



TOTEMS

NEWSLETTER

SEMESTER II 2024 EDITION

BRIDGING CULTURES AND TRANSFORMING HEALTHCARE

Jade Anderson, at just 25 years old, is paving the way for a new era in healthcare.

As a nursing student at TAFE Queensland on the Gold Coast, Jade is on a mission to bridge cultures in the healthcare landscape.

Raised in the Northern Territory, Jade's formative years significantly shaped her identity and aspirations. She experienced firsthand the richness of Indigenous culture through community elders and traditional teachings.

"The connection to nature and the holistic approach to health and wellbeing deeply ingrained within Indigenous culture are not just parts of my identity, but fuel my professional goals," said Jade.

"I believe that Indigenous traditions offer invaluable wisdom for modern healthcare practices," she said.

Jade's path towards nursing was ignited after administering life-saving CPR to a family friend at just 18-years-old, and then a few years later, assisting a miracle birth.

"These lifechanging moments highlighted the importance of nursing and solidified my determination to become a nurse and they continue serve as constant reminders of the privilege and responsibility that come with being a nurse," she said.

When selecting an educational institution to provide hands-on, real-world learning,

TAFE Queensland was the clear choice for Jade.

"Recognising the importance of beginning my nursing journey with a solid educational grounding, TAFE Queensland emerged as the natural fit for me."


"TAFE Queensland's **Southport campus** has facilities that mirror a real hospital environment, and my teachers are practicing nurses that share their wisdom and experiences. Meanwhile the curriculum equips me with the practical skills and confidence necessary for success in my future endeavours."

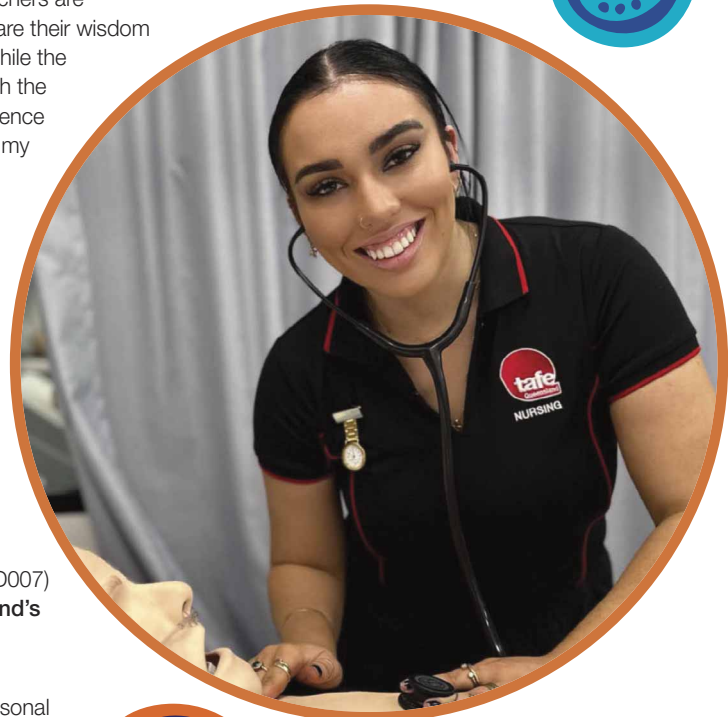
"Studying at TAFE Queensland is such an immersive and wonderful experience," Jade said.

Upon completing the **Diploma of Nursing (HLT54121)**, Jade secured a graduate position as an Enrolled Nurse and plans to continue to study the Bachelor of Nursing (HED007) through **TAFE Queensland's pathway to become a Registered Nurse.**

Her goal extends her personal achievements; she aims integrate Indigenous practices and wisdom into mainstream healthcare.


"My ultimate dream is to establish one of Australia's premier Indigenous birthing centres, where First Nations practices are harmoniously blended with Western medicine to deliver holistic care."

"I am compelled to establish a clinic that prioritises compassionate, culturally sensitive healthcare," Jade concluded. 



Jade Anderson

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MAKE GREAT HAPPEN



SCHOLARSHIP HELPS JASMIN BUILD A BRIGHTER FUTURE

Jasmin Corby is on a journey to turn her passion for woodwork into a successful carpentry career, supported by a TAFE Queensland scholarship. The proud Kungarakan and Gurindji woman aims to inspire more First Nations women to enter the industry.

At just 20 years old, Hervey Bay resident Jasmin is among those making the most of the expected 18.9 per cent growth in employment opportunities for carpenters and joiners across the Wide Bay region over the next five years.

Her apprenticeship is the crucial first step toward her dream of owning a building company and helping First Nations people, particularly women, thrive in the field.

From a young age, Jasmin was drawn to building and creating. She excelled in woodworking as a teenager, winning two high school prizes and the Young Cultural Award of the Year at the Fraser Coast Regional Council's Australia Day Awards in 2022 for her efforts to promote cultural expression through woodwork.

