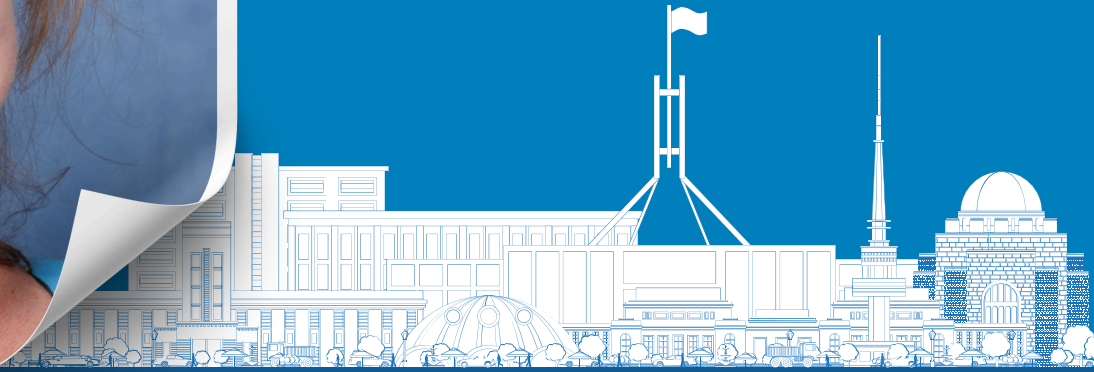




## Building tomorrow's minds :

On the shoulders of teaching giants in the bush capital



My whole approach to teaching is relationship based. I can't intimidate a group of teenagers to get them to sit still and listen, so I use humour. I use kindness. I want the students to trust me, to not be afraid to fail and then try again. So some of my most memorable teaching moments have been when the students have shown me kindness in return.

In 2021 I had breast cancer. I had to stop teaching in April and was gone for the rest of the year. During my time away, a student I taught who had left school three years ago heard I was sick so brought me meals every few weeks. Another ex-student did the same. Cards and gifts from other ex-students arrived as well as care packages from the students I had been teaching when I had to leave. The Year 12 cohort that was finishing school that year asked me to come back and deliver their farewell speech. I had no hair and had just had a major operation. I wore a green wig and felt incredibly stupid and self-conscious. But I loved that they wanted me there.

I loved they still remembered me and wanted to include me. I've been teaching for 30 years, and when I try to think of a 'memorable teaching moment' it's the kindnesses the students have shown me that I think of.

I was walking up to the car park one break time and talking to two year 11 boys on the way. I was moaning that I had a flat tyre and didn't know how to change it. They said, 'We've got you miss!' and proceeded to give up their break time and tutorial time to change my tyre. Once I was sick and had been away for 10 days and the kids clapped when I walked into the classroom after being away for so long.

Teaching can be really hard. And at the moment we are seeing that with teacher shortages. So what is it that keeps me teaching? The relationships I can make with the kids whose lives I get to be part of for a while. That's what gets you through. That's what I'll remember.

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