



2024 Professional Staff Conference

Thriving Personally and Professionally

Rydges Palmerston | Thursday 3 October 2024



Acknowledgement of Country and recognition of Australian First Nations traditional owners and cultures

Charles Darwin University acknowledges and respects the many Australian First Nations traditional custodians of the lands upon which our campuses and centres are located.

We acknowledge and pay our respect to the Larrakia who are the traditional custodians of the lands upon which our Darwin Casuarina, Waterfront and Palmerston campuses are located.

We acknowledge and pay our respect to the Arrernte who are the traditional custodians of the lands upon which our Alice Springs campus is located.

We acknowledge and pay our respect to the Jawoyn, Wardaman and Dagomon who are the traditional custodians of the lands upon which our Katherine campuses are located.

We acknowledge and pay our respect to the Gadigal who are the traditional custodians of the lands upon which our Sydney campus is located.

We acknowledge and pay our respect to the Turrbal and Yuggera who are the traditional custodians of the lands upon which our Brisbane centre is located.

We acknowledge and pay our respect to the Woiworung who are the traditional custodians of the lands upon which our Melbourne centre is located.

We acknowledge and pay our respect to the Kaurna who are the traditional custodians of the lands upon which our Adelaide centre is located.

We acknowledge and pay our respect to the Whadjuk who are the traditional custodians of the lands upon which our Perth centre is located.

We acknowledge and pay our respect to the Kundjey'mi who are the traditional custodians of the lands upon which our Jabiru centre is located.

We acknowledge and pay our respect to the Warumungu who are the traditional custodians of the lands upon which our Tennant Creek centre is located.

We also acknowledge and pay our respect to the Kungarakana (Batchelor and Adelaide River), the Yolngu (northeast Arnhem Land) and the Tiwi (Tiwi Islands). We acknowledge Australian First Nations peoples' long tradition of sustaining their communities and environments over thousands of years.

They are the first educators and first innovators. They are the holders of knowledge that makes an important contribution to the improvement of our local, national, and global communities.

We extend our respect to Elders - past, present, and emerging - and to all First Nations people.



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CDU Vice-Chancellor and President



Welcome to CDU's 2024 Professional Staff Conference. I am pleased that we are meeting again to learn and connect together and this year's conference theme, "Thriving Personally and Professionally" holds significance for me. Thriving is not just about doing well at work or achieving goals – it's about flourishing in all aspects of life. It's about feeling empowered, balanced and supported in your career, while finding fulfilment in your personal journey. At CDU, we believe that when our people thrive, the whole University thrives.

This is the third time we are bringing together professional staff from across the University, and I am proud of how this conference has become a space where we collectively reinforce our values and principles that shape our institution.

At the heart of everything we do at CDU are our core values but even more than that, we work hard to live out our enduring principles of fostering a culture of inclusion and belonging.

As we gather today, we reaffirm our commitment to our goal to be an employer of choice. A workplace where people feel supported, respected, and, most importantly, happy. Our aim is for CDU to be an environment where you can grow, develop, and excel, both professionally and personally. We want to provide the tools, resources, and culture that allow you to pursue your professional ambitions while ensuring you feel a sense of belonging.

As you take part in today's session, I encourage you to reflect on what thriving means to you. Think about how you can balance success in your career with the happiness in your personal life. This conference is designed to inspire you and empower you to thrive in every area of your life.

A special thank you to all who have contributed their expertise, insights, and passion to make today's event possible. And a heartfelt thank you to all participants who are engaging with us today.

Based on our previous conferences, I am confident that today will be filled with insightful discussions, inspiring sessions, and meaningful connections.

Yours sincerely,
Professor Scott Bowman AO

Director, People and Culture



I would like to welcome you to the 2024 Professional Staff Conference. It is so wonderful to see how fast conference places fill up. It shows a commitment to career development and investment in yourself.

The theme this year is Thriving Personally and Professionally, recognising that employees can perform to a high standard when they have the tools to achieve positive outcomes both professionally and personally.

CDU invests in employee's wellbeing through a range of measures including Employee Assistance Program, generous leave provisions, flexible work options, parents' rooms, Voice Survey, celebration of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion events, and access to a range of free development programs. This conference will give you additional ideas and tools to support you to thrive. Let the ideas shared today stir the particles in your head and heart, feel those light bulb moments or times of discomfort and ask what is this telling me, why did I react to this, explore these areas more, be curious and kind to yourself. Seek support where needed.

