

# News for Enabling Educators

## NAEEA CHAIRPERSON'S MESSAGE

Dear Enabling Colleagues

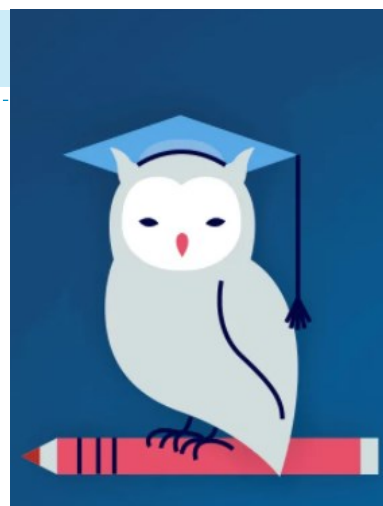
As we are about to turn the calendar to March, it is hard to believe that two months of 2023 have passed us by already. For some, those weeks have found you working tirelessly to close off Term 3, 2022 and begin preparing for Term 1, 2023. For others, it sees you already in the throes of term teaching commitments after welcoming your new and continuing cohorts of students. Wherever you are in your academic endeavours, I wish you the very best of years. I wish you well as your team and your institution work to address the new AI challenge of ChatGBT and the like. I look forward to the creativity in assessment design that eventuates from embracing this challenge and working with it. No doubt many of our existing learning and teaching practices will change somewhat to gain the best from this new technology. Hopefully, our efforts to adapt will provide avenue to ensure our Enabling students' voices are their own in any assessment submitted.

On returning to work after a longer period of annual leave than normal, I find myself reflecting on the 2022 NAEEA conference. Such a great event! The faith the NAEEA Executive had in delivering Enabling educators a face-to-face conference experience, thankfully paid off. The conference at UniSA Adelaide in December did not fail to offer participants a fabulous opportunity to share research outcomes, information, new ideas and student success stories. In fact, it excelled! Participant feedback spoke to an extremely well organised and orchestrated conference where delegates felt welcomed, where high quality papers showed the growth in the strength of research being conducted into Enabling education and where close links were formed. The opportunity to network face-to-face allowed us to meld and strengthen already established cross-institutional relationships as well as to build new relationships that will see future collaborative efforts in the areas of learning and teaching practice, and research. As Enabling educators considering the future opportunities to network, I draw your attention to the Foundation and Bridging Educators New Zealand (FABENZ) conference. FABENZ 2023 is scheduled for the 29<sup>th</sup> November – 1<sup>st</sup> December and will be held at the National Library in Wellington, New Zealand.

The University Accord Discussion Paper was released on the 22<sup>nd</sup> February and is open for consultation for an 8-week period through to the 11<sup>th</sup> April. The NAEEA Executive will work on a submission, paying particular attention to addressing Section 3.5 of the paper, Creating Opportunity for all Australians, the most relevant to us in Enabling Education spheres. The three focus areas within this section include: 3.5.1 *Academic Preparedness*; 3.5.2 *Addressing barriers to success*; and 3.5.3 *Systems wide approaches to increasing access and equity*.

The questions posed in Section 3.5 include:

1. *What is needed to increase the number of people from under-represented groups applying to and prepared for higher education, both from school and from other pathways?*
2. *What changes in provider practices and offerings are necessary to ensure all potential students can succeed in their chosen area of study?*
3. *How can governments, institutions and employers assist students, widen opportunities and remove barriers to higher education?*
4. *How can the costs of participation, including living expenses, be most effectively alleviated?*
5. *How can best practice learning and teaching for students from under-represented groups be embedded across the higher education system, including the use of remote learning?*
6. *What changes to funding and regulatory settings would enable providers to better support students from under-represented groups in higher education?*



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### SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST

- 2022 Conference Highlights
- NAEEA 2022/23 Small Grant recipients
- Celebrate the success of our students and staff

## CHAIRPERSON'S MESSAGE (CONTINUED)

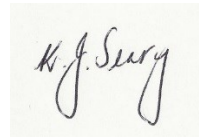
As an Executive, we welcome confirmation that the review will focus on making university more accessible for all Australians regardless of their background.

We also welcome, and strongly encourage, any contribution of ideas from you as NAEAA members to the questions posed in the Discussion Paper. Please send your thoughts to us via the NAEAA email [admin@enablingeducators.org](mailto:admin@enablingeducators.org) by Wednesday 8 March, 2023.

In closing, let's see 2023 as a positive year for us all, both staff and students!

Stay well!

Many regards



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## NAEEA CONFERENCE 2022—HIGHLIGHTS

The National Association of Enabling Educators of Australia conference was held on December 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup>, hosted by the University of South Australia. With the theme 'Reimagining Enabling in Higher Education', over 100 delegates from institutions across Australia attended. After the last conference was postponed due to COVID, the energy and enthusiasm across the two days was reinvigorating as we reconnected with distant colleagues, connected with new colleagues, and shared insights and perspectives from across the Australian sector.

The opening keynote by Professor Sam Sellar reflected on the past 20 years of WP policy and practice through both an Australian and UK lens to interrogate how the idea of human capital can be reimagined to aspirations that serve collective betterment and improved society for all.

