



February 2026 Term 1

Message from the Head of Campus

Welcome back to the 2026 school year at the School of the Air! I hope you all had a safe and enjoyable holiday break, filled with memorable moments that recharge you for the exciting year ahead.

Focus for 2026

Our priority this year we will be continuing to deepen our commitment to implementing the Department for Education's Strategy. The Area of Impact focus is 'effective learners', with a specific emphasis on amplifying curiosity in our learners.

A sincere Welcome to New and returning Families, Students, Staff and Governesses

We are thrilled to extend a warm welcome to our new and returning families, students, staff members and governesses joining the SOTA community this year!

New Reception Students:

- Ada
- Gracie
- Isabella
- Penny

New Year 2 Student:

- Tilly

New Year 5/6 Teacher:

- Mr. Jon Roughley

New Itinerant Teacher:

- Miss Sarah Hampshire

New Learning Support Officer:

- Miss Abby Webb



Student Leadership and Support

Student Council: This year, we are fortunate to have Miss Morley continuing her fantastic leadership of the Student Council. She has exciting and innovative ideas planned.

Quiz Leadership: Miss A will take the reins from Miss Kaur to lead the much-anticipated quiz this year, which adds valuable team points for Sports Day.

ICT Support: Our tech guru, Jordan, will be available each day to assist with all your ICT queries. If you need help outside these hours, please reach out to the OAC tech team at 8309 3500 (extension 3). Don't forget to check out the various ICT guides available on the SOTA Community Team!

Enhancing Community Connections

I'm invested in continuing to build positive partnerships with the SOTA stakeholders who support our SOTA students and families. The partnerships are with organisations such as RICE, Landcare, Revise, nearby Department schools, and other valuable agencies. Together, we can create a multitude of opportunities for our SOTA learners and their families.

Important Reminders for Start Strong Launch - Week 2

As get ready for our first face-to-face week for 2026, a few key reminders:

- **Uniform:** All students are required to wear the official school uniform, including a sun-safe hat for outdoor play and enclosed shoes (no Crocs or thongs, please!).
- **Playground Rules:** To ensure safety, please remember that rough or physical play is not allowed.
- **Aquatics Preparation:** Don't forget your swimming gear! Please bring bathers, goggles, sunscreen, and a towel.
- **School Photo Day:** Mark your calendars for Tuesday morning—come dressed and ready for the camera!
- **Library:** Our library sessions will be available on Thursday morning.
- **Hydration:** With the warm weather, please remember to bring a water bottle to stay hydrated.

Aquatics Update: Currently, our aquatics program is on track. However, we will provide updates on Monday to confirm if any changes need to be made due to the hot weather policies.

Looking Ahead

I am excited for a year filled with curiosity, growth, and shared experiences at SOTA. Let's make 2026 an extraordinary year together, filled with meaningful learning, strong connections, and memorable moments!



EVENTS

Online Orientation: **26 - 30 January**
Start Strong Week: **2-6 February**
School Experience Week: **16-20 March**
Camp @ Port Hughes: **31 May - 5 June**
Mini School @Melrose: **20- 25 September**
Get Together: **3 - 4 December**

OPFA and SOTA CGC

Outback Parents and Friends Association (OPFA)

An opportunity for the parents, supervisors and staff of students enrolled with the Port Augusta School of the Air (SOTA) to discuss any aspects associated with the school.

SOTA Committee of Governing Council (CGC)

The SOTA CGC discuss governance issues that require further discussion from OPFA meetings.

OPFA TERM 1 MEETINGS TO BE HELD IN WEEKS 2 AND 8 AT SOTA FACE TO FACE EVENTS

SOTA main studio 1:20 - 3:00pm

CGC meetings to be held online in weeks 4 and 9. Please see link in TEAMS.

DES NEWS

I am proud to announce our Head Governess for 2026 will be:

Abbey Palmer

Abbey worked at The Peake as a governess in 2025 guiding George, Jack and Lenny to academic success. Her organisational skills and creative mind will be an asset to her in her Head Governess role.

