

## Griffith Tax Clinic

Five years of supporting the community & enhancing student learning

July 2019 to June 2024

Under professional supervision, the student run Griffith Tax Clinic provides free tax assistance to unrepresented taxpayers (including small businesses) so they know their rights and obligations in complying



with Australia's complex tax system. Also, the tax clinic aims to improve the tax knowledge of the community, via the student

tax advisers providing free tailored tax workshops for community groups and high schools.

The Griffith Tax Clinic opened July 2019 at the Logan campus and operates every trimester. The Federal Government has awarded \$600,000 in funding as part of the National Tax Clinic Program.



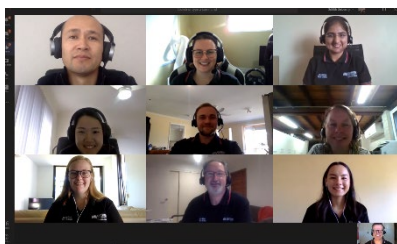
### Tax Clinic Staff

- Clinic Directors: Dr Melissa Belle Isle & Professor Brett Freudenberg.
- Registered Tax Agent: Kristina Brown
- Office Managers: Mackenzie Precians
- Student tax advisers

### Key Achievements

Key Achievements: July 2019 to June 2024:

- Operated for 278 days
- Received 2,052 client enquiries
- Conducted 1,034 client meetings
- Assisted 330 small businesses
- Conducted 96 workshops to over 2,702 attendees
- Lodged approx. 2,200 tax returns (inc BAS)
- 129 students have volunteered at the clinic
- Able to operate fully online during Covid-19
- Created a YouTube Channel for resources



### Client outcomes

"This been hanging over my shoulders for a number of years, but the problem felt too big for me. I am extremely grateful for the support and advice I received."

#### Client stories

Tax is hard and many clients have had a major life event which has seen them let their tax obligations lapse, which then becomes too daunting to face. For example, a proud indigenous leader had to deal with divorce and a cancer diagnosis. He was not sure where to start or even find the paperwork. Working

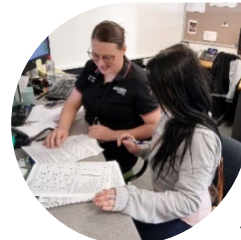


with the Griffith Tax Clinic, he was able to piece together all the information required to complete his outstanding returns. He now

plans to use the refund he received from lodging his tax returns to fund further projects for his indigenous community.

"Thanks so much ... I first arrived thinking I just had to do two tax returns and through your thorough guidance I found that I had a past tax return from almost 20 years ago that had been forgotten. I can rest easy now that all my tax is now up to date"

A recent immigrant to Australia had started Uber driving to earn some income. However, Centrelink



advised that his wife's benefits were going to be cut due to his failure to complete and lodge BAS returns for his Uber driving business. The clinic organised a translator to see him about his issue, and the tax clinic students were able to

complete his BAS and assist with the centrelink forms.

#### Satisfaction & tax confidence

Clients after assistance from the Griffith Tax Clinic felt:

- 95% more confident to seek assistance about tax
- 87% more confident to keep their tax lodgements up to date
- 86% more confident to keep proper records for tax
- 84% satisfied with the service they received from the clinic would recommend the service to others.
- 75% they had improved tax knowledge
- 74% less anxious about their tax
- 71% more empowered to take charge of their tax



## Referral sources

The following organisations refer clients to the clinic:

- Access Community Services
- Small Business Financial Counselling Service
- Uniting Care
- NDIS Support Workers
- Salvation Army
- Lifeline
- Qld Small Business Commissioner

## Student Outcomes

"I was personally unprepared and surprised at how much value I found being able to give back to the community, and to help improve the lives people who otherwise would have not been able to afford assistance."

Over five years, **129 Griffith students** have worked at the clinic (one day a week for 12 weeks). They are studying either business and/or law. Of these students:

- 66% are female;
- 30% are international students; and
- 61% have had no professional work experience.



Student satisfaction is high with:

- 96% finding it a valuable learning experience
- 94% providing insight to their professional life
- 93% developing their professional identity

## Confidence & Generic skills

After working at the clinic students reported improved



confidence in their teamwork (94%), oral communication (94%), problem solving (91%), research skills (88%) and written communication (86%).

"Over the period of the internship, I have become more confident in my ability to work in teams ... I have also learned how to professionally interact with clients in a respectful manner to ensure that I meet the clients' and my personal expectations in that aspect."

## Employment

For students who have worked at the tax clinic and completed their studies 80% have secured employment in their relevant profession, with:

- 48% small/medium advisory firms,
- 32% private firms
- 10% Big 4 accounting firms, and
- 10% at the ATO.

"Looking back, my experience at the Tax Clinic had helped me excel in my current role as an Accountant. Being an Accountant, communication, teamwork and researching form an integral part of my day-to-day activities and these are the skills that the Tax Clinic had really helped me develop. Being able to work with real clients was an experience that had helped me gain valuable insight into what to expect when working as an Accountant."

## Community Education

The clinic also has conducted **96 free tax workshops** for community groups and high schools to **2,702 attendees**. Also, a YouTube channel has been developed with videos.

Workshops have been conducted for ACCESS Community Services; Small Business Financial Counselling Service Southern Qld; Queensland Small Business Commissioner,

Financial Counsellors of Uniting Care, Dept of Employment, Small Business & Training and Logan City Council.

Tax workshops have been delivered to students at a number of schools including:

Marsden State High School; Queensland Academy of Creative Industries; St Margaret Mary's College (Townsville); Islamic College of Brisbane, Australian Industry Trade College and Rockhampton State High.



## Media

The Griffith Tax Clinic media coverage includes:

- Channel 7 News (May 2020; May 2021; June 2022; June 2023, June 2024)
- ABC Radio (Aug 2019; June & Oct 2021; July 2022); ABC News (June 2023)

Over five years the Griffith Tax Clinic has made 49 posts on **LinkedIn** about its activities and received over

**122,979 views** (average of 2,500 views per post)

On Tax Clinic's YouTube channel 13 video packages have been developed with over

**2,371 views**. Videos have been developed about Uber drivers, Investments and Business cashflow and tax.



## Research Outcomes

Research is being conducted into the financial capability outcome for clients, as well as for students' self-efficacy and skills. Referred Articles

- Freudenberg et al, 'Students' professional identity and a fully online tax clinic', in International Handbook on Clinical Tax Education, (University of London Press, London, 2023), Ch 17: pp 240-258
- Cull et al., (2022), Work-integrated learning for international students: developing self-efficacy through the Australian National Tax Clinic Program, *Journal of Australasian Tax Teachers Association* 17(1), 22-56. (B rank)
- Morgan et al. (2022), Pro bono tax clinics: Aiding Australia's Tax administration and Developing students' self-efficacy, *Journal of Australian Taxation* 24(1): 76 - 110 (B rank)
- Brett Freudenberg and Melissa Belle Isle (2021), Confidence in a Pandemic, *New Zealand Journal of Taxation Law and Policy*, 27(4): 279-307 (A rank)
- Freudenberg et al. (2020). 'The Griffith Tax Clinic' *Journal of Australian Taxation*, 22(2): 64-95 (B ranked).