

Obituary: Dr Hennessey Hayes

Hennessey Hayes, 57, passed away in early February 2021 at his home in Brisbane, Queensland, Australia. He is survived by his daughter Olivia, his brother Shaughnessy and mother Robbie. Hennessey was born 29 August, 1963 in Louisiana, United States. He received his PhD at Tulane University before joining Griffith University in 1994, where he served almost 27 years in the School of Criminology and Criminal Justice.

Hennessey's research interests centred on restorative justice and youth justice. His research on youth justice conferencing in Australia explored and explained variations in youth re-offending and the reasons why young people fare better or worse following their participation in youth justice conferences. This series of studies, some in conjunction with his colleague Kathy Daly, were important in bringing more methodological rigour and analytical clarity to our understanding of the impact of RJ on youth reoffending, and they remain widely cited to this day.

His paper on "Apologies and Accounts in Youth Justice Conferencing" (Hayes, 2006) remains perhaps his most notable and original work. Hennessey provides therein a compelling argument that even under the best of conditions, acts of apology and forgiveness are bound up in the messiness of interactions between parties faced with competing and very human emotions of guilt, shame, and the need to save face. This work is a timeless reminder of the difficulty of achieving restorative outcomes with young people who often struggle with balancing the complex emotional, psychological, and communicative aspects of RJ conferencing. In this vein, Hennessey's more recent research had turned towards investigating some of these challenges in more depth – particularly his research with Pamela Snow that investigated the impact of oral language competency in young people on RJ processes and outcomes.

Hennessey was deeply committed to changing the systems in which many young people struggle, and worked with practitioners and policy-makers to achieve real reform. For five successive years he instigated and ran a successful *Youth Justice Symposium* series in Brisbane, melding his numerous professional and academic networks to focus on the challenge of achieving lasting system change.

Hennessey's significant contributions to the field were matched by his deep commitment to the School of Criminology and Criminal Justice. He was tireless in developing and enhancing relationships with students and his academic colleagues. He was always happy to meet with anyone, often at short notice, to consult and advise on any issue or problem they faced. No one was ever turned away; all were greeted with kindness, empathy, and encouragement. All academic departments would wish to have a member of staff as dedicated to students and peers as Hennessey Hayes.

Hennessey's endless patience and ability to find time for everyone were legendary in the School. But to infer that these characteristics were innate, that his approach was something that came natural to him, would be a mistake. The truth is that what shaped Hennessey's disposition can be traced to his own scholastic journey.

Growing up in a small town, Hennessey struggled to harness his talents in high school and early university, receiving little encouragement from teachers and next to no direction. However, the moment he came into the orbit of instructors who were overtly supportive and provided the guidance he needed, Hennessey was able to demonstrate his academic potential. His grades showed a parabolic improvement, sufficient to enter post graduate study, complete his PhD, and embark on an academic career.

The encouragement of a receptive student by university academics at a critical moment can be life changing. The kindness that Hennessey experienced at that time was perhaps the main reason for his relentless drive to nurture the talents of the students under his stewardship. This care is something that 27 years of School of Criminology and Criminal Justice students have been lucky enough to benefit from. Hennessey never sought rewards or acknowledgement for his practical ethic of care and mentorship, but since his untimely passing his colleagues have been overwhelmed with expressions of sympathy and sorrow from countless former students, practitioners, and colleagues. Hennessey would have been humbled but delighted by this outpouring of appreciation for his many contributions.

Beyond his significant contributions to Griffith University, to his students, and the community, Hennessey enjoyed spending time with friends and colleagues. Over the years he hosted many wonderful events and dinners at his favourite spot – his balcony overlooking downtown Brisbane. He was also a keen traveller and assiduous collector of Qantas points, which always enabled him to take his next trip in style.



Provided by Associate Professor Michael Townsley, on behalf of the School of Criminology and Criminal Justice and Griffith Criminology Institute, Griffith University