Our mission is to advance wellbeing of students through the application of positive psychology in schools and systems.

We realise this through exceptional research, teaching and engagement activities that:
1. Contribute to flourishing individuals
2. Empower students to become positive change agents in their community

We have adopted a +S3 strategic model: positive students, positive schools and positive systems.

We have and will continue to undertake the following activities in support of our mission:

- Initiating, managing and evaluating school interventions
- Publishing true cutting-edge research that distinguish us on the world stage and building strategic national and international collaborations
- Developing products and intellectual capital: methodologies, frameworks and tools
- Measuring the outcomes of our work and feeding back the results (learning organisation) to the scientific committee through top tier peer reviewed journal articles, chapter contributions, books and conference publications
- Recruiting, developing and retaining excellent staff and creating a vibrant, professional and healthy organisation (culture)
- Developing future generations of wellbeing practitioners through our teaching, research and engagement
- Establishing a bio-data laboratory
- Marketing our services and products
- Creating a sustainable funding base identifying and establishing a viable model for successful financial operation.
2016 was another very successful year for the Centre of Positive Psychology. Our reach has extended to many countries and communities where we are seen as a leading light in Positive Psychology research, teaching and engagement activities that contribute to the development of people; enabling them to lead more fulfilling lives, empowering them to be positive change agents for others and facilitating them to strongly influence education practice, systems and policy.

My goal for the Centre was to teach people how to live happy and meaningful lives. I still cannot think of a bigger purpose for the Centre today and I am extremely satisfied that the organisation we have built is having a positive impact on young people and the wider community. However, now that we are further into our journey with the University of Melbourne as a ‘Positive’ University, I am starting to realise the reach and influence our students can have, not only in Australia but the world, is much broader than I could ever have imagined and am confident the ‘ripple effect’ will continue to grow.

The commitment of our staff allows us to set high standards, so that we are now ranked as one of the most successful and popular set courses for student engagement at the University of Melbourne.

Our leadership team of Chair Professor Lee Waters, Director Associate Professor Lindsay Oades, Professor Dianne Vella-Brodrick and Centre Manager Kathy Racunica, have continued to implement our strategy of positive students, positive schools and positive systems.

Our external Board members of Professor Jane Burns, Bruce Parncutt, Chris Tipler, Dr Michael Hewitt-Gleeson and Professor Michael Georgeff have generously contributed their time to challenge and direct our focus to ensure we make a significant difference to society through ‘Positive’ education and students.

In particular, Chris Tipler must be thanked for his time with Management in continuing to refine our strategic plan.

To all our staff, your commitment to teaching, research and publishing allows to change lives for the better.

The Dean’s, Field Rickards, total commitment gives us the strength to continue to break new ground and enhance our growing global reputation.

To our education partners, collaborators, students and all involved, the Centre’s success is a reflection of your commitment – and I would like to thank each and every one of you.

John C Higgins
Chairman
The Centre for Positive Psychology has blossomed in 2016. The number of on-site staff has doubled, the number of honorary staff has doubled, our student numbers have increased and our research outputs and impact have also progressed. Importantly, our own students consistently report very high levels of satisfaction with the quality of their learning experience. This has been achieved whilst further refining our strategy to better achieve our mission and purpose of flourishing students more broadly.

In 2016 we welcomed new staff members to our team, including Centre Manager Ms Kathy Racunica, Research Fellows Dr Dan Loton and Dr Kent Patrick, Lecturer Dr Paige Williams, Research Assistant Ms Amanda Ng and Teaching Assistant Ms Lara Mossman. We were also joined by internationally renowned experts and scholars as honorary staff, including, from Australia, Emeritus Professor David Beswick, Dr Justin Coulson and Dr Sonia Sharp, and, from overseas, Professor Michael Steger (USA), Dr Aaron Jarden (New Zealand), Dr Acacia Parks (USA), Dr Margarita Tarragona (Mexico) and Professor Roy Baumeister (USA).

There are many achievements of our staff and students which are highlighted in this report. It is a genuine joy to not only work with such competent people, but also people who are dedicated and clearly value driven. I continually remind myself about the impact of what we are trying to achieve by asking myself questions such as “what difference does this make to the wellbeing of a year nine student now, and ten years from now?” Within this in mind my thanks go to the local staff, honorary staff, MGSE Dean Emeritus, the Chairman John Higgins and the Board, the students and importantly the many supporting people who share our important mission and vision. We have blossomed indeed this year, but continue to look forward and evolve.

Associate Professor Lindsay G. Oades (MBA, PhD)
Director, Centre for Positive Psychology
Melbourne Graduate School of Education,
University of Melbourne
The Centre for Positive Psychology’s national and international teaching and research contribution throughout 2016 has been impressive, particularly our leadership in positive education. This included a number of our team members being Keynote Speakers at national and international conferences including Mexico, America, Canada and Dubai. Many of our staff had their research accepted to be presented at conferences, in addition to publishin in international academic journals.

The Centre’s contribution to policy and practise continues to develop, particularly through our research on Positive Education which includes evidence that wellbeing is becoming more important in global policy, evidence that positive education enhances student wellbeing, and evidence that student wellbeing is related to academic outcomes.

Our senior staff continue to hold editor roles on international journals and positions of influence in organisations including International Positive Psychology Association (IPPA) and International Positive Education Network (IPEN).

We delivered our postgraduate teaching to increasingly diverse audiences, this year including South Australia and New South Wales within Australia, and China and Japan. All deliveries received exceptional student feedback. Our strong teaching reputation is also reflected in the increasing enrolments from interstate and international students undertaking our Master of Applied Positive Psychology, all coming from diverse organisations and sectors.

The combination of 2016 growth in staff numbers, research output, exceptional teaching, and extensive engagement has positioned the Centre well for increased national and international impact. It’s a testament to our highly talented, motivated and well connected team.

Professor Lea Waters (PhD)
Gerry Higgins Chair
Centre for Positive Psychology
Melbourne Graduate School of Education,
University of Melbourne
Gratitude to our Philanthropists

The Melbourne Graduate School of Education is the grateful recipient of a philanthropic gift over ten years that supports the Gerry Higgins Chair in Positive Psychology. This transformational gift from philanthropist John Higgins has strengthened the University of Melbourne’s research and teaching in the field of positive psychology, which aims to build psychological health and resilience in individuals and organisations.

The Chair is named to honour Gerry Higgins, an Irishman who emigrated from Kiltimagh in County Mayo, Ireland in 1949 and established Higgins Coatings, a successful commercial painting business, in Melbourne. The Chairs in Positive Psychology and Irish studies have been established in collaboration with Newman College, a Catholic residential college of the University, and incumbents play a role in College life.

John Higgins is Chairman of the CPP Board. He is passionate about education and has a vision that every student be exposed to the principles of positive psychology through their time at school, so they have the skills to influence their own lives, and those of the people around them. John has also supported the position of Research Fellow (Wellbeing Profiler), and Research Fellow (Positive Education and Positive Parenting).

