

ANNUAL REPORT

2021



Country
Universities
Centre
BASS COAST

**“To provide our people
with access to
university education.”**



2021 Annual Report

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Message from the Chair

Martin Keogh

On behalf of the CUC Bass Coast Board I am pleased to present the 2020–21 Annual Report.

CUC Bass Coast was established on the back of extraordinary vision and the enormous efforts of individuals within Bass Coast Shire Council. Bass Coast Shire Council has established itself over time as a champion of education for the region, and the culmination of this work has seen the provision of a community facility that is already making a considerable difference to regional students of higher education.



Whilst CUC Bass Coast has been open to students since Semester One 2021, a board comprising of independent directors has been working alongside Bass Coast Shire Council officers, CUC Central and the Commonwealth Government since December 2019.

In order to comply with the obligations of the funding agreement, a company limited by guarantee was registered, which was required to be governed by an independent board of directors. It is my privilege to chair this board, which comprises people of extraordinary wisdom, experience, insight and energy. Over the course this reporting year, the board has established and implemented the appropriate mechanisms and tools of governance to ensure appropriate oversight.

Our board has a primary responsibility to ensure that CUC Bass Coast operates in a manner that will provide a sustainable, high quality educational facility that is accessible and available to students now and into the future.

In short, our goal is to *provide our people with access to university education.*

To do this, the CUC Bass Coast Board has identified four key pillars that we are strategically addressing: wellbeing, partnership, innovation and sustainability. The board looks forward to reporting our progress in these areas in the ensuing years.

We are very grateful to our key partners, particularly the Commonwealth Government, the Bass Coast Shire Council and CUC Central. The commitment of these partners to ensuring equity of access to higher education for regional and rural students has enabled the vision to become reality.

Finally, and in closing, I wish to recognise the outstanding efforts made by our Centre Manager, Andrea Evans-McCall. Andrea's passion for education and her advocacy for our students ensures that all those who come into our centre are supported to overcome any obstacles and barriers to their completion of studies. Andrea's work has been integral to the success of CUC Bass Coast in its first year. Alongside our Learning Skills Advisor Aiden Windle, Andrea certainly puts our students first.



Centre Manager's Report

Andrea Evans-McCall

In our first semester of operation, Country Universities Centre Bass Coast has registered 58 students from across our region. It is extremely exciting to see so many people in our local community pursuing higher education, bringing to life the Country Universities Centre Bass Coast mission to provide our people with access to university education.

The most significant benefit of distance education for regional students is the range of course options available at their doorstep. Undertaking distance education while registered at CUC Bass Coast means our students can maintain involvement in their local communities, part-time employment, and stay connected to their support networks.



At CUC, we provide the infrastructure to enable students to succeed while learning remotely, including high-speed internet, quiet study spaces, and local face-to-face support. Our student lounge offers a campus vibe and allows the students to build a network of like-minded fellow students creating a unique university experience.

Our semester one students were studying 43 unique degrees through 16 Institutions. With health being the most prominent subject area. Students join us at different stages, levels, and modes of study. We have had four students graduate with the following degrees:

- Bachelor of Civil Engineering (Honours), Deakin University
- Masters of Wound Care, Monash University
- Bachelor of Human Services, Charles Sturt University

- Graduate Certificate in Terrorism & Security Studies, Charles Sturt University

All four students are employed in the region, with one planning on enrolling in a Master's degree in 2022.

As a passionate educator, I am incredibly proud and privileged to be in the Centre Manager's role at CUC Bass Coast. Since commencing the role, it has been hectic, challenging and gratifying. Our students are exceptional; they have displayed such resilience, adapting, and remaining positive in these extreme circumstances we are all currently living under.

I want to thank the CUC Bass Coast Board of Directors, Martin Keogh, Danny Luna, Ali Wastie, Jan Child, Gea Lovell, Susan Davies and Donald Paproth. They have led the Centre through the COVID pandemic, balancing the needs of students and the health and safety of staff and our students. I value their support, and I have benefited from their generosity to share their expertise and leadership.



Andrea Evans-McCall
Centre Manager



Our Story

Our History

The Country Universities Centre Bass Coast began as a grassroots community-led project. It was first conceptualised by the Bass Coast Higher Education and Steering Committee, formed in 2017, and was also identified as part of the Council's Community Engagement to develop their Council Plan 2017-21.

Following this, Council adopted its Advocacy Strategy 2018-21 and Advocacy Priorities – Tertiary education investment is listed as a priority:

- The Centre would deliver courses in mixed mode, providing a blend of online curriculum, resources, and activities with face-to-face tutorials, laboratories, and workshops. Where relevant, practical placements would be organised through local organisations and industry. Alternatively, all online courses offered by partnering providers could be completed at the Centre by distance with support through the Centre's staff and services.
- The Bass Coast community has limited access to higher education and skills training. Bass Coast also experiences a shortfall in skilled workers.
- Bass Coast students are less likely to complete year 12, less likely to go to university and less likely to complete a degree they start at university. Many of the obstacles are related to the need to relocate to pursue further studies.
- Providing a local education pathway could improve retention and participation and support students at risk or poor learning outcomes reach their potential and stay in education for better life opportunities.
- Council established an internal working group.

