



TOTEMS

NEWSLETTER

SEMESTER I 2024 EDITION

A PICTURE PAINTS A THOUSAND WORDS



When you visit TAFE Queensland's Cairns campus, it is impossible to miss the newly installed 'You Make Great Happen' mural, thanks to the artistic talent of student Keira Alberts.

Keira's creation is more than just art; it's a celebration of her Indigenous heritage. Drawing inspiration from her classmates and family, Keira infused the mural with styles and symbols reflecting her cultural identity.

"I wanted the slogan on the mural to stand out, and what helped was I was able to take inspiration from each of my classmates," the talented **Certificate III in Visual Arts** (CUA31120) student said.

"For example, having the Aboriginal flag and colours represented was important to me as I really wanted to pay homage to my culture."

Speaking about her design process, Keira said she spoke with her mum, dad, brothers and aunty who suggested she pay homage to the Torres Strait Islander flag through the colours of blue, green and white, and by painting the land animals on the top of the sea animals at the bottom of the mural.

"While the letter 'o' on the mural is like the centre of the Indigenous flag, the



Keira Alberts

style of painting we painted on the ground represents the Warlpiri country that my dad married into, and the cross-hatching style represents the way we paint around here in Cairns which is where my mum is from."

Keira's passion for painting and the arts has been nurtured by the encouragement and support of her teachers, and her enjoyment of the visual arts course.

"My course and my teachers have been really flexible and understanding

which is great as it means I can catch up on work either in class or at home, and it's been helpful knowing my teachers are always readily available," Keira said.


Reflecting on her decision to study, Keira said, "When you can study with teachers and classmates who are as passionate about art as you are, it makes it that much more exciting and worthwhile.

"Choosing to study this course has probably been the best thing I've done in a while." 🌟



Scan the QR code to watch Keira's creative journey behind her mural.

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MAKE GREAT HAPPEN



ALEX MURDOCH SHIFTS GEARS TO NURSING



Alex Murdoch

Alex Murdoch had dreams of becoming a nurse since high school. Following a successful customer service career, he has started to pursue his passion.

“I wanted to study nursing after high school, but I kept putting it off because I wasn’t sure if it was for me. Instead, I worked various jobs and have spent the past six years working in sales, quality coaching and as a team leader in a call centre,” explained Alex.

But when his call centre job moved offshore, Alex saw it as the perfect opportunity to switch careers to nursing.

“I’m passionate about helping people and want a career where I can assist them, not just help them with their electricity bill.”

Now enrolled in the **Diploma of Nursing (HLT54121)** at TAFE Queensland’s **South Bank campus**, Alex is confidently working towards his dream career.

A proud Indigenous man connected to both the Wakka Wakka and Noonuccal Aboriginal mobs, Alex hopes to advocate for and support First Nations people throughout his nursing career.

“Nursing is so broad, and I’m open to using the skills and knowledge I gain through studying with TAFE Queensland to help and inspire the next generation of Indigenous people by contributing to their positive health outcomes,” he said.

Alex accessed **Fee-Free TAFE** funding to kickstart his new career, a program that supports Queenslanders to upskill to meet the state’s current

and future workforce needs by enabling them to complete selected qualifications at no or low cost.

“I’ve got other financial commitments, so studying at no cost is of great comfort because it’s a significant financial relief. I’ve used the money I saved to get my uniforms and everything I’ll need to learn,” he said.

Looking forward, Alex sees a clear career path ahead.

“When I finish my diploma, I’ll get recognition of my prior learning because universities recognise my skills from TAFE, shortening the time it takes to finish my Bachelor of Nursing,” he explains.

Motivated by his dedication to helping others, Alex is confident that a career in the healthcare industry will fulfill him.

“There are many positives with nursing, and it gives you a clear pathway in just 18 months, as opposed to a bachelor’s degree where you have to study for three years before you can start applying in your field – and you won’t even know if you like it.

