

# Legacy

Research in Focus:  
Here for good

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A Ride for Life: The World-First  
Quad Tandem Ride

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Can creativity still exist in a  
world of Artificial Intelligence?

**A greater vision of world needs.**

Since 1897

We believe the journey of each individual has deep purpose. Our core business as a university is to provide an excellent academic and student experience. Our corporate mission is to transform lives. We do this through Christian higher education, through world-class research that matters, by providing service opportunities to students and staff, by engaging with and supporting industry, and by creating space on our campuses for thriving community. And we do it because we believe in a greater vision of world needs, and that the contribution of each individual matters.



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# Faith Belonging Purpose

## The Heart of Avondale's Transformation

Rachael Thomson Jones

Avondale University has undergone a period of significant transformation over the last few years, refining strategy and improving the student experience on both campuses. After COVID disrupted both student numbers and the sense of community on campus, revitalising the student experience became a clear priority. Initiatives like free dorm accommodation, the university ministry team, and the launch of 7 at Avondale have helped reshape the campus into a vibrant, connected community. What ties all these changes together is a commitment to developing belonging and a spiritually rich atmosphere where students feel truly at home.

Avondale's commitment to excellence is demonstrated by its long-standing heritage and consistently strong student rankings. Avondale is currently ranked #1 university in Australia for full time employment, and #2 for overall educational experience (The 2025 Good Universities Guide). Recent improvements in the educational experience include new technology in classrooms, the ongoing adoption of new systems, integrating artificial intelligence, investment in the development of short courses, and increasing flexibility in learning delivery to better meet student needs.



Recently, the university received the highest level reregistration from the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA) and the Commonwealth Register of Institutions and Courses for Overseas Students (CRICOS) — a 7-year term — affirming the quality and stability of our academic offerings. Avondale also received the highest re-registration term with the Adventist Accrediting Association, demonstrating the commitment from academic staff to excellence and to supporting the global Seventh-day Adventist Church community.

## Campus Ministry

One of the clearest signs of this transformation is the approach to ministry now unfolding across both campuses. Our chaplaincy team and Avondale University Church have combined forces and created a unified university ministry team. The purpose being to ensure students feel supported in every aspect of their journey. “What we’re doing here at Avondale is really about shared focus, shared purpose, and a shared desire in what we see ministry achieving—for our students and our staff,” explains Pastor Aubree Harrington.

She continues, “As amazing as programs and administration can be, what we really want to be is present with the student.” For Aubree, it’s about being intentional, authentic, and people focused.

***“ We believe in the ministry of presence. We believe that faith engagement and mentoring happen best when we’re in connection and community with each other.”***

The university ministry team includes two chaplains, three university church pastors, student life representatives, residential mentors, and student leaders. One of the things the team has intentionally done is slow the pace down—creating space for spiritual growth and time to connect with each other. “We believe in the ministry of presence. We believe that faith engagement and mentoring happen best when we’re in connection and community with each other,” says Pastor Norman Hurlow.

## 7 at Avondale

That same commitment to a student-centred experience can be seen at our revamped 7 at Avondale cafeteria on the Lake Macquarie campus. “The cafeteria fits perfectly with the university’s goals around campus life,” says Chief Students and Engagement Officer Calvin Dever. “We use it to support students’ meals, but we also run events there, like Orientation Week, State of Origin nights, and other student-focused gatherings.” This space creates connection and activity, facilitating a vibrant on-campus experience of students and staff.

Plans are underway to expand this further with live music, interactive events, and new ways to make mealtimes about more than just food. The goal is for the cafeteria to be a space where students naturally come together, to build friendships and make

memories. We are grateful to donors who generously invested into making 7 at Avondale what it is today.

## ACE Lab

The ACE Lab program introduced in 2022 provides an incredible launching pad into university life for first year students. This research-based initiative aims to foster character development in young people through experiential learning. It involves them in experiences that are challenging, focused on building belonging, and aimed at connecting them with service, nature, and God.

## Free Accommodation

Perhaps the most transformative initiative has been the introduction of free accommodation for new students. Designed to reignite on-campus life, it's had a powerful effect on community spirit. "Our dorms are full to overflowing," shares Peta Tams, who co-manages the Ladies' Residence. "Each year since the trial began, we've seen more and more students choosing to live on campus. And that makes all the difference... it's those real-life connections, friendships, [and] shared faith experiences that make students want to stay."

The ripple effect is visible everywhere. "Why did we do free accommodation? First and foremost, it was about getting people back on campus," adds Dever. "At the time, numbers were low, and so was the vibe. We wanted a big campus feel, and free accommodation was a way to help make that happen."

Initially funded by the South Pacific Division, the free accommodation offer is certainly serving its purpose. "We've used Andre Hall for the first time in around 10 years, and in Watson Hall, guys are sharing rooms... You can walk around and see people studying, Bible studies, small groups here and there. It's brought vibrancy back to campus, which is fabulous. Love it to be even higher, and we're working on that," says Dever.

## Sydney Campus Accommodation

Avondale's clinical education facility on the Sydney Adventist Hospital grounds continues to be an ideal connection point, offering nursing students access to placements at the largest private hospital in New South Wales. Particularly exciting is upcoming additional accommodation options on the Sydney campus. An AU\$85 million construction project will deliver new student and staff accommodation, creating further opportunities for growth. The development is scheduled for completion in 2026.

## Research

Avondale researchers continue to receive recognition for their substantial contributions. A recent example is the recognition of Professor Brett Mitchell AO and his research team, who were named finalists in the 2024 NSW Health Awards under the Health Research category for their world-first Cleaning and Enhanced Disinfection (CLEEN) Study. This pivotal research has made significant strides in preventing healthcare-associated infections





(HAIs), contributing to both patient safety and cost savings for hospitals. Our three research centres – Christian Education Research Centre, Lifestyle Medicine and Health Research Centre, and Scripture, Spirituality and Society Research Centre – produce purpose-driven research motivated by service and a greater vision of world needs.

## What's next?

Looking to the future, that sense of momentum continues to build. Spiritual unity, vibrant campus life, and bold, student-focused decisions are all pointing in the same direction. The challenges of the past haven't disappeared, but the response has been encouraging, faith-led, and grounded in purpose.

"We believe you need to belong, to sense belonging through your involvement," reflects Vice-Chancellor Professor Malcolm Coulson, for whom, the renewed focus on student connection is part of a bigger story. "We need people with strong adaptive leadership willing to rethink how they do things, and I love how well our current team works that way."

***"We believe you need to belong, to sense belonging through your involvement."***

He also sees this moment as part of a long arc of growth which began many years ago. "Thinking about past teams, the decades-long effort towards university status, the support, diligence, and hard work of leadership, staff, and lecturers adding research to their workload—we've been developing and improving for a long time, and that will continue as long as we stay focused on why we exist."

