

prace

Annual Report 2024



Prace acknowledges the Wurundjeri Woiwurrung people as the traditional owners and custodians of the unceded lands on which we work, teach and learn. We pay our respects to their Elders past, present and emerging.

Contact us

Prace Inc.
Merrilands Community Centre
35 Sturdee Street | PO Box 510
Reservoir VIC 3073
(03) 9462 6077

office@prace.vic.edu.au
www.prace.vic.edu.au

Inc. No. A0032713Z | ABN 93 736 262 050 | TOID 4036 | School Registration Number 2110
Prace is a registered public benevolent institution.

Proudly supported by the City of Darebin

Contents

Our organisation	4
Chair's report	5
Message from the CEO	6
Services	9
Projects	10
Partnerships	12
Sector recognition	13
Volunteers	14
Charitable activity	15
Community	16
PageTurners	18
Our learners	19
Pre-accredited programs	20
Vocational education and training	23
English as an Additional Language	24
Prace College	26
Staff	28
Funding bodies and partners	29

Our organisation

Organisational structure

Established in 1993, Prace has over 30 years' experience providing innovative and high quality Adult Community Education (ACE) programs. Over this period, Prace has increased significantly in size and scope of activities and currently receives funding from a range of local, state and federal government departments.

The Prace program, both education and community development, operates from two campuses in Reservoir and Mernda and across a range of other community venues in the northern region of Melbourne. Prace currently operates as:

- A Learn Local provider - delivering adult education and training programs through ACFE
- A Registered Training Organisation (RTO) - a provider of accredited education and training programs recognised throughout Australia
- A funded Neighbourhood House
- A registered Charity
- An Independent School: Prace College

Prace also manages Merrilands Community Centre on behalf of the City of Darebin, supporting over 20 community groups who access the centre.

Prace Board

We thank the members of our board for their hard work and dedication during 2024.

Chair	Ann Haynes
Treasurer	Aileen Yao
Secretary	Adele McBride
Deputy Chair	David Redfearn

Ordinary members


Angie Davidson and Liam Walsh

Prace College subcommittee

Boyd Maplestone, Cate Tinney, Yvette Higgins and Ann Haynes

Treasurer's report

The Board understands our responsibility for ensuring that the financial report is in accordance with the Accounting Standards, Consensus Views and the Prace Inc. constitution and confirm that the financial report is free of material misstatements, including omissions. All financial details are provided in the Financial Report of Prace Inc. for the year ending 31 December 2024. The Board endorses all material in the financial report.



Through the provision of accessible learning, community and work opportunities that build skills, confidence and hope, we shape the community of tomorrow, break the cycle of poverty and disadvantage and enable people to improve their quality of life.

Chair's report

As chair of the Prace Board, I am pleased to present the 2024 Chair's Report, reflecting on the organisation's achievements, challenges and vision for the future. 2024 has been a period of growth and transformation, reinforcing our commitment to providing inclusive and high quality education to our community.

Collaboration with local organisations, businesses and government bodies has continued to grow, ensuring Prace remains at the forefront of adult and community education. The further development of the new learning space at Mernda has enhanced Prace's ability to deliver innovative and flexible learning experiences to young people.

To begin with, I would like to thank all of our major government funding bodies and partners (as acknowledged herein) for their contribution and support as Prace continues to deliver a broad range of high quality programs and services. I also extend my thanks and appreciation to all of those community agencies, schools, businesses, local councils and our many other partners across the north of Melbourne.

I also thank members of the Board and the Prace College subcommittee for their commitment to providing strong governance and direction for Prace, as well as assisting with connections in the local community. This is a great support for Prace in its business as an educational provider. I would especially like to thank Aileen Yao, for her work as treasurer and Adele McBride as secretary. Adele has been an enormous help to Prace with her local community knowledge and connections.

On behalf of the Board, I would like to give special thanks to the teaching team and the administrative team for their ongoing commitment and dedication. I would like to welcome Amaya Munoz as the new Principal of Prace College. Also special thanks to the leadership team of Paddy McVeigh our CEO, and Libby Barker our Education and Business Operations Manager for their ongoing commitment and vision for Prace.

Prace is in a very strong financial position moving forward. (See attached financials). Prace was the recipient of a number of grants that the organisation applied for during 2024. Prace successfully passed a number of government audits. Thanks to the staff who spend time preparing for these audits and applying for grants. These contribute greatly to Prace's ongoing success. Updates and reviews of many policies and procedures continued throughout the year and were overseen by the Board.

Successful student outcomes were again most evident in 2024. Student emails and personal thanks attest to the quality of teaching and the support



the students experienced. Highly valued volunteers make a huge contribution to Prace's successful programs. With their wide range of cultural backgrounds, they do a great job supporting both teachers and students. Their contribution is especially appreciated.

Changing learning models, program restructures and enhanced student support services are key to program adaptability and empowering individuals with skills for employment and further education. As we move into 2025, the focus remains on strengthening programs, embracing innovation and advocating for life long learning opportunities for the many communities Prace serves. Prace looks to expanding its impact and continuing to deliver to its diverse community.

Congratulations to all who have contributed to this successful year.

Ann Haynes
Chair

Message from the CEO

2024 marked exceptional achievements for Prace, as we continued to deliver impactful adult community education programs, expand our reach, and enhance the quality of life for the communities we serve. Below is a summary of our key accomplishments across various service areas.



Key achievements and impacts in 2024

English as an Additional Language

The English as an Additional Language (EAL) Team had a highly successful year, achieving excellent student outcomes across all levels. One notable success was a student progressing from entry-level courses to completing Certificate III. The reaccreditation of the EAL Framework Curriculum in early 2024 required substantial effort from the team to revise and quality-check assessments across all levels. Despite these challenges, they delivered on time while ensuring compliance with all standards.

Vocational Education and Training

The Vocational Education and Training (VET) Education Support Team's dedication to high-quality professional practices has driven continued program success throughout 2024. Strong student qualification completion rates and positive employment outcomes were achieved, alongside the ongoing expansion of industry partnerships within the school-based education sector and associated recruitment agencies. Key achievements and impacts included the course maintaining its strong reputation, with five new commencements across three Melbourne metropolitan LGAs. Additionally, Education Support graduates are now being employed to support participants in the Prace "Women in the Driver's Seat" program in Mitchell Shire, further extending the program's community impact.

Adult Community & Further Education

Prace expanded our Adult Community & Further Education Communication for Seniors Using iPads and Tablets courses within Mitchell Shire to three locations: Beveridge, Kilmore, and Wallan. These courses empowered seniors to embrace technology confidently, improving their ability to communicate and manage social group activities.

Feedback has been overwhelmingly positive, with students praising both the course content and their instructor's supportive approach.

Reconnect

The Reconnect Team successfully exceeded all program milestones over the two-year funding period, with over 51% of 2023/2024 participants achieving positive outcomes to date.


