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From the Executive Dean

Professor Caroline Mansfield, Executive Dean, School of Education.

Welcome to our first edition of UpdatED for 2025 – a year already marked by exciting milestones and fresh beginnings for our School. This issue celebrates a number of firsts. In January, we proudly welcomed the inaugural cohort of Pre-Service Teachers into our High Achieving Teachers Pilot Program (HAT@ECU)—a Commonwealth funded initiative to support alternative and employment based pathways into teaching. We also launched a Graduate Diploma in Early Childhood Teaching, making ECU the first university in Western Australia to offer a one-year postgraduate degree that qualifies educators to teach in early learning centres.

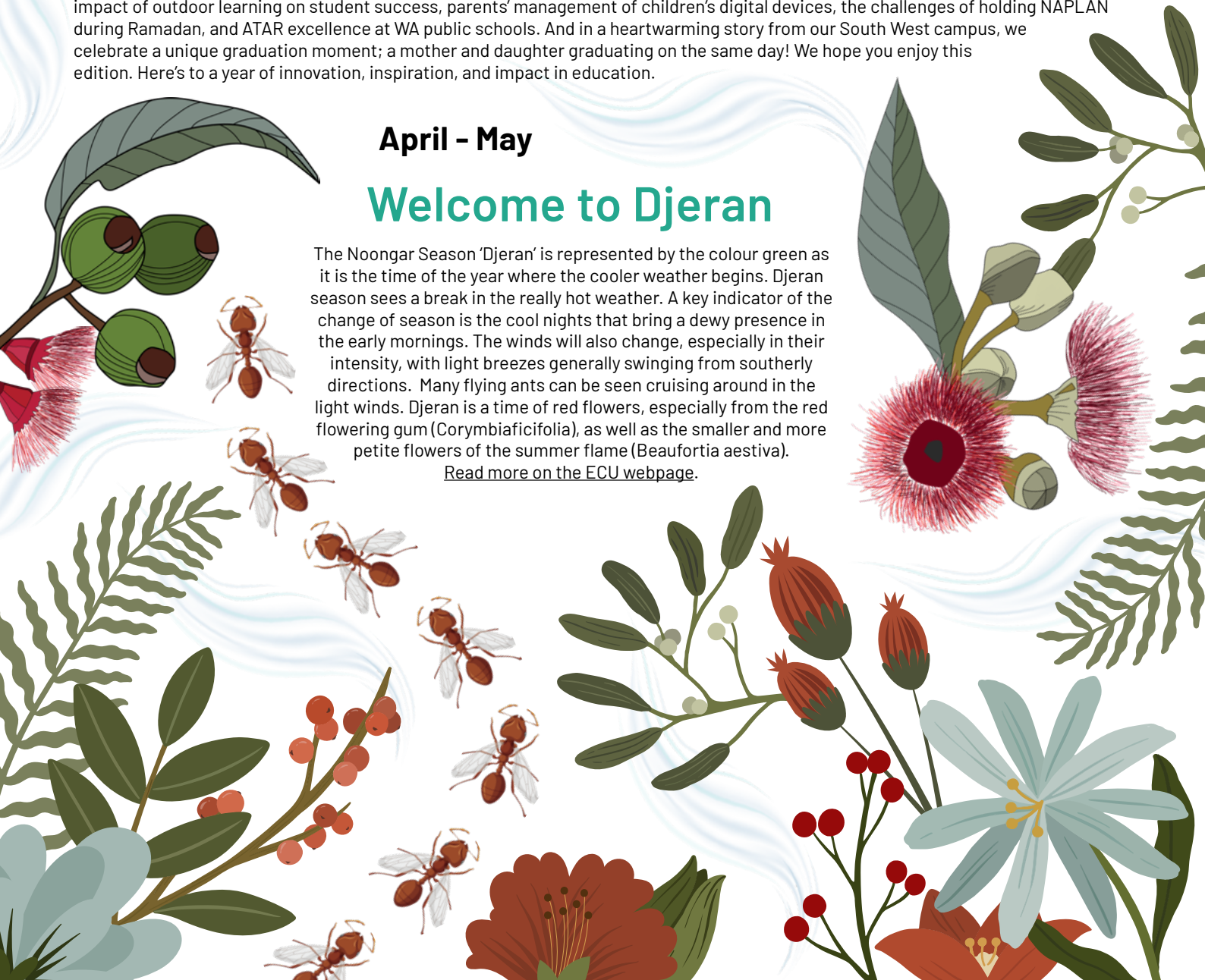
For the first time we also offered a powerful professional learning opportunity for our Pre-Service Teachers who attended a two day workshop with Laureate Professor Jenny Gore (UNSW) to understand how the Quality Teaching Rounds (QTR) approach can be used to continually improve teaching practice. We shine a spotlight on the remarkable achievements of our staff, including Dr Jason Goopy, lecturer in secondary music education, who was awarded a prestigious Fulbright Scholarship – a testament to the calibre of expertise within our School. Staff expertise is also showcased in articles regarding teaching in Regional, Rural and Remote schools, the positive impact of outdoor learning on student success, parents' management of children's digital devices, the challenges of holding NAPLAN during Ramadan, and ATAR excellence at WA public schools. And in a heartwarming story from our South West campus, we celebrate a unique graduation moment; a mother and daughter graduating on the same day! We hope you enjoy this edition. Here's to a year of innovation, inspiration, and impact in education.

April – May

Welcome to Djeran

The Noongar Season 'Djeran' is represented by the colour green as it is the time of the year where the cooler weather begins. Djeran season sees a break in the really hot weather. A key indicator of the change of season is the cool nights that bring a dewy presence in the early mornings. The winds will also change, especially in their intensity, with light breezes generally swinging from southerly directions. Many flying ants can be seen cruising around in the light winds. Djeran is a time of red flowers, especially from the red flowering gum (*Corymbia ficifolia*), as well as the smaller and more petite flowers of the summer flame (*Beaufortia aestiva*).

[Read more on the ECU webpage.](#)



Supporting Pre-Service Teachers' Journey to Regional, Rural and Remote Schools



Mrs Marnie Harris, Lecturer, School of Education.

Across Australia, schools in regional, rural, and remote (RRR) areas face persistent teacher shortages. But what motivates Pre-Service Teachers to pursue careers in these communities? Recent research from ECU's School of Education offers valuable insights through a two-part mixed-method study shedding light on both the factors influencing career decisions and the lived experiences of pre-service teachers during their RRR placements.

"Understanding both the placement experience and its impact on career decisions is crucial for addressing teacher shortages in RRR areas," explains lead researcher Marnie Harris, Primary Professional Experience Coordinator at ECU's Southwest campus. "Our research used advanced data analysis techniques, including classification-decision tree analysis to identify key motivators for graduates pursuing RRR careers. We then explored the real-world experiences of Pre-Service Teachers in RRR placements to see what factors contribute to a successful and supportive transition into these roles."

Key Findings

What Influences Pre-Service Teachers' RRR Career Decisions?

The study revealed that professional growth and skill development during RRR placements were the most influential factors in Pre-Service Teachers' career decisions. Other key motivators included: active involvement in community and clubs, strong mentorship and support networks, adequate financial support, professional development opportunities and a clear understanding of RRR teaching contexts. "Strong mentorship and community integration can make or break a Pre-Service Teacher's experience in an RRR school," says Harris.

Interestingly, the research found that well-designed shorter placements can be just as effective as longer ones in preparing Pre-Service Teachers for careers in RRR schools.

What makes a positive placement experience?

The second part of the study examined factors that shape Pre-Service Teachers' actual experiences during their RRR placements, reinforcing many of the key elements from the first study.