The Centre is also grateful for the philanthropic support provided by our Board member Bruce Parncutt and The Parncutt Family Foundation, which has enabled us to strengthen the development and access of the Wellbeing Profiler to schools and youth organisations.

“Psychology has traditionally supported people to move from minus ten to zero. What I love about positive psychology is it helps people move from zero to plus ten.”

John Higgins, creator of the Gerry Higgins Chair in Positive Psychology
Wellbeing measurement

Leads: Professor Dianne Vella-Brodrick, Dr Peggy Kern and Dr Tan Chyuan Chin

Over the past 5 years, Dr Peggy Kern developed wellbeing measures for both adolescents and adults (The PERMA Profiler and the EPOCH Measure of Adolescent Wellbeing). The measures are publicly available, have been translated into 10 languages, and are being incorporated into studies around the world. In addition, during National Psychology Week, the measures were included as part of a campaign on positive psychology by the Association for Psychological Science psychology (www.psychology.org.au/psychologyweek/compass-for-life).

The Centre continues to expand our research and knowledge on measuring wellbeing. Professor Dianne Vella-Brodrick and Dr Tan Chyuan Chin, with colleagues, have progressed the development of the Wellbeing Profiler over the past 4 years, and the uptake of the measurement tool by schools and organisations throughout 2016 was outstanding. Through the ARC projects additional wellbeing measurement methods are utilised, all of which contributes to our understanding of wellbeing markers.

The Wellbeing Profiler has been developed to measure wellbeing in six empirically supported domains as important indicators of youth wellbeing. The six domains are: Psychological, Cognitive, Physical, Emotional and Strengths, Economic, and Social wellbeing.

This 6-dimensional framework is consistent with the World Health Organisation model of adolescent wellbeing and the Australian Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, Victorian Children and Adolescent Outcomes Framework and takes into account The United Nations Children Fund framework on positive youth development the Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth (ARACY) national plan for child and youth wellbeing (The NEST).

Reach of The Wellbeing Profiler

- 19,033 Victorian participants in the Wellbeing Profiler
- 2 Victorian Municipal Council participants: Maroondah City Council, Whitehorse City Council
- 3 countries: Australia, Ireland, United Arab Emirates
Snapshots of our 2016 research, collaboration and social impact

The Wellbeing Profiler
Outcomes for students, schools and councils

EXCELLENT UPTAKE
The Wellbeing Profiler has been used by 82 schools representing 22,304 children/youth in every state of Australia, Ireland and UAE.

WELLBEING AWARENESS
Through The Wellbeing Profiler, students, schools and councils are able to have a greater awareness of what is wellbeing. It also provides a common language to discuss wellbeing.

INNOVATIVE PARTNERSHIPS
Ensuring ongoing sustainability by partnering with schools through their local council.

EFFECTIVE WELLBEING STRATEGY
School and councils are able to make aligned and informed decisions on youth wellbeing strategies for present and future. They are able to allocate labour and monetary resources more effectively.

POSITIVE RELATIONSHIPS
The wellbeing profiler provides a platform for stronger and effective relationships between schools and councils. Councils are able to create meaningful policies that support school strategies.

SOLUTION TO A NEED
The Wellbeing Profiler is an invaluable tool that is able to identify wellbeing trends and provide information to schools and councils enabling them to implement appropriate strategies for youth wellbeing specific to their school and catchment area.
Social media through the lens of Big Data
Leads: Dr Peggy Kern, Associate Professor Lindsay Oades and Dr Gavin Slemp

Dr Peggy Kern, Dr Gavin Slemp and Associate Professor Lindsay Oades are investigating the use of language in social media “Gaining psychological and educational insights through social media language analysis”.

Dr Peggy Kern collaborates with researchers in the US (including the University of Pennsylvania, Stony Brook University, and Stanford University) on big data from social media, such as Facebook and Twitter. Her work over the year impacted both academic and lay audiences. Early in the year, the research team published a study on gender, which generated quite a bit of interest, and Peggy published an article in Melbourne University’s Pursuit. Big data bring numerous possibilities and opportunities for understanding and intervening with individuals and communities, but also raises a variety of issues and concerns. To provide guidance to the field, Peggy published an article in the top methodological journal in psychology, Psychological Methods. In collaboration with Liz Seabrook and A/Prof Nikki Rickard (Monash University), they published a systematic review looking at the impact of social media on depression and wellbeing. This generated a considerable amount of public interest. Peggy wrote articles on their findings in Pursuit and the Conversation, and Op-ed in the Age, and had numerous interviews. This was the biggest research story for the Melbourne Graduate School of Education in 2016.

Wellbeing literacy
Lead: Associate Professor Lindsay Oades and Dr Peggy Kern

The preliminary working definition of wellbeing literacy is “the vocabulary, knowledge and skills that may be intentionally used to maintain or improve the wellbeing of oneself or others”.

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What is the missing link for positive education? Empirical studies examining the efficacy of positive psychological interventions (e.g. randomised controlled trials) will often include wellbeing related measures as its outcome or dependent variable. This tradition is also evident in most positive education studies. That is, an intervention is provided to students, wellbeing is measured, and if gains are meaningfully and statistically greater than the control condition it is on the way to being deemed a success. There are however a range of other important questions in an educational context. What was actually learned or acquired during the intervention? What was the mechanism of the change? How do students use what they have learned in the future? Wellbeing literacy may be the intermediate construct between the intervention (e.g. students being given a strengths intervention) and wellbeing.

Strength-based parenting
Leads: Professor Lea Waters and Dr Dan Loton

The strength-based parenting research program led by Professor Lea Waters continued to expand in 2016 with the appointment of Dr Daniel Loton as the Gerry Higgins Research Fellow and two Gerry Higgins Studentships awarded to Jessie Sun and Hayley Jach. Both student recipients were mentored by Professor Waters and Dr Loton to conduct a study on strength-based parenting. The Gerry Higgins Studentships provided an ideal opportunity for early career researchers to develop their research skills within the Centre for Positive Psychology. Research on strength-based parenting received considerable media interest both in Australia and Internationally. Professor Waters was an invited Keynote speaker at three international conferences (Mexico, USA and Canada) and three national conferences and completed her book ‘The Strength Switch: How the new science of strength-based parenting can help your child and your teen to flourish.’ The book is being published by Penguin Press and will in Australia, New Zealand, United Kingdom, United States and America and Canada in 2017.
Positive Education and Positive Systems

Lead: Dr Peggy Kern, Associate Professor Lindsay Oades, Dr Christine Sioukou

Research Fellow, Dr Christine Siokou’s expertise in system science together with Centre staff expertise in positive psychology and positive education, created new research opportunities for positive system science.

This included publications and conference presentations, with collaboration between Associate Professor Lindsay Oades, Dr Peggy Kern, Dr Christine Siokou and Ms Cass Spong. Our research is increasingly focusing on how we can affect positive change across entire communities, through what we are calling Positive Systems Science (PSS). This approach combines the strengths of positive psychology and systems science to bring about the very best of human social systems, accounting for the complex, inter-related, and dynamic forces of those systems.

