

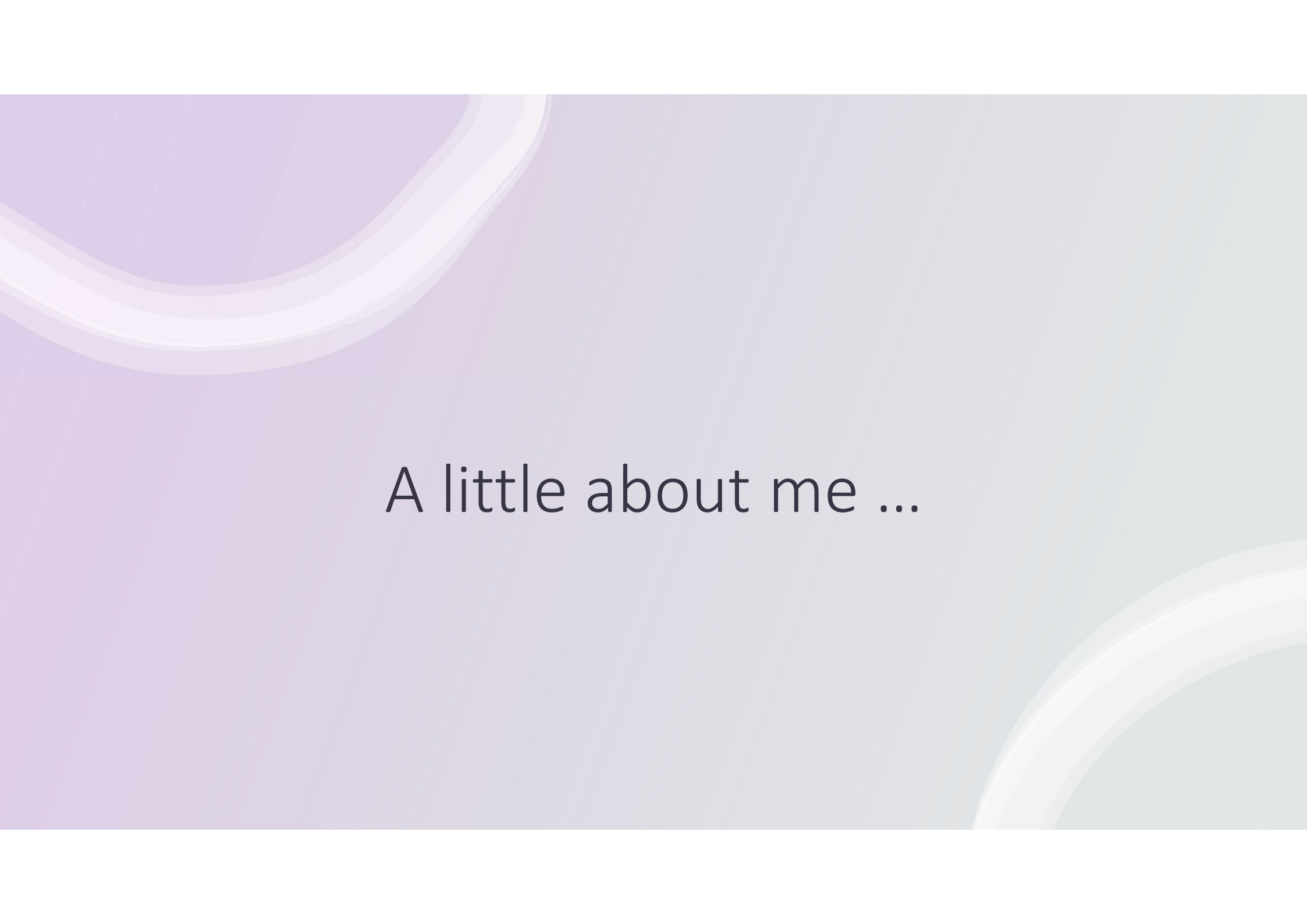


# Supporting frontline educators in Australasia during the pandemic and beyond: The role of the Australasian Corrections Education Association

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A little about me ...