The two days saw the presentation of over 50 papers from educators working in enabling spaces, who spoke to themes of 'agency and avenues; empowering voices, enabling practice and pedagogy; advancing digital approaches and Action Research'. Excitingly, for the first time, this year's conference also had presenters deliver their findings from embedding critical enabling pedagogies in undergraduate teaching, and also attendees who teach and work outside of enabling programs.

Other keynote presentations included Senator Barb Pocock, Greens Senator for South Australia who spoke of the drastic need to rethink the systems that enable precarious work and care, thereby disrupting educational opportunities often for some of the most marginalized. Dr Nicole Crawford furthered the call for this rethink as she spoke about the impacts on both student

and educator wellbeing that are embedded in systems of inequality within the academy.

While there were many highlights, the panel of voices of enabling alumni students who have chosen teaching as a profession spoke of how their experience in an enabling program had shaped their approach to teaching, and a panel on the Aboriginal Pathway Program (an enabling program at the University of South Australia) reconfirmed the fundamental need for ongoing community collaboration and the importance of relationships within and across the institution and community. These 2 panels showed the impact that Widening Participation has across broad ranges and aspects of society far beyond students' time at university.

While the next conference location has not yet been announced, we warmly invite colleagues to start forward planning to come and join us in 2024 – we look forward to seeing you there!

By [Tanya Weiler](#), Senior Lecturer, University of South Australia; Member of NAEAA and local conference organizing committee.





## NAEEA 2022 CONFERENCE HIGHLIGHTS (CONTINUED)



Above (left-right): Panel members Associate Professor Anna Bennett, Professor Sharron King, Professor Karen Nelson, Professor Thomas Roche and NAEAA President Karen Seary.



Above: Heads and Friends of Enabling Panel

Right: Conjoint Associate Professor Cathy Stone (Session Chair)



## OPEN LETTER OF THANKS TO NAEAA EXECUTIVES AND UNI SA

I would like to extend my appreciation and thanks to everyone involved in the NAEAA 2022 conference. It affords those of us who attended a valuable and rewarding professional experience.

I would like to acknowledge that each of you have significant roles in your respective organisations and within the NAEAA and undertook this conferences as an additional commitment. If it is anything like hosting a Christmas dinner, we can all appreciate the time and effort both in the lead up, and in the background during the event. NAEAA continues to strengthen and gain momentum (even since my time of joining), and your continued efforts, including the conference, are an important part of this.

UniSA was a beautiful location – and the room selection, proximity, and hosting efforts (thanks Jason and team) made the transitions smooth and practical. There was a high level of engagement from everyone throughout both days. I found myself challenged, motivated, reassured, and entertained.

On reflection the most valuable elements aside from the networking were;

- the need to be more discerning with my time, energy, and focussed efforts, despite institutional priorities and pressures (thank you Nicole),
- confirmation of our program's practices and alignment with others (thank you to the benchmarking team Charmaine, Suzi, Chris, Sarah, Lisa, Sarah, George, Kathryn, and Stuart),
- a reminder to check-in on my language and positioning (thank you Sam, Tanya and Sarah),
- and to revisit our courses for opportunities to include more authentic assessments (thanks Jennifer and John)

Finally, it offered me reassurance of the importance of our work (thanks Russell), and to continue to research, learn, and advocate

for our sector.

I encourage anyone considering membership to take the leap and become a part of this welcoming and supportive community, and to all members, and wider enabling staff to attend the next conference as it is confirming, connecting, and encouraging experience.

Thank you, *By Michelle Briede, Lecturer, Pathways Programs, Federation University.*



Above: Dr Sarah Hattam, NAEAA Executive Committee member, Conference Lead and organizer

## NAEEA 2022 CONFERENCE HIGHLIGHTS (CONTINUED)



For more fabulous conference memories, [click here](#) or open with this QR code:





# ON OR UNDER THE RADAR: SUPPORTING STUDENT AND STAFF MENTAL WELLBEING

Being a huge fan of enabling education and the NAEAA, it was an honour to present one of the keynotes at this year's NAEAA conference in Adelaide. The following piece is a (very short) summary.

A major part of my NCSEHE [Equity Fellowship](#) research was finding out what, from the students' perspectives, impacts on their mental wellbeing. For this study's participants ([mature-aged regional/remote students](#)), the complexity of their lives – juggling multiple commitments, such as parenting, work, community and university – has a lot to do with it. The interactions that students have with their course, the curriculum, the teaching and learning environment, their [assessment tasks](#), and staff and their peers, are also a major impact (positive and negative). In terms of what we can do in universities to support students' mental wellbeing, doing our core business well – i.e. teaching well – is crucial! Students were not asking for specific mental health interventions. For this target group, at least, the extra-curricular – the extra mental wellbeing events – were not what they wanted. I'm not saying these aren't useful for some students, but if you are time poor, online, mature-aged, juggling children and work, live at a distance from campus, you don't have time for the extras. If they are extras, it becomes an equity issue too! There are various [proactive approaches](#) we can take in our roles "[on the ground](#)" – many of which are core to enabling education. However, supporting students' mental wellbeing needs to be the concern of staff at all levels across the institution; hence I have recommendations for universities and government too.

