

# School Leadership Institute Highlights | S1 2025







## Acknowledgement of Country

We recognise the Traditional Custodians of the lands where we learn, work and live, paying respect to Elders past and present as teachers of knowledge, songlines and stories. We strive to ensure every NSW Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander learner achieves their potential through education.





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# Overview

The NSW School Leadership Institute (SLI) provides leadership development programs and support for current and future school leaders. We offer a range of leadership induction and development programs, on-demand learning, online resources and other opportunities for leaders. Our vision is to enhance the capabilities of all educational leaders in NSW public schools, so they have the greatest impact on teacher and student learning. Our mission is to provide worldclass, evidence-informed, future-focused leadership development programs and resources to support school leaders at every stage of their career.

The SLI’s work supports Our Plan for NSW Public Education in the focus areas of:

- Strengthening trust and respect for the teaching profession
- Delivering outstanding leadership, teaching and learning
- Advancing equitable outcomes, opportunities and experiences.

This Highlights report for Semester 1 2025 captures the impact the SLI has had on NSW public education and the range and reach of our leadership programs, resources and opportunities for leaders across the state.

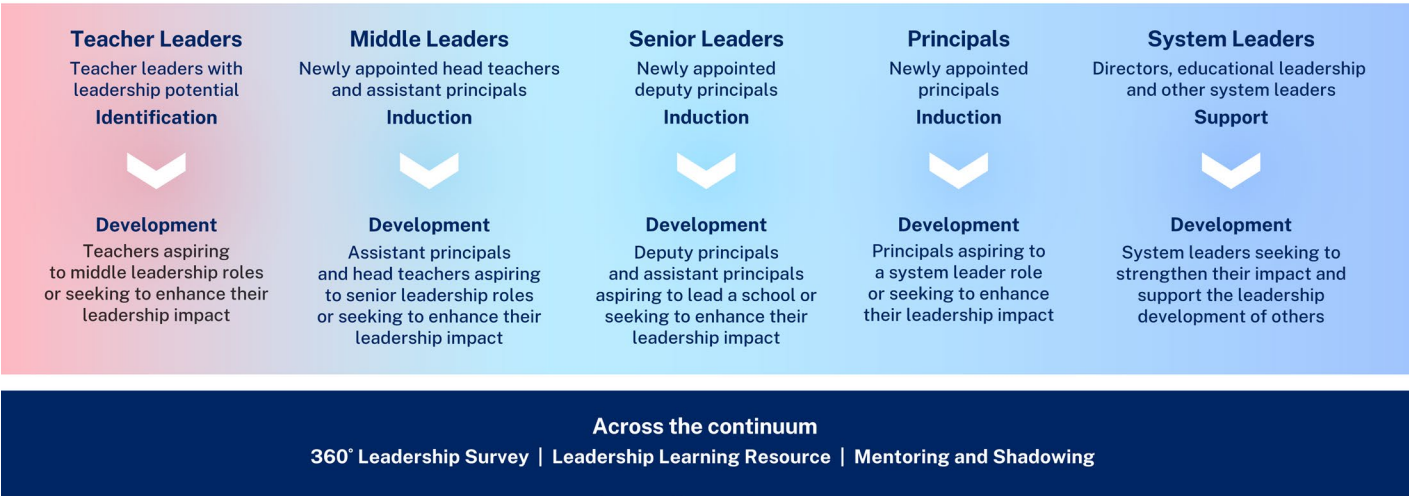
The SLI’s professional learning (PL) options continue to receive positive feedback with evaluation data for all programs and resources indicating participants are extremely pleased with the quality of learning being delivered. In addition to established programs and resources, new opportunities have been added to the suite of SLI offerings.

The first cohort of the Teacher Leader Development Program (TLDP) completed the professional learning series this semester. The program received positive feedback and has experienced strong demand from teachers wishing to join Cohort 2.

Also in Semester 1, the first cohorts of the Regional, Rural and Remote Middle Leaders Program (RRRMLP) finished their face-to-face professional learning sessions, while new networks started the program. Positive participant feedback continues to emphasise the importance of equitable access to live events for rural, regional and remote schools.

The quality of our work has again been demonstrated in the evaluation data for each of our offerings, with consistently high numbers of participants reporting the SLI’s work met their learning expectations and needs. Overall, our programs receive high or very high satisfaction ratings. We use feedback to continuously refine and improve our work, ensuring we continue to offer world-class programs and resources.