Essential Support Systems for RRR Placements

Multi-layered Support Systems:

- Strong mentorship from experienced teachers
- Welcoming school communities
- Institutional support from universities
- Community Engagement opportunities
- Adequate accommodation and travel assistance

Financial Considerations:

- Sufficient financial support for relocation and living expenses
- Opportunities for local activities and community integration

Personal and Professional Development:

- Development of key attributes like adaptability and sociability
- Prior knowledge and preparation for RRR settings
- Challenges that need addressing

While the research highlights many positive factors, it also identifies challenges that universities and education policymakers must tackle, including:

- Limited time for meaningful community engagement
- Varying levels of support across different schools and institutions
- Financial pressures, particularly during longer placements
- The complex and multifaceted nature of RRR teaching

Moving Forward: Strengthening RRR Teacher Preparation

"By rethinking Pre-Service Teacher placements in RRR areas, we can build a stronger, more sustainable workforce for RRR schools," says Harris. "This research highlights the need to focus not only on the quality of placements but also on the factors that shape post-graduation career decisions to effectively address rural teacher shortages."

As universities and education systems refine their teacher preparation programs, implementing structured mentorship, financial support, and high-quality short-term placements can play a key role in attracting and retaining teachers in RRR communities. By fostering strong support networks and encouraging active engagement, education providers can help ensure that Pre-Service Teachers are well-prepared for the unique challenges and rewards of teaching in RRR schools.

For further details, the full studies can be accessed via the links below:

Issues in Educational Research

(<http://www.iier.org.au/iier34/harris.pdf>)

The Australian Educational Researcher

(<https://doi.org/10.1007/s13384-025-00809-5>)

The study was conducted by four researchers at ECU's School of Education; Mrs Marnie Harris, Dr Lynette Vernon, Dr David Rhodes, and Dr Christina Gray.

Exploring parent self-efficacy in children's digital device use:

Understanding shame and self-stigma through a mixed-methods approach



Dr Stephanie Milford, Doctor of Philosophy Candidate (completed 2025), School of Education.

Balancing screen time and digital boundaries is an issue many families face today. As part of her PhD research ECU's School of Education, Stephanie Milford and her supervisory team have explored the complex pressures parents encounter in managing their children's digital device use. "Digital devices have become an integral part of our daily lives," Stephanie explains. "Parents are frequently reminded of their role and responsibility in regulating their children's screen time to ensure appropriate use."

Using a survey that incorporated both quantitative and qualitative data, Stephanie's mixed-methods study uncovered significant insights into the emotional challenges of parenting in the digital age. Her research highlights that parents often grapple with societal pressure, judgment, and feelings of inadequacy.

A key finding of the study highlighted the role of shame and self-stigma. Stephanie explains that societal expectations, often amplified by social media, can lead parents to feel judged and inadequate, diminishing their self-efficacy and confidence. The research also highlights the need for clearer guidance. "We need comprehensive digital device guidelines for parents, as confusion regarding appropriate usage can diminish self-efficacy and lead to feelings of shame," she notes.

Building on these findings, Stephanie and her team's future journal article, currently under review, employs Bronfenbrenner's PPCT (Process-Person-Context-Time) model to further examine parenting challenges across various ecological levels. This subsequent research focuses on how external factors, such as societal norms and school environments, interact with internal factors like shame and self-stigma to shape parents' experiences and strategies for managing digital device use.

Looking ahead, Stephanie advocates for targeted parent support through evidence-based recommendations and guidelines. She believes such resources can empower parents to feel more confident in managing their children's digital device use while reducing shame and self-doubt. This important research offers valuable insights into parenting in the digital age and points to practical ways we can better support families navigating these challenges."

Find out more about ECU's School of Education research activity by visiting our website.



Find out more about Dr Stephanie Milford's research [here](#).



Beyond the classroom:

How outdoor learning boosts student success



Professor Dawn Penney, Vice Chancellor's Professorial Research Fellow, and Dr David Aldous, Senior Lecturer, School of Education.

Education experts are advocating for a renewed focus on learning beyond the traditional classroom, highlighting its potential to enhance student behaviour, academic achievement, and overall well-being. Research indicates that outdoor education, field trips, and community projects offer hands-on experiences that foster teamwork, encourage critical thinking, and promote healthier life habits. Despite these benefits, many schools—particularly at the secondary level—lack the resources and facilities to deliver outdoor learning programs effectively.

The growing importance of outdoor learning

Professor Tonia Gray, a senior researcher at Western Sydney University's Centre for Educational Research, believes outdoor education is more relevant than ever. "Evidence-based research over the past few decades shows that learning outside the classroom can improve engagement and classroom behaviour, enhance academic achievement scores and cognitive function, and positively impact the health and wellbeing of students," she said.

"Some children are better suited to 'embodied learning' as they are kinaesthetic learners. When afforded the opportunity to learn in outdoor environment they can undertake self-directed exploration and experimentation." Gray also noted a concerning trend: a shift towards sedentary, screen-based education, which she argues has contributed to increased childhood obesity and anxiety levels, as well as a decline in interpersonal skills. "Outdoor experiential learning engages children in practical, active learning experiences in natural environments and sometimes risk-taking settings beyond the four walls of the traditional school classroom offer a myriad of benefits," she said.

Skills for learning and employment

Dr David Aldous and Professor Dawn Penney of Edith Cowan University stressed that outdoor learning is essential for developing skills critical to both education and future employment.

"Learning in the outdoors is integral to providing a unique means of expanding environmental and cultural understandings in students," said Penney.

Their research underscores the long-term advantages of outdoor education, linking it to improved health, social skills, and overall well-being. Aldous and Penney advocate for government investment in outdoor learning opportunities, arguing that educational policies must prioritise access to nature-based experiences.

Behavioural and social benefits

Associate Professor Brendon Hyndman of Charles Sturt University highlights the behavioural advantages of outdoor learning. "Students report better behaviour and less bullying if they are engaged in outdoor experiences and learning opportunities at their school," he said.

Hyndman emphasised the need for structured outdoor learning in secondary schools, where limited facilities often prevent students from accessing nature-based education. "Research shows that secondary school teachers have a lower understanding of adolescent physical activity and play needs," he said. "Students require their own recreational spaces and time to think for themselves for their development."

Hyndman calls for increased funding to create diverse, engaging outdoor spaces in schools. "Creating more options for students to play in the outdoors helps students to discover new ways to do things in the real world," he noted.



Credit: Lopolo/Shutterstock.com

This article is republished from **The Educator Australia**.
Read the original article [here](#).

Muslim educators fear holding NAPLAN during Ramadan will disadvantage students



Associate Professor Melanie Brooks, Associate Dean (Research), School of Education.

The decision to hold crucial exams during one of the most sacred periods in the Islamic calendar will put young Muslims “at a clear disadvantage” and undermine “the principles of equity, inclusion, and fairness”, a leading educator says. Primary and high school students across Australia are currently partaking in the NAPLAN tests, which help schools and parents track a child’s progress against national standards.

But for the second year in a row, the exams coincide with the holy month of Ramadan, where Muslims abstain from eating and drinking during daylight hours. The scheduling was slammed by the Victorian chair of the Islamic Schools Association of Australia, Fazeel Arain, who said fasting could impact energy levels and concentration.

“This demonstrates a continued lack of consideration for the needs of Muslim students,” he said. “Scheduling high-stakes assessments during Ramadan disregards the diversity of Australian students and fails to accommodate an essential aspect of our religious observance.” Mr Arain said the timing of NAPLAN “reflects broader systemic issues regarding the recognition and respect of religious and cultural diversity in policymaking”.

Logistical nightmare

The National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy is held every year for students in Grades 3, 5, 7 and 9 and provides crucial data to help governments allocate learning resources and refine teaching programs.

While NAPLAN is run simultaneously at schools across Australia during a two-week period in March, the date of Ramadan changes from year to year. That’s because Ramadan is determined by the Islamic calendar, which is based off lunar cycles, and they do not line up with the annual, solar cycles used by the western Gregorian Calendar.