**For student mental wellbeing:** enabling education; an equity lens; inclusive practices; a culture of care and support; teaching and supporting students well >>> student mental wellbeing >>> learning.

We can't focus on student wellbeing and not on staff; the two are connected. When students are stressed out, anxious or unwell it can [impact on staff](#) too. There can be quite an [emotional load](#) to carry. [Morris \(2019\)](#) describes unis as an 'anxiety machine' and identifies several causes of poor mental health in staff, including: excessive workloads; an audit and metrics culture; precarious contracts; and performance management. [Hughes and Spanner \(2019\)](#) add the role of supporting students with poor mental health; and mention local factors – having a supportive team and a good line manager – as supporting staff mental wellbeing. While



Above: Dr Nicole Crawford presenting a keynote at the NAEAA 2022 Conference at UniSA, Adelaide on 6 December 2022.

there are strategies we can implement individually and/or in our teams, putting the onus entirely on us is problematic. [Leaders need](#)

## Links to guidelines and articles from the fellowship research:

"On the Radar": [Report](#)

"On the Radar": [Guidelines and recommendations](#)

Supporting student mental wellbeing: [what can we do "on the ground"](#)?

"[Shining the light](#)" on mature-aged regional/remote students

Taking an [ecological systems perspective](#)

[Experiences of belonging](#) (or not)

[Inclusive and exclusive assessment](#)

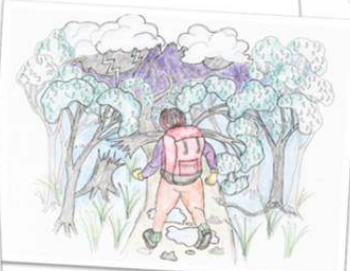


[to act](#) too!

**For staff mental wellbeing:** inclusive, supportive culture (and institutional policies); access to professional learning opportunities; appropriate workloads; support and resourcing >>> staff mental wellbeing.

Thank you to UniSA College – Sarah Hattam, Anthea Fudge, Tanya Weiler, Sharron King and team – and the NAEAA exec, for organising a wonderful conference.

By [Dr Nicole Crawford](#), Adjunct Research Fellow, Curtin University; Adjunct Lecturer, University of Tasmania

- Connections between mental wellbeing; inclusive teaching practices, equity
- student and staff mental wellbeing impact on each other – we need to focus on both

- Micro, [meso](#), macro .... levels (ecological system)
- It's complicated and is everyone's business
- Core to enabling education & to mental wellbeing - Tinto: "Access without support isn't opportunity"

## ON SOLID GROUND

“As a prior student of the preparatory course offered by Southern Cross University, Preparing for Success Program (PSP), and their Undergraduate Certificate in Community Welfare – I would like to express thanks to those involved in developing these foundational courses across the nation.

As a person from a diverse and disadvantaged background – involving a combination of homelessness and mental health issues – I feel it is fair to say many people do not have the opportunity to study, educate or live a fulfilling life due to the disadvantages they face in our society. In particular, educational pathways have long been seen as overly expensive or impossible to achieve for these diverse populations.

‘However, as I have seen, these preparatory courses give much hope to these communities, providing a solid ground for the future of people in similar situations to myself to be stabilised not only educationally but also across their entire life.’

The PSP provided both foundational skills in tertiary studies and a pathway into the Undergraduate Certificate course, and even further into my Bachelors of Social Work degree, as well as providing a structure and foundation for me to build my life off of – the degree allowed me to be accepted for an internship with the university, it allowed me to further my roles outside of paid work, to the point where I am now situated on various state and national committees for international non-profit organisations.

‘These advances in my life, my education, and career, all could not have even been thought of for myself just a year back’

– someone who didn’t complete high school, who didn’t have stable accommodation or had the support required to build towards higher education independently – and I feel I can speak from all students of both the PSP and the people who may be worried about not being able to even start university, in saying that preparatory courses like those I completed provided the necessary stepping stone and foundation to a successful education, career, and enjoyable life.

By Mosey Cluney, past enabling student, SCU College



Above: Mosey Cluney

## MURDOCH UNIVERSITY LAUNCHES ONTRACK FLEX

University Preparation Pathways (UPP) at Murdoch University (MU) is bidding farewell to its longstanding program *OnTrack* and launching a new enabling program in 2023. *OnTrack Flex* will replace both *OnTrack* and *FlexiTrack* as the post-secondary enabling program offered at MU into the future.

This change is in response to recommendations following a Review of Murdoch’s enabling programs in 2019. *OnTrack Flex* will be comprised of 4 units which can be taken concurrently over 1 semester (full-time) or 2 semesters (part-time), and either online or on-campus. This new model aims to give students more choice and flexibility; and allows them to explore their disciplinary interests and gain a better understanding of future course content, skills and expectations.

UPP will also continue to offer their high-school based enabling programs, *FlexiTrack High* (in Perth metropolitan areas) and *Learning for Tomorrow* (in Peel-Rockingham regions); which have seen significant growth in enrolments in recent years. Notably, *FlexiTrack High* won a MU Vice Chancellor’s Citation for Excellence in Enhancing Learning in 2022.

