

News for Enabling Educators

NAEEA CHAIRPERSON'S MESSAGE

Dear Enabling Colleagues

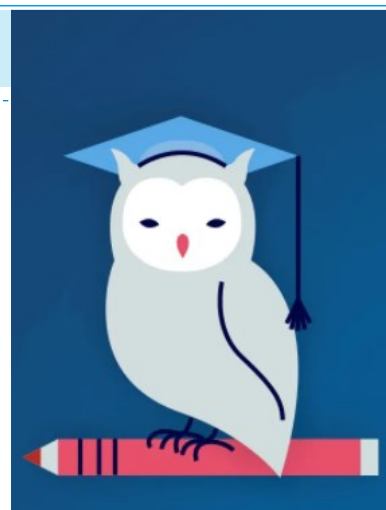
I introduced our NAEEA newsletter in June 2020 by acknowledging what a different world we found ourselves living in, not expecting to have commenced the academic year in a completely unplanned and unimaginable pandemic world. I begin this communication having hoped we would have been beyond the challenge of COVID-19, a hope that unfortunately has not been realised. On reflection however, we have much to be grateful for and proud of in our world of Enabling education in Australia. As educators, alongside our students, we seem to have managed the 'pivot' required to successfully enter the online world of education, adjusting to the new learning and teaching environment in such a short period of time and working tirelessly to improve the online delivery as the academic year progressed. Sadly, we have lost some folk along the way but I live in hope of these students availing themselves of the Enabling opportunity at a later date as our door is always open.

Each day as we navigate the 'new normal' which is forever changing, we reflect on, and admire the strength of character our students display as they determinedly focus on their aim of completing their Enabling study as a pathway to the degree of choice. Many of these students face serious personal and financial challenges in staying on track to achieving an improved life through education and we salute them for their endurance. I acknowledge the additional effort you as lecturers, tutors and administrators have expended over this extended period of time, as for many, it has been your continued support that has ensured students were retained and supported. You have provided the connectedness and sense of belonging that has made the difference to students and their decision to continue studying.

Although COVID-19 remained with us and demanded much attention throughout 2021, the NAEEA Executive did not lose sight of the need to promote our association and the importance of Enabling education within Australia. A keen focus for the NAEEA Executive in 2021 was the AQF Review. As an Executive, we were pleased to be involved in the consultation process post the AQF Review recommendations being released in late 2019 and now eagerly await the finalisation of this review as the way forward for Enabling. As Chair of NAEEA, I and other Executive members participated in interviews and focus groups to consider Recommendations 4 and 10, two of the 21 AQF Review recommendations that relate to Enabling education. Through this opportunity, I am confident we were able to cement the true value of Enabling in the minds of the consultants and those who will be advising Ministers, ably assisted by the student voice in testimonials the NAEEA Executive members gathered. As we know, our student stories of success speak volumes!

AQF Recommendation 4 proposes the development of a framework to provide shared language and understanding of a set of general capabilities so that educators, trainers, and employers can support their development and application in education, training, and employment. Recommendation 10 proposes the development of an AQF qualification type for domestic post-secondary Enabling programs, once common learning outcomes

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SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST

- Recent developments in Enabling education in Australia
- Celebrate the success of our students
- Innovative programs
- Share your Enabling education research with your colleagues

NAEEA Chairperson's message (continued from page 1)

for Enabling programs have been developed to ensure learning outcomes are consistent and to enable their portability between institutions. Through collaboration across providers, the NAEEA Executive group established common learning outcomes in early 2020 and submitted the document to DESE for consideration. The NAEEA document has been subsequently used in the consultation process for implementation of recommendations.

Changes to the AQF requires agreement from Commonwealth, State and Territory Education and Skills Ministers so a cross-jurisdictional working group was established to coordinate advice to Ministers on changes required to implement AQF. As of mid-November 2021, advice is that the working group was considering findings from the consultants engaged to socialise the recommendations and is expected to provide advice to ministers on recommendations in the first half of 2022. And... so we wait!

A highlight for the year was NAEEA's involvement in WAHED week where we once again witnessed the power of the student voice as a representative number from providers very bravely shared their stories of disadvantage, and at times utter despair, having been erased through the opportunity to study an Enabling program. I would challenge any participant in the

WAHED event hosted by the University of Southern Queensland to question the value of Enabling after hearing these students present. It is so true... as providers of Enabling education, we do change lives for the better. We have done so across Australia for three decades now which equates to thousands of lives benefiting from the existence of Enabling programs. Across the national footprint, whilst we await further decisions from the Department on the future of Enabling, we will continue to provide the supportive and inclusive study environments as we have done so to date. I wish you well in your continued delivery of quality education to our very deserving students.

In closing, on behalf of the Executive team, I wish you and your loved ones a fabulous festive season. We continue to be impacted by COVID-19 in aspects of our lives so please stay safe and well amidst the continued challenge the pandemic presents, knowing you are making such a difference to many people's lives through your involvement in the world of Enabling education.

