

News from Nungalinya

with Emily Quinn • June 2025



Greetings from Darwin, where we are in the Larrakia season of Damibila – barramundi and bush fruit time. Here in town we are seeing dragonflies, a sign that the Dry season is starting. The mornings are cooler now and humidity has dropped, bringing a freshness to Darwin that lifts our spirits.

We are in the middle of our third block of teaching: running courses in Foundation Studies, and Faith & Family Wellbeing and Children's Ministry, with the next cohort of Theology students joining us soon. Last block we also had the graduating Murrinhpatha Translation course and a Cert IV in Making Disciples, which provides ongoing professional development for established church leaders.

I have enjoyed being back in the classroom, teaching my EAL (pre-Cert 1) class, along with my co-teacher Wängarr, for blocks one and two. It has been a privilege to both learn from Wängarr and watch her skills and confidence grow, as well as lean into that cross-cultural space. I am always conscious of time and keeping things moving along, worried that some students finish their work quickly and have to wait for their peers. Wängarr, in contrast, will go much more slowly and instructs me to wait until every student has finished all the questions, no matter how long it takes.

Another cross-cultural moment occurs every time we take a class photo for the block. I dutifully create a 'meeting' in Outlook (meeting location – under the mango tree) so that all the teachers, along with our college photographer, know when to be there. We finish class 15 minutes early, and I instruct the students to go straight to the mango tree.

No one should return to their room, visit the bathroom, make a phone call, or do any other odd job. In my mind, this is both the most efficient and kindest way to approach things: if the photo is taken quickly, we will all have more time afterwards, and no one has to wait.

And yet, inevitably, we do wait for someone who has done exactly one of the things I asked them not to do, and we find ourselves arranged around the picnic table, waiting for them. I would be mortified if everyone had to wait for me, but the class doesn't mind. We are, after all, taking a class photo, which will happen when the whole class is there. It might be quicker to do it with less people, but we would have missed the point entirely.



Out and about on Larrakia Country

Banner Image: Magpie Geese in the Nungalinya College Grounds

Circle Image: Emily Quinn

Middle Image: Emily in the classroom

Bottom Image: Wängarr helping students

The College continues to mourn the loss of our dear friend and colleague Michelle Cook following



Michelle's memorial garden

Continued from previous page...

her passing after a freak accident outside the College gates last November. Michelle was an outstanding academic and teacher, a visionary administrator and a bundle of energy, passion and compassion as a leader. We miss her immensely.

Please continue to pray for Michelle's family. We interred some of her ashes earlier this year, in a memorial garden on the College grounds (see above). I also continue to find the aftermath of her passing difficult.

May is the time that KCC – Katherine Christian Convention – happens each year. Indigenous Christians travel in to camp at the Katherine Showgrounds over the May long weekend. The convention consists of Bible talks and then 'celebration' evenings, where people are invited to share a song, an action dance, or a testimony. A limit of two items per community is imposed, but the nights can still run quite late,

Please continue to pray for Michelle's family. We interred some of her ashes here earlier this year, in a memorial garden on the College grounds

as everyone is keen to contribute. Several staff and students from Nungalinga attended, and the two speakers this year – Rachael Kendino and Wendy Wilika – are current Nungalinga students. KCC is always encouraging, and I also appreciate the chance to do a road trip to Katherine.

We are sometimes asked, 'Why don't you deliver (more) courses on country?' and that is a very reasonable question. After all, it is presumably cheaper to fly one or two teachers out to community,

than to bring 15 students in to Darwin. If we taught on country, people would likely have a shared context and language/s, and they would be free to go about their own business in the evenings and on weekends, rather than having to make arrangements to be away from home for weeks at a time.

There are several reasons for this, but the primary one is that students genuinely enjoy attending Nungalinga. Life in community can be challenging, and coming to Nungalinga is something akin to a Christian retreat. You have clean and quiet accommodation, with no overcrowding or desperately needed repairs. You have all your meals provided, eliminating food anxiety and financial worries. You are perhaps released from some of the roles and family responsibilities you juggle back home. And you meet other Christians from all over the place. Sometimes people think that the central cross-cultural element aspect of College is Indigenous and non-Indigenous, but it's really inter-Indigenous; fresh water to salt water, coastal to desert, Centre to Top End, different tribes and languages. To be encouraged by Indigenous brothers and sisters who live far away, but know the same joys and struggles, is no small thing.

Being based at Nungalinga also means that we have access to much-needed wrap-around services, like our Student Services Officer, who assists students with medical needs, our deans, who are on hand for pastoral care, and the entire admin team, who so ably



Emily with Francis at chapel

Continued from previous page...

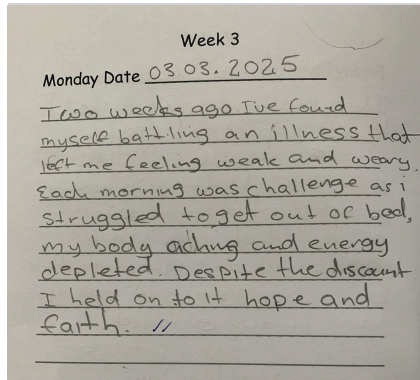
support the teaching staff.

We are thankful every day for living here on Larrakia country, and for the beautiful surroundings of the College.

This doesn't mean that we're not open to more teaching on country, and we have run various short courses over the past few years, in Alice Springs, Maningrida, Gunbalanya and on Groote. There are also some students for whom coming in to Darwin proves to be too difficult – they may be overcome by homesickness, the childcare arrangements they have made might fall through, medical issues that have gone untreated may come to the fore, or the lure of more available alcohol might be too tempting. However, other students persevere no matter what, such as my student Francis (pictured on the previous page).

Francis arrived from Maningrida on a Tuesday night, ready for classes the following day. He attended Tuesday evening fellowship at chapel and then took himself down to the Royal Darwin Hospital with intense arm pain. This was eventually diagnosed as an issue related to the nerves in his neck, and the pain persisted, but Francis attended nearly every class over the four-week block. He would come wearing either a sling or a neck brace, applying "rubbing cream" so liberally that the classroom smelled strongly of Deep

Heat and we had to open all the windows. Sometimes Francis would lie on the floor to ease the pain – and even had a few naps! But his attendance and commitment stayed strong, as evidenced in this journal entry:



Two weeks ago I've found myself battling an illness that left me feeling weak and weary. Each morning was a challenge as I struggled to get out of bed, my body aching and depleted. Despite the [discomfort] I held on to it, hope and faith.

We are thankful for God's provision, as we continue to see so many committed students in our classes every day.

I had a chance to visit family in Hong Kong before Easter, spending time with my brother, sister-in-law, niece and Mum. Hong Kong is a huge contrast to the open spaces of Darwin, and

my students are always wide-eyed when I describe catching the lift to my brother's apartment on the 37th floor. I enjoyed soaking in some big city vibes, trying out different coffee shops, and feeling increasingly confident in another part of the world, as I've been there a few times now. But I also enjoyed coming home! I have a few Tassie trips coming up, and I'm looking forward to the chance to enjoy some cold weather.



Me & my Mum in Hong Kong



Hong Kong highrises

Blessings in Christ,
Emily

Find out more

about Bush Church Aid who support me at Nungalinga College

Donate

Would you consider giving to support gospel ministry here and across rural, regional and remote Australia?



Reaching Australia for Christ since 1919