ENGLISH AUSTRALIA QLD PD FEST 2026

21 March 9.15 am-4.30pm, Sir Llew Edwards Building, UQ College, The University of Queensland, St Lucia

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8.45-9.15	Registration						
9.15 - 9.35	UQ Voices Choir performance - Main Theatre (212)						
9.35 - 9.45	Welcome from English Australia and UQ College - Main Theatre (212)						
9.45 - 10.00	Video address - Stay Informed: Industry Updates with English Australia CEO Ian Aird - Main Theatre (212)						
10.00 - 11.00	Plenary - Bridging Cultural Divides: Interactive Strategies for Culturally Responsive ELICOS Teaching - Presented by Marcela Lapertosa from Value Learning - Main Theatre (212)						
11.00 - 11.30	Morning tea / Trade exhibits						
	Breakout 1 - Room 115 *60 Minute Workshop*	Breakout 2 - Room 216 *60 Minute Workshop*	Breakout 3 - Room 217 *60 Minute Workshop*	Breakout 4 - Room 219 *60 Minute Workshop*	Breakout 5 - Room 412/413 *60 Minute Workshop*	Breakout 6 - Room 116 *30 Minute Sessions*	Breakout 7 - Room 132 *30 Minute Sessions*
11.30 - 12.35	Seeing Vowels Clearly: Using the IPA and Vowel Space to Improve Pronunciation Teaching *Nathaniel Mitchell*	Cambridge Capers: Serious Learning, Playful Practice *Bec Hungerford*	Write More, Work Less (Without AI) *Neridah McHenry*	Good Student or Good Learner? Building Learner Agency in Short ELICOS Courses Chiaki Lawler	Tech as a Thinking Tool: Supporting Imagination, Criticality, and Care in ELT *John Day & Katie Clancy*	Grounding AI-mediated writing feedback in theory: The Three Ts model for informed educational practice *Devrim Yilmaz* 12.00-12.05 Changeover Mentimeter: Interactive Learning to Spark Student Engagement *Timothy Green*	Meaningful goal setting for ESL learnings – turning aspirations into action! *Jennifer Allan* 12.00-12.05 Changeover The best of both worlds: developing reading skills with authentic texts and a little AI help *Sophie Walker*
12.35 - 1.30	**Lunch / Trade Exhibits -** Want to write for the English Australia Journal? Meet the Journal Editor, John Smith, at the Pearson table in the sponsor area now!						
1.30 - 2.00	Strategic Learning, Analysis, and 'Young' Academic Voice [SLAY] in the Age of AI *Mia Tarau, Lorna Clark & Chanelle Swanepoel*	Beyond Mix-and-Match: Making Eclectic Teaching Intentional *Regan Thomson & Cole Thomson*	What if the teacher's guide was actually useful? *Niki Joseph*	How I learned to stop worrying and love CoPilot: Fast, Practical AI for Busy Teachers *Ben Arnot*	Coulda, Woulda, Shoulda: When Grammar, Meaning and Culture Collide *Sermin Erden*	Navigating the Whys and the hows of being an early career ELICOS teacher *Jo Kwai & Donna Cook*	The New Science of Stress: Turning Pressure into Academic Performance *Faye Lawand*
2.10 - 3.00	Closing Plenary - Beyond burnout: Cultivating wellbeing for ELICOS professionals - Presented by Dr Patrick Pheasant - Main Theatre (212)						
3.00 - 3.15	PD Fest close						
3.15 - 4.30	Post-fest drinks and canapés						

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Welcome!



Our key English Australia QLD branch professional development event (PD FEST) excites me every year! I love how one event can bring so many amazing teachers, managers and presenters together into one place from our wonderful sector. It's a day when we can all come together, relax, catch-up with familiar faces, connect with new networks, quench our thirst for some PD – and just take some time out from the busy world we find ourselves in.

I have never missed a PD Fest event in Brisbane. Whether its your first one, or you've come to every event – I'm sure you will agree with me, sometimes the hardest part is choosing which session to go to! I promise you won't be disappointed with the amazing array of presentations this year.