As we had so many applicants for the Head Governess role which shows the passion and dedication of our group, a Deputy Head Governess was appointed. I am proud to announce this went to:

Katie Schmidt

Katie worked at Ingomar in 2025 and continues in this role with Cameron and Lilly. I have no doubt her enthusiasm and broad network of contacts will assist Abbey and the governess group in their fundraising efforts for 2026.

I look forward to seeing all governesses and supervisors in Week 2 and working with them throughout the year. I am so fortunate to be able to be a part of this amazing group, to see the effort they put in within their school rooms and their dedication to learning and student, and their own personal and academic growth.

Safe travels,

Madlen

UPCOMING FACE TO FACE EVENTS

Term 1 Week 2 Start Strong Launch @ Port Augusta: **2-6 February**

Term 1 Week 8 School Experience Week @ Port Augusta: **16-20 March**

Term 2 Week 6 Camp - Port Hughes: **31 May-5 June**

Term 3 Week 10 Mini-School: **20-25 September**

Term 4 Week 8 Get Together @ Port Augusta: **3-4 December**

MEMORIES FROM 2025



— meet — OUR TEAM

Mr Pitkin

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I trust everyone had a safe, relaxing and enjoyable Christmas and New Years break ? I had a quiet break, with a few trips to Adelaide catching up with family and friends.

A little about me:

- I live with my family live near the small town called Pekina. My wife, Kathy, works at Booleroo Centre District School as a school bus driver and SSO. We have two children, Samuel who spends much of his time working across the state and beyond, involved in mustering, shearing, and crutching, while Annie-Mae works at Booleroo Centre District School as an SSO. We have a variety of pets/animals which live on our small property, which include dogs, cats, chooks, guinea fowl and sheep which keep us busy.
- I have been fortunate enough to be a teacher and leader across many communities and towns within South Australia. These include Whyalla, Adelaide, Roxby Downs, Penong, Oak Valley, Louisa Downs Station - Yiyili (Central Kimberley region, WA), Pinnaroo and Orroroo.

My role at SOTA:

- As Head of Campus, I am incredibly honoured to continue working alongside the students, families, supervisors, and staff of School of the Air for the 2026 school year. This represents both a privilege and an opportunity that I'm keen to further enhance and embrace.
- The role includes the balance of leading and managing SOTA, maintaining a strong connection and collaboration with our Marden campus (based in Adelaide), support and guide our educators (teachers, support staff) with their roles at SOTA, providing clear communication with families, continuing to support and enhance pedagogy, curriculum and planning.
- As I've highlighted previously, my philosophy both an educator and leader is centred on the foundation of strong relationships. I believe relationships underpin everything we achieve collectively, and I am committed to fostering meaningful and productive connections to provide the best learning opportunities for our students, staff and families.



Mr Kelly's Kilometres

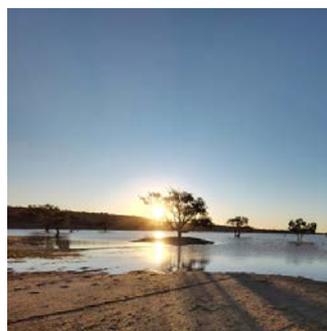
steven.kelly614@schools.sa.edu.au

PH (08)86428313

After term 4 2025 I had a break from teaching and travelling to see SOTA students and family's at their properties. I have come back to SOTA with a new smile after visiting the dentist two days before Christmas, because all I wanted for Christmas was some new front teeth. I did travel to Adelaide for a couple of days. The rest of holidays I spent with my family at home.



3D printing,
my new
holiday
hobby



A memory from a
visit last year

A little about me:

- I have three adult children who all live in the same town as me. I have been in South Australia for three years. We love living in South Australia in a small town.
- After completing several trades, I decided to become a primary school teacher for the next 25 years. At the start of my career, I worked as a fulltime rural area relief teacher in Burke, Broken Hill and the Hunter Valley. I then taught year 1 and 2 for 7 years in Western Sydney. After that I moved back to the Hunter Valley where I taught reception to year 6 in small school until I finally moved to South Australia.
- As a child I travelled a lot to different states in Australia and around the world while my parents were serving in the military. I still like to travel for work to meet new people and experience different places.
- From the age of 16, I competed in 24hr mountain bike racing and marathon running until 2017. During the school holidays I would often ride up to 700km a week to stay competitive.
- I currently have 2 aging bull mastiff's who have travelled everywhere with me.