The Avondale team are deeply committed to working alongside our students and alumni toward the success of this university. At every turn, the purpose and direction of Avondale is rooted in Christ and the student experience, not just through programs or policies, but through people; students who feel seen, supported, and inspired.

Behind the scenes, our team is working diligently to create an environment where Avondale can thrive as a university that's known and loved by all who study and work here. It's a constant journey, one not without its challenges, but with God's leading and a clear vision, we're confident it will continue to grow and be a blessing to the communities that it serves.

Our commitment is motivated by a sense of mission and the values we hold so dear – excellence, spirituality, wellbeing, integrity, and service. We invite you to join us in transforming lives through Christ-centered higher education.

# A Legacy of Service

Bailee McLeod



Service is in our DNA. We have been preparing students for service since our founding in 1897. The Avondale School for Christian Workers set out to prepare people for service in the developing work of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Australia, New Zealand, and the South Pacific – a mission that remains true to the university today. If anything, our scope has widened, with our graduates becoming employed in private, public, and Christian sectors alike.

For over 125 years, our priority has been to provide our students with a holistic and unique Christian education. Preparing them to serve their world for good is the essence of our motto 'A greater vision of world needs' – penned in 1924. We ask them to step outside of their comforts and serve the world in new and transformative ways.

We encourage them to live this out in various expressions. Over the years, our students have served overseas at summer camps

in the United States and Canada, including Big Lake, Mivoden, and Sunset Lake, as well as camps throughout Australia.

## Local Service Opportunities

Students have also participated in various Urban STORMCo trips over the past few years. Organised by our university ministry team, students have visited Victorian, South Queensland and Sydney schools to host chapels and give both our students and school students an opportunity to engage with one another. "We are given a call, in Galatians 5, that our freedom is to be used to serve others," says Associate Pastor Aubree Harrington. "That's really the attitude we have; once you've found freedom in Christ there is an opportunity for us to look outside of ourselves."

**“*That’s really the attitude we have; once you’ve found freedom in Christ there is an opportunity for us to look outside of ourselves.*”**

Students have also engaged in service initiatives locally in Morisset. Serve day, a key event of Festival of Faith, allowed students to touch the local community in various ways. Three teams set out in the community, one cooking pancakes at Morisset High School, another offering a free car wash, and the third mowing lawns, tidying yards and doing maintenance for residents. "These were wonderfully attended. We had around 60 students that came – when some of them were finished with one service project, they'd drive to another to give a hand," says Pr Aubree. The response was extremely positive among the students, which meant another day was organised to give students another opportunity to serve. The projects are largely student organised, "a lot of the effort was by Mikael Falcun, our Serve leader on the university student ministry team. He put a lot into making sure these projects happened." Pr Aubree says that the COVID-19 Pandemic majorly effected how we interact and relate with each other, and the service opportunities that Avondale offered. "We are in a season of rebuilding trust because for so long we were told "do not be around others". Now we want to come back to what we know God has called us to – people matter, and we should be giving where we can".

## Thailand Trip

In November 2024, a team of 10 Avondale University students and staff worked at the Udon Adventist International Mission School (UAIMS). The school caters 400 students from Kindergarten to Year 8. The team contributed to UAIMS in various ways with half the team working on building a new fence

**“*I love being able to see different parts of the world and how God is working in those places*”**

for the school's safety, while the others assisted teachers in classrooms. Jasmin Ringrose, Student Life/Sport Coordinator and trip leader, reflected on the classroom experience, "it was particularly beneficial for our team members studying education,

offering them invaluable hands-on teaching practice". Brooke Howard, one of the students on the trip said of her experience, "I love being able to see different parts of the world and how God is working in those places ... We're called to serve, and God will always use those who are willing."

## Ministry of Teaching Overseas

Education students get the opportunity to teach their Professional Experience Placement overseas. Ministry Of Teaching Overseas, known as MOTO, started in 2007 due to the efforts of Dr Jason Hinze. The idea was born when an education student came into his office asking to complete her placement in a rural town in India. The school had over 150 students and they desperately needed teachers. Dr Hinze recalled his own experience of living with a refugee community on the Thai/

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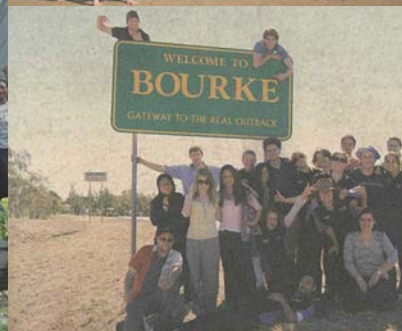
Burmese border when he was 17 – an experience that changed the trajectory of his life. So, in 2007 he took a group of 11 education students to that small town in Northern India on the first MOTO trip. Since 2007, 27 MOTO trips have run, involving 444 Education students. The trips have been to six destinations around the globe: India, Cambodia, Nepal, Tonga, Darwin (during the COVID-19 Pandemic) and Fiji. Speaking about the importance of the experiences, Dr Hinze says, "As a Christian educator one of my main aims is for my students to discover the joy of service. I also want our graduands to see teaching as a service opportunity and to approach their teaching careers with a service mindset."

## One Mission

One Mission provided multiple annual mission trips for students to serve overseas. During the programmes time, it ran trips to Brazil, Vanuatu, Nepal, Thailand, Philippines, Cambodia and other destinations around the globe. Colin Chuang (Avondale Alumni, 2005 graduate) was on the One Mission committee and got to see the idea come to fruition. "I believe that travel, especially service, helps overcome ignorance and complacency," says Colin.

**“*Service is the heart of the gospel – it is looking at things from another person’s point of view, not being me-focused.*”**

"You are there on the ground in these places to fill a need, to work together as a team to accomplish a goal, and in turn, just make the world a little bit of a better place." In the latter years, One Mission collaborated with 'ADRA Connections' through ADRA Australia, who ultimately took over the running of the trips. "Service is the heart of the gospel – it is looking at things from another person's point of view, not being me-focused," says Colin. "The very nature of service is a mentality and a viewpoint that everyone is important and loved. That itself changes how we live and what we see as important and valuable."



# Research in **Focus**

## Here for good

Featuring Dr Jason Morton and  
Professor Tracie Mafile'o

At Avondale University, research is not simply an academic requirement—it's a calling. It's about real-world impact, transforming lives, and faith in action.

As Avondale deepens its role in the higher education sector—now operating as a fully registered Australian university with a distinctive Adventist identity—it continues to position research at the heart of its mission. Research at Avondale is not confined to laboratories or literature reviews. It is, as Associate Dean of Research and Research Training Professor Tracie Mafile'o says, "part of mission itself." And its aim is simple yet profound: to make a difference.

"Research actually is mission. It's not some kind of academic thing," says Mafile'o. "For an Adventist university or institute of higher learning, it's a core contribution to mission that we make because it's about making a difference to the world."