Many regards

Karen Seary
NAEEA Chairperson

GROWING RECOGNITION OF ENABLING EDUCATION

Recent media publications with a focus on Enabling education reflect an increased understanding of the important role the sector plays within higher education.

The Open Foundation Program at the University of Newcastle was a finalist in the *Australian Financial Review* Higher Education Awards for Opportunity and Inclusion. In a follow up opinion piece in this national publication, "Open Foundation puts students at the core of curriculum and teaching", Dr Anna Bennett discusses the dilemma of providing open access to Enabling programs. She also emphasizes the broad educational and social benefits of Enabling programs. See <https://www.afr.com/work-and-careers/education/open-foundation-puts-students-at-the-core-of-curriculum-and-teaching-20211101-p594yf>

'Enabling education has provided many students... the transformative opportunity to access higher education.' (Dr Pranita Anand)

Enabling education has also been the focus of recent articles published in the *Campus Morning Mail*. "Empowering Enabling programs" by Dr Pranita Anand recognizes the importance of not only providing access to higher education, but ensuring students are well

prepared and supported. See <https://campusmorningmail.com.au/news/empowering-enabling-programmes/>

Dr Suzi Syme and Dr Liz Goode focus on the impact of SCU's Transition to Uni program in their *Campus Morning Mail* article, "Transition to Uni program takes the pressure off Year 12's". See <https://campusmorningmail.com.au/news/transition-to-uni-programme-takes-the-pressure-off-year-12s/>

Following the publication of their article in HERD, which can be found on the NAEEA website under Resources: [Transition, Success and Retention](#), Suzi Syme, Thomas Roche, Liz Goode and Erin Crandon published an article titled "Bridging programs transform students' lives—they even go on to outperform others at uni" in *The Conversation*. This article foregrounds the student voice, and showcases five good reasons to support Enabling education. The students' experiences shine through as moving tributes to the power of enabling education to transform and improve their lives and those around them to create intergenerational change. See <https://theconversation.com/bridging-programs-transform-students-lives-they-even-go-on-to-outperform-others-at-uni-171721>

Further collaboration among these authors has resulted in another publication in the newly formed [SCU Scholarship of Learning and Teaching Paper Series](#) where they present findings from a study evaluating the new 6-week model at SCU.

CELEBRATING WORLD ACCESS TO HIGHER EDUCATION DAY

World Access to Higher Education Day, now in its fourth year, is a global initiative focused on addressing inequity in access and student success in higher education. WAHED is particularly significant for Enabling education because of a shared vision of a fair, socially just and inclusive university sector.

This year, the NAEAA celebrated WAHED through a shared event, hosted online by the University of Southern Queensland and supported by the Queensland chapter of the Equity Practitioners in Higher Education Australasia Association (EPHEA). The event was attended by staff and students from universities across the country.

USQ Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) Professor Karen Nelson welcomed participants and invited them to celebrate the transformational role of higher education in Australia and beyond. Keynote speaker, Karen Seary, NAEAA Chairperson and Associate Dean of the School of Access Education, Central Queensland University, spoke of the



Amani Borghoul completed the Academic Communication Skills Program at USQ College and is now undertaking a Bachelor of Biomedical Sciences.

From 2001 to 2019, over 300 000 students have enrolled in an Enabling education at an Australian university.

historic significance of Enabling education in Australia, and of continued growth in demand for these programs. From 2001 to 2019, over 300 000 students have enrolled in an Enabling education at an Australian university. As such, programs make a substantial contribution to Australia's widening participation agenda.

Karen stressed Enabling programs brought many benefits, including improved long term economic outcomes for students and increased diversity and growth at an institutional level.

Programs also contributed significant value to communities, often having a ripple effect through families and local organisations and workplaces.

The transformative power of Enabling education for individual students was a key feature of the event, which focused on the student voice and the often life changing impact of study. Students from a wide range of Australian university Enabling programs shared their powerful stories, creating an inspiring narrative attesting to the contribution these programs make as we strive for greater equity in higher education.

Former USQ College student Amani Borghoul noted that "WAHED is a day where people around the world share their successful stories of getting into university and how impossible it seemed."

Amani reflected on the doubts many students had about their ability to succeed at university and had this advice for those considering further study: "So, when you sit and say to yourself 'I am not good enough', rethink and be brave and say 'I can and I will'.

For more information about this event, see <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nwe2YwVFsXM> and <https://www.usq.edu.au/news/2021/11/power-of-higher-education>

More information about WAHED can be accessed at <https://worldaccesshe.com/>. The combined NCSEHE and EPHEA WAHED event is available through a recording available at <https://www.ncsehe.edu.au/ncsehe-ephea-world-access-higher-education-day-wahed2021/>



Karen Seary, NAEAA Chairperson and Associate Dean of the School of Access Education, Central Queensland University.

CURTIN'S UNIREADY ENABLING PROGRAM WINS VC'S AWARD

The UniReady team at Curtin University was recently acknowledged for the outstanding work they have done in the UniReady in Schools program, taking out the VC's award for Professional Staff in recognition of outstanding achievements in excellence in collaboration.