## SLI Development Continuum





# 360° Leadership Survey

The SLI continues to provide school leaders with access to the 360° Leadership Survey, a powerful developmental tool that enables leaders to reflect on their strengths and identify areas for growth through feedback from supervisors and peers. Each participating leader receives a comprehensive report, supporting the development of a personalised leadership development plan.

In Semester 1 2025, a total of 677 school leaders registered for the survey, representing 310 schools and 102 principal networks. The survey engaged 4,376 evaluators, including:

- 558 school leaders as subjects of the survey
- 786 supervisors
- 3,032 peers.

Of the 558 school leaders who undertook the survey:

- 386 (69%) completed it voluntarily
- 172 (31%) participated as part of the Senior Leadership – Aspiring Principals Leadership Program (SL-APLP) or the Middle Leadership Development Program (MLDP).

To date, 94% of leaders (525) have received their personalised 360° report, enabling them to reflect on feedback and plan targeted development.

Importantly, 157 leaders have completed the survey

more than once, with at least 12 months between surveys, demonstrating a strong commitment to ongoing professional growth and leadership reflection over time.

Evaluation data from Semester 1 registrations indicates the following motivations:

- 83% completed the survey to develop their leadership capacity and capabilities
- 68% sought to assess the status of their leadership behaviours
- 59% intended to use the survey to support their Performance and Development Plan (PDP)
- 45% engaged with the survey as part of their preparation for future formal leadership roles.

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“The 360° survey has provided me with a pathway for future professional learning and development.”

360 Leadership Survey participant

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# Teacher Leaders

## Teacher Leader Development Program

The inaugural cohort of the Teacher Leader Development Program (TLDP) started professional learning in Semester 1 2025. An independent evaluation is currently underway to assess both immediate and intermediate outcomes, and to inform ongoing program improvement.

Early indicators are promising. The program achieved a 72% retention rate, a substantial increase from the 25% retention observed in the previous, voluntary version of the learning. This threefold improvement highlights the value of a structured program with clear objectives and practical support for enacting learning in school contexts.

A key shift since formalisation has been a decline in participation by mentors and formal school leaders, from approximately 50% to 15%. This trend has prompted a review of the program's target audience and a renewed focus on better equipping mentors to support teacher leaders when they are not active program participants themselves.

Research supports the importance of leadership development at all stages of a teacher's career. Positioning leadership as a practice rather than a title fosters engagement, builds agency, and supports the retention of committed educators. In alignment with this, the Demystifying Leadership for Teachers (DL4T) professional learning series was launched to grow interest and capacity among teachers not yet in formal leadership roles.

The first two DL4T sessions received a strong and diverse response. Participants had an average of 13 years of teaching experience, ranging from 3 to over 30 years, highlighting that leadership interest spans all career stages. Participant feedback was overwhelmingly positive:

- 97% found the sessions engaging
- 98% felt they had ample opportunity to participate
- 95–97% reported improved understanding of core leadership principles.

Notably, relational trust emerged as the most resonant concept across sessions. Encouragingly, 89% of participants reported an increased interest in leadership, reinforcing the program's potential to support and grow future teacher leaders.

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“Engaging with the TLDP helped me reflect deeply on my leadership capabilities and brought key areas for development to light.”

TLDP participant

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# Middle Leaders

## Middle Leader Induction Conference

The Semester 1 Middle Leader Induction Conference (MLIC) was attended by 254 head teachers and assistant principals, with 54% of attendees in substantive roles, and 46% in long-term relieving positions.

The MLIC provides newly appointed middle leaders with a comprehensive orientation to their role within the NSW Department of Education. Delivered over 2 days online, the conference features seminars with departmental and leadership experts, alongside peer learning conversations that promote reflection and collaboration.

Participant engagement and satisfaction were strong, with 241 participants (95%) completing the post-conference survey. Key evaluation outcomes include:

- 94% reported increased clarity and knowledge of accountabilities including leading teams, supporting school improvement, and managing curriculum implementation.
- 90% reported a significant increase in their overall confidence to fulfil their role.

- 94% agreed or strongly agreed they gained a deeper understanding of core leadership practices such as leading professional learning, supporting effective teaching, and fostering a culture of high expectations.

The MLIC strengthened the leadership learning and development of middle leaders by combining structured content, system engagement, peer networking opportunities, and practical strategies aligned to role expectations and school improvement goals.