This is research with purpose. Research that seeks to understand, to innovate, to respond to the needs of communities—locally, nationally, and globally.

## A Faith-Based Vision for Discovery

Dr Jason Morton, Dean of Research and Research Training, frames Avondale's research vision within the broader calling of the institution: to transform lives with God at the centre.

"Avondale's purpose is to transform lives, and having God at the centre of that," says Morton. "We want students to be excited about the world around them and excited to seek new knowledge which will inform the way they are as Christians."

This ethos is evident in how research is integrated into teaching. From the first year of study, students are invited into a community of curiosity and discovery. "You see students get excited about joining that journey that we're on as well," says Morton.

## Building a Culture of Research

Over the past five years, Avondale has invested significantly in strengthening its research culture and infrastructure. This has been driven by internal vision but also by the standards required of Australian higher education providers by TEQSA (Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency).

**“ We want students to be excited about the world around them and excited to seek new knowledge which will inform the way they are as Christians.**

"As a university, research is important and expected," explains Morton. "We can't be a provider of ministers, teachers, or nurses unless we also have research and research training built into

our processes.” This growing emphasis has resulted in a shift: research at Avondale has become a defining pillar.

Significant resources have been allocated to ensure this is the case, from supporting academic staff with research mentoring and funding to developing user-friendly and up-to-date researcher profiles on the Avondale website.

Mafile’o has seen the cultural change firsthand. “We have a growing research culture and a vibrant, positive, open, inviting space,” she says. “For our emerging researchers, the research culture at Avondale is one where they feel supported to develop.”

## Research That Matters: Recent Projects and Impact

This transformation in research culture is not abstract. It’s producing real, tangible outcomes with national and international significance.

One of the most notable is a landmark partnership with Adventist Schools Australia (ASA). Avondale has been commissioned to lead a national, multi-year research project to assess and improve the climate, wellbeing, and faith engagement across ASA’s 48 schools and campuses.

The project is driven by a team at the Christian Education Research Centre (CERC), one of three flagship research centres at Avondale, and is designed not just to collect data, but to empower action. It strengthens the quality of Adventist education in Australia while also demonstrating Avondale’s growing research leadership.

Another major initiative is the Global Adventist Pastors’ Survey, covering all 13 divisions of the Seventh-day Adventist Church worldwide. This research by the Scripture, Spirituality, and Society Research Centre offers insights into pastors’ spiritual lives, their alignment with the church’s beliefs, and their perspectives on mission.

The work of Professor Brett Mitchell with the Lifestyle Medicine and Health Research Centre across a range of healthcare-related studies in Infection Prevention and Control has been recognised nationally through several awards, including becoming a member for the Order of Australia. These research studies have attracted recognition and funding and continue to contribute to global efforts to reduce healthcare-associated infections.

The Lift Project is a lifestyle-based mental wellbeing program created by Professor Darren Morton. To date, more than 50,000 people from over 20 countries have participated in The Lift Project. Studies of the outcomes of the program have resulted in more than 10 academic publications.

### Other recent projects include:

- First Nations Community Development (2023–2024): using Indigenous methodologies such as yarning circles to explore effective community development models.
- Grit in Ministry (2024): examining perseverance and passion in pastoral roles in the New Zealand Pacific Union Conference.

- The Relationship Between School Climate and Faith Engagement (2021–2026)

These projects aren’t only academically rigorous—they’re also deeply responsive to real-world needs. “It’s how we do mission better,” says Mafile’o.

## A Unique Contribution

Avondale’s research strengths are organised around three research centres, each contributing a distinctive voice to urgent contemporary conversations:

- Christian Education Research Centre
- Lifestyle Medicine and Health Research Centre
- Scripture, Spirituality, and Society Research Centre

The centres provide a platform for interdisciplinary collaboration and serve as a bridge between academic excellence and community relevance—especially for the Adventist Church in the South Pacific and beyond.

Mafile’o highlights the importance of local context in shaping knowledge production.

“We’re not just taking this knowledge from over there and applying it blindly over here. We can produce our own knowledge, informed by an Adventist worldview and responsive to our local context and cultures in our part of the world.”

This context includes growing collaborations with institutions across the Pacific. It reflects a research culture that is not only academically credible but also socially and spiritually aware.

## Looking Ahead: Here for Good

Avondale’s research agenda isn’t just about growing its profile—it’s about inviting others to join the journey.

“We absolutely are seeking people interested in furthering their research career,” says Morton. “We have scholarships available, particularly if they align with our research centres or with projects that our current staff are engaged in.” It’s a call to future higher degree researchers—those who want to produce research that transforms lives, research that is here for good.

Mafile’o sees it as part of the university’s larger spiritual and intellectual mission. “There’s a need to respond to present truth in 2025,” she says. “I think our calling to be a movement means that research needs to be fresh, vibrant, and engaging. It’s about our impact on the world.”

Whether it’s investigating the role of grit in ministry, understanding faith development in schools, or reducing preventable infections in hospitals, research at Avondale reflects the university’s core mission: to transform lives. And through its growing research profile, it is shaping a better world.

Interested in pursuing research at Avondale? Explore Higher Degree Research (HDR) opportunities, connect with supervisors, and learn more about scholarships at [avondale.edu.au/research](https://avondale.edu.au/research).

# A Ride for Life

## The World-First Quad Tandem Ride

Bailee McLeod



In September 2025, four Australian women will be completing a world first: riding a quad tandem bike across the country. The 4000km journey from Perth to Sydney, holds a single purpose, to raise \$500,000 for Gotcha4Life, an organisation aiming to improve mental fitness and suicide prevention for Australians.

**“We want to be part of getting suicide down to zero. That’s the mission of Gotcha4Life and we’ve keen be part of that.”**

The Ride4Life four – Louise, Anna, Sonia and Rachel – are excited to tackle the challenge. “We don’t know what to expect, which I think is the best part about it,” says Rachel. “We want to be part of getting suicide down to zero. That’s the mission of Gotcha4Life and we’ve keen be part of that” explains Louise.

“This is the official first quad tandem bike in Australia. We got it from Canada, second hand... [and] unpacked it from the box last night and put it together” says Anna. For six weeks, the four women will be averaging from 80km – 180km a day on the bike.

Sonia and Louise became best friends after she sponsored Louise’s second ride. Sonia had the idea of riding across Australia with Louise. Rachel and Anna joined the Ride4Rescue team in 2024 and were keen to join the Ride4Life journey. What started as an idea for two tandem bikes cycling beside each other morphed into this world-first. “Initially it was just going to be 2 tandems riding” says Rachel. “I came across this [quad on the internet] somewhere and I went, ‘four!’” recounts Louise. “She sent a photo of a quad, and we said ‘yeah, let’s do that’” says Anna. Not realising quad tandems were few and far between, especially in Australia, it took the group six months to find one to suit their need. “It wasn’t in the toy shop” jokes Sonia. “It was quite the journey. Over 200 emails liaising with people around the world that were offering us quotes of how to get it here. The original quote was \$35k to bring it here. But through connections, buying it second hand and the shipping company – because it was charity they cut off half the price! So, I think it was approximately \$14k in the end” explains Anna.



