Year 7 to Year 12. Arguably an improved transition experience and a focus on engagement from the school should result in better retention, with less students disengaging and dropping out of school as a result.

Figure 14 shows this information. Again, while trends are encouraging across the four schools shown, (with all showing a modest increase over this period of an average of 9% increased real retention), it would be difficult to attribute this to the JTD Project.
In contrast, Figure 15 (Real Retention for Yarra Catholic Schools 2010-2016) shows a slight drop in Real Retention, however, as previously mentioned; with only two schools this data can be unreliable. As a statistic, this is a slow-moving measure, due to time lag from students who were in Year 7 when the Project started, only finishing Year 12 in 2017. As such, it will take some time to see any potential flow through effect from the Project.

**Attendance**

There have been some challenges with collecting data for attendance over the course of the Project. These have included that for the Catholic sector, the data set only spans Years 1-10. Both the Government and the Catholic sectors changed how they collected data during course of the Project.
As with other data sets, it is difficult to attribute improvements or declines directly to the JTD Project. Figures 16 and 17 below show the school absence data available since 2010 as collected from DET by the Joining the Dots Project. For the Government school sector this shows Prep to Year 12 data for the City of Yarra, spanning 2010-2016, with comparative Victoria wide data from 2013. For the Catholic school sector this shows Prep to Year 10 data for the City of Yarra, from 2012-2015, with comparative Victoria wide data from 2014.

For the Government school data (Figure 16), key trends worth noting are:

- Apart from Year 12, all year levels in Yarra are better off in 2016 compared with the Victorian average.
- From 2010-2016 at Year 7, Year 8 and Year 9 there are encouraging drops in absence levels (levels impacted by transition regarding student engagement).
- Most year levels have dropped in absences from 2010 to 2016. The only year level with increased absence from 2010 is Year 6, up marginally from a low of 6.3% absence in 2014 to 7% absence in 2016.
- Years 5 has also gradually increased for past 3 years from a low of 5.7% absence in 2014 to 6.4% absence in 2016.
- An encouraging improvement trend is evident in Years 9 and 10. Both have dropped below 10%. Year 9 had 9.1% absence in 2016, down from high of 12.3% in 2012. Year 10 had 9.5% absence in 2016, down from high of 12.9% in 2012.

![Figure 16 – Average student absence 2010 – 2016: Yarra Government Schools with comparative Vic figures](chart.png)
For the Catholic school data (Figure 17), it is worth noting that the data is skewed with two primary school data sets missing. With only a small number of schools to collect data from this has a large impact. Key trends worth noting are:

- Year levels in Yarra are a mixture of better off and worse off in 2016 compared with the Victorian average.
- At Years 8 and 9 Yarra (both important years to measure engagement levels), the Catholic School data is better off compared with the Victorian average.
- All Year levels seem to have increased in absences from 2012 to 2015.
- Despite increase Yarra Catholic Schools generally have lower absence levels than Yarra Government Schools.
- In addition, Victorian Catholic School data absence levels are lower than Victorian Government School absence levels.

![Yarra Catholic School Absence (%) 2012 - 2016](image)

Whilst it may be difficult to point to the data showing clearly an impact from the Project, stakeholders nonetheless felt that it had upskilled them in understanding how to approach this important engagement measure. One stakeholder commented that their involvement with the Steering Group provided “…affirmation that the way we are working with our students to keep their attendance high is working”. It is worth considering that 92% attendance still equates to three weeks per year of absence. Over the thirteen-year course of a child’s education this equates to one whole school year of absence.
Student wellbeing

Another area mentioned by a number of participants in the evaluation was the impact of the JTD Project on student wellbeing. The focus of the Project on improving transition and engagement to reduce anxiety was important. Many young people face significant anxiety and concern when they are moving settings as they leave behind what is familiar and move into a new phase in their life, often involving travel, the loss of friendship groups, establishing new peer groups, different learning structures and processes, and much bigger schools.

One Shared Learning Community Member stated that as a result of the Project,

> Students have the opportunity to work collaboratively to develop a shared understanding about their own wellbeing needs for the next stage of their academic journey.

Others talked about the importance of a good transition in ensuring that the students at their school experienced positive wellbeing and engagement. In their eyes, this was also clearly linked to better educational outcomes, as captured by this quote.

> Yes, by directly supporting the wellbeing of young people, we are supporting their educational success in secondary (school). (Shared Learning Community Member)

Resources and capacity building for schools and agencies

Lastly, whilst the capacity building sessions and resources created by the JTD Project have been mentioned in several other categories of impact, it is worth noting that the forums, bus tours and workshops have created a significant information sharing and networking opportunity for all practitioners that have attended them, and that the resources created through the Project have enabled the delivery of new ideas. One practitioner noted that the highlight of the Project for her was,

> ...the professional development and networking opportunities for teachers, building relationships between primary and secondary schools, and providing resources for parents, all contribute to supporting outcomes for children and young people. (Steering Group Member)

A key community agency staff member pointed out that the Preparing for Secondary School - a Guide for Parents was a valuable resource for their organisation, stating,

> Not only were we able to use this with our Yarra students but I sent this on to our other locations around Victoria who used the front half to assist their students and families with transition to secondary school. It has been a most useful document. (Community agency staff member)
4 SUMMING UP AND GOING FORWARDS

4.1 Summing up

Within the City of Yarra, the Joining the Dots Project has had significant impacts on the understanding of the importance of a good transition from primary to secondary school (Year 5-Year 9). It emerged as a project in response to concerns from Yarra educators about young people and children getting lost in transition, particularly when leaving Yarra to go to a school in another LGA. In the space of six years, the Project has managed to forge connections between a wide range of key stakeholders around the issue of transitions and engagement. It has greatly strengthened the relationships between these organisations through a variety of activities.