Our Centre staff continue to lead the Positive Education teaching and research nationally and internationally, this being through ARC grants and other international collaborative grants, research output, conferences and global engagement. The International Positive Psychology Association (IPPA) includes Professor Lea Waters as President Elect from 2017 and also advisor to the Work and Organizations Division of IPPA, Professor Dianne Vella-Brodrick as IPPA secretary, and Dr Peggy Kern is the founder and lead of the IPPA Education Division.

Enhancing adolescent mental health through positive education (ARC Grant 2013-2016)

Lead: Professor Dianne Vella-Brodrick

What benefits to mental health and wellbeing does positive education provide for young people? Funded by the Australian Research Council, this project seeks to address this question by evaluating the impact of a best-practice positive education program (PEP), namely Geelong Grammar School’s Year 9 Timbertop and Year 10 positive education curriculum, on key areas of adolescent mental health (e.g., depressive and anxiety symptoms) and wellbeing (e.g., life satisfaction and meaning). A further aim of this research is to explore whether adapting a best-practice PEP is suitable for enhancing adolescent wellbeing in government schools where resources are more scarce. Using a longitudinal multimethod design, this research tracks Geelong Grammar School students from Year 9 through to Year 12 and students from select government schools over the course of Year 10.

Subjective and objective assessments and new technologies are incorporated into the design to measure program outcomes, including wellbeing, mental health and school engagement.

Project findings provide a rich perspective of positive education as a strategy for addressing the mental health needs of young people in schools, and carry widespread implications for educational policy, research and practice. Such implications include delivering a universal program to students irrespective of mental health status, informing the allocation of limited resources, and enhancing student accessibility to and engagement with mental health initiatives where traditional options have been less effective.

Effects of positive education during the critical post-school transition (ARC grant 2017-2019)

Lead: Professor Dianne Vella-Brodrick

This project extends the aims of a previous study, Enhancing adolescent mental health through positive education, beyond evaluating the impact of positive education programs (PEPs) on wellbeing in adolescence to evaluating the sustained effects of PEPs on wellbeing during the post-school transition to adulthood. The objectives of this research are twofold, first to investigate whether prior PEP experience in secondary school contributes to improved mental health outcomes and success with navigating the post-school transition, and second, to examine the added benefits of a new, youth-led Positive Transition Program (PTP) for strengthening young people’s capacities to manage emerging adulthood.

Funded by the Australian Research Council, this project longitudinally tracks the mental health and wellbeing of young people following secondary school, using subjective and objective indicators, some of whom have recently graduated from independent schools and others, government schools, and some of whom have had previous or no PEP schooling experience or exposure to other wellbeing programs.

Training young people who have recently undergone the post-school transition as youth coaches, and involving them in developing and delivering a PTP targeting post-school transitioning youth, is also a core aim of this research. Project findings offer valuable insight into the role of positive education and its various practical applications, such as implementing best-practice PEPs and near-peer coaching, in the service of sustaining wellbeing outcomes and improving the transition experience for young people.

Effects of positive education during the critical post-school transition is conducted by Professor Dianne Vella-Brodrick and Professor John Hattie of The University of Melbourne, Associate Professor Nikki Rickard of Monash University, and Professor Donna Cross of The University of Western Australia and Telethon Kids Institute, in partnership with Geelong Grammar School, Maroondah City Council, and the Outer Eastern Local Learning and Employment Network.
Taking positive psychology to a group level

Associate Professor Lindsay Oades 
Director for Positive Psychology University of Melbourne

Research psychologist Associate Professor Lindsay Oades explains how positive psychology and wellbeing literacy, once largely focused on the individual, are being taken to a group level to promote healthier, more skillful interactions in humans organisations and networks.

Listen to Lindsay’s podcast: interview (https://pursuit.unimelb.edu.au/podcasts/taking-positive-psychology-to-a-group-level)

The field of positive psychology brings to mind bolstering our mental health literacy as key to our collective wellbeing, our happiness, our ability to thrive and to cope in difficult times. While some argue that positive psychology offers useful, evidence-based lessons to achieve these goals, others are sceptical – calling it merely a focus on “happyology”, saying its benefits are overstated, and that it’s couched in fluffy or Pollyanna-ish terms.

During Lindsay’s interview he shifts the focus of this so-called “science of wellbeing” from the individual to the level of systems like workplaces, schools and health systems – that is, organisations and networks of people that make up our societies.

Associate Professor Lindsay’s 2017 books on the topic include The Wiley-Blackwell Handbook of the Psychology of Positivity and Strengths-Based Approaches at Work and Wellbeing, Recovery and Mental Health from Cambridge University Press.

Additional related article published in Pursuit includes Positive psychology much more than ‘Happyology’ by Dr Peggy Kern.

First published on 10 February 2017 in Up Close.
It’s widely accepted in today’s culture that good parenting requires a balance of warmth and control. Research shows that parents who respond to the needs of children in loving ways, whilst setting rules that build independence and emotional intelligence, produce the best-adjusted, most resourceful, and highest-achieving kids.

Referred to as ‘authoritative parenting’, this style of parenting was identified by University of California, Los Angeles, psychologist Dr Diana Baumrind, whose research on parenting spans three decades, from 1960-1990.

Her work identified that authoritative parenting has the most positive effect on a child’s wellbeing and inspired further research that began in the 90s, on emotional coaching (the warmth aspect) and autonomy-granting parents (the control aspect), and still continues today.

While I certainly agree with an authoritative approach, I’d also argue that parenting research needs to evolve. Sure, parent-child relationships still need warmth and control but, as a psychology researcher and a mother of two, I’m interested in updating our knowledge of effective parenting. After all, we’re well and truly into the 21st Century and yet the bulk of parenting practices are based on ideas put forward in the 1960s and 1990s. Isn’t it time for an upgrade?

**Taking a strength-based approach with positive psychology**

My research examines the role that positive psychology can play in parenting. Positive psychology is a new and rapidly growing branch of psychology that offers us ways to our unlock potential (and the potential of our children), by showing us how to utilise the strengths and positive qualities that already reside within us.
Strength-based parenting is an approach where parents deliberately identify and cultivate positive states, processes and qualities in their children. It’s about connecting your kids with their inborn strengths such as strengths of character (e.g., humour, kindness) as well as their talents such as writing or sporting ability. These strengths are the inner resources contained within our kids that help boost their life satisfaction.

Why is this important?

Adolescence is a time of real psychological vulnerability due to wide ranging hormonal, physical, neurological, and social changes. It’s also a time where life satisfaction drops.

We know that life satisfaction acts as a buffer against the development of psychological disorders during adolescence. Teenagers with high levels of life satisfaction have stronger emotional, academic and social skills. Hence, it’s critical for parents use find ways to boost their teenager’s life satisfaction during the trying teen years. Strength-based parenting is one such approach. My research shows that children and teenagers who have strength-based parents:

- Have higher levels of life satisfaction
- Have a better understanding of their own strengths
- Cope with conflict in more pro-active ways
- Use their strengths to help them meet homework deadlines
- Have lower levels of stress.

