

News for Enabling Educators

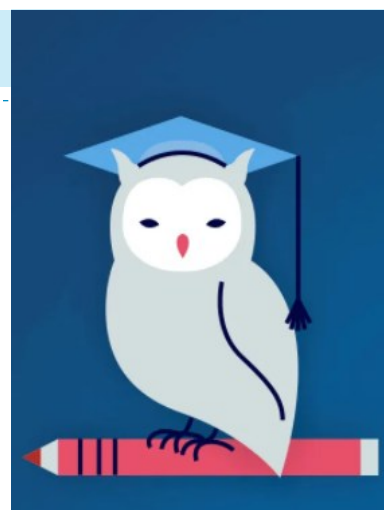
NAEEA CHAIRPERSON'S MESSAGE

Dear Enabling Colleagues,

I write my welcome for Edition 20 of our newsletter on the back of a highly successful Student Success Conference, held in Cairns on the 30 June to 2 July, where a number of NAEEA members and 'friends of Enabling' assembled to network and present the 'Enabling message'. As Chair of NAEEA, my message as I represented Enabling Education on the Equity Forum Panel was one of hope for a brighter future, but also one of a shared frustration at the pace decisions around Enabling Programs (Fee-Free Uni Ready Programs FFUR) are being made. We, as a sector, are not on our own as we await certainty around the full implementation of the Universities Accord. I spoke of my confidence in the continuation of the Honourable Jason Clare as our Minister for Education, re-iterating the words he shared at our NAEEA Conference in Darwin last year. You will remember his video message to open the 2024 Conference where he confirmed Enabling education as the way of the future in growing the tertiary sector in a responsible manner, pointing to a future where Enabling will be central to the achievement of the Accord recommendations. We should also be pleased to see Professor Mary O'Kane being appointed as the new steward for the Australian Tertiary Education Commission (ATEC), which commenced operation on July 1, as we know she is an advocate for Enabling. We now await activity from the ATEC which will focus on allocating university funding, harmonising tertiary education and negotiating mission-based contracts.

Unfortunately, on a less positive note, the 2025 year has not been without the challenges of continued redundancies across numerous universities. It is time once again for us to quietly reflect on the difficult time some of our valued Enabling colleagues are having, not only themselves but their families, as they face uncertainty of employment. The emotional toll is significant, and we offer our thoughts and support to our affected colleagues as they look to future prospects. We also bear a thought for the effect the loss of positions within institutions has on those staff who remain within programs where the workload does not diminish. I encourage everyone to reach out to those you know could benefit from a supportive conversation.

In closing, I thank you all for your continued NAEEA membership and the contribution you make to the association which is growing stronger each year. I also offer a heartfelt thank you to those colleagues serving on the NAEEA Executive Committee for the collegiality and shared vision that continues to drive our advocacy and progression as an Association. As an Association representing the sector, we all stay committed to improving the lives of the cohort of underrepresented students who study in our programs and that is the best reason



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SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST

- Student Success 2025 Conference highlights
- Upcoming Conferences and Colloquium
- NAEEA SIG Grant Recipients

NAEEA CHAIRPERSON'S MESSAGE (CONTINUED)

to continue our hard work in the Enabling space.

As the year once again passes us by far too quickly, I wish you all the very best with your continued Enabling endeavours in 2025. I also encourage you to start planning for our 8th NAEEA Conference in Perth in 2026. With the growing strength of collaboration through our SIGs, there will be so much more practice to share more

widely at conference. Let's make Perth the biggest ever attendance by NAEEA members.

Here's to our collective spirit!

Many regards
Karen Seary
NAEEA Chairperson

STUDENT SUCCESS CONFERENCE 2025

The 2025 Student Success Conference, held in Cairns from 30 June to 2 July, brought together over 350 participants, 200 of whom were first-time attendees. Co-hosted by Students Transitions Achievement Retention and Success (STARS), Equity Practitioners in Higher Education Australasia (EPHEA), and the National Association of Enabling Educators of Australia (NAEEA), the event highlighted the critical and growing role of equity, student support, and of course, Enabling education in the Australian higher education landscape.

Day One: Networks and First Nations Voices

The opening day was dedicated to networking and sector collaboration. Delegates engaged in meetings of the First Year Experience Network, Student Partnership Network, Co-Curricular Recognition Network, Peer Programs Network, and the First in Family Network, each reflecting the shared commitment to equitable student outcomes.

A standout feature of the day was the Equity Panel, where NAEEA Chair **Karen Seary** played a key role, bringing voice to the Enabling sector's contributions and responsibilities in advancing educational equity. Later in the day, the Student Equity Forum offered thoughtful insights into the lived experiences of equity students.

The day concluded with a warm and lively First Timers Meet & Greet and a Welcome Reception that offered a taste of the rich connections and conversations ahead.

Day Two: Rightful Success and Research in Action

Professor **Peter Anderson's** keynote set an ambitious tone, unveiling the *Higher Education Success Factor (HESF)* framework and advocating for what he termed **"Rightful Success"**, a model grounded in evidence-based practice, targeted interventions, and a moral imperative to uplift Indigenous learners. Quoting Gough Whitlam *"We are all diminished when any of us are denied proper education"*—he called on institutions to "build a strong evidence base," create "rightful success laboratories," and ensure universities are held accountable for equitable outcomes.