# A little about Australasian corrections

- Australia
  - Nearly 42,000 people in prison
  - 28% Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians (3% of population)
  - 7% women
  - 40% remand
- Aotearoa New Zealand
  - Nearly 8,400 (up from 7,000 in 2021, down from 10,000 in 2018)
  - 54% Māori
  - 6% women
  - 44% remand



# Australasian Corrections Education Association

- Jurisdictional administration, frontline educators, education providers, academics, corrections companies.
- Executive Committee
  - President
  - Vice President
  - Secretary
  - Treasurer
  - Financial Officer
  - Communications Officer





# Advisory Council

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- Representatives from state and territory jurisdictions
- Aotearoa New Zealand
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representative
- Māori representative
- First nations representative
- International representative
- Lived Experience representative
- Student representative
- Research officer

# COVID in Australasia

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- Lockdowns
- Restricted movement around prisons
- 14-day isolation on arrival
- Visits stopped
- Lawyers, programs, education stopped in most jurisdictions (and hasn't restarted everywhere)
- Staff shortages
- Staff (vaccine mandates) and prisoner vaccination (variable rates)





A detailed, close-up, microscopic view of several COVID-19 virus particles. The particles are spherical with a textured, reddish-brown surface and numerous dark, cylindrical protrusions (spikes) extending from their surfaces. The background is a soft, out-of-focus light grey and white, creating a sense of depth and focus on the individual virus particles.

# COVID in Australasia

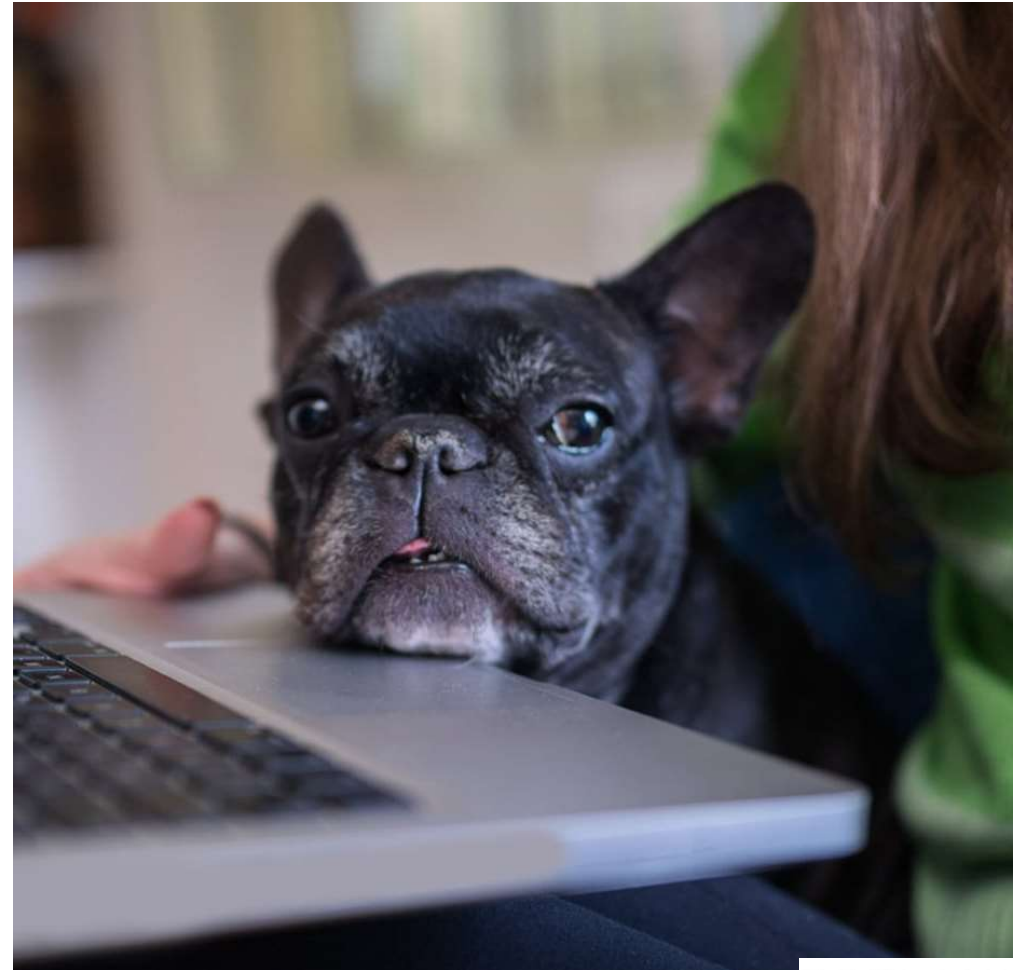
- Very low rates of COVID in prisons
- Very few deaths of prisoners and staff
- Vaccine mandates worsened staffing shortages
- Those who were close to retirement retired
- Large part of workforce 'immunocompromised'
- 4-year public service pay freeze