“With this diploma, you can start working in aged care after six months, and after you’ve done your diploma, you can work as an enrolled nurse while you finish your degree, and it also takes a year off the bachelor’s so it’s very convenient in that way to become a registered nurse.

“I’m very confident I will succeed. The industry needs compassionate and skilled nurses, and with my customer service background, I’ll get to help people face to face – and I like that idea,” he concluded. 🌐



PALM ISLAND RESIDENTS DIALLED INTO A NEW FUTURE



Palm Island Skills for Education and Employment (SEE) students

Twelve First Nations Skills for Education and Employment (SEE) program students have successfully secured employment with Telstra after completing a tailored training program at TAFE Queensland's Palm Island campus.

TAFE Queensland is supporting a Queensland State Government Initiative to establish Digital Service Centres across regional Queensland locations which will be operated by Telstra.

Graduates from the program are set to secure employment at a new purpose-built call centre located on Palm Island.

Over twelve weeks at TAFE Queensland's Palm Island campus, the first cohort of SEE First Nation students completed a comprehensive program designed to equip them with the skills needed for employment in the digital service industry.

This started with essential employability skills, followed by industry-specific skills such as

language and numeracy skills required for call centre operations.

The program eased students into a real-world working environment, starting with three-days of training per week, building up to five days by the end of the course.

Upon completion, students commenced a traineeship and enrolled into **Certificate III in Business (BSB30120)** to further enhance their skills.

This comprehensive approach ensured that all graduates were well-prepared for the demands of their new roles, with one student expressing how the program, "Boosted the confidence I have in myself to strive towards a rewarding career."

Graduation was a cause for celebration, and was attended by local community members, as well as representatives from Telstra, the Queensland Department of Transport and Main Roads, Palm Island Community Company, Palm Island Council and Rainbow Gateway.

The feedback from the SEE students was overwhelmingly positive, with many highlighting the value of collaboration and peer learning throughout the program.

One student commented, "Being able to collaborate with my classmates and gain knowledge from them has been incredibly helpful."

"Working together as a team and communicating effectively has really improved my learning experience," another student said.

The success of the program follows similar initiatives launched in Cherbourg and Jumbun. Due to the program's warm reception and successful implementation, a second cohort of SEE students has graduated on Palm Island.

The **Skills for Education and Employment (SEE)** program is funded by the Australian Government Department of Employment and Workplace Relations. 🌐



EDUCATION OPENS A WORLD OF OPPORTUNITY FOR HAYTHAM

With a dream to become a schoolteacher, Haytham Trueheart Harbus is studying with TAFE Queensland as a pathway to university to study education.

Recognising the demands of university studies, particularly in areas like academic writing, note-taking, and referencing, Haytham embarked on a **Certificate IV in Adult Tertiary Preparation** (11240NAT) (ATP).

“I’m studying to get the eligibility prerequisites to study primary education and become a schoolteacher, and TAFE Queensland is building that foundation for me,” explained Haytham.

While getting the skills required, Haytham is also developing a broad range of skills relevant to education.

From advanced literacy, numeracy and digital skills, time management, problem-solving, research and assignment writing skills, examination strategies and seminar presentation skills, Haytham is gaining the skills necessary to thrive in higher education.

A proud Torres Strait Islander man with ties to Gudumadh Village on Masig Island, Haytham’s focus within education is to work with children and young people and assist them to succeed.

“I love children’s curiosity and creativity, and I am interested in childhood development, so I’m working to get in the best position to work with disadvantaged children, break the trauma cycle, restore their hope and help them succeed in life,” he said.

This motivation comes from his experience as a pupil at The Murri School in Brisbane, a community-owned and community-controlled school that builds healthy relationships between young First Nations people and adults.



Haytham Trueheart Harbus

“Many Murri School students come from challenging backgrounds, so the school puts culture, mental health, and wellbeing first and brings education in. Being a skilled and qualified teacher able to help those students develop healthy relationships with adults is my dream career.