In 2015, Ramadan occurred in the middle of winter, where fasting is made much easier by the shorter, cooler days. But by 2028, Ramadan will have moved to the middle of summer, where long days and scorching heat will make it tough to go without water during 14-hours of daylight. And next year, the major religious holiday Eid al-Fitr, which marks the end of Ramadan and is a day where many Islamic schools will close, will likely fall in the middle of the NAPLAN testing period.

The ever-shifting dates of Ramadan are a major headache for academic administrators, who want NAPLAN tests to be held at a similar time every year to ensure long-term datasets are reliable, consistent and comparable. And they also have to work around the different term dates of every single Australian state and territory, as well as local considerations.

Mitigating the disadvantages

The body charged with running NAPLAN, The Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority, said they had worked with the Islamic Schools Association of Australia to ensure they “have guidance for schools and teachers to support affected students”. “Schools are encouraged to schedule their tests as soon as possible in the testing window and encouraged to run NAPLAN tests first thing in the morning to ensure fasting students’ energy levels are at their highest,” a spokesperson said. “Parents and carers with any concerns should contact their child’s school directly.”

Mr Fazeel said schools were doing “everything in [their] power” to support students, such as by shortening school days and holding exams in the morning “to ensure students have the great opportunity to perform at their best”. “Despite these efforts, the fundamental issue remains: the responsibility should not fall on schools to mitigate the disadvantages caused by poor scheduling decisions,” he said. “It’s harder to fast at school. Most Muslims start observing Ramadan once they hit puberty, however, 14-year-old student Kinan Ariyanto started undertaking half-day fasts when she was six.

“It is harder to fast at school, especially during the break times when all your friends are eating,” she said. “And I don’t think I’m focusing that well because I’m thinking a lot about food.”



Credit: Ground Picture/Shutterstock.com

Despite that, she doesn't think it will impact her NAPLAN results. "I'm not sure it really changes my learning," she said. "But I do feel hungry at times." Kinan said her teachers and friends have been "very supportive" and Ramadan was an opportunity "to become a better Muslim overall". "The whole purpose of fasting is to make yourself more disciplined," she said. "We usually give to charity, be kinder to people, read more of the Koran, help people and try to not commit as much sin."

Mother-of-two Vaessy Usatryanti from suburban Adelaide has been paying close attention to her 11-year-old son Raza during the NAPLAN test. She made sure his teacher was aware and has been giving Raza vitamins and honey before dawn for extra energy. "I told him, it was going to be very hot, if you feel it's too hard and you have to break the fast, it's OK," she said. But on the day of the first NAPLAN test, Raza kept his fast. "He's very proud of it." Raza is the only one fasting in his class and while not having water is challenging, air-conditioned classrooms and a less active lunchtime have helped him survive the heat. "I'm really proud. I actually thought I wasn't going to do it," he said. "But I was so focused on the NAPLAN, I didn't need to worry about fasting."

Schools encouraged to support students

The potential impact of Ramadan on student performance is not just about fasting but about the disruption of normal sleeping patterns, according to Melanie Brooks, an associate professor of Religion,

Education and Leadership at Edith Cowan University. "Family routines are altered. They're staying up later, they're getting up earlier," she said. "Some families and students may be concerned that they won't be able to do their best work, especially if the tests are later in the day when they might really start feeling a little bit more tired." Associate Professor Brooks said schools could support students by holding exams early, keeping examinations rooms "cool and comfortable" and modifying the physical education programs. "Schools are really doing the best they can but there's always room for improvement."

"Schools have very diverse populations and it's about maintaining that culturally responsive leadership, culturally responsive pedagogy." Most importantly, Associate Professor Brooks said educators should take time after NAPLAN to reflect on their approach, seek feedback from Muslim families and share successful strategies with other schools to inform their approach in the coming years. "Overall, it's just making sure that teachers have an understanding of Ramadan, they are prepared to help their students and they maintain an inclusive school environment," she said.

This article is republished from **ABC News**.
Read the original article [here](#).

ECU music education expert awarded Fulbright Scholarship

Dr Jason Goopy, Lecturer, School of Education.

Edith Cowan University (ECU)'s Dr Jason Goopy has been awarded a prestigious Fulbright Scholarship. The Fulbright Program is the flagship foreign exchange scholarship from the USA, aimed at increasing binational research collaboration, cultural understanding, and the exchange of ideas.

Dr Goopy is an accomplished teacher, scholar, and leader in music education, and is the Coordinator of Secondary and Instrumental Music Education at ECU's School of Education and Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts (WAAPA). Through his 2025 Fulbright Postdoctoral Scholarship, Dr Goopy is set to research music education and wellbeing science at Columbia University's Teachers College in New York City.

Teachers College is the highest-ranking Graduate School of Education in the USA, where Dr Goopy will foster cross-cultural exchange and collaborate with Professor of Music and Music Education, Patrick Schmidt, and colleagues.



"I will conduct research investigating how school and community music education in NYC enhances the wellbeing of young people experiencing adversity and develop sustainable music learning models that heal and empower youth to flourish," Dr Goopy said.

"This work builds on my existing research at ECU, examining how inclusive music education can positively transform lives."

A global music city, New York has one of the world's largest education departments and extensive community music education programs serving diverse populations. From August this year, Dr Goopy will live and conduct research in New York City for six months. Find out more about the [Fulbright Scholarships](#).

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ECU research honouring mentor and matriarch

Dr Leanda Mason, Vice-Chancellor Research Fellow, Centre for People, Place, and Planet, School of Education.



International Women's Day held annually in March provides a valuable platform to celebrate and raise the profile of the bold and visionary research conducted at ECU. This year's United Nations theme for International Women's Day is 'March Forward' – for all women and girls. Rights. Equality. Empowerment. Vice-Chancellor Professor Clare Pollock launched the March celebrations with a global message to staff saying how honoured she is to lead a university where our researchers boldly march in Edith Dircksey Cowan's pioneering footsteps, contributing with their own vision of equity for all and their commitment to a more united local and global community.

One of those bold ECU researchers is Dr Leanda Mason, Vice-Chancellor Research Fellow in the Centre for People, Place, and Planet within the School of Education. Dr Mason (they/them, Minang Nyungar) has a fascinating story about how they were inspired by their mentor into honouring a matriarch – quite a different one than you'd think.

Championing conservation and equity: Dr Leanda Mason

With an expansive research portfolio spanning conservation ecology, tertiary education, and diversity and inclusion frameworks, Dr Mason is a leader in bridging science and social impact. As Chair of the Equity and Diversity Working Group for the Ecological Society of Australia, Dr Mason actively promotes inclusive practices within the scientific community. Their contributions to education and research have earned them national recognition, including the 2023 Australian Award for University Teaching and multiple accolades from Curtin University. A dedicated science communicator, Dr Mason frequently engages in public talks, media interviews, and publications to advocate for conservation beyond academia. Their commitment to both biodiversity and social equity exemplifies the impact of research that intertwines environmental and cultural sustainability.

A unique connection

Dr Mason is a practising trapdoor spider conservation ecologist and researcher. Leanda considers the trapdoor spider to be their own borangka, or totem, a Noongar concept forming part of their Minang Noongar heritage. Leanda explains that in the Noongar language, trapdoor spiders are known as walbungkara, and our Elders share that plants and animals are our relatives and we must care for them like they are family. Cataxia burrows are clustered in generational groups where a matriarch may be surrounded by multiple generations of offspring of varying ages.



Dr Leanda Mason

Beyond their ecological expertise, Dr Mason is an award-winning educator with a passion for place-based learning and Indigenous ways of being. Dr Mason also coordinates and lectures in Aboriginal Perspectives on the Environment, bringing their extensive teaching experience and a Master of Teaching qualification to inspire the next generation of conservationists and educators. "Through my current research focus on Equity, Diversity, Justice and Inclusion (EDJI) in ecology, committed to giving a voice to the voiceless; advocating for species that are frequently forgotten in conservation efforts due to being "non-charismatic", such as the trapdoor spiders," said Dr Mason.