The Yarra Transition Model has gained a reputation as a best practice approach to strengthening the transitions of young people and children within Yarra. As a Model, it has now grown outside of Yarra to neighbouring Darebin and Moreland. It has gone through several iterations visually, all with input and review from key stakeholders.

The governance of the Project has been strong and has managed to both set the strategic direction and lead its implementation well. The Steering Group has been well subscribed for the full duration of the Project and has had very good representation from primary schools, secondary schools, DET, CEM and community agencies. It has met regularly and worked productively to create a strong framework for the Project. Project leadership by the INLLEN and the Project Manager has been exceptionally strong as noted widely by stakeholders.

Relationships between schools have been considerably strengthened, improving the ability of those schools to carry out transition processes. Processes for transition have been improved through a range of practical capacity building activities. Foremost of these is the TRP. This clear, reflective framework has created the space and time for schools to review their current transition and engagement related practice. By mapping this against the four phases and five areas of transition and putting into place a plan of action, schools have been empowered to create a strategy specific to their setting. Ongoing involvement in the Shared Learning Community has enabled these schools to network and encourage other schools that have gone through the TRP process to stay accountable to the goals set.

Capacity building activities such as the forums, workshops and bus tours have all played a key role in helping staff within schools and community agencies to understand the need for and be resourced to implement a well-structured transition program. Resources developed as part of Joining the Dots are being utilised by a wide range of stakeholders within Yarra, including primary schools, secondary schools and community agencies. They are considered strong enough to be used state-wide where relevant outside of the LGA.

Data gathered throughout the Project has helped to set the strategic direction of the Project and to frame the need for work being completed. As this data set has grown, it has enabled more nuanced analysis of some of the school-based issues that may relate to transition, such as student absence.

Project documentation throughout has been extremely strong, with all activities well documented for review. This will substantially aid any further project delivery either in Yarra or in other areas.
4.2 Going forwards

Key lessons for future project delivery

A range of key lessons have been learnt as a result of the Joining the Dots Project that may influence future project delivery, either in Yarra or in other areas.

Delivery should focus on local issues

The Joining the Dots Project started as a place-based response to what was identified as a particular local issue. Due to a range of locally relevant factors, such as Richmond having no State secondary school for boys and a wide range of community agencies struggling to connect with schools, there was concern that students were being lost during this transition. Analysis of the evidence to draw conclusions on these concerns influenced the formation of the Project. Hence for a project to be successful, it is critical to look at what factors are important locally. A similar project in a rural area would potentially look quite different, as might one in the growth corridors of Melbourne. A key way forward would be to use the Transition Model as a baseline for future projects, with specifics modified according to local issues to be addressed. Additionally, to ensure that it continues to be reflective of best practice it should be regularly reviewed against literature and practice from within Victoria, Australia and internationally.

Delivery should involve structured review processes/tools for schools

The TRP was such an important process for schools to gain an understanding of where their transition practice was succeeding and where it needed development. The structured nature of this review process enabled schools to create an action plan that was both realistic and targeted. To enable schools to focus on transitions and implement the best practice solutions, this facilitated process helped them to overcome the barrier of time and prioritise a response. The TRP has made a great difference to transition and engagement practice throughout Yarra. As such, it is something that could make a highly significant difference in the transition and engagement practice of schools across Victoria.

Good governance is crucial

The Steering Group engagement and commitment was noted to be very high for this project. The organisation and structure of the Steering Group ensured the continuity of the Project and a strategic approach to delivery. Without strong governance and a committed group of organisations at the table to help its goals to be delivered, it is doubtful that the Joining the Dots Project would have been so effective. Additionally, the high level of in kind contribution from the Steering Group and the INLLEN Project Manager improved delivery significantly. Some stakeholders commented that going forward it would be good to have higher levels of involvement from young people and/or parents. To date there have been few opportunities for young people or parents to directly influence the direction of the Project. Options that could be looked at might include creating a students and parents reference group to give input into the delivery of the Project, or to carry out focus groups with students and parents to gather their views on what is important to strengthen transitions within Yarra.

Planning creates buy in

To be successful, a project such as Joining the Dots needs to be well planned, with a strategic purpose that is clearly understood. Schools are time poor and often experience a number of initiatives within a five-year period, including changes to curriculum (such as the Victorian Curriculum), changes to reporting frameworks (such as FISO) and new initiatives (such as Respectful Relationships). As such they can be either dubious or simply too time poor to respond to local initiatives that they have no obligation to be involved with. The Joining the Dots Project is an excellent example of a project that started at a local level that, due to well-planned and coordinated activities, has gathered widespread buy in from the intended recipients and beyond.
A cross-sectoral approach works best

An important factor in the success of the Joining the Dots Project was the cross-sectoral nature of it. By having representatives of the Department of Education and Training, Catholic Education Melbourne, the City of Yarra, primary schools, secondary schools, community agencies such as The Smith Family and community organisations such as the INLLEN, a wide range of perspectives was gathered on how to best approach the topic of transitions for the City of Yarra. This enhanced buy in when rolling out the JTD Transition Model. It also added the voices, knowledge, resources and perspectives of organisations with a variety of perspectives to the formation of a targeted response to improving transitions in Yarra.

Resource development enables project delivery

Projects should aim to create resources that will assist in the delivery of key project outputs, such as the Preparing for Secondary School - a Guide for Parents. This resource played a significant role in the practical ability for schools to help parents to be well informed and to inform teachers and schools staff about other Yarra schools. Having a physical resource that parents could get from their child’s school meant that they could take it away to consider. Additionally, having it translated into four other languages made it significantly more useful. It also served as a resource for community agency staff and school staff to sit down with parents when they wanted to explain the next steps for the child.