The program began in 2018 and has now grown to include 46 schools in Western Australia with more to start next year. What began as an idea initiated by schools for the university, has expanded to schools covering metropolitan and regional areas. UniReady works collaboratively with each school involved and supports teachers who deliver the material and assess the program. The rigour of the program is maintained through training and extensive moderation practices.

Students who take this program are often those who have fallen through the cracks in the high school system and are capable of entering university but for one reason or another don't have the opportunity at their school. The reasons are varied but include health issues, lack of school resource to offer full ATAR courses and change of mind.

'Hundreds of students have chosen this pathway.'

Students who complete through the school system can then go on to apply for an undergraduate course following the same rules of eligibility as the regular UniReady students. The units of study in the UniReady in schools program are also endorsed

through the School Curriculum and Standards Authority (SCSA) and contribute to the students' Western Australian Certificate of Education (WACE)

Hundreds of students have now chosen this pathway and have moved into an undergraduate program igniting in them a keen interest in Higher Education that they didn't previously have or didn't have the confidence to feel they could be a part of.

'This has been a very positive experience'

Feedback from school staff, parents and students is overwhelmingly positive:

"I feel the UniReady program has provided a positive impact by installing confidence in my daughter that she has the ability to succeed at University by providing this program."

"I hope Curtin and other universities continue to offer alternate pathways to university. This has been a very positive experience for my daughter and our family."

But it extends beyond changes in school students and includes staff who work in the schools to deliver the licenced program. They have also been re engaged with a different learning environment that has set some of them on a path to their own further study.

By the [UniReady Team](#), Curtin University, Western Australia.



The award winning UniReady team at Curtin University, Western Australia.

FEDERATION UNIVERSITY'S FAST PROGRAM PROVIDES A HEAD START: KAREN'S STORY



Karen Seedsman, Federation University

Melbourne was enjoying a relatively relaxed phase of the Covid pandemic when I decided to enrol in the FAST program. With kids back at school and easing restrictions, I firmly believed a return to everyday life was within reach. Experiencing yet another lockdown just as the FAST program began was devastating. I hadn't considered the need to help my primary school-aged children with their remote learning while studying online myself. Juggling the commitments of family life and study was undoubtedly more difficult than I had planned. And being in my early forties, I was already nervous about "fitting in". However, the support and understanding from my FAST lecturers and fellow students made all the difference. The pandemic was a shared experience to which we could all relate. As a result, Covid often became a topic of discussion in tutorials. These conversations not only practised our newly developing critical thinking skills but provided a valuable outlet to connect and share the difficulties we all faced living with Covid-19. Not to mention the much-needed laugh we all enjoyed whenever someone's child, partner or pet made an unexpected appearance in our online classes.

When I first enrolled in the FAST program, I expected it to be a time-filler while waiting for my Bachelor of Nursing degree to begin in 2022. But instead, I found myself completely in awe of the fantastic opportunity I was undertaking. As well as academic writing and basic mathematics, the course covered topics aimed at helping students feel confident and prepared for university study. However, I found many aspects of the program were also highly valuable life skills. Part of the curriculum included learning why many students find first-year university particularly challenging. As a teenager who dropped out of tertiary study within the first semester, I had always believed that I failed because I lacked the intelligence for tertiary success. In reality, I discovered many contributing factors were responsible for my absence of achievement, none of which had anything to do with book smarts or academic worthiness.

'Many aspects of the program were also highly valuable life skills.'

Understanding my first university experience from a new perspective did more than just prepare me for returning to study; it helped change how I see myself as a person. I have learnt so much of benefit, both academically and personally. I now feel supremely confident in my ability to learn and am excited at the opportunities to come, beliefs I would never have realised had it not been for the FAST program. The FAST program provides such a head start to study for a degree. I can't recommend it highly enough!



For Karen, the COVID-19 pandemic lockdowns meant managing her own and her children's remote learning.

By **Karen Seedman**, Federation University Bachelor of Nursing student and former student of the FAST program.

SIX WEEKS OF STUDY VERSUS 12 WEEKS OF STUDY: Does it matter in terms of students' psychological wellbeing?

Enabling educators know and understand that studying at university can be a transformative experience for many students (Syme et al., 2021); however, it can also be a stressful experience for students (Nieuwoudt, 2021). Not all students are managing the “normal” stresses of university life and may feel depressed, anxious and stressed (Crawford, 2021). Indeed, research has shown that university students experience rates of psychological distress at higher rates than the general population. High psychological distress is associated with reduced academic performance, but it can also lead to a lower quality of life and increased morbidity and mortality.

A Southern Cross University research project investigated the psychological wellbeing of students enrolled in the Preparing for Success Program (PSP; an enabling program)¹. Data were collected in Session 1, 2019 using the Depression, Anxiety, and Stress Scale – 21 Items (DASS-21). The findings from Session 1, 2019 indicated that the vast majority of participating students reported elevated distress levels, with 95% of students experiencing above normal levels of depression, anxiety, and stress.

