



# TOTEMS

NEWSLETTER

SEMESTER I 2026 EDITION



**KAYLA GAGAI NAMED AUSTRALIA'S TRAINEE OF THE YEAR**

Kayla Gagai

**At just 25, Cairns local Kayla Gagai is already making her mark as a youth worker, cultural leader, and role model for young people across Far North Queensland.**

**K**ayla was named Trainee of the Year at the 2025 Australian Training Awards, held in December in Darwin.

It's a moment she describes as both surreal and deeply affirming.

"I went into the night just proud to be on the stage with the other finalists," Kayla said.

"To actually win – that was a huge honour. For me, it is a testimony of all the hard work I've put into my training and my career. It's proof for my younger siblings – and for young people thinking about training – that there are so many good outcomes from doing a traineeship."

Like many young people, Kayla started out in retail and hospitality jobs after finishing school, unsure where her career would take her. That changed when she connected with Vocational Partnerships Group (VPG), a not-for-profit organisation dedicated to supporting young people through key life transitions.

Initially, Kayla joined VPG as a participant, receiving help with her resume and landing a job.

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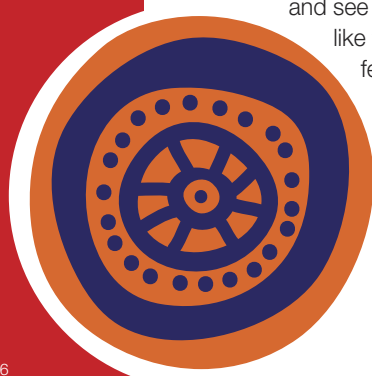


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A few years later, she returned as a trainee in business administration. That role sparked something bigger.

“I realised pretty quickly how much I enjoyed working with young people,” she said. “When the opportunity came up to step into youth work, I knew that’s where I belonged. From the first time I picked up that role, I just loved it.”

**“I wake up excited to go to work every day. That’s how I know I’m in the right place.”**

Kayla enrolled in a **Certificate IV in Youth Work** (CHC40421) with TAFE Queensland while completing her traineeship with VPG. The qualification – combined with hands-on experience – gave her the confidence to take on new responsibilities and opportunities she never imagined.

“This job challenged me to step out of my comfort zone. I’ve always been a quiet achiever, but through this traineeship I’ve run programs in schools, delivered workshops, and presented in front of large cohorts. I never thought I’d be able to do that. Now I know I can.”

Today, Kayla is an integral part of VPG’s First Nations Leadership Team, where she helps organise cultural events, provides guidance to colleagues working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth, and delivers cultural awareness training.

“I am Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander – my mum is Yirrganydji and my dad is from Badu Island and Mabuig in the Torres Strait,” Kayla said.

“Representation matters. When young people walk into VPG or a classroom and see someone who looks like them, it makes them feel welcome and safe. That’s how I felt when I first came here, and now I can be that person for others.”

At VPG, Kayla works across

programs like Respect Me, a school-based respectful relationship education program, and Ready for Work, helping young people build skills, gain confidence, and transition successfully into employment or further training.

“I want to show young people that their voice matters, that they can create change in their communities. If I can play even a small part in empowering them, then I’m doing my job.”

Operations Manager at VPG, Emma Takai, has watched Kayla’s journey from trainee to award-winning youth worker.

Emma says Kayla’s story shows the true value of traineeships – for both the individual and the organisation.

“A traineeship is an investment – in young people, in your business, and in the community,” Emma said.

“For us, it meant we could support emerging talent and help Kayla develop the skills she needed while contributing to our programs. Through a combination of on-the-job experiences and formal training, she built a strong foundation and learned to apply an advantage thinking approach in her work. Today, she brings that mindset to everything she does – a testament to her commitment and the opportunities a traineeship provides.”

When asked what her advice would be for other young people, particularly First Nations students, Kayla is clear.

“Be open to it. A traineeship might just show you something you’re passionate about. It can open doors you never imagined and give you the extra support to reach your goals. If you’ve got the drive, just go for it.”