My role at SOTA:

- My role at SOTA is the same as last year where I will be the Itinerant Teacher. This means I will get to travel and work with students at different stations for the year.
- Most weeks I will start travelling Monday or Tuesday and spend a few days a week at the same property before going home for the weekend and travelling to a new one the following week.
- I have planned HPE for this term. There will be a focus on basic skills at the start of the year. As students' skills progress, I will introduce modified games where students can apply their new skills.

Miss Hampshire - Itinerate Teacher

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Hello everyone,

I hope you have all enjoyed a restful break and are ready for a busy and exciting 2026. I spent my holidays relaxing by the river, spending time with friends and family and playing with my labrador, Maple at my home in the Riverland. After the holidays, I packed up and made the move to Port Augusta and am really excited to be working at School of the Air.

I am very much looking forward to working with you and your children this year. Whether through home visits, online delivery of the Health and Physical Education or during our face-to-face weeks at SOTA. I look forward to meeting everyone in Week 2!

A little bit about me:

- This is my second year of teaching. Previously, I taught PE and Year 6 in the Riverland.
- I have a pet dog called Maple, who especially loves eating avocados although she really shouldn't!!
- Travelling, playing tennis, camping and exploring new places are some of my favourite activities.
- Before and during my teaching studies, I was fortunate to be a governess here at Port Augusta SOTA, as well as at Broken Hill SOTA. I am now looking forward to experiencing SOTA from the other side, as a teacher.
- I have an older sister named Zoe. We love travelling together, even though she never lets me plan the trips, which always leads to great surprises!



My role at SOTA:

This year, I am privileged to be one of your itinerant teachers, working alongside Mr Kelly. In this role, we help support supervisors in the schoolroom and provide additional engaging and enrichment activities for students. I feel so fortunate to work closely with our students and their families during my visits, creating meaningful and enjoyable opportunities to enhance learning.

I wish everyone a fantastic start to the school year. Please feel free to reach out with any questions or just to say hello!

ABOUT ME

Miss Stringer - Reception

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Another summer holidays, another adventure. I spent my break exploring Central Europe starting in Berlin, Germany and zig zagging all the way down to Rome, Italy. After having travelled the world, I am right back to where I want to be - here at SOTA with our dedicated team ready to see what 2026 has in store for us! I look forward to seeing you all in Week 2.



A little about me:

- Although my passion and Early Childhood Education training lies within junior primary I have previously taught from Reception all the way up to Year 8.
- Did you know I actually taught one of our Year 6 students Bonnie Morris when she was in Reception, not here at SOTA, but when she would have her town days at Kimba Area School. I am grateful (and sad) to see Bonnie graduate from SOTA this year having flourished into a kind, thoughtful and wonderful role model of a student.
- I love travelling and exploring Australia and the world and hopefully you might continue to see me pop up at gymkhanas and bronco branding events throughout the year.
- I have two pets, a dog - Rona and a cat - Molly. I like one more than the other, but I will let you guess which one!
- Although no-where near as big as the stations that you are all growing up on, I grew up on a farm here in SA with my 3 older siblings. I am fortunate enough to be a biological aunt to 7 nieces and nephews but adore all of my friends children as well who call me an aunty!

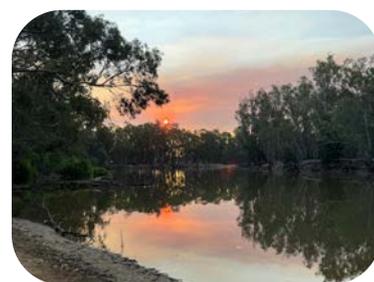
My role at SOTA:

- I continue into my second year as Pedagogy and Supervisor Support Coordinator here at SOTA. I love working with the supervisor team and empowering all to become meaningful educators. We achieved great fundraising in 2025 and I look forward to seeing how we can improve our skills and fundraising efforts in 2026.
- Working alongside Paul, I advocate for and inspire our SOTA staff with pedagogical skills and practice to improve our teaching and outcomes for all students.
- As well as my leadership role, I also have a full time teaching load with the Reception class for 2026. I cannot wait to work with this girl gang and set them up for their schooling and lifelong learning.