"By embracing an Indigenous-led framework grounded in equity and inclusion, I aim to bring attention to the ecological and cultural significance of these tenacious invertebrates. Barbara's legacy lives on in my work, fostering an approach to ecology that respects both the land and its diverse, widely unnoticed and unappreciated inhabitants."

Honouring a special mentor

A specialist in trapdoor spider ecology, Dr Mason has conducted extensive research on the challenges these ancient arachnids face in urban environments. Their work highlights the significance of these often-overlooked creatures, advocating for their conservation and shedding light on the broader implications of habitat loss for short-range endemic species.



Dr Leanda Mason alongside Dr Cass Lynch

Dr Mason was mentored by the late pioneering spider biologist Professor Barbara York Main OAM. "Professor Barbara York Main, one of Australia's leading spider experts, sparked my fascination with trapdoors during my impressionable late teen years during my undergraduate studies. She subsequently became a mentor and friend," said Leanda.

"Barbara's poetic passion for these remarkable yet often overlooked creatures was contagiously inspiring and seamlessly translated across our 60-year age difference. "Thanks to Barbara, we also know that individual trapdoor spider females can live for 43 years! Trapdoor spiders lay claim to being the oldest recorded living spiders in the world that we know of. "She was very generous and patient in sharing her knowledge with me. Later, and during my own personal identity journey with my Minang Noongar heritage, my research practices came to be informed by Noongar ways of doing, being and knowing. "Our 'Caring as Country' approach emphasises relationality, interconnectedness, sustainability, reciprocity, and the deep wisdom of protecting all living things."

The Spider Lady

Professor Barbara York Main OAM (1929 – 2019). Barbara York Main was a pioneer of Australian arachnology. Born in 1929 on a small farm in Tammin, Western Australia, Barbara grew up immersed in the unique flora and fauna of the Wheatbelt. Her love for nature flourished early, as did her particular interest in insects. Inspired by her mother, who one of the first female students at The University of Western Australia (UWA), Barbara pursued higher education, completing her Honours in Zoology in 1950, defying societal expectations at the time by becoming the first woman to earn a PhD in UWA's Zoology Department.

Barbara became a trailblazer in arachnology, becoming a world-renowned expert in the genus *Mygalomorph* (trapdoor spiders), and other arachnids and making significant contributions to understanding the evolutionary ecology of spiders. Her PhD, completed in 1956, broke new ground by integrating ecology with traditional fields such as creative writing, natural history and biogeography.

Beyond academia

Barbara was a gifted writer. Her books, *Between Wodjil and Tor* (1967) and *Twice Trodden Ground* (1971), blend scientific insight with a profound connection to the land, making her an early voice for conservation. Honoured with numerous awards, including the OAM in 2011, Barbara's quiet perseverance in the protection for trapdoor species continues to inspire scientists and conservationists.

Roll of Honour 2025

On International Women's Day 2025 the WA Women's Hall of Fame inducted Professor Barbara York Main OAM onto the Roll of Honour that formally acknowledge women who were no longer with us, but whose efforts were critical to the State's social and economic development.

Dr Leanda Mason – Australian Geographic

Read more about [Rescuing the matriarch trapdoor spiders of Porongurup](#).

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Open Access Research Articles in the School of Education

Associate Professor Melanie Brooks, Associate Dean (Research).



Written by School of Education academics, please find below a selection of recently published articles which are available to you without any subscriptions. Please select the links or scan the QR codes to view these journal articles which are all freely available. For more information about our research at ECU, visit our [website](#) or scan the QR Code.



The impact of trauma-informed practices on academic outcomes of First Nations children: a pilot study of culturally responsive supports in Australia. *Humanities & Social Sciences Communication*.

Krishnamoorthy, G., Harrison, E., **Ayre, K.**, Forooshani, S. A., Berger, E., Rees, B., Wheeler, K., Eiby, N., Ong, N., Dallinger, V., & Ulhaq, A. (2024). <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41599-024-03892-8>

This pilot observational study examined the effectiveness of trauma-informed and culturally responsive behaviour support practices on the academic outcomes of predominantly First Nation's children in an Australian primary school. The cohort study found that the co-designed, multi-tiered Trauma-

informed Behaviour Support program improved students' literacy and numeracy scores. While highlighting the complex relationship between behavioural difficulties and academic abilities, the findings suggest that educators can improve academic outcomes by promoting cultural safety across the school and making the curriculum more flexible, engaging, and relevant. Further implications for educators, policymakers, and researchers working with First Nations students are discussed.

'Survival mode': navigating the first five years of teaching performing arts in neoliberal education assemblages. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 1-17.



Lambert, K., & **Gray, C.** (2025). <https://doi.org/10.1080/01425692.2025.2460012>

This paper shares findings from a five-year study that followed early career secondary performing arts teachers in Western Australia. We explored how these teachers developed their professional identities in a constantly shifting educational landscape. Rather than seeing identity as fixed, we looked at how it changed through relationships, emotions, and experiences. The study highlights the intense pressures early career teachers face - such as job insecurity, heavy workloads, school cultures focused on performance, the impact of COVID-19, and ongoing teacher shortages. These challenges were compounded by narrow public and professional ideas about what 'good teaching' looks like. Many teachers in our study reported mental health struggles, and alarmingly, 35% left the profession within their first five years. Our research suggests that to better support new teachers, we need to rethink how we understand and support their professional growth within today's complex education systems.





Pedagogical growth journeys: perspectives of spirituality within holistic approaches to early years education. *International Journal of Children's Spirituality*, 1–20.

Robinson, C., O'Connor, D., Wynne, S., Manners, W., & Pietraceutella, M. (2025).

<https://doi.org/10.1080/1364436X.2025.2458825>

Holistic approaches to early years' education acknowledge the interconnectedness of child development. Understanding the role of spirituality within a holistic approach is complex, especially given how spirituality can be misunderstood as a religious construct. In this paper, we explore how spirituality is understood as a capacity of the child, an integral part of being human, and therefore a part of the child requiring nurturing and development, whether connected to religion or not. Through the delivery of a year long professional learning program, the researchers worked with school-based early childhood leaders to grow their understanding and practice in leading early childhood holistic pedagogies that intentionally included spirituality. This paper presents the findings from this study and highlights the centrality of spirituality to children's development and learning, holistically.



School infrastructure procurement by Public–Private Partnership: In the public interest? *Policy Futures in Education*, 0(0).



Benade, L. (2025).

<https://doi.org/10.1177/14782103251328165>

In the past two decades, governments in Australia, New Zealand, the United States, and parts of Europe have increasingly used Public–Private Partnerships (PPPs) to build and maintain school infrastructure. A PPP is a long-term contract where a private consortium shares the cost and risk of building schools in exchange for regular State payments. While PPPs are promoted for delivering modern facilities and relieving principals of maintenance burdens, Australian case studies suggest otherwise. Principals may still spend time managing relationships with private service providers, while tightly bound contracts can restrict schools' ability to adapt learning spaces, limit community use, and constrain teaching practices. For teachers and school leaders, these constraints can affect autonomy and school culture. This article concludes that although PPPs may help governments meet infrastructure demands, they may also erode the public mission of education. Education professionals and policymakers should carefully weigh these trade-offs when considering PPP arrangements.



"A bull stole my bike": Teachers' experiences of belonging in regional, rural and remote Australian communities. *Issues in Educational Research*, 35(1), 160–180.

Gray, C., Lambert, K., Macdonald, M.-A., Harris, M., Beard, T., Jackson, K., & Booth, S. (2025).

