



Country  
Universities  
Centre  
DEGREES CLOSER

2022

**ANNUAL  
REPORT**





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 wish to acknowledge that our Centre is located on Wilyakali Country. We pay our respects to the Traditional Custodians, the Wiliyakali and Barkindji people, and to their Elders past, present, and future.

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# Message from the Chair

## Michael Williams

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Country Universities Centre Far West's vision – To empower the people of Far West NSW by enabling increased access to higher education opportunities conveys our fundamental optimism and our role in supporting local people to achieve their goals.

Enabling and supporting local people to access higher education is not only critical for the sustainability of the region but also essential to the individual development of local people.

Supporting the aspirational development of our youngest and then creating pathways to enable them to achieve those aspirations is vital in ensuring the age-old advice we have provided our children “you can be whatever you want to be”.

Unfortunately, the data didn't demonstrate that for many regional people, with many regional Australians missing the opportunities to access higher education and the associated careers higher education leads to. Often through circumstances beyond their control, including limited local higher education study options, the financial, emotional, and social challenges associated with relocating to study, or any other factors.

The latest ABS data demonstrated a significant rise in local people accessing higher education pathways which is great for local people and fantastic for our local communities as we strive to meet the challenges of supporting the growing workforce needs of the region.

The Board are driven by the need to continue to meet the growing needs of our local communities and ensure local people have access to higher education, regardless of their location and personal circumstances. Ongoing development of our Governance framework, calculated decision making and collaborative strategic planning for the significant growth of the Centre has remained the focus of the Board over the past 12 months.

The operational team has again increased to meet the growing needs. The ongoing development of very successful outreach programs to engage local school students has been a significant highlight and a pleasure to be part of.



# Message from the Chair

**Michael Williams**

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CUC Far West continues to collaborate with local industry to support local workforce needs, investigate new opportunities for local students and support the sustainability of the Centre. The support of local businesses can not be understated, and the ongoing support from the Broken Hill Community Credit Union and Regional Development Australia Far West remain critical to the sustainability of the Centre. I encourage all industry sectors to think outside the square and investigate every opportunity to support local students to develop aspirations and achieve them.

Last year I described the year for students as relentless, exhausting and disruptive. For many students, the impact of COVID on their studies will be long lived, our current year 12 students undertook a significant portion of their HSC studies from their bedrooms, and as we all begin to learn to live with COVID, our students have demonstrated their capacity to overcome challenges, keep their goals in sight and strive to achieve the highest outcomes.

As the Centre continues to develop, diversify and grow to meet the needs of our communities, our CUC Far West team continue to flourish and demonstrate the initiative and commitment critical to success. As always, our greatest assets are our people, and I would like to recognise the incredible team that continues to strive for excellence, develop new strategies and display genuine care for every student that walks into the Centre. I offer my sincere gratitude to every team member, individually they are incredibly talented people, but collectively their dedication, resilience, passion and creativity are inspirational and the backbone of the success of the Centre.

CUC Far West has grown well beyond the expectations of any of us, but we will continue to serve the higher education needs of our communities and support the aspirational development of our youngest.

The year ahead brings many new challenges, the Board will remain focused on governance, strategic planning and seeking funding to support an expansion of the Centre, and our operational team will continue to develop, refine and deliver various programs to support every learner in Far West NSW.





**Heaven Celotto**  
Bachelor of History &  
Aercheology  
University of New England

# Centre Managers Report

Danielle Keenan

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CUC Far West celebrated its fourth year of operations and remained focused on its mission to increase aspirations and access to higher education. The CUC Far West team continues to be innovative and responsive to the needs of our student community. Despite the effects of Covid-19, the Centre has maintained a high level of registrations seen in the previous year's substantial growth. A strong performance indicator is the latest Census data, which suggests that over 80% of higher education students in our community were registered with CUC Far West in Semester II 2021.



Our commitment to meeting our students where they are in their learning journey is a vital component of supporting the diverse needs of our student cohort. Imperative to our ability to assist students in succeeding is the Learning Skills Advisor program. The program continues to demonstrate outstanding outcomes, evidently, our dedicated LSA team delivered 229 one-on-one sessions in Semester 1, 2022. Our students highly value the program. This is illuminated by the continuous anecdotes of success students share and the feedback provided in the Student Satisfaction Survey.

This year's key achievement has been enhancing our connection with the local school network and youth in the development and delivery of programs. Our youth programs focus on nurturing aspirations and providing exposure to the Far West's local workforce, emerging industries, and major employers. A primary focus has been to highlight the synergy between education and employment to support young people navigating post-school transitions.





# Our Story

The Country Universities Centre's origins were in the establishment of the Cooma Universities Centre in 2013, designed to provide improved supported higher educational opportunities in that town of approximately 7,000 people.