During 2020 the team of enabling educators redesigned the PSP curriculum to transition to the Southern Cross Model, a new 6-week delivery model to replace the 12-week delivery model. The Southern Cross Model consists of self-access learning (6 online modules with media-rich, interactive, and responsive activities), active class experiences (3 hours per week), and scaffolded authentic assessments. Students are enrolled in 1 – 2 units during a study period, instead of up to four different units during a session.

Not all students are managing the “normal” stresses of university life and may feel depressed, anxious and stressed.

In Study Period 2, 2021, the research study was replicated to investigate the impact of the Southern Cross Model on PSP students' psychological wellbeing. Much lower levels of psychological distress were reported in the study period compared to the session. More than half of the participating students (54%) in Study Period 2, 2021 had normal levels of depression and anxiety. This is a great improvement compared to Session 1, 2019; when all students had above normal levels of depression and anxiety. In Study period 2, 2021, 46% of participating students had normal levels of stress; compared to only 5% in Session 1, 2019.

This initial survey data suggests that students may be less depressed, anxious, and stressed when focusing on 1 – 2 different units of study at the same time for 6 weeks, instead of up to four different units of study for 12 weeks. The self-accessed online learning, active class experiences, and scaffolded authentic assessments of the Southern Cross Model may help students to manage the “normal” stresses of university life.

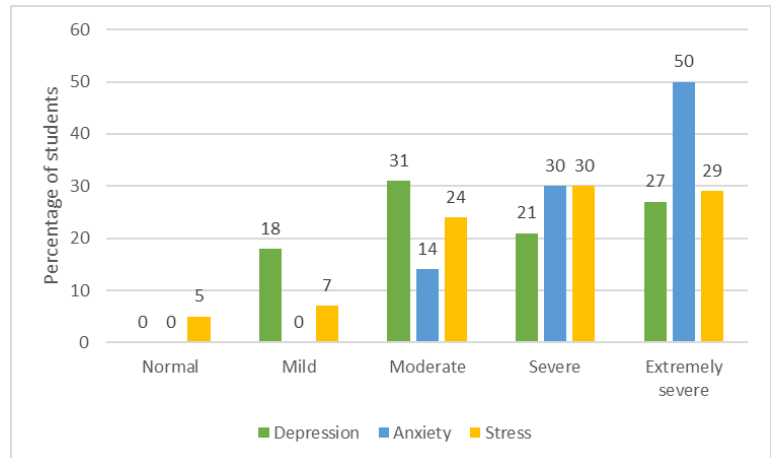
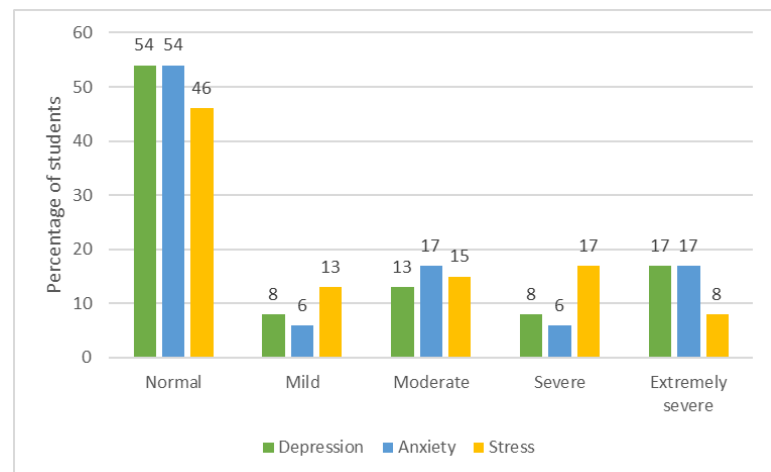


Figure 1

The severity of students' depression, anxiety, and stress as measured by the DASS-21 in Session 1, 2019 (N = 92)

Figure 2

The severity of students' depression, anxiety, and stress as measured by the DASS-21 in Study Period 2, 2021 (N = 54)



by Dr Johanna Nieuwoudt from Southern Cross University.

References

- Crawford, N. (2021). “On the radar”: Supporting the mental wellbeing of mature-aged students in regional and remote Australia. *National Centre for Student Equity in Higher Education*. <https://www.ncsehe.edu.au/publications/nicole-crawford-equity-fellowship-mental-wellbeing-mature-students-regional-remote-australia/>
- Nieuwoudt, J. E. (2021). Psychological distress among students in enabling education: An exploratory study. *Australian Journal of Adult Learning*, 61(1), 6-25. <https://ajal.net.au/downloads/psychological-distress-among-students-in-enabling-education-an-exploratory-study/>
- Syme, S., Roche, T., Goode, L., & Crandon, E. (in press). Transforming lives: The power of an Australian enabling program. *Higher Education Research & Development*.

Footnotes

1. Part of a research project investigating students' psychological wellbeing, grit, and time use.

SPEAKING FOR OURSELVES

In June, the journal *International Studies in Widening Participation* (now retitled *Critical Explorations of Equity in Higher Education*) published a [Special Issue](#) dedicated to enabling educators. The purpose of the issue was to create a space for enabling educators to share their knowledge, experience and identities. The editors sought to create a platform for voices that often remain unheard within the academy, while bringing the enabling educator into the enabling literature as a whole person, rather than as a discrete set of teaching strategies or skill sets.

