

2024 Alumni Award Winners

We recognise the outstanding achievements of our alumni and celebrate the remarkable contributions they are making to their communities and professions, whether in their local region or the global stage.

Research Excellence: Professor Pornsak Sriamornsak

Professor Pornsak Sriamornsak has dedicated his entire career to pushing the boundaries of pharmaceutical research in pursuit of better outcomes for all.



Completing his PhD at Charles Sturt's Wagga Wagga campus in 2002, Pornsak has become one of the world's most influential academics and innovators in his field. At the leading edge of pharmaceutical ingenuity, his groundbreaking work with biopolymers – such as pectin and alginate – is advancing the green bioeconomy and enabling a new era of industrially sustainable practices.

He has also developed novel drug delivery systems solving long-term challenges in the administration of medicine, particularly among children and the elderly, and led important discoveries in pharmaceutical nanotechnology and 3D printing. With an impressive track record of over 250 highly cited publications and nine patents, his work has significantly advanced pharmaceutical knowledge and practices worldwide.

"The practical applications of our discoveries and pushing the frontiers of pharmaceutical research are the most exciting aspects of my work," Pornsak says.

"Witnessing how our innovations and sustainable practices improve healthcare outcomes fuels my passion for excellence in pharmaceutical sciences."

Pornsak is Dean of the Faculty of Pharmacy at Silpakorn University in Thailand and the nation's youngest full professor in pharmacy. An energetic leader, supportive colleague and award-winning educator, he is deeply committed to inspiring, motivating and empowering the next generation of innovators and leaders in pharmaceutical science.

A pivotal figure in the pharmaceutical community, Pornsak holds many influential positions including Vice President of the Thai Industrial Pharmacist Association, Vice President of the Asian Federation for Pharmaceutical Sciences and Secretary General of the College of Industrial Pharmacy of Thailand. He is also an Adjunct Professor at Saveetha Institute of Medical and Technical Sciences in India, a sought-after conference speaker, and editor of several renowned journals.

He has won many prestigious national and international awards recognising his commitment to expanding scientific knowledge, encouraging sustainable practices and developing the next generation of pharmaceutical science professionals.

Pornsak says his time at Charles Sturt – the mentors, stimulating research topics and strong research emphasis – has underpinned his remarkable academic trajectory. He is proud to have been recognised for his contribution to pharmaceutical research, innovation, education, and commitment to advancing health outcomes.

"The Alumni Award for Research Excellence motivates me to continue aiming for greatness and making a positive difference in the world while embodying the principles and spirit of Charles Sturt University."

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Professor Pornsak Sriamornsak, PhD, 2002.



"I have actively fostered this positive dynamic, due in no small part to the inclusive and diverse ethos emphasised during my studies at Charles Sturt."

Jenna Mayhew

Master of Clinical Psychology, 2022.

Professional Excellence: Jenna Mayhew

In her flourishing cross-cultural psychology practice in Mexico City, Jenna Mayhew has created an environment where diversity and inclusion shape every interaction, reflecting the values instilled throughout her Charles Sturt degree.

"I have assembled a diverse group of talented therapists from around the globe; together we have created a work culture that thrives on difference, where diversity is not merely tolerated but sought out, celebrated and cherished," Jenna explains.

"I have actively fostered this positive dynamic, due in no small part to the inclusive and diverse ethos emphasised during my studies at Charles Sturt."

Jenna has spent almost 20 years in the social services sector. Beginning her career in clinical and advocacy spaces in Sydney, she moved to the UK in 2012, where she founded written word therapy service *Write as Rain*. She also spent time in Mexico offering individual therapy to English speakers, heading home in 2015 to work with Rape and Domestic Violence Services Australia and Headspace.

Following the birth of her second child, Jenna returned to Mexico in 2019. Speaking little Spanish, she established Hola Therapy to offer psychology services to the city's English-speaking population. As Founder and Principal Psychologist, she now leads therapists from Australia, the US, the Philippines, Venezuela and Mexico in delivering ethical, evidence-based and progressive intercultural psychology.

Today, her team provides over 600 clients from around the world access to quality therapy, often in a mix of Spanish and English. Many are in bicultural or bilingual relationships or families, seeking help to navigate cultural nuances and the challenges and isolation of migration.

"We provide services to people who would be otherwise unable to access therapy in their native language. The perspective we bring is unique, as many of our therapists and clients have a shared experience of immigration and cross-cultural relationships."