“Thanks to my inspirational Murri School teacher, Miss Kim Peyton-Smith, who shaped my future, I firmly believe that we need to ensure students are focused and safe to have a good education, and that’s why I’d love to teach there. Those kids have pushed me here, and I want to be there for those kids.”

A believer in education’s power to open doors and guarantee meaningful jobs, Haytham hopes to travel to California, join The Freedom Writers Foundation, and continue learning under Erin Gruwell.

“As a teacher, Erin changed the lives of disadvantaged young people in Wilson High School in America, where she inspired young, underprivileged students to write, and I see myself bringing learnings from her to Australia,” he explained.

“With the skills and knowledge that I’m learning, and being a Torres Strait Islander, I know the challenges First Nations children face, and I’m getting qualified to connect them to their culture through teaching.”

Teaching students to enhance and improve their lives through writing combines Haytham’s passion for positively performing arts and his culture.

“Having won awards like the National NAIDOC Youth Award in 2022 under my previous name, Elijah Manis, I’m looking forward to passing on knowledge and enhancing the outcomes of students under Haytham Trueheart, which is now my poet name and what I’m being published under.”

“I’m fortunate to be preparing to become a teacher that helps First Nations students connect with their culture – it’s great for healing the soul. The combination of my training and culture will set me up for a fulfilling and life-long career,” concluded Haytham. 🌀

JACKSON CARVES OUT A CAREER IN BARBERING

Jackson's determination and entrepreneurial spirit are propelling him towards achieving his career goals in barbering, while also paving the way for business success.

Jackson Midgeley, a proud Mununjali man from Ipswich, discovered his passion for barbering in his final year of high school in 2022.

Inspired by his mother Kristy Midgeley, a respected hairdresser with three decades of experience, Jackson saw barbering as the perfect fit for his outgoing personality and creative flair.

"It was my mum who really encouraged me to choose a career in the industry. I had no plans after high school, and my mum asked me if I wanted to try barbering," Jackson explained.

Kristy's longstanding partnership with TAFE Queensland led Jackson to enrol in **Certificate III in Barbering** (SHB30516) at the **Ipswich campus** after he finished high school.

Jackson also credits his TAFE Queensland barbering teacher, Junior Faamalele, as playing a crucial role in his training journey.

"My teacher, Junior, sat me down when we first started and discussed what was my goals were," Jackson shared.

"I was really keen to fast-track my qualification and Junior worked with me to achieve that goal within nine months. It was an awesome accomplishment."

Jackson fully embraced his training at the Ipswich campus salon, dedicating himself to mastering various techniques, including head and face shaving, carving, and clipper-over-comb techniques.



TAFE Queensland Ipswich Graduation guest speaker and former TAFE Queensland CEO, Ms Mary Campbell, Jackson Midgeley, and TAFE Queensland General Manager (South West region), Jenni Butler

He also learned about salon operations, such as stock management, client retention, and business fundamentals, in addition to improving his technical skills.

For Jackson, barbering went beyond just hairstyling.

"I'm very interested in the culture of barbering," he said.

"It's not just about helping people to feel good about themselves, but about building genuine relationships."

Jackson received the 'Excellence in Barbering' award at the TAFE Queensland's Ipswich graduation ceremony for his talent and dedication. He was also invited to give a speech and play the didgeridoo, entertaining the graduands and their guests.

Now, Jackson is prepared to embark on a new venture – starting his own barbering shop.

"When I first started barbering, I rented out a chair within a salon. But then the shop became available next door. I reached out to the landlord and organised to take on the lease. It's next to my mum's salon Booval in East Ipswich," Jackson said.