The papers reveal a diversity among enabling educators that in many ways parallels the diversity of their students. Drawing on methodologies such as autoethnography, narrative inquiry and self-reflexive research, the contributors lay bare the human dimensions of working in enabling education in the contemporary academy.

Among the unique voices in the issue are:

- a mature-age woman from a working-class background who began her university journey as an enabling student and continued it as an enabling educator ([Johnston, 2021](#));
- a burnt-out high school teacher who found a new lease of life in teaching enabling students ([Hogg, 2021](#));
- an Italian migrant with a passion for Australian fauna who found her place teaching enabling students ([Santamaria & Priest, 2021](#));
- a mathematics lecturer who came to realise that acknowledging her sexual identity as part of her professional identity would enable her to create a welcoming and inclusive space in the enabling classroom ([Mann, 2021](#));
- a dedicated career-educator who observed significant

Katrina Johnston (below) and Dr Gemma Mann (right) make important contributions to Enabling education publications through the latest edition of Access: Critical Explorations of Equity in Higher Education.



changes in enabling education over a twenty-year period which led her to question her practice ([Willans, 2021](#)).

Other papers explored experiences that academics of all stripes will recognise, but which have a particular valence in the enabling context:

- the emotional labour involved in marking when the need to give useful and rigorous feedback must be balanced with building a non-traditional student's fragile confidence ([Henderson-Brooks, 2021](#))
- the vulnerability of the academic in an institutional context that can be hostile, and the risks and rewards associated with embracing that vulnerability ([McDougall, 2021](#))
- the conflicts that emerge for educators who define themselves as 'caring' people in a job where caring is considered not only a necessary qualification but also a form of pedagogy ([Johnston et al., 2021](#))
- the struggle with imposter syndrome as part of self-transformation in an academic's journey ([James, 2021](#)).

Collectively, these papers deepen and complicate our knowledge of enabling educators and thus of enabling education, raising questions and issues that offer rich fields for future research.



Priest, A. & McDougall, J. (Eds.). 2021. Speaking for Ourselves. *International Studies in Widening Participation* [Special Issue], vol. 8, no. 1. <https://novaajs.newcastle.edu.au/ceehe/>



ACCELERATED ENTRY PATHWAY PROGRAM (AEPP)- ENABLING YEAR 12 STUDENTS

The University of Southern Queensland (USQ) College has offered HEPPP supported intensive on-campus Enabling pathways for Year 12 leavers since the first trial of the Tertiary Preparation Program Intensive Pathway (TPPIP) at the Toowoomba campus in Semester 3, 2012 with 20 students.

Since then, TPPIP has transformed into the Accelerated Entry Pathway Program (AEPP) and is run at both the USQ Toowoomba and Springfield campuses. Since its inception, 367 students have completed the program, with 73 students then enrolling into USQ's Tertiary Preparation Program and 246 students being offered places into a USQ undergraduate degree (not including offers to continue into higher education at another university).

Consistently, approximately 40% of AEPP students each year are the first in their family to attend university. Other HEPPP targeted equity groups are overrepresented in the program. In 2019, 9.5% of students enrolled in the program were from the top 100 most socio-economically disadvantaged areas in Queensland, a further 38.1% of that cohort were in the top 600 most socio-economic disadvantaged areas in Queensland. Figure 1 demonstrates a typical cohort of AEPP students at both Springfield and Toowoomba campuses, with Springfield having the highest percentage of females who were also first in family to attend university.

AEPP provides Year 12 school leavers with a fee free pathway which aims to reduce academic, financial, cultural, geographic and social barriers to accessing higher education by minimising education disparities associated with underlying disadvantage. It is an intensive Enabling program aimed at improving their access to and preparation for undergraduate study. The program is offered in two intensive on-campus residential blocks, including two weeks in both December and in January. It consists of two courses; *AEP1111 Transitioning to University* and *AEP1112 Applied Academic Literacies*.

AEP1112 Applied Academic Literacies seeks to address the academic disadvantage which can be experienced by students from



Students undertake activities to help them enjoy their transition into on-campus university life.

HEPPP targeted groups. This course addresses unsatisfactory educational experiences and focuses on academic requirements that are central to successful university study, specifically academic literacies, including academic communication, critical literacy, digital literacy and numeracy skills.

AEP1111 Transition to University seeks to address the lack of knowledge under-represented equity groups have about university processes, protocols and practices which is crucial to successful transition to an undergraduate program. This course provides a comprehensive introduction to university life, which positively impacts students sense of belonging and ultimately helps them succeed in higher education.

The program includes career development sessions which helps to reduce attrition in undergraduate programs due to a poor match between undergraduate program choices and career expectations of students. Extra-curricular and social activities help foster student confidence in forging strong ties within the university. Free on-campus accommodation is provided for students from rural and remote locations or other regional areas removed from USQ campuses. This helps overcome the emotional, social and financial challenges associated with moving for study which can prove prohibitive for many young people leaving home for the first time.

