



TOTEMS

NEWSLETTER

SEMESTER II 2025 EDITION

PHILLIP MOOKA NAMED OUTSTANDING APPRENTICE OF THE YEAR



Cookery apprentice Phillip Mooka, 35, has claimed the top title at the TAFE Queensland 2025 Cairns Trade Excellence Awards, held in July.

Over 2,500 apprentices and trainees train with **TAFE Queensland in Cairns and Far North Queensland**, and Phillip emerged victorious, claiming the trophies for Cookery Apprentice of the Year and the night's top prize, Outstanding Apprentice of the Year.

Phillip completed his **Certificate III in Commercial Cookery (SIT30821)** at TAFE Queensland's Cairns campus, doing his apprenticeship at Salt House restaurant in the heart of the city.

"I am Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander – my clans are Wagadagam from Mabuiag Island in the Torres Strait, as well as Ankamuthi from Cape York, Gunggandji from Yarrabah and Cairns region, and Djiru from Clump Point, Mission Beach," Phillip said. "I am also Samoan and South Sea Islander descent from Vanuatu."

"I'm proud to have even been nominated, let alone win," Phillip said. "It means a lot to be recognised for doing something I love."

"I started off doing dishes at Salt House, and I just knew I wanted to be in the kitchen. I've been lucky to work with great people, and I'm thankful to my teachers at TAFE Queensland for helping me build my skills."

"I'm happy with where I'm at, but I'm also excited to see what's next."

Nominated by both his employer and teacher, Phillip was praised for his creativity, professionalism, and


commitment to growth – both personally and as a team player.

His teacher noted Phillip's exceptional food presentation, mentorship of classmates, and strong ethics. "Phil always checks his seasoning and ensures that the food is cooked correctly. He works well with others and is always willing to help."

Almost 100 nominations were received for the 2025 TAFE Queensland Cairns Trade Excellence Awards, and the judges shortlisted 39 finalists.

TAFE Queensland North region Director of Educational Delivery for Trades and Transport, Maree Butler, said the event was a powerful reminder of the impact of vocational education.

"Nights like this give us the opportunity to celebrate all that our students have achieved," Ms Butler said. "Their stories reflect the skill, dedication and heart that define the future of our trades workforce."

The 2025 Cairns Trade Excellence Awards were made possible thanks to the generous support of our Platinum sponsor Cairns Hardware. 



Phillip Mooka

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**MAKE
GREAT
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Rose McMahon

STANDING STRONG FOR HER PEOPLE

TAFE Queensland employee Rose McMahon shared her story at the launch of TAFE Queensland's Stretch Reconciliation Action Plan.

Standing in front of a crowd with a microphone in hand, young Yugambah and Santo woman Rose McMahon is taking every opportunity she can to bring a voice to her people.

"Growing up I always felt out of place and a lack of connection to my culture, this played a huge toll on how I saw myself and because of this I became a strong advocate for First Nations people to be a voice for those who can't be for themselves," the committed woman said as she addressed the audience at TAFE Queensland's launch of their Stretch Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP).

Endorsed by Reconciliation Australia, this **Stretch RAP** is a strategic document that outlines TAFE Queensland's commitment to advancing reconciliation by fostering strong relationships, respect, and opportunities for First Nations peoples.

"As an Indigenous woman, I stand here today with pride to share my story. I come from a family that hasn't had the opportunity to pursue formal education or stable employment, so being

here is not just about breaking the cycle for my family – it's about challenging stereotypes and creating change for all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples," Rose said.

“I became a strong advocate for First Nations people to be a voice for those who can't be for themselves.”

In 2023, Rose started a traineeship with TAFE Queensland, relishing in the opportunity to work while completing a **Certificate III in Business (BSB30120)**, with the role quickly turning into a permanent position.

"Working for TAFE has not stopped my passion, love or pride for my culture or our history. It has given me the privilege of engaging with Indigenous guest speakers, as well as representatives from small enterprises and major corporations. I have been given gateways to opportunities and experiences that I could have never imagined," Rose said.

"Without these opportunities I would not have the confidence to stand here and speak to you all today."

Rose was supported by more than 50 people at an event at TAFE Queensland's South Bank campus,

where staff and students shared their reconciliation journey and their thoughts about the value of the new Reconciliation Action Plan.

The Stretch RAP, the third iteration for TAFE Queensland, builds on previous RAPs, setting ambitious goals and actions to create a more inclusive and equitable environment for all.