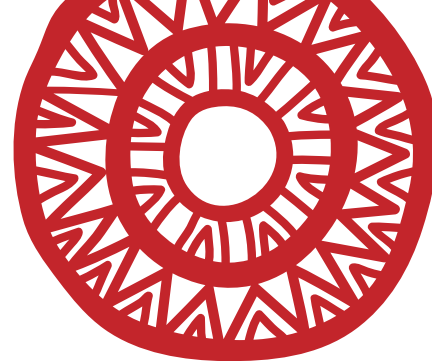
With her award-winning traineeship complete, Kayla is now focused on continuing her work with VPG and inspiring the next generation.

“I wake up excited to go to work every day. That’s how I know I’m in the right place. Youth work is more than a job for me – it’s my passion, my purpose, and my way of giving back.”



**Scan the QR code** to learn more about traineeships.

# OLIVIA GOES FROM CONSTRUCTION TO CONTOURING



Olivia Croydon



**For six years, hard hats, pipes and tools defined Olivia “Liv” Croydon’s world as she worked across Queensland’s commercial and civil plumbing projects. But behind the high-vis, Liv carried a passion she was yet to pursue – make-up artistry.**

**A** proud Kuku Yalanji woman now based in Toowoomba, Liv had built a strong career in plumbing. When health issues meant she needed to step away from the trade, she began looking toward a new direction.

“I loved plumbing, but didn’t see myself doing it forever, and when I was unwell, I looked to change careers. While make-up had always been something I adored, I never thought it could be a career,” Liv said.

Encouraged by her mum, Jules, and her sister, Megs, Liv decided to take the leap.

“They pushed me to trade tools for brushes and chase my dream, and I’ll be forever in debt to them for that,” she said.

At the end of 2024, Liv enrolled in the **Certificate III in Make-Up (SHB30221)** at TAFE Queensland’s **South Bank campus**. The

commitment meant travelling two hours each way from Toowoomba, but Liv stayed focused on her goal.

“I didn’t hesitate because I was so committed to my purpose. TAFE Queensland’s facilities, the products, and the guest speakers made the training so incredible,” she said.

While studying, Liv built both her skills and confidence, with support from her teachers and classmates.

“At first, I was shy and anxious, wondering if I was in the right place. However, my teacher Jessica Peacock saw something in me, and she challenged and supported me, pushing me to believe in my abilities. I wouldn’t be where I am without her,” continued Liv.

As her skills developed, Liv discovered a passion for brows and lashes and soon launched her own business, **Alter Beauty**, transforming a spare room in her home into a welcoming studio for clients.

“I always knew I wanted to be my own boss, and my studies gave me

the skills, the knowledge, and the confidence to do it. Now, I’m living my dream.”

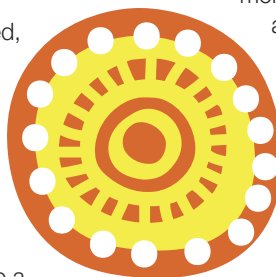
By the end of her studies, Liv was named TAFE Queensland Brisbane’s Graduate of the Year, affirming her decision to change careers.

“That moment was surreal. In just six months, I went from questioning if I belonged in this industry to being named graduate of the year, to building and running my own business,” she said.

Looking ahead, Liv hopes to continue building her business and eventually return to the classroom as a teacher.

“I’d love to train the next generation of artists and show them that this is more than just a hobby – it’s an art and a career,” Liv explained.

“Studying at TAFE Queensland has changed my life. I’ve gained the knowledge, skills, and confidence to chase my dreams, and proof that it’s never too late to start again.”





Bianca Rickert

# BUILDING CARE CLOSE TO HOME IN THE TORRES STRAIT



**Thursday Island-based student, Bianca Rickert, is building a career in nursing while staying connected to her community – and helping shape the future of healthcare in the Torres Strait**

**B**ianca Rickert, a **Diploma of Nursing** (HLT54121) student with TAFE Queensland, is balancing her studies with hands-on work as a personal carer at the northernmost aged care service in Australia and supporting elders in a remote setting.

A proud Djangadi woman from Kempsey in New South Wales, who grew up on Gimuy (Cairns) country, Bianca has called Thursday Island home for the past five years.

For Bianca, nursing is driven by lived experience.

“That motivation really started with my grandparents,” she said. “Then through my dad’s cancer journey and working in aged care, I saw just how much of a difference good healthcare can make. That’s what pushed me to take this further.”