Continuous evaluation of student feedback has led to high reported levels of student satisfaction with the program with 98.4% rating the program as Good or Excellent.

By **Dr Jenny Spence**, Lecturer, University of Southern Queensland College.

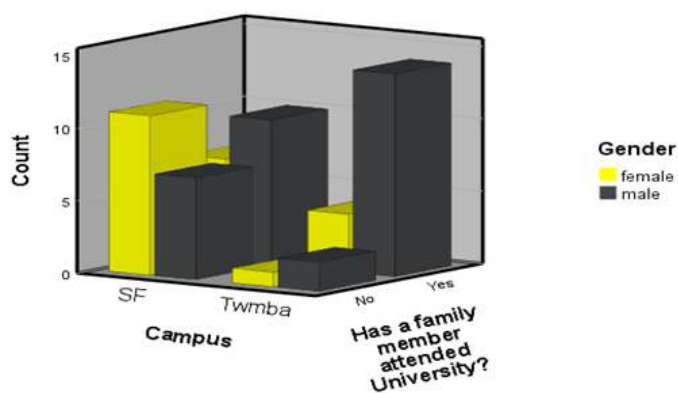


Figure 1: A typical cohort of AEPP students across both the Springfield and Toowoomba USQ campuses.

UNIVERSITY OF TASMANIA TRANSFORMING LIVES: ADRIAN'S STORY

My name is Adrian, and I am a student at the University of Tasmania. I have just gone through the University Preparation Program (UPP) in 2021. I entered the program because I wanted to be able to make the most of my time at university. Overall, I found the experience to be great. The UPP had a practical focus, teaching all sorts of useful things such as evaluating data, determining a source's reliability, how and where to research information, and how to write academically. There were even pragmatic units such as Learning at University where we explored a myriad of things to expect as a student at university and discuss strategies for how best to deal with them.



Adrian Smith, University of Tasmania.

‘Get a head start on a degree and really develop a skillset conducive to success at university.’

I am 42 years old, the father of three young children, and my education before this year only went as far as year 10 in high school. Studying at university has certainly been a challenge. Having made it through the year goes to illustrate how accessible this learning is. If I can do this, then anyone can. I recommend to anyone considering tertiary education to go through the UPP in order to get a head start on a degree and really develop a skillset conducive to success at university. I am at university because I believe that Philosophy is one of the most important, yet overlooked disciplines there is. I plan to learn as much about Philosophy as I can and then use that knowledge to improve the world around me.

More information about the University Preparation Program offered by the University of Tasmania is available on the university website at <https://www.utas.edu.au/courses/university-college/courses/eod-university-preparation-program>

By **Adrian Smith**, former University Preparation Program (UPP) student at the University of Tasmania.

NAEEA WEBINARS

The NAEEA webinar series continues to be popular with educators working in Enabling classrooms. Recent events have included a presentation by Dr Suzi Syme and Dr Liz Goode exploring the key learnings and initial findings of Southern Cross University's move to a six week block teaching model.

The first session of the Research Development and Collaboration Special Interest Group for 2021 attracted much interest. This event was facilitated by Dr Anna Bennett and Dr Jo Hanley from the University of Newcastle.

“Educative culture of Academic Integrity” was presented by Dr Anthea Fudge, Tamra Ulpen and Dr Snjezana Bilic of the University of South Australia. This webinar explored the educative approaches to Academic Integrity that have been developed and deployed at the UniSA College.

Recordings of previous webinars are available through the NAEEA YouTube channel at <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC5qNsDVHSvdW4uQB-CO26Xfw>

Many thanks to webinar Chairs, particularly Dr Pranit Anand.

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

The NAEEA 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.

REFLECTIONS OF A RETIRING ENABLING EDUCATOR: SUE'S STORY

Sue Sharp is a senior lecturer and long term coordinator of Enabling and pathway programs at Edith Cowan University. On the eve of her retirement, Sue reflects on her experiences and provides valuable insights into the work of Enabling educators.

I have coordinated the Edith Cowan University ECU UniPrep and Undergraduate Certificate of Higher Education programs for the past 11 years. Twenty years of previous teaching experience in early childhood, primary, secondary and tertiary education I can gratefully say, led me to the final decade of my career in Enabling Education.

'Enabling education is not work that can be done by individuals, it requires a commitment from a team.'

When I consider the decades of teaching experience, working with, and influenced by wonderful colleagues and amazing mentors, my reflection starts with the core set of values and principles that made the transition to enabling education very easy. Sharing these with a teaching team that understand, when students feel comfortable, confident and connected, their engagement improves, and their chances of success improve. Working with such colleagues who are excellent and dedicated practitioners with high levels of ethic of care, has made my work in enabling education so personally satisfying.

I have learnt that enabling education is not work that can be done by individuals, it requires a commitment from a team of academics, student support and success staff, sessional tutors and professional staff. Common language, shared visions of student potential, understanding that same is not always equal and that students in this transition to higher education require greater supports and flexibilities to achieve goals that many themselves, do not 'at first' believe can be attained. In short, it is not just the curriculum that supports or drives Enabling Education. We know from recent national benchmarking projects that curriculum and courses can vary greatly across universities. What is not surprising to enabling educators is, that despite this the student experience is so similarly positive.