Our partnerships in Mitchell Shire led to the development and delivery of two new programs for young people, further expanding Prace's presence in the region. Additionally, after surpassing expectations in the AMEP Connect program throughout 2024, we secured renewed funding from the Department of Home Affairs to continue delivering this critical service in 2025. This success has also enabled staff to transition into new roles, fostering professional growth and strengthening organisational capacity.

Facilities

In 2024, Prace completed capital works at 70 Schotters Road, Mernda, overcoming delays caused by unforeseen building requirements. The handover was finalised in mid-December, followed by rapid fit-out efforts to accommodate growing teams. The Facilities Team also achieved record-high venue hire income, with 31 regular hirers at Merrilands Community Centre.

Compliance

Where compliance is concerned, Prace achieved outstanding results in two major external audits conducted last year: a Skills First VET Funding Audit for "Business Process" and "Transactional Compliance" were completed with outstanding outcomes; and a post-census survey conducted by the Federal Department of Education to assess accuracy and completeness of data for Prace College funding yielded a good outcome. These



Prace staff embrace learning experiences
at the annual all staff meeting

results reflect the robustness of our processes and the dedication of our staff to maintaining excellence in compliance and operations.

Marketing

The Marketing Team successfully oversaw the redevelopment of Prace's website, enhancing user experience and stakeholder communication. This initiative reflects our commitment to maintaining a strong digital presence and engaging effectively

with our community. The team also ensured that all communications materials remained clear, consistent, and impactful, further strengthening Prace's reputation.

Governance

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to the Prace Board for their invaluable insights, knowledge, confidence, and unwavering support throughout this remarkable year. Their guidance has been instrumental in shaping our strategic direction and ensuring the success of our programs. Their dedication continues to inspire us as we strive to make a lasting impact on adult community education and empower individuals within our communities.

Paddy McVeigh
Chief Executive Officer



Prace's achievements in 2024 underscore our commitment to empowering individuals through education and community engagement. As we look ahead to 2025, we remain dedicated to fostering lifelong learning opportunities that improve quality of life for all members of our community.



La Trobe University students on placement at Prace

Our experience with FAAS

The Forms & Advocacy Assist Service (FAAS) is delivered by La Trobe University Bachelor of Criminology students as part of work based learning. In 2024, ten students completed a 12-week summer placement. Two of those students, Lwandile and Tessa, generously shared feedback on their experience.

"Every week we assisted up to eight client groups. While many were able to resolve their cases successfully, others faced challenges such as insufficient documentation or difficulties in contacting relevant authorities. Regardless of the complexity of each case, we strived to provide the best assistance possible.

Working on our first emotionally intense case gave us a profound understanding of the complexities involved in advocacy and support work. It reinforced the importance of patience, empathy, and active listening when dealing with vulnerable individuals. It also set the tone for the rest of our placement, preparing us for the emotional and logistical challenges we would continue to encounter. Additionally, hearing the client's financial struggles

and history of abuse underscored the reality of the work we were engaged in.

Working with Irfan, a 35 year old refugee, highlighted the challenges linguistically and culturally diverse people have when navigating government systems for people. Our service provided Irfan with assistance through the process and effectively triaged his issue to an organisation that he was unaware was able to assist him.

During the placement, we developed a wide range of skills including:

- Communication skills in building rapport and facilitating a culturally safe environment.
- Interpersonal skills by contacting clients over the phone and face-to-face to assess their needs and achieve the desired outcomes.
- Facilitating effective, timely and appropriate referrals.
- Experience and knowledge of working with interpreters.

This internship has been influential in shaping our future career paths, offering valuable insights into areas we could pursue further."

Services

Reconnect

2024 marked the eighth year of delivery for the Reconnect program at Prace - supporting participants in the City of Darebin, Whittlesea, Banyule, Nillumbik, Merri-bek and Mitchell (Wallan, Beveridge and Kilmore) to pathway into study or employment.

The Reconnect program provides targeted assistance, encouraging participants to develop individual plans based on their goals and aspirations while receiving one-to-one support throughout the process. This includes planning, staying on track and assistance with finding the right education/ training provider or employer. To date, the program has engaged with over 870 people and has supported over 482 registered participants, seeking further education pathways or employment.

Work Development Permit Scheme

In 2024, we continued to offer the Work Development Permit Scheme (WDPS)- an initiative of the Department of Justice and Community Safety. The scheme provides a non-financial way for people to clear their unpaid fines, with the support of a sponsor organisation. Individuals with unpaid civil fines, who are facing financial difficulties and other barriers, can use their attendance at Prace programs to pay down their fines. To date, 42 learners at Prace have had their fine debt addressed through the WDPS.

Forms & Advocacy Assist Service

In 2024, Prace continued to host the Forms & Advocacy Assist Service (FAAS) in partnership with La Trobe University Law School.



The service operates weekly on Thursdays at Merrilands Community Centre, providing the community with free assistance for a range of form filling requirements, as well as assisting with consumer advocacy.

Since 2021, the service has provided assistance to over 460 individuals and family groups. FAAS is available to those living, working or studying in the Darebin, Whittlesea or Banyule LGAs or connected to a Prace service.



Projects

Learn Local Industry Practice Networks

In 2024, Prace continued to coordinate the Learn Local Industry Practice Network (IPN) in Building and Civil Construction. Launched by the ACFE Board in 2023, this state-wide initiative aims to strengthen industry engagement and align pre-accredited training with workforce needs.

Designed to build the capacity of Learn Local providers to collaborate with industry employers, the IPNs foster development of industry partnerships and support the co-design of pre-accredited training that addresses entry-level foundation skills needs.

The initiative aims to improve employer collaboration, enhance workforce-relevant training delivery, and increase employment outcomes for adult learners across Victoria. The Building and Civil Construction IPN has been extended through 2025 and expanded to include landscaping.

Women in the Driver's Seat

Prace Business Development Coordinator, Martha Perilla, partnered with Fawcner Neighbourhood House to develop the Women in the Driver's Seat (WIDS) program. Initially funded by a Merri-bek social cohesion grant, the first delivery was so successful that WIDS has now been delivered in Reservoir (supported by the City of Darebin) and Wallara Waters, Wallan (through the Family Learning Partnerships program). The program is designed for women aged 21 and older, focusing on women who face socio-economic challenges to obtaining a driver licence, as well as those with young children.

During the program, participants build skills and knowledge around road rules and the probationary testing process, as well as gain practical driving experience with a professional driving instructor.



The WIDS program does more than teach women to drive, it empowers and builds participants confidence to create change and access new opportunities. Demand for the program has been strong and Prace will continue to deliver WIDS across multiple training locations in 2025.

Empowering Women in Merri-bek

In May and June, Prace successfully delivered the first Women in the Driver's Seat (WIDS) program at Fawcner Neighbourhood House. The first program was fully booked with ten women living in Merri-bek who had recently migrated from Pakistan, India, Bangladesh, and Afghanistan, undertaking the program.

Developed specifically for women facing socio-economic challenges to gaining their driver licence, WIDS covers the learner driver handbook, road safety, positive driver behaviours, and basic car maintenance. By the program's end, six participants had booked their probationary licence testing, and two had obtained their driver licence - expanding their opportunities to engage with family, work and their local community.