Miss Andrews - Year 1/2

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My summer holidays were spent travelling nearly 4,500kms following the rivers through NSW, meeting up with my sister's family in Dubbo, and catching up with family and friends in Victoria. After 5 weeks living in my caravan, I was happy to return to Port Augusta and get back into routine, preparing for what's going to be another exciting year back here at SOTA.



A little about me:

- I grew up in Eaglehawk, Victoria with my Mum, Dad, 2 sisters and 1 brother. My parents are still living in this same house after 45 years. As an adult, I am now a proud aunty to 5 nieces and 4 nephews, the youngest starting his school adventures this year.
- In 2024, I put my house in Murchison, Victoria on the market, sold everything I had, packed up my bus (since sold this) and moved to South Australia with my fiancé Kelly and 2 dogs, Nicko and Storm to our cousin's farm in Currency Creek.
- My very first teaching position was in 2005 and since then I have taught in 5 small country schools in Victoria until 2024 when I moved to SA. I have also been a governess on a station in the Northern Territory, Eva Downs for 1 year back in 2007 through Mt Isa School of the Air.
- I have been lucky enough to see many amazing places in Australia, travelling with my family since I was a little girl. This passion has continued through my adult life, and I am embarking on a life of living and working around Australia, with my first stop here in Port Augusta. Who knows where I'll be this time next year?

My role at SOTA:

- This year, I have the pleasure of teaching the Year 1/2 class for a second year and look forward to consolidating all the knowledge and skills I have gained through teaching in this online environment.
- In 2026, I have taken on the role of Quiz Master for our weekly Quiz Assembly which will now be on Wednesday mornings at 8:30am. I am super excited to see who will take out the trophy this year! Good luck to everyone!

Go  !

Miss Morley - Year 3/4

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Welcome back SOTA! I hope you all had a great holiday! After spending my holidays relaxing on a short cruise in Queensland, visiting family in Adelaide, and enjoying the air conditioner while chilling out in Port Augusta, I'm looking forward to a brand-new year with the Year 3/4 class!



A little about me:

- Having grown up moving between various places in Australia - including several years on a small country property in NSW, and two years of distance education as my family travelled around Australia - I developed a love for travelling and learning about different cultures.
- Before studying to become a teacher, I spent years overseas teaching, volunteering, and exploring Europe and Asia.
- My hobbies involve a variety of arts and crafts; I love being creative and trying out new things.
- Last year I adopted a greyhound called Andrew - my personal goal this year is to continue his training in obedience and agility.
- In 2023 I moved to Port Augusta to start my role at SOTA and have been here since!

My role at SOTA:

- Class Teacher: This is now my fourth year at SOTA, having started in 2023. The last two years I have taught upper primary so this year I'm looking forward to moving back down to middle primary, teaching the year 3/4 class.
- Student Council: This year I will continue as the Student Council Advisor supporting our council members to step up into leadership roles and to support our SOTA community.

I look forward to working with you all this year. Please don't hesitate to get in touch via Teams, email or phone should you have any concerns or questions.

Mr Roughley - Year 5/6

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08 8642 8321

Hi everyone,

I hope you all had an energizing break - with luck, you got to spend some relaxing time with family and friends over the holiday period, and are ready for the new school year

A little about me:

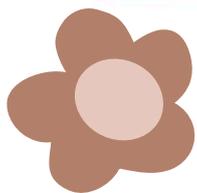
- I grew up in rural and remote Queensland before moving to the Sunshine Coast, then spent time living and working in Brisbane, Sydney, Melbourne and Canberra. After growing tired of city life, I returned to the more comfortable rural life.
- Having completed my Bachelor and Master Degrees through distance education while working full-time, I understand the challenges, pitfalls and frustrations of staying motivated when it comes to learning.
- Over the years I have worked in a variety of non-education jobs before starting work in Adult Ed. While completing my degrees, I provided student support for R - 6 students at an Independent School in Queensland. That role then transitioned into being a Year 5/6, Year 5 then Year 3 classroom teacher and providing relief teaching for Years 8 to 12 students.
- Before joining the SOTA team, I spent 7 years, working with a remote College in the Northern Territory teaching students from Transition to Year 10. This was a fantastic experience as the College had 5 campuses covering an area of 500 kilometers - so lots of driving on dirt, corrugated and flooded roads.