<https://www.iier.org.au/iier35/gray.pdf>

Teacher shortages have reached crisis levels across the education sector, especially in regional, rural, and remote (RRR) communities. While there's been a lot of focus on why teachers leave, there's been far less attention on why some choose to stay. Our study, based on in-depth interviews with 21 teachers from six RRR schools in Western Australia, explores this question. We found that many teachers stay because their personal and professional lives are deeply connected to the communities they serve. Feeling valued and building strong relationships with students, families, and colleagues gave them a real sense of belonging. These meaningful connections not only enriched their professional lives but also played a major role in their choice to remain in these communities.

ECU Leads the Way with Groundbreaking Professional Learning for Future Teachers



Professor Caroline Mansfield, Executive Dean, School of Education.

For the first time in Western Australia, final-year teaching students at Edith Cowan University's School of Education had the opportunity to participate in an innovative professional learning experience designed to strengthen their teaching before entering the workforce.

ECU recently hosted a two-day Quality Teaching Rounds (QTR) workshop led by Laureate Professor Jenny Gore from the University of Newcastle's Quality Teaching Academy. This hands-on learning experience brought 33 final-year Pre-Service Teachers together in a collaborative and research-backed program designed to refine their teaching practice, build professional confidence, and improve student outcomes. Professor Caroline Mansfield, Executive Dean of the School of Education, said, "Our School prides itself in engaging our students in evidence-based approaches to effective learning and improvement. The skills learnt in this workshop will further empower our graduates to be successful and effective teachers."

The QTR model has been rigorously tested and backed by decades of empirical research, showing that it enhances teaching quality, boosts teacher morale, and improves student achievement. This marks the first time Pre-Service Teachers in WA have been offered access to such a structured and evidence-based approach to professional development.

Professor Gore emphasised the impact of QTR, stating: "On top of the remarkable effects of QTR for practising teachers, our research on Pre-Service Teachers shows this approach helps connect theory to practice and boosts their confidence and readiness for the classroom."

Through peer observation, structured reflection, and collaborative discussions, ECU's future teachers strengthened their pedagogical skills, built professional relationships, and gained a deeper understanding of quality teaching practices. As one student said, "This workshop has reignited my excitement and confidence to commence my final practicum and enter this amazing profession."

This milestone initiative reinforces ECU's commitment to excellence in teacher education and ensures that graduates enter the profession fully equipped to make a meaningful impact in the classroom.

If you want to be part of the next generation of outstanding teachers and make a real difference to the lives of young people, our [Teacher Education courses](#) will start you on your journey.



You can read the original news item on the ECU School of Education website [here](#).



Laureate Professor Jenny Gore with ECU School of Education Pre-Service Teachers

Mother and daughter celebrate ECU graduation on the same day



Professor Cobie Rudd, Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Regional Futures) and Vice-President, Edith Cowan University.

South West ECU graduations coincided with Bunbury's first Children's University (CU) graduation, featuring a successful street parade with residents and community leaders. Bunbury mother Smitha Nair graduates from Edith Cowan University (ECU) with a Diploma of Psychology after returning to study as a mature age student. On the same day, her 9-year-old daughter Sana Subramaniam has graduated from the ECU's Children's University in the South West. "The Children's University gave Sana an opportunity to continue to learn outside of the classroom in school holidays, rather than being on digital devices," Smitha Nair said. "Education is very important to our family, I believe it is a key to empowerment."

The Children's University graduation was the first for the South West cohort, with 33 children graduating from the program in the region. South West partnering schools included Australind Primary School, Clifton Park Primary School, Dalyellup Primary School and Leschenault Catholic Primary School. The Children's University program offers a variety of extracurricular learning for children, with engaging hands-on ECU school holiday programs available to students and their families.

ECU Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Regional Futures) Professor Cobie Rudd who brought the program to WA in 2017, said expanding the program into the regions encourages and connects families to local learning opportunities and aims to ignite children's interest in health careers. "We want children in our regional areas to enjoy the same access to educational opportunities as those in the city," Professor Rudd said. "The Children's University aims to inspire a passion for lifelong learning from a young age, strengthen educational engagement, widen participation, and support students from diverse backgrounds to one day access higher education. We want to work now to grow the regional health workforce we need for the future. "We want to raise aspirations, boost achievement and instil a love of learning in the students who participate – and that is exactly the outcome we are seeing."

Celebrating achievements beyond the classroom

382 children from 14 Perth metropolitan and four South West schools completed an astounding 29 331 hours of extracurricular learning in 2024. Supported by a range of ECU Academics from the School of Medical and Health Sciences and the School of Nursing and Midwifery, the children and their families were able to participate in 18 ECU school holiday workshops now including the ECU South West Bunbury Campus. At these workshops, they experienced a wide variety of ECU course-related learning activities such as discovering secrets about the human skeleton, bone strength and how to prevent osteoporosis, investigating essential nursing tools as well as exploring

ECU's state of the art facilities such as the South West nursing demonstration ward. Now as an ECU Children's University Alumni, Sana Subramaniam will continue her love of learning outside of the classroom with piano, Indian Classical dance lessons, and Taekwondo. "The experience has inspired Sana to keep learning beyond the traditional classroom. She hopes to one day be an artist or art teacher, but she is also passionate about the environment," Smitha Nair said.

2025 and beyond

ECU first introduced Children's University to WA in 2017 and to date, over 1150 children have graduated. ECU South West plans to continue CU in the South West with a focus on health through its new University Department of Rural Health South West, with funding from the Commonwealth Government's Rural Health Multidisciplinary Training Program. To grow the regional health workforce, ECU is keen to raise aspirations from the earliest age. For more information about how to become involved with the Children's University at ECU, contact childrensuniversity@ecu.edu.au.

Background:

- The Children's University originated in the United Kingdom and is based on the notion that many of life's most valuable lessons are learnt outside of the classroom.
- ECU was the first University to deliver this extracurricular program to students in Western Australia.
- Although open to all, Children's University aims to reach children from disadvantaged backgrounds.



Credit: Henderson Photographics

This article is republished from the **ECU Newsroom**. Read the original article [here](#).

School of Education Careers Fair Connects Pre-Service Teachers with Future Employers



Dr Julie Boston, Director of Partnerships and Engagement, School of Education.

More than 330 ECU Pre-Service Teachers recently took a significant step toward their teaching careers, engaging face-to-face with a diverse range of 30 employers and organisations at the annual School of Education Careers Fair. Held on campus, the event provided students with valuable networking opportunities, helping them build professional connections and explore future career pathways. From government education departments to early learning centres, regulatory bodies, teacher associations, and recruitment agencies, employers were eager to meet ECU's talented teaching students, with many looking to recruit directly from the event.

Dr Julie Boston, Director of Partnerships and Engagement at ECU's School of Education, highlighted the importance of this high-demand event: "Many employers are eager to recruit ECU students, and this fair provides a fantastic opportunity for them to connect directly with their future workforce."

Missed the 2025 Careers Fair? ECU students can still access key resources:

- Download the "[A Guide to Education Applications 2025 booklet](#)", a must-have resource for securing your first teaching job.
- Explore job listings on the [ECU Career Hub](#).

The School of Education Careers Fair will return in Semester 2 2026, at the Joondalup Campus, date TBC.



For industry partnership inquiries, contact Dr Julie Boston, Director, Partnerships and Engagement, via email: julie.boston@ecu.edu.au.

You can read the original news item on ECU's School of Education website [here](#).

Vale
Dr Ian
Lillico

16/04/1952 - 10/04/2025



“

Ian has had a long association with ECU's School of Education and in recent years supported our students in the role of University Supervisor.

Ian made a significant contribution to education not only through his work as a teacher and Principal, but also in particular with regard to gender, boys' education and middle schooling. He founded the Boys Forward Institute and has consulted widely both nationally and internationally.

The School of Education remembers Ian for the extraordinary impact he had on education. On behalf of the ECU community and all who had the privilege of knowing Ian, we honor his legacy and may he rest in peace.