By Dr Joanne Lisciandro, Lecturer, University Preparation Pathways, Murdoch University

## NAEEA 2022/23 SMALL GRANTS RECIPIENTS

NAEEA recognises the need to support members working in enabling and pathways education to undertake research that contributes to evidenced-based practice. The NAEEA will be providing members with an opportunity to apply for NAEEA Small Grants of between \$500 and \$1500 annually. These are competitive grants and only 2 or 3 grants will be supported up to a total value of \$2000 each year.

The following projects will be supported by NAEEA’s first round of Small Grants:

### Project 1:

*“Enabling Educators engaging with social equity discourses.”*

Ana Larsen, Central Queensland University.

### Project 2:

*“The Be Positive Program: Helping students develop psychological well-being and resilience through implementing positive psychology strategies.”*

Trixie James, Ruth O’Neill, Katrina Johnston, Sara Smalley, Central Queensland University.

### Project 3:

*“UniPrep Schools—transition and preparedness in tertiary studies.”*

Shaz Attree, Edith Cowan University.



Above: OnTrack Flex promo image.

## SPOTLIGHT ON ANA LARSEN

In 2010, as a mature-age student, I completed a pathway program at Monash University, Gippsland campus to get into an Arts/Community Welfare degree. Six years later I landed a sessional gig teaching enabling at the same campus which had become Federation University.

People have asked me why I was drawn to enabling education, so the simple answer was because of my own experience, and that is true.

But it was more than that. Without giving too much away, I'll just say that upon reflection I realised my own values and beliefs are rather complicated as is the education system I am a part of. Then, during honours I started reading about neoliberalism, social justice, transformative education and the plot thickened!

I know that enabling educators care deeply about their students and about improving equity in higher education. I am also aware that time is precious for us and our students. With this in mind I teamed up with Dr. Susan Emmett, an early childhood senior lecturer from Federation University, and we published a discussion piece that has attempted to make sense of the ways of thinking about social equity in higher education. We call it a typology of social equity discourses and it's designed to help educators reflect on their own values and make sense of the decisions that are being made around them. Please contact me if you would like a copy of this article.

So now I'm taking the next step and doing a mixed-methods project to investigate the values and beliefs held by enabling educators around equity in higher education (ethics approval number XYZ).

I'm always encouraged to see publications where the voice of enabling educators is heard and I hope this project can contribute in that space.



Survey QR Code

This project includes an online survey which may take around 10 to 15 minutes. Participants can opt to continue with a follow-up interview via email. The email interview will involve around 4 email exchanges where I will send participants questions to reflect on. I figured 4 more emails in one's inbox would hardly be noticed, right?



Above: Ana Larsen

If you are willing to participate in the online survey or both the survey and email interview please use the link below. Your participation is very much appreciated and please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions.

By [Ana Larsen](#), PhD student and Associate Lecturer, School of Access Education, CQU

### CALL FOR RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

Ana Larsen, a PhD student, is doing a side project about discourses and enabling educators' views on social equity in higher education.

She is looking for enabling educators to complete a short online survey (5 to 10 minutes) please! There is an optional follow-up interview which is via email. That would involve around 4 email exchanges with Ana who will email you some questions to reflect on.

Your participation is very much appreciated and please do not hesitate to contact Ana with any questions:

Email: Ana Larsen – [a.larsen@cqu.edu.au](mailto:a.larsen@cqu.edu.au)

Survey link: [https://cqu.syd1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV\\_8bTtyNWUumD3JY](https://cqu.syd1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_8bTtyNWUumD3JY)

[CLICK HERE](#) to access the online survey



## FROM ENABLING STUDENT TO PHD CANDIDATE: REBEKAH'S STORY

Before I started STEPS, I fully believed I would never make it to university, let alone ever graduate. I had dropped out of formal schooling in Year 8 due to illnesses, and while I had received my Year 10 equivalent via TAFE, I had given up hope that I would ever get into university. I loved learning and had wanted to get a degree since I was a child, but it just never seemed like it would ever be a possibility for me.

It's funny to look back now on what it was like then. When I started STEPS, I had low expectations of myself. I didn't know what I wanted to do, and I didn't think I would be able to stick it out. My anxiety was so significant, and I was so scared, my mum had to come with me on my first orientation day. Even afterwards, when I started to feel confident and make friends, I still remember worrying that I couldn't do it. I would sit on the floor of my bedroom, filling out my maths workbook and putting in the hours I had spent that day on working through the problems to track my progress. For my first ever essay, I remember sitting with printed journal articles spread out around me and feeling completely lost.

Despite all my fears, I did it in the end. I completed STEPS and, after a while of trying to work out the best fit for me, I ended up moving to JCU to study sociology.

**I graduated my Bachelor of Social Science with honours and a 6.9 GPA, and I received my Class 1 Honours in Sociology and received the University Medal for outstanding academic achievement in a combination of coursework studies and research undertaken at undergraduate level.**

I am currently in my second year of my PhD where I am examining the impacts of medical misogyny and the trans-global impacts of medical devices, especially around their regulation and approval processes. I never thought that was possible, and yet here I am!