## Frontline educators during COVID pandemic

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- Vaccine mandates
- Deemed non-essential so not allowed on site
- Working from home
  - Poorly supervised and little guidance
- Using their own technology (Aotearoa New Zealand)
  - Slowly changing
- Education staff felt isolated



# What they did?

Industry instructors  
deployed to custodial  
to make up for  
staffing shortfalls

Educators tried to  
talk to prisoners by  
phone – site specific

Librarians took books  
to cells – site specific

Educators created  
packs of printed  
resources – Brain  
Bites in Aotearoa

Created activity  
books in Aotearoa

Created a repository  
of materials to be  
printed by anyone.

External providers  
became even more  
flexible with due  
dates

Limited use of video  
visit facilities for  
learning

In Victoria, some use  
of tablets with  
content – books,  
music, games.



## Project Auaha

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- Competition which featured artworks, carvings, paintings, poems, creative writing
- 300 entries across Aotearoa New Zealand
- Too slow, too labour intensive, senior leadership too tedious



# Queensland

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- Transitioned from face-to-face to distance delivery.
- Spent a lot of time on robust processes.
- Education providers mailed out hard copy materials.
- Corrections officers delivered and collected work.
- University of Southern Queensland continued to use in-cell laptops and work carried on uninterrupted.



# The impact on educators

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- Lack of trust from management working from home
- Mixed messages from the jurisdictions
- Feelings of isolation
- Dissatisfaction having to use their own technology
- In Auckland, lockdowns lasted months and months
- Staff reported burnout
- Anecdotally, staff who were engaged during first lockdown, disengaged with subsequent lockdowns