As she prepares to complete her Diploma of Nursing (HLT54121), Bianca reflects on a study journey that has required resilience, planning and time away from home.

When she enrolled, studying from Thursday Island meant completing her qualification online and travelling

to Cairns for residential blocks and placement.

Her placements have taken her across the region, from Thursday Island to Bamaga, Babinda and Cairns Hospital, building her confidence in real clinical environments.

Getting there was not simple. Travel involved multiple connections by ferry, bus and plane, along with extended time away from work, family and community.

Despite this, Bianca has remained committed – continuing to work, study and support her community while progressing through her qualification.

Her approach to learning has been consistent.

“I’ve never stopped studying since I graduated school,” she said.

Now, her focus is on building a career in healthcare that reflects the needs of her community.

Living and working on Thursday Island has strengthened her understanding of culturally safe care. She has taken the initiative to learn local language and protocols, helping her communicate more effectively with patients and build trust.

“It’s important to have someone who can understand them, speak the language and help break down the medical terminology,” she said. “It can

mean the difference between someone taking life-saving medication or not,” she said. “If they understand you better, you build trust and get better health outcomes.”

Bianca has also supported her peers throughout the course, creating a student group to help others stay connected, share information and navigate their studies together.

Looking ahead, she plans to continue her studies and become a registered nurse, with a clear focus on improving healthcare outcomes in remote communities.

“Now is not the end,” she said. “There are always learning opportunities to continue to grow.”

Her journey has required travel and sacrifice – but it has also helped pave the way for what comes next.

With the opening of the Thursday Island Health Hub, future students will now have greater access to nursing training closer to home, reducing the need to leave the Torres Strait for extended periods.

For communities across the region, it marks an important step forward – building a local healthcare workforce, shaped by people who understand the needs of the Torres Strait. 🌀

# CARING FOR COUNTRY AND CREATING FUTURES

**For proud Gunggandji man Dion Sands, caring for Country isn't just a job – it's a responsibility, a passion, and now, an award-winning achievement.**



In September, Dion was named Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Student of the Year at the Queensland Training Awards, after earlier being recognised for the same category in the Tropical North Queensland regional awards.

In December, Dion travelled to Darwin to represent Queensland at the Australian Training Awards, where he was named runner-up for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Student of the Year – something he admits still feels surreal.

“Writing my nomination really made me think about how far I’ve come,” he said. “When I looked back at everything I’d achieved through training and work, it amazed me. Winning the award still doesn’t quite feel real – but it’s something I’m really proud of.”

Dion’s award reflects his growing leadership and technical capability as a ranger with the Gunggandji-Mandingalbay Yidinji Peoples Prescribed Body Corporate (GMYPPBC) in Yarrabah – Queensland’s largest discrete Aboriginal community, located 60 kilometres southeast of Cairns.

The ranger team manages more than 8,500 hectares of land and sea Country, working to protect ecosystems, restore biodiversity, and maintain cultural landscapes.

“It really is the best job in the world,” Dion said. “We’re out monitoring seagrass, managing weeds, checking

crocodile activity – every day we’re doing something that helps Country.”

Dion’s pathway began with a Certificate I in Conservation and Ecosystem Management, progressing



*Dion Sands*

through certificate II with Gunggandji Rangers through a school-based traineeship, and then completing his **Certificate III in Conservation and Ecosystem Management** (AHC31424) through a training partnership between GMYPPBC and TAFE Queensland.

The program is unique in the way it delivers learning: hands-on, on Country, and aligned to cultural and community priorities.

“Having trainers work with us here makes a huge difference,” Dion said. “They support you through the training, but they also check in afterwards – that means a lot.”

GMYPPBC Land and Sea Program Manager Patrick Wadey says the approach is powerful.

“You can’t separate skill development from connection to place,” he said.

“TAFE trainers build trust, respect, and understanding first – then the training becomes meaningful.”

The partnership model has delivered impressive outcomes. Since 2021, the program has supported 29 traineeship completions and 10 further vocational outcomes, created employment pathways, and strengthened environmental management capability within the community.