When it came time to decide on a career, it was clear to Jasmin that construction was the right path. However, choosing her career wasn't always straightforward. "When I was in high school, I wanted to get into carpentry, but I was told that because I had good grades, I should go to uni," Jasmin recalled.

"The head of department at my school was an engineer and told me to look into that, so I thought I'd give it a shot and did a semester in a dual degree in landscape architecture and civil engineering."

Realising that the computer-heavy focus of that degree wasn't for her, Jasmin decided to follow her true

“**Being Indigenous and female, it has not always been easy stepping into traditionally male-dominated spaces, and it is my hope that I will be able to make it easier for others.**”

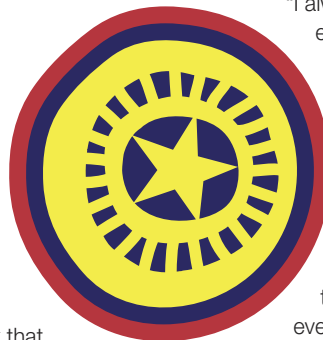
passion. "I'm not the sort of person to sit in front of a computer all day. I like working with my hands and wanted to do the kind of work that would allow a project to come to life rather than be a design on a screen," Jasmin said.

"So, I reached out to a family friend to start an apprenticeship in carpentry, and I haven't looked back since."

Now employed by Cam Killen Constructions, Jasmin is pursuing a **Certificate III in Carpentry (CPC30220)** at no cost under the Queensland Government's **Free Apprenticeships for U25s** funding program and has been able to continue her qualification stress-free after receiving a TAFE Queensland scholarship.



Jasmin Corby



"I always wanted to take every opportunity that came by. By completing a **Certificate III in Carpentry (CPC30220)** through TAFE Queensland, I hope to gain skills that will allow me to eventually build or buy property for myself and my family," Jasmin said.

"Life is expensive at the moment, so the scholarship in particular has really helped take the pressure off by covering the cost of tools and transport to and from jobs."

Now in the second year of her apprenticeship, Jasmin is discovering new aspects of her apprenticeship that she enjoys.

"My boss takes on a lot of jobs that require us to travel and I get to meet a lot of different people. And you're interacting with plenty of other handy



people too, so I've been able to make some great connections," Jasmin said.

"But really, I'm just loving learning the whole process of building and about all the different ways there are to do things."

While she focuses on completing her qualification and gaining experience, Jasmin is also immensely proud of her culture and is eager to use her journey to inspire and support others in her community.

"I think, historically, First Nations people haven't been allowed to be loud and proud, but the more loud and proud we are, the more others will be too – just as the more we encourage and provide opportunities for others to step up and do their best, the more we'll see them succeed," Jasmin said.

"My ultimate goal would be to start my own Indigenous-owned and operated business prioritising the employment of other First Nations carpenters."

"I want to continue on to do my building and construction licence so I can work on a wider range of projects, and then eventually I'd like to approach high schools in the area to offer other Indigenous students, and hopefully girls like me, apprenticeships in carpentry."

"Being Indigenous and female, it has not always been easy stepping into traditionally male-dominated spaces, and it is my hope that I will be able to make it easier for others. I want to show that if I can do it, they can do it too."

Jasmin encourages other young women considering an apprenticeship to follow their passion. "If it's a career you're interested in, get in and do it. It's not as daunting as you think," she concluded. 🌐

TRAINEESHIP OPENS THE DOOR TO A CAREER IN CARING

Shaun Lucas always knew he wanted a career in caring and now that he's qualified and working in his ideal job, he couldn't be happier that he listened to himself and never gave up.

Thanks to a partnership between TAFE Queensland and BlueCare, Shaun recently completed a **Certificate III in Individual Support (Ageing)** (CHC33021) while working as a personal carer in Mareeba.

"The cost was always prohibitive which is why I wasn't able to do this earlier," the proud Tagalaka man and recent graduate said.

"The traineeship was such a great opportunity because I was able to earn while I was learning."

After 12 months of working and studying, Shaun is now fully qualified and using his new skills to benefit those most in need in the regional town, west of Cairns.

"Every day I have such a feeling of satisfaction knowing that I have helped someone else's day be a little bit better, even it was just as simple as keeping someone company," he said.

"At the end of the day, this is a job that makes me feel really good."

BlueCare is an agency of UnitingCare, the health and community arm of the Uniting Church of Queensland and has been operating since 1953.

BlueCare is Queensland's largest, and trusted providers, delivering in-home care and residential aged care services right across the state.

To help fill the need for more qualified carers, BlueCare recently began offering traineeships for people to commence work while building their skills and knowledge.

Strategic Workforce Partnerships People and Culture Group, UnitingCare Manager, Michelle Templin, said the phenomenal success of BlueCare's training partnerships has resulted in benefits not only for the organisation, but most importantly for the community members in need of the services.