For Enabling Educators although the 'What' (curriculum) is important, it is the 'How' and the 'Why', that are as or even more important ingredients to ensure best outcomes for our students. At ECU in our University Preparation Course and more recently the Undergraduate Certificate of Higher Education, cohesion, coherence and connectedness



Sue Sharp has made a significant contribution to Enabling education in Australia through her work at Edith Cowan University in Western Australia.

are central principles guiding course leadership style, design, staff-student communication and collaborative teaching and learning approaches. These principles involve a commitment to building relationships, engaging students in their learning, and developing active, independent and reflective learners. In common with most enabling programs this is done in an environment that celebrates and supports diversity and develops a strong sense of belonging and collaboration. I hope that governments of the future understand, as do our colleagues in the undergraduate courses our students transition to and as do students themselves understand, the enormous opportunities, value add and equity that enabling programs provide.

'We all know and understand the inspiration and magic that happens when our students' lives are transformed by opportunity and education.'

My final reflection is a paraphrase from a email from a dear friend and former colleague Dr John O'Rourke who in a comment on our time working together in enabling education said "because of our connections we changed people's livesand in years to come these people will never know that it was these sparks firing and connecting that made all the difference to them and those around them". That sums up my feelings about the wonderful time I have had with ECU staff, colleagues from other universities around Australia and most importantly the students we work in Enabling Education. We all know and understand the inspiration and magic that happens when our students' lives are transformed by opportunity and education.

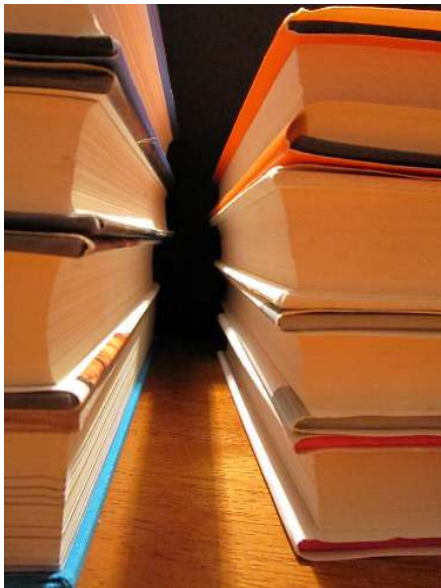
By Sue Sharp, Senior Lecturer, Edith Cowan University.

A SIGNIFICANT CONTRIBUTION

Sue Sharp's career at Edith Cowan University in both the education and Enabling education sectors, and her work in schools reflects her outstanding commitment to student development and the provision of quality programs. In particular, as a Senior Lecturer, Sue has played a pivotal role in Enabling education as the coordinator of UniPrep, one of Australia's largest Enabling programs. She has undertaken a multitude of other leadership roles at ECU, and has been the recipient of multiple awards for outstanding achievements in teaching and learning.

Sue has an extensive research history, with publications in education and Enabling education. She has been a regular presenter at conferences, and has generously shared her knowledge and expertise with her colleagues and the broader higher education community. Her impact on both educators and students will have a lasting and positive legacy.

Sue exemplifies the qualities of a true Enabling educator.



TRANSFORMING LIVES: The power of an Australian Enabling program

All my kids (one of whom also completed the program) except my youngest (year 12) now have university education and fulfilling careers as well. Study at home became the norm. (Mark commenting on intergenerational change via the enabling program)

We are excited to share with you our recent publication in HERD entitled: Transforming Lives: the power of an Australian enabling program at

<https://doi.org/10.1080/07294360.2021.1990222>

‘It changes your whole life when you’ve got a career that you love’

The study examined the impact of our 12-week enabling Preparing for Success Program (PSP), underpinned by a critical pedagogy, on students’ academic and later professional success. We report on findings from focus groups that capture student voice and experience as well as quantitative data that compare the academic achievement of enabling and non-enabling students. Students who completed the PSP enabling program had higher success rates, grade point averages, and retention rates than their non-enabling peers over a six- year period. Student comments from the focus groups are powerful testimonies to the power of the enabling program to transform lives. Aimee, now studying to be teacher, reflected:

“It was amazing to be using my brain again after four years of mindlessly scrubbing toilets... I gained enough confidence and enough understanding of what being at uni is like that I was able to get into the degree this year and I am doing well...I feel like I have an actual chance at a career now”.

Another ex-PSP student, Sofia, now a nurse, commented:

“[The program] changes your perspective on how good you are at studying. And how able you are to actually achieve that goal of getting a degree, so you can change your career and ultimately it changes your whole life when you’ve got a career that you love”.

Together, the data present a compelling picture of the transformative power of an enabling program to facilitate student academic success and empower them to overcome limiting beliefs and realise their dreams to achieve hitherto unimaginable careers.

By Suzi Syme, Thomas Roche, Liz Goode and Erin Crandon, Southern Cross University

SHARE YOUR WORK WITH NAEAA COLLEAGUES

The NAEAA website continues to evolve and includes a resources tab which features published works by Association members.