TAFE Queensland Chief Executive Officer John Tucker said the RAP was a step forward in the organisation's commitment to create lasting and meaningful change.

"At TAFE Queensland, we believe that vocational education and training has a key role to play in achieving a united Australia, one where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples participate equally and equitably in all aspects of life," Mr Tucker said. 🌐

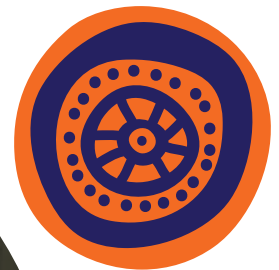


Scan the QR code to learn more about TAFE Queensland's Stretch Reconciliation Action Plan.





VIVIENNE CREATES MEANINGFUL CHANGE FOR HER MOB AND COMMUNITY



When Vivienne Nickels talks about her study journey, it's clear she's walking with purpose – grounded in culture, driven by community, and focused on creating change.

A proud Arrernt, Bardi and Wullli Wullli woman, Vivienne is studying the **Certificate IV in Adult Tertiary Preparation (11240NAT)** (ATP) program at TAFE Queensland's South Bank campus.

She aims to eventually build and lead Indigenous-led support programs grounded in her personal and professional experience, strengthened by education.

Born in Darwin and raised in Alice Springs, Vivienne grew up surrounded by her First Nations culture, language and community.

"I grew up basically in pure hardship – you must be strong to thrive in Alice Springs," Vivienne said.

After graduating from high school, Vivienne went straight into work, carving out a deeply impactful career in community service.

Starting in childcare and moving into youth work, aged care, disability support, cultural inclusion programs, and outreach services across Central Australia, she built a career in helping her culture.

"I mostly worked in Indigenous organisations helping Aboriginal people because that just comes second nature to me," she said.

"Whether it was getting kids into boarding school, camping out bush, or taking Elders out hunting – I'm all about helping people do the things they love but can't access without support."

Vivienne Nickels



Her work took her from the heart of the Western Desert to the Barkly Region, combining grassroots support with behind-the-scenes program planning, data analysis and reporting to help keep vital services funded and running.

But eventually, she hit a wall.

"I got tired of being part of programs that weren't working. So, I decided that I wanted a career designing and leading support programs that are effective, culturally safe, and built the right way, by the mob, for the mob," she explained.

"To do that, I need an education that formalises my knowledge and experience to start and lead cultural inclusion programs on my terms, with the qualifications to back it up."

That dream brought Vivienne to TAFE Queensland, with her ATP course being the first step in her journey to university, where she'll complete a double degree in Communications and Arts, majoring in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies and Political Science.


For Vivienne, TAFE Queensland has offered a level of support she had not previously experienced.

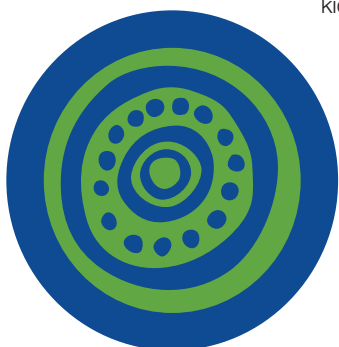
She is thriving with access to knowledgeable and experienced teachers, **Indigenous student support, Studiosity, counselling, library services**, and a campus community that's warm and inclusive.

"TAFE Queensland offers students so much support – there's just too much to fail. As long as you show up and try, you'll have TAFE people in your corner helping you get through," she says.

"Indigenous Outcomes Officer Morgan Cotter has also been a massive help. She's created a safe space in the Indigenous Learning Centre's Kurilpa Room, a dedicated study space for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, and she always checks in."

Despite being one of the older students in her class, she's found support and motivation among her peers – and a clear path forward.

"I want to show others – especially mob – that you can go to TAFE and university and create something powerful from your own story," Vivienne concluded. 



FELICITY'S SECOND CHANCE AT LEARNING



Felicity Crowe

A proud Gunnedarr woman from the Kamilaroi tribe, Felicity Crowe is proving that anything is possible with the right support.

Felicity knows what it means to start again. She had rarely been to school and was placed in care at 10 years old when her mother could no longer look after her.

At 17, Felicity graduated from TAFE Queensland with a **Diploma of Early Childhood Education and Care (CHC50121)** – and she's just getting started.