"Soon we will be renovating the whole shop, and in the future, I will hopefully be employing my own team of barbers." 🌀



TAMMY'S TWO-DECADE COMMITMENT TO EDUCATION



TAFE Queensland ICT Service Delivery Trainee Dannii McPherson, TAFE Queensland Indigenous Student Support Officer Tammy Rasmussen, and TAFE Queensland Business Administration Trainee Jack Kemp

Widadjuri woman Tammy Rasmussen has dedicated over two decades to empowering First Nations students through education.

Tammy's career in education began in 1999 at the University of Southern Queensland as an assistant to a lecturer specialising in Australian Cultural Studies and tutoring in various subjects.



Tammy's passion for education led her to deliver Indigenous studies at **TAFE Queensland's Toowoomba campus**, and later, to roll out Indigenous competency units for the Queensland Government.

In 2020, Tammy returned to TAFE Queensland, where she now works to support First Nations students to achieve their study and career goals.

"On a day-to-day basis, that could involve guiding students with their course work, liaising with other government and community organisations to connect our students to additional support services, or to providing mentorship for TAFE Queensland's business and ICT trainees.

"Recently we've had a group of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Primary Health Care students at all levels from certificate III to diploma travel from various locations across the state to complete a week-

long clinical training block at the Toowoomba campus's health facilities.

"I help these students with their accommodation and travel requirements and check-in to see how they're travelling with their studies.

"While I'm based at the Toowoomba campus, my role extends throughout the 13 campuses in South West Queensland, and for some courses I have students across the whole state."

Tammy works closely with several community organisations to gain practical support for students and achieve great training outcomes.

"Recently, I had a student who is a mother of three and was considering studying at TAFE Queensland but was

“**Another important aspect of my role involves delivering cultural awareness training to new students.**”

lacking the confidence to get started,” Tammy said.

“But we worked together with a team member from the Australian Government Initiative, Parents Next, to give her the support she needed to complete her course and she is now enrolled a **Diploma of Child, Youth and Family Intervention** (CHC50321).

“To see the change in her from sitting in my office doubting herself, to now, equipped with the confidence and skills to pursue a career in community services, has been wonderful.”

With qualifications including a Graduate Certificate in Tertiary Education and a **Certificate IV Training and Assessment** (TAE40122), Tammy combines her cultural knowledge and teaching experience to foster culturally safe learning environments.

“Another important aspect of my role involves delivering cultural awareness training to new students. I cover what culture is and how it differs between language groups,” explained Tammy.

“These sessions have been designed to raise people’s awareness of the influences and impacts of culture on how we do things.”

Through partnerships with organisations like Adapt, Tammy ensures that young students

can engage with community programs and organisations, enhancing their personal and professional development.

“The Adapt program is designed to help them navigate the challenges of work, and study life, and balancing their responsibilities in-community,” she said.

“I also attend a Yarning Circle with Toowoomba community representatives and leaders regularly and it provides a valuable opportunity to discuss current issues and to work together.”

Tammy’s dedication goes beyond student support, as she is also involved in mentoring a number of TAFE Queensland employees.

“It’s been great to see our organisation employ four young First Nations trainees – Rose, Maddy, Jack and Dannii in the areas of information technology, customer service and student support services.

“Rose, Maddy, Jack and Dannii are learning the ropes quickly and are becoming valued members of staff with a bright future ahead,” said Tammy. 🌟



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SCHOLARSHIP PAVES THE WAY FOR RASHONDA'S FUTURE STUDY

Rashonda Murray has a plan and a scholarship from TAFE Queensland is helping her achieve her dreams.

“My career goals in life are to become the first ever descendant and family member out of my community to become a lawyer and I also want to start my own business in the near future,” the committed 22-year-old said.

Growing up in the remote Aboriginal community of Cherbourg, Rashonda's dream was put on the sidelines when she was unable to complete high school. But now, with the help of a traineeship and a scholarship, she is well on the way to becoming a story of study success.

Preparing herself for the road ahead, Rashonda, a proud Wakka Wakka and Ngugi descendant, is completing a traineeship with the Cherbourg First Nations Service Centre while studying a **Certificate III in Business (BSB30120)**.