Hola Therapy promotes tolerance, respect and celebration in all aspects of life. Jenna has created a safe space for LGBTQ+ and non-traditional relationships – often difficult to find in Mexico. She also provides clinical, financial and fundraising support to Mision Mexico, a charity that supports vulnerable children and immigrants from Latin America.

Under Jenna's professional excellence and vision, demand for Hola Therapy's services continues to grow. Constantly evolving her offering, she plans to provide psychocognitive assessments in Spanish and to foreigners in their native language and conduct research on relocation, immigration, cross-cultural living and cross-cultural relationships.





“Being able to give someone a voice and have that lead to change or make an impact is special, and definitely the most fulfilling aspect of my job.”

Kamin Gock
Bachelor of Communication (Journalism), 2018.

Social Impact: Kamin Gock

Kamin Gock was in Year 6 when he decided to become a journalist and hold authority to account. Since graduating from Charles Sturt's journalism program in 2018 he has achieved just that, shining a light on social, political and environmental issues and giving a voice to the voiceless.

“I owe so much to my time at this university, whether it be the opportunities afforded to me or the lifelong friends and on-campus experience I had.”

Juggling study, internships and casual work in the industry, Kamin joined Channel Nine's Orange studios in 2018. He worked full-time as a journalist with Nine in Albury and then Perth, before moving to the ABC in Sydney in July 2021.

It was the beginning of a rapid ascent at the national broadcaster that took him from Multimedia Reporter to State Political Reporter, Andrew Olle Scholar, and now a reporter for 7.30. Reporting for seminal programs including *4 Corners*, he has covered major events including the search for William Tyrrell, the Northern Rivers floods, COVID-19 lockdowns and state and federal elections.

But it is in the social justice sphere where his reporting has had the most vital impact.

“Telling people's stories is a great privilege and responsibility,” Kamin explains.

Kamin's exclusive series of reports for Nine News on the death of seven-year-old Aishwarya Aswath in Perth Children's Hospital sparked two investigations and major reforms, including the hiring of 400 additional new nurses and the implementation of a state-wide parental escalation system. His exposé on the deaths of two children following alleged inadequate care at Monash Children's Hospital spurred a raft of structural changes, prompting a state-wide overhaul of patient escalation processes and paediatric emergency management.

He has also exposed countless political and institutional injustices affecting minority communities, including delay tactics used by the NSW Department of Justice against victims of institutionalised abuse. In the wake of his report, dozens of people received responses from the department after many months of silence and distress.

Through fearless and sensitive reporting, Kamin exposes inequities in society and holds politicians, businesses, organisations and individuals to account. Named *Young Journalist of the Year* in the 2023 Kennedy Awards, he is immensely proud of how far he's come since his Charles Sturt studies.

Innovation, Entrepreneurship and Creativity: Sally-Anne Stollznnow

Drawn to social work by a deep desire to help vulnerable people and communities, Sally-Anne Stollznnow is making a significant impact through creativity, innovation and entrepreneurship.

For almost a decade, Sally-Anne has served her home region of Port Stephens as a tireless social worker with Services Australia, spanning everything from child protection, policy authoring, field education, out-servicing, families, disability, crisis support and disaster recovery.

“The broadness of social work has taken me in many directions, all with their joys and challenges. I have however found my passion in supporting families that enter the early intervention phase with disabled children,” she shares.

A Guppi Guppi woman living and working on Worimi country, Sally-Anne’s advocacy work is now focused on the social impacts of disability, particularly those with neurodivergence. She has lived experience of the challenges this brings; her young son was diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) at age four.

Sally-Anne quickly identified a significant gap in the early intervention space: many very young children were engaging in therapies without understanding why. She poured her creativity into developing, authoring and publishing *Sid Goes to Kitty Land*, an innovative children’s book introducing autism and associated therapies to young children.

Published under the pen name Sally Marshall, the story takes children on a joyful journey through a neurodiverse land, explaining different types of brains and what they need to thrive. Well-received by the neurodivergent community, the book has been distributed through schools, regional libraries and other community services across the Port Stephens area.

Sally-Anne’s commitment to making a difference in her local community was highlighted at Port Stephen’s Local Woman of the Year event in 2023. In 2024, she was awarded the *Port Stephens International Women’s Day Scholarship*. She used the funds to provide a copy of her book to every



local school library and publish a second book titled *Sid’s Friend Belle*, which explores autism and friendship.