"Our investment in training our people is helping improve productivity, workforce utilisation and retention. Anecdotal evidence, through monthly check-ins with our trainees, indicates that the traineeships are helping to enhance employee engagement and loyalty, and our excellent retention results support this," Ms Templin said. 🌐



Shaun Lucas

TAHNEE'S VISION FOR A MORE INCLUSIVE BEAUTY INDUSTRY



Tahnee Bell



make them proud as we openly step into the world of beauty.”

Tahnee also extended a heartfelt thanks to Indigenous Student Support Officer, Morgan Cotter, whose encouragement and support helped them achieve their study goals.

“Morgan inspired me to take responsibility and commit to studying, and her encouragement helped me to finish my diploma – I’m very grateful for it, and I wouldn’t be here without it,” Tahnee noted.

Tahnee’s experience at TAFE Queensland has been transformative. With industry-standard training and a nurturing community, they were able to overcome doubts, face challenges, and achieve their dreams. The hands-on approach and inclusive environment at TAFE Queensland have been key to their success.

As Tahnee steps into the beauty industry, they’re driven by passion, creativity, inclusivity, and a desire to redefine beauty standards.

Tahnee’s journey is an inspiration to all who face obstacles. Their dedication to inclusivity and their vision for the beauty industry will undoubtedly make a lasting difference.

“Now is our time, and we must redefine the industry or be on the wrong side of history,” Tahnee concluded. 🌀

Tahnee’s journey into beauty therapy is a testament to resilience, inclusivity, and the power of community support.

As a proud Wirldi and Burri Gubba person with Autism and ADHD, Tahnee Bell’s path has been marked by both challenges and triumphs.

Yet, through their determination and the incredible support from TAFE Queensland, they have completed their **Diploma of Beauty Therapy (Spa Treatments)** (SHB50121) and are set to redefine beauty standards for everyone.

From the outset, Tahnee believed beauty was for everyone. “You are never too old, too masculine, too dark, too disabled, or too unconventional to enjoy self-expression and self-care,” they shared.

Tahnee’s mission is to make the beauty industry a space that celebrates diversity and inclusivity.

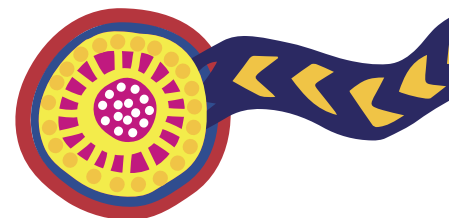


Tahnee’s journey began in 2020 when they first attempted to pursue their diploma through a private institute during the pandemic.

The theory-only approach proved difficult, and studying cosmetic tattooing online in 2021 presented further hurdles.

However, enrolling at TAFE Queensland in 2023 marked a turning point. The supportive environment and the dedicated educators at TAFE Queensland provided the patience, understanding, and assistance Tahnee needed to succeed.

“I completed my diploma because of the incredible support, understanding, and patience from the educators and faculty at TAFE Queensland,” Tahnee said. “Their teachings, guidance, and hard work did not go unnoticed, and now that I’ve graduated, I hope to



SHAPING COMMUNITY SERVICES EDUCATION WITH CULTURE

TAFE Queensland community services teacher and South Burnett Contributing to Community (CTC) worker, Chris Congoo, combines his cultural heritage and hands-on experience to shape future community services professionals.

Chris Congoo, a proud Ngara and Gia man, began teaching at TAFE Queensland's Kingaroy campus in January 2024.

He continues his important work with South Burnett CTC, a not-for-profit organisation focused on helping at-risk community members.

"I am a descendant and Traditional Owner of the Ngara and Gia Lands and Seas, some of the most unique in the world," Chris said.

"As Ngara people, we are the waves that hit our 74 islands and the reef that protected them. As Gia people, we are the rivers and creeks that run through this land. We are the trees that grow to give us food and shelter," Chris shared.

"Our connection to this Country is our sense of belonging. Our Lore of Country is our connection to our ancestors, whom we may never forget."

Before teaching at TAFE Queensland, Chris had a significant career at South Burnett CTC. After moving to Kingaroy to be closer to his wife's family, he started working as a residential support worker.

This role saw Chris helping at-risk youth with case planning, in-home care, taking clients to appointments and school, providing mentorship through developing social and interpersonal skills, and teaching clients how to live independently.

During his 10 years as a residential support worker, Chris also completed a **Diploma in Child, Youth and Family Intervention (CHC50321)** through TAFE Queensland, ensuring he had appropriate trauma crisis intervention skills.

"I loved teaching my clients and sharing my culture, so I pursued my training and education qualification while working at South Burnett CTC," he said. "I learned how to make learning engaging before deciding to move into teaching."

"I learnt about the flow of learning, and how to make course work engaging – then eventually took the plunge and transitioned to teaching."