Above: Prof. Peter Anderson

The parallel sessions showcased a strong presence of NAEEA members. Presentations included:

- **Dr Trixie James:** *The Peregrination of Belonging*
- **Katrina Johnston & Michelle Gray:** *Show Me What You Mean* (video feedback)
- **Ana Larsen** (on behalf of the Mental Health SIG): *Trauma-Informed Teaching in the Liminal Spaces*
- **Dr Kieran Balloo** and colleagues: *Supporting Academics with Inclusive and Equitable Curricula*
- **Dr Liz Goode:** *Immersive Block Learning and Its Impact*



Above: Karen Seary

STUDENT SUCCESS CONFERENCE 2025 (CONTINUED)

That evening's Conference Dinner was a celebration of colour, music, and connection.

📷 *Side Note: One memorable moment came when a local waiter recognised Dr Trixie James as his Zoom lecturer. A full-time Cairns worker studying STEPS part-time, he was thrilled to find himself in a room where his own Enabling educators were connecting with the broader higher education sector; a moment that reminded us of the reach and impact of our work.*



Above: Trixie James and STEPS student

Day Three: Student Voices and Future Visions

The final day opened with a compelling Student Panel facilitated by Dr Kylie Austin, focusing on the experiences of international students. Students called for:

- Greater diversity in the voices being heard
- Safe spaces for co-creation and genuine inclusion
- Clear, culturally sensitive mentoring
- Responsible, ethical guidance on AI use as many expressed shame and confusion about its role in learning and the mixed messages received by the institutions
- Meaningful action on disability support, not tokenism

One student remarked, *"We don't want to just be heard. We want to see outcomes from what we say."* Their insights reinforced the need for a whole-of-university approach to inclusion, an ethos well aligned with NAEAA's values.

The conference closed with an energetic and thought-provoking keynote by **Professor Claire**



Above: Prof. Claire Macken's keynote

Macken, titled *"Shaping the Future: The Role of Higher Education in a Changing World."* In her imagined "very pink" university of the future, Professor Macken championed active, engaged learning, reminding us that *"Learning is not about teaching content when no one is there. It is a fundamental opportunity led by educators."* She urged institutions to be courageous, authentic, and to "stay the course."

Spotlight on NAEAA Research and Recognition

NAEEA members made a remarkable contribution across parallel sessions, including:

- **Anne Braund** – *Grit-Ability Toolkit*
- **Dr Fiona Navin** – *Benchmarking In-School Enabling Programs*
- **Dr Amanda Daly** – *Insights into the development of the Griffith Enabling Program*
- **Mental Health SIG** – *Student Support, Beyond Empty Signifiers* (Larsen, James, Mann)
- **Kristy Stanwix** – *From Accommodations to Universal Design*

Poster Presentations



STUDENT SUCCESS CONFERENCE 2025 (CONTINUED)

- **Dr Michelle Mansfield** – *Open Foundation Extended*
- **Dr Gemma Mann** – *Evaluating LGBTIQ+ Ally Training*
- **Dr John Pike & Tamra Ulpen** – *Critical Generative AI Literacy*
- **Rachel Barber** – *Transforming Academic Language and Learning*

In addition, two NAEAA papers were selected for inclusion in the upcoming *Student Success Journal* special issue:

1. “*Student Support, Beyond Empty Signifiers*” – Larsen, James, Mann, Balloo, Westacott, Subramaniam
2. “*Remediating the Remedial*” – Rachel Barber [👉 Click here for link](#)

NAEEA’s presence at the Student Success Conference showcased our members as collegial, knowledgeable, and committed to the needs of their Enabling student cohort, further demonstrating deep impact in our sector. This is a testament to the institutional and cross-institutional

Don’t forget to tag NAEAA when you post about your conference experiences on LinkedIn and Twitter!

<https://www.linkedin.com/company/enablingeducators/>

research and innovation within our sector. From belonging to AI literacy, from trauma-informed practice to student voice, Enabling educators are not only responding to the needs of our students, they are speaking *for* them, amplifying their voices, and advocating with a genuine ethos of care. Their work reflects an unwavering commitment to ensuring that all students, especially those within our Enabling programs, are seen, heard, and supported. They are not just contributing to the future of higher education; they are helping to shape it with integrity and heart.

✳ Save the Date! ✳

We’re excited to announce the location for the 2026 Student Success Conference — it’s heading to the beautiful Novotel Sunshine Coast Resort from 29 June to 1 July 2026!

Mark your calendars now if you’re planning to attend both the NAEAA Conference and STARS 2026. It’s going to be an inspiring few days in a stunning setting. More details to come, but for now, start dreaming of sunshine, collaboration, and connection on both the Sunshine Coast and the Western Coast of Australia!

By [Dr Trixie James](#), CQUniversity Australia



2025 PATHWAYS EDUCATION AND RESEARCH COLLOQUIUM – ADVANCING THE AGENDA

Friday 24 October 2025

8:30 am–4:30 pm

UniSQ Springfield (D Block Auditorium)

You're warmly invited to the 2025 Pathways Education and Research Colloquium—a national gathering focused on equity, access, and the transformative power of pathways education, including Enabling, bridging, transition, and vocational programs.

This year's theme, *Advancing the Agenda*, brings together practitioners, researchers, and policymakers committed to expanding educational opportunity through inclusive and responsive approaches across the tertiary sector.

Highlights include:

- **Keynote by Professor Andrew Harvey**, renowned equity researcher and policy advisor
- **Panel discussion** featuring sector experts Associate Professor Katelyn Barney, Professor Sarah O'Shea, and Karen Seary
- The **official launch of the *Journal of Pathways Education and Research***

- Engaging face-to-face presentations from across the sector (with keynote and panel livestreamed)

Call for Presentations:

Submit your abstract by Monday 11 August

Registration is free:

Register [here](#) or via the QR code below by Thursday 6 October

Let's come together to advance the agenda—for equity, for students, and for the transformative potential of pathways education.