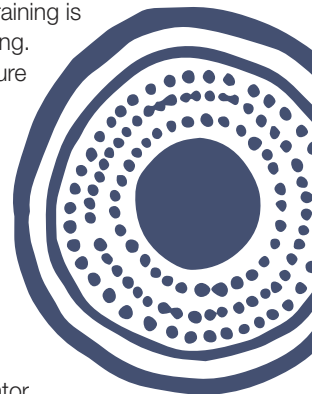
For Dion, this training is just the beginning. He sees his future firmly rooted in Yarrabah, continuing his role as a ranger while looking for ways to help shape the next generation.

“I’d love to mentor younger rangers and one day step into leadership,” he said. “We’re not just protecting Country – we’re protecting

culture, knowledge and opportunity for the future.”

And while his trip to Darwin was an exciting milestone, Dion’s motivation remains grounded and clear.

“I just want to keep learning and keep giving back,” he said. “If my journey can inspire someone else to start theirs, that’s even better.”

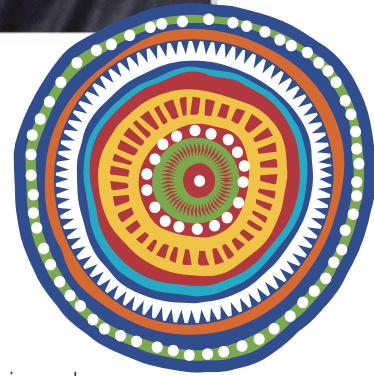


**Scan the QR code** to learn more about Dion’s journey



Locklyn O'Loughlin

# BUILDING HEALTHIER FUTURES FOR HIS MOB



**At just 17, Locklyn O'Loughlin is already carving out a future in healthcare. A proud Nughi, Nunukul and Gorenpul man from Minjerribah, North Stradbroke Island, Locklyn is balancing school, work and study while supporting his community to better manage their health.**



**W**hile completing Year 12 at BUSY Schools Cleveland, Locklyn undertook a **school-based traineeship**, achieving a **Certificate III in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Primary Health Care** (HLT30121).

He is now continuing his studies with the **Certificate IV in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Primary Health Care** (HLT40221) while

working with the Chronic Disease Team at Redland Hospital within the Metro South Health network.

Healthcare wasn't part of Locklyn's original plan.

"This was an opportunity that came up through school, and I just thought I'd give it a go," he said.

"I didn't know much about health care when I started, but now I love getting out into the community and helping my own mob – encouraging them to come to appointments and take care of their health."

Through his traineeship, Locklyn gained hands-on experience across clinics in Capalaba, Wynnum and Minjerribah, working alongside heart failure and respiratory nurses, diabetes educators and dietitians.

"The teachers and the chronic disease team have all pushed me to be my best," he said. "They've supported me through my studies and taught me the clinical side – things like ECGs, blood pressure, blood glucose and heart rate checks. I've learned how to have conversations with patients,

understand their needs, and refer them on for more help."

Locklyn is also passionate about improving representation for First Nations men in healthcare.

"There's not enough of us. Having a male health worker means our men can have open conversations about men's business," he said. "Culturally, we have separate men's and women's clinics, so it's important to have both."

Locklyn plans to continue working in chronic disease while completing his certificate IV and eventually studying a **Diploma of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Primary Health Care Management** (HLT50221).

"I'll keep working in chronic disease while I study, and then I'll see where life takes me from there," he said.

His message for others thinking about a similar path is simple.

"Just give it a go – even if you're unsure. Don't do it just for the sake of it – put your heart into it and enjoy it. It all comes together." 🌀

# FROM STUDY TO STRONGER COMMUNITY OUTCOMES

**For Vicki Baker, completing her diploma was more than gaining a qualification — it reaffirmed her purpose.**

**A** proud Wiradjuri woman with family connections to Peak Hill in New South Wales, Vicki is committed to strengthen the outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families.

After completing a **Diploma of Child, Youth and Family Intervention** (CHC50321), she now works within the Delegated Authority team at the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community Health Service (ATSICHS), supporting greater self-determination for community in child protection matters.

“My focus is around minimising the impact of Child Protection systems on mob, and being part of meaningful change in this space,” Vicki said.