Recent additions include:

Jarvis, L. (2021). Try before you buy: using enabling programs to negotiate the risks of higher education. *Australian Journal of Adult Learning*, 61(1).

<https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/try-before-you-buy-using-enabling-programs/docview/2542474727/se-2?accountid=14647>

Syme, S., Roche, T., Goode, E., & Crandon, E. (2021). Transforming lives: the power of an Australian enabling education. *Higher Education Research & Development*, 1-15.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/07294360.2021.1990222>

Nieuwoudt, J. (2021). Psychological distress among students in enabling education: An exploratory study. *Australian Journal of Adult Learning*, 61(1). 6-25. <http://ezproxy.usq.edu.au/login?url=https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=anh&AN=150689088&site=ehost-live>

Further publications can be found on the NAEAA website under the Resources tab. See <https://enablingeducators.org/resources-list/>

If you would like to have your publications included, please contact admin@enablingeducators.org to request details.

NAEAA EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE ELECTIONS

The NAEAA was formed in 2012 to advocate for wider access and successful participation in higher education for people from under-represented groups. The major mechanism through which this aim is pursued is the development and promotion of Enabling education across Australia. The NAEAA Executive Committee, along with many active Association members have worked to support fellow educators through the sharing of practice, through collegial networking, and through growing research outputs in the sector.

The Executive Committee is made up of ten members, along with representatives of our fellow organisation, the Foundation and Bridging Educators New Zealand (FABENZ). Members serve two terms, and each year, usually five Committee positions become vacant and elections are held. In 2022, elections will be held in January and all financial NAEAA members are encouraged to nominate for these positions. The outgoing Committee members are also able to nominate.

The Committee meets online every six weeks, and members undertake a range of tasks including maintaining the website, assembling newsletters, organising webinars and other communication, supporting special interest groups and communities of practice, advocating at institutional and government levels, distributing information to members, and, importantly, organising the biennial conference.

Information about the election will be distributed early in 2022, so please consider nominating for a position on the Committee. This is an important time for Enabling education in Australia, and a strong representative organisation is vital to help us support our students.

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN QUEENSLAND: UNLOCKING THE FUTURE

The University of Southern Queensland recognises that everyone should have the opportunity to access higher education. As part of this commitment to equity, USQ is the largest provider of university education in Australian correctional centres. Since 2012, the University has enrolled over 5 000 incarcerated students in more than 12 000 courses. Through the implementation of the University's Incarcerated Student Strategy, established in 2016, this work is ongoing and demand continues to increase.

Rapid changes in higher education and the move to digital platforms to deliver programs represented a significant challenge to the sustainable provision of education in correctional centres. The University developed unique offline digital technology which deploys mobile devices to incarcerated students with preloaded USQ courses that enables them to study without access to the internet. The University works closely in partnership with correctional centres to support students throughout their study.

“We see education as our passport to a new chance in life, and to make amends for our wrong doings.”

The university now delivers five programs, including the Tertiary Preparation Program (TPP), and selected undergraduate programs, with 52 courses to jurisdictions in Queensland, Western Australia, Tasmania, and the Northern Territory.

In other states, including Victoria and New South Wales, incarcerated students are able to study USQ's TPP program through a specifically designed print based program.

USQ students from one correctional centre contributed to the recent WAHED event hosted by the university in conjunction with NAEAA and EPHEA. The students, both of whom have completed USQ degrees after undertaking the Tertiary Preparation Program, focused on the impact of COVID-19 on incarcerated students. They recognised the global impact of the pandemic on education, acknowledging it has disrupted efforts to achieve greater equity in the university sector.

However, the presentation focused on the ability of incarcerated students and their Education Officers to adapt to the additional restrictions posed by the pandemic, just as many non-incarcerated students have had to do in order to continue their study through very difficult times.

The important role education occupies in Australia's prison systems is explained by the students: “Although we dwell a lot on what may have been, we see education as our passport to a new chance in life, and to make amends for our wrong doings.”

The implementation of the Incarcerated Student Strategy at USQ ensures that the university continues to provide high-quality teaching and learning experiences, with appropriate support mechanisms so that students can continue to achieve successful study outcomes.

More information about the provision of education inside correctional centres can be found through the *Unlocking the Future Update*, available at <https://paper.li/Unlocking-the-Future-Update>. The newsletter provides insight into education in this sector, along with updates about the use of offline technology in educational settings.



USQ incarcerated students continued their involvement in WAHED in 2021 with a poster presentation focusing on the challenges posed by COVID-19 and emphasising the importance of education in correctional environments.



By Charmaine Davis, Lecturer, USQ College, and Stephen Seymour, Associate Director (Social Justice, Equity and Inclusion), University of Southern Queensland.

NAEEA MEMBERSHIP 2022

Membership of NAEEA is due early next year. Visit the website for details at <https://enablingeducators.org/> or contact the NAEEA Executive at admin@enablingeducators.org for details about your membership.

ABOUT NAEEA

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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