"I just love teaching and sharing my experience," Chris beamed.

At TAFE Queensland, Chris teaches **Certificate III in Community Services (CHC32015)** and **Certificate IV in Child, Youth and Family Intervention (CHC40321)**.

"I want students to consider learning as a reward, and that these courses and job outcomes will provide

students the opportunity to interact with people in a way they never have before," Chris said.

His teaching approach includes role-playing and activities that make difficult topics easy to understand.

"Honestly, the best aspect is the support from my team and the general environment," he said

"They've helped me to upskill so that I can incorporate what I know from my decade of experience, into the teaching space for my students," said Chris.

And, like all TAFE Queensland teachers, Chris maintains his industry currency by working at South Burnett CTC when he is not teaching.

"Yes. I'm still currently working for CTC on my holidays. I just go back because I enjoy the job so much," Chris concluded. 🌀

“Our connection to this Country is our sense of belonging.”



Chris Congoo

LIAMON MUDD IS MAKING A DIFFERENCE FOR HIS MOB

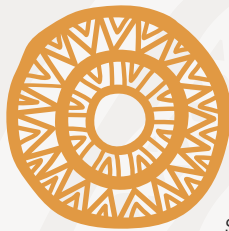
Follow Liamon's path from TAFE Queensland to university as he fulfils his dreams of becoming a nurse, empowering his community, and closing the gap in healthcare.

Liamon Mudd, a proud Kunjen man from Kowanyama, Cape York, always knew he wanted to become a nurse.

"Health was always my calling," Liamon said. "I have that personality to care for people, and I knew that health would be the best pathway for me to do that."

This passion for healthcare led Liamon to undertake a **Certificate IV in Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Primary Health Care** (HLT40121), followed by a **Diploma of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Primary Health Care Management** (HLT50221) at TAFE Queensland's **Toowoomba campus**.

"I realised I needed to do more to upskill and better my experience so I could help close the gap in healthcare for mob. So, I enrolled in the diploma," Liamon said.



During his studies, he was supported by the Indigenous Youth Mobility Program, which provides accommodation options for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students relocating from remote or regional communities to study or undertake an apprenticeship.

"If it wasn't for the Indigenous Youth Mobility Program, I wouldn't be where I am today," Liamon said. "It set me up to succeed in life."

Liamon's list of achievements is nothing short of impressive. He won 2020 Tropical North Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Student of the Year and was a finalist for Vocational Student of the Year at the Queensland Training Awards.

While he was completing his studies at TAFE Queensland, Liamon worked at Gidgee Healing and Apunipima Cape York Health Council, primary healthcare providers that focus on delivering health services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Far North Queensland.

“ I want to work as a child health nurse in Kowanyama, providing services that help close the gap in healthcare and benefit our future. ”

"TAFE Queensland gave me the hands-on experience to be the best healthcare worker I could be for my mob, my community, and the healthcare centre I work for. They have the facilities, equipment, staff, and teachers to make the best of us," Liamon said.

Eager to upskill even more, Liamon is now using his TAFE Queensland studies to pursue a Bachelor of Nursing at Deakin University. This pathway allows him to transfer credits from his diploma and shorten the time it will take to complete his bachelor degree.



Liamon Mudd at Mookai Rosie Family Health Centre in Cairns

PHIL'S JOURNEY FROM LABOURER TO MENTOR

"TAFE Queensland gave me the boost to go to take the next step," Liamon said. "I still can't believe that I am actually doing nursing at university."

He is balancing his studies with full-time job at Mookai Rosie Family Health Centre in Cairns, where his commitment to providing culturally safe healthcare for First Nations people has made a significant impact.

Chief Executive Officer at Mookai Rosie, Theresa Simpson, said, "Liamon is an inspirational young man to the community, with huge potential in the health field. Mookai Rosie is very proud to support Liamon through his health journey."

Reflecting on his experience, Liamon shared, "I feel blessed to be connected with mob from the Cape and Torres and provide essential services."

"It's good to see mob taking up work in the health industry. Health is a big issue for First Nations people, and having our own people on the ground, providing a service for their own community and their own people will really help close the gap in healthcare."

"You can be anything you want to be if you're passionate and want to make a difference for your community," Liamon said.

Liamon's ultimate goal is to return to his community and improve health outcomes for Kowanyama's next generation.

"I've got another couple of years before I graduate, but hopefully I can come out as a registered nurse, so that one day I can go back and make that change in healthcare for my community."

"I want to work as a child health nurse in Kowanyama, providing services that help close the gap in healthcare and benefit our future."

Mayor of Kowanyama Aboriginal Shire, Territa Dick, said, "Liamon is making all of us in Kowanyama very proud. He's working hard to get the education he needs to come back and make a real difference in our community. It's such important work, and we're inspired by his drive to improve health outcomes for our future generations." 🌀

Phil Fisher, a proud Wakka Wakka man and father of three, is on a transformative path as he trains to become a mentor for young people.

