

WHAT IT MEANS TO WALK ALONGSIDE:

Exploring the Our Place partnership



ourplace
education is the key to the door



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Introduction

In November 2017, a landmark education agreement was signed between the Victorian Government and a philanthropic organisation, the Colman Foundation.

The partnership establish a unique place-based and integrated education approach called Our Place, which is being implemented at ten school sites across Victoria. This built upon an agreement signed between these parties in 2012, were this education approach was created at what came to be called Doveton College.

It created the conditions for a unique cross-sector collaboration across education, early learning, health and adult education systems and lays the foundation for what could be the next – and quite transformative – step in this process. One that leads to real systems change.

This paper explores how the agreement came to be and what can be learned from philanthropy and government working differently together. It shows how individuals with courage, vision and a willingness to bypass short-term agendas and organisational agendas came together to create a unique partnership for change. And it explores the journey to get there and the opportunities and benefits being created.

In interviewees own words, it outlines the enabling conditions that allowed the partnership to come to life including strategies such as:

- Working to a shared vision
- Enrolling senior stakeholders from the start
- Taking the time to build relationships and trust
- Unleashing the boundary spanners
- Support at the highest level makes all the difference.

And it shows how formalising the partnership and carefully navigating the space between high level vision and local level implementation is so important. For the Our Place approach, key steps include:

- Articulating the approach for translation, not replication
- Getting the governance right
- Formalising the collaboration beyond key individuals
- Focusing on site level implementation
- Growing Our Place as an intermediary for scaling and capacity building
- Enrolling new partners
- Always maintaining a vision for what might be.

The findings draw upon in-depth interviews with key actors in the establishment of Our Place as well as a review of Our Place documentation and wider literature.

They reveal the amazing potential for government, philanthropy and community to genuinely “walk alongside” each other to empower children, families, and communities to thrive. •