Benefits for parents and children alike

Strength-based parenting doesn’t just benefit our sons and daughters; it also improves the life satisfaction and confidence of the parents themselves. In one of my studies, parents who went through a four week strength-based parenting program found parenting more interesting, felt more confident in their role as a parent and experienced more positive emotions toward their children.

While the importance of providing love and emotional support to children is well understood, we now know the importance of deliberately identifying and building strengths in our children.

With the rising rates of youth mental illness and the increasing complexity of raising children in the 21st Century, strength-based parenting is a new and exciting avenue of research that holds much promise and practical value.

Practical tips for parents to apply to strength-based parenting

Strengths spotting
Think about the strengths that underpin your child’s actions and let them know what you see. Spot the kindness that underpins them sharing with their friends, their self-control to finish homework on time rather than watch TV and the persistence their using in sports training.

Strengths letter
Write a letter to your child letting them know about the strengths you see in them and how these strengths will help them cope with challenging time as well as helping them to thrive during the good time.

Strengths surveys
There are a number of online surveys that children can take to help them identify and think about their strengths. The Gallup Institute has the StrengthsExplorer for children aged 10-14 and the StrengthsQuest for children aged 15-25. If parents and children are interested in identifying personality strengths, they can go to The Values in Action Institute and complete the free online VIA-Youth survey.

Strengths role model
It always helps to see how other parents and kids are using their strengths. Visit The The Strengths Exchange and discover how parents and children of all ages apply character strength to everyday.

First published on 30 May 2016 in pursuit.unimelb.edu.au
How being positive improves your health

Professor Dianne Vella-Brodrick
Associate Professor and Deputy Director at the Centre for Positive Psychology at the Melbourne Graduate School of Education at the University of Melbourne

A growing body of evidence reveals feeling happy is linked with better physical and psychological health.

In 2003 a landmark study revealed what psychologists had long suspected: that people who experience positive emotions are at a reduced risk of disease. Researchers assessed a group of 334 people aged 18 to 54 for their tendency to experience positive emotions like happiness, pleasure and relaxation along with negative emotions like anxiety, hostility and depression. Participants were then injected with nasal drops containing the common cold.

People who expressed more positive emotions were less likely to develop the common cold, and the relationship was so strong that it held across age, gender, education, race, body mass and even season.

Since then, psychologists have continued to probe the link between feeling good and being well in a new field of research called ‘positive psychology’. Importantly, this new discipline extends beyond disease models of health such as whether we have a cold and seeks to define what it means to be healthy in positive terms.

Positive psychology and health

Positive psychology encompasses a variety of techniques that encourage us to identify and develop positive emotions, experiences and character traits. According to a study in the American Journal of Lifestyle Medicine, “Positive psychology urges attention to what is taking place on the other side of the zero point of being problem-free.

“It calls for as much focus on strength as on weakness, as much interest in building the best things in life as in repairing the worst, and as much attention to fulfilling the lives
Of healthy people as to healing the wounds of the distressed. Research findings from positive psychology are intended to contribute to a more complete and balanced scientific understanding of human experiences and ways to foster thriving in individuals, communities and societies.”

When it comes to health, positive psychology goes beyond the idea that wellness is simply the absence of illness and instead looks at the body as a complete system. Along with being disease-free – indeed, research shows that being optimistic is linked to improved heart health, – positive health is defined by less frequent and briefer ailments, greater recuperative ability and rapid wound healing. What’s more, people who experience positive emotions are more likely to live longer than people who are less happy (but not depressed).

In addition to how long a person lives, there is also emphasis on how well a person has lived and this is often referred to as ‘quality adjusted life years’. Here the emphasis is on quality of life rather than on quantity of life alone.

How do feelings impact on health?

So what’s going on in the brain when we experience positive emotions? When we develop strong and meaningful connections with other people a hormone called oxytocin is released, which makes us feel good. This happens in the brain’s dopamine reward system which manages how we perceive pleasure – and problems with this system can lead to depression and other mental health problems. Research has found that warm touch such as hugging, particularly among loved ones, releases oxytocin and improves physiological health.

When oxytocin flows through the body it lowers stress hormones, which reduces blood pressure, improves mood and increases tolerance for pain. The result? Improved mental and physical health. The moral of this story, as told by positive psychology advocate Chris Peterson, is that other people matter.

There’s also evidence to suggest that people who are resilient and adaptable (read: positive) have lower levels of the stress hormone cortisol and higher levels of heart rate variability, which is associated with a reduced risk of heart disease.

For example, a recent study by my colleagues and I found the ‘cortisol awakening response’ (CAR) – a rush of the hormone that we experience when we wake up – is associated with negative feelings and inversely related with feeling good, life satisfaction and feeling supported by family and friends.

Further research has found that loving-kindness meditation – the practice of directing well-wishes towards other people – increases vagal tone (a central part of our social engagement system) as measured by heart rate variability. In other words, practising a contemplative practice that promotes care and goodwill towards others can increase social connectedness, demonstrating that the mind and body are connected.

Boost your mood

If you’re keen to improve your health with positivity, try these mood-boosting strategies.

• Fight the negativity bias. Thanks to an evolutionary hangover, when positive and negative things happen we’re more likely to pay attention to the negative things so it’s important to make a deliberate effort to balance that out by devoting attention to positive things. Try counting acts of kindness or savouring a beautiful sunset.

• Express gratitude. Keep a journal or talk to friends and family about how grateful you are for the things in your life that make you feel happy.

• Practice a loving-kindness meditation. Direct good vibes towards other people, including people you like, people you neither like nor dislike and people you don’t like.

• Develop good quality relationships. And remember to hug those special people in your life.
Is social media good for you?

Dr Peggy Kern
University of Melbourne

Using social media can have benefits for your mental health, but only if you use it in the right way.

Whether I’m standing on the tram, sitting in a café, or walking down the street, I’m struck by the sight of so many people looking down at their phones, scrolling through Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, or a myriad of other social media platforms.

I immediately ask myself, in this increasingly technological age, what is the impact of constant social media use on our mental health?

On one hand, it allows us to stay up-to-date and connected. I can find out what friends in America and around the world are doing at any time of day or night.

On the other, it’s hard to carry on a normal conversation without someone compulsively checking their feed, rendered paranoid by FOMO (fear of missing out). A person might have thousands of “friends”, but feel completely alone.

So is social media good or bad for us? In a new study published in the Journal of Mental Health, PhD student Elizabeth Seabrook, Dr Nikki Rickard from Monash University and myself found that it is not as clear-cut as you might think.

We reviewed 70 studies that have examined how social network use relates to depression, anxiety, and subjective wellbeing. Results were mixed. Some studies found social media users were happier and more connected with other people.