A huge thank you to everyone who submitted an abstract, and if you're a first-time presenter – congratulations! This is such a collegial event, it's a wonderful launch-pad to share and inspire others with your passion and practice. Our passionate presenters have put a lot of time into preparing for this event, and a big thanks go to you as well as to everyone who makes this event possible (including Sophie O'Keefe, and the QLD PD Fest committee, as well as UQ for hosting us).

Investing in ourselves and our PD is important. I'm looking forward to our closing plenary speaker who is going to talk about Teacher Wellbeing.

Wishing everyone a fantastic day,

Jo Kwai
PD Fest Founder

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Bright Ideas Program

Bright Ideas Program Information

The Bright Ideas program is run in partnership with Pearson and English Australia.

Bright Ideas is a national professional-learning initiative that spotlights new thinking, emerging practice, and innovative classroom approaches in English language teaching.

Each year, English Australia delivers statebased PD Fests—local, high-engagement professional development events where teachers present sessions to their peers. Attendees vote for the most impactful or innovative presentation in their state. The winning presenters become Bright Ideas Winners and are sponsored to attend the English Australia Conference, where they present their work in dedicated conference sessions.

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UQ Voices Choir Performance (9.15-9.35)

UQ Voices will be performing 3 crowd-pleasers, guaranteed to entertain and delight the Qld PD Fest crowd!

Know someone who might enjoy or benefit from the choir? Connect with UQ Voices on Instagram: @uq_voices



UQ Voices is a Brisbane-based community choir for international students and friends, dedicated to promoting wellbeing and belonging on campus and in the wider community. Founded by the UQ School of Psychology and proudly supported by The Queensland Institute since 2021, UQ Voices brings people together through the joy of group singing and contributes to research outcomes in international student wellbeing.

Stay Informed: Industry Updates with English Australia CEO Ian Aird (9.45-10.00)

Join English Australia's CEO, Ian Aird, for a brief video update covering the latest legislation and policy changes shaping the ELICOS sector. Ian will break down what these developments mean for you and your students — clearly, concisely, and with in a way that's relevant to you.

Ian has over 25 years' experience in international education, spanning the full ELICOS sector. He began as a teacher and CELTA trainer, progressed to Director of Studies, and later led across sales and marketing, admissions, IT, and executive management. He also ran a consulting firm for five years, advising on strategy, M&A, financial performance, market and economic research, regulatory reform and compliance, and executive and sales coaching, with clients including government agencies, industry bodies, and education providers from universities to multinational and family-owned organisations.
His governance experience includes six years on the English Australia Board, serving on the StudyNSW advisory board, and five years as non-executive Chair of a not-for-profit. He holds a Graduate Diploma in Law, an MBA with Distinction, a Masters in Professional Education, and completed the AICD Company Directors Course with Order of Merit, along with CELTA and DELTA qualifications.

Plenary - Bridging Cultural Divides: Interactive Strategies for Culturally Responsive ELICOS Teaching - Presented by Marcela Lapertosa from Value Learning (10.00-11.00)

As ELICOS programs welcome increasingly diverse international cohorts, educators must understand how different cultural and educational backgrounds shape learning preferences and classroom expectations. This interactive workshop led Marcela Lapertosa, a cross-cultural psychologist, examines cultural variations in teaching and learning styles and the importance of adapting pedagogical approaches for multicultural classrooms. Drawing on research and practical examples, participants will actively explore how cultural values, previous educational experiences, and communication norms influence students' engagement, participation, and learning. Through small group activities and case study discussions, attendees will identify challenges faced by learners from collectivist versus individualist cultures, high-context versus low-context communication backgrounds, and varied educational traditions.
The workshop provides evidence-based strategies for creating inclusive learning environments, including adapting questioning techniques, and recognising how unconscious assumptions about classroom participation can impact student success. Participants will leave with practical tools for fostering cross-cultural awareness, building rapport across cultural boundaries, and creating flexible learning pathways that honour diverse approaches to language learning while maintaining academic rigour in ELICOS contexts.