Sally-Anne founded *Wellness Through Fortitude* in 2022 as a platform to offer her books, specially designed NDIS participant planner and other resources to support children and families.



“The sense of personal reward, of joy, when you watch someone advocate for themselves and meet their set goals is nothing short of humbling and incredible.”

Sally-Anne Stollznnow

Bachelor of Social Science (Social Welfare), 2012, Master of Social Work, 2015, Master of Child and Adolescent Welfare, 2023.

First Nations Excellence: Fiona Harrison

Fiona Harrison's drive to relearn ancestral ways and decolonise her thinking drew her to Charles Sturt's Wiradjuri Language, Culture and Heritage program. She embraces First Nations excellence through sharing language and Wiradjuri nation-building, fuelled by social entrepreneurship and a determination to meaningfully improve lives.

A proud Wiradjuri woman of the Galari (Lachlan River), Fiona's journey from personal and cultural fragmentation to entrepreneurial success is one of resilience and vision. Her childhood was marred by intergenerational and personal trauma, suffering deep depression and PTSD in the wake of an armed robbery. Seeking healing through ancestral guidance, she discovered the therapeutic power of Australian native botanicals, becoming an aromatic medicine practitioner.

She was at a casual chocolate-making class when the inspiration to blend native ingredients with chocolate struck. In 2012, she became Founder and CEO of certified social enterprise Chocolate On Purpose, Australia's first Indigenous chocolate company.

Fiona's premium range fuses fine Belgian chocolate with premium Australian native botanicals, honouring the wisdom of the

ingredient custodians and ancient plant knowledge systems. Wiradjuri storytelling infuses each piece – from the owl shape representing Elders' wisdom to the 'Walking On Country' chocolate bar – creating a bridge to understanding, respect, inclusiveness and reconciliation.

"My chocolate embodies the change I want to see, and knowing my efforts support equity in supply chains and contribute to sustainable communities makes every challenge worthwhile."

Fiona Harrison
Graduate Certificate in Wiradjuri Language, 2024.

As a business leader, speaker and advocate, Fiona shares the richness of Indigenous ways of knowing, being and doing while highlighting the inequity between Colonial Australia and First Nations peoples. Disrupting the artisan chocolate market, she embeds social impact in every business decision,

from supply chain to sustainable sourcing and ethical production. The concept of *Yindyamarra* – in her words, "respect, honour and go slowly to do it properly" – underpins her vision.

"My chocolate embodies the change I want to see, and knowing my efforts support equity in supply chains and contribute to sustainable communities makes every challenge worthwhile," Fiona explains.

"Every successful Indigenous business dismantles stereotypes in an economic sector we have historically been excluded from. I am committed to building a First Nations-led supply chain to increase Indigenous representation in Australia's bushfood and botanical industries, where currently less than one per cent of leadership is Indigenous – and even fewer are women."

For Fiona, it is about much more than chocolate.

"It's about nurturing a legacy of *Yindyamarra*, healing and empowerment. A call to ask ourselves: what sort of ancestor do I want to be for the seven generations looking up at us, waiting for their turn to emerge?"





Young Alumni: Emmeline Rocks

One of the first female students to graduate from Charles Sturt's engineering program, Emmeline Rocks is blazing a trail for others to follow.

Emmeline hit the ground running early in her Bachelor of Technology/Master of Engineering (Civil) studies. She undertook her first two work placements in Wagga Wagga – an engineering traineeship at Riverina Water, and a building cadetship with Hansen Yuncken working on the construction of Estella Primary School. She moved to Albury in 2021 to join *Zauner Construction*, completing her remaining two placements while finishing her studies and master's thesis.

Zauner Construction promoted Emmeline to her current role as Project Manager upon graduation in 2023. She has worked on some of the company's leading projects, including the Northeast Health Wangaratta redevelopment, the Opal Fibre Packaging Plant and a five-level carpark. She is currently project managing the redevelopment of Jacob Toyota in Wodonga.

"The unique structure of the Charles Sturt Engineering degree enabled me to gain experience while studying and advance my career so soon after graduation, which would not be possible with a traditional engineering degree," Emmeline shares.

"My journey as a civil engineer and project manager would not have been possible without the opportunities that the Charles Sturt Engineering degree offered me."

Emmeline is committed to advancing opportunities for women in the male-dominated construction industry. She shares her experience freely with current and future engineering students through a range of Charles Sturt events, including Engineering Career Pathways and EngFest. Emmeline is an active mentor in Charles Sturt's Connecting to Industry program and has facilitated student cadetships.

