



Country  
Universities  
Centre  
FAR WEST

# Annual Report 2020









# Table of Contents

<b>Our Chair's Report</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Our Centre Manager's Report</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Our Story</b>	
Our History	6
What We Do	6
Our Support	6
<b>Our People</b>	
Our Board	8
Our Team	9
Our Partners	10-13
<b>Our Students</b>	
Statistics	14
Student Success	15-16
Learning Skills Advice	17
<b>School Engagement</b>	
Student Support Program 2020	18
<b>CUC Far West Alumni</b>	<b>19</b>

# Chair's Report



Being the Chair of Country Universities Centre Far West is a great privilege and on behalf of the Board it gives me pleasure to present the 2019–2020 Annual Report.

Education is more than just learning how to read and write. Education helps us grow personally, professionally, and socially. Education is a process of inviting truth and possibilities of encouraging and giving time to discovery.

**"Education is a process of living and not a preparation of future living," John Dewey, 1916.**

The world of education is changing rapidly and the uncertainty of world events for the majority of 2020 has certainly created additional challenges.

The past year has provided opportunity for the Centre to enhance support services and refine our capacity to deliver that support in a number of forums, supporting the safety of students and staff whilst continuing to meet the needs of our students throughout the COVID pandemic.

Student registrations continue to grow with more than 350 students registered through the Centre since opening in 2018 and I remain very proud that the Centre is creating opportunities for regional students with 56% of our students the first in their family to study at University.

This year saw a refined and enhanced school program with workshops supporting goal setting and motivation, time management, exam preparation and aspirations.

One of the biggest challenges that online students face is the lack of visible support and feeling isolated. This is particularly challenging for first-year students who are not familiar with university technology, terminology, and expectations. Our Centre staff have developed a comprehensive program designed to build confidence and academic skills for regional students who are studying via distance.

The greatest asset of the Country Universities Centre Far West is our people and I wish to take this opportunity to recognise and sincerely thank my fellow Board members, who's vision, commitment and unrivalled passion for regional students and the ongoing growth of the Centre is praiseworthy and reaches well beyond the normal expectations of volunteers.

Likewise, the success of the Centre is a direct result of the dedication and commitment of the team, led by Danielle they continue to exceed expectations in their delivery and commitment to student support.

Country Universities Centre Far West has a compelling story to tell in a complex and fast changing environment. It remains a great privilege to be part of the Country Universities Centre Far West journey and I look forward to building on the outstanding success of the Centre over the coming 12 months.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Michael Williams'.

**Michael Williams**  
**Chair, CUC Far West**



# Centre Manager's Report



Having commenced our third year of operations, Country Universities Centre Far West remains focused on our vision to empower the people of Far West by enabling increased access to higher education opportunities. We have created a vibrant local learning community which has supported over 350 students to date and growing.

We are a proud community institution that contributes to the educational framework that exists in the Far West. We have worked tirelessly to build our reputation for providing supported and dedicated learning experiences and study space, designed for regional people by regional people.

Our students have the opportunity to build a network of like-minded fellow students and can take advantage of being part of a state-wide learning community. Our capacity to positively impact community underpins who we are and what we do. By building robust partnerships with local organisations, schools and nationally recognised higher education institutions, we have created new possibilities, transforming the way we approach and tackle the challenges that face our region.

Some of the highlights from the past year include the establishment of partnerships with higher education providers; University of New

England (UNE) and Charles Sturt University. These partnerships are aimed to provide high-quality support for students registered across the CUC network, bringing together community, university and industry to build strong pathways for our region.

We have also continued forging powerful connections with local high schools delivering collaborative workshops aimed to build aspirations of our region's students for higher education and provide support for success in the progression to High School Certificate.

Lastly, one of the more notable achievements includes the extension of our dedicated learning skills program, offering students face to face support with academic skills development. With fantastic student response and outcomes, the program has now been adapted and expanded to Centres across the CUC network, giving students the resources and tools needed to thrive in their studies.