In 2017, the NSW Government invited the Cooma Universities Centre to develop a proposal to expand its model of higher educational support to further regions in NSW. By the end of 2019 eight Country Universities Centres had been established across NSW. Since then, the CUC has continued to expand with the support of the Australian Government's Regional University Centre Program and NSW Government. In 2022, the CUC network has grown to include 13 Centres across Queensland, New South Wales, and Victoria.

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 590 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**

CUC Far West is a dedicated learning and study space that supports any student, studying any course, at any Australian university. Students can connect with like-minded people and engage in a learning community while they study locally. We are focused on supporting the academic success of students and ensuring they have the tools to succeed in their higher education journey.

**Stephanie Warhurst**  
Bachelor of  
Paramedicine  
Charles Sturt University





# Partners

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Essential to the success of the CUC Far West has been the support of our partners, including the Commonwealth Government, NSW State Government, university partners, local government and community partners.

## Government and Community



### NSW Government

The NSW Government has supported the CUC through multiple funding grants exceeding \$16 million, which facilitated its successful expansion. The NSW Government's Higher Education Strategy focuses on increasing participation in higher education, CUC Far West is proud to assist the government to achieve this by supporting people in our region to pursue higher education in their local community.



### Foundation for Regional Rural and Renewal (FRRR)

The FRRR is supporting the CUC through its not-for-profit fundraising account.



**Australian Government**  
**Department of Education**

### The Australian Government

The Australian Government is investing more than \$74 million to assist in the establishment and operation of community-owned, Regional University Centres at sites across regional Australia. CUC Far West is a successful recipient of the Commonwealth's Regional University Centres Program and gratefully acknowledges the support received to date.



### Vincent Fairfax Family Foundation

CUC Far West acknowledges and thanks the Vincent Fairfax Family Foundation (VFFF) for its support. Funding has been used alongside local Centre funds to support our successful Learning Skills Advisor to support CUC students.



### Country Education Foundation

Country Education Foundation (CEF) and CUC collaborate to create and promote opportunities for regional students in areas of education, increasing aspirations, and community engagement.

# Partners

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Essential to the success of the CUC Far West has been the support of our partners, including the Commonwealth Government, university partners, local government and community partners.

## Government and Community



- **Regional Development Australia Far West**

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.



- **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





## University Partners

The CUC has formal partnerships with the following universities:

### University of New England (UNE)

As Australia's oldest provider of distance and online education, the expertise of UNE has been highly valued by the CUC. Sharing of knowledge between UNE Support Staff, CUC Centre Managers and LSAs has provided a valuable resource for CUC students and developed an enhanced understanding of the challenges online regional students face.

### CQUniversity

The CUC and CQUniversity have a shared mission in supporting regional students to succeed, irrespective of where they live. The university has been a close partner of the CUC since its establishment and continues to provide expertise and support to students across the CUC network.

### Charles Sturt University (CSU)

In a collaboration between industry, community and university, the CUC is offering content-specialised tutoring to assist CSU Bachelor of Nursing students registered with a CUC. The tutoring style is student-led, with students given the agency and flexibility to work with the tutor on the challenges they face in their personal learning. In 2022, CSU expanded their partnership with the CUC.

### University of Technology Sydney (UTS)

UTS have partnered with the CUC to develop the Regional Partnerships Project Pool Program (RPPPP). This program brings together 25 universities and 16 Regional University Centres to design tailored school outreach programmes for the local community.

### Federation University

This partnership provides the framework for future collaborations to share knowledge, expertise, and support students across the CUC network.

### University of Southern Queensland

The CUC and USQ have begun exploring ways to partner together to allow students to have broad access, choice, and flexibility in their higher education pursuits.

# CUC Far West Students

SEMESTER 1, 2022



**54%**

are the first in their family to study

**25**  different universities

**46%**  
study full time

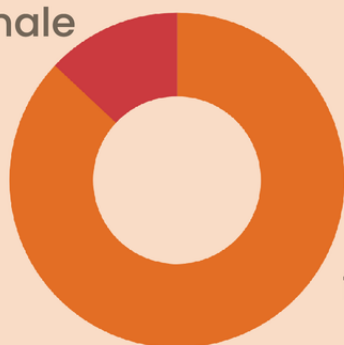


**54%**  
study part time

## TOP Areas of Study



**13%**  
male



**87%**  
female



**12.2%**  
Aboriginal and  
Torres Strait  
Islander heritage



# Student Support

## Here for our students

CUC students choose to study a diverse range of courses from over 40 different Australian universities. The CUC has responded to student needs and created an innovative model that can support any student, studying any course, at any Australian university.

The wrap-around model of student support provides face-to-face academic, wellbeing, technology, and administrative support in addition to what each student's university already provides.