She has also spoken with girls from Albury-Wodonga high schools as part of Regional Industry Education Partnerships' *Girls Can Too* initiative, reshaping their perception of construction as exclusively a 'man's field'. Her genuine passion for her work and determination to inspire a new, more diverse generation of engineers shine brightly through in every interaction.

"Through my involvement with these programs, I am committed to breaking down barriers and stigmas around women working in the construction industry."

In recognition of her inspiring contribution and leadership in the industry, Emmeline was awarded the 2024 *Women in Building Award* for the Riverina Murray Region by the Master Builders' Association. She has also been nominated for the Association's NSW *Graduate of the Year Award*, to be announced later this year. →

"The unique structure of the Charles Sturt Engineering degree enabled me to gain experience while studying and advance my career so soon after graduation."

Emmeline Rocks, Bachelor of Technology/Master of Engineering (Civil), 2023.

2024 Alumni Awards Highly Commended

We love to recognise and share our alumni successes and inspire the next generation of Charles Sturt alumni. The 2025 Distinguished Alumni Awards will open early 2025 – we urge you to nominate yourself or a fellow alum.



Professional Excellence

Dale Hurley

Bachelor of Business (Marketing), 2007.

Dale Hurley is a visionary leader and serial innovator, redefining the interface between technology and finance to solve practical problems and improve everyday processes.

“Entrepreneurship is not just about personal success; it’s about creating value and making the world a little better,” he explains.

Dale’s contribution to the fintech sector is vast. After graduating with a Bachelor of Business (Marketing) in 2006, he co-founded credit management entity *CreditorWatch* in 2010. Under his leadership as Chief Technology Officer (CTO) and Innovation Director, *CreditorWatch* transformed how credit risk is assessed and managed, accelerated reporting processes and enhanced accessibility and affordability for small and medium enterprises (SMEs).

In 2018 he co-founded *Avenue Bank*, an innovative digital bank for SMEs and Australia’s first and only bank specialising in bank guarantees. Securing over \$70 million in funding, Dale steered it from startup to fully licensed banking institution and developed solutions that set sector-wide benchmarks for operational efficiency.

Dale is immersed in several other high-impact tech projects across diverse arenas and recently became CTO of *Greener*, working to shift our climate trajectory by making greener choices easier.

“I remain active in the startup world, advising multiple startups addressing global issues from climate change, to hate speech and affordable housing.”



Research Excellence

Dr Heather McCormack

Bachelor of Media Communication, 2017.

Dr Heather McCormack fuses research excellence with deep industry experience to transform the sexual health of communities.

“The motivating factor for me has always been the knowledge that my work contributes to a social good, that I’m making a positive difference to the world with what I do every day,” she explains.

A proud Wiradjuri woman, Heather’s novel research focuses on enhancing patient experiences within sexual health services and ensuring equitable access to prevention, testing and treatment for sexually transmissible infections (STIs) and blood-borne viruses – particularly among Aboriginal, youth, and LGBTQ+ communities.

Throughout her Bachelor of Media Communication studies, Heather worked in health promotion across not-for-profit and frontline sexual health organisations. She joined NSW Health in 2016, leading high-impact sexual health initiatives including its flagship campaign targeting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth.

Heather’s PhD research at UNSW’s Kirby Institute was identified as a strategic priority by NSW Health, leading to \$2.2 million in competitive grants and four journal papers. She was appointed to UNSW’s prestigious Scientia Program for high-performing researchers in February 2024, where she continues to design and lead innovative public health research.

“I find my work in public health research incredibly rewarding. My public health implementation experience gives me a strong understanding of the pipeline from research to policy and practice.”



Social Impact

Nadia Teong

Master of Psychology, 2018.

Nadia Teong served as a Senior Psychologist in the Australian Army for 11 years. Founding *Veterans Psychology* in 2021, the Master of Psychology (Clinical) graduate harnesses her personal experience to improve mental health services and outcomes for the military community.

“The transition from military to civilian life can be challenging, especially when it comes to mental health,” Nadia explains.

“I wanted to create a space where veterans knew they could go to access mental health support, provided by professionals who also have lived experience of military life.”

Veterans Psychology is Australia’s only private psychology consultancy tailored to veterans’ unique experiences and needs. Nadia’s expert team is comprised primarily of veterans, bringing first-hand understanding of the military experience to foster trust, rapport and continuing engagement with mental health. It offers face-to-face services in Townsville, Brisbane, Sydney and Melbourne, and serves clients across Australia and overseas via telehealth.