While 2020 brought significant challenges as the COVID-19 pandemic took hold. At the height of the outbreak, the board and staff had to balance student support initiatives with the Centre's legal and moral duty to do everything practical to ensure the health and safety of our learning community and move in step with efforts to reduce the spread of the infection. I want to acknowledge the hard work of my team as they pivoted supports online and remained proactive in their efforts to assist our students. And to our students, who showed extreme resilience under such adverse conditions.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading 'Danielle Keenan'.

**Danielle Keenan**  
**Centre Manager, CUC Far West**



# Our Story

**Regional and rural communities deserve quality opportunities to pursue their dreams without the need to relocate.**

## Our History

CUC Far West officially opened in May 2018 as an affiliate of Country Universities Centre, with support from the NSW Government, Broken Hill Community Credit Union and Regional Development Australia Far West. In late 2018 we were successful in obtaining Federal funding to deepen our operations and engagement under the Regional University Centres program. Since opening, we have supported more than **350 Far West students** in their learning journeys, and we look forward to being part of the future of higher education for the Far West region.

## What We Do

Our Centre is a dedicated learning and study space where students can focus entirely on their studies. Students can connect with like-minded people and experience a campus-like environment while they study locally in the Far West. We are focused on assisting our students settle into study, improve their academic skills and to make sure they feel like they have the tools to succeed in their studies.

## Our Support

Regional and rural communities deserve quality opportunities to pursue their dreams without the need to relocate. Our mission is to provide regional people with the space and tools they need to create a vibrant and more prosperous future for themselves and their wider community.

We have created a dedicated learning and study space in Broken Hill that have been designed for regional people by regional people. Our students have free access to high-speed Internet, modern technology, and general academic support all delivered here at CUC Far West. Our students have the opportunity to build a network of like-minded fellow students and can take advantage of being part of a state-wide learning community.







**CUC Far West is a fantastic resource that can help you transition into study and navigate online learning.**

**Phoebe Kaye  
B.Education (K-6)  
University of New England**



# Our People

## Board of Directors

### **Michael Williams – Chair**

Michael is the inaugural Chair of Country Universities Centre Far West and led the development of the original submission to establish the Centre in Broken Hill. Michael is currently the CEO/Director of Regional Development with Regional Development Australia Far West and brings a strong knowledge of the not for profit sector and significant experience in regional development and corporate governance. Michael brings a variety of skills and expertise to the Board with a history in education and training and formal qualifications in Human Resources, Auditing, Education and Training and Work Health and Safety. Michael is passionate about education and providing opportunities for robust career pathways for young people in the region and previously gained significant experience as the Quality Teaching Consultant / Vocational Education Consultant for over ten years with the NSW Department of Education.

### **Duncan Taylor – Non Executive Director**

Duncan has a Bachelor of Economics and Law (Hons) from the University of Sydney. He currently sits on CQUniversity's Regional Engagement Committee and is a past member of the TAFE NSW Commission Board. He is a former President of the Isolated Children's Parents' Association of New South Wales and previously sat on the Rural and Remote Education Advisory Group that advises the NSW Government and NSW Department of Education on strategies to improve educational outcomes in rural and remote areas, and is a Committee Member of the Monaro Early Intervention Service.

### **Louise Hunt – Non Executive Director**

Louise is the General Manager of the Broken Hill Community Credit Union and brings to the Board a deep understanding of financial management and community engagement.

### **Dave Gallagher – Non Executive Director**

Dave is a career Police Officer and long standing Councillor with Broken Hill City Council. Dave is engaged with a number of community organisations, is the Chair of RDA Far West and brings strong community engagement to the team.

### **Peter Macbeth – Non Executive Director**

Peter is the current Director Educational Leadership Far West Principal Network with the NSW Department of Education and brings a strong history in education and leadership.



# Our People

## Our Team



### **Danielle Keenan – Centre Manager**

Danielle joined CUC Far West in November 2017, prior to the centre opening to the community. Danielle has extensive experience in the higher education sector, having worked for the USYD for almost nine years in education programs and student support. A born and bred local to the Far West region, Danielle is focused on the establishment of relevant teaching and support environments, the promotion of opportunities for students in the region and the delivery of successful training programs for current and future students investing in their education.



