



# World Teachers' Day QLD

Celebrating Teachers  
Friday 31 October 2025

[www.qld.gov.au/world-teachers-day](http://www.qld.gov.au/world-teachers-day)

## A 45-year journey working in special education

When Barb White first had an inkling that special education was a career possibility, she had no idea it would become a 45-year passion to teach children with disabilities. When Barb was working as an assistant to the occupational therapist in the Handicapped Children's Unit, she met a group of special education students who were visiting to observe. Their presence sparked something in her. She didn't return to her studies to become a social worker. Instead, she enrolled at Mount Gravatt College of Advanced Education, graduating in 1979 with her Diploma in Primary and Special Education, specialising in Vision Impairment.

'My first teaching role, in 1980, was as class teacher at Kirwan Special Education Unit in Townsville, which specialised in educating students with a vision impairment,' she said.

Over a span of more than 4 decades, Barb has taught in every imaginable type of special education setting across Queensland. From primary and secondary schools, early childhood development units, special schools, and in roles from learning support teacher to Head of Department, Curriculum.

'45 years is a long time to sustain the energy and enthusiasm I still have for this job, and I'm often asked how I've managed to last this long,' Barb said.

What's kept her going isn't the variety. It's the students.

'Every single student I teach is an inspiration to me, because they are all unique and they all bring with them a new challenge,' she said.

'While in the Northern Peninsula Area, I had the opportunity to see the change in Community move past established perceptions.'

'I've seen students whose trauma backgrounds further complicated their diagnoses, overcome their negative self-belief to become learners.'

'If you love solving puzzles, being creative, thinking outside the box and of course if you love working with children, then teaching, and Special Education in particular, might be a great fit for you. You'll be challenged, but you'll be so gifted as well.'

'My current teaching is an amalgamation of what I've learnt along the way and what I'm still learning. Some of the ideas, practices, resources, are from times past, but good pedagogy doesn't have a use by date and the more arrows to your bow, the more likely you are to hit your target.'

'Strive to keep an open mind as there are always new things to learn and new challenges to be met and teachers really are the epitome of lifelong learners.'

### **Barb White**

Nambour Special School – Nambour QLD