“Most people are not aware that every day, nine Australians take their lives. That’s seven men and two women every day. [Australia is] the highest rated [country for] suicide in the world” the women explain. Awareness is the heart and purpose of Gotcha4Life. Founded in 2017 by Gus Worland, their vision is for a ‘suicide free world, where no one worries alone’. How do they do this? They develop and deliver preventative programs that help build skills in building emotional muscles, social connectedness and encourage help seeking behaviours. These programs and behaviours are taught in schools, sports clubs, workplaces and communities across Australia.

“When you think about Australia, we actually have so much in this country. It’s so rich and yet people are still feeling hopeless” says Anna. “The one thing that I really loved about Gotcha4Life is they target schools and getting kids early to talk about mental fitness.” In 2024, the organisation equipped 45,818 young people and the adults in their lives, 17,927 people visited their Mental Fitness Gym and they held 1,237 workshops that inspired life changing conversations (Gotcha4Life’s 2024 Impact Report). “Three of us [on the ride] are school teachers. I’ve chatted to kids that are on the brink – they feel that hopeless and they’re 13. So, I’m a really big believer in what Gotcha4Life do” explains Anna.

Rachel, Anna and Louise are also all Avondale graduates. “I came to [Avondale] and graduated originally in 1991” says Louise. She graduated again in 2015 from her Bachelor’s degree and set off the next day to complete her first tandem ride. “It’s crazy it was 2015 because that is the year my sister [Rachel] and I, graduated from our teaching degrees. But we didn’t even know Louise at that point. So, it’s a full circle. Now it’s 10 years later, it’s our homecoming year, and we’re on this mission together on this quad tandem. Avondale’s been a special part of our journeys and made us the teachers we are” observes Anna.

For the women, their six-week journey is also deeply connected to their faith. “We have lost the ability to connect and be able to talk to one another about what is really on our hearts. And that’s a big deal” says Sonia. “Jesus said, I’ve come that they have life and have it to the full. As Christians, we should be really concerned about that. It should be really on our hearts that we do change the world with the hope that we have.”

Support Ride4Life and donate today!



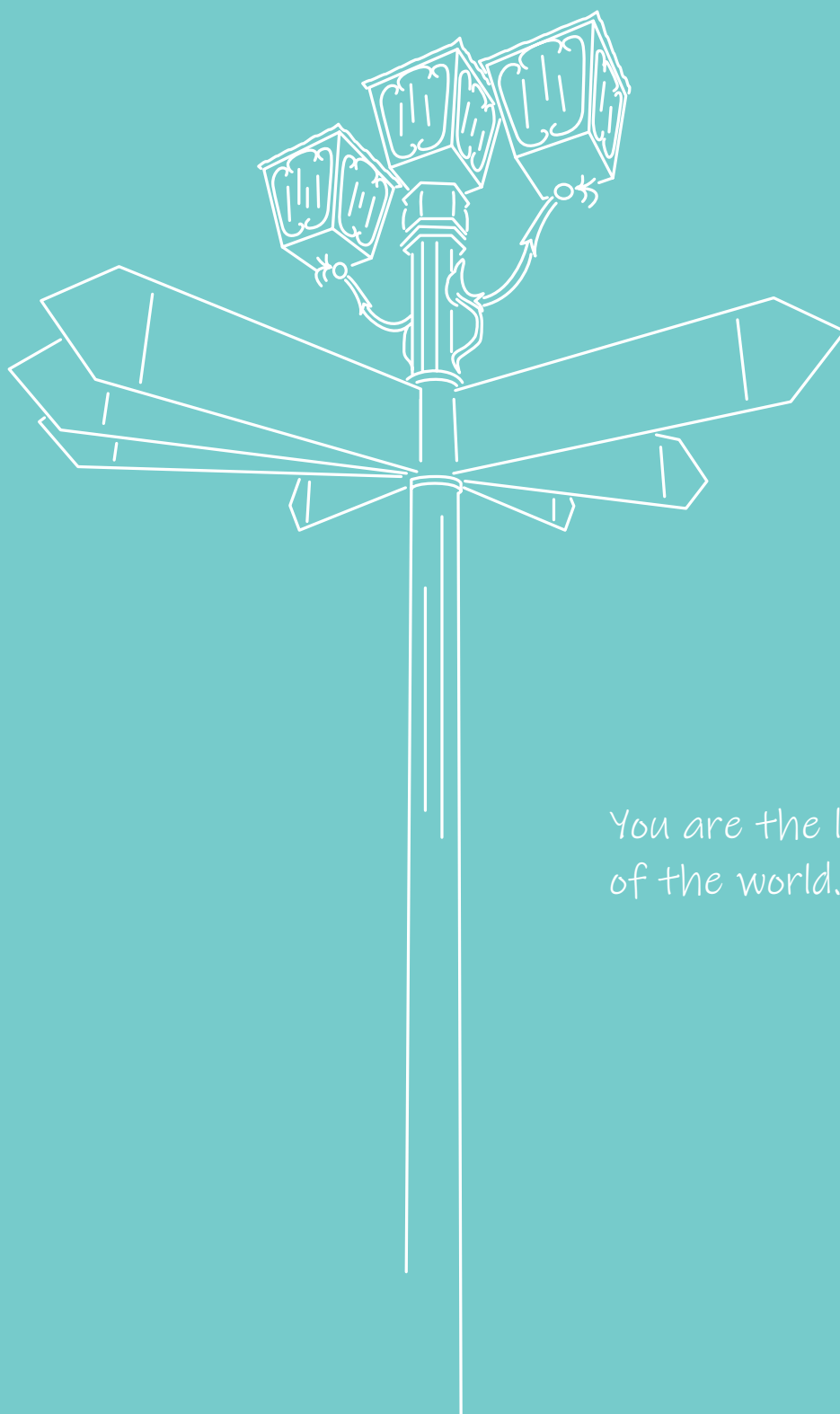


Conservatorium

AVONDALE



In 1925, the Music Hall was completed. It was the first brick building on campus, and had four Poole pianos that were brought over from the United States. The building remains the Music Hall today and is home to the Avondale Conservatorium.



You are the light  
of the world...