Currently enrolled in the **Certificate III in Community Services (CHC32015)** at TAFE Queensland's **Kingaroy campus**, Phil is dedicated to making a difference in his community.

Phil grew up in the community of Cherbourg in Queensland's South Burnett region, and previously worked as a contract labourer. He now lives in Wondai, and travels to Kingaroy twice a week to complete his course, which will prepare him to work with at-risk and vulnerable people of all ages.

"I enrolled in the course to take on a new challenge, and in particular, to share my knowledge with the youth," Phil began.

"I enjoy the class because it's face-to-face – and the group discussions have definitely been the highlight. Everything you need is here," Phil shared.

"My teacher (Chris Congoo) is also always willing to assist me – even when it got hard – like with the mental health unit – he inspired me to finish it and helped me through it," Phil continued.



Phil Fisher

TAFE Queensland's **Certificate III in Community Services (CHC32015)** course has been designed to give students the core skills to manage personal stressors in the workplace, and to work with people from a range of backgrounds, while gaining the communication skills required for working in community services settings.

TAFE Queensland's community services educators, like Chris Congoo, bring industry qualifications and years of hands-on experience to the classroom.

Encouraged by Chris, Phil is already planning for his future. He is in touch with a group home in Cherbourg, and is focused on securing a position there, saying, "My ideal job will see me working with Indigenous young people in the South Burnett region."

Phil's advice for anyone considering studying with TAFE Queensland? "Go for it!" he encouraged. 🌀





Beau Robinson

BEAU KICKS OFF HIS COACHING CAREER

Fresh out of high school with a burning passion for AFL, Beau Robinson embarked on a journey to become a coach through TAFE Queensland's Academy of Sport.

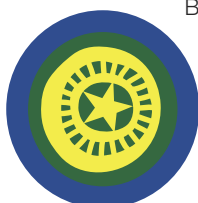
“I started playing in early primary school through an Auskick program, which saw me joining a local AFL club, and since then, I've always played AFL,” explained Beau.

Beau played club AFL in Toowoomba and Brisbane, and after graduating from Centenary Heights State High School in 2023, contacted the Gold Coast Suns about joining their Gold Coast College of Sport and Business program.

Delivered in partnership between the Gold Coast Suns Football Club and TAFE Queensland's Academy of Sport, Beau is learning within the elite AFL clubs' world-class facilities at People First Stadium and the Gold Coast Sport and Leisure Centre.

A proud Indigenous man connected to the Muruwari, Kullilli and Kooma tribes, Beau aims to incorporate cultural insights into his coaching to help Indigenous players maximise their potential in the sport.

Having experienced support from TAFE Queensland's teachers during his time in the **TAFE at School** program, Beau felt assured that he would receive the same level of mentorship and flexibility, which gave him the confidence to enrol.



His **Diploma of Leadership and Management / Diploma of Sport** (BSB50420/SIS50321) dual award studies are enriched by connections with sports industry experts, staff, players, and coaches from the Gold Coast Suns.

Thanks to the Queensland Government's **Fee-Free TAFE** funding, Beau is kick starting his sporting career at no cost.

Training for 12 months in an immersive environment, Beau and his class benefit from 100 hours of work-integrated learning across game day activations.

“I still live in Toowoomba and commute to the Gold Coast for the course. There's nothing better than coming to a world-class facility and learning in this environment. I'm thriving being around and connecting with like-minded people,” Beau said.

“My skills and confidence have improved dramatically. I'm even coaching at a community level in Toowoomba with the Under 14s University Cougars in the Darling Downs AFL.”

“I use the coaching skills I learned in my course to help kids enjoy training and winning games and build a social network with the families and the community through coaching. I love seeing the players I'm coaching grow and improve,” he said.

Beau credits his teachers for helping him build his skills. “Bianca and Martin have been supportive and considerate because I live over two hours away,” he said.

“They ensured that I would not overload myself, and they've supported my coaching by coming to Toowoomba to watch me coach and give me feedback.”

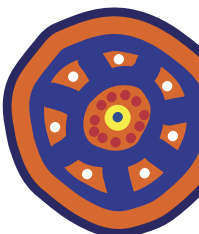
“The learning atmosphere in the classroom is great too, and my classmates are always there to give me help, and I'm thankful for that.”

“Coming here from a small town and having this facility as your classroom, being around professional players and the team behind the team and using the same practice fields is full-on and fun; it's awesome, and I love it here,” he continued.

Beau is thrilled to be studying with the Gold Coast College of Sport and Business under the guidance of TAFE Queensland's teachers. He is thriving in the elite sporting environment as he studies towards his dream career in athlete development.

“Sport is a sustainable industry; technology cannot do what coaches do. If you're a sports lover, get into the industry through the Gold Coast College of Sport and Business and follow your dreams.”

