



**Southern
Cross
University**

Southern Cross Matters



July Edition 2026

From the Vice-Chancellor

Dear Colleagues,

One of the enormous privileges of my work as Vice-Chancellor is that I have the opportunity to see and experience our University on a very broad basis. Nonetheless, it remains the case that I learn new things about our University as I read through each edition of Southern Cross Matters, and this month has not proven to be the exception to that rule. It was great to see how so many of our students and staff embraced the excitement of the 10Km run at this year's Gold Coast Marathon event and given the strength of our commitment to high quality education and impactful research in early childhood education, I was really pleased to learn about how we recently gathered together so many leading thinkers in this domain at the Waves of Wisdom conference. While these are just two items that stood out for me and that broadened my picture of the diversity and vibrancy of what we come together each day to do, there is so much more to our story, and I'm optimistic that there will be many new insights for you in this month's edition too.

You'll notice a prominent call out in relation to the [open day events](#) that will be occurring across August at Coffs Harbour, Lismore and at the Gold Coast and I want to particularly reflect on this. Open days are such special and significant events in our annual calendar – and they require enormous amounts of planning and pre-work so that we can do the best possible job of opening our campuses up to the communities we serve in a welcoming, professional and authentic manner. I make a point of attending each event – whether at Coffs, Lismore or the Gold Coast – and it is always so energising to see our campuses come to life and to witness the pride with which staff and students alike come together to showcase who we are, what we do and why we do what we do.

Open days are huge productions that take months to plan and only exist because of the generous investment of time that so many people around the University pour into them. And year after year, I've noticed that we are drawing greater and greater numbers to campus as our reputation grows and more and more people within our communities and from further afield come to understand just how distinctive and excellent what we have to offer is.

So, in advance of these remarkable Sundays spread throughout August, I want to thank everyone involved in preparing for our open days and in their delivery. But I also want to underscore how welcome every member of the University community is at these special days and encourage you to consider coming along to one (or more) of them. I am certain that if you do, you'll see the University in a new and different light and come away with a renewed sense of energy and a deepened sense of pride in what we are all working together to accomplish.

I hope you very much enjoy this month's edition of Southern Cross Matters and hope to continue to hear your ideas for areas of future coverage.

Warmest wishes,

Tyrone



Children exploring nature using a magnifier.

World's top 300 for sustainable development impact

Southern Cross University has climbed to the global top 300 in the 2026 Times Higher Education (THE) Impact Rankings, reflecting the University's contribution to sustainable development through research, education, partnerships and community impact. The THE Impact Rankings assess how universities use their teaching, research, operations, and partnerships to address global challenges. The University ranked 94th in the world for Reduced Inequalities (SDG 10), highlighting the impact of the Southern Cross Model, which has seen Indigenous student success rates rise to 81 per cent.

[Find out more](#)



Higher Degree Researchers at the Coffs Harbour Graduation.

Meet the graduates shaping tomorrow

Congratulations to the more than 220 graduates who crossed the stage at our Coffs Harbour graduation ceremonies last month. Among them was a remarkable cohort of Graduate Researchers whose work is already contributing to a smarter, healthier and more sustainable world. One of the graduates, Chancellor's Medal recipient, Dr Mohammad Rastegari, was recognised for his PhD thesis exploring the environmental behaviour of antimony, a critical mineral increasingly important in batteries, renewable energy technologies and advanced manufacturing.

[Find out more](#)

Spotlight stories



Nominations are now open for the 2026 Alumni Impact Awards, celebrating exceptional achievements of graduates making a meaningful difference in their communities, industries and across the globe.

[Find out more](#)



It's our first year as Official Education Partner of the ASICS Gold Coast Marathon - our 10km run was a sold-out success, and students got plenty of hands-on experience at our post-race recovery hub.

[Find out more](#)



Early childhood researchers and educators across Australia came together at the Faculty of Education's Waves of Wisdom Conference to explore challenges - from AI and digital wellbeing to workforce pressure.

[Find out more](#)



With the 2032 Brisbane Olympics on the horizon, it's perfect timing for two graduate researchers working alongside Australia's top sprinters in partnership with Athletics Australia, Athletics NSW and Queensland Athletics.

[Find out more](#)

Excellence in action



Gold Coast Secondary Principals Alliance event.