Community Services teacher Debra Stephens delivered the diploma through a partnership between TAFE Queensland and ATSICHS, with training held at the Bullang Bujerim site in Logan.

Learning was designed to support ATSICHS staff while strengthening their knowledge and practical skills to better support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families in the community.

“Deb brings decades of industry insights, knowledge, and cultural sensitivity to each session, and was an integral part of my re-entrance into learning and successfully obtaining my diploma,” Vicki said.



*Vicki Baker*

Deb also reviewed Vicki’s previous studies and mapped her transferable skills against the qualification requirements, creating a personalised learning plan that balanced work commitments with study.

“Her plan balanced my work priorities and paved the way to achieving the outcomes being celebrated,” Vicki said.

Vicki says the experience strengthened her confidence and enhanced her ability to advocate for families navigating complex systems.

“I hold the deepest respect for Deb, along with TAFE Queensland and ATSICHS, for supporting my growth.”

Next, she hopes to complete a **Certificate IV in Training and Assessment** (TAE40122) and eventually mentor others working in child protection and community services.

“I want to replicate the dedication and commitment to upskilling workers in understanding the intersectionality of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander customs and culture with systemic intervention,” Vicki said.

For Vicki, education is not just about career progression – it’s about strengthening capability within the community and ensuring cultural knowledge and professional practice work together. 🌀



# TEACHING WITH CULTURE AND CONNECTION

**From the Torres Strait to Yarrabah and beyond, TAFE Queensland teacher Stacy Walters is helping transform early childhood education across some of Queensland's most remote communities.**

**A** proud Goomeri woman from Gunnedah in New South Wales, Stacy leads the delivery of the **Remote Area Teacher Education Program (RATEP)** in early childhood education and care, supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students across remote communities.

Through the program, Stacy delivers the **Certificate III in Early Childhood Education and Care (CHC30121)** and **Diploma of Early Childhood Education and Care (CHC50121)** across locations

including the Torres Strait and outer islands, residential blocks in Cairns, and community visits to off-site locations such as Doomadgee, Napranum, Yarrabah, Hope Vale, Lockhart River and Kowanyama.

In recognition of her work, Stacy was named a finalist for VET Teacher or Trainer of the Year at the 2025 Queensland Training Awards for the Tropical North region.

“Seeing First Nations students shine – that’s my passion. That’s what drives me every single day,” Stacy said.

Stacy first launched the RATEP early childhood model in 2018, piloting the program in two remote communities with 13 graduates. All secured employment or moved into further study. In 2024, the program produced 40 graduates across seven communities, all of whom are now employed.

“We knew from the start that this wasn’t about fitting students into a box. It was about designing something that fits them – culturally, practically, and personally,” Stacy said.

Her program blends national curriculum with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ways of learning, incorporating story sharing,

learning maps, and community-led discussions.

“I don’t just go into communities and teach. I become part of them. We learn from each other,” she said.

“I know every student. I know their story, their family, what they’re juggling, and how they learn best. That connection matters. It changes everything.”

Delivering training in remote locations also brings challenges.

“Sometimes there’s no internet, no computers, and students are expected to study online. That doesn’t work for everyone,” Stacy said. “If a student says, ‘Miss, I can’t do this online,’ I say, ‘Then do it the way that works for you.’ Handwrite it, talk it out, take a photo – we’ll make it work.”

Stacy says the greatest reward is seeing her students graduate and step into the workforce.

“When they walk into a centre with confidence, knowing they belong in that space and have something valuable to offer, that’s the win,” she said. “That’s what it’s all about.”

With every student and every milestone reached, Stacy Walters continues to transform lives – and shape the future of early childhood education across remote Queensland. 🌍

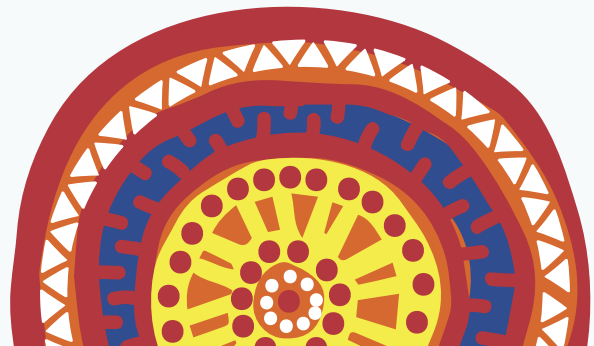


“Seeing First Nations students shine – that’s my passion.”