ECU welcomes new High Achieving Teachers of the future



Professor Caroline Mansfield, Executive Dean and Associate Professor Matt Byrne, Associate Dean (Primary) and HAT@ECU Director, School of Education.

ECU hosted the first orientation for HAT@ECU, an earn-as-you-learn pathway to a Master of Teaching in Early Childhood, Primary, or Secondary Education. Edith Cowan University (ECU) has welcomed its first cohort of students at Joondalup campus to officially launch the High Achieving Teacher's program, known as HAT@ECU, which commenced in Semester 1.

"ECU's first orientation was a resounding success with our HAT@ECU students given the opportunity to familiarise themselves with the program and meet our dedicated teaching staff," ECU Executive Dean, Professor Caroline Mansfield said.

"We're also fortunate to have a diverse and talented group of individuals, thanks to HAT@ECU's focus on attracting not only recent graduates but also career changers. "A Paediatric nurse, consultant and data scientist, engineer, WAFLW football player, journalist, foster carer, and disability support worker, to name just a few." Also in attendance was ECU Vice-Chancellor Professor Clare Pollock, 25 Western Australian school principals, sector head leaders and The Education Department's Director General, Mr Jay Peckitt. "We are delighted to be the only Western Australian university to offer this program which allows students to earn an income while they study to become a teacher," Professor Mansfield said.

HAT@ECU

The program is an earn-as-you-learn pathway to a Master of Teaching in either Early Childhood, Primary or Secondary Education. HAT@ECU is delivered as part of the High Achieving Teachers Program: Phase 2 Expansion Pilots supported by the Australian Government Department of Education. Unlike existing coursework schedule for these master's degrees, study is structured around the four Western Australian school terms. During the course, students will be placed in one of the partnership schools – public, Catholic or independent. "This better aligns with school needs and enhances theory-practice connections. It also makes life easier for our students with school-age children," HAT@ECU Director Associate Professor Matt Byrne added.

"ECU is responsible for delivering more than half of Western Australia's teachers to public schools, however a national shortage remains. "ECU and the Federal Government are trying to alleviate that in an innovative way," Professor Mansfield added. "HAT@ECU is an exciting new program for our university, and welcoming the new HAT students for the first ever orientation is another milestone."

More information on HAT@ECU can be found on the [website](#).



This article is republished from the **ECU Newsroom**.
Read the original article [here](#).

ECU offers Graduate Diploma in Early Childhood Teaching



Associate Professor Gill Kirk, Associate Dean (Early Childhood), School of Education.



Starting Semester 1, 2025, Edith Cowan University (ECU) will offer this one-year Graduate Diploma in Early Childhood Teaching, providing a nationally recognised qualification. ECU will become the first WA university to offer a one-year Graduate Diploma in Early Childhood Teaching. Eligible students must have already completed a three-year undergraduate degree.

"We are thrilled to launch this innovative one year course providing graduates with a nationally recognised qualification to teach in early learning contexts prior to school, 0-5 years," ECU Associate Dean (Early Childhood) Associate Professor Gill Kirk said. "Graduates will be ready to take up opportunities as qualified teachers in pre-compulsory school settings, including early learning centres."

Key Features

ECU's Graduate Diploma in Early Childhood Teaching offers:

- 60 days of professional experience,
- 20 days specialised with young children from birth to 35 months,
- followed by 40 days with children aged 3-5 years.

"The professional experience has been developed in consultation with leading partners in the early learning sector to ensure quality and continuity for the Pre-Service Teachers and for the Centres, we are certain there is no

better preparation for work in the sector than right here at ECU," Associate Professor Kirk said. "The professional experience components of the course are supported by six theoretical units that ensure a comprehensive and holistic approach to young children's education and care, as well as extensive work integrated experiences that are informed by both theory and industry needs."

More trained and skilled early childhood educators

The one-year Graduate Diploma responds to calls for increased quality and experience in the early childhood sector through the provision of qualified teachers, especially trained and skilled in working with children from birth to 5 years. The Australian Early Years Strategy (2024-2034) prioritises universal access for kindergarten children and aims to ensure children attending early childhood education and care services receive high quality early learning opportunities delivered by a professional workforce.

"To do this requires a larger early childhood workforce with a teaching qualification – which this course will provide," Associate Professor Kirk added.

"The Australian Government also recognises the need to attract and retain a high-quality workforce. This course provides a qualification specifically for the 0-5 sector, meaning graduates who complete this qualification are not only highly qualified, but they are also more likely to stay in the sector."

More information on ECU's Graduate Diploma in Early Childhood Teaching is available on the [course page](#).



This article is republished from the **ECU Newsroom**.
Read the original article [here](#).



The WA suburbs where local schools topped the ATAR charts

Associate Professor Brad Gobby, Associate Professor, School of Education.



Students at public schools in Perth's western and southern suburbs have topped the charts when it comes to achieving high grades in their ATAR courses for 2024.

Christ Church Grammar, the highest-scoring private school, joined Shenton College, Perth Modern, Rossmoyne Senior High School and Willetton Senior High School at the top of a list of schools, ranked by the number of subjects where students scored in the top 15 per cent when compared to the rest of the cohort.

Regionally, the schools listed excelled mostly in Biology and English, while students at schools listed in the eastern suburbs of Perth were geared more towards niche subjects including business management and enterprise, engineering, outdoor education and religion and life.

The eastern suburbs and regional schools listed had a maximum of two subjects where students were in the top 15 per cent, but in Perth's inner and western suburbs the number was as high as 24.

Shenton College, the state's biggest school, offered ATAR courses that few other schools did. For example, just 11 schools offered food science and technology, 10 offered ancient history and just four offered integrated science – all of which Shenton was top of the class in.

Other schools to record high scores in multiple subjects were in a similar boat, offering options such as marine and maritime studies, philosophy and ethics, Chinese as a second language, and career and enterprise.

Perth Modern, which placed second on the list, is also entirely academically selective, while schools like Rossmoyne offer specialist entry programs.

Edith Cowan University School of Education Associate Professor Brad Gobby said many schools did not have the funding and enrolments needed to provide students with a comprehensive curriculum that included a plethora of ATAR subjects, if any at all.

"These students are therefore unfairly having their curriculum choices narrowed," he said. "This can be caused by the demographics of their neighbourhoods and, in research I have conducted, that other schools are poaching or attracting their ATAR-bound students."

"While there are exceptions, the list (of top-performing schools) is comprised of WA's elite and advantaged private and public schools."

"The education system's entrenching of the socio-economic divide is overwhelmingly reflected." Overall, 89 schools across the state had one or more course with students in the top 15 per cent – 12 of those had 10 or more.

This is a slight decline on 2023, when 15 schools recorded high scorers in 10 or more subjects. There were 212 schools with an enrolment of 20 or more full-time WACE-eligible year 12 students, up from 200 in 2023.



This article is republished from the **Brisbane Times**.
Read the original article [here](#).



Professional Learning

Our professional learning programs have been designed with teachers in mind. The programs are delivered by qualified and experienced ECU educators with high level content and pedagogical knowledge and reflect adult learning principles. These courses are embedded in evidence-based teaching practices and are responsive to the cultural backgrounds and contextual circumstances of the participating teachers. For more information and to register, view our current short courses [here](#) or scan the QR codes below.

New Course!

Face-to-Face

Sounds of Country: Culturally Responsive Pedagogy Three-Day Short Course

This innovative, multifaceted course, Sounds of Country, focuses on culturally responsive pedagogy and practice, mainly within primary education, but also applies to early childhood and secondary education. The program will commence with an emergent On Country experience guided by Traditional Owner/s designed to connect participants' relational understanding of their local school's connection to place through the Boorn (tree) methodology. This pivotal juncture is an ideal starting point, encouraging participants to reflect on their personal and school context of place and country. The journey is guided by the protocols of Aboriginal knowledge and histories grounded in the Country.