"I hadn't been to school in my younger years and now at 17, I've graduated with a Diploma of Early Childhood Education and Care from TAFE Queensland," Felicity said.

Not only did she graduate – she was awarded the Education Student of the

Year and received the major Excellence Award at the ceremony.

"I was so excited. My whole face lit up when I walked up on stage. I couldn't believe all my hard work had finally paid off," she said.

"All of those hours of studying, all that time on placement, and securing a full-time job – everything came together in that moment."

Studying at the **Robina campus** on the Gold Coast, Felicity found more than just an education – she found a community of supportive teachers and people who believed in her.

Her journey started with the love and support of her aunt and uncle, who took her in and helped her find her way forward.

"They always told me not to let my past define my future," Felicity said.

"They saw something in me before I saw it in myself."

Her aunt noticed her natural way of caring for others – especially her younger siblings – and encouraged her to turn that gift into a career.

Together, they visited a local childcare centre, where Felicity learned about TAFE Queensland. That was the start of something new.

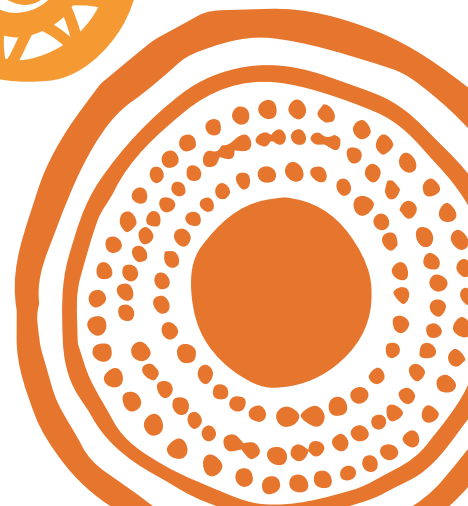
Felicity embraces her culture and hopes to share it with the next generation through her work in the early childhood sector.

"I want to teach children about Indigenous culture from a young age – through storytelling, music and nature," she said.

"It's important that all kids, no matter their background, grow up understanding First Nations culture."

She dreams of taking her diploma further, with plans to study a Bachelor degree and become a primary school teacher.

Her message to other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students thinking about studying with TAFE Queensland is simple: "No matter how old or young you are, you can always do something with your life. You are worth so much, and anything is possible." 🌀





FINDING STRENGTH THROUGH STUDY

For proud Meriam Mir (Murray Island) woman and Townsville mum of three, Aleshia Morris, finishing her community services course was about much more than study – it was about proving to herself and her children that she could rise above the toughest challenges and create a new path forward.

Graduating with a Certificate III in Community Services (CHC32015) at TAFE Queensland's Townsville (Pimlico) campus has already opened life-changing doors for Aleshia.

She now works full-time as a Connector with **Community Gro** and Connected Beginnings, a program that helps women and families in the community find the right support and access services.

It's a role that feels deeply personal, as Aleshia first found inspiration in Community Gro's women's group.

"That group gave me hope," she said. "It was a safe space to sit with other women, yarn, and realise we weren't alone. That support planted the seed for me to study and eventually give back in the same way."

The journey there wasn't straightforward. Before beginning her course, Aleshia faced past trauma that once made study feel like an impossible dream. But her lived experience ended up giving her the strength, perspective, and a determination to make the most of the opportunity when she walked into her first class.

Along the way, she discovered that the classroom wasn't just a place to learn new skills – it was a place to rebuild her confidence.

"I opened up to my classmates because I wanted to share my journey

and firsthand experience with community services," she said.

"When other students opened up too, we realised how many of us had been through similar things. We supported each other, gave each other advice, and walked out proud of what we'd achieved."



Aleshia Morris

Travelling two buses each way from her home in Rasmussen to class, Aleshia kept showing up, even on the days she felt overwhelmed.

One moment in particular stood out. Aleshia stood before her peers and delivered a heartfelt speech that brought the class to tears – including her teacher.

Community services teacher, Adi Hayden, said Aleshia left a lasting impression.

"Aleshia brought so much heart to the classroom. She reminded me that teaching isn't just about giving knowledge, it's about learning from students too. That's what two-way learning is all about."

That sense of connection has carried through into her new career.

"I know what it's like to feel like there's nowhere to turn, and I don't want anyone else to feel that way," she said.