The conference is in its third year and was implemented as part of the CDU Strategic Plan 2021-2026, Goal 7 – 'Be an employer of choice' where people feel supported and happy. It is becoming one of my favourite events in our calendar, and each year, based on participant feedback, just keeps getting better!

Peta Preo
Director, People and Culture

Conference Program

TIME	SESSIONS	PRESENTER
7.45 – 8.30	Arrive and coffee	
8.30 – 8.40	MC Welcome	MC Rachael Croker
8.40 – 8.45	Welcome to Country	Bilawara Lee
8.50 – 9.20	Keynote Speaker	Karan Nagrani
9.20 – 10.00	Speed Networking	MC Rachael Croker
10.00 – 10.15	Morning Tea	
10.15 – 10.20	Welcome from Vice-Chancellor	VC Scott Bowman
10.25 – 12.10	Workshop: The Significance of Core Values for Thriving Personally and Professionally	Catie Kirke – ART Your Life
12.10 – 12.45	Lunch	
12.50 – 1.30	Speed Mentoring (optional)	MC & VCAC members
1.30 – 3.00	Workshop: Mastering Procrastination and Prioritisation	Barbara Clifford – The Time Tamer
3.00 – 3.15	Afternoon Tea	
3.15 – 4.00	Panel Session: Thriving through Adversity	Karan Nagrani (Disability Advocate), Jeswynn Yogaratnam (ADC Commissioner), Ruth Wallace (FAS) Facilitator Lynette Pathy
4.00 – 4.10	Wrap up	MC Rachael Croker

Conference Presenters



Bilawara Lee - CDU Larrakia Academic in Residence

The Larrakia academic-in-residence provides culturally informed guidance, direction, and support to CDU's Indigenous and non-Indigenous students, staff, and stakeholders.

Respected Larrakia Elder Bilawara Lee, affectionately known around CDU as Aunty B, is acknowledged locally and internationally as a community communicator, healer, and teacher of ancient wisdom with more than 30 years of experience in education and health.

Aunty B was awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia (OAM) in January 2024 for her services to the community.

The position is part of CDU's various commitments to formally acknowledge the Larrakia people as the traditional owners of the land on which the Casuarina and Palmerston campuses stand.



Rachael Croker - MC

Rachael is an experienced facilitator, passionate about helping people build confidence and overcome their fears. With a background in adult education teaching and management, she has worked as a consultant at CDU for three years, researching, designing and delivering interactive and engaging workshops for employees to enhance their skills and form connections across the university. She specialises in leadership training and has a particular passion for helping empower women in leadership positions.

At CDU, she is proud to have implemented Lean In Circles to give women at the university a safe space for connection and support. Outside of work, Rachael volunteers in animal rescue and is actively involved with local musical theatre groups and choirs - she just loves a stage!



Conference Presenters



Karan Nagrani – Keynote Speaker

Disability Advocate – Blind Content Creator – Nominee for Blind Australian of the Year, Karan has had an extensive career in the corporate world as a marketer, graphic designer and video creator, in a career spanning almost two decades. He is also blind. Bit of a head-scratcher right?

Diagnosed at Eleven with Usher Syndrome, a rare degenerative and incurable condition leading to complete blindness, and hearing loss, Karan's perspective is very unique. An excellent communicator and creative talent, he was drawn to marketing, graphic design and communications. Fast forward to his thirties and Karan's vision loss had progressed to more than 97% leaving him with no night or peripheral vision and a narrowing field of sight. Determined not to allow his vision loss to impact his life and motivated by a desire to help others with low/no-vision and disability, he now works as a disability advocate, campaigning for social change, accessible workplaces and an inclusive society.

Through his disability journey Karan has had to deal with the slow and progressive loss of his sight, a challenge only few would be prepared for and let alone capable of navigating. How would you manage knowing you're going blind? Emerging from his vision loss as a mental health warrior Karan has now dedicated his life to disability advocacy.

With the tagline, Pretty Fly for a Blind Guy – Karan's take on life and the world around us is fresh, real and extremely relatable. A natural comedian, Karan's communication style, whether through Instagram or public speaking is raw, unfiltered and from the heart. A proud member of the LGBTQIA+ community, Karan is deeply passionate about breaking down misconceptions about vision loss, the "invisible disabilities" and ableist stereotypes. Karan says that blind people can be gay, person-of-colour and don't have to have a six pack to live a full and rewarding life. Karan has been the Disability Ambassador for Chillout Festival in 2023 and Midsumma Festival and Darwin Pride in 2024.