The overwhelmingly positive participant feedback underscores the program's impact on building leadership capacity within NSW public schools.

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“The fact the department was taking time and investing money in support of newly appointed middle leaders made me feel valued.”

MLIC participant

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## Middle Leadership Development Program

Cohort 3 of the Middle Leadership Development Program (MLDP) began in March with 163 participants and 31 facilitators attending the program's first 3-day conference.

The MLDP is a 12-month program, delivered by the SLI in partnership with the University of Wollongong and the University of Newcastle. It provides targeted, evidence-informed professional learning to build on strengths of assistant principals and head teachers and develop their leadership capacity.

An evaluation of the Term 1 conference received 156 responses, representing a 96% response rate, providing high confidence in the data. Key findings included:

- an average satisfaction rating of 8.9 out of 10
- nearly 90% rated the program highly (8-10) with no low ratings recorded
- more than 96% of responses were positive, highlighting the conference as thought provoking, well organised, engaging, and effectively supported by facilitator and teams.

Qualitative feedback identified 'the team' and 'networking' as the most valued aspects of the experience. Participants reported that collegial discussions were instrumental in sharing ideas, deepening understanding, and building collaborative professional relationships.

Facilitators were also highly valued for the knowledge, guidance and support they provided, contributing to a strong sense of collegiality within the team.

Overall, the conference was viewed as highly relevant to participant's role, with informed presenters and mentors creating a supportive environment for meaningful leadership development.

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**"I am the only middle leader in a small school, so the speakers and my team have been amazing in giving different perspectives."**

**MLDP participant**

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# Senior Leaders

## Senior Leadership – Aspiring Principals Leadership Program

The Senior Leadership – Aspiring Principals Leadership Program (SL-APLP) is a 12-month program for aspiring principals or those seeking to enhance their leadership impact.

In Semester 1, 2025 45 senior leaders participated in Cohort 11 with 33 participants submitting a Leadership Report and Digital Story for validation. Of these, 24 participants achieved a Certificate of Graduation, 9 participants requested an extension, one person withdrew from the program, and 2 participants deferred to Cohort 12.

An increasing number of validated participants plan to enrol in a Master of Educational Leadership, reflecting the program's effectiveness in fostering a commitment to ongoing professional learning and leadership development.

Aspiration for principalship also increased in SL-APLP Cohort 11, with post-program evaluation data showing:

- 53% reported a significant increase in their aspiration for principalship, while a further 31% reported a slight increase, after engaging in the program
- 89% intended to apply for a principalship in the next 1-5 years.

All participants agreed or strongly agreed that the program had:

- enhanced their leadership practices that positively impact on student learning

- increased their confidence to lead collaborative inquiry focused on improving teaching and learning
- strengthened the personal and interpersonal qualities required to lead with influence.

SL-APLP Cohort 12, comprising 53 participants and 11 principal facilitators, continued their engagement in Semester 1, 2025 completing seminars 3 to 7. During the same period, the selection process for Cohort 13 also took place. This new cohort of 52 participants commenced leadership seminars 1 and 2 in May.

The SL-APLP continues to attract senior leaders from metropolitan, regional, and rural areas, representing primary, secondary, and schools for specific purposes. Notably, participation from Education Support Staff (ESS) has increased, with 4 ESS colleagues enrolled in Cohort 13. This highlights the program's expanding reach and growing relevance across diverse leadership pathways.

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**“This has been outstanding: from research papers to being in a room with engaging presenters and being supported by experienced principal facilitators.”**

**Cohort 11 participant**

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## Deputy Principal Induction Conference

The Semester 1 2025 Deputy Principal Induction Conference (DPIC) attracted 120 registered participants, comprising:

- 55% newly appointed deputy principals
- 33% in long-term relieving roles,
- 10% in above-establishment positions.

The DPIC is a 2-day conference which outlines the role, responsibilities and practices of deputy principals in leading learning.

For the first time eligibility was extended to head teachers secondary who are situated in central schools in rural and remote settings and undertake the responsibilities of a deputy principal in their context. The conference was attended by 6 head teachers.

The conference delivery was supported by 24 experienced deputy principal facilitators. Evaluation data indicated high levels of participant satisfaction, with strong outcomes across key domains:

- 93% increase in self-efficacy and confidence following the conference
- 89% gained a stronger understanding of the leadership practices expected of a deputy principal
- 93% reported an improved ability to connect with system supports to enact these leadership practices.