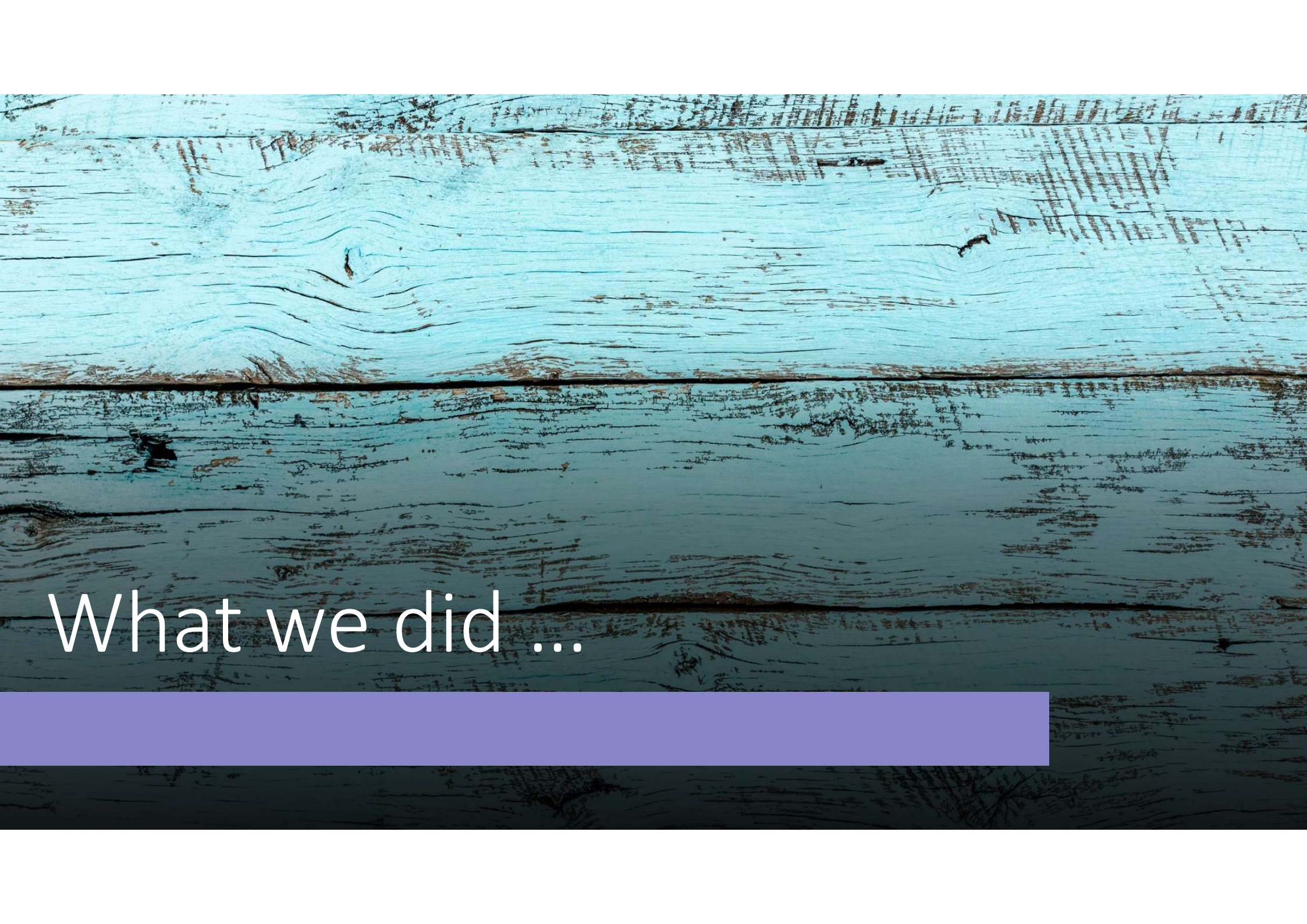


## Burn out

- Anaesthetised feelings
- Less regard for effectiveness
- Negative behavioural consequences
- Decreased wellbeing
- Mental ill health
- Leading to reduced learner motivation and engagement
- Formation of adversarial attitudes







What we did ...







## Stood still and listened

- Lots of educators sought connection (are still seeking connection)
- Lack of certainty
- Frustration and anger
- Felt they had failed those they were charged to look after

# DROP-IN

## Drop in sessions

- Informal sessions on Teams where educators could drop-in and talk
- Sometimes we would focus on a topic or have a speaker
- Tended to have the same people show up
- Made them feel less isolated
- Lots of comparing notes across sites and jurisdictions





## Webinars

- Webinars on self-care
- Well attended
- Helped to make up the shortfall in professional development
- Jurisdictions were just doing the basics
- Another opportunity to connect
- Had a full-day session on prison libraries

# Recognised excellence

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- The Educator of the Year Awards
- Reminded educators about what was good



## Created a repository of materials

- Three levels: beginner, intermediate, and advanced
- Across every topic you could imagine
- Thousands and thousands of resources
- Acted as a resource but also gave educators something to do
- Puzzles, activity booklets, literacy and numeracy, higher level learning, tractor knowledge, fencing, physiology, te reo Māori, history ...