Above (left): location of the Colloquium.
Above (Right): QR code to register your attendance.



ASSOCIATION FOR
ACADEMIC
LANGUAGE AND
LEARNING

Empowering students
to succeed

17TH BIENNIAL ASSOCIATION FOR ACADEMIC LANGUAGE AND LEARNING CONFERENCE 2025— DISCOUNTED REGISTRATIONS FOR NAEAA MEMBERS

The conference will be held from 3-5 December, at James Cook University (JCU), Townsville Queensland.

The first face-to-face conference since 2019 and the twentieth anniversary of AALL's founding, this event aims to be a space for ALL educators to connect or reconnect. The conference will focus on practice, inviting proposals for interactive events that share how we connect and collaborate with peers, students, academics and third space professionals to create engaging, inclusive 21st century learning experiences.

We would especially like to draw your attention to a discounted price on registration for adjacent memberships to AALL. Members of associations whose activi-

ties overlap with or are adjacent to AALL are eligible for Adjacent Membership registration. This discounted fee is offered in recognition of our common interests in supporting learners in the Higher Education space. Eligible associations include [English Australia](#), [HERDSA](#), [ICALLD](#), [EPHEA](#), [NAEEA](#), and [ASCILITE](#).

Please visit the conference website: <https://www.jcu.edu.au/aall> for more information

For further enquiries, please email aallconference2025@jcu.edu.au.

SAVE THE DATES—NAEEA 2026 CONFERENCE!



NAEEA NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF
ENABLING EDUCATORS
OF AUSTRALIA

CONFERENCE 2026
Creating Inclusive Futures

2 - 4 December 2026 / Perth, Western Australia



Hosted by Edith Cowan University
and Murdoch University

Subscribe for conference updates
naeeaconference.com.au

Get Ready! In 2026, the NAEAA conference will be headed to Western Australia for the first time ever!

The conference, to be jointly hosted by Murdoch University and Edith Cowan University, will be held over 3 days during Birak (the first summer of the Noongar calendar), and arguably the best time of year to visit sunny Boorloo!

More information coming soon—please [subscribe](#) for conference updates and start dreaming of sunshine, beautiful beaches, Margaret River wines and Quokkas! Registrations will open in late 2025.

We can't wait to welcome you!

By [Dr Joanne Liscandro](#), Murdoch University

Congratulations to our 2025 SIG Seed Grant Recipients!

We're thrilled to announce that 10 Special Interest Groups (SIGs) have each been awarded \$2500 funding through the NAEAA SIG Seed Grant Scheme, a fantastic initiative supporting cross-institutional collaboration and innovation in the Enabling education space.

These projects, selected for their creativity and relevance, will unfold over the next year, with outcomes to be shared at the 2026 NAEAA Conference in Perth. This is a wonderful opportunity for our community to come together, explore shared interests, and generate meaningful impact.

A big thank you to the SIG facilitators, co-researchers and everyone who supported this initiative. Your dedication helps bring NAEAA's vision to life — building and sharing knowledge that strengthens practice across the sector.

We look forward to walking alongside each SIG as they develop and deliver their projects. Stay tuned for updates as this exciting work takes shape!



NAEEA SIG Seed Grant 2025 Winners:

SIG	Grant title	Authors
Assessment	Embedding feedback literacy in Enabling education: Evidence-informed principles and guidance for Enabling educators	Kieran Balloo, Southern Cross University Liz Goode, Southern Cross University Susan Hopkins, University of the Sunshine Coast Peter Power, University of Newcastle Raquel Salmeron, University of Southern Queensland
Enabling Curriculum	Enabling Program Curriculum Design Principles	Bronwyn Relf, The University of Newcastle Lisa Moody, James Cook University Michelle Briede, Federation University Onur Ates, Macquarie University Amanda Daly, Griffith University

Congratulations to our 2025 SIG Seed Grant Recipients! (continued)