These extra layers of support are crucial for many students who study with the CUC. Regional online students are often at greater risk of attrition. Many students are from low SES backgrounds, are the first in their family to attend university, or have caring and multiple other responsibilities. The CUC offers a free and welcoming place to study with flexible and personalised face-to-face support within a local learning community. This empowers students to enrol in the degree of their choice from any Australian university with the knowledge they will be supported locally.

The focus on face-to-face support provided by CUC staff is highly valued by students. In the 2022 Student Experience Survey, 92% of students indicated they are more likely to continue with their studies because of the help they received from the CUC, while 87% of CUC students experienced a sense of belonging to the CUC, and 99% of students found the staff to be very or extremely helpful.

”

I have not studied for over twenty years and my overall academic success along with feedback I received from lecturers for semester one, with support from the CUC staff, far surpassed my expectations.

”

I received an Executive Dean award from my university this semester, and have maintained a high GPA for 5 consecutive semesters, thanks to the support from CUC.

# Community Outreach Programs

## Building aspirations



### Discover Your Future

CUC Far West collaborated with local youth and industry to facilitate an interactive networking event. Local young people advocated for a program that facilitates connections with diverse professionals to learn about navigating careers and education pathways. Discover Your Future supports career education in high schools by providing industry-specific career insight to young people and facilitation of mentorship, benefiting both students and industry through grassroots connections. Approximately 150 students from years 10–12 from both local high schools engaged with industry-focused activities and discussions with over 30 professionals across 15 local organisations. Positively, almost 80% of students stated they had learned about new careers that they had not considered before, and 88% said they feel they have multiple career options to choose from once they finish school.

### Life Literacy High School Program

Life Literacy supports students in years 10–12 in developing skills and understanding to successfully navigate post-school transitions. We will provide contextually relevant strategies to students in the Far West, that are transferable across higher education, vocational training, and employment. Post-survey results suggest students found learning about multiple pathways to higher education most valuable.

### Future Me Program

The University of Wollongong, in partnership with CUC Far West, ran the UOW Year 12 Future Me Program. We provided HSC students with more than 20 hours of learning across both study and life skills under the guidance of In2Uni mentors. Participating students were supported through the Early Admissions process, and all 2022 participants received early offers to the University of Wollongong or UOW College Australia.



Discover Your Future  
Youth Advisory





# Discover Your Future

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Essential to the success of the Discover Your Future project was the engagement and participation of local organisations, industry and education providers in the Far West.

## Outreach Community Partners

Broken Hill High School

Willyama High School

Regional Development Australia Far West

Foundation Broken Hill

Royal Flying Doctor Service of South Eastern Section

Cobalt Blue

CBH Resources

Lifeline Broken Hill Country to Coast

Far West Community Legal Centre

Warra Warra Legal Service

Broken Hill University Department of Rural Health

TAFE NSW Broken Hill

Training Services NSW

West Darling Arts

Broken Hill City Council

Western Student Connections



# 2022 Year in Review

## A time for growth

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The past year seen CUC Far West continue its mission to empower regional & remote communities by enabling increased access to higher education opportunities. Two words come to mind when reflecting on 2022; growth and opportunity.

We entered the new year celebrating the graduation of our 2021 graduates; the festivities recognised the achievements of 16 local graduates and their efforts in completing their various degrees alongside family and peers. The student address was one of many highlights of the evening. CUC Far West graduate Cory Paulson remarked, "The staff are the reason CUC Far West is the best. They are always there to listen, give advice and lend a sympathetic ear. I am grateful for the support CUC has given. That enabled me to be the best student I could be!"

Further, the Student Experience Survey 2022 painted a very clear picture of the value of CUC Far West to our students. The survey indicated the importance of positive relationships between students and the CUC Far West team, built on trust and confidence.

Lastly, CUC Far West has expanded upon our high school and youth programs, adopting a community-centred approach to design and delivery. Partnering with industries and local business provides a real opportunity for youth and the community to build diverse aspirations. CUC Far West collaborated with local youth to facilitate an interactive networking event, 'Discover Your Future' in May 2022. Approximately 150 students from years 10-12 from both local high schools engaged with industry-focused activities and discussions with over 30 professionals across 15 local organisations.





# Highlights of 2022



## Discover Your Future

Increased youth exposure to education and career pathways

## Celebration of Graduation

16 of our students celebrated their graduation at our annual celebration

## Student Satisfaction

Annual survey revealed our students high level of satisfaction

## Census Data

Indicates CUC Far West had an increase in university students of 23% compared to a non-metropolitan NSW average increase of 5.4%





# Celebrating our Students

## Our greatest achievements



**Tabitha Schultz**  
**Bachelor of Health Science (Food & Nutrition)**  
**Charles Sturt University**

I chose to study Bachelor of Health Science (Food & Nutrition) at CSU to pursue my lifelong ambition to work in science and health. I love that I can structure learning around the rest of my life here, and the online tutorials with other students to allow for interactive learning. The CUC is why I took the risk to study again, knowing that I have the practical support, space, and facilities to focus on studying. It provides a buffer to the competing demands of life while providing a community of fellow students who can support, inspire and challenge me all through the year.