A cross-cultural psychologist with a passion for fostering intercultural understanding, Marcela is a master facilitator and trainer who has travelled the world leading the development and delivery of global competence curricula, intercultural learning, and leadership training to diverse audiences. As co-founder of Value Learning, a Corporate Affiliate of English Australia and a consulting business committed to advancing global competence and fostering intercultural understanding, Marcela brings extensive expertise in bridging cultural divides and creating inclusive learning environments across educational contexts.

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Seeing vowels clearly: Using the IPA and vowel space to improve pronunciation teaching - Presented by Nathaniel Mitchell (11.30-12.30)

Vowel pronunciation is one of the most persistent challenges in English language teaching, yet many teachers feel under-prepared to diagnose or train vowel issues with confidence. This workshop introduces a practical, teacher-friendly approach to phonetics and phonology using the IPA chart, vowel space awareness, and simple self-recording on mobile phones.

Designed for beginner and experienced ESL teachers alike, the session focuses on seeing and hearing vowel differences clearly—across different learner backgrounds—without requiring technical knowledge or specialist software. Participants will explore how English vowel spaces differ across countries, how first-language vowel systems influence English pronunciation, and how teachers can train vowels more effectively in class.

The workshop is hands-on and reflective. Teachers will record short speech samples on their phones, use the IPA chart to analyse their own vowel production, and practice simple classroom techniques for helping students notice and adjust vowel quality. The aim is to build confidence, accuracy, and awareness—so teachers can move beyond “repeat after me” and towards informed, effective pronunciation teaching.

Nathaniel Mitchell is formally trained in Phonetics at Griffith University, lecturing into phonetics and phonology from 2013 until 2018. His Honors project specifically looked at pronunciation of Australian English and worked on the Western Australian English Pronunciation project with Griffith University.

Cambridge capers: Serious learning, playful practice - Presented by Bec Hungerford (11.30-12.30)

Exam preparation courses can be demanding for both students and teachers. Time pressure, high expectations, and repeated exposure to familiar task types can make sustaining learner engagement over time challenging. Finding ways to balance effective exam training with enjoyable learning experiences is therefore an important consideration for these courses.

This workshop presents a range of engaging approaches to practising tasks from the Reading and Use of English, Listening, and Speaking papers. Participants will explore interactive activities that encourage collaboration, discussion, and active language use, while still preparing learners effectively for the exam. While rooted in exam preparation, the activities shown can be readily adapted for other language exam formats and for General English teaching. These activities promote strategic thinking, deeper language awareness, and learner confidence, supporting success in exams as well as in real-world communication. The session demonstrates that effective exam preparation does not have to come at the expense of enjoyment in the classroom.

Bec Hungerford has over 15 years’ experience teaching English both in Australia and overseas, much of it focused on Cambridge exam preparation. She is passionate about fostering learner autonomy and encouraging curiosity about language and the wider world. She strongly believes that effective teaching should be engaging and human — and that motivating students and colleagues with chocolate and home-baked goods is a perfectly valid pedagogical strategy.

Write more, work less (Without AI) - Presented by Neridah McHenry (11.30-12.30)

Writing is a highly time intensive skill to work on in class, and to correct and provide meaningful feedback on. This can lead to shallow learning, underdeveloped skills, and missed opportunities to improve students' overall ability. This presentation covers the rationale for valuing writing, shares some engaging and effective writing activities, and suggests how to make things sustainable for we overworked teachers - all in ways that don't rely on AI tools.

Neridah got her CELTA some 14 years ago with the intention of working overseas long enough to sound interesting at parties. She has gone on to love of the challenge of EAP and IELTs courses and completed a Masters of Teaching in 2021. Her great loves are books, trivia, and teachable moments.

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Good student or good learner? Building learner agency in short ELICOS courses - Presented by Chiaki Lawler (11.30-12.30)

It is not uncommon to see students begin their English language learning journey at an Australian ELICOS with a preconceived belief about what it means to be a good ‘student.’ Being quiet, obedient, accuracy-focused, and dependent on the teacher may be the norm in some cultures. While understandable, these behaviours can limit participation, risk-taking, and meaningful communication in Australian classrooms, making learner agency essential.