SIG	Grant title	Authors
Diploma SIG	An investigation of students' perceptions of their university diploma course	Johanna Nieuwoudt, Southern Cross University Lili Zhang, University of Canberra College Henry Lee, University of Wollongong Natasha Wilson, University of South Australia Heath Jones, University of Newcastle
Gen AI	Investigating the implementation and impact of GenAI in Enabling Education curriculum through case studies and student perspectives	Grant Andrews, LaTrobe University John Pike, UniSA Selena Dhondea-Tenakov, Edith Cowan University Rhian Morgan, JCU Marie Abi Abdallah, UniSA Daniel Lee, Adelaide Uni Trixie James, CQU
In-School	Mapping High School University Enabling Programs: Structure, Design and Delivery	Selena Dhondea-Tenakov, Edith Cowan University Helen Rogers, Notre Dame University Cinzia Loddo, Notre Dame University Amanda Daly, Griffith University Robert Whannell, University of New England Rebekah Sturniolo-Baker, Murdoch University Jillianna Segura, Charles Darwin University Susan Shaw, Murdoch University
Maths	Unifying Mathematics in Enabling Education	Debra Monteith, Murdoch University Michael Brickhill, Southern Cross University Niharika Singh, University of Southern Queensland Kerrie Stimpson, Southern Cross University Daya Weerasinghe, Federation University Hermina Conradie, Central Queensland University Glynne Bartle, Edith Cowan University Angela Hames, Flinders University Brijesh Kumar, Central Queensland University Jane Stratton, University of Tasmania
Mental Health	Trauma Informed Teaching in Non-Traditional Spaces: An Edited Collection	Angela Jones, ECU Anita Maclaurin, Murdoch University Ana Larsen, CQ University Gemma Mann, CQ University
Research	A Comprehensive Review of NAEAA Conference Papers and Publication Outcomes	Jo Hanley, University of Newcastle Kristen Allen, University of Newcastle Heath Jones, University of Newcastle Rebecca Smith, University of Newcastle Zoe Griffiths, University of Newcastle Susan Hopkins, University of the Sunshine Coast
Self-Efficacy	Start Strong: A Self-Efficacy Toolkit for Transitioning Students	Ana Larsen, Central Queensland University Amy Robinson, University of Adelaide Trixie James, Central Queensland University Matilda Coleman, Charles Darwin University Angela Jones, Edith Cowan University Zoë Griffiths, University of Newcastle Nihal Akdere, Macquarie University College George Lambrinidis, Charles Darwin University
STEM	Benchmarking of science curriculum and assessment in Enabling Programs across Australia	Cinzia Loddo, The University of Notre Dame Australia Joanne Lisciandro, Murdoch University James Valentine, Charles Darwin University Anthea Fudge, Adelaide University Kelly Boyland, Murdoch University Vicki Kiaos, Australian Catholic University Kerrie Stimpson, Southern Cross University

BLAK FUTURISM: HOW A GROUNDBREAKING ENABLING UNIT IS REWRITING THE NARRATIVE ON UNIVERSITY LEARNING

BlaK Futurism: Indigenous Pop Culture for Tomorrow is a UniPrep unit that centres Indigenous ways of knowing and contemporary culture while giving students a strong foundation in academic writing, critical thinking, and media analysis.

At Edith Cowan University (ECU), a groundbreaking Enabling unit is turning traditional learning on its head.

BlaK Futurism: Indigenous Pop Culture for Tomorrow is a UniPrep unit that centres Indigenous ways of knowing and contemporary culture while giving students a strong foundation in academic writing, critical thinking, and media analysis.

Created by Sian Bennett (Gamilaroi), a Lecturer in Kurongkurl Katitjin, ECU's Centre for Indigenous Australian Education and Research, the unit was designed to give Indigenous students a culturally affirming learning space, while remaining open and enriching for all students.

"Kurongkurl Katitjin is always interested in looking at new ways to encourage and support Indigenous students coming to university," Bennett explained.

"Through surveys and conversations with Indigenous students, we found that while many of them enjoyed co-learning spaces, they also wanted spaces that spoke directly to their cultures and contemporary lived experiences."

BlaK Futurism became that space. The unit explores Aboriginal hip-hop, superheroes and comic books, social me-



Above: Sian Bennett and Athena Lee.

dia influencers, fashion, comedy, film, literature and more. Key themes include cultural identity, storytelling, activism, and resistance.

"Any Indigenous student coming into that space is already a mini expert," Bennett explained.

"They already know more than most non-Indigenous students. It's about them and who they are, and that is an empowering position to be in when starting your university education."

The unit is coordinated by Athena Lee, a Parrdarrama woman and academic who has taken on the development of the course's interactive learning model.

At its heart is yarning pedagogy - a relational, circular, and inclusive approach to teaching that centres dialogue and lived experience.

"One of the things that I really enjoy about the unit, is that it predominantly focuses on futurism - what the future looks like for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people," said Lee.

"I think that is so powerful because so much focus in Indigenous units is often through the lens of colonisation.

It's great to be able to restructure the narrative of what it means to be an Aboriginal person in Australia in a modern context, what the future looks like, how we can regain control."

Dr Ange Jones, a Senior Lecturer within ECU's UniPrep program and Co-Coordinator of the BlaK Futurism



BLAK FUTURISM: HOW A GROUNDBREAKING ENABLING UNIT IS REWRITING THE NARRATIVE ON UNIVERSITY LEARNING (CONTINUED)

unit, attributes the unit's success to the leadership of her Aboriginal colleagues, noting her place as a non-Indigenous person co-teaching the unit.

"I'm really conscious of my positionality as a non-Indigenous person teaching in this space. From the start, I've always said this will be through my lens as an ally, someone holding space while centring Aboriginal voices," said Jones.

"When Athena joined, I told her, 'This is your space, not mine.' We're both coordinators, but you're up front, and I am here to support you.

It's not about stepping away from responsibility, but about knowing when to lead and when to step back, without shifting the cultural load."

As universities across Australia reckon with how to embed Indigenous knowledges in meaningful ways, ECU's BlaK Futurism offers one bold answer: honouring the cultural expertise students already carry and building futures together through collaboration and sharing.

[Republished from ECU News.](#)

ENHANCING ACADEMIC READINESS: GRANT SUPPORTS ACCESSIBILITY EXPANSION OF OPEN TEXTBOOK

Congratulations to Liam (Leigh) Frost-Camilleri, who has been awarded a 'wildcard' grant from the CAUL Open Educational Resources (OER) Collective to expand the accessibility of his openly licensed textbook, *The Art of Re-Learning: A Guide to Academic Readiness*.