The Professional Learning Groups (PLGs) were critical in creating the conditions for authentic engagement during the conference. Pleasingly, 87% of participants indicated their intention to sustain professional connections and leverage the relationships with their PLGs for ongoing collaboration.

A key enabler of learning was the DPIC Hub which was highly valued by participants for the variety of modes of content and the ongoing access to resources prior to, within and after the conference.

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**“I liked the professional approach of all aspects of this conference. Each presenter was engaging, informative and knowledgeable.”**

**DPIC participant**

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# Principals

## Principal Induction Conference

The Semester 1 2025 Principal Induction Conference (PIC) was attended by 73 newly appointed principals.

Held over 3 days, the conference featured subject matter experts from within the department and external partners, alongside the SLI. The program was tailored to the specific context and responsibilities of NSW public school principals.

Evaluation data was submitted by 63 participants. Responses showed:

- 92%, either agreed or strongly agreed that they had increased knowledge of the key accountabilities of the principal role
- 93.7% either agreed or strongly agreed they had gained a better understanding of principal leadership practices.

Overall, the evaluation results indicate that the PIC was highly successful in:

- building participants' understanding of principal accountabilities and leadership practices
- strengthening professional networks
- increasing awareness of available system supports.

The positive outcomes reflect the conference's strong relevance, expert facilitation, and alignment with the needs of new school leaders.

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**“The key speakers were relevant.  
The resources made available will  
be invaluable. Thank you.”**

**PIC S1 2025 participant**

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## Growing Great Leaders

Growing Great Leaders (GGL) is a 12-month leadership program delivered by the SLI in partnership with the University of Auckland. The program is for newly appointed, first-time principals following their attendance at the Principal Induction Conference.

Cohort 10 of GGL began in Semester 1 2025, with 60 participants attending a re-designed 3-day conference.

Feedback from the conference was highly positive, with the majority of participants agreeing or strongly agreeing with all statements related to engagement.

Notably, 97% of participants found the learning relevant to their role, validating the alignment of the new conference with the leadership development needs of NSW public school principals. Participants felt the learning exceeded expectations, with relevant content and practical strategies they could apply immediately.

The updated format and content of the conference will be retained for future cohorts, ensuring continued relevance and impact.

Meanwhile, Cohort 9 participants completed the program in Semester 1.