But other studies found that social media users had more signs of depression or anxiety. So we also looked at various factors that had an impact on when it is beneficial or harmful.

Studies were conducted between 2005 and 2016, mostly with adolescents and young adults. Most focused on Facebook, with a few studies centred around the use of Twitter, MySpace, or social media in general.

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These studies examined a variety of themes, including how much time people spent on social media, the number of friends they had, and whether or not they liked and felt accepted by their friends.

Also examined were the words they used, how much personal information they shared, whether they compared themselves with others, and how much they felt addicted to social media.

Across the studies, it appears that it’s not so much that social media causes anxiety and depression, but that people have different ways of using social media, which may be more or less helpful.

For example, Chris, who reported high levels of wellbeing, liked to use Facebook to catch up on the latest gossip and share with others fun things that happened during the day.

Meanwhile, Carey, who suffers from depression, spent hours browsing the newsfeed, and bemoaning how nice everyone else’s life seems.

For many, social media appears to have a range of benefits. It provides a way for many of us to connect with others. We can support other people and feel supported by them. It may even be a useful way for those with social anxiety and those who have a hard time with face-to-face interactions to connect with others.

But for those with depression or anxiety, it could make their symptoms worse. Indeed people who often compared themselves to their friends, ruminated about life, or had negative interactions with others, were at greater risk of depression and anxiety.

Notably, the number of hours that people spent on social media didn’t make a clear difference – it was more the feeling of being addicted to it. It seems like what a person writes about is more indicative of their state of mental health than the number of hours spent online.

Those with symptoms of depression were more likely to be jealous of their friends, compare themselves to others, and use negative language when using social media. This is similar to what I’ve seen in some of my other research, which points to the power of the words that we use.

A growing number of studies suggest that we might be able to use data from social media use to identify people suffering from depression or anxiety, thereby providing the possibility for offering support and resources for those who might not otherwise get the help they need.

So what can we take away from the study? We each have unique patterns in how we use social media, in terms of the language we use and how we behave when we are using it.

Do you keep your friends updated on your activities? Post pictures of your family? Complain about work or other people? Passively browse news feeds without commenting? Do you feel like it helps you connect with others, or do you feel addicted and controlled by it?

As a whole, our review suggests that it is valuable to pause and consider what our behavioural patterns are. By understanding them better, we potentially can make better choices about how to best use social media, as well as use it to promote good mental health.

First published on 8 December 2016 in pursuit.unimelb.edu.au
The Centre hosted a number of important public lectures in 2016. Recordings are available on our website: http://education.unimelb.edu.au/cpp/past-news-and-events
Centre for Positive Psychology, in conjunction with Australian Psychological Society, joined in the planning and delivery of National Psychology Week.

Themed *The Compass for Life, Ways to Thrive*, the campaign focused on improving mental health literacy and arming people with advice and strategies which enhance satisfaction, happiness and wellbeing, helping Australian to become their best selves. Centre staff contributed to the expansion of the national survey (taken by over 10,000 people) and assisted in the reporting of results. The base survey ‘PERMAH’ was used and we are grateful for the work on this by Dr Peggy Kern and Michelle McQuaid (www.permahsurvey.com).

During the Psychology Week Centre staff contributed to media interviews, articles and our Centre Director Associate Professor Lindsay Oades presented to a packed house of over 350 people on the topic ‘Finding Ways to Thrive’. This popular recorded lecture can be viewed online in our events section: http://education.unimelb.edu.au/cpp

Additional events at the University included:

- Showcase of Positive Psychology in the Marketplace - supporting our MAPP Alumni
- Wellbeing at Unimelb: Student & Staff symposium
- Mindfulness session
- Staff Workshop: Enhancing Wellbeing and Managing Stress
- Free Yoga Class
- Tips for Wellbeing & afternoon tea
We want to live happy, fulfilling lives but how can we thrive despite the daily challenges of life?

There are many ways of thinking about wellbeing and happiness. One of the co-founders of the discipline of positive psychology, Professor Martin Seligman, suggests that there are five pillars that underpin flourishing – Positive emotion, Engagement, positive Relationships, having a sense of Meaning, and Accomplishment (PERMA).

**Engagement**
Being interested and involved in life.

**Relationships**
Feeling loved, valued, and connected with others.

**Meaning**
Having a sense of direction, feeling that our lives are valuable and worthwhile, and connecting to something bigger than ourselves.

**Positive Emotions**
Experiencing positive feelings such as joy, calmness and satisfaction.

**Accomplishment**
The belief and ability to do things that matter most to us, achieving goals, and having a sense of mastery.

PERMA provides a way to think about how you’re going in life. Do you generally have more positive or negative emotions? Are you engaged and interested in life, or bored and detached? Do you have positive social relationships or feel lonely? Do you have a sense of meaning and purpose, or does life seem rather meaningless? Do you feel competent and able to accomplish what you’d like? By taking small steps each day, you can improve your wellbeing, in these five areas and beyond.

Here are a few tips to get you started:

1. **Nurture Positive Emotions**
   Create more moments of heartfelt positivity in your day – spend time in nature, find a reason to laugh, go for a walk, share time with a friend, or do other simple things that you enjoy.

2. **Build Engagement**
   Use your strengths – things that you’re good at and enjoy doing – to keep you feel more confident, energised and engaged.

3. **Invest in Relationships**
   Make the time to genuinely connect with other people – express gratitude, show kindness, actively listen, and show a genuine interest in their life. Disconnect from technology and connect in person.

4. **Cultivate Meaning**
   Understand that what you do each day can have a positive impact on others. Connect with your values, and let them be your guiding compass.

5. **Grow Accomplishments**
   Embrace a learning mindset. Set specific achievable goals, track your progress, and celebrate successes.

These tips were reproduced with permission of Michelle McQuaid www.permahsurvey.com

When to seek professional help
There are many ways you can improve your wellbeing and increase your satisfaction with life. However, there may be a time when professional help from a psychologist is required. A psychologist can help you identify behaviours or thought-patterns that are impacting your wellbeing and help you make changes that will help you to thrive. To talk to an APS psychologist, speak to your GP about a referral or contact the APS ‘Find A Psychologist’ service on 1800 333 497 or visit findapsychologist.org.au
Dr Christine Sioukou
Associate Professor
Dianne Vella-Brodrick

Fostering rich and supportive learning environments for disadvantaged young people

Dr Christine Siokou and Associate Professor Dianne Vella-Brodrick were awarded a Melbourne Engagement grant to collaborate with the Brotherhood of St Laurence to develop an implementation framework which supports the development of rich and supportive learning environments for disadvantaged young people – which in turn will contribute to both their educational success, as well as their broader self-esteem and well-being.

A literature review on core elements of successful learning environments will be undertaken and then we will workshop core ideas and potential frameworks with teachers and school leaders from disadvantaged schools and create ‘systems maps’ – diagrams that show the key elements of the system. This innovative approach will redefine experiences and allow us to reach solutions based on a new understanding of complex situations.