The first delivery was so popular, 24 people were placed on a waiting list, highlighting demand for the WIDS program across Melbourne's northern suburbs and growth corridor.

This program makes opportunities for me to practice driving on main roads with a professional instructor. The free driving lessons is a very big help for me financially. Please continue this program, a lot of women above 25 years old can't drive and they don't have anyone with a full drivers license to practice with them.

AMEP Connect

From October 2023 to December 2024, the AMEP Connect program utilised a transformative approach to supporting clients in the Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP).

The AMEP Connect program provided one-to-one case management support to AMEP learners. Through three tailored interventions, participants were empowered to assess barriers and define aspirations; develop and implement a personalised support plan; and lastly, create and pursue aspirational career pathways.

Through AMEP Connect, I regained my confidence and found my first nursing role. Thank you for helping me achieve my goals and a more secure future in Australia..

During the program, Prace provided one-to-one case management to 37 participants, supporting them to overcome significant situational barriers—such as homelessness, family

With support from AMEP Connect, I have gradually taken small but very meaningful steps to regain my confidence and have gained hope that I can move forward and build a fulfilling life.

violence and caregiving responsibilities.

Managed and implemented by Prace AMEP Connect Program Coordinator, Jonathan Baulch, the program had a meaningful impact on the lives of its participants, including 33 outcomes achieved and 11 participants securing their first job in Australia - including roles in family day care, hospitality, NDIS, real estate, banking, and local councils.

AMEP Connect was made possible by an AMEP Innovative Projects grant and was proudly delivered in collaboration with four AMEP community education providers; Olympic Neighbourhood House, Fitzroy Learning Network, Carringbush Adult Education and, Carlton Neighbourhood Learning Centre.



Jonathan Baulch with AMEP Connect participant, Elizabeta

Partnerships

Mitchell Shire Youth Services

Each year Mitchell Youth Services participates in the State Government initiative 'Youth Fest', delivering a range of events, training, workshops and celebrations in partnership with other local organisations for young people connected to Mitchell Shire.

In 2024, we continued our partnership with Mitchell Shire Youth Services and delivered a free program, "The Beauty Biz: Beauty Industry Workshop", during September's **Youth Fest**.

Developed specifically for young people looking to start their own business in the beauty industry, the half-day workshop was led by an industry expert and covered the basics of lash lifts and extensions, essential product knowledge, and a live demonstration.

Thomastown Neighbourhood House

Prace and Thomastown Neighbourhood House (TNH) have partnered for many years on a variety of successful programs including English Conversation at Thomastown Neighbourhood House, to meet the needs of the local community. The course builds participants' English language skills and helps foster a vibrant sense of community in Thomastown.



"More than ninety per cent of our community come from CALD backgrounds. For example, within our playgroup community alone there are seventeen languages spoken," TNH's Manager Liz Skitch told us.

"Thanks to the partnership with Prace, Thomastown Neighbourhood House has been able to provide a teacher-led English conversation class. Having a highly skilled teacher able to tailor the class to our diverse student cohort is amazing."

Plenty Parklands Primary School

Our partnership with Plenty Parklands Primary School (PPPS) continued in 2024 with PPPS once again hosting the Mock Interview Workshop for our Education Support students.



Principal David Whewell led the event, with support from industry experts; Anita Osavkovska (Principal, Findon Primary School), Stephen Zhang (Assistant Principal, Tarneit Rise Primary School), Cyndy Tennent (Education Support Worker, Plenty Parklands Primary School), Alex Campbell and Phillip Van Dorp (Teachers, Plenty Parklands Primary School).

The panel provided a unique skill development opportunity for our learners, supporting them to build the skills they need to successfully undertake employment interviews in the sector.



I attended the mock interview workshop and I'm so glad I decided to go and participate.

It was really worthwhile, I learnt a lot and the industry speakers were excellent.

DIVRS and Whittlesea L2P

Through our partnership with DIVRS (Darebin Information, Volunteer & Resource Service) and Whittlesea L2P, we were able to offer Prace College learners access to a car and a safe learning environment to build their driving hours.



With the help of five dedicated mentors, students, who had little to no opportunity to reach the required 120 hours of driving practice, made great progress in 2024. Whether they were just starting

out, or close to meeting the 120 hours, each student was supported in their journey toward the independence and opportunities that come with obtaining their driver license.

Wallan Neighbourhood House

We continued our longstanding partnership with Wallan Neighbourhood House, providing the community with skill building programs to meet local employment needs.

In 2024, we delivered Computers for Beginners, Computer Essentials and Barista & Cafe Operations. And, for the first time Communication for Seniors Using iPads & Tablets - a new course for older people, helping get them to confidently and safely navigate the digital landscape via iPads, tablets and smart phones.

Sector recognition

Learn Local Conference 2024

In October, Prace was represented by Lauren Rizzacasa and Martha Perilla at the annual Learn Local Conference, where the theme 'Opening Doors, Shaping the Future' was front and centre.

The Prace Women in the Driver's Seat program was showcased by Martha Perilla who led the development, partnerships, stakeholder engagement and the delivery of the program at multiple training locations in the northern growth corridor.

The Industry Practice Network (IPN) is an ACFE initiative designed to help Learn Locals strengthen their partnerships with industry and grow their impact. Prace IPN Coordinator Lauren Rizzacasa and fellow coordinator Olivia Hurrell from Bass Coast Adult Learning, led several breakout sessions on this exciting new ACFE initiative.



Volunteers

Our volunteer team

Volunteers are a vital part of our organisation and we couldn't do what we do without their passion and dedication.

During 2024, Prace had 11 registered volunteers routinely engaged in assisting in classes on a weekly basis. Our volunteers worked a combined average of 53 hours per week. We are proud to report that two of our volunteers went on to paid employment.

Our team in 2024:

- Alan Thompson
- Ani Zarasham
- Dalmara Flavo
- Debra Plowmen
- Huma Umbreen
- Janine Hodge
- Jann Skinner
- Jeff Perry
- Lorraine Smith
- Maree Norris King
- Nadya Belousova



National Volunteer Week

National Volunteer Week is Australia's largest annual celebration of volunteering. To celebrate, our former Volunteer Coordinator, Deb Vallely, returned to Prace to talk to our English as an Additional Language (EAL) level 3 class. Although now retired, Deb occasionally returns to Prace for relief teaching.

Deb generously shared her volunteering experiences in Australia and provided numerous useful websites where students can learn more about volunteering opportunities.

Meet Ani



Ani's journey from student to Prace employee.

Ani joined Prace as a Level 3 EAL student and soon became a dedicated part of our team, undertaking casual administration work in the office, volunteering and supporting others with warmth and enthusiasm. She made a positive impact on those around her through kindness, hard work, and enthusiasm.