With recent student visa regulations and decreased international enrolments, some providers have noticed increased interest in short, under 12 week programs on visitor visas. Although there is no conclusive national evidence that short-term cohorts are rising across the ELICOS sector, Department of Home Affairs data shows more visitor visa entrants and fewer student visa holders. This may contribute to local increases in short-term cohorts, but it remains anecdotal rather than a confirmed national trend. Still, concentrated engagement is vital to build confidence and support proactive learning within compressed timeframes.

In this interactive workshop, participants will explore practical, research-informed strategies to guide learners from passive to proactive. Through task redesign, teacher talk reframing, micro routines, and culturally informed discussion, participants will gain techniques to enhance autonomy, participation, and willingness to communicate—regardless of background or visa type.

Chiaki has over 25 years of experience catering to students from diverse backgrounds and ages. She has taught at various private and government institutions in Australia and Japan. She specialises in pre and in-service teacher training. Her focus as an educator is World Englishes, cross-cultural identity, and communication. At SCU College, she is a teaching scholar, and her primary role is to oversee the English Language Program and provide student support across campuses.

Tech as a thinking tool: Supporting imagination, criticality, and care in ELT - Presented byJohn Day & Katie Clancy (11.30-12.30)

As artificial intelligence becomes increasingly visible in English language teaching, educators face growing tension between innovation and pedagogy. While AI tools promise efficiency and personalised support, uncritical adoption risks undermining learner agency, confidence, and meaningful thinking. This workshop introduces a pedagogy-first framework based on CAC Co-intelligence (Cognitive → AI → Cognitive), which positions AI as a thinking tool that supports deeper learning when guided by professional judgement and restraint (Nikolic, 2025).
The session is structured around three interrelated principles: imagination (supporting learners to generate and shape meaning), criticality (supporting evaluation and judgement), and care (supporting confidence, agency, and inclusion). The workshop emphasises that affective support and ethical decision-making cannot be automated and remain the responsibility of teachers.
Participants engage in small-group, task-based activities to analyse classroom AI scenarios and redesign them using CAC constraints: learners think first, use AI to enhance ideas, and return to human judgement to evaluate and refine outcomes. Rather than focusing on specific tools, the workshop highlights how task design and sequencing determine whether AI extends or replaces thinking. Participants leave with a practical framework and design principles for responsible AI use. This workshop is not about using more technology; it is about using it carefully.

John Day is an English language teacher at UQ College with over ten years’ experience in TESOL teaching, teacher training, and academic leadership in Australia and China. Alongside his ongoing classroom teaching, he contributes to curriculum design, quality assurance, and professional development, and has delivered workshops on pedagogy and educational technology. He is particularly interested in exploring how AI can be integrated into TESOL in ways that strengthen learner thinking, confidence, and meaningful communication.

Katie Clancy has worked across Australian mainstream schools and English programs in South America, and has spent the past 10 years at UQ College. Her work spans university preparation programs and Learning Advice, supporting diverse learners in academic contexts. Grounded in cross-cultural experience, Katie is committed to equity, student voice, and reflective practice. She values curiosity, collaboration, and ongoing professional growth, and is interested in how educational technology and AI can support confidence, critical thinking, and independent academic identities.

Grounding AI-mediated writing feedback in theory: The Three Ts model for informed educational practice - Presented by Devrim Yilmaz (11.30-12.00)

Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI) is increasingly used to provide feedback on student writing due to its efficiency and capacity for wider implementation. However, despite its technological capabilities, AI-generated feedback risks becoming unfocused or pedagogically superficial if it is not grounded in educational research, linguistic conceptualisation, and learning theory. This presentation argues that effective AI-mediated feedback must be driven by pedagogy rather than technology. Building on earlier work that categorised written feedback according to degrees of explicitness and the presence of rationale, the presentation introduces a recently developed framework: the Three Ts of Feedback. This model conceptualises feedback across three interconnected dimensions: type, target and text level, as these dimensions provide practitioners with a structured lens for analysing feedback practices and identifying patterns shaped by learner proficiency, age, and educational context. The presentation demonstrates how GenAI can be purposefully used to create a pedagogically informed comment bank aligned with the Three Ts framework. In essence, GenAI is positioned not as a replacement for teacher judgement but as an educational assistant that supports consistent, focused, and theory-driven feedback practices while maintaining learner-centred principles.