Dr Gavin Slemp
University of Melbourne Early Career Research Grant

In addition to the recognition, Gavin has been awarded $25,000 to conduct research on his emerging interest and skill set on developing an ethical framework and web-application to study adolescent wellbeing. This is a great outcome and an important area of growth, focussing on ethics and language.

Prof Lea Waters
Revolution School

Professor Lea Waters featured in episode 3 of the four-part documentary Revolution School which the MGSE participated in. The series ran over four weeks on the ABC and is available on iView. The documentary is a compelling watch for anyone involved in education, as well as parents of school children and anyone interested in how we are shaped by our schooling.

Dr Peggy Kern
Publicity hit

Congratulations to Dr Peggy Kern on the publication of, “Women are Warmer but No Less Assertive Than Men: Gender and Language on Facebook”. The article gained enormous publicity with Peggy featuring in the NY Times article and she was also interviewed by Washington Post, Wall Street Journal and Herald Sun. A fabulous example of the Centre’s impact.
Dr Tan Chyuan (TC) Chin  
**Young Investigator Award - Honourable mention**  
Congratulation to Dr Tan Chyuan Chin (TC) for receiving honourable mention for the Young Investigator Award for the ICMPC14 / SEMPRE (14th Biennial International Conference on Music Perception and Cognition). She presented 3 papers at the Conference:  
• Predicting Emotional Wellbeing,  
• The Roles of Emotional Sensitivity to Music and Emotion Regulation Using Music,  
• Music use predicts neurobiological indices of wellbeing and emotion regulation capacity,  
• Music engagement – A psychometrically robust questionnaire for capturing its many voices).  

Hayley Jach  
Jessie Sun  
**Gerry Higgins Studentship awards**  
Congratulations to our Research Assistants Jessie Sun and Hayley Jach on their Gerry Higgins studentship awards and for their contribution to the Centre for Positive Psychology. Hayley is currently spending a couple of months travelling around Europe. Jessie is heading to University of California, Davis to commence her PhD. We wish both all the very best and thank them for the wonderful contributions to the Centre.  

Dr Kelly Allen  
**APS Excellent PhD Thesis in Psychology Award for 2016**  
Kelly was recently awarded the Excellent PhD Thesis in Psychology for 2016 from the Australian Psychological Society. Her PhD Thesis, supervised by Prof Lea Waters and A/Prof Dianne Vella-Brodrick was titled ‘In Pursuit of Belonging: A socio-ecological perspective of school belonging in secondary school settings’ and was comprised of three studies exploring belonging in schools through a socio-ecological perspective.  

Lucy Morrish  
**Emerging Researcher Award**  
Congratulations to PhD candidate Lucy Morrish on winning the Emerging Researcher Award at the 5th Australian Positive Psychology and Wellbeing Conference, Adelaide. Lucy was awarded for her PhD work on emotion regulation and wellbeing in an education context. Lucy is a scholarship awardee on an ARC Linkage grant at the Centre (supervised by Dianne Vella-Brodrick, Nikki Rickard and Dr TC Chin).
The Centre expanded its teaching in 2016 beyond Melbourne and included deliveries in South Australia, New South Wales, Japan and China. Applications and enrolments in all courses and subjects continue to grow over the recent years, and maintained very strong student evaluation across all subjects. We are grateful to the leaders across each of the states and internationally for creating the opportunities and trust in our staff to deliver the courses to the diverse student cohorts.

### 2016 teaching highlights

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<td>EDUC10057 Wellbeing, Motivation and Performance</td>
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<td>EDUC20074 Positive Communities and Organisations</td>
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<td><strong>Professional Certificate in Education (Positive Education)</strong></td>
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<td>EDUC90806 Introduction to Positive Education</td>
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<td><strong>Grand Total</strong></td>
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### Student Testimonials

*This masters course has been so well thought out and created. I think Lea Waters did a great job at creating a fantastic MAPP. The capstone (subject) did a really good job at pulling everything together. Peggy has been brilliant. We have been very lucky to have such a super star from the world of positive psych to take us for this subject. It is so evident that Peggy cares for our learning and has tried to make research methods, which can be a tad dry at times, more interesting.*

I liked the entertaining and engaging lecturers that allowed me to have a detailed and memorable class, helping the information to be absorbed, and making learning fun and enjoyable.

*This is easily my favourite subject this semester! I love going to lectures and the tutorials are so interesting and interactive. I’ve found all the information we have learnt really interesting and its great learning about things that can be used in daily life to make it better…. definitely going to miss it next semester.*

*This subject (Wellbeing, Motivation and Performance) influenced not only the way I approached my other subjects- but the way I perceived life itself.*
Lindsay Oades is a multi-award winning researcher, speaker, teacher and author in the applications of wellbeing science. As Director of the Centre for Positive Psychology and coordinator for the Masters of Applied Positive Psychology (MAPP) program at the University of Melbourne his applications of wellbeing science span health, business and education sectors.

In the health sector Lindsay’s work on the Collaborative Recovery Model (CRM) has impacted mental health service provision with the wellbeing/coaching model being used in all mainland states of Australia and related measurement tools translated into 8 languages. In the business sector, Lindsay was the foundational Director of the Australian Institute for Business Wellbeing, Sydney Business School and he is lead editor on *The Wiley-Blackwell Handbook of the Psychology of Positivity and Strengths-Based Approaches at Work*. In the education sector, he contributed to the NSW Wellbeing Framework for schools and is currently on an ARC Linkage project examining the implementation for social and emotional learning at scale across Victorian public schools. Lindsay is a high quality educator recognised by an Australian government citation for his outstanding contribution to student learning. With over 100 scientific articles and book chapters and approaching $3m in competitive research funding he also contributes to the science of wellbeing. Lindsay is on the scientific advisory board at the Institute of Coaching at Harvard University, a co-editor of the International Journal of Wellbeing, non-executive Director for the Reach Foundation and Action for Happiness Australia.
Lea Waters holds the Gerry Higgins Chair in Positive Psychology, is the founding Director of the Centre for Positive Psychology and is the President Elect of the International Positive Psychology Association.

Lea has affiliate positions with Cambridge University and University of Michigan. She has been listed in the Marques ‘Who’s Who in the World’ since 2009. In 2015, she was listed as one of Australia’s Top 100 Women of Influence by the Financial Review and Westpac Bank. She is on the Board of South Australian Health and Medical Research institute and is the Ambassador for the Positive Education Schools Association. Lea is a registered psychologist with AHPRA and has been a member of the Australian psychological Society for 24 years.

Professor Waters has published over 90 peer reviewed scientific journal articles and book chapters and has been a Key Note and invited pre-conference speaker at the International Positive Education World Congress, the Canadian Positive Psychology National Conference, the International Positive Psychology Association’s World Congress, the International Conference on the Science of Happiness, the Australian National Positive Psychology Conference and the New Zealand Positive Psychology Association’s National Conference.