Ani has now found employment outside of Prace and we are so proud of her as she moves forward into her first permanent role in Australia. Before leaving, Ani shared these kind words with us:

"Dear Prace Team. Thank you for the great time I had at Prace. Working with you was an amazing experience, and I learned so much because of your support and kindness. Prace felt like more than just a job to me—it was a place where I made friends and grew as a person. Although I'm moving on, I'll always remember my time here."

Charitable activity

Prace

Fee waivers and subsidies

Every year, Prace raises funds and waives fees for disadvantaged students to enable their participation in adult education courses. In 2024, we supported 104 students with fee subsidies and waivers amounting to \$6556.30 in support.



104

Students supported
with fee waivers and subsidies

Material aid

Prace also provides material aid to students in the form of food vouchers, breakfast (approximately 416 provided per month) and lunch daily for Prace College students, and the provision of other necessities for students in at-risk circumstances, such as family violence situations.

Laptop donations

Prace donated a number of laptops to Hampton Park Community House (HPCH). Executive Officer, Kate Madden, told us that acquiring the laptops has made it possible for HPCH to continue delivering vital digital literacy programs efficiently and effectively.

HPCH Board of Governance Chair, Jeff McAlpine said, "your generosity exemplifies the spirit of community and collaboration, and we feel privileged to partner with Prace in our shared endeavour to make a positive impact in our community."

Prace College

Fundraising

Prace College students raised \$5,482.80 for Cancer Council Victoria in 2024.

From term one to term three, students ran the Y Connect Cafe on Tuesdays and Wednesdays at the Reservoir Campus. Alongside the cafe, they ran the Food for Folk stall, with food and handmade items created by students for sale.



Students lovingly made all of the coffee and food items for the Y Connect Cafe. All proceeds were donated to Cancer Council Victoria to support life-saving cancer research.

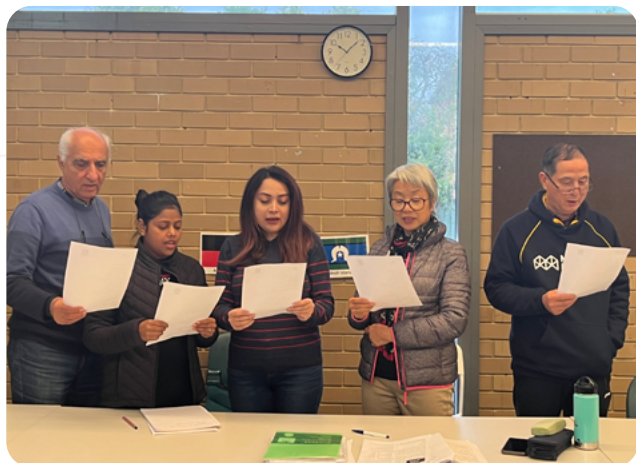


We couldn't have achieved this without the hard work of our students and the generous support of our community.

Community

Reconciliation Week

In May, staff and English language learners formed a choir to celebrate National Reconciliation Week. Over 400 choirs across Australia performed "Blackfella/Whitefella" by the Warumpi Band, a song with a catchy tune and a powerful message that became an anthem for Australia's reconciliation movement.



Harmony Day

Prace staff wore orange to celebrate Harmony Day on March 21st. Our learners joined the festivities with a fun craft project where they contributed something meaningful about their own culture or family. The resulting artwork was a beautiful testament to our community's diversity and unity!

Stronger together

In May we celebrated Neighbourhood House Week, with staff, learners and volunteers coming together to create a visual tribute to the impact Neighbourhood Houses make — bringing people from diverse backgrounds together to learn, connect, and contribute to positive change.



Merrilands Community Centre

Merrilands Community Centre brings together a range of different community groups to gather and connect with each other, fostering a spirit of harmony and local access. In 2024, Merrilands Community Centre hosted a diverse range of community sports, social and religious groups and a number of one-off and commercial hirers.

Garage Sale Trail

In November, we hosted a community garage sale as part of the national Garage Sale Trail. Members of the local community hired stalls in the function hall at Merrilands Community Centre, bringing pre-loved items for others to buy and treasure..



Adult Learners Week

Prace teamed up with Reservoir Library and Reservoir Neighbourhood House to celebrate Adult Learners Week in September.

Prace staff Kathryn and Ani hosted a pop-up event offering career guidance and quizzes, as well as advice on local courses and services for jobseekers.





Alison and Barb from Darebin Life Activities Club

Farewell to Darebin Life Activities Club

For nearly 24 years, Darebin Life Activities Club was a cherished member of the Merrilands community. The club brought joy, camaraderie, and healthy living to its members for over two decades.

Darebin Life Activities Club was formed during a meeting of the Merrilands Walking Group in April 2000. The establishment of the club was supported by Con Constantinou from Darebin Council, a member of another Life Activities Club (LAC), alongside a representative from the parent body, Life Activities Clubs Victoria. Together, they laid the foundation for what would become a vibrant and active community organisation. Meetings were held at Merrilands Community Centre.

The first office bearers were:

President Pat Mushed

Secretary Ken Shacklock

Treasurer Maureen Zampelis

Club activities

One of the most beloved aspects of the Darebin Life Activities Club was the walking group. Members would meet at Flinders Street Station and embark on journeys to various scenic locations, including; Cherry Lake, Blackburn Lake, Port Melbourne, and Geelong. These walking trips, held every

Wednesday, were a testament to the club's spirit of adventure and community. Members would gather, rain or shine, for a day filled with exercise, nature, and fellowship. Other club activities included table tennis, snooker, indoor bowls, Canasta, meet-ups at cafes and dinner dance events at Reservoir RSL.

Recognising club pillars

Ken, the club's first secretary and true stalwart, was nominated for Senior of the Year. Ken also served on the Board of Directors at LAC for several years, later joined by fellow Darebin Life Activities Club member, Tony.

Alison, one of the club's earliest members, served on the committee and became president in 2014. Barb joined in 2001 and in 2009 she was appointed secretary, serving on the board until the club's closure.

A fond farewell

As we bid farewell to the Darebin Life Activities Club, we reflect on the impact it has had, its role as a cornerstone of our community - promoting health, happiness, and togetherness. Members recall fondly, the many years of club activities and the lasting friendships they forged.

PageTurners

Prace PageTurners are short, easy, fun books designed for adults learning to read and for adults learning to read in English. With a website, a Facebook page, and a newsletter, PageTurners has spread to all corners of Australia as well as overseas, to Canada, the USA, and New Zealand. With more than 90 titles now available, we are hoping to expand this reach.

Our final report

The last PageTurners

The tenth - and last - series of PageTurners came out in 2024. We are finishing up, as Moira, our fabulous illustrator, wishes to retire.

PageTurners began twenty years ago as a small experiment. There were very few simple books suitable for adult beginners in literacy and those learning English, so we started making our own. When these proved popular with our own adult learners, Libby Barker, then the Prace coordinator, suggested we prepare some for publication to sell.

Series #1 with just seven titles, was launched with the help of a small initial loan from the Prace Committee of Management. The books, which we displayed at teaching conferences, sold quickly and word of mouth ensured that they continued to sell. That initial loan was repaid within weeks and since then PageTurners has supported itself, as well as making a profit.