An experienced educator and teacher educator specialising in EAP, TESOL, and Applied Linguistics, with a strong focus on writing pedagogy and feedback. He has extensive experience in curriculum design, pedagogical innovation, and academic language development in tertiary contexts. His work emphasises culturally responsive teaching, plurilingualism, and theory-informed use of Generative AI in language education. He has led teams, developed institutional resources, and taught across face-to-face, blended, and online programs. His current interests include feedback literacy, teacher development, and technology-enhanced learning.

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Meaningful goal setting for ESL learnings – Turning aspirations into action! - Presented by Jennifer Allan (11.30-12.00)

Supporting English language learners to create goals that are clear, purposeful, motivating and tailored to their learning needs helps them to take ownership of their progress. In this session I'd like to share some classroom-ready strategies for guiding students to create tangible language learning goals that build confidence and long-term growth.

Having achievable but challenging goals in place provides structure and as a result can improve study habits, facilitate stronger progress tracking and creates better alignment between classroom tasks and learner aims.

Attendees will explore what makes a goal "meaningful' in an ESL context, leaving the session with tools to guide students to set their own short and longer-term goals. In addition, the session will cover ways of embedding reflection and self-monitoring into everyday classroom and self-study learning.

Ideal for teachers looking to strengthen student engagement and create a greater sense of achievement for short and long-term students alike by propelling them out of 'stagnation' in their learning journeys!

A multi-lingual ESL trainer with 10 years industry experience having worked as an English Assistant in Paris before embarking on a career in the cooperate and VET RTO world during which time I ran PD workshops and training for employees focusing on professional growth and career advancement. Moving into the ESL industry in Brisbane ignited my passion for supporting international students in the classroom, specifically looking at ways to catapult their progress and build their self-confidence!

Mentimeter: Interactive learning to spark student engagement - Presented by Timothy Green (12.05-12.35)

Ready to move beyond basic quiz tools to provide an easy to use yet effective interactive online tool? While platforms like Kahoot, Canva, and Genially have their place, Mentimeter offers a surprisingly powerful number of features that can transform how students interact, collaborate, and learn together.
My presentation is hands-on and showcases Mentimeter's versatility through live demonstrations that teachers can immediately apply in their own context. We'll explore three applications of Mentimeter: quizzes, designing task-based collaborative activities, and facilitating open-ended whole class discussion-based activities that spark genuine engagement.
This will involve moving beyond the basics of Mentimeter as a polling tool and exploring features such as scales and rankings, different visual representations for multiple choice questions, AI summaries of creative Q&A sessions, and collaborative brainstorming that work across all proficiency levels from general English to EAP and more. My presentation will also touch on AI tools that can create for Mentimeter, such as Menti AI assistant and Claude Anthropic.
While each competing platform has its specific areas of strength, this presentation covers exactly when and where Mentimeter can outperform the alternatives. Leave this session with practical, ready-to use strategies and the confidence to implement Mentimeter effectively from day one.

I am a passionate ESL/ELT educator with over 15 years of experience. Much of my career was spent at a local English school that ranked as high as 3rd globally and for the past two years, I've been working with a dedicated team at Bond University. My primary focus is teaching the interrelationship between vocabulary and grammar, while exploring technology-assisted learning to create effective and engaging classroom experiences. I look forward to sharing insights and connecting with colleagues at this professional development festival.