A very passionate graphic designer, Karan is on a mission to show the world what blind people like him see. A skill he may no longer be able to use as he loses all his sight in a few years.

Whether it's through content on Instagram, Public Speaking as an Advocate with a hint of Comedy, or his collection of clothing and merchandise, 'That Blind Guy' Karan is on a mission to change how the world sees blind people.

Conference Presenters



Catie Kirke – ART Your Life

Catie Kirke is the founder of A.R.T Your Life - a Darwin based company specialising in coaching and mentoring and the design and facilitation of workshops and programs. Catie is a human behaviour expert, or some would say geek! She has worked with a broad range of individuals and teams to help them to achieve greater professional success, and personal wellbeing and fulfillment. Catie has a Diploma in Business, Personal Training, Fitness and Life Coaching. She is an Extended Disc, Lifestyles Inventory and Thought Code behaviour profiling consultant and if a Master Practitioner of Neuro Linguistic Programming.

The A.R.T Your Life team specialise in bespoke programs that strengthen essential modern-day skills needed to: lead and manage others, communicate with influence, think critically, speak publicly, resolve conflict, be self-aware and emotionally intelligent and overcome issues such as lack of time and too much stress! Catie's mission is to help people **thrive** – at work, rest, and play.



Barbara Clifford – The Time Tamer

Barbara Clifford, known as “The Time Tamer”, is the co-founder of The Hinwood Institute. Barbara is recognised as a leader in Time Management and Stress Management. She is a highly experienced coach, international speaker, columnist, facilitator and accredited mediator.

Barbara equips busy business leaders to make courageous decisions in pressure situations for the long-term benefit of their business, team and personal wellbeing. Giving them a sense of order; taking them from chaos to calm and transforming their stress into a source of strength. Even though she lives in the desert of Alice Springs she works with people around the world and in 2021 won the NT Chief Ministers “Emerging Exporter” at the NT Export Awards.



Conference Presenter



Jeswynn Yogaratnam

Jeswynn Yogaratnam is the Northern Territory Anti-Discrimination Commissioner, and has unwavering commitment to advancing equality of opportunity and combating discrimination. His career spans law, education, and advocacy, reflecting a profound dedication to human rights and social justice.

Jeswynn was a law academic at Charles Darwin University, where he specialised in International Human Rights Law and Corporations Law. His academic work often explored the intersections of these fields through the lens of a rights-based approach, equipping him with a nuanced understanding of the legal frameworks governing business practices and human rights.

As the Northern Territory Anti-Discrimination Commissioner, Jeswynn is at the forefront of implementing the ground-breaking Positive Duty reforms. These reforms mandate proactive measures from businesses and organisations to prevent and eliminate discrimination, sexual harassment, and victimisation. His work is especially significant in addressing institutional racism and advancing equitable outcomes for First Nations Territorians.

In addition to his role as Anti-Discrimination Commissioner, Jeswynn serves as the Northern Territory Principal Community Visitor under the Community Visitor Program. In this capacity, he monitors and advocates for individuals in places of detention, including the mental health wards and forensic disability unit. His advocacy emphasises a social and person-centred approach, striving to ensure that persons receive fair and compassionate treatment as part of the service delivery.

Jeswynn's career is characterised by a deep-seated passion for equality and justice, and his ongoing efforts are pivotal in advancing a more inclusive and equitable society.



Professor Ruth Wallace ***Faculty of Arts and Society, Charles Darwin University***

Professor Ruth Wallace is the Pro Vice-Chancellor of the Faculty of Arts and Society at Charles Darwin University. She is a leader in Indigenous education with specialised expertise in education policy and systems in regional and remote areas. She has a special interest in understanding the role of Aboriginal knowledge in education and how particular strengths can be used to improve student success. Her research has spanned both workforce development and learning pathways in both urban and remote areas of the Northern Territory. Ruth's career has enabled her to focus on building and maintaining high profile national and international partnerships with institutions and government. Through these connections, Ruth is passionate about advocating for marginalised learners, the development of effective learning and workforce development pathways particularly through remote-based enterprises.

Thank you to our generous sponsors



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All information contained in this guide is correct at the time of publication, but is subject to change as information is reviewed and updated throughout the year. When considering a course, we recommend checking the CDU website for the most up-to-date information.

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