Networking is highly valued

Attendees at events such as the forums, workshops, bus tours, Shared Learning Community and Steering Group all noted how important the networking component was. Over and above the explicit purpose of each event, networking was often described as the key benefit to emerge. It was clear that the outcome of strengthened relationships with other stakeholders within Yarra was highly valued by every participant at each of these events and that this was directly linkable to better outcomes for transition. Opportunities to network and share practice across and within sectors is rare and greatly valued in the busy day to day workings of schools. This should be prioritised.

Coordination

Time and again participants in the evaluation spoke of the need to have strong project coordination for such a project to work. Without someone coordinating the Project, it was agreed that the Project would likely lose direction and not sustain the level of momentum needed to ensure strong school and community agency buy in, and to organise the events that were central to rolling out the professional development opportunities to strengthen transition practice.

Funding

It is important to find a source of funding to deliver such a project if possible. Whilst it could be run by a cross section of community representatives such as teachers and community agency staff on a voluntary basis, stakeholder consensus was that this approach doesn’t work in the long term and that the Project would eventually lose momentum. A funding source also gives the Project a defined timeline and strategic framework to be accountable to, all of which give the Project delivery a sense of purpose.

Case Studies

Currently there is a range of quantitative data sets that have been gathered to create an evidence base. To compliment this a collection of qualitative data should be considered. One way to do this would be to collect case studies. These could be following the journey of young people who have transitioned from a Yarra feeder school into a Yarra secondary school.
5 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE ACTION

5.1 Continue Joining the Dots Project delivery locally

Joining the Dots has created a great sense of momentum in Yarra in a relatively short period of time. Practitioners, schools and community member are all enthusiastic about the resources created from the Project, the professional development offered and the improved cross sector relationships. As such the Project should be continued to be delivered in Yarra if possible, leveraging off the existing good will and ‘brand recognition’ that has been created over six years.

Actions:
- Consider ways to ensure that Joining the Dots continues to be delivered locally.
- Consider ways to utilise community momentum around the Project to create next steps.
- Consider reviewing annually to ensure reflective of current good practice and research.

5.2 Update Joining the Dots Transition Model

Currently the JTD Transition Model has a number of elements represented. These cover a wide range of activities related to improving transition practice ranging from a top level, strategic approach and governance perspective right down the ‘on the ground’, in the school activities such as management of learning. The key element of the Model in regard to its implementation is the Strategic Approach. This element should be emphasized in the model presentation. In addition, it is critical in the conceptual formation of the Model that the young person and their experience of transition is firmly at the centre. As such the elements that directly involve young people should be represented as the core of the Project.

Actions:
- Consider ways to emphasize and expand upon the Strategic Approach element of the Model.
- Consider ways to emphasize the Support for Individual Students and Parents and School Based Programs elements of the Model.

5.3 Support Shared Learning Community

Since the SLC has moved to a self-governing model the challenges with convening meetings and other time-consuming activities has hampered the sustainability of the group. This group could consider implementing additional structure to drive it forward, give it clarity of purpose and support the rebuilding of relationships as members change roles or leave their school.

Actions:
- Consider developing a Terms of Reference and a Strategic Plan to refocus the SLC, focusing on such tasks as collaborative actioning of individual TRP Action Plans/Policy; documenting and improving transition programs to include reciprocal school visits by staff; and curriculum planning to build in transition related skills and wellbeing.
- Consider seeking funding for coordination of the SLC.
5.4 Support cross school curriculum planning

With students spending the majority of their time at school in class, curriculum delivery and teaching and learning styles is a key component of their transition experience. The Transition Model should therefore ensure that School Based Programs focuses on cross school curriculum planning meetings between primary and secondary schools.

These meetings would support *co-planned curriculum and teaching and learning approaches* for transitioning students. This area has been found in research to be valued in principle but executed poorly between primary and secondary school.

**Actions:**
- Consider facilitating schools to work collaboratively to design a comprehensive transition program that includes all five areas of transition, with specific emphasis on in-class curriculum, not just students visiting and experiencing secondary schools.

5.5 Consolidate key knowledge into one resource

A great deal of knowledge and understanding of transition best practice has been gained through the Joining the Dots Project, ranging from parent engagement to policy writing. There are a number of key resources that have been developed as a result of Joining the Dots, both in Yarra and recently in Darebin/Moreland (including two sets of digital case studies exploring transition from the perspective of student, parent and school and a book about transition entitled *Goodbye Primary, Hello High School* written by primary and secondary students). Resources could be consolidated into one resource that is able to be rolled out widely.

**Actions:**
- Consider bringing together the knowledge gained so far into a single resource for schools that includes such things as basic information on transition; a suggested annual timetable of when to carry out transition activities; JTD resources such as student and parent books, guides and digital case studies; and the TRP documentation.
- Consider creating a Train the Trainer process to enable delivery of TRP with this documentation. This could be delivered by key organisations that work in the school transition space, such as other LLEIs, the Catholic Education Office, regional DET offices and schools.

5.6 Support collaboration between LGAs

Currently there are thirteen schools in Yarra involved in the SLC, with a further twelve schools in Darebin and Moreland working in Transition Clusters. *Education Transitions* (2015) recommends that DET develop “transition networks with geographically similar schools and sharing best practice approaches across the school system” (p. xv). This is precisely what the current Yarra Shared Learning Community and the Moreland/Darebin Transition Clusters are carrying out.