**KIA KAHA  
TE REO MĀORI**



# ACEA Conference

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- Still had one
- Made it online
- Kept it affordable
- Ensured frontline educators could still attend
- Exposed our educators to a global audience
- Accessibility was key



## Kept in contact

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- Any excuse to write
- External professional development opportunities
- Forwarded relevant articles
- ACEA newsletter





## Special Interest Groups

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Research

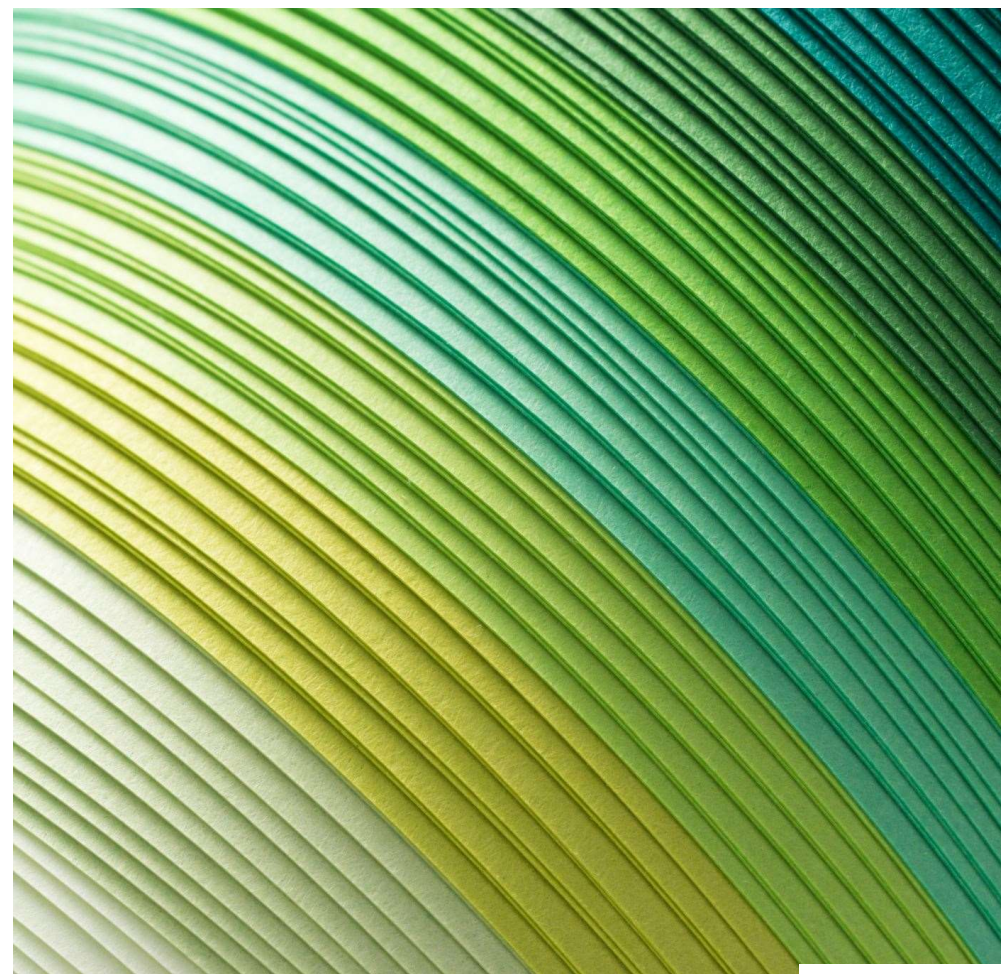
Library

Would also like:

Literacy and numeracy

Higher education

Lived experience







Where to from here?