### **Lisa Turner – Learning Skills Advisor**

Lisa has been providing academic support to student's at CUC Far West since joining the team in 2018. Lisa also provides academic support to local students through CSU's Indigenous Academic Success Program. Born and raised in the Far West, Lisa is proud to bring home her teaching experience developed through work as a tutor and subject specialist at Studiosity. Lisa holds a B.Business and B.International Relations from UniSA, a B.Laws through SCU, and is currently studying a Graduate Diploma in Legal Practice through the University of Adelaide.



### **Sophie Weathersbee – Learning Skills Advisor**

In October 2019, Sophie took on a role at CUC Far West as Learning Skills Advisor, assisting students in developing the foundation skills required for higher education. She has also taken on an Academic Appointment through CQUni, providing local B.Education students, face to face teaching. Sophie has completed a Bachelor of Arts from UOW, a Masters of Secondary Teaching from the University of Newcastle and a Master of Counselling from Monash, with her final placement the last hurdle.



### **Sarah Rolton – Administration Assistant**

Sarah started working at CUC Far West in June of 2020. Born in Broken Hill, Sarah joins CUC Far West after working within the Community Services and Fitness Industries. Sarah is currently undertaking her B.Education Primary with CDU and is passionate about the educational opportunities now available in the local community.



# Our Partners

## Government & Community

**Central to the successful establishment of the CUC Far West is NSW Government and Commonwealth Government's establishment and operational funding, alongside the significant local corporate support, regional collaboration and individual commitment.**

**Regional Development Australia Far West and Broken Hill Community Credit Union have provided sponsorship, support and guidance in the establishment and operation of CUC Far West.**

### NSW Government

The NSW Government has backed the expansion of the successful CUC initiative with an \$8 million investment, which allows more regional and rural university students to study close to home. The NSW Government has provided CUC Far West with funding for the establishment and early operational assistance of the CUC as part of an affiliated network of CUC's across the state.

### The Australian Government

The Australian Government is investing \$24.2 million over four years to assist in the establishment and operation of 16 community-owned, regional study hubs at 23 sites across regional Australia. In November 2018, the Minister for Education announced that CUC Far West was a successful grant recipient of the Regional University Centre program, receiving support for ongoing operations until 2023.

### The Broken Hill Community Credit Union

The Broken Hill Community Credit Union is a community-owned financial institution that has been part of the Broken Hill landscape for 40 years. With total assets of approximately \$60 million, a strong liquidity position and an excellent capital base, Broken Hill Community Credit Union is a positive and co-operative community partner. The Broken Hill Community Credit Union provided the initial funds to undertake a significant refurbishment of the CUC Far West building including project management, construction and fit out. The Broken Hill Community Credit Union's contribution made the redevelopment of the Centre possible and they continue to provide ongoing support through reduced market rate rent, financial guidance and support.

### Regional Development Australia, Far West NSW

Regional Development Australia Far West (RDA Far West) led the development of steering groups, community consultation and funding application development during the concept and establishment phase. RDA Far West provide ongoing consultancy support and expertise to ensure the Centre develops strong governance systems and operational processes. RDA Far West is working with the Centre to develop a comprehensive Governance System and provide consultancy support as and when required.







**People living in a place like Broken Hill have to choose between leaving home to attend university education or forgoing a university education to search for employment in town or to stay with family. A CUC eliminates this barrier as a person who can choose to live with their family, find work locally, all while studying a tertiary level course.**

**Dylan Stone  
Juris Doctor  
RMIT**





# Our Partners

## Universities

### Central Queensland University

CUC Far West has offered tailored support for students studying a Bachelor of Education in partnership with CQUniversity across 2020. This has included utilising the skills of local teacher and CUCFW LSA Sophie Weathersbee to offer face-to-face support for students with weekly tutorials.

CQUniversity is a national educational institution with more than 40 years' experience in distance education. The collaboration, between CUC Far West and CQUniversity offering students greater support to meet their goals. Connecting students to online lectures with fellow classmates, facilitating face-to-face tutorials, assisting in enrolment, and ultimately, helping students them to achieve their career aspirations. Students engage in face-to-face tutorials, delivered by our qualified industry professional, and access study facilities seven days a week, including video conferencing technology.