DET under the Education State, has a strong focus that networks and system leaders will adopt a Communities of Practice (CoP) approach “to share knowledge, experience and resources” (Bastow, 2017). The key focus of this is to create a collective responsibility to work towards improvement using FISO. At the same time, the DET resource *A Toolkit for Transition Clusters: Primary to Secondary* states that although most schools have a transition policy and strategy, “it is less common for a transition strategy to be developed and implemented by a cluster consisting of a secondary school and its main feeder primary schools” (DET, 2015, p1).
Actions:

- Consider schools in Yarra, Moreland and Darebin continuing to utilise a local focus for a Transitions Cluster approach focused on locally relevant transition related topics specific to their schools.
- Consider forming an Inner North Transitions Network for professional development, networking and support with implementation of the Project to create economies of scale and to widen the support network for these schools.
- Consider ways to set up this network in a coordinated, self-directed and self-funded manner to ensure its sustainability. This could be achieved by member schools contributing towards project management and coordination costs.

5.7 Scale up Joining the Dots

Scaling up Joining the Dots Project out into other areas of Melbourne will enable and promote good transitions practice. In the LGAs where this has already occurred (Darebin and Moreland), local nuances have developed so that they are appropriate to their context. The VAGO Education Transitions made it clear that the quality of transitions was highly variable across Victorian schools, demonstrating the need for quality resources and frameworks to support schools in this area. Scaling up will enable greater advocacy with DET, CEM and Independent Schools Victoria, building awareness, sharing knowledge, and improving practice around transition and engagement practice.

Actions:

- Consider ways to scale the Project up, including the earlier mentioned resource package and leveraging off local momentum for the Project.
- Consider building Project advocacy goals with key education administrative and peak bodies into future objectives.

5.8 Seek further funding

The Steering Group is clearly aware of the need for further funding to assist with the important work of promoting and supporting transition and engagement in Yarra and beyond. Given the importance of having dedicated coordination to make the Project work to its optimum level, and the opportunity to promote the learnings of the Project more widely, funding is required over both a short-term and long-term period.

Actions:

- Consider securing further interim funding as the current funding period has ended. This will ensure that it can be sustainable from a project management perspective in the short-term.
- Consider researching longer term funding options, required to enable the Project to continue its excellent work and to promote the work more widely across Melbourne and Victoria.
6 REFERENCES


McCourt, B. (2017). The role of student engagement in the transition from primary to secondary school. Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluations. NSW Department of Education. Sydney, NSW.


### Situation and Priorities

**INPUTS**
- What we invest?
  - City of Yarra – Funding, Venues, Steering Group membership
  - INLLEN – Project coordination, event management & evaluation; conduct TIP, data collection & collation, update and design of Parent Resource & Steering Group secretariat duties
  - Community partners – Participate in JTP capacity-building opportunities, utilise the Parent Resource
  - Steering Group – Support the development, implementation and evaluation of the Project

**OUTPUTS**
- Activities & Participants
  - City of Yarra – Funding, Venues, Steering Group membership
  - INLLEN – Project coordination, event management & evaluation; conduct TIP, data collection & collation, update and design of Parent Resource & Steering Group secretariat duties
  - Community partners – Participate in JTP capacity-building opportunities, utilise the Parent Resource
  - Building Capacity
    - Workshops
    - Forums – three large Forums held in 2013, 2015 & 2017
    - Bus Tours (2014-2017) – exploring agency and school settings in Yarra
  - Shared Learning Community
  - School Based Programs
    - Transition Review Process (2014-2016) – a series of three facilitated workshops delivered in primary and secondary schools to reflect on practice and develop a plan for action on transition and engagement
  - Support for Individual Students and Parents
    - Parent Transition Guide

**Strategic Approach**
- Steering Group – development of a cross sector steering group to guide and participate in the development, implementation and evaluation of the Project
  - City of Yarra – Funding, Venues, Steering Group membership
  - INLLEN – Project coordination, event management & evaluation; conduct TIP, data collection & collation, update and design of Parent Resource & Steering Group secretariat duties
  - Community partners – Participate in JTP capacity-building opportunities, utilise the Parent Resource
  - Building Capacity
    - Workshops
    - Forums – three large Forums held in 2013, 2015 & 2017
    - Bus Tours (2014-2017) – exploring agency and school settings in Yarra
  - Shared Learning Community
  - School Based Programs
    - Transition Review Process (2014-2016) – a series of three facilitated workshops delivered in primary and secondary schools to reflect on practice and develop a plan for action on transition and engagement
  - Support for Individual Students and Parents
    - Parent Transition Guide

**OUTCOMES**
- Short Term 2015-2017
  - Improved staffing, documentation and development of a policy around Transition and Engagement (Years 5-9) in participating TRP/SLC schools
  - Early identification of transitioning students at risk of disengagement and appropriate support put in place
  - Appropriately produced and used by educators, students, parents, DET and community partners to support better primary to secondary transitions
  - Better parent involvement and outcome of TRANSITION REVIEW PROCESS comes to fruition with three projects:
    - Faculty of Mary Immaculate College
    - Fitzroy High School
    - Yarra City Council
  - Improved parent and community engagement in their children's learning, beyond school involvement
  - Students and families reporting stronger connectedness to school
  - Shared Learning Community has developed beyond information sharing to working in collaboration
  - Strategic partnerships between schools and community agencies establish a ‘Yarra Transition Model’ to support needs of students and families in particular those at risk of disengagement
  - Ongoing sharing of knowledge and good practice within and between educational and community agencies
  - Yarra Transition Model continued to be reviewed and utilised within Yarra

**EXTERNAL FACTORS**
- School participation in TRP and Shared Learning Community
- Competing priorities for schools/education by DET/DEECD/other programs
- End of YTC in 2016 did not impact the completion of the Project due to the strength of the Steering Group

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**APPENDICES**

**JOINING THE DOTS** Yarra 2012-2017

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**Research indicates**

- Anecdotally, transition to secondary school transition was perceived as an area of concern for DET, CEM and schools
- The Parent Resource & Transition Review Process (TRP), data collected and analysis at key points in the Project
- Data sets – Collect, collate & report
- Yarra Transition Model – Develop, review and update
- Joining the Dots Reports, 1–3 documenting the activities, findings and recommendations at key points in the Project