“Having a TAFE campus in my community is great. It means I have a safe and well-equipped environment to learn, and also provides me with the opportunity to work and gain study experience before I am able to enrol in the **Diploma of Justice Studies (10972NAT)**,” Rashonda said.

“Learning in a team environment with people from my own culture has been really enjoyable.”

To help her progress her study plans, Rashonda received a helping hand in the form of an Equity Scholarship from TAFE Queensland, sponsored by RACQ.

The \$5000 scholarship enabled Rashonda to purchase office equipment, including a laptop and a desk, setting her up for study success.



Rashonda Murray

“I am very thankful to RACQ and TAFE Queensland for the scholarship. I was able to buy what I needed to study successfully and not have to worry about the expense,” Rashonda said.

The **TAFE Queensland Scholarship Program** awards each recipient \$5,000 to study any certificate III through to an advanced diploma or bachelor degree at any of our over 60 campus locations or online.

Scholarships help cover the costs of course fees, text books and living expenses.

For several years, RACQ has generously supported the TAFE

Queensland Foundation to provide two Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students with the opportunity to train for free.

“As Queensland's largest Club, we recognise the important role we play in supporting our communities across the state, and we're proud to play a small role in helping the next generation of Queenslanders through this sponsorship,” RACQ Community and Sponsorship Manager Melanie Calzavara said.

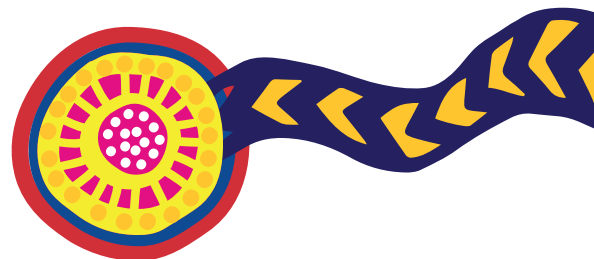
“A solid education is vital to give our youth a good start in life.”

“We look forward to continuing this partnership with TAFE Queensland Foundation to make education more accessible for all Queenslanders.”

“**Learning in a team environment with people from my own culture has been really enjoyable.**”



Scan the QR code to watch a video of Rashonda.



OVERCOMING ADVERSITY TO EMPOWER OTHERS

Tameika Brett's story is one of resilience and inspiration. Her profound empathy, drawn from personal experiences, fuels her commitment to support others facing life-altering challenges.

If you need inspiration to pursue the career you've always wanted, look no further than Tameika Brett.

A proud Gunggari and Gumbainggir woman, Tameika was recently honoured as the 'Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Student of the Year' and recipient of the 'Encouragement Award' in Individual Support at the TAFE Queensland Toowoomba graduation ceremony.

As a mature student, she has not only excelled academically, but she has also balanced her studies with her role as a mother of five and grandmother of five.

After being diagnosed with multiple sclerosis, she faced years of adversity, during which even small tasks became huge obstacles.

"It's taken me eight years to get back on my feet," Tameika said. "There was a period of time when I was bed ridden, my daughter used to bathe me, dress me, everything.

"Then, at one stage, the children were going to leave school to look after me. I said 'No – you're going to finish Year 12!'



Tameika Brett

"So, I learnt to drag myself along the floor and dress myself again. I had to learn how to talk, and eventually, walk again. I can now drive."

Before her diagnosis, Tameika had worked in hospitals and nursing homes, as well as for the Queensland Police Service, and she was keen to gain a formal qualification to further build upon her previous experience.

In 2023, Tameika chose to study a **Certificate III in Individual Support (CHC33021)** at **TAFE Queensland's Toowoomba campus**, after being encouraged by a representative from local community organisation, Wesbro Services.

"I'm going to look after people like me because I know how hard it is – every day is a challenge. But I love, love learning. It's been years because I've had a family – I've always just

concentrated on my family," Tameika explained.