**Karren Howe**  
**Master in Business and Human Resource**  
**Australian Institute of Business**

The major hurdle is studying remotely and working a demanding full-time job whilst at the same time being part of a family. CUC provided me with the facilities to study away from my work and home life interruptions and assisted with tutoring as required. Without this unique facility and team members my studying journey would have been more difficult. CUC has created the opportunity for people of all ages and locations to study at university and to complete life long goals without having to leave your home.

**Danielle Minnis**  
Bachelor of Laws  
Southern Cross University





# Student Success

## Graduate Student Story



### Shelley Hollingworth

**Bachelor of Nursing  
Charles Darwin University**

I completed the Diploma of Nursing and really enjoyed studying so I decided to continue my journey. Working as an Endorsed Enrolled Nurse while studying Bachelor of Nursing I was able to apply the skills learnt and use within my scope of practice, it was great to broaden my knowledge. Now I have completed my degree more doors have opened and I'm very excited for the future. I already know my study days are not over!


Over the past two years I have utilised the Country Universities Centre very regularly. Having a quiet place where you can focus and have other like-minded people around you really helps as it can be very isolating studying online. Thankfully I was able to access our Far West Centre with the facilities required (printing, computers, high-speed internet). I was able to better use my time and obtain good grades due to the CUC facility.

Studying externally is hard but when you connect with others and a CUC facility you will never look back. Dan, Lisa & Sarah's support throughout my studies have made a positive impact on my journey and they want to see every student who walks through the door succeed.



# Community Engagement

Our community are our biggest supporters

A photograph of two kangaroos in a grassy field at sunset. The kangaroos are silhouetted against the warm, orange light of the setting sun. The background shows a hazy landscape with distant hills.

The Centre has engaged with local industry, schools, and organisations. The success of this Centre depends on the support from our local community.



## **Regional Development Far West – David Gallagher, APM, Chair**

CUC Far West epitomises what collaboration and a shared vision can achieve, jobs, aspiration, opportunities and support for local people. It's been a hugely rewarding experience for RDA Far West to be involved with a project driven by commitment and to be part of the growth from a concept to such outstanding success.



## **Broken Hill Community Credit Union – Louise Hunt, General Manager**

BHCCU Ltd is a proud corporate sponsor of the Country Universities Centre Far West. We recognise the challenges faced by remote communities and are proud to align ourselves with an organisation working hard to improve educational and workforce outcomes for our region.



## **NSW Education, Far West Principals Network – Peter Macbeth, Director Educational Leadership**

CUC Far West works closely with schools and other education providers to support the growth of a culture in our community that is built around the value that education can provide in supporting the goals and aspirations of our young people.

Alexandra Rosenblum  
Masters of Teaching  
Deakin University





# 2021 ALUMNI CUC FAR WEST

**Josie Andrews**

Bachelor of Human Services  
Charles Sturt University

**Shelby McInerney**

Bachelor of Education (Primary)  
University of Western Sydney

**Belinda Day**

Bachelor of Nursing  
University of South Australia

**Cory Paulson**

Bachelor of Health Science  
(Mental Health)  
Charles Sturt University

**Rachel Dowd**

Bachelor of Education (Early  
Childhood Teaching)  
University of New England

**Michelle Pearce**

Bachelor of Nursing  
University of South Australia

**Tegan Hinchey-Gerard**

Graduate Certificate in Business  
Public Sector Management  
Queensland University of Technology

**Kulai Reynolds**

Bachelor of Education (Primary)  
University of Western Sydney

**Shelley Hollingworth**

Bachelor of Nursing  
Charles Darwin University

**Christopher Rintoul**

Master of Teaching (Secondary)  
Charles Sturt University

**Karren Howe**

Master in Business and Human  
Resource  
Australian Institute of Business

**Connor Rogers**

Bachelor of Information  
Technology  
Flinders University

**Courtney Hurley**

Bachelor of Nursing  
Central Queensland University

**Sharryn Rouse**

Graduate Certificate in Domestic  
and Family Violence Practice  
Central Queensland University

**Leighton King**

Graduate Diploma in Medical  
Sonography  
University of South Australia

**Jazmin Tindale**

Graduate Certificate in Critical  
Care  
Australian College of Nursing





Bringing degrees closer  
to regional, rural and  
remote Australia.

COUNTRY UNIVERSITIES CENTRE  
Far West

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black  
AND  
deadly

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