The early PageTurners were printed in black and white, as colour was too expensive, however technological advances have enabled us now to print coloured editions, where one exists.

In recent years, a number of PageTurners titles with coloured illustrations were made available as

e-books, to be read on iPads, phones and tablets. Sales have grown steadily and a number of institutions have purchased them under special agreements, negotiated by Libby.

Twenty years ago, none of us would have dreamed of the success the books (and audio versions) have achieved. Moira, Chris, and I wish to thank Libby Barker for her ongoing support over the full twenty years - and for the initial suggestion that we make little books to sell.

PageTurners continue to sell steadily and bring kudos to Prace as a centre of innovation and learning excellence.

Thank you

We would like to thank Libby Barker, Lauren Rizzacasa and Prace administrative staff for all their work to support and administer PageTurners, and the Prace Board for their on-going support. We would also thank all the teachers who use Prace PageTurners in their classrooms and give us valuable feedback.

**Anne Dunn, on behalf of
Chris Malakar and Moira Hanrahan**
PageTurners Team

Digital subscriptions



In 2024, we introduced Digital Subscriptions, a new way to access PageTurners readers.

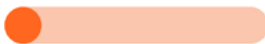
The team have developed multi-user subscription plans that provide access to over 90 titles to support classroom learning and engage adult learners of all levels.

Plans are cost-effective and can be tailored to suit schools and organisations of all sizes. Our digital readers can be integrated with online libraries or learning management systems, providing easy access for teachers and learners.

Our learners

591  **Students**

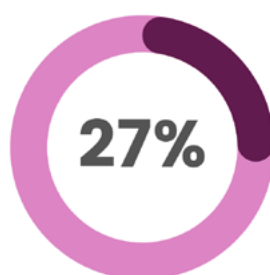
Ranging from 18 to 85 years old

 **3%**

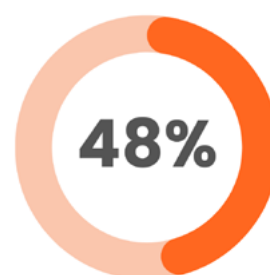
Identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander



**Born outside of
Australia**



**Did not complete
secondary school**



**Unemployed and
looking for work**



31%
Live with
disability

1026

**Class
enrolments**



69
Countries of
birth



44

**Languages
spoken**



The data on this page represents statistics from 2024 student enrolments in Adult Community and Further Education (ACFE), Skills First, the Skills for Education and Employment Program (SEE) and the Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP).

Pre-accredited programs

Prace provides pre-accredited vocational education opportunities to adult learners, supporting individual learning goals and career pathways.

Courses delivered

In 2024, Prace offered 24 pre-accredited courses with 57 deliveries. We received a course delivery contract for a total of 34,918 hours supported by Adult Community and Further Education (ACFE) funding over three local government areas (LGAs); Darebin, Whittlesea and Mitchell Shire.

Over the course of the year, we delivered programs across a number of skills areas: English language; computer skills; employment and career planning; adult literacy and numeracy; inclusion courses; short vocational courses; volunteering and community programs. Successful learner outcomes in all program areas highlights the need for, and positive impact of, our pre-accredited programs in the local community.

Highlights

Inclusion programs and public transport

Learners in our inclusion programs further developed their confidence in using public transport, with many incursions and excursions with the team from North Western Program Alliance Metro. They learnt about the redevelopment of Keon Park Train Station, and were guided on how to navigate changes while the train station was being redeveloped, including the train replacement buses. Our learners were invited to see concrete supports for the overpass being installed, a tour of the new station and a train trip over the new rail bridge.



Living and Working in Australia program

Learners from the Living and Working in Australia program brought enthusiasm and positivity to Merrilands Community Centre on Friday mornings. Developed specifically for English language learners who want to pass the Australian citizenship test, the course really had the students engaged in their learning and they demonstrated their new skills via a range of activities, like language speed dating, mock interviews, sample citizenship tests and starting each class with an Acknowledgment to Country worksheet.

Not only did learners improve their English language skills while learning about Australia, they could also be heard learning the words and signing both verses of the national anthem, Advance Australia Fair.

The excursion to Parliament House (below) was a course highlight. The class was taken on a guided tour, consolidating their learning about the structure of parliament, how laws are made, the history of Australia's government and parliamentary democracy.



Meet Cheree

Cheree was referred to Prace by her disability agency as she was struggling with low literacy and couldn't use a computer. Starting with basic reading, writing, and digital skills, she gained the skills and confidence to navigate modern life.

"I graduated high school with year four level reading and maths. I have Dyslexia, but I wasn't given any help at school. I always turned up for class, but no matter how hard I tried, I couldn't understand the work.

After school I went from employment agency to employment agency. I asked them to help me find an adult literacy program, but they said that wasn't their role.

I completed a Diploma of Costume Design, because I had a talent for making clothes, and I also started a course in Auslan, because there was a shortage of translators. But, each time, my low literacy eventually became a road block and my self-esteem plummeted.

Finally I was referred to Prace by a disability agency and everything changed. Adult Literacy is a great program and the teacher was supportive. I met other people with similar experiences to me and we'd all had similar problems of not being able to read posters, book tickets to events, understand



road signs and all the other 'automatic' reading that most people just take for granted each day. It was comforting to know we weren't alone in our feelings of exclusion.

People might wonder why everyone with low literacy doesn't just take this course, but if you can't even research you can't find out about it. It's a Catch 22! I would really encourage anyone who might know someone struggling, to tell that person about Prace.

I'm more confident in everyday life and I have greater independence. I wish I had discovered Prace a decade ago."

Communication for Seniors Using iPads & Tablets

New in 2024, this course gives older people an introduction to using iPads, tablets and smart phones. Learning the basics, including safety, can change the way learners feel about technology and reduce fears around scams. Learners are taught how to track their devices and this has helped them feel less vulnerable and even helped to fight crime - see the featured quote at right from one of our learners.

Partnerships

We continued to build our partnerships with other community organisations in 2024. Our community partners allow us to engage with, support and meet the needs of our diverse community and they are an integral part of our pre-accredited delivery within the Mitchell Shire, Darebin and Whittlesea LGAs. See funders and partners page for our partner list.

Nadine Mulquiney
Vocational and Community
Programs Manager

In class we learnt how to track our phones, well about ten days ago while at home, my house was broken into, the guy took cards, keys and phone. Hubby was able to track my phone. The Police were called and they caught the guy breaking into someone else's house due to where the phone was traced to.

Meet Monique

Embracing a new career in education support

Monique's change of career, from chemistry to education support, highlights her resilience and adaptability. After 12 years out of the workforce, she enrolled in our education support course, where she gained the skills and confidence to thrive in her first role as a member of a high school inclusion team.

In 2022, Monique was looking to return to work and chose to pursue a new career in education support as it aligned with her priorities - to balance her role as a mother with work she found meaningful.