While the impact STEPS had on my academic success are clear, the other impacts it had on my life are equally important. STEPS was the first time anyone gave me the knowledge I needed to navigate the education system, and to find ways to cope with and adjust to my then untreated ADHD. I learned how to manage my time, and the importance of creating a supportive and accessible environment.

**It was also the first time in a long time that anyone had assumed that I was capable of anything and encouraged me to keep trying.**

As a result, I started to believe I really could do anything I put my mind to, and that I was smart and capable. It's an energy I try to bring when I work in student support roles now—I want students to believe they, too, can do whatever it is they want to do both within academia and outside of it. I wouldn't be where I am now without an enabling program, and I am forever grateful to the educators who created the environment that let me believe in myself.

By [Rebekah Liscandro](#), PhD Student, JCU (former STEPS/CQU student)



*Above: Rebekah Liscandro, PhD student (JCU)*





# “FEELING COMFORTABLE, SAFE AND SUPPORTED”: THE IMPORTANCE OF EMBEDDING INDIGENOUS AUSTRALIAN KNOWLEDGE IN THE ENABLING CURRICULUM

Educators recognise the importance of the internationalisation of the curriculum to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education. A culturally responsive pedagogy aims to enhance the learning experience of all students, irrespective of their culture (Morrison et al., 2019). However, when it comes to embedding Indigenous perspectives in the curriculum, it can seem like a daunting task. Many educators may fear ‘getting it wrong’ or being accused of being ‘tokenistic’ in their approach (Hoger, 2020). This fear is genuine and understandable. However, it is not an adequate reason to intentionally exclude Indigenous perspectives in the curriculum.

In Term 2 of 2022, Indigenous Australian knowledge was embedded in the curriculum of the Studying Science unit of Southern Cross University’s Preparing for Success Program (PSP). Many people think that science is ‘acultural’ (Gondwe & Longnecker, 2015). However, the science curriculum is generally based on Western knowledge and does not acknowledge Indigenous cultures and knowledges. This can have an impact on students’ view of science and their sense of belonging. Furthermore, Indigenous knowledges and practices must be acknowledged and validated in order to advance decolonisation of the curriculum (Morrison et al., 2019). The decolonisation of the curriculum does not mean throwing away all Western knowledge, but it requires the accommodation and protection of Indigenous knowledge (de Beer & Petersen, 2016).

The following is an example of how Indigenous Australian knowledge was embedded in the PSP introductory science unit. We typically introduce students to science and the scientific method in Week 1. We discuss the scientific method and how scientists use this method to conduct research and how research findings are communicated. Instead of just talking about the scientific method, this time we’ve acknowledged that Australia is home to many of the earliest examples of scientific thinking in the world.

## Indigenous Australian Peoples used scientific methods of data collection, such as observation and experimentation, for thousands of years.

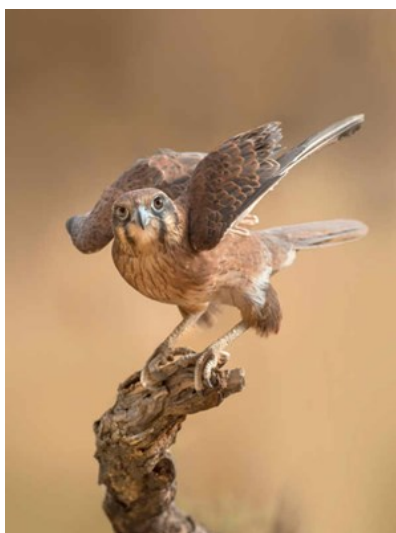
While Western science passes on its insights through scientific publications (e.g. journal articles), Aboriginal culture use oral traditions such as stories, dance and ceremonies for the same purpose. In this science unit, Karrkanj, the little troublemaker, that spread fire; helped us to learn about scientific methods of data **collection**. You can read and watch a video about Karrkanj here <http://www.mimal.org.au/latest-news/burning-interest-in-our-fire-starting-bird>

In class we’ve discussed how the information about firebirds were gathered, how this information is distributed, and so forth. In the past when we’ve talked about the scientific method students generally didn’t look very excited, and they didn’t ask many questions. After watching the video and talking about Karkkanj, students had so many questions about firehawks and scientific methods of data collection and appeared to be very engaged in their learning.

Prior to embedding Indigenous Australian knowledge in this unit’s curriculum (2020 – 2021), the formal student feedback scores for the statement “Respect for cultural diversity was embedded in this unit” ranged 4.19 – 4.48 out of 5.00. Comments from students included “I’m not sure this came up. I never noticed anything that was culturally upsetting”. After embedding Indigenous Australian knowledge in the curriculum, feedback scores were 4.37 / 5.00 in Term 2 and 4.56 / 5.00 in Term 4, 2022. One student commented “Excellent – first nations relevance was embedded throughout and something that was a real highlight and very interesting to learn! LOVED IT”. And another student said “Johanna’s non bias focus on traditional methodologies was thought provoking and intriguing. On a personal note as an Aboriginal person, this helped me connect to my learning and feel comfortable, safe and supported”.