Cost

- **\$2,187.00** incl GST (this covers catering, materials and online coaching sessions).
- A 10% discount is offered to ECU alumni and for multiple bookings from the same organisation.



Register Online



Fully Online

#1 - Understanding Childhood Trauma: An introduction for educators

Trauma-affected children can be found in any classroom and any school. In fact, one in four children experience a traumatic event before they turn three years old (Child, J. 2017). Trauma impacts development, behaviour and learning. This short course is an ideal introduction to childhood trauma for all educators including parents, carers and youth workers. Providing effective support for children and young people affected by trauma begins with educators who are trauma-informed. By building your understanding and knowledge you have a better chance of making a positive difference.

Cost

- **\$199.00** to undertake the course which includes all reading materials, case studies, and online activities.
- A 10% discount is offered to ECU alumni and for multiple bookings from the same organisation.



Register Online



Fully Online

#2 - Trauma and Development: Understanding the impact for educators

Children and adolescents who live in adverse circumstances where there is neglect, abuse, or violence live in a state of hypervigilance and with toxic stress from experiencing ongoing, traumatic events. Toxic stress sabotages development and wellbeing - the brain and the body struggle to function effectively, the consequences of which can be far reaching. This short course looks at the impact of adversity and toxic stress on development, focussing on the brain. Educators will build their knowledge and understanding of children and adolescents whose development has been interrupted by toxic stress and trauma.

Cost

- **\$199.00** to undertake the course which includes all reading materials, case studies, and online activities.
- A 10% discount is offered to ECU alumni and for multiple bookings from the same organisation.



Register Online



Fully Online

#3 - Trauma and Behaviour: Reflecting and responding for educators

Behaviour is communication. Behaviour for the child or young person living with trauma is often an expression of their struggle to cope. This may include struggling to cope with managing big emotions, struggling to cope with learning and struggling with being with others. Trauma means days are full of struggles and feelings of fear. This short course aims to build your understanding of children and young people's trauma-driven behaviour and your knowledge of evidence-based strategies so you can more confidently and effectively, guide and support their development of self-regulation and behaviour competencies.

Cost

- **\$199.00** to undertake the course which includes all reading materials, case studies, and online activities.
- A 10% discount is offered to ECU alumni and for multiple bookings from the same organisation.



Register Online



Fully Online

#4 - Trauma and Learning: Meeting complex support needs for educators

Early childhood learning environments and school environments can be a struggle for the child or young person living with trauma. Struggling to think, pay attention, remember, play with others, trust and form friendships with peers and adults, every day can be exhausting and overwhelming for these children who often struggle to cope. In this short course you will explore trauma-responsive pedagogy to promote positive interactions and assist children and young people affected by trauma to achieve better learning outcomes. Teaching troubled children and young people is difficult and can take its toll therefore attention to educator wellbeing and self-care is introduced.

Cost

- **\$199.00** to undertake the course which includes all reading materials, case studies, and online activities.
- A 10% discount is offered to ECU alumni and for multiple bookings from the same organisation.



Register Online



Fully Online

#5 - Trauma and Vulnerable Children: Helping them heal for educators

In this short course you will be introduced to children and young people living with family violence, refugee and asylum seeker experiences, children in out of home care, children living in poverty, and children impacted by the collective trauma histories of their families and communities. By the very nature of these specific experiences, it can be argued that these children and young people are vulnerable and are highly likely to be living with trauma. You will gain insight into the needs of these children and young people who have endured complex vulnerabilities, with the unique child, positive relationships, and a strengths-based approach at the heart of practice.

Cost

- **\$199.00** to undertake the course which includes all reading materials, case studies, and online activities.
- A 10% discount is offered to ECU alumni and for multiple bookings from the same organisation.



Register Online



Professional Learning Opportunity!

Face-to-Face

Twilight Seminar: Simple Strategies for Learning and Behaviour in Inclusive Classrooms

Join Dr Jennifer Sears (University of North Georgia) and Dr Kathy Randolph (Texas State University) - respected educators with over 20 years' experience each - as they share research-informed, practical tools to support learning and behaviour in inclusive classrooms. With expertise in co-teaching, classroom management, and the integration of AI, they'll guide you through High-Leverage Practices (HLPs), Universal Design for Learning (UDL), and proactive behaviour strategies like visual schedules, behaviour-specific praise, and opportunities to respond.

This Twilight Seminar is packed with real-world examples, editable templates, and the CEEDAR Centre's HLP toolkit - giving you actionable ideas you can implement immediately. Whether new to inclusive practices or looking to refine your approach, you'll leave with fresh insights and ready-to-use resources to better support every learner.

When: Wednesday 4 June 2025, 4.00pm - 5.30pm

Cost: \$10.00 (including light refreshments)

Where: ECU Mount Lawley Campus,
Building 17, Room 17.103, 2 Bradford Street,
Mount Lawley, WA 6050.



Walk away with practical ideas you can implement tomorrow. Perfect for general and special educators alike!

Register Here

School of Education Research Showcase



Dr Serap Sevimli-Celik

Senior Lecturer, School of Education.

Tell us about your background

I recently joined ECU as a Senior Lecturer in Early Childhood Studies. Prior to this role, I was an Associate Professor of Early Childhood Education and Associate Dean for Student Affairs at METU, Ankara, Turkey. My academic journey began with a Bachelor's degree in Early Childhood Education, followed by a Master's degree in Physical Education and Sports at METU. I then completed my PhD at Penn State University in Curriculum and Instruction, Pennsylvania, USA, where I spent the first two years as a teaching and research assistant under the supervision of Professor James E. Johnson. For the last two years of my doctoral studies, I taught the Play Pedagogy course.

My educational background and professional experience are deeply rooted in the professional development of early childhood teachers, particularly in the areas of movement education, play pedagogy, outdoor play and creativity. As play and creativity are fundamental to children's learning and problem-solving skills, I am committed to exploring early years teachers' beliefs and practices in relation to these aspects.

What is your research focus?

My research examines the impact of playful and creative teaching methods and professional development opportunities, with the aim of developing effective strategies for fostering playfulness and creativity in future educators and promoting innovative teaching practices in early childhood classrooms.

In addition, recognising the importance of play and movement in children's development, my research also explores young learners' experiences of outdoor play. I investigated how the design and layout of outdoor play areas influence children's play choices, focusing on elements that promote cognitive and social types of play. By examining these factors, I aimed to identify environmental design features that enhance children's engagement and learning in outdoor environments.

Mentoring and advising students has also been an important aspect of my work. As a former Erasmus+ European Coordinator and Academic Advisor, I facilitated international partnerships, supported student mobility programs, and ensured the comparability and recognition of study programs and courses. During my Erasmus Teaching Mobility Grant at the University of Turku, Finland, I had the opportunity to engage with a vibrant academic community, share my expertise with students and immerse myself in the rich cultural landscape of Finland. Similarly, my Erasmus Teaching Mobility Grant at the Universidad de Castilla-La Mancha in Spain allowed me to build academic contacts, deliver lectures to a diverse group of students and experience Spanish culture, enriching my professional and personal development.

In addition to my research, mentoring and teaching responsibilities, I actively contribute to the academic community through various service roles. I am a member of the editorial board of the International Journal of Play (since 2017), and I am a project evaluator for the European Union's Cooperation in Science & Technology (COST) program, acting as an external expert and rapporteur since 2023.

What are your research aims?

Through my research, I aim to contribute to ongoing efforts in early childhood education to prioritise play, creativity and active learning. By bridging the gap between theory and practice, my work aims to inform educational policy, empower teachers with effective strategies, and ultimately improve the quality of early childhood education. I look forward to collaborating with other researchers, educators and institutions who share my commitment to promoting playful and active learning experiences for young children.