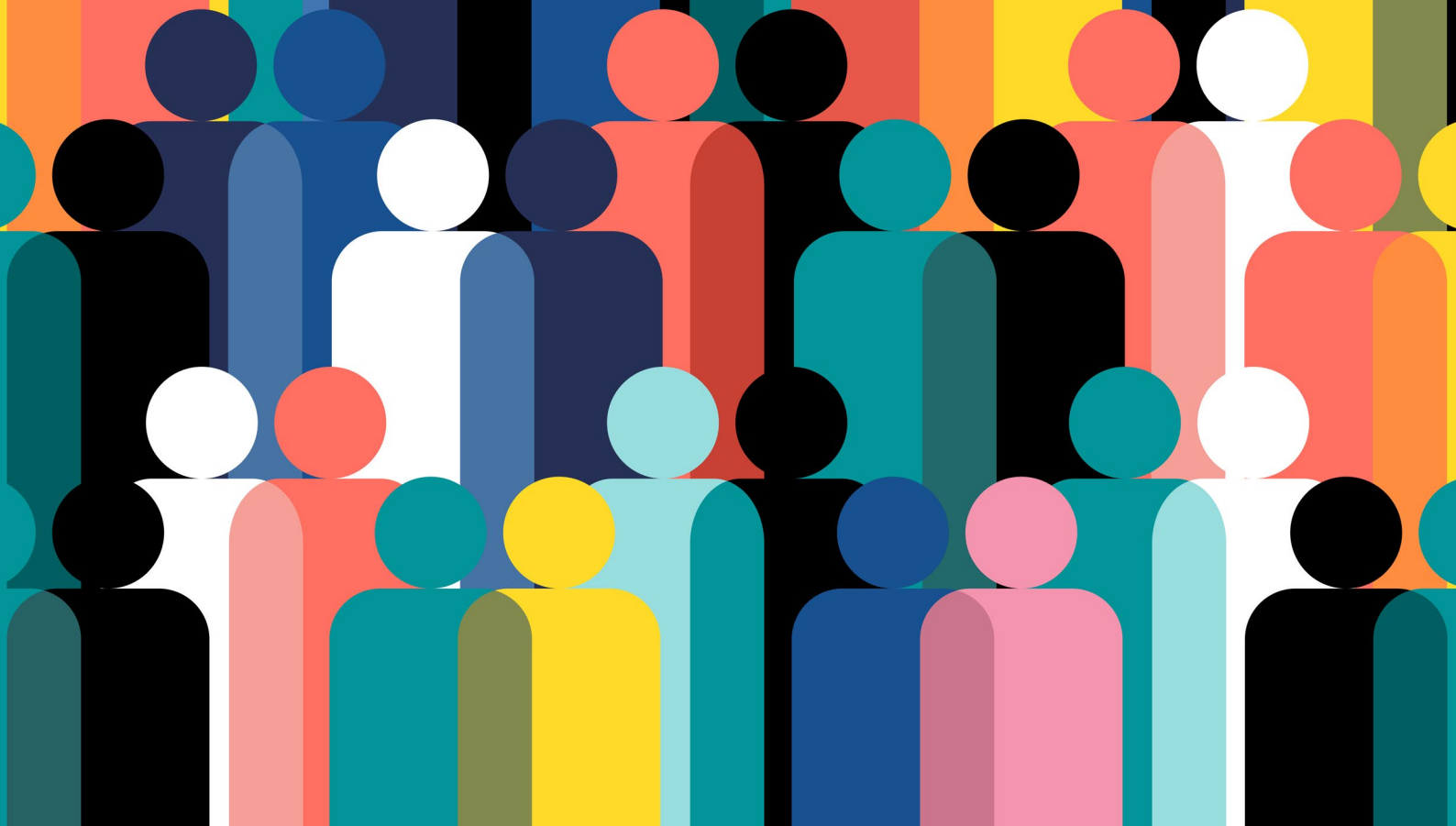
As part of program sustainability and capacity building, 14 experienced principals, including 5 new to the GGL program, were trained as GGL facilitators. Feedback from facilitators has also been positive, with one returning principal facilitator describing GGL as “one of the best professional learning programs available to our school leaders.”

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“It exceeded my expectations. Every element was relevant to my needs as a new principal and gave me knowledge and thinking to enhance my practice.”

GGL Cohort 10 participant

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## Principal Leadership Learning

The SLI's Principal Leadership Learning (PLL) supports the growth of every NSW public school principal through the Insights Series events and resources. It also provides learning opportunities for deputy principals and directors, educational leadership (DELs).

During Semester 1 2025, 747 school leaders engaged with the Insights Series program, with 50% of participants being principals. The increased participation from non-principals this semester is largely attributed to Immersion 1, which enabled principals to invite members of their leadership teams to learn alongside them.

By June, there was 20% increase in overall registrations for the live program compared to the same period last year. Notably, attendance has grown by 36.6% so far in 2025 compared with 2024.

Current attendance data indicates that engagement is evenly distributed across all school types and directorates, supporting broad and equitable access.

Program evaluation shows participants found the learning in Semester 1 highly effective in meeting their needs, with:

- 90% of respondents stating the sessions met their expectations
- 92.6% of participants noting strong connections to evidence-informed theory.

Participants in the live Insights Series sessions consistently demonstrate a strong commitment to translating learning into meaningful action. A recurring theme is the desire to foster cultures of curiosity, collaboration, and reflective practice, alongside opportunities for personal and professional growth. Many participants express a clear intention to share key insights with their leadership teams.

The Principal Leadership Hub continues to support this momentum, offering on-demand access to evidence-informed resources that empower principals and their teams with greater agency in their leadership development. Engagement with the Insights Series on-demand content is steadily increasing, and in 2025, the program has expanded with the addition of 7 new courses.

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**“I am finding the sessions well timed, thought provoking, having a clear focus and very relevant to my work.”**

**Principal participant at Keynote 2**

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# Other achievements

## Regional, Rural and Remote Middle Leaders Program

The Regional, Rural and Remote Middle Leader Program (RRRMLP) continues to be delivered across the state, supporting the development of middle leaders in diverse educational settings. In Semester 1, 2025, the Ulladulla and Grafton networks were the first to complete all face-to-face professional learning elements of the program, while the Far West network commenced its participation in the same period. Engagement across all networks was positive with participants placing strong value on the face-to-face professional learning opportunities.