The Steering Committee adopted the Terms of Reference on 5 February 2018. This Committee included representatives from Bass Coast Community Foundation, Bass Coast Shire Council, Destination Phillip Island, Newhaven College, Department of Education and Training, Federation University, Regional

Development Victoria, Bass Coast Health, Watersure, and Country Universities Centre.

- August 2018 – Bass Coast Shire Council CEO and Manager Advocacy and Engagement visit Cooma to meet with Board and CEO of CUC and Federal Regional Study Hubs Program Manager
- October 2018– A Tertiary Education Roundtable was held. The roundtable session was attended by state government departments, local and regional education providers, post-secondary students, community and business advocates and critical employers. At this roundtable, the idea of Regional Study Hub to service our community was discussed and endorsed. Following this roundtable, Council led a workshop with local youth and recent school leavers named, Advocacy forum with young people for access to tertiary education
 - Topic – what are some of the barriers for young people?
 - Participants – young people, the Mayor/Deputy Mayor; local member of State Government; Youth advocates, students, LLEN and local media.
 - Incorporate objectives of Youth Action Plan
- November 2018 – Council adoption of MoU between Council and CUC. Council endorsement of the Memorandum of Understanding between Country Universities Centre and Bass Coast Shire Council to develop a business case to establish a tertiary regional study hub in Bass Coast.
- June 2019 – Council – led another workshop with youth service providers.
- June 2019 – Council Delegation to Canberra – Advocacy to Federal Government Ministers and Departments regarding Regional University Centre in Bass Coast.
- 31 October 2019 – First Country Universities Centre Bass Coast Board Meeting – Initial Directors established.
- November 2019 – Mayor and Officers attended Regional Study Hubs Symposium NSW.

- December 2019 – CUC BC (supported by Council) applies for Regional Universities Centres Grant.
- June 2020 – Notification of successful application.
- October 2020 to March 2021 – Refurbishment of former Council offices building for CUC Bass Coast Centre.
- March 2021 – Launch of the Country Universities Centre Bass Coast.

What we do

CUC Bass Coast is a dedicated learning and study space where students can focus entirely on their studies. Students can connect with like-minded people and engage in a learning community while they study locally in the Bass Coast. We are focused on assisting students settle into study, improve their academic skills and ensure they have the tools to succeed in their higher education journey.



Partners

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

Government and Community

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 Bass Coast is a successful recipient of the Commonwealth's Regional University Centres Program and gratefully acknowledges the support received to date.



Australian Government
**Department of Education,
Skills and Employment**

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.



Foundation for Regional Rural and Renewal (FRRR)

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



FRRR
Foundation for Rural
Regional Renewal

University Partners

The CUC has formal partnerships with the following universities to support current students studying at the CUC:

CQUniversity

The CUC and CQUniversity have a shared mission in supporting regional students to succeed, irrespective of where they live, with the university providing place-based focused support for Bachelor of Education students who study at the CUC.

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.

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.

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 (USQ)

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.

Other Partners

Bass Coast Shire Council

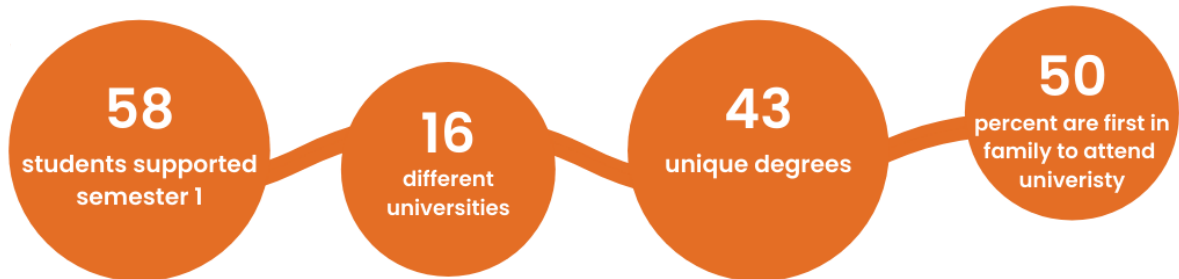
The BCSC conceptualised and brought the vision of a CUC Bass Coast to life and continues to provide in-kind support to the Centre.



CUC Students

CUC Bass Coast Fact Sheet

Semester 1, 2021



Top Area of Study



Health **43%**

57%
students are over
the age of 25



74%
female



26%
male

63%
study
part time



37%
study
full time

Student Support

CUC Bass Coast provides wraparound support for any student who is studying online or in blended modes at any Australian university and compliments the support that each student's university already offers. This support includes access to a local learning community, in addition to well-being, technology, administrative and academic support.