Returning to study after two decades was daunting for Monique, who previously worked as an industrial chemist. However, the welcoming environment at Prace eased her nerves.

The learning experience at Prace was amazing. I did four years of chemistry at university, but it was a long time ago. Edita, our teacher, made it very supportive, very easy and achievable. After the first few classes, I knew I could do it.

Monique undertook her practical placement at a local primary school, and the experience confirmed she had chosen the right path. Working with students, particularly those with Autism or ADHD, brought her immense satisfaction. "Helping them with literacy and maths and seeing their progress was so rewarding," she said.

Her dedication didn't go unnoticed. After completing the course, she secured a role at a primary school and later transitioned to a high school inclusion team, where she now supports students in various capacities. She loves the fact that "every day is different" and finds extra satisfaction in working with different students, up to eight students in a day at her secondary school.

Monique returned to Prace as an industry guest speaker, inspiring current learners by sharing her experiences. She highlighted the rewards and



challenges of her role, including the importance of understanding strategies for working with students with additional needs. She went on to talk about the importance of building strong connections with students and the value of tools like Auslan to foster communication and inclusion in the classroom. Monique's visit inspired our learners at an important time - the beginning of their journey into education support.

Monique plans to continue working in education support while gaining the experience needed to pursue her next goal - becoming an education support trainer. This next step will allow her to train and mentor others entering the field, using her first-hand knowledge and experience to help them succeed.

Monique's journey is a testament to how embracing change and pursuing new opportunities can lead to fulfilling work. By combining her background, determination, and the skills gained through Prace, Monique has not only found her calling, but is also inspiring others to follow their dreams.

Vocational Education and Training

Education support program

The Vocational Education and Training (VET) Education Support Team's commitment to best practice and a strong work ethic has resulted in further success in 2024. The Prace program is highly regarded and continues to grow.

Delivering high quality learning experiences with a focus on the wellbeing of our staff and students is our priority. We acknowledge our committed and professional teachers and their contribution to our success. Thank you to the Prace administration staff, coordinators, management, volunteers, and our community and industry partners who provide invaluable support.

Highlights

- Successful program delivery in three Melbourne metropolitan local government areas – Darebin, Whittlesea and Banyule.
- Student numbers exceeded our yearly target.
- Graduate employment rate of 88% for the November 2023 course and 100% from the Rosanna May 2024 course.
- A 93% completion rate for the July 2023 course and an 80% completion rate for the February 2024 class exceeded the VET 50% qualification completion rate as projected by the National Centre for Vocational Education Research.
- Graduates are in demand with employers recruiting directly from Prace.
- Learners are now employed to support the Prace Women in the Driver's Seat program.
- Continued growth of our industry network, increasing practical placement opportunities.



Mock Interview Workshop

Industry networks and partnerships

Industry endorsement of the Prace Education Support program continued to grow with regular program involvement via industry guest speakers, mock interview workshop facilitators (pictured) and excursions/school tours. Sincere appreciation goes out to the following schools for their contribution in 2024: Plenty Parklands Primary School, Thornbury Secondary College, Epping Views Primary School & Glenroy Secondary College.

Valued industry contribution and support was maintained via our network of practical placement host employers along with monthly meetings/consultation with external VET practitioners via the LLO/RTO Melbourne Metro VET Network (Formerly the Eastern VET ACE Network).

New associations were established with local schools, including Thomastown East Primary School, Mernda Primary School, Arthurs Creek Primary School, Lalor Garden's Primary School and Glenroy West Primary School.

Industry networks and partnerships with recruitment organisations and other community stakeholders included Anzuk Education, Tradewind Australia and Preston Skills & Jobs Centre.

Ancy Kurban
VET (Education Support) Coordinator

English as an Additional Language

Courses delivered

In 2024, we delivered the following accredited English as an Additional Language (EAL) courses:

- 22483VIC Course in EAL
- 22484VIC Certificate I in EAL (Access)
- 22485VIC Certificate II in EAL (Access)
- 22486VIC Certificate III in EAL (Access)

Prace students accessed fully funded places through the Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP) and Skills for Education and Employment (SEE) programs, and subsidised places through Skills First.

Our program

The teaching team at Prace utilise a range of activities to help learners develop the skills needed to learn a language, such as reading, writing, speaking and listening, as well as numeracy, digital skills and learning strategies. Learning activities include:

- Teacher instruction and demonstration
- Practical tasks
- Peer support
- Pair and group work
- Excursions and guest speakers
- Text-based, topic-based or theme-based approaches
- Word skills, grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation

Learning activities

Guest speakers

Keon Parade Level Crossing Removal project

Representatives from the North Western Program Alliance spoke to our learners about the works around Keon Park Station as part of the Keon Parade Level Crossing Removal project. Interpreters were able to support lower level students and the sessions provided valuable insight about the project and resulting disruptions to our local community, especially those travelling to Prace on public transport.

Chinese Community Social Services

This initiative is aimed at helping new migrants settle into life in Australia with ease and confidence. The session provided essential information and support in areas like:

- Language, education and training



A visit from Chinese Community Social Services

- Employment
- Housing and getting around
- Social and family support
- Health services

Banyule Community Health

Our level 3 classes are learning about gambling as part of the information text and current issues units. Alisa Huynh spoke about financial literacy and gambling. Learners heard valuable insights about:

- How to budget
- What is a spending leak?
- Tips to pay bills
- Meal planning
- Scams
- Gambling
- Financial abuse and counselling

Additional guest speaker

Fire Rescue Victoria, Volunteerin and Life Saving Victoria.

Excursions

Excursions offer unique learning opportunities and are a great alternative to traditional classroom instruction. They help learners engage with Australian culture and their local community as well as allowing teachers to personalise classes to meet the needs of their learners.

Preston Library

Learners from our level 1 class visited Preston Library as part of their learning about settlement topics. They received a tour of the library, learned about the events, and the resources available in different languages.

The class also visited the Darebin Intercultural Centre, where the students were shown around the beautiful space and encouraged to come visit and relax whenever they feel like it.

To finish the excursion, the class headed to a local café to practice reading menus and placing orders in English. After learning about cafe culture and ordering coffee in class, the cafe visit was a great way to put their new skills into action.

Royal Botanic Gardens

At the end of term three, our level 1 students spent the day out of the classroom, taking a train ride from Keon Park Station to the Royal Botanic Gardens and Shrine of Remembrance. The day included:

- Admiring bright and bold spring blooms
- Tree-hugging for good vibes
- A relaxing picnic
- Cruising around in an electric jeep
- Posing for a class photo on the Shrine's steps
- A climb to the Shrine's peak for city views.

Other excursions

Melbourne City, Melbourne Museum and Carlton Gardens.

Active learning

Multi-sensory activities

Incorporating sound and movement into lessons helps learners retain information better. For example, our level 2 class practiced introducing themselves using gestures like clapping, thigh slapping, and finger clicking. It's a fun, energetic way to remember names and build connections while improving language skills. They also play similar games to review vocabulary.