The best of both worlds: Developing reading skills with authentic texts and a little AI help - Presented by Sophie Walker (12.05-12.35)

This presentation will focus on one short authentic text to argue that if we want to develop our students' reading skills and maintain our assessment writing skills, we should be using human-generated texts in our classrooms and tests. We will look at how AI can play a role in helping us prepare reading material for the classroom and assessments – but not as the 'author' of the text we want to use with students.

I work at UQ College as part of the assessment team producing tests for the English language pathways programs and tests for use in the wider university. I have a passion for item writing and continuing to develop my own skills as well as the skills of other item writers and teachers, especially in the age of AI where these skills are in danger of being eroded.

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Strategic learning, analysis, and 'Young' academic voice [SLAY] in the age of AI - Presented by Mia Tarau, Lorna Clark & Chanelle Swanepoel (1.30-2.00)

As generative AI reshapes student writing and learning, pathways programs face growing pressure to uphold academic integrity while preparing students for university expectations. This session argues that key intellectual and academic skills that are vital for students' ability to engage ethically with AI are often assumed rather than explicitly taught in pathways curricula. Drawing on higher education practice and current research in progress, the presentation suggests opportunities for pathway programs to take a steering role in preparing students for first-year university demands in relation to engagement with AI. It will argue that doing so requires educators to harness the critical thinking capabilities already present in the cohort, as well as provide students with the practical skills required to assess the validity of source material and demonstrate effective argumentation. Participants will explore practical strategies for embedding critical thinking through scaffolded tasks, metacognitive reflection, and assessment design that prioritises process over product.

Dr Mia Tarau is a creative and experienced educator, active across pathways and tertiary education contexts in Australia and New Zealand. Her expertise spans policy research, teaching and learning, and inclusive curriculum design, fostering the development of academic integrity and academic skills across Humanities, language education, and applied linguistics. Her current collaborative project focuses on supporting students in using AI for learning in critical, ethical, and responsible ways, while strengthening their confidence and ownership of academic voice.

Lorna Clark is an experienced educator and program coordinator who has worked across pathways and tertiary education contexts in Australia. Her PhD research focuses on exploring the epistemology of international students as it relates to critical and connected ways of knowing. Her areas of interest include critical thinking, pedagogy and inclusive curriculum design. This collaboration focuses on supporting students in using AI for learning in critical, ethical, and responsible ways, while strengthening their confidence and ownership of academic voice.

Chanelle Swanepoel is a Business and Economics educator whose philosophy centres on relationships, empathy and high expectations, helping learners belong and build confidence. With experience across South Africa and Australia in high school and tertiary enabling pathway programs, she designs inclusive, future-focused learning that strengthens language and digital literacy. Her practice integrates design thinking, multimodal assessment and purposeful technology. She collaborates on projects supporting students to use AI critically, ethically and responsibly, strengthening academic voice and ownership.

Beyond mix-and-match: Making eclectic teaching intentional - Presented by Regan Thomson & Cole Thomson (1.30-2.00)

Discover how Principled Eclecticism can transform your teaching from reactive to intentional. This session explores how strategic, evidence-based decision-making helps teachers select the right methods and techniques for diverse learners. We'll provide a quick overview of the theory of PE, share real examples from the classroom, unpack how quick needs analyses can guide lesson design, and finish with a collaborative brainstorming activity where you'll generate PE applications for your own teaching. Walk away with practical tools for building flexible, inclusive, and coherent lessons—without the chaos of "just mixing everything together."

Regan Thomson is an ESL educator at UQ College with over 16 years of teaching experience across Australia, Japan, and Canada. He holds an MA in Applied Linguistics from Griffith University and has taught a wide variety of English language courses ranging from General English to ESP and exam preparation. Regan is particularly interested in evidence-based, adaptive teaching approaches that respond to diverse learner needs.

Cole is a passionate educator with experience across a range of educational contexts. As a seasoned EAL instructor, he is enthusiastic about working towards a future of helping the next generation of teachers get started and build confidence in this exciting industry.