## Research

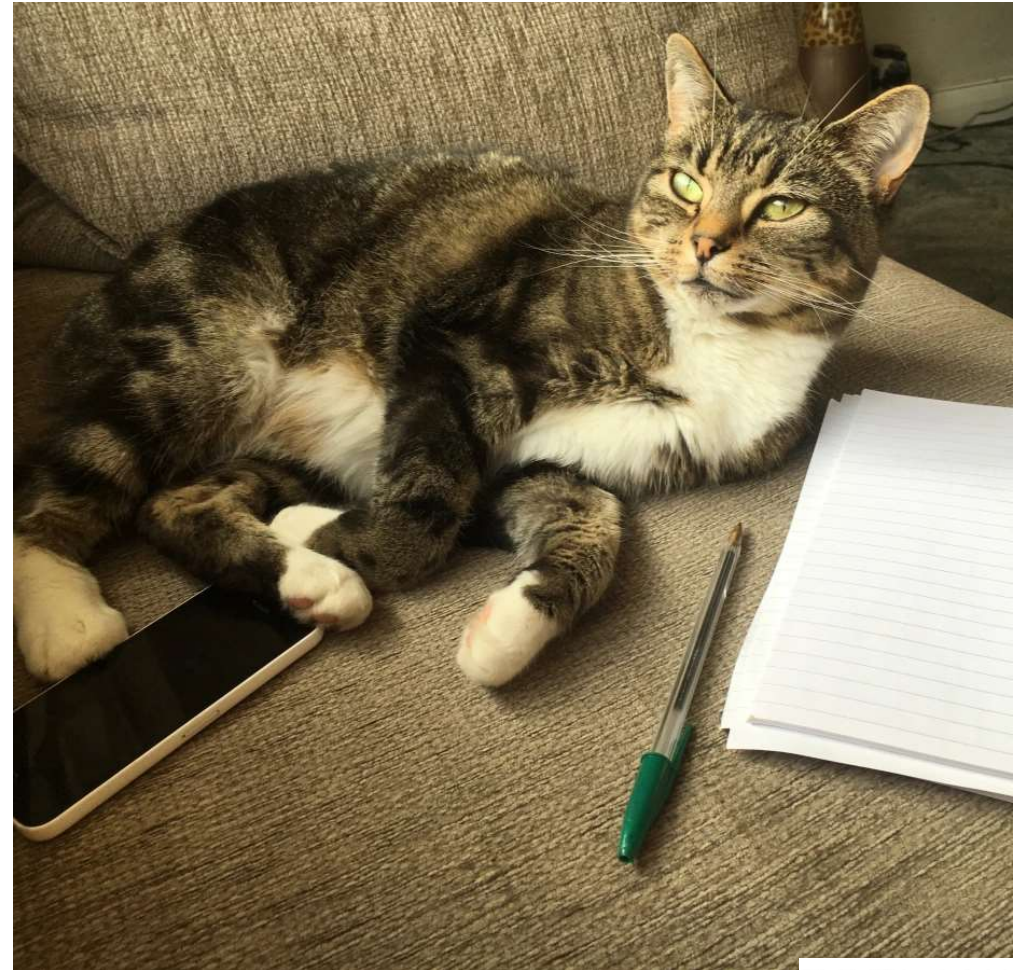
- Jayson and I are doing research with frontline educators across Australasia
- Using MCJ and Psychology students from University of Canterbury
- What is the extent of educator burn out? Now?
- How can we better support educators?
- Will help to shape the direction of ACEA