Stacy Walters



Scan the QR code to learn more about RATEP.



# GRIFFIN CLAPHAM RECOGNISED AS TOP TRADE TALENT

**For proud Torres Strait Islander and Kalkadoon man Griffin Clapham, carpentry is more than a trade – it's the foundation of a better life for his young family.**

**T**he 27-year-old father of two is completing his **Certificate III in Carpentry (CPC30220)** with T.Real.Co., training through TAFE Queensland's **Mount Isa campus**.

His dedication and passion have seen him recognised as the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Trade Student of the Year at the 2025 TAFE Queensland Mount Isa Trade Excellence Awards.

This latest recognition builds on his 2024 success as Building and Industries Apprentice of the Year, cementing his rise as one of Mount Isa's top young tradespeople.

Griffin said his daughters – aged three and one – are the reason he started and the reason he pushes himself for greatness each day.

“When my first daughter was born, I knew I wanted more for her and for our family. That's what pushed me to start my apprenticeship,” he said.

“Now I've got two little girls, and they're my biggest motivation. They were both at the awards this year – my youngest even ran up to the stage while I was accepting the award. It makes me proud that one day they'll see the hard work I put in and know why I did it.”

For Griffin, being recognised at the Trade Excellence Awards was both humbling and motivating.

“It's surreal. Winning makes all the hard work feel worth it – not just the work on the job, but at TAFE Queensland too,” he said.

“I never really knew what I wanted to do until I picked up a hammer. Carpentry just clicked for me. I love it, and I want to be the best tradesman I can be – like the ones I look up to at

work. That drives me to step up – whether it's on site or on campus – and be a role model for other apprentices.”

His employer, Tim Real, said that Griffin has stood out since day one.

“When I first interviewed Griffin, he told me that if I gave him a chance, he wouldn't let me down – and he hasn't,” Tim said.

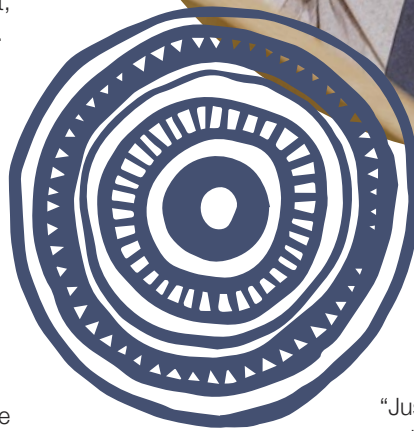
“From the start, he's shown up every day, given 100 per cent, and never stopped asking questions. He's eager to learn and always looking to better himself. That's rare, and it's inspiring to see.”

Tim, who also completed his carpentry apprenticeship with TAFE Queensland in Mount Isa, said Griffin is proof of the value apprentices bring to a business.

“We dedicate time to our apprentices because we want them to succeed. Watching Griffin grow into the tradesman that he's becoming has been one of the most rewarding parts of my career.”



Griffin Clapham



Griffin hopes his journey encourages other young people, especially Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, to give trades a go.

“Just try it. There are no silly questions, and you might just find something that you love doing, like I did.”

Looking ahead, Griffin is focused on becoming the best tradesman he can be, with hopes of one day running his own business.

“For now, I just want to keep learning and improving. Down the track, I'd love to have my own construction business,” he said.

With two Trade Excellence Awards under his belt and a bright career ahead, Griffin is already proving to his daughters – and to himself – that commitment opens doors. 🌀

# ON COUNTRY LEADERSHIP PROGRAM DRIVING STRONGER RANGER TEAMS



**A new leadership and management program delivered through TAFE Queensland Cairns campus is helping First Nations rangers strengthen the skills they need to lead on Country, support their teams, and grow their careers.**

**T**he **Certificate IV in Leadership and Management (BSB40520)** is being delivered to 24 rangers through a collaboration between the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service & Partnerships and TAFE Queensland.

Designed around the realities of ranger work, the program is building practical leadership skills that can be applied in the field, in communities, and within ranger teams across Queensland.