“People are built for learning; we learn from each other, from teachers, and experiences. I'll be a lifelong learner because, in coaching, there are always new things I'll need to know. So, whenever I can, I'll study, and this is just the start of my journey,” concluded Beau. 🌀



CAMERON POWERS UP HIS CAREER IN ENERGY

Cameron Betts is participating in a groundbreaking cadetship program that prepares students for careers in Queensland's energy industry through hands-on training and real-world experience.

Cameron Betts, a Southern Downs Indigenous high school student, is making strides towards a promising career in the energy sector.

He's part of a groundbreaking regional, rural, and remote cadetship that is designed to prepare young people for careers in Queensland's dynamic energy industry.

This initiative, a collaboration between Ergon Energy Network, Energex, and TAFE Queensland has seen 18 students from southwest Queensland participating in online training sessions, on-campus practical days, and in-depot work experiences throughout the year.

Cameron's motivation for joining the program was to broaden his understanding of the opportunities available in the industry. He was particularly looking forward to undertaking work experience at Ergon Energy Network's Warwick depot in September this year.

"I chose this program because it provides a solid foundation in electrical principles and practices," Cameron said.

"The electrical industry is an exciting field with numerous opportunities, and I find it interesting because it involves working with cutting-edge technology, problem-solving and continuous learning."

As part of the program, Cameron is completing the **Certificate II in Electrotechnology (Career Start)** (JEE2201). This qualification will equip him with essential industry skills, including safe handling of basic electrotechnology work, troubleshooting low-voltage circuits, and exploring sustainable energy solutions.

"So far I've been learning electrical theory, but I'm looking forward to putting the theory into practice and wiring an electrical appliance," Cameron said. "I'm intrigued to learn more about the industry. I'm a hands-on person, so I really like those aspects of the program."

Ergon Energy Network and Energex spokesperson, Dan McGaw, emphasised the importance of the collaboration. "It's great to partner with TAFE Queensland and spark interest in career opportunities in the industry," he said.

"This program will provide foundational electrotechnology skills and a clear pathway towards an energy sector-related apprenticeship for young people."

General Manager of TAFE Queensland South West region, Kate Venables, said that the organisation was proud to work together with Australia's largest electricity company to help equip the next generation of energy tradespeople.

"Working with Ergon Energy Network and Energex ensures our training programs are tailored to the specific needs of the industry," said Mrs Venables. "The program participants will gain the confidence, capabilities, and are ready to help drive a bright future for the industry and their communities."

Following the success of this cadetship in Ipswich, Darling Downs, and southwest Queensland, TAFE Queensland, Ergon Energy Network, and Energex plan to expand the program across regional and remote areas, involving more than 50 depots in 2025. 🌐

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Scan the QR code to find out more about the Ergon Energy Network and Energex Pre-Apprenticeship Program.



Cameron Betts



GEOFFREY'S FLYER FINDS HIM SUCCESS

Stepping into the Nurunderi campus, Geoffrey Dowling was on the hunt to learn something new, he left with a flyer that led to a life-changing study and employment opportunity.

Due to a recent move back to the Cherbourg community, proud Wakka Wakka man Geoffrey visited the TAFE Queensland campus in the hope of enrolling in a course to learn some skills to help him find employment.

Spotting a flyer about the community's First Nations Digital Service Centre on the counter became a life changing moment as he successfully became one of the first employees of the Cherbourg First Nations Service Centre.

"I came into TAFE to see about a pre-vocational program and I spotted that flyer," he said.

"It was for an information session that sounded too good to be true. I kept asking if it was real."

Community-owned and operated, the Digital Services Centre is a model for building independence and digital literacy skills, and creating real and sustainable jobs on Country for First Nations Queenslanders.



Community members engaged in the program are employed by Cherbourg Aboriginal Shire Council, undertake job readiness training, and gain a

Certificate III in Business

(BSB30120) qualification from

TAFE Queensland.

Growing to employ 30 community members in its first 18 months, the centre's first client was tech-giant and founding partner Fujitsu.

Having been in operation for several years, the call centre continues to train and employ people from the Cherbourg community to answer calls and perform digital tasks for customers.

Describing himself as "not really a scholar," Geoffrey is loving the experience of learning as an adult and is looking forward to earning a qualification.

"I was used to working outdoors, in gardens and as a removalist, so I have had to learn everything – from Word to Excel," he said.