"I can walk alongside families, share my own journey, and show them that change is possible. That's what being my job means to me."

Community Gro CEO, Kathrin Meehan, said Aleshia's contribution is already being felt across the community.


"We're so proud of the incredible work Aleshia is doing to support the community in her role. Her dedication and care make a real difference in the lives of local families every day," she said.

Her children remain her biggest motivation.

"They saw me stressed, tired, and sometimes ready to give up – but they also saw me keep going. Now they know that if mum can do it, they can too," Aleshia said.

"I wanted them to see that if you want something, you go for it. Don't wait for it to come to you."

In her new role, Aleshia is combining her training with the lessons life has taught her – transforming her challenges into a source of strength for others.

"If you're thinking about studying – do it. Do it for yourself, do it for your kids. Don't let anything hold you back. Women especially – we're capable of so much." 

SHAPING THE NEXT GENERATION OF EDUCATORS

For proud Walkaman and Bardi man Warren Clements, teaching is about more than delivering units and marking assessments. It's about carrying culture, guiding students, and making sure the next generation of First Nations educators feel empowered to share their own stories.

Today, Warren teaches the Certificate III in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education (11212NAT) and Diploma of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education (11214NAT) through the Remote Area Teacher Education Program (RATEP). But his path into education started in a very different setting – on stage.

"I started in the performing arts as part of the Tjapukai Dance Theatre," Warren said. "For 23 years I was a lead performer, sharing Aboriginal culture through dance and theatre, both here in Australia and around the world."

Warren built an international career in the performing arts, always finding ways to connect audiences to culture. Over more than two decades he performed across the globe – from Good Morning America to the Sydney Opera House, and for Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II. Even today, he continues to perform, most recently travelling to Morocco for a cultural exchange with the Amazigh people of the Atlas Mountains.

Warren's background in performance turned out to be the perfect foundation for teaching.

"As a performer, you learn to read body language, to engage people, to keep an audience with you," he said. "In the classroom, it's the same. A lot of communication is nonverbal, and I can use those skills to guide students in a way that feels supportive and natural."

He also draws deeply from his cultural knowledge.

"As First Nations people, we don't just learn through theory and writing. We learn through story, through practice, through listening and watching. I bring

that same approach into my teaching. It's about two-way learning – I'm not just teaching students, I'm also learning from them."

Warren's own study journey inspired him to take the leap into teaching. After completing his own **Diploma of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education (11214NAT)** through RATEP in 2021, he felt ready to pass on the knowledge he'd gained. When the opportunity came up to teach in the program, he didn't hesitate.

For Warren, RATEP is more than just a training program.

"RATEP is rare, sacred even. I haven't seen another program like it in all my years," he said. "It doesn't just give students the mainstream skills they

need to become teacher aides – it nurtures them, and it values their culture as part of that journey."

One of the most powerful aspects of the program, Warren says, is how it centres students' identities.

"From the very beginning, assessments ask students to talk about their mob, their upbringing, their culture. For some, it's the first time they've ever been asked to share that in an education setting. And what they share can be so powerful it brings me to tears."

Although he has only been teaching in RATEP for a short time, Warren says he's already been deeply moved by his students' journeys.

"One of the units asks certificate III students – some of them just 16 or 17 – to create a presentation about themselves," he said. "They talk about their family, their challenges, their goals. The depth and honesty they show is incredible."

“Every time a student shares their story, they’re leaving their footprints in the red soil.”

Warren Clements





For Warren, these moments are a reminder of why he teaches.

"It's such an honour to be part of that process. When I read or listen to their stories, I feel proud, I feel humbled – and I also feel like I'm learning from them."

Warren never forgets where he came from. After decades performing and sharing culture with audiences around the world, he now sees his role as guiding others to do the same in their own way.

"Every time a student shares their story, they're leaving their footprints in the red soil," he said. "That will never be forgotten. RATEP gives them the chance to take their cultural knowledge and use it in the classroom to support the next generation. That's powerful."

His message to those considering the program is simple.

"Don't be afraid. RATEP will ask you to share your culture and your identity, and that's a strength, not something to fear. If you want to work in education and make a difference in your community, this program is for you."

For Warren, teaching has become the perfect way to bring his passion for culture, performance, and education together.

"I've always been about sharing knowledge – whether it was through dance, theatre, or now in the classroom. Teaching with RATEP gives me the chance to keep doing that, and to help others step forward with pride in who they are." 🌀



Scan the QR code to learn more about the Remote Area Teacher Education Program.