Post-program feedback from the Ulladulla network cohort reflects high levels of satisfaction and early impact. Evaluation data showed that:

- 84% of participants had already applied their learning to practice
- 95% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed the program had enhanced their ability to lead more effectively
- 100% of participants reported increased confidence in their leadership practice.

Similarly, responses from the Grafton cohort reinforced the program's relevance and practical impact:

- 100% participants agreed (33%) or strongly agreed (67%) that they had already applied their learning in practice
- 100% of participants also agreed (33%) or strongly agreed (67%) that the program had enhanced their capability and enhanced their confidence.

Participants from the Ulladulla network reported meaningful shifts in leadership mindsets and practices. Many described moving from a directive leadership style to one that facilitates growth through inquiry and relational trust. These self-reported changes were echoed by principals, with 67% observing improvements in their middle leaders' practices, mindsets, and/or behaviours.

Qualitative feedback from the Grafton cohort echoed these themes, with participants highlighting growth in communication skills, feedback practices, and team engagement. Many described becoming more reflective, seeking feedback from peers, and adopting a more strategic approach to leadership. Principal affirmed these changes, with 87% reporting observable positive shifts in their middle leaders' mindsets or behaviours.

Taken together, these insights demonstrate the RRRMLP's growing impact in building leadership identity, strengthening professional practice, and supporting educational leadership in regional, rural, and remote school contexts.

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**“I have been able to reflect on my strengths as a leader and identify areas for improvement and strategies I can use to grow.”**

**Assistant Principal**

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## Lead and Aspire Mentoring Program

The Lead and Aspire Mentoring Program (LAMP) continues to attract strong engagement from school-based staff and education support staff across the department.

Cohort 2 of the program began in Semester 1 2025, with 155 participants at face-to-face venues in Parramatta, Tamworth, and Albury. This diverse group included Principal Coach Mentors (PCMs), principals, senior leaders, middle leaders, and teacher leaders. A strong partnership has been established with the Mathematics Retraining Team, whose members joined Cohort 2.

Participant feedback from Cohort 2 has been overwhelmingly positive, reinforcing both the program's relevance and the ongoing need for high-quality mentor training across multiple contexts in the department.

In addition to the main cohort, the HALT Talent Pipeline team participated in a dedicated stream of the program during Semester 1. In Semester 2, the LAMP team will run a second cohort for the HALT Talent Pipeline.

Cohort 3 was promoted during Semester 1 and attracted 171 applications, including 10 career advisers from the Careers Teacher Retraining Program.

As LAMP's reputation for excellence in mentor development continues to grow, planning is already underway for future cohorts to meet the rising demand and ensure sustained impact across the system.

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**“This course should be mandatory for all PCMs and principals. The linking of the themes in the e-learning with the readings is fantastic. I am using the scaffolds and resources within my own school context to develop others and when working with other principals.”**

**Principal and PCM**

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# Leading by Learning

In May 2025, Professor Emeritus Viviane Robinson and Dr Jacqui Patuawa led a 2-day Leading by Learning workshop attended by 20 directors, educational leadership (DELs) and 3 Principal School Leadership (PSL) participants. The workshop focused on enhancing participants' abilities to lead with a learning focused manner, supporting more effective partnerships with school principals.

Of the 20 DELs who completed the evaluation survey, 73% held substantive roles, while 27% were in acting or relieving positions. This session marked the third delivery of the Leading by Learning workshop, bringing total participation to over 70 leaders across the system.

Evaluation data highlighted overwhelmingly strong impact of the workshop:

- More than 80% of respondents reported increased confidence in applying a learning-focused approach when working with principals.
- The workshop was rated as very or extremely effective in strengthening their leadership capacity by 92% of respondents.
- A majority (77%) of respondents reported significant improvements in their ability to assess the impact of their leadership conversations.

Participants also praised the quality of facilitation:

- More than 90% agreed the presenters were very or extremely effective at fostering a safe, engaging environment and clearly communicating core concepts.
- The presenters' ability to explain ideas and provide feedback received an average score of 4.42 out of 5.

Overall, the Leading by Learning workshop continues to demonstrate the benefits of targeted professional development for DELs, offering practical tools to enhance their leadership and better support principals in driving school improvement.

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“High quality professional learning that was informative, practical, collaborative and engaging. The pacing made the breakout time very deliberate and purposeful”

Leading by Learning participant

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