What if the teacher's guide was actually useful? - Presented by Niki Joseph (1.30-2.00)

Teacher's Guides are written for teachers, yet they are frequently underused or overlooked. At best, they might be consulted to check answer keys, at worst, teachers may not even receive a copy.
However, most Teacher's Guides are packed with resources which, when used or adapted, can save valuable preparation time, enrich lessons and even serve as a form of ongoing professional development. This is a practical workshop, and participants will engage in hands-on activities including trying out the writing of their own teacher's notes for an activity and also discovering some hidden gems within the Guides. There will also be plenty of opportunities to share experiences and ideas.
Participants will leave with a toolkit of creative, ready-to-use ideas that will encourage closer reading of Teacher's Guides, enhanced coursebook use and inspiration for classroom practice.

Niki Joseph is an ELT professional with over 30 years of experience in classrooms around the world. An experienced teacher, trainer, examiner trainer, and curriculum developer, she now works full-time as a materials writers.

She enjoys creating engaging materials including students' books, workbooks and supplementary resources for learners worldwide. She is currently passionate about Teacher's Guides as a powerful yet often underused tool for supporting teachers and enriching lessons.

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How I learned to stop worrying and love CoPilot: Fast, practical AI for busy teachers - Presented by Ben Arnot (1.30-2.00)

This streamlined, practice-focused session demonstrates how Microsoft 365 Copilot can support ELICOS and adult-migrant English teachers by accelerating everyday planning and resource creation. Using real classroom examples, the workshop showcases three high-impact workflows educators can immediately adopt: generating CEFR-aligned unit planners, creating quiz items for formative assessment, and designing workbooks that adapt authentic texts into level-appropriate learning materials.

Participants will be introduced to a simple prompting framework—goal, context, source, and expectations—that reliably improves Copilot's accuracy and makes outputs more "classroom-ready." Before-and-after examples reveal how AI can reduce preparation time while still preserving teacher judgement, curriculum alignment, and pedagogical intent.

The session also includes a short "AI misadventure" case study highlighting common pitfalls and offering strategies to maintain control, avoid over-reliance on automation, and ensure outputs meet quality and compliance standards.
Teachers will leave with prompt templates, replicable workflows, and the confidence to start using Copilot to enhance—not replace—their professional expertise.

Ben Arnot is a Leading Vocational Teacher in AMEP, SEE, and ELICOS at TAFE Gold Coast, with 22 years' experience across ELICOS, university programs, and adult-migrant English, including serving as Director of Studies at CQUniversity's Gold Coast campus. Passionate about technology in teaching, Ben helps educators evolve to meet today's learners where they're at. Known for his warm, humorous style, Ben once paid his way through uni as a bouncer—and later represented Australia at the World BBQ Championships in Texas.

Coulda, woulda, shoulda: When grammar, meaning and culture collide - Presented by Sermin Erden (1.30-2.00)

Modal verbs are often presented as a discrete grammar point, taught in a single unit and assessed shortly afterwards. However, for many learners, modals are not simply a matter of form and function. They require the brain to process degrees of certainty, politeness, social distance, and implied meaning. These are concepts that may not be encoded in the same way in a learner's first language, or may be used differently even in languages that have modal systems.
This session explores what happens cognitively and linguistically when learners encounter English modals, particularly those whose first languages express obligation, possibility, or politeness through different grammatical or pragmatic means. Drawing on classroom examples, the presentation will examine how meaning is negotiated, why learners often interpret modals literally, and how cultural expectations about directness and politeness influence both production and interpretation.
Participants will also reflect on teaching practices: How effective is teaching modals as a single unit within a longer course? What kinds of explanations and activities help learners grasp not only meaning, but nuance?
The session will provide practical strategies to support deeper understanding of modals in multilingual classrooms and to improve clarity, confidence, and intercultural communication.

Sermin Erden is an experienced language educator with a strong interest in the relationship between language, cognition, and communication in multilingual contexts. Her previous work explored how linguistic differences are often mistaken for cultural differences in second language learning and teaching. Building on this, her current focus brings language and culture together through the lens of grammar, examining how meaning, nuance, and social expectations are encoded and taught in English. She is passionate about helping teachers better understand multilingual learners and classroom communication.