## Online courses

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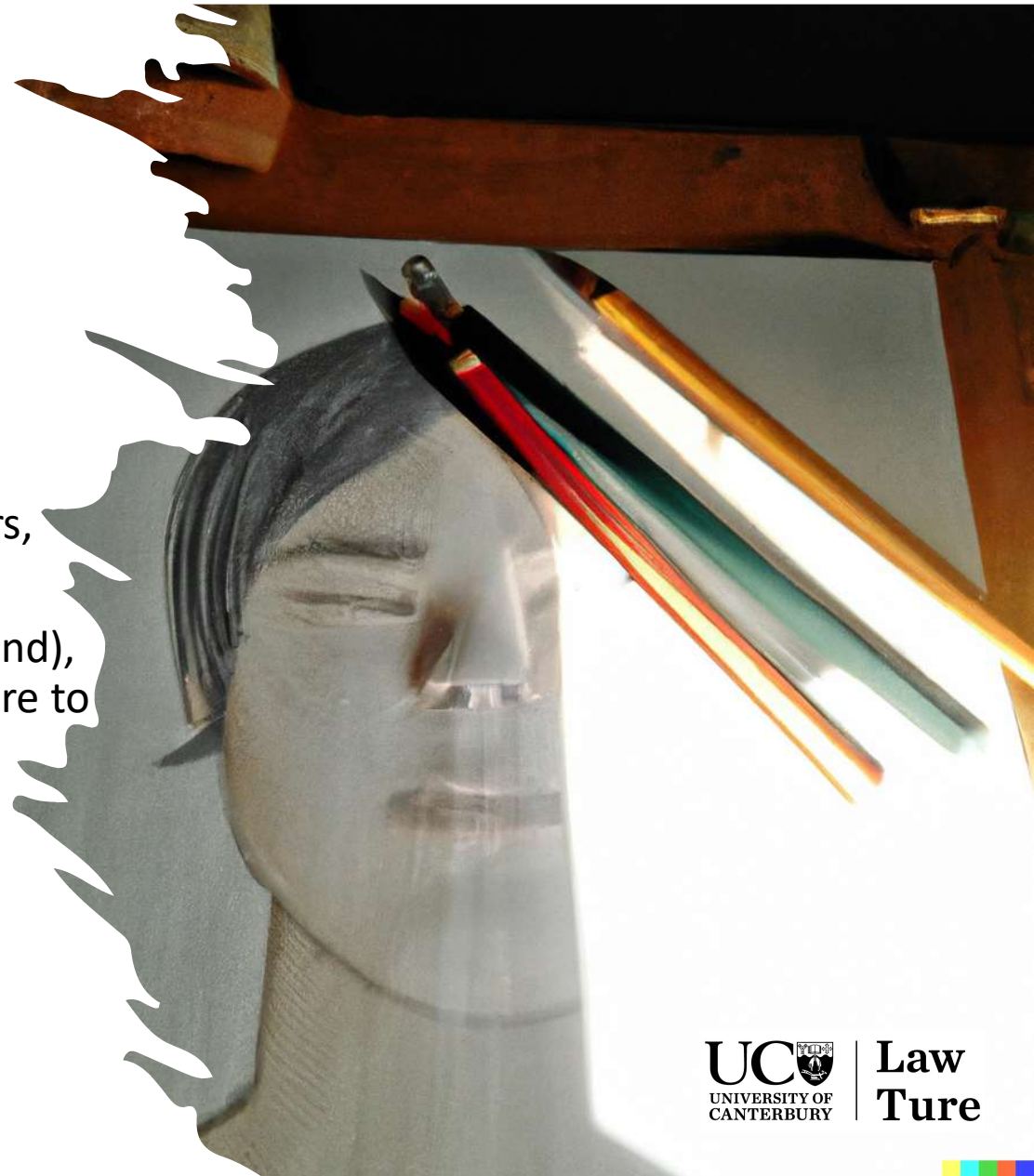
- Prison education induction
- Educator self-care





## 15<sup>th</sup> Biennial ACEA Conference: Functioning within Dysfunction

- November 21 -23
- November 21 – free – Indigenous overrepresentation in criminal justice
- Conscious decision to be online
- Jurisdictions won't pay for travel for educators, especially not internationally
- Fergus McNeill (Scotland), Pia Puolakka (Finland), Ian Lambie (Aotearoa New Zealand), with more to be announced
- We encourage 'watch parties'
- Watch for CFP
- <https://aceaconference.com/>



## Further Information

### Contact

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### Visit

Australian Corrections Education Association Inc. <https://www.acea.org.au/>

### Attend

ACEA Biennial Online Conference 21-23 November 2023 <http://aceaconference.com>