While the formal student feedback scores did not increase, written comments illustrate the importance and value of embedding Indigenous Australian knowledge in units.

By incorporating knowledge and perspectives from Australia’s First Nations Peoples, students’ sense of belonging and their engagement with learning can be enhanced. To ensure an inclusive and equitable quality education for all students, it is increasingly important to purposefully embed Indigenous Australian knowledge and perspectives in units.



Above: Karrkanj the Brown Falcon (*Falco berigora*). Photo Greg Oakley

## References

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By [Dr Johanna Nieuwoudt](#), Lecturer, Southern Cross University

## FIRST NATIONS PRE-STEM PROGRAM AT CDU



First Nations students from across the Northern Territory got a taste of STEM subjects and career pathways as part of a pre-STEM program recently held at Charles Darwin University (CDU).

Twelve female students aged 17 to 40 from across the Territory, including Katherine, Jabiru, West Arnhem Land and Darwin, travelled to CDU's Casuarina campus for the First Nations Pre-STEM program held from October 31 to November 6. In partnership with Power and Water, the program provided participants with an opportunity to visit CDU and get involved in workshops and activities across all areas of science, technology, engineering and maths.

Spanning over a week, participants visited local industries that employ STEM professionals in the NT, as well as interactive workshops at CDU and social activities to connect with STEM mentors in their area of interest. Students took part in activities related to wildlife conservation, robotics, and aviation, as well as a visit to Power and Water Corporation.

The program was funded under the Australian Government's Higher Education Participation and Partnerships Program (HEPPP).

By [Carla Eisemberg](#), Lecturer in STEM Pathways, Charles Darwin University



*Images above and below: participants in the First Nations Pre-STEM program engaging in the various workshops and activities at CDU*





## A MAPP FOR THE FUTURE: CQUNI'S PILOT PROGRAM TO SUPPORT MILITARY VETERANS



*Above: Students, staff and ADF personnel on Day 1 of the program.*

We are hearing a lot more in the news about the need to support our military veterans, and how difficult it can be for some to find a way back into civilian life after years of service. Struggles with mental health are widely reported, along with challenges in securing meaningful employment and adjusting to social roles outside the military setting.

In response to such concerns, some Australian universities are taking up the challenge of providing targeted support for this cohort. In 2019, Flinders University led the way by securing a Department of Veteran Affairs grant to establish a Military Academic Pathway Program (MAPP) aimed at preparing military veterans for higher education. This year, CQUniversity, alongside The University of Newcastle and The University of the Sunshine Coast, came on board. Each was offered the opportunity to establish their own program, with the longer-term goal being to establish the MAPP initiative nationally.

CQUniversity's School of Access Education, under the leadership of Associate Dean, Karen Seary, set about developing our own offering, loosely based on the model adopted by Flinders University. We worked in collaboration with MAPP teams from the other universities, and also consulted ADF members and CQUni staff with military backgrounds. Townsville campus was chosen as the site for the program because of the town's strong military connections, being home to an RAAF base, as well as Australia's largest Army base.

The program that has evolved is 'MAPP Townsville' which is a four-week face-to-face program with an online component. Its main focus is academic with an emphasis on research skills, critical thinking, digital literacy, and effective communication skills for academic purposes. However, we wanted the program to be a holistic one, so activities designed to encourage self-awareness, positive study habits, and a sense of belonging, are also an important part of the curriculum. Students are provided with opportunities to establish social networks within CQUniversity, including links with other student veterans.

However, it wasn't all smooth going for the program's development; in fact, there was some doubt if it would even come to fruition. Promotion of MAPP only really began a few weeks before the scheduled start date, and numbers were not what we had hoped for. Luckily, Karen worked her magic, and we secured the support of the University to go ahead.

So it was that MAPP Townsville began on 24 October with a small but enthusiastic group of students. The teaching of MAPP was shared between Breanna Knight and me (two weeks each), and as we reflect on that experience, we both agree that it was a demanding teaching experience in some ways, but also incredibly rewarding.

Those familiar with this area of learning and teaching warned us that student veterans often do not have much to say in class. In some contexts, this did prove to be true; some students were wary about topics of a more personal nature, and especially reluctant to put their thoughts in writing. However, we were constantly surprised by students' reactions and were never quite sure which activities were going to land. Even within the one small group, reactions could vary wildly. We were struck by the level of cynicism, even suspicion, demonstrated at times, yet there were also many open and spirited class discussions which saw all students actively participate.

A few students had firm plans to pursue university studies after completing MAPP, and all seemed keen to further their education in some way, bolstered by a new-found confidence, and eager to explore their career options. By the program's end, it was clear that genuine friendships had been formed and that a sense of trust had developed. A student, who had refused to be photographed on Day One, was easily persuaded to join in a group photo on the last day. Although students had not been forthcoming when it came to formal feedback, there was no denying their appreciation for the program and their gratitude.

As a farewell gift, one student presented Bre with badges from his Army uniforms – two for her and two for me. He wanted us to know that he had worn them with pride for many years. Bre told me she cried when receiving the gift, and as she shared the story, I also felt deeply moved. We were humbled to realise how much the MAPP experience had meant to this student, despite his nonchalant exterior.