Find out more about ECU's School of Education research activity by visiting our [website](#).



Future Research & Career Pathway



Delyse Clayden

PhD Candidate, School of Education.

Can you introduce yourself and tell us about your background and academic journey?

I am an Early Childhood teacher (BEEd ECS) with 25 years teaching experience, finding my way into educational support and working with families with disabilities. I have 3 neurodiverse children and a Diabetic husband, so my life is embedded in the disability community. I am an advocate working with families and schools and a sessional tutor at ECU.

I have a MEd (SN) and a Certificate IV in Community Services. My work as an advocate has prompted me to pursue a PhD, as a way to advocate for more students at a time. I find joy in continuing to work in industry, often getting called into a school where an experienced hand can benefit a student or situation.

The most important thing I would say about my academic journey is that I never imagined I would have one. I always wanted to work with young children, even from an early age, but as a completely average student, no one from my childhood would possibly imagine that I would go on to study like I have. I can see how much I underachieved at school, and how underestimated I was.

Now, I feel like the real me is starting to show, because I want to be a good role model for my own children. They drive me to be the best I can be, so they can feel free to be their own best selves, I still pinch myself sometimes that I am in this position. I fully acknowledge my hard work, feistiness and passion led me here, but it is thanks to some special mentors, cheerleaders and family that I continue to pursue this work. My heart and mind are full.

Why did you choose ECU to do your PhD degree?

I have been at ECU my entire university learning life. My first degree was completed at the Churchlands campus that no longer exists. It was the best time, and I made life altering friendships, so when considering postgraduate study, there was no other option for me. Another reason for choosing ECU is the connection I feel to the amazing Edith Cowan who was an advocate and suffragette. Her story is powerful and I consider her an important part of my journey inspiration, I will definitely miss the Mount Lawley campus as it feels like I am losing a second home.

What have you enjoyed the most?

The academic discussions, the meeting people with a similar passion to pursue knowledge and improve practice. Learning from and with dedicated educators but also meeting people that have a similar drive not necessarily in education. The parallel path we all seem to take in pursuit of understanding and growth. The fact that we can discuss things, disagree but still respect the process and like each other after.

What is the focus of your thesis?

My current research is entitled "Autistic Student Voice in Reasonable Adjustments" and looks at ways to elicit responses from young autistic students about classroom accommodations and their ability to have a say in their own educational programs, benefiting the student and the teacher. I hope this can be expanded to include all students with or without a disability, not necessarily by me, but anyone who wants to advocate.

What will you do after your PhD? And why?

I will likely sleep, reintroduce myself to my family and continue teaching and advocating. Once the degree is finished, the work really begins, hopefully. I want to see it put into practice in schools and help more young people advocate for what they need and want. The PhD is hopefully the catalyst for me to work even harder. With the research and PhD behind me, I hope we can get schools and governments to take what I am saying more seriously and that student voice becomes everyday practice. I want to expand the understanding of student voice and ways to elicit responses from more than just autistic students, but all students, with or without a disability, to move from theory and research into actual practice.

ECU Education Alumni Spotlight:

Mikayla King

Bachelor of Education (2018)

Walking into her very first lecture on her first day of university, it was obvious that Mikayla King was a young person eager to learn. And from that day on, learning has been a huge part of Mikayla's life – both as a student and a teacher. Since graduating from ECU with a Bachelor of Education in 2018, the proud Kalkadoon and Indjalandi-Dhidhanu woman whose family originates from Mount Isa, Queensland has accomplished a great deal, combining her two passions of teaching and learning as well as starting her own business. "Given that education is a collaborative role, I think it's really important that we position ourselves both as the teacher but also as the learner in our professional careers," Mikayla says. "Since completing my Bachelor of Education studies at ECU I transitioned into a full-time classroom teaching role, where I was able to gain a lot of information and insights into what my role is as a teacher and what the bigger purpose is, and contribution to my community. "And then throughout that time I also realised that I would like to further my knowledge and understanding in education, and in particular Aboriginal education."

Her passion for Aboriginal education led to the creation of her own business, sharing her knowledge at conferences and schools across the country. "Half-way through my Bachelor of Education at Edith Cowan University I started my business, Aboriginal Education Solutions," Mikayla explains. "And that was as a result of teachers needing professional learning outside of cultural awareness training. So what does it mean once you've attended a cultural awareness session? What does that mean in terms of how you consider pedagogy, how you consider curriculum, classroom leadership, student support and all of those things. "It's sharing my knowledge with teachers in terms of how we can develop responsive practices of being in the classroom." "That's what I really enjoy. Sharing my knowledge, supporting people to understand each other and working towards an Australia where we all feel welcome."

When asked about the importance for Aboriginal children to have Aboriginal teachers and role models, the answer is clear for Mikayla. "I've had the honour of sharing the classroom with many Aboriginal students throughout my teaching career and when I consider what my impact is through children being able to see themselves represented as the teacher, but also in having their knowledges and languages affirmed – I think that's really important," she says. "But I also advocate for non-Aboriginal teachers working alongside us. So I feel really proud of my contribution to educators, both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, in terms of how we develop responsive practices for all children. "But when I consider my own professional career, I feel really inspired by the children who see themselves in me because they walk 10 steps taller." Mikayla credits her time studying at ECU for helping her get to where she is now.



She made the most of every opportunity that came her way, from receiving the Vice Chancellor's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander scholarship to contributing to published articles.

"Doing my Bachelor of Education at ECU has given me a really strong foundation of skills, knowledge, networks and experiences where I feel confident to go into my career and accelerate quite quickly," Mikayla says. "The scholarship that I received was in my second year of study and it really affirmed my place at university, not only financially but in ensuring that I knew that I belonged as a student at the university."

"I built amazing relationships with the lecturers and academic team in the School of Education at ECU, and I felt so inspired by their commitment to education – both in their roles at ECU, but also externally in voluntary roles that supported and advocated for children across the nation. "And I felt really proud to be a part of the team here. And whilst I loved the lectures and getting to know my colleagues, the opportunities were really special."

"Being an ECU alumni makes me feel like I'm part of a strong collective of committed people who are interested in driving towards an equitable future for all Australians. "And I also feel proud in particular to be an alumni of the School of Education because of our strong history of teacher education, but also our success and high quality of teachers." Going on to complete her Masters of Aboriginal Studies and now working towards a PhD, when she's not teaching or studying Mikayla is involved in community and volunteer work, further enhancing her standing as a role model. "When I was thinking about all of my external professional and personal roles within my community, I was thinking what is it about them that I love? And what is it about them that is really similar? And I realised that all of them are teaching roles, funnily enough. "So that's what I really enjoy, is sharing my knowledge, supporting people to understand each other and working towards an Australia where we all feel welcome."

Explore our Teacher Education Postgraduate courses [here](#).



This article is republished from **Alumni News**.
Read the original article [here](#).

Student SHOWCASE

A selection of some of the recent stunning creative works by Pre-Service Teachers in the fields of Technologies and Art Education.



Zoe McLean
Ceramic Bust



Mefail Alitovski
Ceramic Vase



Emilee Harring
Ceramic Bust



Crystal Richardson
Ceramic Plate



Joshua Gabriel
Ceramic Vessel



Sienna Marie Collier (Tris)
Ceramic Figurine



Jessica Lee
Ceramic Pot



Ella Smith
Ceramic Plant Pot

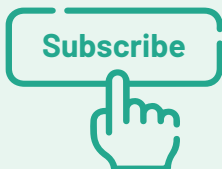


Maralee Zien Newing
Ceramic Teapot



Send us your Feedback

We are keen to understand your interaction with UpdatED, its connection with your role, and how it might be improved in the future.





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ECU is committed to reconciliation and recognises the traditional custodians of the land upon which its campuses stand and their connection to this land. We acknowledge and offer our respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elders and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people past, present and emerging.


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