National Reconciliation Week

Staff and students came together to perform "Blackfella/Whitefella" by the Warumpi Band during National Reconciliation Week. Our English language learners practiced diligently and showcased their voices alongside Prace staff members - view [the video on Facebook](#).

Libby Barker

Education and Business
Operations Manager

Meet Kathy

Kathy experienced first-hand how skills cultivated in one setting can be used in another to great success.

Kathy was a level 3 EAL student when she decided to pursue a highly competitive marketing course at RMIT. Despite her background in accounting and statistics, undertaking a marketing course in a second language was extremely challenging. However, Kathy immersed herself in the course material, successfully completing the first two milestones of Marketing Analytics and Insights.

The final assessment, a daunting challenge where Kathy would undertake the role of a company analyst and deliver a report to business owners, CEOs and CMOs ended up being her biggest achievement. To complete her report, Kathy created a PowerPoint presentation, however her pronunciation issues led her to seek assistance from her English teacher, Zoe.

Zoe and Kathy worked together to meticulously annotate her speech, addressing errors such as the distinction between long and short vowel sounds and habitual consonant omissions. Returning home, she diligently practiced for hours, syncing her voice to her PowerPoint until her "face ached."

Kathy told her RMIT tutor Jack about her labourious process. "I painstakingly recorded it slide by slide



using PowerPoint and then exported it as an MP4 file. It took ages and I'm now convinced that becoming a voice actor is not in my future!" she said.

Kathy received a perfect score of 5/5 with positive feedback from her tutor Jack. "You covered all the points quite well and showed that you are comfortable performing the analysis," he said.

Kathy's journey not only taught her about digital marketing, but it reminded her that asking for help is crucial. Kathy acknowledged that Zoe's tips about easy presentation formats and techniques played a big role in her success. "Having mentors like Zoe boosted my confidence as I tackle language learning and understanding Australian society."

Prace College

Message from the Principal

Prace College celebrated a significant year of growth and a high level of student graduations in 2024.

Following the 2023 rollout of the new VCE Vocational Major (VCE VM) and Vocational Pathways Certificate (VPC), in 2024 we focused on refining our approach to the new curriculum, improving the way we incorporate the applied learning model to the Unit 3 & 4 studies of Literacy, Numeracy, Personal Development Skills (PDS) and Work Related Skills (WRS).

Student feedback was resoundingly positive, indicating a significant improvement in the nature of their learning in 2024 compared to 2023, which students had reported to be too 'paperwork heavy'.

With the first year of a new curriculum behind us, teachers were able to identify ways to weave hands-on learning into the school week and move the new learning closer to the practical classwork that has proven to increase engagement and task completion.

2024 was the first year the College had delivered the Unit 3 and 4 sequence of the VCE VM and we were incredibly proud to have a record number of graduates with 20 students graduating with the VCE VM certificate and an additional 16 completed the VPC studies. In addition to this, a further 21 completed the Units 3 & 4 sequence and are, therefore, well positioned for graduation this year.

Prace College was happy to see a high level of new enrolments, particularly at the Mernda Campus. Community interest was high and we have been able to not only fill the vacancies formed from our high graduation rate in 2024, but also increase enrolments at the Mernda campus sufficiently to justify opening a fourth classroom.

86 Students in 2024



17 Completed Units 1 & 2 VPC



41 Completed Units 3 & 4 VCE-VM



39 Completed VET Certificate

40 Continuing with Prace College in 2025

Key programs in 2024

Active Volunteering

2024 saw the rollout of a new experience in the Active Volunteering program delivered through the VET program. The initiative was such a success that we have adopted the program in 2025 through the Work Skills work unit, maintaining what proved to be a range of opportunities for students to work in highly engaging real life work experiences, gaining invaluable experience building interpersonal communication skills, and applying their learning of work-related practices such as customer service skills and occupational health and safety requirements in true work contexts.

College Carnival

Held for the first time at the Mernda campus and reserve, the carnival was a major success with games, food stalls, and decorations. It brought the community together and is set to become an annual event, potentially expanding to include parents.



Outreach and wellbeing

Young people experiencing significant barriers to school access were supported through home visits, care packages and in some cases individual pickup and return college bus services.

Breakfast and lunch

The program provides students with a meal and a place to be. Mernda students in particular have developed a strong culture of early arrival at school, sitting in the kitchen and school grounds socialising and waking up for the day over a cuppa and cooked breakfast.

Pathways support and work placements

Working with individual students at their point of need, the Youth Work team did an excellent job finding work placements for those that were ready to start planning for pathways beyond school.

Job readiness

Students were offered the Responsible Service of Alcohol, Food Handling, and the serving of Non-Alcoholic Beverages certificates. These certificates provided students with an edge for their job applications in a competitive market.



Gumbaya World

A major highlight at the end of the year was taking the students out on an excursion to Gumbaya World adventure and water park. The students had an absolute ball.

End of Year Celebration

2024 boasted the biggest attendance in the history of the College. Families enjoyed formal seating, cheese platters at each table and a smorgasbord of sweets and savories, as they celebrated the amazing achievements of our young people.