From development of the program to delivery, there has been an abundance of goodwill towards the MAPP initiative. The Townsville's military community has already enthusiastically embraced the program, with representatives from The Australian Army keen to get the word out there. CQUniversity staff, with and without a military background, can see the merit in this endeavour and want to be involved.

The pilot for MAPP Townsville has shown us what is possible to achieve with students in just four weeks, and provides a solid starting point from which to advance – a 'map' to guide us, as it were, for the future. We are motivated to develop our connections with the military community and other universities working in this space, and to continue our efforts to create a program that makes a real difference in the lives of our military veterans. Regardless of whether all students go straight to university, all can leave MAPP with a strong sense of personal achievement, a new friendship group to fall back on, and a sense of hope about the future.

*By Dr Jen McDougall, Lecturer, School of Access Education, Central Queensland University*

## STAFF SPOTLIGHT: LIAM FROST-CAMILLERI

**Q: How long have you been working in Enabling? How did you come to work in enabling? What were you doing previously?**

A: I have been working in Enabling for 3 years, although I did run a *quasi* version of it when I taught a VCAL subject known as 'Study Skills'. Before my time in VCAL, I taught in secondary schools, both public and private. I even did some primary school level teaching. I was looking for change when I came across enabling, but must say that teaching in enabling has been the most professionally satisfying for its ability to provide large amounts of change for students in a short amount of time.

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

A: I coordinate and teach the Introduction to Tertiary Studies course. This course is designed to provide a stable base for navigating university and focusses on developing soft and hard skills. In many ways, the students are supported to 'unlearn' poor study habits and 'relearn' helpful ones. This change requires the students to take stock of their experiences and question some of their personal monologues. The course facilitates reflective skills to explore these experiences and explore educational possibilities that the students previously believed they were unable to achieve.

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

A: The most rewarding part of this job is being able to join students on the journey of self-discovery and the possibilities that education offers. There is such an attitude shift in the students, and it is fantastic to be an agent of that change. I have also noticed that the relationships that we develop have been long lasting. Many students contact me after the classes have finished to get advice or to simply catch up.

The most challenging part of this course is watching how hard students can be on themselves. Self-compassion is not something that comes easy to these students.

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

A: The rate of change and growth is the biggest difference to other positions that I hold at the university. I teach all of my classes in very similar ways. My classes are workshops that draw on student experience and are essentially student centred. Most classes develop and change and I find myself needing to adapt to suit the needs of the students. Enabling students have different needs to other students, such as resilience development, reassurance, repetition of instruction or providing a space to sound-board concerns. These

spaces are fantastic for student growth and development.

**Q5: What do you think is commonly misunderstood (or a misconception) about Enabling education?**

A: The most commonly misunderstood elements of enabling is that it is for 'stupid' people who didn't work hard enough at school, or that students should intuitively know the soft skills that we teach in my course. This is just simply not the case. I've had students who could have entered into their Bachelor course say that they wanted to develop the confidence in themselves first, so they enrolled into our enabling course. Students who have finished VCE, or who are parents and wanted to return to study after time away join our course and get a lot out of it. But the biggest misconception is that people are fixed in their abilities and skills. In our course we teach that all skills can develop. We teach that learning is a journey and the process is more important than the outcome.

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

While I would be the first to say I don't always hit the mark on this, I think the thing that makes me an effective enabling educator is meeting my students at their point of need. I try to understand my students on an individual basis and alter my delivery based on who they are. I try to create a safe learning environment for my students where my students feel they can ask 'stupid questions' without judgement. There is much more to it than this, but on the surface, this details my approach well.

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



*Above: Liam Frost-Camilleri*

There are plenty of 'one off' times that have been memorable, but my favourite memories are rooted in discussing the program with my colleagues. I find them so inspiring and passionate about the program and the education of our students that it is nothing less than contagious.

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

I probably should look a little more to the future, but at the moment I am more than happy teaching and coordinating this course while conducting research with my colleagues.

*Liam Frost-Camilleri is a lecturer at the Institute of Education, Arts and Community at Federation University Australia.*



# A BURST OF UNIVERSITY PREPARATION AT EDITH COWAN UNIVERSITY

The model of intensive units and courses is not a recent development in higher education curriculum design (McKie, 2022), but the uptake and design of such courses to meet student needs has gained traction during the recent pandemic. A **burst mode** delivery of a course, that is a course that runs for a shorter period of time but with more intensive hours, has been a curriculum response during volatile and uncertain times (Wang et al., 2021) and one adopted by Edith Cowan University (ECU).

## UniPrep Accelerate – A Burst Course Example

At ECU, the first pandemic lockdown in March 2020 presented a complexity of unknown factors to predict the continuity of learning and success for Year 12 students. For those who had committed to a direct university pathway (via ATAR base), this uncertainty had the potential to interrupt their goal of gaining entry to their desired university course. This led to the design of UniPrep Accelerate: a burst version of ECU's successful university preparation course to prepare students for university in a supported learning environment.