Navigating the Whys and the hows of being an early career ELICOS teacher - Presented by Jo Kwai & Donna Cook (1.30-2.00)

PSA: Only for 'newbies' aka. new teachers to ELICOS, and returning ones, ok!
Navigating your way as a 'newbie' into sector can be exciting and daunting at the same time. We are both passionate and experienced professionals, ready to mentor and share what we have learnt along the way. We'll have an open discussion to help you build your networks, value PD. Networking. Understanding your place in the sector, for now and beyond. Ask questions and share in our safe space!

Jo Kwai is a QCT registered, experienced teacher and has worked in the schools sector (public and private), ELICOS, TAFE AMEP, VET Trainer and Assessor (TESOL); Jo has also been an Academic Manager, and is currently on the secondary school team at St Peters Lutheran College, as a CLA-EALD, and International Student Coordinator. She is also a current board member of the federal govt Tuition Protection Service (TPS).

Donna Cook is the In-Country manager, Cambridge. She is an experienced senior manager with over 20 years of experience in the higher education sector. She also served on the English Australia Board for over 10 years, and has an IEAA Fellowship. Donna previously was the Senior Academic Manager, Australian Catholic University.

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The new science of stress: Turning pressure into academic performance - Presented by Faye Lawand (1.30-2.00)

ELICOS classes focused on high-stakes exams come with high expectations, diverse language proficiency levels, and relentless performance demands. But what if stress isn't just an obstacle, but a lever for learning?

This session brings forward groundbreaking research from Stanford University on the New Science of Stress, busting the old myths and revealing how acute pressure (when reframed) can enhance focus, memory, and motivation in both students and teachers. We'll unpack the latest neuroscience and psychophysiology, showing how stress, managed differently, can move from sabotage to support.

You'll walk through the key findings, see what this means in your own classroom, and experience a practical reframing process. No jargon, no complicated tools, just a new lens you can use immediately to benefit yourself and your learners.

Faye Lawand is a seasoned educator with over 20 years of experience in teaching and teacher training across a wide range of educational settings from elementary to university, in diverse international contexts. She holds a Master of Arts in Education (ESOL) and is a certified clinical hypnotherapist, Advanced Relaxation Teacher, and Master Practitioner of NLP. Along the way, Faye noticed a crucial piece missing from traditional teacher training: practical tools for self-regulation and personal agency. Today, she integrates brain-based learning with nervous system support to fill that gap, equipping students and educators with science-backed strategies to reduce stress, sharpen focus, and build the resilience needed to thrive in high-pressure environments.

Closing Plenary - Beyond burnout: Cultivating wellbeing for ELICOS professionals - Presented by Dr Patrick Pheasant (2.10-3.00)

In the demanding ELICOS sector, teacher well-being is the foundation of student success and institutional resilience. Yet, navigating complex classroom dynamics, regulatory pressures, and student pastoral care often leads to chronic stress and compassion fatigue.
Drawing on clinical psychotherapy and international education leadership, this session explores the hidden drivers of teacher burnout through real-world case studies. Moving from diagnosis to actionable intervention, we will examine a multi-layered approach to building psychological safety:
• The School: Systemic strategies for leadership to structurally support staff mental health.
• The Colleagues: Practical ways to build supportive, peer-led staffroom cultures.
• The Individual: Evidence-based tools to regulate stress and build embodied resilience.
Attendees will be encouraged to consider a "Well-being Action Plan" to advocate for healthier workplace dynamics, support their peers, and sustainably protect their own energy and passion for teaching.

Dr Patrick Pheasant is the Head of Education Partnerships (ANZ) at LanguageCert and a registered psychotherapist and counsellor. With over 30 years of experience in international education, including seven years as CEO of NEAS Australia, Patrick intimately understands the unique systemic and classroom pressures placed on ELICOS professionals. Holding a PhD in Education with a focus on embodied learning, he merges his extensive sector leadership with clinical mental health expertise. Patrick is a passionate advocate for creating psychologically safe, resilient environments where both educators and students can thrive.