CODY BUILDS HIS FUTURE

Cody Chambers

Carpentry apprentice Cody Chambers is a big advocate for TAFE Queensland training – and he's no stranger to it, either. Before taking up carpentry, Cody studied rural operations and animal studies through TAFE at School.

Cody is now a second-year apprentice with QBuild, studying his **Certificate III in Carpentry (CPC30220)** through block training and continuing to make the most of the tools and training available at TAFE Queensland's **Ipswich campus**.

"I'm not the first in my family to go to TAFE Queensland – my brother studied mechanics at Ipswich, where I study," Cody began.

"TAFE Queensland Ipswich is convenient – I live in Goodna, so it's only 15 minutes' drive away. Plus QBuild, my employer, partners with TAFE Queensland for training – so I was happy with that too."

"My training involves attending one-week intensive blocks, and I come to campus for these blocks a number of times each year," Cody explained.

Cody is currently based at a QBuild site at Eagle Farm, but his apprenticeship has taken him to work across the state – including on multiple TAFE Queensland campuses.

"For work, I have been to multiple TAFE Queensland campuses from here in Ipswich to Townsville, and they have been really good facilities to work at," he said.

QBuild, the Queensland Government's official building and maintenance provider, plays a vital role in delivering and maintaining essential public infrastructure – from schools and hospitals to TAFE Queensland campuses, housing, and more.

Cody said the hands-on variety of the course has been a highlight of his training so far.

"I've liked the variety of my course – learning how to build simple scaffolds to even framing a house, and then doing form base and leveling outside," he said.

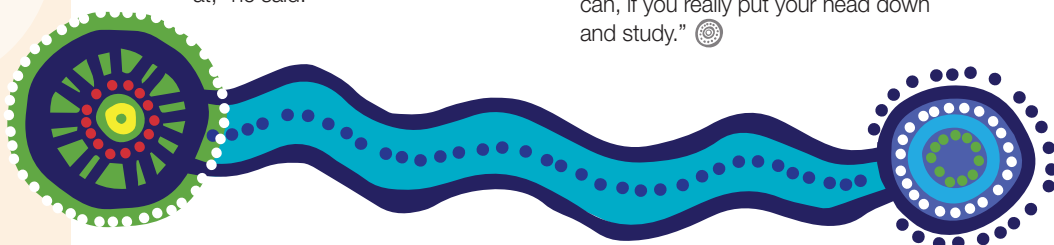
"Also, in the theory component there's a lot of math to carpentry. So, if there were certain formulas that I had any trouble with, I'd always ask teachers, and they'd always explain things and help us out."

Through his work with QBuild, Cody also supports recovery relief and modular housing builds – gaining practical experience in transporting and constructing homes from the ground up.

"When I graduate, I would love to go on and be a builder – learn the 'ins and outs' of the trade and also the 'ins and outs' of a construction site," Cody said.

Outside of carpentry, Cody is focused on health and fitness – and when asked what greatness means to him, he named NRL legend Johnathan Thurston as a role model.

Cody followed that up with: "I'd say 'greatness' to me would be to just stick with it and do the work and get your apprenticeship completed as fast as you can, if you really put your head down and study." 🌀



FROM SUPER MUM TO MENTAL HEALTH ADVOCATE

Tamara Solien, is pursuing her passion for supporting others by helping the First Nations community to find their strength, overcome their challenges, and embrace their futures after completing a Certificate IV in Mental Health (CHC43315) online through TAFE Queensland.

A proud Torres Strait Islander woman with a connection to Badu Island, Tamara has successfully turned her compassionate and caring nature into a career supporting others as a mental health support worker with Staying Deadly Hub – a service run by the Institute for Urban Indigenous Health that provides specialised mental health care to mob across Southeast Queensland.

After 11 years as a stay-at-home mum of five, Tamara enrolled in the **Certificate IV in Mental Health (CHC43315)** to better understand the challenges her brothers were facing and to keep her mind active after being out of the workforce.

“The idea of returning to study and work was so scary after being out of the workforce for so long, so I wanted to make sure I was pursuing something I was passionate about,” Tamara said.

“If I was going to be stepping back from being a full-time mum to my kids, it needed to be worth it – I had to get real fulfilment from it. I really loved this course and found it super interesting.”