"And now in the last year, and this year, it's about me doing something for me and my goals and what I want in life. I just feel really good about myself for these achievements.

"I want to inspire my own people. I want to encourage people to get out there and achieve their career goals, and with the government's **Fee-Free TAFE**, the cost of learning doesn't have to be a barrier."

TAFE Queensland's Health, Communities and Education Educational Team Leader, Shelley Haynes, and Indigenous Student Support Officer, Tammy Rasmussen, praised her high level of diligence and persistence in her training.

"Tameika, while receiving ongoing medical treatment and with the daily challenges this presented, remained

focused and maintained an impeccable attendance rate throughout her course," said Shelley.

"She was tenacious and persistent, with her determination being inspirational to others in the class," explained Tammy.

"Furthermore, as an Indigenous woman, Tameika displays cultural practices at all levels in everything she does, whether at TAFE Queensland or within the wider community," added Tammy.

Now Tameika is taking the next step in her study journey. She has recently commenced the **Fee-Free TAFE** course, **Certificate IV in Child, Youth and Family Intervention (CHC40321)**, and is gaining further skills to complement her community-based role supporting young people at risk in Toowoomba. 🌀

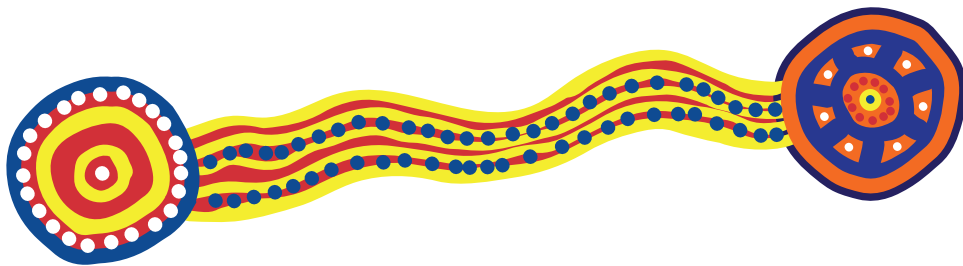
RAP ARTWORK INSPIRES TRANSFORMATION OF TRAINING UTE



SkillsTech's iconic Holden Commodore V8 race ute has undergone a stunning transformation, inspired by TAFE Queensland's Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) Artwork by Riki Salam, *We are 27 Creative*.

The vehicle is used for automotive training and also as a show car at events to promote TAFE Queensland and engage with the community.

The RAP artwork, 'Connecting Knowledge – Connecting Cultures', is about bringing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous cultures, understandings, and knowledges together. The complete RAP artwork is featured on the hard cover of the tray, with freshwater and desert patterns on the body of the ute. 🌀



First Nations Education Strategy

Our **First Nations Education Strategy for VET and Higher Education 2024-2027** demonstrates our commitment to closing the gap to ensure our first Australians are afforded the same opportunities for learning and prosperity that everyone enjoys in Australia.



Scan the QR code to view our First Nations Education Strategy.