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**Community Partnerships**

- Steering Group – as above
  - Fitzroy High School & Community Demonstration Pilot Project (June 2013 – June 2014) – an action research project incorporating a school community action team to improve transition, student and parent engagement
  - Shared Learning Community (SLC) – Yarra transition coordinators where schools have completed the Transition Review Process come together once per term to work collaboratively in a school partnership and transition in Yarra. Facilitated by Project Officer and then convened by Fitzroy High School since 2013

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**School Based Programs**

- Transition Review Process (2014-2016) – a series of three facilitated workshops delivered in primary and secondary schools to reflect on practice and develop a plan for action on transition and engagement

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**Support for Individual Students and Parents**

- Parent Transition Guide

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**ASUMPTIONS**

- Sufficient and willing participation from Steering Group, schools, educators, agencies and other community partners

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**EXTERNAL FACTORS**

- School participation in TRP and Shared Learning Community
- Competing priorities for schools/education by DET/DEECD/other programs
- End of YTC in 2016 did not impact the completion of the Project due to the strength of the Steering Group
Appendix 2 – Steering Group survey

Introduction
You are invited to take part in a short survey about the Joining the Dots (JTD) Yarra Project. This survey will contribute to an evaluation of the JTD Project.

Purpose of the evaluation
The Steering Group has commissioned an independent evaluation of the JTD Project. This evaluation aims to:
1. Evaluate the JTD Transition Model;
2. Provide recommendations for the next phases(s) of the JTD Project, and
3. Capture learnings to inform similar projects.
The evaluation report will be completed by February 2018.

Evaluation Team
On behalf of the JTD Steering Group, the Inner Northern LLEN has commissioned Johns Education Consulting to carry out the evaluation – an independent organisation that supports education and community organisations to achieve their goals. Johns Education Consulting work in the areas of evaluation, project delivery and training.

Your participation
As a member of the Steering Group, your input to this evaluation is vital. You have important knowledge of the impact of the JTD Project, both in your organisation and more widely. You can help us paint a more complete picture of how the JTD Project works, so that others can learn more about the Model. You can also help us identify how to improve Joining the Dots in the future.
Your participation is voluntary. If you do not want to answer some of the questions that is fine – just leave them blank. This survey is anonymous. No participants will be identified in the final report.

Questions or concerns
If you would like further information, please contact the evaluator Nick Johns on johnsconsulting@icloud.com
This survey should take 10-20 minutes. By clicking on the NEXT button at the bottom of the page you are agreeing to take part in the survey.

About the Steering Group
Firstly, we would like to know a bit about the Steering Group and your involvement with it.
1. How long have you been a member of the Steering Group?
   ☐ 4 - 6 months
   ☐ 7 months - 1 year
   ☐ 1 - 2 years
   ☐ 2 - 3 years
   ☐ 3 years +

2. What, if anything, have you/your organisation gained from being a member of the Steering Group?

3. What are the challenges in being a member of the Steering Group? (Select as many as apply)
   ☐ Time constraints
   ☐ Difficulty being released from organisation duties
   ☐ Timing of meetings
   ☐ Distance to travel
   ☐ Other (please specify)

4. How effective has the Steering Group been in leading the JTD Project?
   ☐ Highly ineffective
   ☐ Somewhat effective
   ☐ Highly effective

Please clarify response.

5. How effective has the Steering Group been in setting the strategic direction for the JTD Project?
   ☐ Highly ineffective
   ☐ Somewhat effective
   ☐ Highly effective

Please clarify response.
Improving Outcomes
Now we would like to know whether you believe that the JTD Project is improving outcomes for young people in Yarra.

6. Is the Project addressing a real need in the City of Yarra? Please comment.
7. Is the Project contributing to improved transition outcomes for young people in Yarra? Please comment.
8. Is the Project contributing to improved educational outcomes for young people? Please comment.
9. To what extent are the following JTD resources useful for the needs of your organisation? Please rate below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Resource</th>
<th>Not useful at all</th>
<th>Slightly useful</th>
<th>Somewhat useful</th>
<th>Very useful</th>
<th>Extremely useful</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Transition Model</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transition Review Process</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preparing for Secondary School Guide for Parents</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Please add comment.

Impact of Joining the Dots
Now we would like to know your views about the impact of Joining the Dots in your school/organisation and across Yarra.

10. What impact, if any, has the Joining the Dots Project had in your school/organisation? Please comment.
11. What impact has the JTD Project had on awareness for the need for a well-supported transition in Yarra?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Impact</th>
<th>No impact</th>
<th>Some impact</th>
<th>Very high impact</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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</table>

Please clarify response.

12. What impact has the JTD Project had on transition practices and processes in Yarra?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Impact</th>
<th>No impact</th>
<th>Some impact</th>
<th>Very high impact</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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</table>

Please clarify response.

13. What impact has the JTD Project had on student and family engagement in learning in Yarra?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Impact</th>
<th>No impact</th>
<th>Some impact</th>
<th>Very high impact</th>
</tr>
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</table>

Please clarify response.

14. What impact has the JTD Project had on coordination between different schools and community agencies in supporting transitions in Yarra?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Impact</th>
<th>No impact</th>
<th>Some impact</th>
<th>Very high impact</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Please clarify response.

Next Steps
Lastly, we would like to know your views on possible next steps for the Steering Group and the JTD Project.

15. What key learnings from the JTD Project could be shared for similar projects? Please comment.
16. Do you have any recommendations for improvement for the Project? Please comment.
17. Do you have any recommendations for the future direction for the Project? Please comment.
18. Reflecting on your experience, would you recommend that your organisation maintains its relationship with JTD Project in 2018?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recommendation</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Uncertain</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Planning to maintain relationship?</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Please clarify response.