# Can creativity still exist in a world of Artificial Intelligence?

Bailee McLeod

For centuries art has been intimately connected to the cultural zeitgeist. Not just visual artists, but writers, playwrights, actors and filmmakers all produce art that, either poignantly or provocatively, holds a mirror up to society. As the digital age progresses, our idea of art and the means and systems to create it expands. Recent developments of Artificial Intelligence have stirred a plethora of conversations and sparked protests, lawsuits, and movements throughout many industries demanding for regulations around artificial life. The Writers Guild of America (WGA) and SAG-AFTRA (Screen Actors Guild - American Federation of Television and Radio Artists) strikes in 2023 are a prime example. Actors and writers in Hollywood protested for collectively 146 days (WGA started on May 2nd, and SAG-AFTRA joined on July 14) making it the second longest labour stoppage in the industry's history. One major concern for the industry was the emergence and use of artificial intelligence, and the potential impact on their livelihoods. Let's dive in.



### **Dr Richard Morris**

Richard is an educator, craftsman and practicing artist with over 30 years experience in the industries. His favoured art mediums include timber, clay, paint and found objects. He is a Senior Lecturer at Avondale University for Visual Arts and Visual Communication.

### **Jacqueline Calvo**

Jacqueline is a marketing professional with 15 years in academia and industry. A business lecturer at Avondale University and founder of Insight Marketing Specialist, she provides coaching and consulting services for small businesses.

### **Dr Lynnette Lounsbury**

Lynnette is a writer, historian, educator and filmmaker. She has two novels, *We Ate the Road Like Vultures* (2016) and *Afterworld* (2014). Lynnette is a Senior Lecturer in Communication at Avondale University, and Head of Arts and Business.

### **Jim Lounsbury**

Jim is a writer, director and Environmentalist, known for *The Meaning of Vanlife* (2019), *Love is Now* (2014), *Possession(s)* (2009), and *The Fragments* (2013). His short film *Goodbye Industrialist*. *Hello Circulist* premiered at TEDx Sydney in 2022. Jim is an academic in the School of Arts at Avondale University.

## Tool, Threat, or Creative Partner?

Our relationship with Artificial Intelligence (AI) is ever evolving. The continual advancement of the technology means our interactions with it can change, almost daily. What started as asking Siri to 'call mum' evolved to asking Google to 'turn down the air conditioning', to now asking ChatGPT to make an itinerary of our three-week Euro vacation, or craft a work email for us. All time saving tasks, but what are the costs of integrating AI into our lives? We spoke with four leading creatives on Avondale University's academic staff to explore the effects and impact Artificial Intelligence has on creativity, art and our human experience.

"I think modelling ethical use of AI is something we can all do for our kids or for our students or in our workplace – creating a culture of using it only when you need [and] using it carefully... We have no choice but to embrace AI and use it wisely," says Dr Lynnette Lounsbury, Head of School – Arts and Business. "I have a choice whether I write using AI or not. So that's my choice. I don't have a choice about engaging in a world that has AI in it or not." Jacqueline Calvo, Business School Lecturer, adds "I would always say that the technology in and of itself is a tool. It's who's wielding it, that you need to be more wary of. We get to steer the ship of where it goes."

**“ Whether I use it or not, I need to understand it, or I will be fooled by it. I need to use it well, or I am contributing to wasteful destruction.**

Energy consumption is a major concern around the increased use of AI. The International Energy Agency (IEA) suggests that in 2024 data centres used around 1.5% of the global electricity consumption. Long term environmental impacts of data centres are not yet known, but if the technology rollout continues, electricity demand will increase. The IEA shares that global electricity supply for data centres is projected to rise from '460 TWh in 2024 to over 1000 TWh in 2030'. Renewable energy, nuclear and natural coal and gas are all suggestions helping combat the energy crisis. They also suggest that renewables continue to be the fastest growing energy source for data centres and meet close to 50% of their energy demand. But we must ask ourselves, is the draining of our natural resources worth asking ChatGPT what we should make for breakfast with what we have in our fridge? "Whether I use it or not, I need to understand it, or I will be fooled by it. I need to use it well, or I am contributing to wasteful destruction," says Dr Lounsbury.

## Artificial Intelligence: A History

Ideas of Artificial Intelligence date back centuries. Greek mythology foreshadowed artificial life with figures such as Talos, a bronze robot in the form of a man, commissioned to protect the island kingdom of Crete. Jonathan Swift included 'the Engine' in his 1726 novel Gulliver's Travels, the earliest known reference

to a device that resembles a computer. While no direct reference is made, the Engine is thought to parody Spanish philosopher and theologian Ramon Llull's 'logical machines' and his theory *Ars generalis ultima*.

The term 'artificial intelligence' was first coined in a proposal by computer scientists John McCarthy, Marvin Minsky, Nathaniel Rochester and Claude Shannon in 1955. In 1956, the following year, the team held a Summer Research Project at Dartmouth College which is generally considered the birth of the new academic discipline, Artificial Intelligence. In 1958, John McCarthy created the computer programming language LISP which became the most popular language programme in artificial intelligence research. For nearly 70 years Artificial Intelligence has developed from human intelligence exhibited in a computer to deep learning machines that now pump out content (Generative AI).

## So, what exactly is AI?

Artificial Intelligence models are dependent on learning algorithms that are developed and maintained by data scientists. This means they need human intervention to form responses to new information outside of their initial training. The AI applications that we interact with today are based on traditional machine learning models.

AI can be understood through two categories: AI functionalities and AI capabilities. There are four types of AI based on functionalities: Reactive Machine AI – these produce your Netflix recommendations; Limited Memory AI – this is Generative AI (OpenAI's ChatGPT), virtual assistants and chat bots (Siri, Alexa, Google etc), and self-driving cars; Theory of Mind AI and Self-Aware AI. If we look at the types of AI based on capabilities, there are three: Artificial Narrow AI, General AI, and Super AI. General and Super AI are nothing but theoretical concepts. If realised, they would be the types of Artificial Intelligence that could reason, learn and have cognitive abilities, like humans. Examples in pop culture of sentient bots would be 'Rosey' the robot as seen in The Jetsons and 'HAL 9000' in 2001: A Space Odyssey.

**“ AI might facilitate creativity toward a place it's never been, but a commonality of art is its process and creation which stems from wrestle and risk.**

Only Artificial Narrow AI exists today; it's not going to rise up like Skynet, but it might transform how we work. Siri, Alexa and even ChatGPT are all forms of Narrow AI as they are limited to perform singular tasks. While these chatbots return the thanks for a task we thank them for doing, they are only doing so because of human input, but they are not sentient.

Using chatbots as search engines is increasing in popularity however Calvo notes that not all bots have the same capabilities.

"ChatGPT uses Bing [which] only holds around, 2 or 3% of the market share – their answers from a search perspective are not great" she explains. "Google's version that they have now completely rolled out, Google AI overview, I think [is] going to give ChatGPT a massive run for their money because they've already had the mass market share and [you] don't have to go into a different program to actually get answers."