My role at SOTA:

This year I am so excited to meet the new challenge of being the Year 5/6 teacher, while doing most of it on-line. So far this has been a wonderful experience, learning new ways of doing things, working with the fantastic SOTA Team and the incredible students. A small class who know more about navigating Teams is a welcome introduction.

I look forward to working with you all and meeting families and governesses face-to-face as the year moves along.



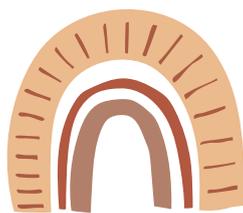
Miss Webb

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Hey everyone, I hope you had a wonderful and safe Christmas break! I spent my holidays hanging around in the Flinders and Adelaide! I helped my brother open his own barbershop in Wilmington and I definitely made sure to stay as cool as possible, and I hope you did too! I am so excited to start at SOTA as the new SSO across all grades!

Let's have a great year!



A little about me:

- I studied my Early Childhood Education and Care course in years 11 and 12 and continued to babysit on the side outside of school in between my jobs.
- I am easy-going and always up for a chat!
- Although I haven't lived on a station, I have grown up most of my life in Wilmington. I lived in Roxby Downs and Whyalla for a few years as well before making the permanent move to Wilmington.
- I am the eldest sibling of 4, so I have had the privilege of watching my siblings grow and supporting them through their early years. I am also very grateful to be an Aunt to my 1.5-year-old nephew and 8-month-old nephew.
- I love, love animals so much! Especially my cat Peach!
- I moved away to the city in 2021, but very soon came to realise I love the country, and I am not a city person!
- I love travelling and experiencing new things. You will rarely see me decline an offer of a new adventure!!

My role at SOTA:

- I will be entering my first year working at the School of the Air as an SSO.
- I will be working alongside the teachers and any other supervisors and will be wherever I am needed.
- I will be engaging with the students, working in groups and 1:1 to ensure they have the correct amount of support and to enhance their learning and engagement.
- My main priority here at SOTA is the children and their education and well-being. That being said, I would like to assure you that parents, governesses, teachers, etc can reach out and talk to me at any time regarding their children or what I can do better to support you and your child.



Angela

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I had a very quiet Christmas holiday break, spending time with my family following the sad loss of my dear mum to Motor Neurone Disease. I am sincerely grateful for the kindness, care and support shown to me during this difficult time.

I am very pleased to be back at SOTA and working toward another positive and productive year. I look forward to seeing everyone in Week 2.

A little about me:

- I have spent my entire working career in administration roles across a variety of industries, including accounting, insurance, financial planning, real estate, Centrelink, health and now education.
- I grew up living in both city and country areas and have lived in Ingle Farm, Peterborough, Watervale, Clare and Port Augusta.
 - I am the second of four children. My older sister lives in Clare and works in a pharmacy, while my two younger brothers live in Waikerie (a vineyard manager) and Moonta Bay (a truck driver).
 - I am a very proud mum of three grown children. My eldest son, Nick, lives in Adelaide and is a carpenter. My daughter, Abbey, lives at home and is in her second year of teaching, and my youngest son, Lachie, also lives at home and is a qualified motor mechanic.
 - Our family includes two much-loved dogs: Bella, a nearly three-year-old Spoodle, and Milo, an 18-month-old Cavoodle. They both have big personalities and bring lots of joy to our home.
 - When time allows, we enjoy travelling in our caravan, especially to beachside locations where we can relax and enjoy the outdoors.

My role at SOTA:

- I am continuing into my second year as School Services Officer (Administration) at SOTA and enjoy working closely with staff and families to support positive outcomes for our students.
- I have been very appreciative of the support from parents, staff and colleagues at OAC as I continue to develop in this role, which is my first position within an education setting.
- Term 1 is shaping up to be a very busy one, and I look forward to seeing the results of the significant work that has gone into our new site and the wonderful learning environment it will provide.