Balancing study and parenting, Tamara completed her course in June 2025, supported by the flexibility of online learning.

“The online space was great and enabled me to have my youngest with me while I studied,” she said. “While it was hard work, the fact

that I could catch up on classes and do it at my own pace was perfect. I would even play my class recordings and listen to them while I was in the car driving.”

“The teachers were amazing too, and if I didn’t understand something or needed that extra guidance, they were always so supportive and helpful.”

Throughout her studies, Tamara juggled major life responsibilities – including experiencing grief, family care, and planning her wedding – all within the same 12 months.

“I was trying to be an anchor for everyone while achieving my own goals and planning a wedding on top of all of that, so it was incredibly stressful. There were many times where I almost dropped the course so I could just focus on everything else that was going on, but I’m so glad I pushed through.”

Her placement at The Murri School reinforced how much supporting others meant to her – especially other Indigenous mothers.

“I felt particularly drawn to helping Indigenous mums. Being a mum myself and going back to study, I lacked confidence in myself and worried

I wasn’t smart enough, so I wanted to support other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander mothers who felt the same,” Tamara said.

She then completed a placement with Ipswich-based First Nations mental health service Staying Deadly Hub, where she made such an impact that she was offered a role after graduation.

“When I stepped into placement with Staying Deadly, I was terrified, but it felt so amazing to play a role in supporting the clients they let me sit in on. I honestly feel so lucky to have a job I love with a team who are doing such amazing work. This is my reward for sticking it out with my studies, despite the challenges. I absolutely love it,” Tamara said.

Now working as a mental health wellbeing support worker, Tamara helps clients navigate difficult appointments and access care in a safe, supported environment.

“Seeing someone leave a session in a lighter mood and better headspace, and knowing that I helped, is just so rewarding.”

“For a lot of Indigenous Australians, there is a lot of distrust in the system, and a fear of hospitals and institutions, so having a service like this that is in a more relaxed space and that provides support from people who understand and have that lived experience is so important,” Tamara said.

Still early in her career, Tamara is focused on the future – with her sights set on becoming a care coordinator.

“I would love to get to that point. It’s been amazing to put everything I’ve learned into practice,” Tamara said. 🌀



Tamara Solien

BREAKING GROUNDS BEYOND THE MINES



Leaving behind the red dust of Cape York for the bright lights of Brisbane, Savannah Jia-Craige is choosing education over pay, and using her new skills to help her people find a voice.

As a proud Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander woman from the Yidinji clan of Gordonvale and Komet clan of Mer Island, Savannah called the tiny bauxite mining town Weipa – on the western Cape York peninsula – home. Like many of her friends and family, she believed her future was in mining.

“Living so remotely, I experienced lack of opportunity and a lack of higher education. In school I was an average performing student, I had no sense of career direction and did what most Indigenous kids do there, join the mining industry,” Savannah said.

“After spending seven years in the mines, I faced a loss of purpose. It took a toll on my mental health and wellbeing. I knew that I needed to change something in my life.”

Moving more than 2000km from home, from a tiny remote town to the city, “taking a massive pay cut”, Savannah was presented with a life changing opportunity to join the **Queensland Government’s First Nations Digital Program (FNDP)** that is enabling her to earn while she learns.

The FNDP, in partnership with Microsoft, is designed specifically for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who are keen to explore opportunities in the digital industry – no prior experience needed.

Employed as a trainee with eHealth Queensland, Savannah is also the proud recipient of a TAFE Queensland Scholarship and is completing a **Certificate III in Information Technology (ICT30120)**.

“This course is taught virtually, allowing Indigenous students from all areas of Queensland to join. We have students from Yarrabah, Longreach, Rockhampton, Ipswich, Brisbane, and Hervey Bay,” Savannah said.

“Even with a virtual learning environment we have built meaningful connections. Classes are an enjoyable safe space to share stories and engage in creative learning. Our teacher Jeff is passionate about his job and shows deep dedication and respect while teaching Indigenous students.”

“I’m very grateful for the opportunity that the Queensland Government and TAFE Queensland has provided me. Although I have had a dramatic decrease in salary since leaving the mining industry, I chose to prioritise my education.”

Savannah recently shared her story at the launch of TAFE Queensland’s

Stretch Reconciliation Action Plan – using the opportunity to recognise the challenges faced by First Nations peoples.

