

**STAND
OUT**

SEPLA-CON 19

Monday 22nd July – Rosehill Racecourse
Tuesday 23rd July – Rydges Parramatta



Redefining Practice : a Journey towards Trauma Informed Practice at Ajuga School

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¹Ajuga School

Biography:

Leah has been at the helm of Ajuga School since mid-2018 following relieving principal contracts at both the Sydney Children’s Hospital Randwick and Rivendell School. Leah has an extensive background in special education, having worked as an executive in a variety of specialised settings including dual health/education settings for students with a mental health disorder, intellectual disability and behaviour disorders. Leah is both a leader and practitioner in curriculum access and engagement of students with complex trauma history.

Fiona joined Ajuga School in mid-2018 and has been an active member of the leadership team shaping the new Ajuga concept. Fiona has worked in mainstream and specialised settings both in Ireland and Australia, supporting students from various backgrounds from gifted and talented to students presenting with intellectual disabilities, behaviour disorders and complex trauma. Fiona is a passionate special educator who strives to create opportunities for students to be authentic active participants in school and the community.

Schools catering for students with an emotional disturbance are routinely stigmatised and often face a difficult time working with mainstream settings to provide opportunities for integration and authentic inclusion, both within education and community settings. But what happens when the narrative of a school is reframed and identified as a setting for students with complex trauma history?

Historically, schools have invested heavily in systems and processes where student behaviour are framed within continuums and mapped against structured consequences. In settings where students regularly exhibit escalated behaviours, student management often leads to restrictive and/or exclusionary practices to maintain safety within the context of a behavioural approach. But what if there was a different approach which, whilst a lot challenging at the onset, would lead a whole school school to embrace a new model leading to student success both in and beyond the school gate.

The staff at Ajuga School have embarked on a journey to reframe the “why” of the setting, turning historic practice on its head and working towards a model where relationships are heavily invested, and student voice championed.

Utilising the Berry Street Education Board as a springboard for developing whole school language and framing the school philosophy, coupled with coaching from Terry O’Connell OAM and a Restorative Justice lens, Ajuga School is redefining what it means to be a setting for students with Emotional Disturbance.

Through this presentation, Leah and Fiona will take the audience on a journey through the metamorphosis of a school in crisis to a school where every student is really known, cared for and valued. In true Ajuga fashion, the audience will become active participants in the session, enjoying a

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range of activities Ajuqa students engage in each day to help develop their ability to self regulate, whilst also developing an idea of what trauma informed practice looks like in a NSW SSP.