19. Do you have anything further you would like to add about the JTD Project or your role in the Steering Group?

Thank you for your time and responses in completing this survey. We sincerely appreciate your opinions and input. To make sure your responses count, just click the DONE button below.
Appendix 3 – Shared Learning Community survey

Introduction
You are invited to take part in a short survey about the Joining the Dots (JTD) Yarra Project. This survey will contribute to an evaluation of the JTD Project.

Purpose of the evaluation
The Steering Group has commissioned an independent evaluation of the JTD Project. This evaluation aims to:
1. Evaluate the JTD Transition Model;
2. Provide recommendations for the next phases(s) of the JTD Project, and
3. Capture learnings to inform similar projects.
The evaluation report will be completed by February 2018. This report will be shared with the Steering Group who will then make it more widely available.

Evaluation Team
On behalf of the JTD Steering Group, the Inner Northern LLEN has commissioned Johns Education Consulting to carry out the evaluation – an independent organisation that supports education and community organisations to achieve their goals. Johns Education Consulting work in the areas of evaluation, project delivery and training.

Your participation
As a member of the Shared Learning Community, your input to this evaluation is vital. You have important knowledge of the impact of the JTD Project, both in your organisation and more widely. You can help us paint a more complete picture of how the JTD Project works, so that others can learn more about the Model. You can also help us identify how to improve Joining the Dots in the future.
Your participation is voluntary. If you do not want to answer some of the questions that is fine – just leave them blank. This survey is anonymous. No participants will be identified in the final report.

Questions or concerns
If you would like further information, please contact the evaluator Nick Johns on johnsconsulting@icloud.com
This survey should take 10-20 minutes. By clicking on the NEXT button at the bottom of the page you are agreeing to take part in the survey.

About You
Firstly, we would like to learn about your role with the Shared Learning Community.

1. How long have you been a member of the SLC?
   🌟 4 - 6 months
   🌟 7 months - 1 year
   🌟 1 - 2 years
   🌟 2 - 3 years
   🌟 3 years +

2. What is your role within your school? (Select as many as apply)
   🌟 Teacher
   🌟 Transition Coordinator
   🌟 Registrar
   🌟 Leading Teacher
   🌟 Assistant Principal
   🌟 Principal
   🌟 Other (please specify)

3. Has your role changed over the membership of the SLC?
   🌟 Yes (please clarify below)
   🌟 No

If yes, how?
Shared Learning Community
Now we would like to learn about your views on the Shared Learning Community.
4. Has there been benefit or value gained from working collaboratively in the SLC? If so, what?
5. What have been the barriers to your participation in the SLC? (Select as many as apply).
   - Time constraints
   - Difficulty being released from school duties
   - Timing of meetings
   - Distance to travel
   - Other (please specify)
6. What recommendations for improvement to the SLC do you have? Please comment.

Impact of Joining the Dots
Now we would like to learn about your views on the impact of the JTD Project.
7. What, if anything, is your school doing differently as a result of completing the Transition Review Process? Please comment.
8. What impact has the JTD Project had on transition practices and processes in your school? Please clarify response below star rating.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No impact</th>
<th>Some impact</th>
<th>Very high impact</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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</table>

Please clarify response.
9. What impact has the JTD Project had on awareness for the need for a well-supported transition in your school? Please clarify response below star rating.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No impact</th>
<th>Some impact</th>
<th>Very high impact</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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</table>

Please clarify response.
10. What impact has the JTD Project had on student and family engagement in learning in your school? Please clarify response below star rating.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No impact</th>
<th>Some impact</th>
<th>Very high impact</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
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</table>

Please clarify response.
11. What impact has the JTD Project had on coordination between YOUR school and other schools/community agencies to support transitions? Please clarify response below star rating.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No impact</th>
<th>Some impact</th>
<th>Very high impact</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
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</tbody>
</table>

Please clarify response.

Next Steps
Lastly, we would like to learn about your views on possible next steps for the Shared Learning Community and the JTD Project.

12. What key learnings from your work with Joining the Dots could be shared for similar projects? Please comment.
13. What support is needed to work towards sustainability for the SLC? Please comment.
14. In 2018, the SLC intends to meet once a Term. Do you think this is sufficient?
   - Yes
   - No
Comment to clarify
15. Are you or another member of your organisation planning to participate in the SLC in 2018?
   - Yes
   - No
Comment to clarify
16. Do you have anything further you would like to add about the JTD Project or your role in the Shared Learning Community?

Thank you for your time and responses in completing this survey. We sincerely appreciate your opinions and input. To make sure your responses count, just click the DONE button below.
Appendix 4 – Focus Group questions

Interview Guide: Steering Group Questions

For each section of the interview – prompt for specific examples / stories of where things have worked well. Depending on people’s roles and organisations – people may have stories in different areas.

Introduction
1. Overall – what do you think is working well with the Joining the Dots Project? What are you proud of / pleased about?

About the Yarra Transition Model
2. In your opinion, is the Model:
   a. Scalable? What will help this?
      Prompt: Could the Model be scaled up from an individual school, to a local area cluster, and then to a regional cluster? i.e. it would be equally applicable at each level
   b. Appropriate for the needs of the school and students/families? What will help this?
      Prompt: Does it meet the transition needs of schools? Students? Families? Community Agencies?
   c. Replicable? What will help this?
      Prompt: Can someone from outside the Project pick it up and use it?

About the Steering Group/Governance
3. Has the Steering Group provided effective governance and support of the Project? Should it continue?
   Prompt: What impact would discontinuing the Steering Group have?

4. Has INLLEN Project Coordination been effective?
   Prompt: What impact would not having a project coordinator have on this project?