## The intersection of art, technology, and knowledge

The invention of photography in the 1800s had some artists claiming it the antithesis of the artist. While considered a threat to the status quo, photography didn't overtake painting but became the catalyst for the experimental modern art movement of the 20th century. "They had to create a path of distinction," explains Dr Richard Morris, Senior Lecturer of Creative Arts. "They had to create a justification for why to continue painting. So, there was the idea of pointillism and then impressionism. In the '60s when photography was abounding, they got into realism again. It made a resurgence, and it was probably more to do with the craft." The photographs development led to the contemporary art we consume today. "All new technologies that come along, at first, they're a novelty and they're a threat."

The arts often intersect with other industries and movements. Art movements such as Surrealism – think *The Son of Man* by René Magritte – burgeoned from the Dada movement of 1916 and is characterised by its bizarre, dreamlike and illogical imagery. Artists in the movement found inspiration from the uncanny and challenging the imposed norms. The surrealists use of the uncanny came from Psychologist Sigmund Freud's essay. Artists used his definition – of something feeling familiar yet alien at once – by combining familiar things in unexpected ways.

## What are the effects of incorporating AI into the practice of art?

In the same way a camera takes an image for the artist, AI generates art for the artist. "[AI art] is still filtered through humans because there's no bot sitting there spitting out films, paintings and poems. They only come out when asked by a programmer or asked by a human who's using the program. There's still human input to trigger the process" says Dr Lounsbury. "Pros of Generative AI is that it does democratise access to data," explains Calvo. "It does democratise some of the creative aspects where people who aren't naturally, perhaps creative, can go through an ideation and prototype process a lot easier without having to use specialised experts in that area."

AI might facilitate creativity toward a place it's never been, but a commonality of art is its process and creation which stems from

wrestle and risk. If the artist hasn't been through that process of creation, then is the final artefact – novel, painting, film and so on – meaningful? "Ultimately, art is just as much about the journey as it is about the destination. And if you haven't gone through the struggle, have you really created art?" questions Jim Lounsbury, filmmaker and Academic for Creative Arts. "The humanness is understanding that struggle and understanding that we each go through it. So, if you cheat yourself out of the human experience, then what's the purpose?"

"I suppose it's an area of life that really doesn't make a lot of sense, in that it doesn't feed people. It doesn't build homes. It doesn't have a pragmatic basis. But without art, our lives would be incredibly impoverished" says Dr Morris. "Art is one of those things that celebrates our humanity, who we are as creative individuals – I believe that we've been created that way."

Ancient art (4000BCE – 400CE) was produced by advanced civilisations such as Mesopotamia, Egypt, Greece and some of the Americas. These civilisations all used art for similar purposes, such as decorating utilitarian objects like crockery and weapons, to tell stories, demonstrate societal status and religious imagery. There was a purpose to it, a usefulness that has translated into today's culture. Art, in all its forms, still tells stories, but has the commercialisation undermined its impact in society? "I've often said that advertising stole all the poets in this generation." Lounsbury continues, "so, I think commerce has rendered a lot of creative minds somewhat banal and uninteresting, because now they're chasing commerce rather than chasing originality. Or they're trying to manufacture originality for the sake of commerce."

***"Art is one of those things that celebrates our humanity, who we are as creative individuals – I believe that we've been created that way."***

If creative minds are being siphoned into commerce, and AI is encroaching on the creative industry, can meaningful, valuable art still exist. "If you [take that] away from a person, the ability to express themselves and to create, you're diminishing who they are as a person. You're reducing them to just a life form. And I think that we're much more than that" says Dr Morris.

"[Meaning is] what life's all about. It's about doing things that count, doing things that are important." When identifying and connecting with peoples artforms, Dr Morris uses ceramics as an example, "[understanding that it's] not just something that a machine has poked out of a pug mill onto a conveyor belt and then [glazed] and it goes into a kiln. But it's somebody who's chosen this as a way of life and even as a way of hardship. They've embraced the difficulty of that whole process as something that they value and it's something that they want to hold on to, and they don't want to lose."

Human intelligence landed us here today. Great, curious minds such as William Shakespeare advanced the English language; we

have light bulbs and motion pictures thanks to Thomas Edison; we can attempt to understand the universe because Galileo laid the groundwork for modern science, meaning Isaac Newton could realise the Laws of Motion. Their work continues to ripple throughout our existence today, despite their controversy during their time. "People are scared of new things," explains Dr Lounsbury, "I think there's a portion of society that absolutely runs at new things and loves [them], and then there's this majority who are scared and don't know what to do with it. It was the same with the internet. People thought it was the end of everything, and it certainly wasn't. But it brought problems, and maybe if we embrace things in a new way, we can avoid problems more effectively, than we did then."

***“ Commerce has rendered a lot of creative minds somewhat banal and uninteresting, because now they're chasing commerce rather than chasing originality.***

Calvo explains the most interesting factor is that AI is creating new consumer behaviours. "We're going to see more products integrate these types of AI as part of their augmented products that are offered to customers," she explains. "So, it's going to [create] certain expectations that consumers expect when we're using products and services." Cons to increased use of Artificial Intelligence are deep fakes. "[They are] going to cause issues" she says. "People perhaps are now lacking the skills or aren't understanding that new skills need to be created around the critical eye of how we view and how we use AI tools. [It's] something that needs to be talked [about] at various levels, in terms of how we deal with the spread of potential misinformation."

So, is our own human interaction and response with GenAI what makes it a positive or a negative? Perhaps it's our own guilt or our own fantasy that warps the narrative. Maybe it's our greed. So, are we the problem, not AI?

"Yes, are we the problem. AI is just a machine – machines have malfunctions. People have problems," says Dr Morris.

"Humanity is always the problem and the solution," adds Dr Lounsbury. "We tend to, and this is DNA level humanity, try and make things easier, [and] less work for ourselves – even if it's just the fun, emotional work of creating. It's still work; it's still tiring."