Dianne Vella-Brodrick is a Professor at the Melbourne Graduate School of Education, University of Melbourne, and adjunct in the School of Psychology and Psychiatry at Monash University. She was the Director of the Master of Applied Positive Psychology program at the University of Melbourne (2013-2015). Dianne is a registered psychologist and a Member of APS. She founded the Positive Psychology Network in Australia and is Secretary of the International Positive Psychology Association and Chair of the IPPA Membership Committee. Dianne is an Editor in Chief of the Psychology of Wellbeing: Theory, Research and Practice journal and founded and co-directed multiple Australian positive psychology conferences. She has published widely, presents regularly at conferences and has received over 2.5 million dollars of research funding. She serves on numerous research advisory boards, regularly reviews scientific papers for leading journals and has examined over 20 research dissertations. Dianne’s research interests include the development and evaluation of wellbeing programs, particularly in the areas of positive education and workplace wellbeing. She specialises in innovative mixed method designs which utilise the latest technology, with a special focus on young people. She also integrates ethical and professional practice issues in much of her work and has extensive experience with scale development and psychometric testing.

Kathy Racunica joined the Centre for Positive Psychology early 2016 in the role of Centre Manager, providing strategic and operational leadership and support. She has over 20 years of experience in Higher Education management working at Monash University and at Swinburne University, in the recent years. Her extensive experience includes strategic planning, financial and human resource management, program development, faculty management of academic and operational services. Kathy’s previous roles have included campus manager at Monash University Peninsula and Berwick campuses, manager of Monash University’s International Student Support team (10,000 students), and business readiness manager for large scale organisational change. Her engagement with external organisations has lead to further developments for teaching, research and community partnerships, tenders and agreements. She has extensive experience in enterprise systems implementation and large scale change management. Kathy has developed and led large teams that have been multi-discipline, culturally diverse and spanning many locations. Kathy has qualifications in Arts, Change Management, and post graduate qualifications in Education and Business.
Dr Peggy Kern
Senior Lecturer

Peggy Kern is a senior lecturer at the Centre for Positive Psychology at the University of Melbourne’s Graduate School of Education. Originally trained in social, personality, and developmental psychology, Dr Kern received her undergraduate degree in psychology from Arizona State University, a Masters and PhD in social/personality psychology from the University of California, Riverside, and postdoctoral training at the University of Pennsylvania. She has published over 50 peer-reviewed articles and chapters. Her research is collaborative in nature and draws on a variety of methodologies and interdisciplinary perspectives to examine questions around who flourishes in life and why. More specifically, her research focuses on several related areas:
A) understanding and measuring healthy functioning,
B) evaluating sophisticated theories of psychosocial processes underlying health over time,
C) big data approaches to psychological study, and
D) whole school approaches to wellbeing.

Grace Fiore
Centre Coordinator

Grace Fiore is the Centre Coordinator and her role has expanded considerably since she commenced employment at the Centre in 2015. She has taken on the role as Executive Officer for MGSE Library User’s Committee; contributes to the development of marketing resources for the Centre and identifying key requirements to meet the needs of events and the audience so as to maximise impact and increase engagement with the Centre; and works closely with the Centre Manager in producing the Centre’s Annual Reports.

Grace brings many strengths into the Centre Coordinator role, most notably her strategic thinking, ability for planning and forethought.

She has exceptionally strong interpersonal skills which is most suitable when she connects with large networks of people and uses her social capital to help the Centre meet its goals.

Grace continues to maintain the Centre’s quarterly newsletter and the Visiting Scholar program which enhances engagement for our students (past and present) and general public.

Dr Gavin R. Slemp
Lecturer

Gavin Slemp is a lecturer, academic, and program coordinator of the undergraduate stream in the Centre for Positive Psychology, University of Melbourne. Here, Gavin teaches and coordinates the Masters subject Positive Psychology and Organisations, and the undergraduate breadth sequence in positive psychology – subjects which have been voted as among the most popular in the university by the students. With a Doctor of Organisational Psychology and as a registered Organisational Psychologist (AHPRA), Gavin’s research interests are primarily in the areas of employee wellbeing, autonomous motivation and autonomy support, the effects of people becoming active crafters of their work, and positive education. Gavin is also Co-Editor of the International Journal of Wellbeing.

Before becoming an academic, Gavin worked in consulting in Human Resources Advisory for clients in Australia and the Asia-Pacific. In this role his work was primarily on the leadership development of executive teams and their direct reporting lines, as well as the design and implementation of training and development programs in large organisations. Gavin’s first book is a coedited with Dr Mathew A. White and Simon Murray, entitled “Future Directions in Wellbeing: Education, Organizations and Policy”, and will be published by Springer in June 2017 and features a foreword by David Cooperrider.
Paige Williams is a Lecturer at the Centre for Positive Psychology within the Melbourne Graduate School of Education. She leads the ‘Applications of Positive Psychology’ subject within the Masters of Applied Positive Psychology, the ‘Leading Schools the Leading Self’ subject within the Masters of Instructional Leadership and the Professional Certificate in Psychology. Following more than 15 years international business leadership experience, Paige's PhD examined change pathways and processes to create wellbeing at work. She has published a number of peer-reviewed journal articles in areas such as positive change, employee wellbeing, positive education and appreciative inquiry. Her research interests include positive systems science, leadership, organizational change and thriving at work.

Tan-Chyuan Chin is Research Fellow and Director of The Wellbeing Profiler at the Centre for Positive Psychology at The University of Melbourne. Tan-Chyuan’s formal training is in psychology and chemistry. Tan-Chyuan’s PhD was in Music Psychology and she developed and published a widely sought after measure of music engagement which allows clinicians and researchers to study the impact of music use on emotional, mental and physical wellbeing.

Tan-Chyuan’s research examines the enablers and contextual factors of what contributes to improved and sustained wellbeing over the lifespan. She specializes in multi-method approaches of measuring wellbeing for program evaluation, using a combination of established and innovative techniques across physiological, psychological and behavioural experience sampling methods. Tan-Chyuan presents regularly at major national and international conferences, has published over 10 peer-reviewed articles and also contributed to the first volumes of The Oxford Handbook of Musical Identities and the Lifelong Engagement with Music: Benefits for Mental Health and Well-being.

Tan-Chyuan is currently working on two ARC Linkage projects examining the impact of Positive Education on enhancing youth wellbeing and mental health during high school and the post-high school transition. She is also leading several Local Government community and youth wellbeing projects at the centre.

Natalie Brain holds a Master of Applied Positive Psychology from the University of Pennsylvania, an MBA from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and a Bachelor of Arts in Economics and Business from the University of California, Los Angeles.

Natalie has taught the science of wellbeing and peak performance in university and workplace settings around the world. She wrote and launched two University of Melbourne positive psychology subjects that have been taken by more than 1,500 students and received an overall 4.9/5.0 quality of teaching score for subjects taught.