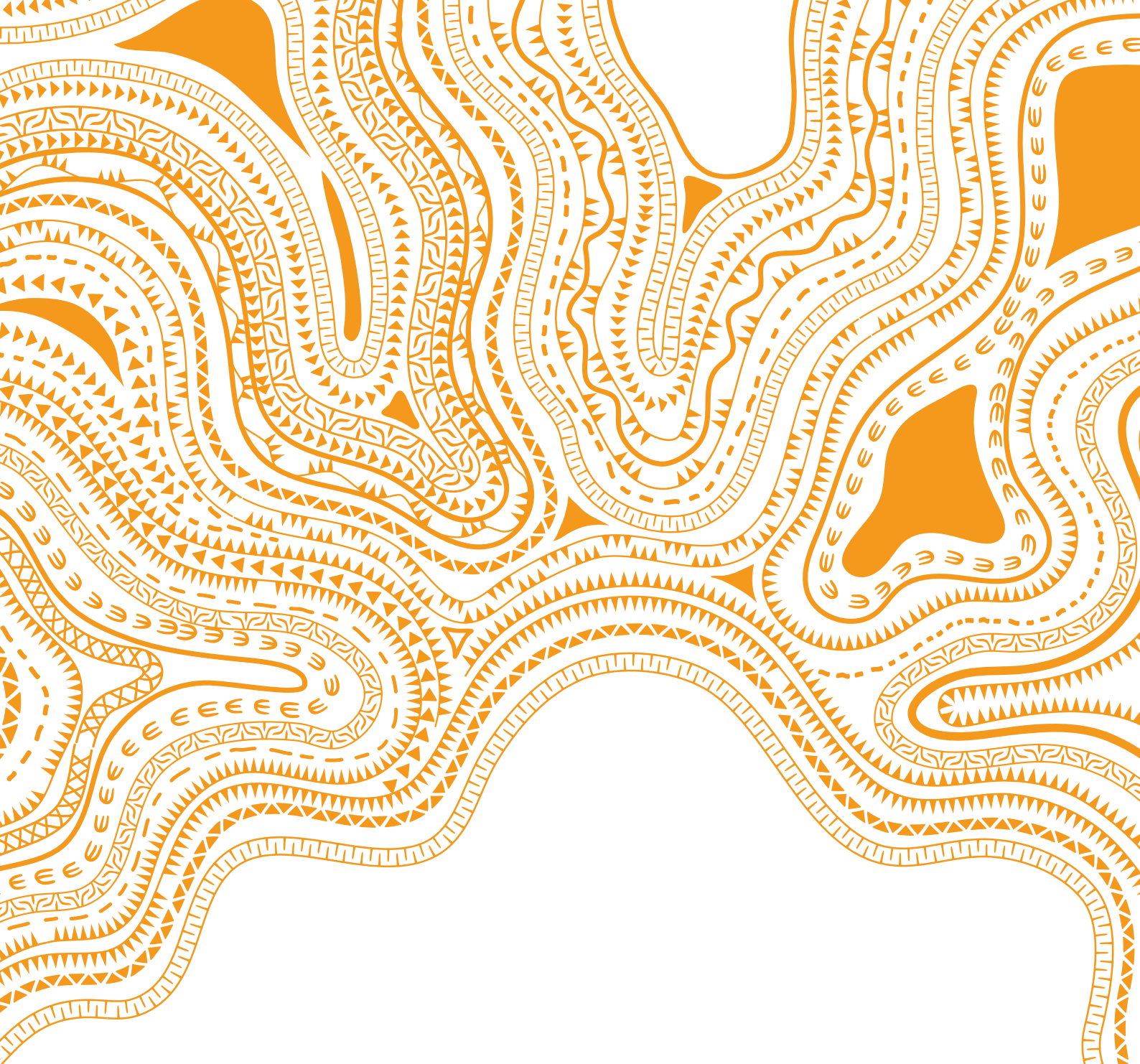


Official Vocational Education and Training (VET) partner of the North Queensland Toyota Cowboys



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TAFE Queensland acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of Country throughout Australia and respect the continuing connection to land, waters, cultures and family that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples uphold.

We pay respect to Elders past, present and future. We recognise that teaching and learning has taken place on Country for over 60,000 years and two-way learning is an important part of our reconciliation journey.

Information is correct at time of printing, May 2024. For the most up-to-date information refer to our website at tafeqld.edu.au.

In many areas of Australia it is considered offensive to publish photographs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who are deceased. Readers are warned that this publication may inadvertently contain such photographs.

Artwork elements from TAFE Queensland's Reconciliation Action Plan artwork 'Connecting Knowledge – Connecting Cultures' by Riki Salam, We are 27 Creative. Visit tafeqld.edu.au/rap to view the Reconciliation Action Plan.

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