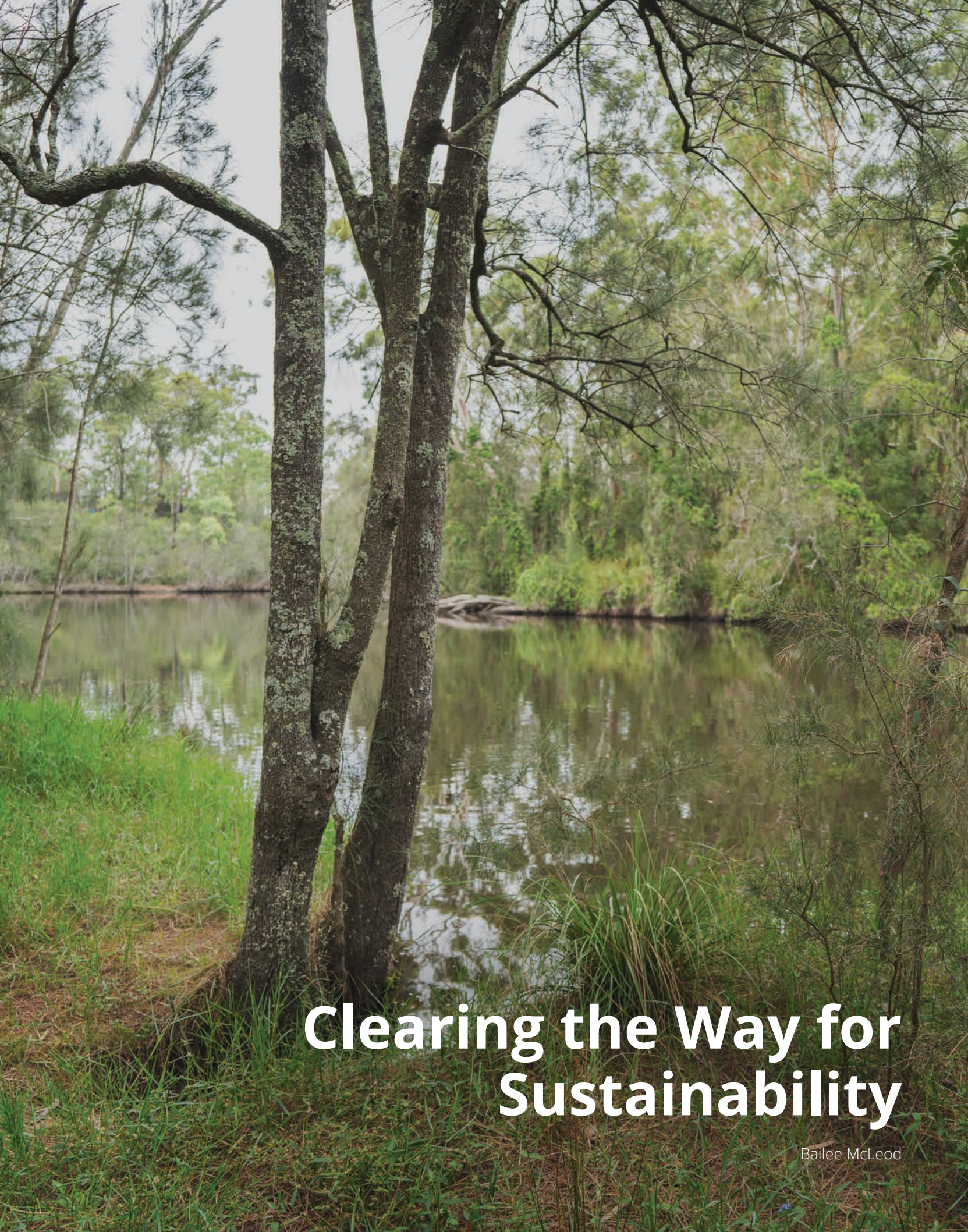
"I always come back to the person who's using the tools and the intent behind it," comments Calvo. "Also from a communication model perspective, you may have encoded the message to come across [one] way, but people [might not be] decoding it in that way... So, governance, is the next big issue when it comes to the likes of deep fakes and how we might be using AI in particular ways."

"AI just adds fuel," Lounsbury concludes. "Technology adds fuel to whatever is the prevailing trade winds of our trajectory as human beings."



The age-old adage of 'ignorance is bliss' should not be a badge of honour we wear proudly. Ignorance is a weapon used by many systems throughout history, which can cost us our agency. It is also a choice. Knowledge is power, especially when it comes to artificial intelligence. Knowing the capabilities and when to spot AI generated content is pivotal in reducing the spread of mis and disinformation. We can't fake fluency; foresight and education bring confidence in a field that changes and attempts to mislead us daily. Ethical and responsible use needs to be our approach when it comes to Generative AI; if it's not, there are detrimental cognitive, environmental, and economical effects. Shutting it out is not the answer.

As multifaceted as life can be, when we break it down into tasks, it's completely binary; there's joyous tasks and mundane ones – they look different to all of us. If artificial intelligence is taking away the joy of being human, of being creative, then we ourselves are left to complete the mundane. It's a hollow promise that it's here to help us create authentic art. It's a current that can rip us out to sea. So, knowing its capability isn't submission, it's action. It's swimming with the tide so we don't drown.



# Clearing the Way for Sustainability

Bailee McLeod



As a Marine Biologist and Ecologist, Dr Jason Morton has spent his 20-year career examining organisms and their environment. Over his tenure at Avondale, Jason has been involved in several initiatives that have contributed positively to climate action: “some of the things that we have been doing recently is waste management... obviously recycling and also the 10 cent return bottles, just so we can channel some of that money to charities.” Other initiatives include Solar panels on the roofs of the library and 7 at Avondale buildings.

**“If you don’t care for the earth, you’re not caring for the people that live on the earth.”**

The Lake Macquarie campus is home to 7-8 kilometres of walking tracks which 15 years ago were laden with the invasive weed, Lantana. The Sandy Creek track, which spans over 1km, was covered in Lantana for most of the walk. Jason recalls, “there was no ability to walk there because of the eight-foot-high [Lantana] all the way to the creek.” Over the past 15 years, thanks to many grants and volunteer efforts the weed has been majorly eradicated from the track. While removing the weeds were the main concern, management of the tracks also ensures that the waterways, wetlands and surrounding lands remain protected.

This ongoing restoration effort aligns closely with global sustainability priorities. The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) emphasise the importance of preserving ecosystems, promoting biodiversity, and ensuring responsible land management. In particular, SDG 15 (Life on Land) and SDG 6 (Clean Water and Sanitation) highlight the need for conservation initiatives like this one, which protect natural habitats and improve water quality. “There are 17 SDGs, some to do with people, some to do with planet,” Jason continues, “when it comes to the people ones, [Avondale] is not doing too bad... There’s some that perfectly align, things like quality education, gender equality, reduced inequalities, even wellbeing and good health. So, the SDGs very much align with the core values of Avondale.”

Incorporating them into our everyday starts with knowledge, then heart, then action as Jason explains, “[Incorporating] can be done in many ways. It can be done with the mind, that is a cognitive, so what we’re teaching. It can be done on an emotional level, so the heart, and this is trying to get action from students in their heart to want to do things. And the final thing is with our hands, which is our actions.”

# Alumni Spotlight



Name: **Dr Dawn Grant-Skiba**

Graduated: **2015**

Initially, Dawn studied a Bachelor of Business Administration and Accounting at Northern Caribbean University, however, soon recognised her true calling as a teacher and received a Master of Teaching from Aston University. After teaching for 14 years in Europe, Dawn's husband, who is a Seventh-day Adventist Pastor, received the call to relocate to Australia. She studied yet another Master of Teaching at Avondale and graduated in 2015. This year, in 2025, Dawn completed her PhD in Education from Avondale University which explored coaching as a way to support teachers.

Dawn worked in a number of schools within the Seventh-day Adventist system (Prescott Southern and McArthur) and the public system. She is currently the School Principal and Executive Manager of Warrah Specialist School.