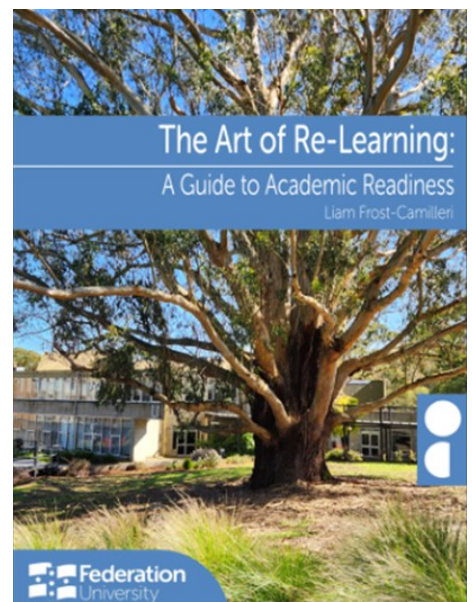
Published in March 2025, this peer-reviewed resource was developed to support Enabling and first year students in their transition to university. With a strong focus on cultivating resilience, managing anxiety and fostering self-efficacy, *The Art of Re-Learning* addresses key aspects of transition often overlooked in more traditional academic texts. Designed for non-traditional learners, the textbook speaks to the lived experiences of students and is written in accessible prose.

Since publication, the book has received almost 2,500 visits, and has been actively used in foundation and Enabling programs. The wildcard grant will now support further development of the resource, including:



Above: Author Liam (Leigh) Frost-Camilleri

- An audio version of the book read by the author (currently underway),
- The inclusion of case studies and visual aids to increase engagement and comprehension, and
- Design refinements to improve accessibility for neurodivergent learners, informed by best practice in inclusive learning.



Above: Front cover of the textbook

The addition of multimodal elements will make *The Art of Re-Learning* one of the few open textbooks specifically tailored diverse learners, offering multiple ways to access the content.

With its approachable tone and practical strategies, this resource is freely available to be adapted or adopted by educators across Enabling and first year programs. It represents a step forward in how we support our students' academic and personal development as they enter higher education.

Access the book here: <https://oercollective.caul.edu.au/art-of-re-learning/>

FROM SETBACKS TO SMILES – HOW OLIVIA ARNOLD FOUND HER PURPOSE IN ORAL HEALTH

For Olivia Arnold, paving the path to find her purpose has been one marked with challenge, soul-searching – and serendipity.

As a current oral health therapist working in rural Queensland, the dedicated and inspired health professional and CQUniversity alumna has seen first-hand what it looks like to overcome barriers and face challenges head on in order to achieve her dreams.

Hailing from Switzerland and immigrating with her parents to Australia at a young age, Olivia grew up surrounded by the vibrant language and hospitality of European culture from her parents' Euro-style restaurant in Cairns. Both chefs by trade, Olivia is the first on her father's side to attain a university degree.

But the journey wasn't easy.

During Olivia's high school years, she encountered bullying that impacted her ability to concentrate, resulting in low marks and a loss of self-esteem. However, it didn't dampen the resilient student's resolve and dream of one day attending university and becoming a primary school teacher; and with her parents' persistent encouragement to complete high school, Olivia achieved enough marks to gain entry into CQUniversity's Bachelor of Primary Education.

"Since a very young age my 'dream job' was to become a primary school teacher," Olivia said.

"I always knew I wanted to help others, work hands-on and contribute to the community."

However, with the pressure and stress of tertiary study along with a decline in health that resulted in hospitalisation, Olivia's university journey came to an abrupt halt.

Searching for reprieve, Olivia threw caution to the wind and took a six-month hiatus with family in Switzerland.

"A year had passed, and I was fit and healthy and had the 'all clear' from the doctors. I decided that I wanted to travel and escape from Australia for a while," Olivia said.

"I reached out to my family in Switzerland and applied for work, and I ended up working and living in Switzerland for six months before returning to Australia.

"Although this experience was great, I still had no official qualification to my name. My parents always strongly encouraged me to get a qualification. At this stage in my life,

I felt a little lost and had no idea what I was going to do with my life. I started to put myself back out in the workplace and began to try and re-spark my passion. I volunteered and completed work experience in several different areas of work from pastry chef to cabinet making, but nothing seemed to spark my interest."

It wasn't until one fateful day when

Olivia's mother happened upon a job advertisement in the local newspaper, that it all changed.

"The advertised position was for a full-time dental assistant traineeship and my initial reaction was very pessimistic, but my mother encouraged me to give it a go and I recall her saying 'you don't know until you try'," Olivia said.

"Let me tell you how wrong I was – within my first hour in the dental clinic I was hooked – it was like love at first sight. This was it, the 'light bulb moment', and the very beginning of my journey back to university."

Thriving in her work and completing her traineeship, Olivia was qualified and worked as a dental assistant for four years – but something was missing.

"I absolutely loved my job, but there was some part of me that said, 'I want more'," Olivia said.

"I wanted to be the clinician; I wanted to be the one providing education for the patient, and I wanted to be promoting minimal intervention and prevention of disease. This is when I discovered Skills for Tertiary Education Preparatory Studies (STEPS) at CQUniversity."



Above: STEPS student, now Oral Health Therapist, Olivia Arnold.

FROM SETBACKS TO SMILES – HOW OLIVIA ARNOLD FOUND HER PURPOSE IN ORAL HEALTH (CONTINUED)

With a goal now to attain a Bachelor of Oral Health, Olivia was determined to push past the barrier of being a ‘mature -aged student’, and after seeking advice from CQU staff in Cairns, Olivia began her STEPS course.

“Once I’ve settled, I will travel for outreach to the surrounding communities of North West Queensland (Cloncurry, Normanton, Doomadgee and Mornington Island),” Olivia said.



