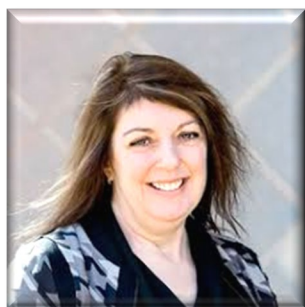


## Vale Professor Helen Farley – 28 June 1968 to 9 July 2025

It is with great sadness that we announce to the ASCILITE community the passing of **Professor Helen Farley**. Helen was known to many far and wide and crossed many people's paths and hearts. Helen was an active member of ASCILITE, joining in early 2005, being voted onto the ASCILITE Executive in 2015, becoming Vice President in 2017 and retiring from the ASCILITE Executive to take up a role in Christchurch, New Zealand, and returning to ASCILITE in 2023, when she had become a Professor and Director of Criminal Justice at the University of Canterbury.

During her time as an ASCILITE member she received an ASCILITE Innovation and Excellence Award in 2013 and was an ASCILITE Innovation Award winner in 2015. Helen said the following about herself: *"As an educator, I am also a researcher of higher education, technology-enhanced learning, blended learning and the innovative use of technologies for learning, especially virtual reality and augmented reality."* Her research interests include digital equity, prisoner education, mobile learning, learning in virtual worlds and the educational application of virtual and augmented reality.

Professionally, Helen's LinkedIn profile gives a sense of the amazing, diverse, inclusive and intelligent academic that Helen was. She started out with a degree as a veterinarian ☺, worked in a diverse range of industries, and completed five postgraduate degrees including her PhD. Her bio states:

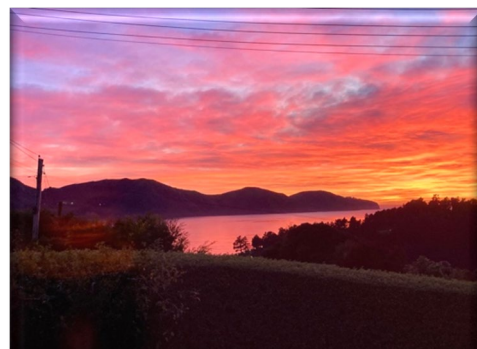


**Professor Helen Farley** is the Director of Criminal Justice at the University of Canterbury in Ōtautahi Christchurch. She oversees the direction of the criminal justice programmes at the university and works closely with criminal justice agencies and NGOs. Prior to this, Helen worked for Ara Poutama Aotearoa Department of Corrections, overseeing prison education in the Southern Region and advising on the implementation of technology in the Department. Helen was the Acting Director of the Digital Life Lab at the University of Southern Queensland in Australia. She led a number of projects introducing digital technologies into prisons to provide access to digital higher education. The latest of these, the Australian government-funded \$AUD4.4 million

*Making the Connection*, saw **1700 course enrolments over 4 years**. Helen is also the **President of the Australasian Corrections Education Association (ACEA)**. **She is the first woman, academic, and person outside of Australia to hold this role.** She has steered the organisation towards an active and advisory role for Australasian corrections jurisdictions. Helen's own research is around higher education, neurodiversity, and technology in the carceral space. She also publishes on the mental health of criminal justice students and frontline criminal justice workers. She is widely published and appears at a number of international conferences. She is on the Expert Working Group on Technologies for Prisoner Rehabilitation for the United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute (UNICRI).

Sadly, we were recently informed by Helen Farley's partner, James, of her passing. James wrote on Helen's Facebook page:

*This post is to let all those who loved Helen know that she suddenly and unexpectedly passed away on Wednesday night. She had been admitted to Christchurch Hospital earlier in the day and later took a sudden turn for the worst and was unable to be revived. She hadn't been in any pain and was active and positive to the end. Helen touched many people's lives and treasured your company and friendship. I know you will all mourn her loss and share in my grief.*



*One of many sunrises shared with us by Helen of Diamond Harbour, New Zealand*

Helen was great at sharing, on Facebook, her journeys through daily posts. They began with cat bombing photos, then views out of her accommodation window whilst away working, walks with street art and more recently, we were blessed by sunrise photos of the view Helen had from her home in Christchurch. She was truly blessed with a beautiful view every day.

A response to James's post, on behalf of ASCILITE community (and the Australian and New Zealand Virtual Worlds Working Group [VWWG] – which was formed out of ASCILITE – equivalent to a SIG) where dozens of us met through ASCILITE was posted as followings:

*Hi James - we have never met but have to say, I was totally gutted by your message. I knew Helen such a long time before I actually met her in person. Helen and I used to "hang out" in the virtual world, discussing ways in which we could enhance our students' learnings.*

*I loved taking students to Helen's virtual religious precincts, where, with the click of a button, the church, synagogue, temple, or wherever we were, AND Helen's avatar, would change, depending on the type of religion that was being depicted at the time (holodecks - scene changers).*

*Then, we met in RL (real life) through ASCILITE, I have no idea when, but probably in 2009 - wrote papers together, presented together (I think one year Helen and I presented about 5 papers together - mostly for others who could it make it to the conference), and eventually we were on the ASCILITE Executive together 😊.*

*Helen then took on the amazing opportunity and challenge, moving out of academia and to a new country (New Zealand). She was such an inspiring person to take on the opportunities that New Zealand had to offer her - leaving behind her beloved life in Australia and in particular, Brisbane. Helen had such a high social conscience, was an amazing colleague and friend, and she will be missed by so many 😭💕.*