Dawn is passionate about inclusive education and is deeply committed to supporting students with disabilities. She believes every child can thrive with the right support and works to ensure they are equipped to participate meaningfully in life and community, regardless of the nature or degree of their disability. Her personal journey and cross-cultural experience have enabled Dawn to bring value to indigenous students and educators.

Dawn's journey shows how education can break barriers. She was the first in her family to complete a PhD in which education gave her the voice and confidence to dream big and advocate for others. For Dawn, teaching is more than a job. It's a calling to empower others, inspire hope, and create a sense of belonging for every student.



Name: **Dr Brendan Pratt**

Graduated: **1995**

Brendan graduated from Avondale in 1995 with a BA Arts/Theology and in 2004 with Masters of Theology. In 2021, he received a PhD in Consumerism & Faith development from Charles Sturt University.

After graduating, Brendan ministered at Papatoetoe Church in Auckland for ten years. He then worked at the Greater Sydney Conference for eight years focusing on Healthy Churches and Church Leadership. He is currently working 50% for the Australian Union Conference as Associate Ministerial Secretary and 50% for the General Conference as the director of the Global Mission Center for Secular and Post-Christian Mission.

**“ It's not about success, it's about significance.**

Brendan is driven by the passion and conviction that local church communities can change the world by creating communities where people grow, serve, connect, share and worship—where humanity is at its best. His contribution to the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Australia and globally continues to grow and is recognised.

Brendan is married to Amanda who also works at the Australian Union Conference. Together they have three children, two of which are current students at Avondale University.



Name: **Anna Lindbeck**

Graduated: **2015**

Anna began her tertiary education journey at Avondale University in 2012, choosing to pursue a career in teaching. Anna thrived in Avondale's spiritually enriching environment, actively participating in student ministries and eventually leading the Student Associated Ministries (SAM) team. Her commitment to service was evident early on, particularly through experiences like the 2013 Ministry of Teaching Overseas trip to Nepal, which had a profound impact on her worldview. During her time at Avondale, she launched her music career, releasing her debut EP Simple Joys in 2013.

After graduating in 2015 with a Bachelor of Arts/Bachelor of Teaching, Anna began teaching at Darling Downs Adventist College, where she taught Bible, Math, Music, and Drama. Her passion for education took her across a variety of school settings over the next decade, including Adventist, independent, and public schools. Alongside her teaching career, Anna pursued music and ministry, working at Big Lake Camp in Oregon and completing a "Coast to Coast" music tour in the US. Her work has extended globally, performing at churches and festivals across the US and Europe while also using her travels to connect and serve.

Anna's life is characterised by service, creativity, and compassion. Whether in the classroom, on stage, or on the road, Anna consistently lives out her values with joy and purpose.



Name: **Jarrod Cherry**

Graduated: **2015**

After graduating in 2015 with a Bachelor of Teaching (Secondary), Jarrod began his teaching career at Gilson College before moving to Brisbane Adventist College in 2018, where he currently serves as Head of English and Head of Year 9. Jarrod is currently studying an MBA through Avondale University.

Growing up in Toowoomba, Jarrod valued the close-knit Christian community and chose Avondale for the same reason. His first practicum at Brisbane Adventist College confirmed God's leading into a career shaped by his passion for people. He now teaches English, business, and aquatic science, with service at the heart of his professional and personal life.

Outside the classroom, Jarrod invests heavily in youth ministry, leading StormCo trips, helping to coordinate summer camps, and creating experiences where young people can grow and connect. Participating in these experiences was formative for Jarrod in his teenage years, and now he has the privilege to organise and create the same experiences for others. "When I get to see how much the young people just love and enjoy the experiences, it's just so rewarding when you see how much they love it, and I got play a part in that."

For Jarrod, serving and loving others is "the highest calling," an ideal he discovered at Avondale and continues to live out in his work and community involvement today.



Name: **Julie Jackson**

Graduated: **1975**

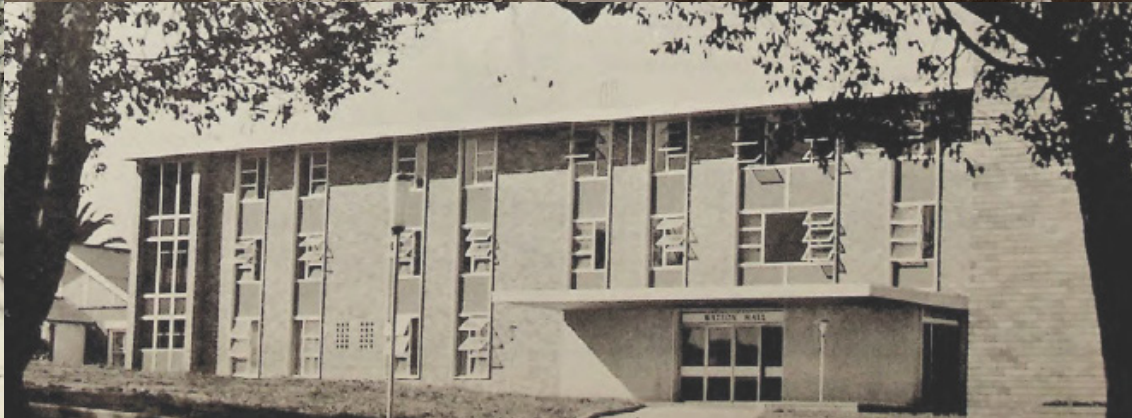
Julie Jackson's journey into education began at Avondale College, where she graduated with a Diploma of Teaching in 1975, later returning to complete her teaching degree. Even after graduating, Julie wasn't sure of her career path, until God made it clear that teaching was indeed her calling.

Her career took her from being the sole educator for Kindergarten to Year 6 on Norfolk Island, to serving in Launceston's public and Dutch Reformed school systems, and then to spending 14 years at Hamilton Adventist School/Macquarie College (1995–2009), where she championed environmental education, built a thriving vegetable garden, and even supplied the school canteen. She later taught younger years in Inverell and Lismore.

### “ *Your life is in God's hands.* ”

Julie's professional highlights include receiving the prestigious National Excellence in Teaching Award (NEITA), winning multiple environmental education awards—including a \$10,000 Sydney Morning Herald prize—and seeing God's providence at work in every stage of her career. For Julie, teaching has always been an act of service underpinned by integrity, resilience, and spirituality.

Julie encourages Avondale alumni to trust God's leading: "You may not know where you're headed, but He will put you where you're best suited." From a shy country girl to a celebrated educator, Julie's story is one of faith, perseverance, and a deep love for her students.





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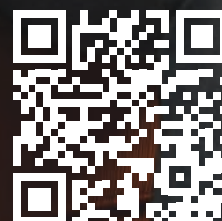
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Kate Simpson  
3rd year nursing student, Sydney Campus.



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