Louise - Administration

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My summer holidays were a busy and special time spent with my family, especially having my daughter home from Darwin. It was wonderful catching up after her busy year of teaching and exploring Europe and the Northern Territory. I made the most of the good days at our beach shack near Port Augusta and enjoyed visiting friends in Adelaide and Victor Harbour.

I'm now back home, busy keeping my garden alive and looking forward to a positive year ahead with our new Head of Campus and the wonderful teachers at SOTA—you are all very lucky! I'm also very excited about our big move.

A little about me:

- I was born in Port Augusta and have two brothers and a sister. An interesting fact about me is that I didn't have a single cousin living in South Australia while I was growing up.
- I also keep very busy caring for and enjoying time with my dad, who will turn 95 in March.
- My passion is keeping fit and healthy since I don't play netball anymore, I joined a gym with my friends and walk my best four-legged friend (Olive) every day.
- My husband and I have three grown-up children: Orry, Geena, and Milhan, and we recently celebrated our eldest son getting married.
- I love swimming in the ocean—this is where I feel most relaxed. My kelpie, Olive, loves it just as much as I do. I'm even planning to share my best swimming spots with Ms Andrews this year.



My role at SOTA:

- My passion is supporting students in all areas of their schooling. I started at SOTA as a Student Support Officer and now support both the administration and teaching staff. I am currently the longest-serving employee, having seen many staff come and go. You will see me at SOTA on Fridays only; on my other working days, I am based at Port Augusta Secondary School.

Miss Jess

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A little bit about me...

My name is Jess Tiver and I work as a Teacher Librarian based at Open Access College, Marden. I am from Burra in the Mid North of South Australia and although I'm in Adelaide during the week, I very much look forward to returning to Burra most weekends and during the holidays! Together with my husband Ben, we have four daughters - Alice, Bree, Sophie and Harriet.



In my spare time, I enjoy camping in our camper with my family, travelling to new destinations throughout Australia, gardening, reading, going for walks and sometimes cooking (just not thinking of what's for dinner every night!).

In the holidays we went to the river for the first time (we usually go to the beach), and we loved it! I water skied for the first time in 20 years and had so much fun (I will admit, I was a little sore the next day!). It was great to see my kids gain confidence, try new things and more importantly, have fun!



My role at SOTA...

This is my second year working at OAC and it's a big change from my 20 plus years teaching in the Mid North. This year I will be sharing the Primary Teacher Librarian role with Jodie Zajak as she returns from leave. I am the lucky one who will teach and facilitate library sessions during assemblies again this year for SOTA Junior Primary and Middle Primary students! However, most of my time this year I will be spent teaching in the Teaching and Learning Community at Open Access College.

I believe my rural background enables me to connect with the students and share many laughs. I love seeing how the students learn and thrive at School of the Air. My day is always a good day when I've had a SOTA session!



Miss Julie

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OR library@openaccess.edu.au



A little about me:

My name is Julie Staley and I'm a Teacher Librarian working as Library Manager for both Open Access & Marden Senior College based at Marden. I grew up and live on the coast in the southern suburbs of Adelaide, but enjoy getting out of the city whenever possible. I have two daughters, Lily & Kye and a gaggle of pets, which makes for a pretty chaotic homelife (I can't say no to a rescue!).



In my spare time I love camping, bushwalking and gardening if I'm outdoors. For indoors, I like to paint, restore old furniture or go to the gym. In the holidays, we did lots of trying to relax, but, also collected another kitten - so much of the time was spent watching "Albus" do zoomies around the house breaking my stuff and refereeing pet squabbles between the Chihuahua Team and the Cat Team (they each have 3 players and don't like each other).

My role at SOTA:

This is my second year working at OAC and I've really enjoyed the change from working in Independent schools - especially the opportunity to meet such a diverse group of students and their families. This year I will be continuing my role as Library Manager and having some teaching time with SOTA students (as well as with Marden Primary, Secondary & Marden Senior College students). While Primary trained, working across the Secondary and Tertiary years as well over the past decade has helped me to support students across a wide range of the curriculum and I love being able to connect with all ages, encouraging curiosity and bringing fun into reading and information literacy skills instruction.