For Troy Johnson, the course is about refining the skills he already uses every day in his role as a coordinator with the Yunbenun Land and Sea Rangers on Yunbenun Country (Magnetic Island).

A Wulgurukaba Country man and future elder, Troy said the training is helping him build stronger

administrative and leadership capability to support his team and community.

“The course has been really solid,” Troy said. “The delivery has been professional, respectful and inclusive, and the content is relevant to the work we do. It’s helping me sharpen my skills so I can deliver more strongly in my role.”

For Troy, being a ranger is about much more than a job title.

“It’s a great way to experience and work on land and sea Country,” he said. “I’ve been lucky enough to work across beautiful parts of sea Country and see everything from reefs, whales, dolphins and other marine life. That connection is powerful.”

He said ranger work offers young people a meaningful pathway if they are willing to learn and put in the effort.

“It’s a rewarding career where you get the chance to work alongside passionate people, protect natural and cultural assets, and be part of something bigger than yourself. It gives you purpose.”

Troy hopes the course will help him continue building his leadership while also strengthening

the systems and structure behind the work.

“I want to keep refining my administrative skills and make sure I’m delivering at the level my role requires,” he said. “That’s what this course is helping me do.”

TAFE Queensland Manager, Centre for First Nations Training, Jeanie McIntosh, said the program shows the value of strong partnerships and training that responds to the needs of First Nations ranger teams.

“This training is about more than a qualification,” Ms McIntosh said. “It’s about giving rangers the opportunity to strengthen their leadership skills in a way that respects who they are, where they come from, and the important work they do on Country. Through strong partnerships, we’re helping build capability that will have lasting impact for communities and future generations.”

As the program continues, its impact is being measured not just in qualifications, but in confidence, capability, and the strength of First Nations leadership growing across Queensland’s land and sea ranger network. 🌀





# JOSIAH TURNS A TRAINEESHIP OPPORTUNITY INTO AN IMPACTFUL HEALTH CAREER

**A traineeship opportunity in 2019 set Josiah Little on a path that would shape his future.**

**A** proud Bandjin and Djakunda man and South Sea Islander, Josiah grew up in Bundaberg surrounded by family and culture – values that continue to guide his work today.

He began his journey as an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Worker trainee, travelling to TAFE Queensland's **Toowoomba campus** to complete his **Certificate III in Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Primary Health Care** (HLT30121).

One qualification quickly led to another with Josiah going on to complete a **Certificate IV in Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Primary Health Care (HLT40121)**, a **Diploma of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Primary Health Care Management (HLT50221)**, and a **Certificate IV in Primary Health Care Practice (HLT40213)**.

"The training I gained from TAFE Queensland unlocked job opportunities and further education," Josiah said. "They enriched my professional and personal life very much so."

He later completed a Graduate Diploma in Indigenous Health Promotion with the University of Sydney in 2024 and a Graduate Certificate in Diabetes Education and Management with James Cook University, becoming

a Credentialed Diabetes Educator through the Australian Diabetes Educators Association.

For Josiah, TAFE Queensland laid the foundation for everything that followed.

"My favourite part was the support," he shared. "The teachers were incredible and took me under their wing."

He credits educators Leanne Morgan and Mandy Beetson for their guidance, along with the culturally safe and flexible learning environment.

"TAFE Queensland created a culturally safe and flexible environment where students could work at their own pace. It made my dreams possible," he explained.

Now based on the Gold Coast, Josiah is a qualified Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Practitioner and Credentialed Diabetes Educator, with experience working across

Queensland, including Bundaberg, Yarrabah, Cherbourg and the Sunshine Coast. He has also led a men's group in his community, supporting connection and wellbeing.

His impact extends beyond the workplace. In 2025, he was a finalist for Channel Seven's Young Achiever Award and performed on the national television show *The Piano*, where he met Harry Connick Jr., who showed interest in his career pathway and Australia's model of community-based primary health care.

Looking ahead, Josiah plans to continue his studies, focusing on areas such as sexual health and diabetes management to further improve long-term outcomes for his community.