### University of New England

University of New England (UNE) has 18,000 external students and is Australia's second largest online university. Online Study Australia rates UNE as Australia's best online university, providing exceptionally high course satisfaction rates and high graduate salaries.

The partnership is aimed at providing high-quality student and academic support for UNE students registered across the CUC network. The CUC team and UNE collaborated for a series of training sessions to develop a better understanding of how we can work together to support students, including meeting staff from a range of UNE projects. In Trimester 1, 2020, 21 UNE students registered with the CUC Far West. These and hopefully many more students will benefit from this agreement.

### Charles Sturt University

We are very excited to announce a new initiative between the CUC and Charles Sturt University (CSU) to support our regional nursing students to be successful in their studies. The CUC is now offering free specialised tutoring to students registered with the CUC who are studying Nursing with CSU.

One of our key goals is to enhance regional development by creating opportunities for locals to grow their own workforce. Health is one of the most studied fields for CUC students and graduates, and is an important source of employment for our regional and rural communities. This initiative brings together community, university and industry to build strong pathways for our regional communities. This new service will provide high quality content specialist assistance for students to overcome these challenges.

Support is offered to CSU B.Nursing and Graduate Diploma of Midwifery students who are registered with a CUC; CSU students completing a health-related subject which is a part of the nursing curriculum i.e. Paramedicine; CSU Postgraduate Nursing students are welcome to make contact for general support, content support will be speciality dependent.

# Our Partners

## Community

### Country Education Foundation

Country Universities Centre (CUC) is happy to announce a partnership with the Country Education Foundation (CEF). The organisations are united in their drive to empower rural and regional communities and support their youth who aspire to achieve further education after high school.

CUC and the CEF currently operate in several shared geographic areas, and with expansion front of mind for both organisations, a partnership is the perfect way to collaborate and grow.

By working together to increase access to education in rural and regional Australia, we hope to increase the aspirations and participation in further education by our country youth. This mission is now more important than ever on the back of severe drought, devastating bushfires and unprecedented challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic.

### Foundation for Rural Regional and Rural Renewal

The Foundation for Rural & Regional Renewal (FRRR) is a charitable foundation based on partnerships between philanthropy, community, government and business.

FRRR partners with CUC to assist in the fundraising for CUC as a charitable project in line with FRRR's purposes, through a Not-for-Profit Fundraising Account.

Donations made into the FRRR Public Fund towards the CUC project are tax deductible because of FRRR's tax status.

### Vincent Fairfax Family Foundation

The CUC awarded a grant from Vincent Fairfax Family Foundation. This funding has been used alongside local Centre funds to recruit Learning Skills Advisors to assist students in their studies.

We are enormously grateful to the VFFF and look forward to reporting how their contribution has positively impacted the lives of our students in the years ahead.





# Who Our Students Are

And What They Represent

**363**

students supported  
since opening

**212**

students  
supported  
in 2020

**53%**

are first in their  
family to study

**31**

different  
universities

**80%**  
female



**20%**  
male

**12%**

Aboriginal or  
Torres Strait  
Islander  
heritage



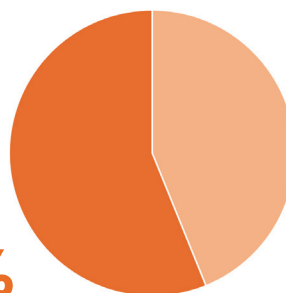
**68%**

students are over  
the age of 25



**57%**

study full time



**43%**

study full time

## Top areas of study:



Health 35%



Education 17%



Psychology, Social Work &  
Community Services 21%

# Our Students

## And their success



**Georgy Seward**  
Western Sydney University  
Bachelor of Natural Science

### Why did you choose your degree and what did you enjoy the most about it?

I chose my degree because of how much variety is involved. Epidemiology to Chemistry to Biology to Water Quality, It's a huge variety with so much to learn never boring. I love public health and learning about the impacts the natural and built environment can affect human health.

### How important is having the CUC in your local town to you and why?

Having CUC in Broken Hill has been so important throughout my degree, to have a designated area where I can go to study free from distractions, with the latest technology available has really helped me to complete my assignments and feel a part of a university. The CUC team are always so helpful whether to organise rooms and equipment or just be there to support you through the university journey.