“I’m very fortunate to come from a family that encourages education, but not all Indigenous people have that experience,” Savannah said.

“Growing up remotely means I’ve witnessed firsthand the challenges we face as First Nations people – educational gaps such as numeracy and literacy skills being below national benchmarks.

“Through education and opportunity, we can increase Indigenous employment, build confidence and self-determination, remove shame culture, and increase community development.”

Savannah hopes to continue her education with higher qualifications and encourages First Nations peoples to step out of their comfort zone and let their voice be heard. 🗣️



Scan the QR code to learn more about TAFE Queensland Scholarships.



Savannah Jia-Craige and her teacher Jeff Rozen at the launch of TAFE Queensland's Stretch Reconciliation Action Plan.

PROJECT MANAGEMENT EMPOWERS ANNETTE'S FUTURE

For proud Pitta Pitta and Waluwarra woman Annette Radecker, studying with TAFE Queensland was more than just a career move – it was the realisation of a lifelong goal.

A seasoned project administrator, Annette had worked in the industry for more than a decade when she decided to formalise her skills through the **Diploma of Project Management (BSB50820)** at TAFE Queensland's **South Bank campus**.

"I'd wanted to complete accredited training since 1989, but raising young children as a single parent made it difficult to find the time and support needed to study," Annette explained.

She previously studied with TAFE Queensland's **Mount Isa campus**, studying business administration with the support of her family, friends, and teachers.

"I had fond memories of studying with TAFE in Mount Isa," she said.

"It provided a great foundation, and I felt safe with my peers and teachers supporting me. That experience taught me that no matter your educational background, even if you didn't finish high school, you're never too old to get an education."

In 2021, Annette was encouraged by family to take the next step.

A discussion with her sister, who provided motivation and support, reignited her passion to formalise her skills and overcome the barriers she faced when applying for roles without formal qualifications.

She enrolled in the **Diploma of Project Management (BSB50820)** at TAFE Queensland's South Bank campus and found the support she needed.

"Although I was completely overwhelmed initially, the teachers

reassured me that my feelings were normal and guided me. TAFE Queensland's training environment was relaxed, supportive and encouraging, which made all the difference," she said.

Through the course, Annette gained formal skills in managing project scopes, budgets, risks and quality – and developed confidence in new tools like Microsoft Project.

She now uses those skills every day in her current role as Project Administrator with LFF Australia, supporting the delivery of major gas and energy infrastructure across Australia and South-East Asia.

She also leads LFF Australia's Reflect Reconciliation Action Plan, helping build

culturally respectful relationships on major projects.

"This training gave me back my confidence, both personally and professionally. I'm now much more confident about pursuing new career paths and continuing to study," she explained.

Her goal now is to mentor others and use her project management skills to give back to her community in Mount Isa and Boulia.

"If you're ever given the opportunity, take it. Don't delay. If you're unsure, anxious or nervous - that's normal. Just reach out to TAFE Queensland, ask questions, and you'll be supported every step of the way," she concluded. 🌀



Annette Radecker



BRINGING RAP ARTWORK TO LIFE

At TAFE Queensland's Acacia Ridge campus, staff and students are helping to bring the organisation's Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) Artwork 'Connecting Knowledge – Connecting Cultures' to life through a striking new mosaic project.

Led by the campus tiling team, the mosaic draws directly from elements of the RAP artwork and will continue to grow throughout the year, with contributions from staff, students, and partners.

Begun in NAIDOC Week and contributed to in its first weeks by TAFE Queensland Board Chair Viv Grayson, Board Member Professor Jody Currie, Chief Executive Officer John Tucker, Brisbane Broncos players, students, and members of TAFE Queensland's RAP Committee following the Stretch RAP launch, this project will serve as an example piece for students for years to come and will contribute greatly to the campus.

Business Manager Support Officer for Finishing Trades at Acacia Ridge, proud Waka Waka woman Kerrie Ramsay, and tiling teacher Grant Job, began the project to represent TAFE Queensland's commitment to reconciliation in a way that resonated with and involved students and staff.

"As an Indigenous person, and with Grant's children also being Indigenous, this project holds deep significance for us," Ms Ramsay said.

"I'm incredibly proud to be part of something so meaningful and symbolic."

"To share this project already with members of the TAFE Queensland Board, the RAP Committee, and the Brisbane Broncos alongside our students and staff has been amazing," she said. 🌀





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, October 2025. 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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