Above: Dental assisting was ‘the light bulb moment’ for Olivia, and the catalyst for her journey back to university.

“For the Bachelor of Oral Health, I had to attain a minimum GPA of 6. This translates to at least Distinctions in all subjects,” Olivia explained.

“Initially, I was worried because of my struggles in high school – I never believed I was ‘smart enough’ to attain these grades, but CQU offered so much free academic support and after completing STEPS, I attained a position at CQUniversity in Rockhampton to start my journey of becoming an Oral Health Therapist.

“Three years later I walked across the stage with my mortarboard on my head and my special piece of paper in my hand. Six weeks later I had attained my AHPRA registration that officially recognises me as an Oral Health Therapist – Dental Clinician in Australia.”

Elated, Olivia started her graduate position in February within the public health system in the rural location of Mount Isa, North West Queensland, where she works between the Mount Isa Hospital and a school-based dental van – and her career goals have never looked brighter.

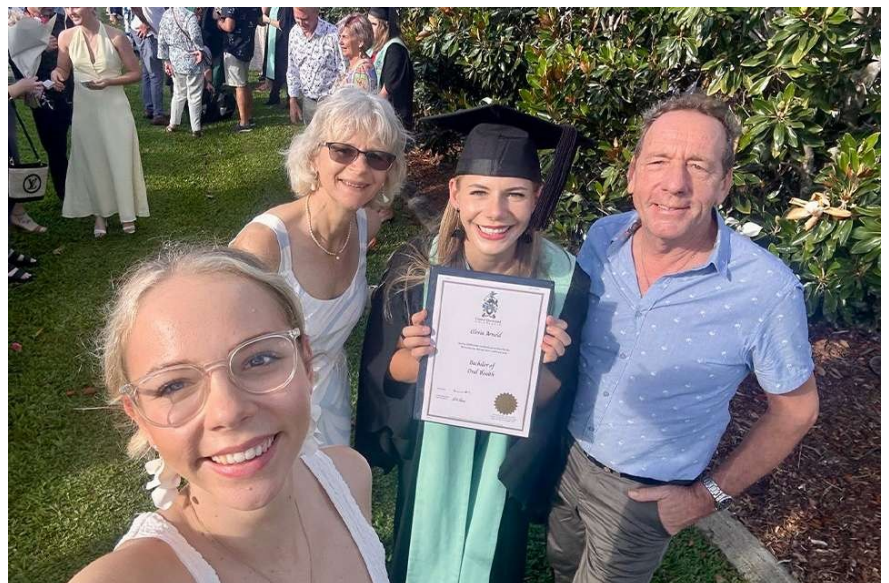
“Long-term, I’d love to open my own private practice, and it’s crossed my mind that perhaps one day I could attain the position of Director of Oral Health Service for the North West Public Health System – I have always wanted to experience working in rural and remote parts of Australia to help contribute to closing the oral health gap.

“I can proudly say that this was all made possible due to a lot of hard work, sacrifice and ongoing support from CQU and the STEPS program – I never thought I’d ever go back to university and attain a bachelor’s degree. STEPS gave me the confidence to apply myself to study at a higher educational level.

“My advice to anyone who wants to achieve a university degree would be whether you’re fresh out of school or have had a family and are classed as a “mature aged student” – then just give it a go! If you really want something you will work for it and you will be supported by STEPS and CQU through every step and hurdle you face along the way.”

By [Sala Mkoka](#), Media Resource Centre, CQU.

Republished from [CQU News](#).



Above: Olivia graduating with a Bachelor of Oral Health.

STAFF SPOTLIGHT: KELLY HART (FEDERATION UNIVERSITY AUSTRALIA)

Q1: How long have you been working in Enabling? (or a misconception) about Enabling education? How did you come to work in Enabling? What were you doing previously?

I began working in Enabling in 2020, not the ideal time to begin! Prior to joining the Enabling team at Federation University, I was teaching EAP at Federation and at Monash University before that, as well as running my own EAL business teaching primary and secondary school students. If we go back far enough, I was a project manager for design companies in China, while also teaching English. Tracing my journey all the way back, I began teaching English in 1998 to fund my studies at university in China.

Q2: What is your current role? Which units/course do you teach?

My official title is 'Scholarly Teaching Fellow – TESOL and Enabling' and right now I'm teaching and coordinating ATSGC1369 Understanding University Learning, which is a fascinating unit because it brings together both Enabling and first-year students who dissect the experience of university transition together. Over the past couple of years, I have also taught in our FASTP1011 Introduction to Tertiary Studies and FASTP1015 Academic Writing units. I find having a window into what 3 of the 4 units are doing really beneficial.

Q3: What is most rewarding in your role? What is the most challenging?

In Enabling I feel fortunate to meet students at a pivotal moment of transition, on the cusp of pursuing their dream, when I can play a role in helping them gain momentum to move forward. I love running into past students in the uni corridors and hearing about the long-term positive impact our course has had on their studies. At the moment, the most challenging thing is helping students navigate their studies successfully in the age of Generative Artificial Intelligence and ensuring they have the skills they need for the changes this brings to study and work in the future.

Q4: How is Enabling different to other roles that you hold or have held previously (education/teaching)?

I see many parallels between Enabling and my previous teaching work. No matter what their age, students want learning to be enjoyable and they sometimes struggle with engagement and motivation. TESOL and Enabling share many commonalities. In TESOL a key component of supporting students to acquire the target language includes highlighting how it integrates with culture, while helping them navigate a new cultural and linguistic identity. Similarly, supporting Enabling students' transition into university also involves a strong focus on connecting the language and culture of academia as they forge their new study identity.