### Where are you working now and what do you like about it? Is your career path what you originally intended?

I'm working at the local mine practicing in my field and I love it! Leaving school I wasn't sure what I wanted to do I knew I wanted to do something in public health but also have a hands on job. I started off completing a mechanical apprenticeship before taking the jump and enrolling in University and completely changing my career path! At the time it was terrifying but I am so glad I went for it now I'm almost finished University and working in the field that I love and want to be in forever.



Being a regional online student it can often feel isolating and daunting, having CUC there makes you feel like you are a part a university team with other regional on line students, it provides an environment where you can still have the university experience and the support network is just so helpful.



# Our Students

## And their success



**Luke Dart**  
University of New England  
Bachelor of Computer Science

### How important is having the CUC in your local town to you and why?

Studying a degree remotely had always seemed like a bridge too far. The absence of supporting services, technology, and specialists, along with a lack of visible role models who had been, or were going through, the same challenges I could expect to, made the concept seem out of reach. The presence of a local CUC addresses all of these issues. It provides a place I can be sure to have access to a stable, fast, reliable internet connection in order to sit online invigilated exams. The regular workshops provide the supporting services I would otherwise miss out on due to my location, and the centre is equipped with the technology students need but might not have access to in the home. The most important aspect of the CUC though, is the human one. The support offered by staff is invaluable, even to the most independent of students, for we're the ones who often don't realise we need to talk to someone until the conversation has already started. Whereas other students might actively seek out assistance, students like me need an environment where the supporting conversations occur naturally as part of everyday interactions. The other side to the human aspect of the CUC, is that all students inadvertently become role-models for one another, as well as students-to-be. When we as students can see others experiencing similar challenges to us, and not just overcoming them, but succeeding, it reaffirms that this isn't a bridge to far, and that we're not walking this road alone. The student community that has formed around the CUC is arguably the most powerful aspect of having a local CUC, and also the most significant community impact as a result.

### How has CUC Far West assisted you to achieve your academic goals?

The biggest challenge I have faced, and continue to face, is anxiety about online invigilated exams. The nature of online invigilated exams is such that a student risks failing their unit if their internet speed drops below a minimum threshold during the exam, or if they experience an interruption such as a delivery driver knocking on their door. The presence of a CUC gives me a space I know I can rely on to conform to exam conditions, while also providing access to an enterprise grade internet connection, something I rely on even after the switch over to NBN at home. Knowing I can sit my exams at the CUC enables me to focus my energy on preparing for my exams rather than worrying about what external factors could go against me on the day



The CUC Far West does an amazing job of providing a campus-like experience to students studying remotely across many different institutions. It's unlikely that I would have met, and engaged with as many local university students if not for the Centre. I find it hard to imagine what my off-campus student experience would be like without the CUC, but I know it wouldn't be as fulfilling.



# Learning Skills Advice

## Supporting Our Students to Succeed

The CUC Far West Learning Skills Advisor (LSA) program kicked off on in 2019. Early planning work included recruiting highly skilled team members who would be able to deliver support to our students. Australia's leading expert in supporting online university students Cathy Stone has supported the development and planning of the program. Across the first semester of 2020 we have focused on developing our team, building resources, and delivering face-to-face support for our students who are studying online. Two key methods for our LSA team to deliver support for our students are group workshops on general study skills and one-on-one tutoring sessions on individual study requirements. Assessment of student behaviour has shown demand for workshops on general skills at the beginning of the semester, and greater demand for one-on-one tutoring towards the end of the semester. The LSA teams across the network are supported through weekly team meetings, with opportunity to discuss successes and challenges through each week. Evaluation and remaining responsive to student feedback has also been a key focus, with evaluation and feedback mechanisms developed.

### One-on-one Consults

These sessions cover everything from small questions about study to feedback on assignments, study planning and more. CUC Far West conducted over 200 one on one consultations over 2020.

### Main Topics of Support

Main topics included settling students into study sessions, referencing, assignment planning, writing feedback and breaking down assignment questions.