A vocal advocate for veteran mental health, Nadia leverages *Veterans Psychology*’s online presence to reduce stigma, shape public discourse and influence policy. In 2023, her impact was recognised with the *Prince’s Trust Australia Beyond Service Award (Power of One category)* and *Enterprise Accelerate Award*. She was also a finalist in the *2023 Prime Minister’s National Veteran Employment Awards*.



Innovation, Entrepreneurship and Creativity

Dr Alexander (Sandy) MacQuarrie

Master of Business Administration, 2009. PhD, 2019.

Dr Alexander (Sandy) MacQuarrie’s contribution to the fields of paramedicine, human performance and wellbeing over the past three decades is immense.

Sandy is a distinguished paramedic, educator and researcher. Excelling in numerous key leadership roles in emergency management in his native Canada, he served as Chief Flight Paramedic at Canadian Helicopters and Director of Educational Services at Medavie while completing his Charles Sturt MBA online.

Sandy relocated to Australia in 2013 as a lecturer and PhD researcher in Charles Sturt’s paramedicine program, and later spent five years as a senior lecturer and researcher at Griffith University. His outstanding innovations in program development and delivery, high-fidelity simulation and interprofessional learning have raised the bar in paramedic education and research internationally. He has shaped generations of paramedics and enriched health, wellbeing and performance across the profession.

“From my early career days, I have tried to foster a connection between paramedic care, education and health,” Sandy explains.

“The most fulfilling aspect of my work is knowing that the course of healthcare, education, research and practice may be slightly better because I was in it.”

In December 2023, Sandy founded *The Edge Human Performance Group*, specialising in educational design and research support across high-value projects internationally. He is currently designing the ambulance curriculum for Papua New Guinea.



2024 Alumni Awards Highly Commended



First Nation Excellence

Assoc. Professor Brett Biles
PhD, 2020.

Associate Professor Brett Biles is living proof of the transformative power of education. With three degrees including a Charles Sturt PhD, the proud Murrawarri man is advancing First Nations health and wellbeing through research and academic leadership.

Brett's academic career began in 2011 at Charles Sturt as Lecturer in Indigenous Health and Associate Head of School, Indigenous Studies. He transitioned to UNSW in 2019 as the inaugural Director of Indigenous Health Education and then Associate Dean Indigenous at UNSW Medicine and Health and Senior Scientia Lecturer. He is a 2024 Fellow in the University of Melbourne's Poche Indigenous Health Leadership Program.

Brett was appointed UNSW's inaugural Pro Vice-Chancellor Indigenous Engagement and Research in February 2024. Through this pivotal leadership role, he is developing the University's Indigenous Research Plan and working to improve engagement with Indigenous staff and communities.

Brett has spent 15 years transforming Aboriginal health and wellbeing through research. Since 2020, he has generated over \$3.5 million in grant funding as Chief Investigator on multiple Australian Research Council Medical Research Future Fund projects in the field of Aboriginal health.

"Charles Sturt provided me with the foundations to build an academic career which has afforded me the opportunity to serve my community through education and research," he says.



Young Alumni

Dilan Jayasekara
Master of Information Technology, 2018.

A passionate young ICT professional, Dilan Jayasekara is striving to create a thriving, sustainable and inclusive tech ecosystem for all.

Dilan arrived in Australia from Sri Lanka in 2017 as a newlywed international student with just \$700 in his pocket. Completing his Master of Information Technology at Charles Sturt, he joined accounting and business advisory firm *Pitcher Partners* in Melbourne in 2019 as a data analyst, ascending swiftly to his current role as Assistant Manager – Data Engineering.

Inspired by his experience and driven to create opportunities for others, Dilan joined ACS (*Australian Computing Society*) in January 2022. He served two years as Vice Chair – Emerging Professionals Committee (EPS), driving the high-impact Student Support Membership program and a range of workshops, panel discussions and networking events to equip students with career-boosting skills and connections.

Dilan also championed the creation of ACS's ESG (Environmental, Social and Governance) *Special Interest Group*. As Chair, he leads the group in bridging the skills divide between graduates and industry needs in partnership with education, business and government.

"By addressing this critical gap, we're fostering a thriving tech ecosystem in Victoria and ensuring a future workforce ready to meet the demands of the digital age," he says.