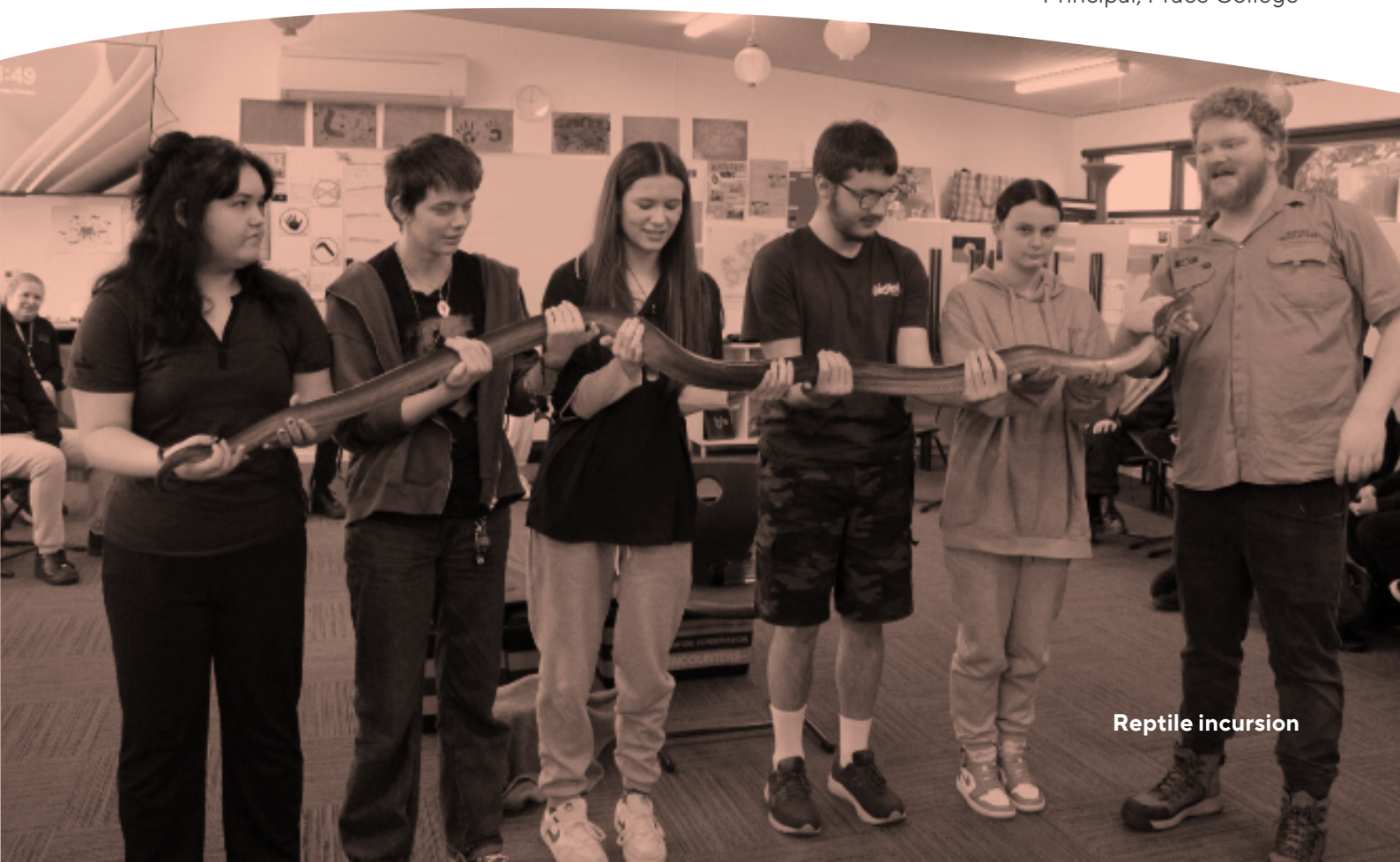


I would like to thank staff across the College for their dedicated efforts throughout 2024. The combination of tailored teaching and learning opportunities with a high level of relational trust established across our campuses, has benefitted the college community and helped raise our profile among neighbouring service providers.

As we embark on the 2025 school year, I look forward to working alongside our dedicated staff, families and community to support our young people to grow, thrive, and achieve their goals.

Amaya Munoz

Principal, Prace College



Reptile incursion

Prace staff

We acknowledge and thank all of the people who contribute to Prace's success and their commitment to providing education in our community.

Senior Management Team

Chief Executive Officer	Paddy McVeigh
Education & Business Operations Manager	Libby Barker
Principal (Prace College)	Jane Davies, Amaya Munoz (acting)

Office

VET Coordinator	Ancy Kurban, Dalal Al Tayh
Vocational & Community Programs Manager	Nadine Mulquiney
Stakeholder Engagement Coordinator	Cecille Paulo, Carolyn Black
Marketing Coordinator	Lauren Rizzacasa
Facilities Coordinator	Lisa Cincev
Compliance Manager	Cindy Geyer
Volunteer Coordinator	Carolyn Black
Communications Officers	Kate Noppert, Haley Johnston
Student Services Manager	Rita Al-Mourani
Administration	Ashleigh Clarke, Kathryn Hannon, Melanie Ienari, Kristina Phung, Luke Rizzacasa, Maria Tomazos, Lize-Mari Veldsman
Teachers	Harry Barr, Kanwaljit Bhar, Shameem Bhatti, Shveta Bhutani, Josie Cannizzo, Belinda Carelli, Steve Chazikantis, Rebecca Coleman, Karen Cullen, Edita Didic, Ella Didic, Nilanthi Dona, Irina Giles, Kristalo Hrysicos, Christina Kingston, Rohan Kioney, Michele Newman, Alexis O'Donoghue, Zoe Phillips, Kirsty Sarjeant, Steve Stokes, Sajida Tannoura, Debra Vallely, David Williamson, Daniela Zinni
Reconnect Manager	Adriana Pugliese
Reconnect Team	Lydia Aregay, Jonathan Baulch, Marina Knight, Martha Perilla, Brayden Smith, Celia Soares, Billie Williams
Project Workers	Lia Caelli,
IT Technicians	Fraser Lorimer, Ron Thomas
Cleaning & Maintenance Team	Sheridan Atkinson, Aubrey Jansz, Botrus Mingana

Prace College

Assistant Principal	Megan Noy (Reservoir), Amaya Munoz (Mernda)
Youth Services Manager	Mathew Goldsworthy
Youth Worker	David Bonney, Melinda Fonseka, Mathew Humphreys, Mia Ormiston
Specialist Support Staff	Jackie Begg, Kerri Delaney, Colleen Keating, Jasmine Grech, Jordana Leone, Stephanie Watt
Teachers	Adam Densley, Margaret Gardner, Julia Goldberg, Gabrielle Panozzo, Mary Zbierski-West
Administration	Chantelle Cassar, Rosa Cornwell, Zoe Dick, Amanda Templeton

Funding bodies and partners

Prace acknowledges the generous support of our funding bodies and partners.

Funding

Training at Prace is delivered with Victorian and Commonwealth Government funding through the following departments and programs.

- Adult Community & Further Education (ACFE)
- Skills First
- Victorian Department of Education and Training (DET)
- Commonwealth Department of Education and Training (DET)
- Victorian Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (DFFH)
- City of Darebin
- City of Merri-bek
- Department of Home Affairs
- Department of Education, Skills and Employment
- Department of Jobs, Skills, Industry and Regions
- Australian Neighbourhood Houses and Centres Association

Individuals and organisations who provided support and assistance in 2024

- Nelson Alexander Real Estate
- Centrelink
- Bunnings Thomastown
- The Salvation Army
- SecondBite
- Your Community Health
- FoodBank
- Darebin L2P and Whittlesea L2P
- DIVRS

Numerous other businesses and organisations provided valuable practical placement opportunities for our learners in 2024.

Partners

- Melbourne AMEP
- Northern SEE
- La Trobe University
- Hume Whittlesea LLEN
- Thomastown West Community Hub
- Department of Justice and Community Safety
- Whittlesea Community Connections
- East Preston Community Centre
- Epping Views Primary School, Darebin
- Neighbourhood House Network
- Thomastown West Community Hub
- The Smith Family
- Thomastown West Primary School
- East Preston Community Centre
- Mernda Community House
- Whittlesea Council Youth Services
- Melbourne Polytechnic
- Winslow Constructors
- Mirvac
- Shared Cup
- William Ruthven Primary School,
- Wallan Neighbourhood, House
- Greater Beveridge Community Centre
- Thomastown Library
- Thomastown Neighbourhood House
- Frasers Property Australia - Wallara Waters
- The Elm's Retirement Village
- Wallan U3A
- Reservoir Neighbourhood House
- Darebin City Council
- Darebin Youth Services
- Plenty Parklands Primary School
- Thornbury High School
- The Teaching Initiative
- Mitchell Shire Council,
- Anzuk Education.