Q5: What do you think is commonly misunderstood

I think the work we are doing is often incorrectly perceived as just teaching basic skills, whereas I believe much of our work with students is around rebuilding their efficacy and their identity as a learner. The psychological side of our work with students and the importance of this aspect of our work seems to be underestimated by some who haven't worked in this field.

Q6: What do you believe makes you a good Enabling educator? What is important to being able to do the job well?

Living in other countries and learning other languages has given me a sense of compassion for anyone experiencing a major transition in their life or feeling out of their depth. Personal insight into learning difficulties through family and friends has been pivotal in informing my perspective too, with a valuable window into dyslexia, dysgraphia, ADHD and autism that has shone a light on just some of the challenges can learners face in their educational journey.

Q7: Do you have any memorable moments during your time in Enabling?

Somewhat like the shiny coloured marbles in Riley's mind on 'Inside Out', my journey in Enabling is a collection of many tiny memorable moments, including brilliant insights from colleagues, feedback from students and aha moments in the classroom. The most memorable moment so far was in semester 1,

2024 when I launched a new assessment task requiring students to engage in a small group discussion. Leading up to the assessment, students and staff were nervous and unsure about this new exam mode. On the day, students came into the room admitting they were nervous and visibly appearing so. Then one by one, as each group finished the task, this sense of relief and elation was very clear among the students. Seeing that same scenario play out over almost 3 days of group discussions, I felt I had visibly witnessed students' self-efficacy take a leap forward in that very moment. So, that was particularly memorable and fascinating to witness a key milestone in their learner identity happen right before my eyes.

Q8: What are your future professional goals (related to Enabling, or other)?

Education and work are changing quickly, particularly with the advent of GenAI, so I want to play a positive role in equipping students for this new world. For me that means not just keeping up but actively taking innovative steps to bring the best to my classroom. I would also like to ensure that my work continues to evolve to better serve students with diverse needs, particularly dyslexia and dysgraphia. Most importantly, I hope I am fortunate enough to continue to be a solid stepping stone to give students a strong foothold from which to launch their dreams.



Above: Kelly Hart.

EXCITING NEWS: BE POSITIVE HEADS TO MIDDLE SCHOOL!

We're thrilled to share that a team from CQUniversity's School of Access Education has been awarded a \$15,000 grant to adapt the highly successful *Be Positive* program for middle school students.

Led by Dr Trixie James, with team members Katrina Johnston, Sara Hof, Ruth O'Neill, and education specialist Dr Karena Menzie-Ballantyne, this exciting project will run from early 2025 through to mid-2026.

The middle school version of *Be Positive* will offer students practical, engaging strategies to reframe how they think about themselves and their learning capacity—helping build confidence,

resilience, and a positive mindset at a critical stage in their education journey.

Congratulations to the team on this inspiring initiative—empowering young learners to thrive!



THE TEMPTATION OF THE SILVER PLATTER: PREVENTING THE SIDESTEP AND NORMALISING THE PRODUCTIVE STRUGGLE

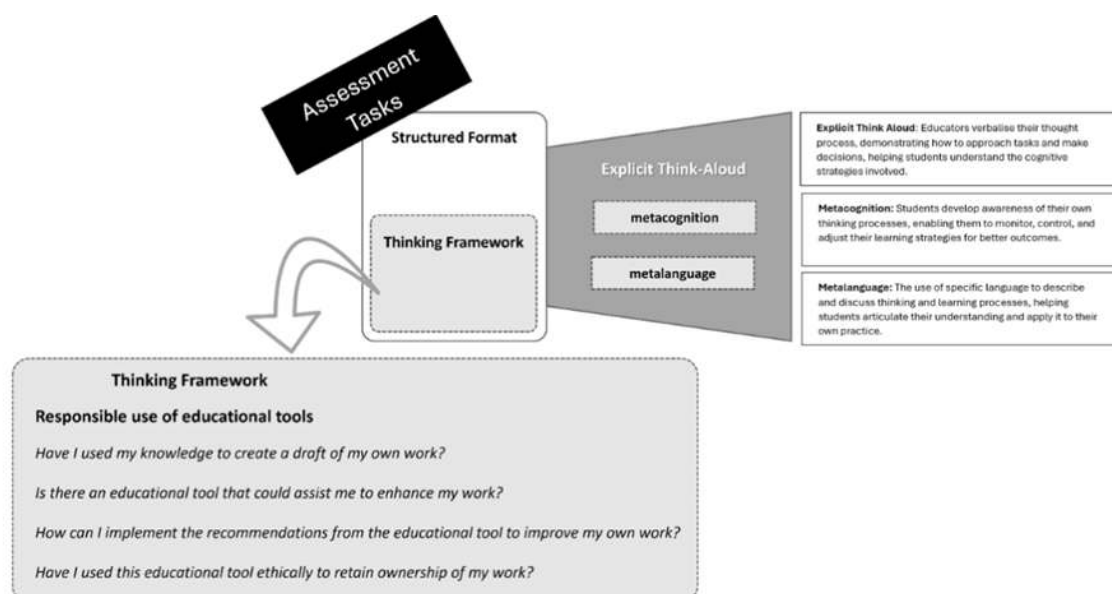
In a time when headlines are filled with concerns about Generative AI (GenAI) diminishing students' critical thinking skills, a new paper offers a refreshing and much-needed perspective.