About the Impact of the Model
5. What have been the key impacts of the Model in Yarra in the following areas?
   a. Awareness of the need for well supported transition;
   b. Primary – Secondary transition process
   c. Student and family engagement in learning; and
   d. Coordination between primary schools, secondary schools and community agencies to support transition;

Learnings/Recommendations
6. What learnings from the Project can be shared with similar projects?
   Prompt: how could learnings from this project help transitions focused projects in other areas/regions?

7. What recommendations do you have for the next phase of Joining the Dots?
   Prompt: What recommendations do you have for Yarra and/or across the Inner North incorporating the three satellite projects in Moreland and Darebin?

Do you have anything further you would like to tell us? Or any questions for me?
Appendix 5 – Phone interview questions

SHARED LEARNING COMMUNITY PHONE CALLS – INTERVIEW SCRIPT

Hello, I am Nick Johns. I am from Johns Education Consulting. Thanks very much for taking the time to speak with me today. As you may know, the INLLEN have commissioned on behalf of the Steering Group “Johns Education Consulting” to conduct an evaluation of the JTD Project. We are an independent organisation that supports education and community organisations to achieve their goals, working in the areas of evaluation, project delivery and training.

**Purpose of the evaluation**

This evaluation aims to:
- evaluate the JTD Transition Model;
- provide recommendations for the next phases(s) of the JTD Project, and
- capture learnings to inform similar projects.

The intention is that the evaluation will provide a road map of sorts for the future of the Project. The evaluation report will be completed by February 2018 and then be shared with the SLC.

**Your participation**

As a member of the SLC, your input to this evaluation is vital. You have important knowledge of the impact of the JTD Project, both in your organisation and more widely. You can help us paint a more complete picture of how the JTD Project works, so that others can learn more about the Model. You can also help us identify how to improve Joining the Dots in the future.

**Background**

As you may know, the INLLEN have commissioned Johns Education Consulting to conduct an evaluation of the Joining the Dots (JTD) Yarra Project. We are an independent organisation that supports education and community organisations to achieve their goals, working in the areas of evaluation, project delivery and training.

**Anonymity**

The only people who will see the focus group notes are the Johns Education Consulting evaluation team. We may include your views in the final report for this evaluation, but they will not be personally attributed to you and will not include your name or other personally identifying information. However, it may still be possible for someone who knows you to guess who expressed particular views. So, I can’t guarantee anonymity. However, I will be writing the report with that in mind and will take all care. If after the phone call you think of something you’d like to add, or something that you don’t want us to quote, if you contact me within two weeks, by phone or email, I’ll be happy to adjust my notes accordingly. Do you have any questions about what I have just explained? Are you happy to go ahead?

**QUESTIONS**

1. **INTRO** - Overall what do you think is working well with the Joining the Dots Project? What are you proud of / pleased about?
2. **IMPACT** - What, if anything, is your school doing differently as a result of completing the Transition Review Process/ involvement with JTD? Please comment.
3. **IMPACT** - What have been the key impacts of the Model in Yarra in the following areas?
   - Awareness of the need for well supported transition;
   - Primary – Secondary transition process;
   - Student and family engagement in learning; and
   - Coordination between primary schools, secondary schools and community agencies to support transition;
4. **SLC** – Could you comment on benefits from working collaboratively in the SLC? Do you see your school having ongoing involvement?
5. **Future** - What key learnings from your work with Joining the Dots could be shared for similar projects?
6. **Summing up** - Do you have anything else you would like to add about the JTD Project or your role in the Shared Learning Community?
7. **FINISH** - Do you have anything else you would like to add about the JTD Project or your role in the SLC?
Appendix 6 - Key stakeholder interviews

Interview Guide: Key Stakeholders

For each section of the interview – prompt for specific examples / stories of where things have worked well. Depending on people’s roles and organisations – people may have stories in different areas.

Introduction

1. Overall – what do you think is working well with the Joining the Dots Project?  
   What are you proud of / pleased about?

About the Yarra Transition Model

2. In your opinion, is the Model:
   a. Scalable? What will help this?  
      Prompt: Could the Model be scaled up from an individual school, to a local area cluster, and then to a regional cluster? i.e. it would be equally applicable at each level
   
   b. Appropriate for the needs of the school and students/families? What will help this?  
      Prompt: Does it meet the transition needs of schools? Students? Families? Community Agencies?
   
   c. Replicable? What will help this?  
      Prompt: Can someone from outside the Project pick it up and use it?
   
   d. Reflective of best practice? What will help this?

About the Steering Group/Governance

3. Has the Steering Group provided effective governance and support of the Project? Should it continue?  
   Prompt: What impact would discontinuing the Steering Group have?

About the Impact of the Model

4. What have been the key impacts of the Model in Yarra in the following areas?
   a. Awareness of the need for well supported transition;
   b. Primary – Secondary transition process;
   c. Student and family engagement in learning; and
   d. Coordination between primary schools, secondary schools and community agencies to support transition

5. What has been the significance of tracking the data?

6. Which JTD resources have made the most impact?

Learnings/Recommendations

7. What learnings from the Project can be shared with similar projects?  
   Prompt: how could learnings from this project help transitions focused projects in other areas/regions?

8. What recommendations do you have for the next phase of Joining the Dots?  
   Prompt: What recommendations do you have for Yarra and/or across the Inner North incorporating the three satellite projects in Moreland and Darebin?

Do you have anything further you would like to tell us? Or any questions for me?
Appendix 7 – Steering Group Terms of Reference

2017 Yarra Steering Group
TERMS OF REFERENCE

1. ROLE
The role of the Steering Group is:
- to support, inform and participate in the development, implementation and evaluation of Phase Six (final) of the Joining the Dots Project in Yarra;
- to provide a valuable point of reference regarding Primary to Secondary School Transition and Student Engagement programs and practices.