The central purpose of UniPrep Accelerate was to provide a timely and accessible pathway to tertiary study that bridged the gap between secondary and university studies by providing academic skills development and university experiences. The burst course was designed for four weeks (12 days) of on-campus delivery, with units underpinned by enabling curriculum design principles (Relf et al., 2017). In building the burst delivery there was a conscious focus on tight interconnection of learning, activities, and assessment across the units.

## Developing Connection

The student pulse was taken regularly to create a picture of the student learning experience. From these pulse checks, the positive references to peer-networking amongst students, together with personable tutor interactions, were welcomed results of the intentional design of the burst learning approach. This positive feedback was also captured in the end of course survey with 91% of students agreeing that the course delivery 'encouraged networking with other students'.

*"Talking in groups and basically debating with each other a whole bunch was really fun and was pretty challenging to what you think as you really had to consider what other people were saying about a particular topic etc" (Student feedback, 2022).*

## Interface with Learning Advisers

The Learning Advisers reflected that the depth of learning, regular interactions with tutors and peer-networking within scheduled seminars became a "one-stop shop" for students. This insight from Learning Advisers was also reflected in student responses with 83% and 77% respectively agreeing that the course developed 'relationships with staff and students' and 'sense of belonging to the

university community'.

The experience suggests that for students contextualised support and learning spaces that foster a learning community (Oblinger, 2006) are key to their success in a burst mode delivery.

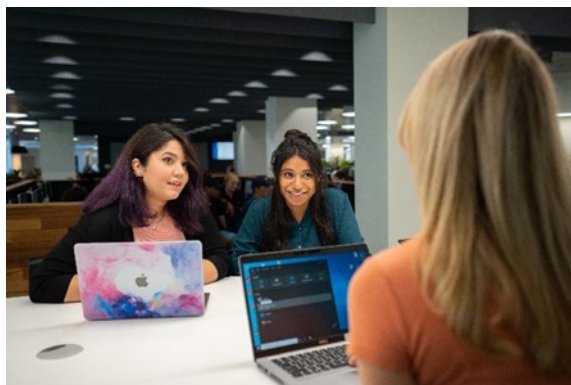
*"I feel like I have a head start over other students not doing the course as I already know my way around uni and know how to be prepared" (Student feedback, 2022).*

## Changes for Future UniPrep Accelerate

Embarking on burst delivery mode requires a whole and committed shift from existing practice to intentional design for this delivery mode (McKie, 2022). The adoption of a burst mode course for UniPrep Accelerate was contextually relevant and sought to meet the needs of specific students. The next iteration will again require putting students at the centre to determine their needs in VUCA times.

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- By [Fiona Navin](#) (Director, Access and Equity), [Selena Tenakov](#) (UniPrep Accelerate), [Maureen Buckingham](#) (Senior Learning Adviser), Edith Cowan University.



*Images above and right: students collaboration at ECU*





## SHARE YOUR WORK WITH NAEAA COLLEAGUES

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

See <https://enablingeducators.org/resources-list/>

If you would like to have your publications included, please contact [admin@enablingeducators.org](mailto:admin@enablingeducators.org) to request details.

### NAEEA MEMBERSHIP 2023

Visit the website for details at <https://enablingeducators.org/> or contact the NAEAA Executive at [admin@enablingeducators.org](mailto:admin@enablingeducators.org) for details about your membership. Please renew your membership for the 2023 calendar year by March 31, 2023.

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

### ‘INVITE A FRIEND’

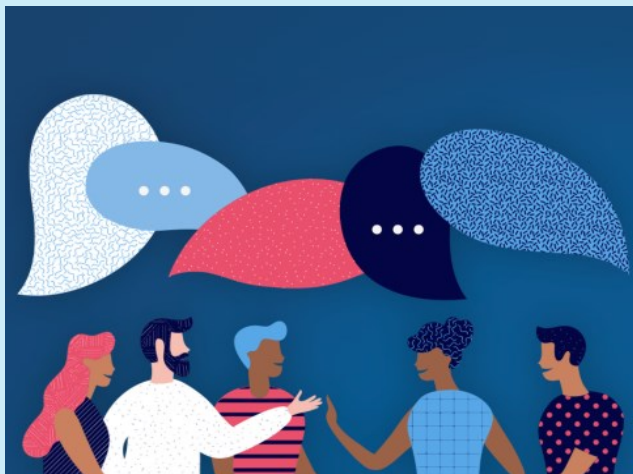
If you have a colleague who is interested in enabling education but is not yet a NAEAA member, please feel free to share this newsletter with them. We would love to welcome new members and we hope to see many of you, both new and long-term members, at this year’s long awaited conference!

### 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](mailto:admin@enablingeducators.org) or visit our website at <https://enablingeducators.org/>

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## ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The NAEAA AGM for 2023 will be held on Friday 10 March 2023, at 12:00pm (AEST) via Zoom. All NAEAA members are welcome to attend.

## SHARE YOUR UNIVERSITY’S ENABLING EDUCATION EVENTS, SUCCESSSES 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](mailto:admin@enablingeducators.org). We would love to hear about your programs, projects, research, students and educators.