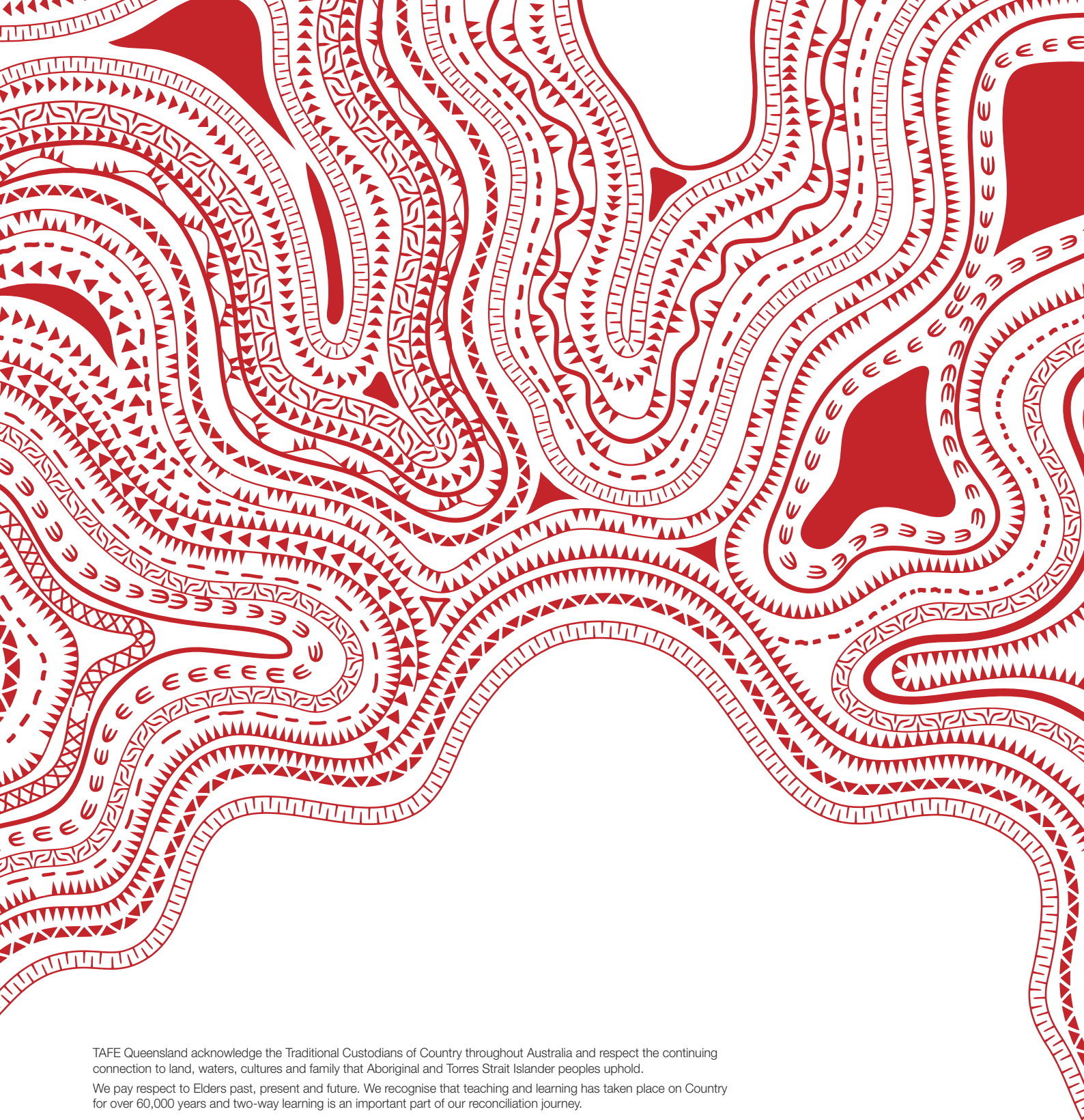
His advice to future students is simple.

"Give it a go. You never know what opportunities will open. Don't let anyone's opinions become a barrier to your future," he said.

Josiah hopes his journey encourages more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to pursue in health, showing what is possible with the right support and opportunity. 🌀



*Josiah Little*



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 2026. For the most up-to-date information refer to our website at [tafeqld.edu.au](http://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](http://tafeqld.edu.au/rap) to view the Reconciliation Action Plan.

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