Helen's virtual world avatar, Rupert



Helen's lookalike virtual world avatar

*I last saw Helen at the ASCILITE conference in Christchurch 18 months ago. It was wonderful to catch up and see that she was on top of things and life was looking great.*

*I am so sorry for your loss, James. Helen talked about you lots and I cannot imagine what you are going through at the moment. I am so glad that I had the privilege of meeting and knowing Helen and I was able to wish her a happy birthday 10 days ago and hear of her jammed packed day of celebrating.*

*It has been an absolute privilege to know Helen. I am truly saddened by her passing. RIP Helen and my condolences to you, James, her family and her friends.*

This was on behalf of many who also joined in these adventures with Helen – in the virtual world and in writing papers for ASCILITE conferences (13 papers and two posters with members of the VWWG). I cannot put in words how utterly saddened I was by this announcement. Many were there when we first started the VWWG group – Helen was one of them of the original members.

Following are some images of Helen that many in the ASCILITE community will remember fondly.



**ASCILITE members with Helen Farley**



2025 – Helen with Princess Coco (Helen loved animals) ☺



2025 – Helen - lecture to her University of Canterbury students



2025 – With Caroline Steel (ASCILITE ex President)



2025 – With Hazel Jones and Claire Beattie



2025 – With Greg and Hazel Jones and Claire Beattie



2022 – Helen at her beloved Diamond Harbour, NZ



2022 – Helen beginning her new role as Professor at the University of Canterbury – 4 July



2018 – Helen's 50<sup>th</sup> celebrations – 28 June

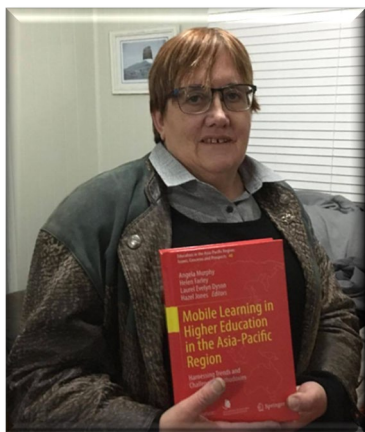




2018 – With Julie Wharton (ASCILITE ex Executive)



2018 – With Hazel Jones and Julie Wharton (3 wise monkeys)



2017 SIG Book – edited with Hazel Jones (including editors: Angela Murphy, Lauren Dyson)



2016 – ASCILITE Adelaide conference with Caroline Steel and Chris Campbell (both ex ASCILITE Presidents)



2016 – ASCILITE Adelaide conference with Chris Campbell and Julie Wharton



2016 – ASCILITE Executive meeting



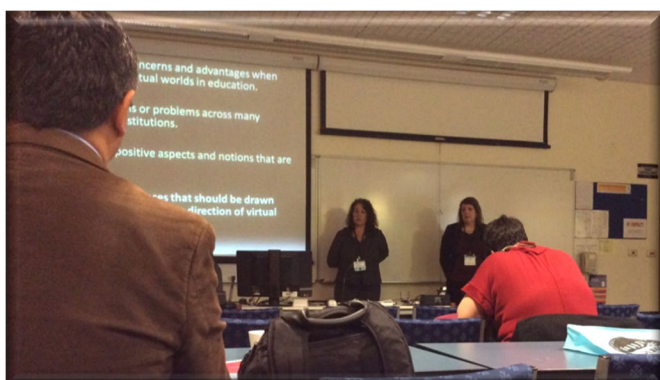
2016 – Sarah de Frietas (previous ASCILITE Keynote speaker)



2015 – ASCILITE conference Dinner – With Joanne Doyle



2015 – ASCILITE conference – With Hazel Jones, Joanne Doyle



2014 – ASCILITE Conference dinner – With Caroline Steel (ex ASCILITE President)



2014 – ASCILITE conference (presenting on behalf of a member) – With Sue Gregory (ASCILITE Life Member 2020 and current member of the Executive)

2013 – ASCILITE Conference – With Grainne Conole (ASCILITE Fellow 2012)



2010 – With Cathy Gunn (ex ASCILITE President)

2010 – With Rob Phillips (ASCILITE Life Member 2009 and ex ASCILITE President)





2009 – With Caroline Steel (ASCILITE ex President)



2009 – With Caroline Steel (ex ASCILITE President)

In 2009, Helen joined the Australian and New Zealand Virtual Worlds Working (VWWG) group. The group was formed after several sessions at the conference on the affordances of using a virtual world in education where we decided we wanted to keep in contact. Helen was an active member of this community and following are images from our sessions together as a group – to demonstrate how innovative and inclusive Helen was of her colleagues. Following are some images of Helen participating in the activities of the VWWG (Helen had many avatar – she mostly liked to be a male so that she could work in the virtual world without being disturbed).

#### Virtual World Working group activities – from 2009 to 2022 (approx. 250 members)



Helen was super clever – her avatar looked very much like her real life self ☺ By the click of a button Helen could depict many different avatars, depending on the requirement at the time (i.e., religious education, law)



“Rupert” – Helen’s main avatar when mixing with other residents and building her space



2022 – Helen attending an online PhD graduation for Merle Hearn – many of the VWWG group present here.



2022 – meeting to organise the graduation virtual world celebrations



2010 – Helen (Ruper) and her virtual space – Religion Bizzare



2010 – one of the many profiles that Helen used when in “Religion Bizarre”



2010 - Helen as a Judge



2009 - VWWG meeting (Helen is in the middle with her female avatar, named “Helen”)

# Rest in Peace, Helen

You will be sorely missed by many far and wide!!

