



# QUEST

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## Take the journey and change your lives

*"Each of you will take your own learning journey. Some may start late, some may already be mentors to other learners. Some may think they've missed the boat, but, believe me, that's not so. Some of you may not know where to start. Whatever your age, whatever your passions, wherever you live, learning greases our wheels, locks our world and fuels our lives. I congratulate you all for taking the journey".*

This was Maggie Beer's inspirational message to current and future adult learners across Australia during the launch of Adult Learners Week 2024.

Maggie told attendees that she couldn't think of a "more important theme in my life than learning". "It is my passion and my joy. Everything I do and I know I have learnt. None of my learning happened at a university and most of it didn't happen when I was young".

Maggie said when she set up her Maggie Beer Foundation (<https://maggiebeerfoundation.org.au/>) in 2014, she knew learning would be "part of all we did and it is". The Foundation was set up when Maggie found there were limited opportunities for cooks and chefs in aged care to access skills and training "despite these being one of the most important and complex

roles in aged care".

"We're determined to change that through learning, through training and mentoring. We have a long way to go but the journey has started".

The transformative nature of adult and community education was woven throughout the launch of Adult Learners Week 2024, with speakers and learning ambassadors discussing the many ways that lives can be changed by gaining new knowledge, skills and confidence.

This year's launch was held at the Tauondi Aboriginal College in Port Adelaide. Since 1973, Tauondi – an independent college governed by the Aboriginal Community - has been a leader in Aboriginal vocational education and training, and adult and community education

The College grounds provided a beautiful setting for the Smoking Ceremony, which preceded a traditional Welcome to Country performed by Tauondi staff members, Kamellia Forbes and Mark Catanzariti, both of whom belong to the Kurna Miyurna people of the Kurna Yarta Nation.

(Story continues on p. 3)

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The launch's smoking ceremony was lead by Kamellia Forbes and Mark Catanzariti

(story continued from p. 1)

Tauondi Chair, Brenz Saunders, welcomed everyone to Tauondi, saying that it is a “very special space for our community and it is something that has been sustained for 50 years”. The College, he said, strives to make students “feel safe in a space that is going to nurture their abilities to develop their skills and make them great people”.

South Australian Minister for Education, Training and Skills, Blair Boyer, told the audience that one of the first things he had been pleased to do when he became Minister was to restore \$1 million of funding to the adult and community education sector in 2022.

Minister Blair said he believed that funding put into adult and community education “just about has the best bang for buck of anything you could do”.

“When you look at the outcomes that we actually get from adult and community education, it’s actually money that is really, really well spent because it has real tangible, long lasting outcomes for the people who get to undertake it”.

Recently appointed federal Minister for Skills and Training, Andrew Giles, said that the Australian Government recognises that lifelong learning is a “fundamental right”.

“And we are with you every step of the way,” he said.

“This year’s theme - ‘Take the journey’ - emphasises the journey anyone can take through adult education, regardless of age or life stage. Anyone can start or restart a learning journey.” - Minister Giles

“We know the benefits of adult learning go beyond skills acquisition, including meeting new people, feeling a sense of belonging and achievement, and discovering new self-confidence.

Going on a learning journey as an adult can help adapt to today’s challenges, particularly with the changing nature of work and rapidly changing technology,” Minister Giles told the audience.

## Adult Learners Week Scholarships

Minister Giles said he was honoured to also be announcing two winners of \$1000 Adult Learners Week scholarships and two recipients of \$500 awards.

“These scholarships are awarded to outstanding adult learners to enable them to continue their learning journey. Today’s scholarship winners are learners whose commitment and motivation make them stand out, and whose learning journey has made a big difference in their lives. They have overcome significant barriers to get started or faced challenges in continuing to learn.”

In 2024, there was a record 26 scholarship applications from across Australia, with the \$1000 scholarships awarded to Kirsty Marshall (Brotherhood of St Laurence SEED program, Victoria) and John Lindsay (Tauondi Aboriginal College, SA).

Tahnee Baker (Tamworth Community College, NSW) and Jypsey-Lee Banfield-Paterson (Batchelor Institute, NT) were awarded \$500 scholarships. Read more about the Scholarship winners on page 5.



L to R; MC Troy Sincock, The Hon Andrew Giles, Isabel Osuna-Gatty, Mathew Bishop, Christiana Davies, Farah Naz, John Lindsay, Haydon Grigg, and Brenz Saunders

## 2024 Learning Ambassadors

Each year, providers nominate learners who have inspiring stories to tell of their adult education journey.

In total 10 learners from across each State and Territory were chosen to be ambassadors.

The four SA-based ambassadors spoke at the launch with MC Troy Sincock.

**Haydon Grigg**, 28, left school in Year 11 due to difficulties with reading, writing, and socialising with others.

In 2023, Haydon began a cooking course at Eastwood Community Centre. One year later, he now has skills to “step forward into an actual job”.

Equally as important, he said, is the boost in confidence the course has given him. After not feeling comfortable speaking to other people, Haydon has now taken up a teacher’s suggestion that he also take part in a podcasting course because he has “such a good presenting voice”.

**John Lindsay**, a River Ngarrindjeri man, now studying at Tauondi, always really liked school but “could never concentrate on anything”.

John worked for 30 years and became a leader within his community. It was this responsibility – and his daughter’s urging – that led him to the Tauondi’s Skill Up program.

John is now studying a Certificate I in Access to Vocational Pathways. As a respected Aboriginal mentor, John is also supporting others while they study at Tauondi and showing them that you can learn at any age.

**Farah Naz’s** pride and enthusiasm while talking about her learning journey were clear to everyone in the launch audience. “Sometimes I feel like a superhero”, she said laughing.

After arriving from Pakistan in 2013 and finding that her qualifications weren’t recognised, Farah spent the next decade raising her three children.

In 2021, she connected with the Morella Community Centre where she found “amazing staff, lovely, supportive people” who encouraged her to enrol in the Pathways to Children’s Services course.

In March 2022, Farah followed this up with a Certificate III in Early Childhood Education and Care, before starting in 2023 as a Home Interaction Program for Parents and Youngsters (HIPPY) tutor.

**Christiana Davies** spent six years in a refugee camp in Ghana after fleeing Sierra Leone. Coming to Australia 19 years ago with a seven-month old daughter, Christiana undertook a Foundation Studies course in the hope that she could then study for a nursing degree.

During her studies, Christiana faced several challenges but she persisted and is now finishing a postgraduate degree in mental health nursing. “I am not a quitter. I always like to keep moving things forward”.

Christiana is also a leader in her community, serving as the SA Chair of the African Women’s Foundation.

You can read all of the ambassador stories at: <https://adultlearnersweek.org/story-category/learning-ambassadors/>