2. RESPONSIBILITIES OF MEMBERS
Members are asked to:
- Provide input and advice
- Identify and recommend sources of information and contacts that may be of value
- Participate in the planning, implementation and evaluation of the Project activities
- Provide feedback to assist with the evaluation of the Project and post-Project planning
- Recommend and contribute appropriate resources
- Attend scheduled meetings (as noted below)

3. MEMBERSHIP
The Steering Group will comprise of the following members (up to a total maximum of 12 members):

1. Berry Street Childhood Institute (SFYS)
2. Catholic Education Melbourne
3. City of Yarra Youth Services
4. Department of Education and Training
5. Fitzroy High School
6. Foundation House
7. INLLEN
8. Murdoch Children’s Research Institute
9. Seven Ways Consultancy
10. The Smith Family
11. Trinity Primary School (Richmond)
12. Yarra Primary School

4. MANAGEMENT & COORDINATION
- Inner Northern Local Learning and Employment Network (INLLEN), as the management organisation, will be the final decision maker in matters relating to the Project.
- The Joining the Dots Project Manager is employed by INLLEN.
- The Joining the Dots Project Manager will undertake the role of administration of the Steering Group
- The role of chair will rotate among members, as per the following schedule.
- The next scheduled chair will undertake the role of deputy chair, as per the following schedule.
## Appendix 8 – Steering Group Member Organisations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Steering Group Member Organisations (2012-2017)</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Berry Street Childhood Institute (SFYS)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catholic Education Melbourne</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City of Yarra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collingwood Alternative School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collingwood College</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concern Australia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Department of Education and Training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eating Disorders Victoria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fitzroy High School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fitzroy Primary School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foundation House</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hawthorn Secondary College</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INLLEN</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kildonan Reconnect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mission Australia</td>
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<tr>
<td>Murdoch Children’s Research Institute</td>
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<tr>
<td>Seven Ways Consultancy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Smith Family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trinity Catholic School (Richmond)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victoria Police</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yarra Primary School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth Connect</td>
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<tr>
<td>YSAS (Youth Support and Advocacy Service)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total organisations represented - 23
## Appendix 9 – Transition Review Process Schools

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yarra TRP Schools / SLC members</th>
<th>TRP Schools Outside Yarra</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Collingwood College</td>
<td>Glenroy College</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collingwood English Language School</td>
<td>John Fawkner College</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fitzroy High School</td>
<td>Westbreen Primary School</td>
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<td>Fitzroy Primary School</td>
<td>Reservoir High School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Princes Hill Secondary College</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sacred Heart School</td>
<td>Preston North East Primary School</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Kingsbury Primary School</td>
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<td>Abbotsford Primary School</td>
<td>Pascoe Vale Girls College</td>
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<tr>
<td>Simonds Catholic College</td>
<td>Coburg North Primary School</td>
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<tr>
<td>Yarra Primary School</td>
<td>William Ruthven Secondary College</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trinity Catholic School</td>
<td>William Ruthven Primary School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spensley Street Primary School</td>
<td>St Clare's Primary School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academy of Mary Immaculate</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Total schools - 13  
Total schools - 12
Appendix 10 – Organisations Represented at Forums, Workshops and Bus Tours

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbotsford Primary School</th>
<th>Glenroy College</th>
<th>Practically Learning</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Academy of Mary Immaculate</td>
<td>Good Samaritan Catholic Primary</td>
<td>Preston North East Primary School</td>
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<tr>
<td>Anglicare Victoria</td>
<td>Good Shepherd Australia New Zealand</td>
<td>Princes Hill Primary School</td>
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<tr>
<td>Austin Child &amp; Adolescent Mental Health Service</td>
<td>Graceful Community Services Inc.</td>
<td>Princes Hill Secondary College</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australian Catholic University</td>
<td>Hands On Learning Australia</td>
<td>PTR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australian Government Department of Human Services</td>
<td>headspace Collingwood</td>
<td>Reservoir East Primary School</td>
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<tr>
<td>Australian International Academy</td>
<td>Hume Whittlesea LLEN</td>
<td>Reservoir High School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Banyule Nullumbik LLEN</td>
<td>INLLEN</td>
<td>Richmond High School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Banyule Nullumbik Workplace Learning</td>
<td>Jesuit Social Services</td>
<td>Richmond West Primary School</td>
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<tr>
<td>Berry Street / SFYS</td>
<td>JLS &amp; Associates</td>
<td>Roxburgh College</td>
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<td>Berry Street Childhood Institute</td>
<td>John Fawkner College</td>
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<td>Big Brothers Big Sisters Australia</td>
<td>John Paul College</td>
<td>Save the Children</td>
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<td>Brotherhood of St. Laurence</td>
<td>Kids’ Own Publishing</td>
<td>Selby Primary School</td>
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<td>Carringbush Adult Education</td>
<td>Knightlamp</td>
<td>Spectrum Migrant Resource Centre</td>
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<td>Catholic Education Melbourne</td>
<td>Ladder</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Land of Welcome</td>
<td>Springside P-9 College</td>
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<td>St Helena Secondary School</td>
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<td>Maribyrnong / Moonee Valley LLEN</td>
<td>St Johns Clifton Hill (Primary School)</td>
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<td>City of Yarra</td>
<td>Melbourne City Mission</td>
<td>St Joseph’s Primary School, Collingwood</td>
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<td>St Mark’s Primary School</td>
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<td>St Peter Chanel Deer Park Primary</td>
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<td>Merri Health</td>
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<td>The Smith Family</td>
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<td>New Hope Foundation</td>
<td>Travancore School</td>
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<td>Department of Education and Training</td>
<td>Nillumbik Community Health</td>
<td>Trinity Catholic School (Primary School)</td>
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<td>Uniting Kildonan</td>
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<td>North Carlton Neighbourhood House</td>
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<td>West Side Circus</td>
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