Recognising high school leaders. We welcomed student leaders from 17 Gold Coast schools to celebrate their 2026 School Leadership Teams. The event recognised each student leader and featured inspiring speakers. [Discover our emerging leaders.](#)

Helping detect delirium earlier. We are helping carers and clinicians work together to identify delirium and improve patient outcomes. Now expanding to QLD, the program empowers carers to recognise changes in loved ones. [More about the project.](#)

Celebrating health professionals. Strong relationships with the regional healthcare sector are deeply important to us, and we were very proud to celebrate those making a difference at the Mid North Coast Local Health District Excellence Awards. [Check the pulse.](#)

Representing UniRoos in China. Bachelor of Engineering (Honours) student and elite cyclist Sophie Sutton represented Australia as part of the UniRoos team at the FISU World University Championships in China. Balancing high-performance sport with study, Sophie is a member of the Elite Athlete and Performer Program. [Welcome Sophie home.](#)

University updates



Vice-Chancellor, engineering academics, and students at the opening of the Engineering Student Hub on the Gold Coast campus.

Engineering Student Hub is open. Located on Gold Coast campus, the hub is a dedicated space for students to connect, collaborate and study. Check out the new facility, located on Level 1 of Building A. [Learn more about the Faculty of Science and Engineering.](#)

Tourism research in the spotlight. Professor Anne Hardy joined ABC Radio National's Life Matters to discuss over-tourism and the growing role of “demarketing” in helping destinations balance visitor demand with community wellbeing. [Tune into the conversation.](#)

Nature-based learning meets the curriculum. Dr Chris Speldewinde is leading a team of researchers partnering with Victorian primary schools to connect nature-based learning with curriculum outcomes in literacy, science, mathematics, and the arts. [Learn more.](#)

The power – or not – of the green and gold. As Australians spent the past few weeks waking up early to watch the World Cup, Dr Declan Forrester and Dr Mitchell Longstaff are exploring whether our national colours influence the way we think and feel. [Take the survey.](#)

Turning disaster waste into community value. In response to the 2022 Northern Rivers floods, researchers have helped pioneer a circular approach to deconstructing flood-damaged homes, reusing valuable materials and reducing landfill. [Unearth the details.](#)

Gen AI in early childhood education. As generative AI becomes increasingly common in childcare centres, researchers are calling for clearer guidance to help educators use the technology safely, in ways that align with early childhood values. [Find out why.](#)

A brighter future for corals. New research led by graduate researcher Conor Hendrickson has found that seawater fogging can help reduce coral bleaching and support

recovery after bleaching events. The study showed that increasing shade from seawater mist reduced coral mortality risk by a significant percentage. [*Dive into the research.*](#)

Investing in bold futures. The Bold Futures Appeal is helping Southern Cross University students overcome barriers to education through scholarships, financial assistance and opportunities that support success. [*Help shape a bold future.*](#)

Our Media Centre. Want to know what else we've been up to? [*Check our Media Centre.*](#)

People and culture



Celebrating our people: Professor Erica Wilson

When Erica Wilson moved to Lismore for a lecturer position at Southern Cross University in 2003, she had no idea she'd build a decades-long career with us, nor how much she'd come to love the region.

Now, as Pro Vice-Chancellor (Academic Innovation), Erica shares how she's helped drive one of the biggest innovations in the University's history to deliver impressive outcomes for students. [Watch her story.](#)

Peer learning in action. The Centre for Teaching and Learning is inviting you to share innovative approaches to peer-engaged learning. The 2026 CTL Showcase will highlight practical examples and ideas that support student success. [Express interest.](#)

Welcome to those who've recently joined Southern Cross University:

Zoe Hunter, Associate Lecturer
Professor Craig Deed, Associate Dean (Strategic Partnerships)
Dr Donna Mathewson Mitchell, Professor
Dr Leana Coleman, Lecturer in Education (Science)
Dr Suzanne Infantino, Lecturer in Early Childhood Education and Care
Brianne van Rhyn, Lecturer (Shared Learning)
David Berger, Team Leader Compliance
Dr Kenny Ardouin, Lecturer
Cassie Smith, Work Integrated Learning Coordinator

Naomi DeBoer, Work Integrated Learning Coordinator
Willem Overbosch, Engagement Lead Circular Economy
Ernest Du Toit, Project Manager - Circular Economy
Jo Collis, Student Administration Officer
Wilna Joubert, Manager – Timetabling
Cathrina Geldard, Associate Lecturer
Isabel Halse, Associate Lecturer
Professor Tim Smith, Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research)

Dr Lauren Cash, Lecturer, Veterinary
Clinical Practice
Rochelle Price, Technical Officer,
Veterinary Pathology and Microbiology
Professor Jim Nyland, Professor and
Associate Dean (Education)

Willem Overbosch, Engagement Lead
Circular Economy
Ernest Du Toit, Project Manager -
Circular Economy
Jo Collis, Student Administration Officer
Wilna Joubert, Manager - Timetabling

Have some news to share?

If you have some news or a story idea you'd like to share in an upcoming edition of SCU
Matters, email us at content@scu.edu.au.

Interested in previous editions of Southern Cross Matters? [View the archive.](#)