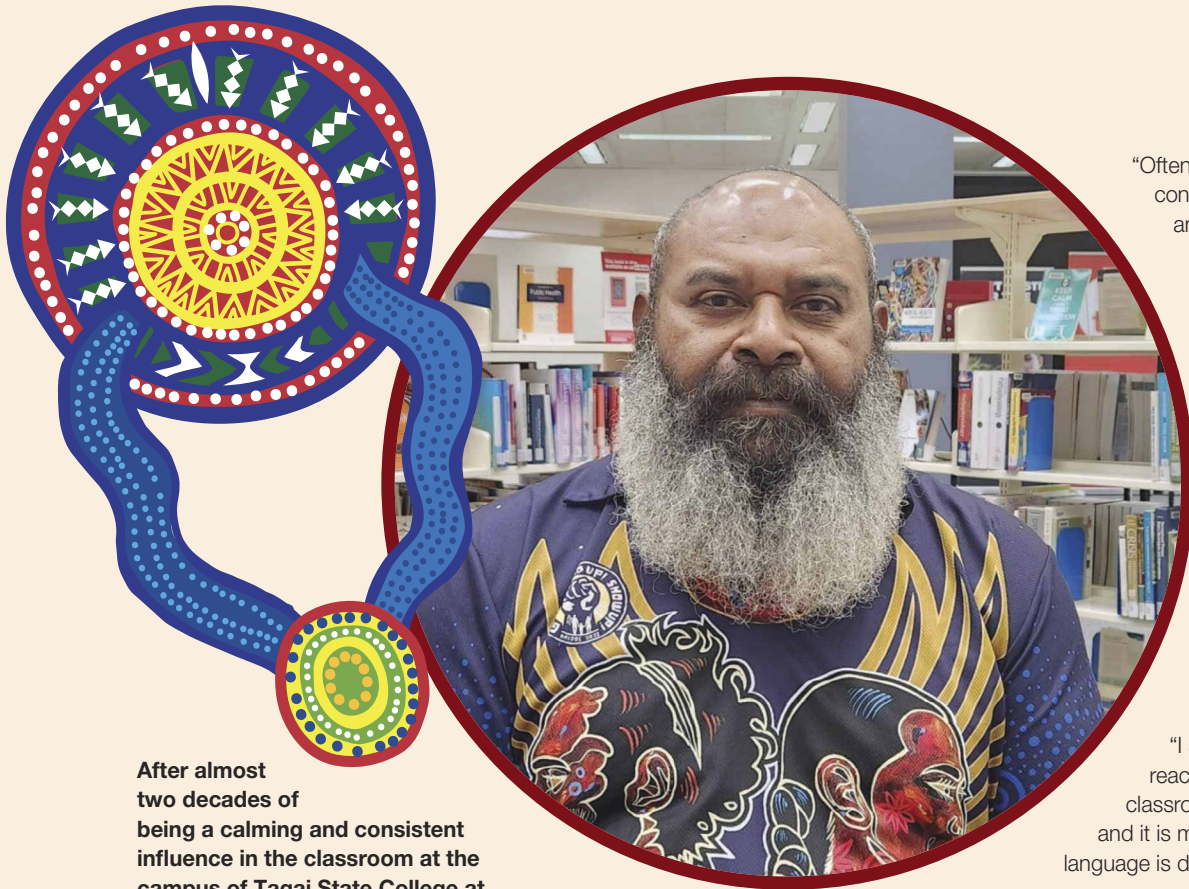
"It's been challenging but I'm really enjoying it."

Building on the success of the Cherbourg centre, TAFE Queensland is also partnering with communities and corporate clients such as Telstra and the Queensland Government on service centres on Palm Island and in the Cassowary Coast community of Jumbun and Yarrabah. 



Geoffrey Dowling

BRINGING CULTURE AND CONSISTENCY TO THE CLASSROOM



After almost two decades of being a calming and consistent influence in the classroom at the campus of Tagai State College at Darnley (Erub) Island, Mark Waigana is the proud recipient of a certificate III qualification.

For the past two years, the 53-year-old Erub Island Mauram man has been studying a **Certificate III in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education** (11212NAT) through RATEP, formalising the skills and knowledge he had acquired as a classroom teacher aide.

With previous employment in community policing and 19 years in the classroom, Mark was already a confident member of the school faculty but until recently had not had the opportunity to achieve his own educational goals.

While not mandatory, Mark knew the qualification would improve the quality of the service he could provide to the students.

"I wanted to be able to do my job better. These kids deserve that commitment," Mark said.

Mark Waigana

RATEP is a community-based primary education and early childhood education program. It provides a direct pathway for First Nations people to become registered teachers, qualified teacher aides or early childhood educators.

RATEP is an initiative that respects the culture and knowledge of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and values the contribution they can make to the education of all young Australians.

Through RATEP and with only a few on-site visits to Cairns, Mark was able to complete most of the course without leaving the Island and his beloved school and students – maintaining his presence in the classroom.

"These kids know I will always be here and that I will do anything for them," Mark said.

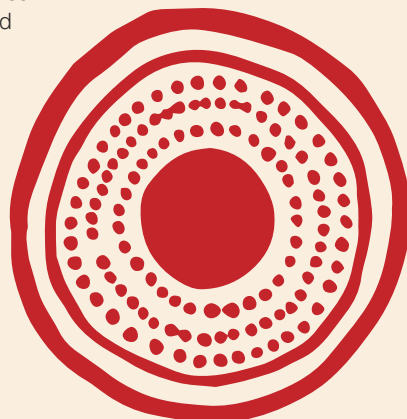
"Often staffing is not consistent – people come and go. RATEP meant that I could still be here for them and help them with their learning."