### Workshops

CUC Far West designed and delivered a series of study skills workshops intended to give students all the skills they need to succeed in their studies. CUC Far West ran 25 group learning workshops from July 2019 until the end of Semester II 2020 with a total of 74 students in attendance. Due to COVID19, 3 workshops were provided through live virtual events, referencing, research skills and the power of sleep.

Workshop topics across 2019-2020 included:

- Getting started at Uni
- Referencing
- Time management and wellbeing
- Assignment writing
- Academic writing
- Study Hacks
- Shut up and Write
- Research Skills and Source Analysis



Danielle and Lisa give me so much confidence to complete my university course. They are always encouraging and helpful and I am so grateful to have this wonderful service in Broken Hill. Thankyou.



I just recently received marks back for my first two assignment and got two distinctions! One of them was only 1% away from a high distinction which is amazing to hear!



This is an excellent workshop for any student who is feeling overwhelmed with working and studying at the same time.

# High School Student Support Program 2020

Building Aspirations for Higher Education & Providing Support for Success in the HSC

Goal setting & motivation	What you need to know about university	How to approach your assignments	Time management & exam preparation
<p><b>Key activities</b> Discussion on what motivation is, where to find it, and how to keep it</p> <p>Discussion on goal setting</p> <p>The key to success – Lego Challenge</p> <p>How to identify and achieve goals</p> <p><b>Key objectives</b> Support students to set goals for the future and maintain motivation through the HSC</p> <p><b>Workshop evaluation</b> Did you find the information about goal setting and motivation helpful?</p> <p>85% positive response</p>	<p><b>Key activities</b> University Trivia used to establish understanding of:</p> <p>University admission processes including early entry and alternate pathways</p> <p>Managing admissions preferences</p> <p>Demystifying the ATAR</p> <p>Scholarships</p> <p><b>Key objectives</b> Deepen student knowledge of university processes, admissions, and pathways</p> <p><b>Workshop evaluation</b> Did you find the information about university helpful?</p> <p>96% positive response</p>	<p><b>Key activities</b> Discussion on what it means to understand assignment topics</p> <p>Identifying the benefits of assignment planning</p> <p>How to breakdown questions into direct, topic and focus words activity</p> <p>Generating ideas through mind mapping</p> <p><b>Key objectives</b> Assist students to develop skills in assignment planning and essay writing</p> <p><b>Workshop evaluation</b> Did you find the information about how to approach your assignment useful?</p> <p>83% positive response</p>	<p><b>Key activities</b> Discussion on time management strategies and the benefits on productivity &amp; wellbeing</p> <p>Time scheduling for study activity</p> <p>Memory and revision activities</p> <p>The important of practice exams (NESA) in managing expectations</p> <p><b>Key objectives</b> To develop student understanding of exam situations, preparation &amp; time management</p> <p><b>Workshop evaluation</b> Did you find the information about exam prep and time management useful?</p> <p>89% positive response</p>

What is one word to describe how you feel following this workshop?

great satisfied good awesome helpful inspired  
relaxed motivated educated  
informed prime knowledgeable and  
relieved helpful and useful  
very good



# CUC FAR WEST ALUMNI

**2019**

**Amanda Fox Andra**

**Kloczko Andrew**

**Schultz Breeanna**

**Visser Christine**

**Punch Dhyani**

**Carroll**

**Indiana Shamroze-  
Tumes**

**Jodie Guidolin Lisa**

**Turner Lindsay Ball**

**Martin Thrift Rachel**

**Harvey Taylor**

**Huxtable**

**2020**

**Brylee Callaghan**

**Claudia Jenkin**

**Hannah Schultz**

**Holly Howard**

**Jane Hynes**

**Jennifer Wellington**

**Karen Harding-Smith**

**Rahel Boon**

**Shelby McInerny**

**Lisa Turner**

**Georgie Seward**

**Dionne Devlin**

**Jenny Shroff**

**Sharon DeFranceschi**

**Emma Reeves**

**Teagan Hedrick**

**Paige Cuy**

**Rani Little**

**Shannon West**



# Bringing degrees closer to regional rural and remote Australia.



Australian Government  
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