Introducing the Responsible Use of Educational Tools Thinking Framework, this timely work tackles the growing worry about students' over-reliance on product-oriented tools like GenAI. Rather than dismissing these technologies, the framework empowers students to engage with them purposefully, critically, and ethically, encouraging self-regulation, deep learning, and higher-order thinking.

By helping students embrace the *productive struggle* that's essential for intellectual growth, this paper offers practical guidance and hope for educators navigating the fast-changing digital landscape. A must-read for anyone committed to maintaining the integrity and richness of learning in the age of AI.

By [Dr Trixie James](#),
CQUniversity Australia

Right: Figure from:
James, T., & Griffin,
H. (2025). The temptation of the silver platter: Preventing the sidestep and normalising the productive struggle. *Intelligent Technologies in Education*, Advanced Online Publication.
<https://open-publishing.org/journals/index.php/ited/article/view/1460>



CQUIVERSITY— MELBOURNE CAMPUS: ENGLISH CONVERSATION CLUB BUILDS CONFIDENCE AND COMMUNITY

In Term 1 2025, CQUniversity's Academic Learning Centre (ALC) launched the English Conversation Club at the Melbourne campus to support students' spoken English confidence and cultural understanding. Piloted in response to feedback on practicum challenges, the initiative aimed to create a safe, inclusive, and engaging space for practising everyday communication.

Led by Dr Vicky Chang, the English Conversation Club was a collaborative achievement involving the ALC, academic staff, student representatives, the campus team, library, careers, and student wellbeing services. Each week, the Club featured a themed session with conversation leaders from across the university. Topics ranged from "G'Day Mate: Mastering Aussie Slang" to "Leading the Way: Student Leaders' guide to University Success" and "We Are Hiring: How to Land Your First Job in Melbourne". Sessions were held weekly on campus, with attendance growing steadily from 72 students in Week 1 to a peak of 192 students in Week 11. Across the term, the English Conversation Club engaged over 800 students in total.

Students responded enthusiastically, describing the Club as "supportive and informative," "helpful and friendly," and "a brilliant space" to practise English and meet others. One student shared, "Ms Vicky is very supportive ... seeing her and Mark [the librarian] smiling makes your day."

Another commented,

"The best thing is the English Conversation Club. It helps me gain knowledge and talk with others. Good food and many activities."

Others highlighted how the club "calmed me down," "helped me in school," and provided "a

great source of refreshment after classes." Many expressed a desire for "more interactive sessions," "more games," and "more events," reflecting strong engagement and demand for ongoing opportunities to build communication skills and community.

While the English Conversation Club received a CQU Values Award for its innovation and impact, its success is grounded in the collaborative efforts of teams across the university who worked together to create a welcoming, student-centred space. Building on this momentum, the



By [Dr Vicky Chang](#), ALC Discipline Coordinator (Academic Communication), CQUniversity Australia

Above/left: Photos taken during English Conversation Club

GET INVOLVED: JOIN AN NAEAA SIG!

Are you looking to connect with like-minded colleagues, share ideas, and collaborate on sector-wide initiatives? As a member of NAEAA, you're invited to join one of our 12 Special Interest Groups (SIGs)!

Whether you're interested in research, policy, teaching practice, or institutional challenges, there's a SIG for you. These groups offer a fantastic opportunity to:

- Discuss key issues relevant to your institution
- Collaborate on cross-institutional research

Share insights and innovations in Enabling education

💡 It's easy to get involved! Visit our [SIG webpage](#) to learn more and email the facilitators directly to join.

Let's keep the conversation going — across campuses and across the country.



COMING SOON IN 2025: SPECIAL EDITION ON *FOSTERING INCLUSION IN HIGHER EDUCATION*

We're excited to announce the upcoming special edition of the *Journal of University Teaching and Learning Practice* titled *Fostering Inclusion in Higher Education: Global Approaches to Widening Participation*, set for release in October 2025.

Led by Dr Stephen Miller (Charles Darwin University) and Dr Trixie James (CQUniversity), the editorial team is thrilled with the calibre of submissions received from both national and international contribu-

tors. The edition promises to showcase innovative, impactful approaches to widening participation and advancing equity in higher education across the globe.

Currently in the review and finalisation phase, this special issue is shaping up to be a must-read for educators, researchers, and policy-makers passionate about inclusion and access in tertiary education.

By [Dr Trixie James](#), CQUniversity Australia

SHARE YOUR UNIVERSITY'S ENABLING EDUCATION EVENTS, SUCCESSES AND INNOVATIONS

The NAEAA newsletter focuses on the achievements of students and staff in our sector, and on innovations that continue to foster the ongoing development of Enabling education. The newsletter is published twice a year. If you have a story you would like to include in the next edition, please contact admin@Enablingeducators.org. We would love to hear about your programs, projects, research, students and educators.

NAEEA MEMBERSHIP 2025

Visit the website for details at <https://Enablingeducators.org/> or contact the NAEAA Executive at admin@Enablingeducators.org for details about your membership. Please renew your membership for the 2025 calendar year by 1 July 2025.

Members receive many perks including discounted conference registration rates and opportunities to apply for small grants.

'INVITE A FRIEND'

If you have a colleague who is interested in Enabling education but is not yet a NAEAA member, please feel free to share this newsletter with them. We would love to welcome new members.

ABOUT NAEAA

The National Association of Enabling Educators of Australia represents Enabling educators and practitioners from across the country for the purpose of collaborating on issues of common interest and relevance to enable education and the students whose lives are changed through access to tertiary education.



For more information about the Association, contact admin@Enablingeducators.org or visit our website at <https://Enablingeducators.org/>

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