She is a leadership development consultant for one of Fortune Magazine’s “Best Companies to Work, 2016”. As a leadership development consultant, Natalie draws on more than a decade of management experience with leading edge organizations around the globe, including a Fortune 100 company, a global foundation helping 10 countries in Asia & Africa to increase access to effective malaria treatment, and a health technology start-up. She has lived and worked or studied on six continents.

Christine Siokou is a Research Fellow (Positive Systems) at the Centre for Positive Psychology, the University of Melbourne. Christine has an undergraduate degree in Sociology and Politics from the University of Melbourne and a PhD from Curtin University in Public Health. Her research involves the development of the ‘Positive Systems’ research program, understanding and supporting positive students, positive schools and positive systems. Her research interests include: the application of system science, community interventions, alcohol and drug use amongst young people, mixed methods research, implementing system level change, and the evaluation of complex systems.
Dan Loton’s professional experience comprises research management in the Higher Education sector and work as a researcher in the disciplines of Psychology, Education and Research Policy. Dan completed his PhD on the topic of video game addiction in 2014 and has commenced a post-doctoral Fellowship in the Centre for Positive Psychology at the University of Melbourne’s Graduate School of Education, focusing on Positive Parenting and Positive Education. Subsequent to his PhD, Dan worked in a centralised Teaching and Learning Centre in a dual-sector University, undertaking research aimed at enhancing positive student experiences and outcomes.

Kent Patrick is a Research Fellow (Wellbeing Profiler) at the Centre for Positive Psychology, the University of Melbourne. After an early career as a health professional, Kent completed a PhD in Psychology at Deakin University and since then has been involved in lecturing in Psychology and working on a range of research projects. He has previously worked as Research Fellow on large scale projects such as the NHMRC funded ‘Australian Longitudinal Study of Health and Relationships’ and the ‘5th National survey of Australian Secondary Students and Sexual Health’ (Commonwealth funded) both of which were conducted at the Australian Centre for Sex, Health and Society at La Trobe University. He has published nearly 30 reports and peer-reviewed journal articles in areas such as employee wellbeing, adult and adolescent sexual health and behaviour, and attracting allied health undergraduates into rural mental health work. His research interests include: employee wellbeing, multivariate modelling in large data sets, and the promotion of adolescent health and wellbeing.

Amanda Ng is a research assistant at the Centre for Positive Psychology at the Melbourne Graduate School of Education. She has a bachelor’s honours degree in Psychology from The University of Melbourne and joined the Centre at the start of 2016.

Amanda is currently involved in two longitudinal projects examining the benefits of Positive Education for the wellbeing and mental health of young people across adolescence and during the transition into adulthood. Both projects have received competitive research funding by the Australian Research Council, and are being led by Professor Dianne Vella-Brodrick and Professor John Hattie of The University of Melbourne, Associate Professor Nikki Rickard of Monash University, and Professor Donna Cross of The University of Western Australia and Telethon Kids Institute, in partnership with industry organisations such as Geelong Grammar School and Maroondah City Council.

Amanda has presented at key conferences including Positive Education Conference in Perth, and the 5th Australian Positive Psychology and Wellbeing Conference (2016). She has developed a growing interest in the science of wellbeing, and in understanding the conditions that serve to promote, sustain, or even undermine one’s sense of wellbeing, and is an advocate of interdisciplinary and cross-disciplinary research.

The Centre is grateful for the exceptional teaching and research support provided by our casual employees, particularly Lara Mossman, Alexandra Johnston and Jiaying Jiang.
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<td>Meditating Teachers: Mindfulness as praxis in Teacher Education.</td>
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(P): Principal Supervisor    (C): Co Supervisor
Fellows
Professor Roy Baumeister
Honorary Professorial
Professor Michael Steger
Honorary Principal Fellow
Professor Emeritus David Beswick
Honorary Principal Fellow
Associate Professor Nikki Rickard
Senior Honorary Fellow
Associate Professor Mathew White
Senior Honorary Fellow
Dr Suzy Green
Senior Honorary Fellow
Ms Michelle McQuaid
Senior Honorary Fellow
Mr Justin Robinson
Honorary Fellow
Dr Sonia Sharp
Honorary Fellow
Dr Justin Coulson
Honorary Fellow
Dr Reuben Rusk
Honorary Fellow
Dr Kerry Howells
Honorary Fellow

The Centre is grateful for the ongoing advice and expertise from our Board, and their recommendations on future direction and growth of the Centre.

Board members

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<tr>
<th>Board Membership</th>
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<tr>
<td>John Higgins</td>
<td>Dianne Vella-Brodrick</td>
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<td>Bruce Parncutt</td>
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<td>Chris Tipler</td>
<td>Grace Fiore</td>
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<td>Michael Hewitt-Gleeson</td>
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<td>Jane Burns</td>
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Our people: Fellows and Board members
Category 1


Category 2-4

Dr Gavin Slemp *The influence of cultural factors in positive psychology interventions*. Tsinghua University, China. $10,000.

Dr Tan Chyuan Chin *Wellbeing & Youth Consultation Project*. Maroondah City Council. $30,000

University internal grants

Dr Christine Siokou & Professor Dianne Vella-Brodrick
Melbourne Engagement Grant – Fostering rich and supportive learning environments for disadvantaged young people. $10,000.

Dr Peggy Kern, Dr Gavin Slemp & Associate Professor Lindsay Oades MGSE Research Seed funding -Gaining psychological and educational insights through social media language analysis, $6,000.

Commissioned work & University of Melbourne Commercial

The Centre has grown its research consultancy and custom education deliveries (Professional Certificates) throughout 2016, with over $500,000 billed.
Refereed Journal articles


Refereed Conference Proceedings


Research Reports (Non-HERDC)
Other


Supporting the Centre for Positive Psychology

John Higgins has always been passionate about education. His vision is that every student should be exposed to the principles of Positive Psychology through their time at school, so they have the skills to influence their own lives, and those of the people around them.

“Psychology has traditionally supported people to move from minus ten to zero”.

“What I love about Positive Psychology is it helps people move from zero to plus ten.”

CONTACT:
If you have any queries regarding giving to the Centre for Positive Psychology, and about how your gift can help make a difference, please contact:

Carl Junot
Development Officer
Melbourne Graduate School of Education
carl.junot@unimelb.edu.au
+61 3 9035 6133

“Positive Psychology is a branch of science that seeks to build wellbeing in people by teaching them how to use their strengths, positive emotions and positive relationships. The generous support of John Higgins to fund the Gerry Higgins Chair in Positive Psychology has created a pivotal leadership position for driving the Centre’s strategic direction and raising its public visibility.

“In addition to Mr Higgins supporting the growth of the Centre for Positive Psychology through his financial endowment, he is also the foundational Chair of the Board for the Centre for Positive Psychology – a role he has held since 2014. Mr Higgins gives up his time, intellectual capital and business expertise to the Centre in a voluntary capacity and has been instrumental in steering us towards success.”

Professor Lea Waters (PhD)
Gerry Higgins Chair
Centre for Positive Psychology
Melbourne Graduate School of Education
The University of Melbourne