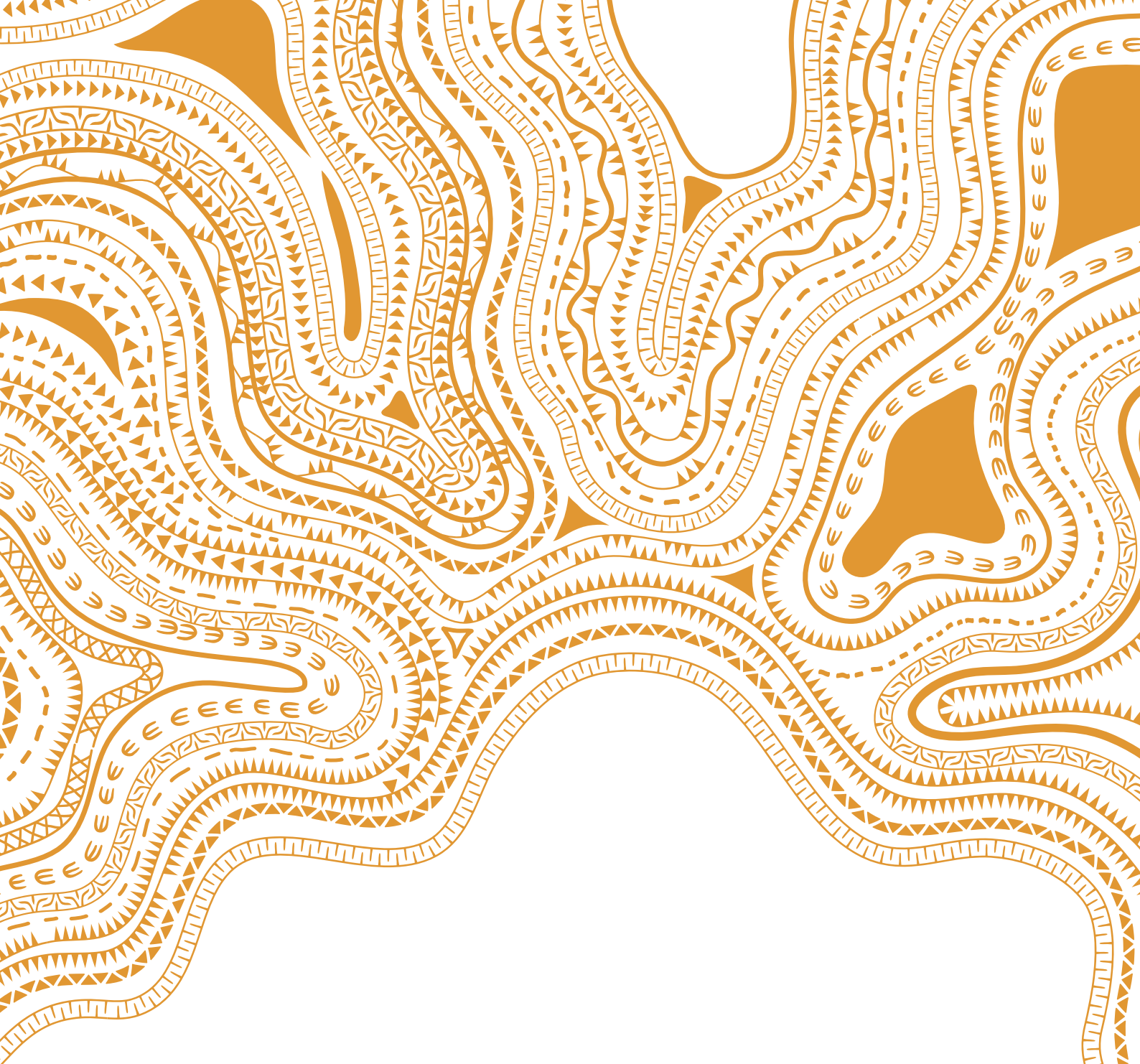
Mark uses an example of his own presence in the classroom to signify the importance of programs like RATEP to encourage First Nations people to take up careers in education.

"I see how the children react when I am in the classroom. They do their work, and it is much calmer, the body language is different," he said.

"I believe I am a positive influence and that just shows how important it is for our people to be in the classroom every day."

RATEP is a partnership between TAFE Queensland, James Cook University, and the Queensland Education Department. First Nations people can choose to study at a number of RATEP sites throughout Queensland, as well as a via an off-site model. As well as certificate or diploma course in education or childcare, the program also opens up pathways towards a Bachelor of Education qualification at James Cook University. 





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, November 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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