In addition to being regional, many CUC students are often their first-in-family to attend university, are non-school leavers, have had a break from education, are balancing fulltime work with study, have caring responsibilities, or a combination of these factors. These factors influence every student differently and can combine to create unique challenges for each student to succeed in higher education. To support these students, the CUC 'meets students where they are' and delivers face-to-face support that is tailored to the needs of each individual student.

The focus on face-to-face support provided by CUC staff is highly valued by Students. In the 2021 Student Experience Survey, 92% of students indicated they are more likely to continue with their studies as a result 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 am more productive. I get done in three hours while at the Centre what would have taken me five hours at home."



"Less distractions than home and a stimulating environment makes me more productive."

2021 Year in Review

CUC Bass Coast Official Opening

We are very grateful for the fantastic support from various Bass Coast organisations and the significant effort by many people to make the Country Universities Centre Bass Coast a reality. We proudly celebrated the official opening on March 26th, 2021. The event was headlined by several guests, including the federal Member for Monash, Russell Broadbent, and Bass Coast Shire Council Mayor, Cr Brett Tessari, who joined the local CUC Board and community members to celebrate the opening of the Centre.

Mr Broadbent said that the newly opened Centre would give local students unprecedented facilities and support, which will play a crucial part in enabling students to succeed in higher education.

“State of the art facilities like the CUC places Bass Coast amongst the most preferable regional locations around the nation to both live and work,” Mr Broadbent said.

Cr Brett Tessari said that the establishment of the Bass Coast CUC in Wonthaggi is wonderful news for the local community.



“Council has been involved in this project since its inception, so it is great to see the Centre up and running,” Cr Tessari said.

“Having this Centre in Wonthaggi will open up some amazing opportunities for students across Bass Coast and surrounding areas. It is a game changer for the whole region,” Cr Tessari concluded.

The Chair of CUC Bass Coast, Martin Keogh, said the opening of CUC Bass Coast is a major milestone for the community of Bass Coast and beyond. It is the culmination of community investment and the work of many stakeholders.

“The official opening provided an opportunity to acknowledge the support of the Federal Government and the leadership shown by Bass Coast Shire Council. Working alongside CUC Central, CUC Bass Coast looks forward to contributing to reducing the gap in higher educational opportunities for regional students,” Mr Keogh said.

Student Engagement

Since we opened our doors to students on the 5th of March 2021, there has been continuing student registration growth. Our growing number of registered students benefit from our friendly and supportive environment, access to modern technology, and the facilities from 5 am to 12 pm seven days a week.

One of the biggest challenges that online students face is the lack of visible support and feeling isolated. It is particularly challenging for first-year students who are unfamiliar with university technology, terminology, and expectations. We have started implementing student engagement strategies for students to get connected and build their capacity. One example is Table Talk Monday, a series of lunches with a community member joining conversation across the table each week. These activities are aimed to engage all students individually and collectively, empowering students as partners in their education. The overarching idea is that achieving success is a shared responsibility.

Celebrating our Students



Our students have displayed incredible resilience under extremely trying conditions.

Break-out room two in our Centre was turned into an online prep classroom. As a CUC Bass coast student, Sherridan negotiated the changing context of teaching and learning in the 21st century while undertaking a placement at a metro Melbourne school where the students were in lockdown. This activity counted towards her mandatory work placement hours for her Bachelor of Education (Early Childhood and Primary) at the Swinburne University of Technology.

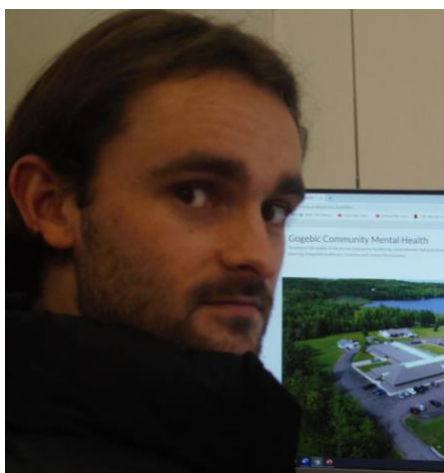


You just need to look at Uni from the right angle.

Bonnie is first in her family to study for a degree. After school Bonnie trained as a baker and in her mid-twenties, she enrolled to do a Bachelor of Business (Marketing and Management) at Federation University. Bonnie has studied mainly online due to Covid and realised is self-disciplined in her remote learning. With the support and help available at CUC she has now enrolled in her 2nd year. CUC has provided Bonnie with a place to study as she juggles work and uni placements and study. She has appreciated the support provided by the CUC staff.

Student Success

Graduate Student Story



Taj McEntee

Bachelor of Civil Engineering (Honours)
Deakin University

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

I chose Civil Engineering due to the amount of work available in the field, in Australia and abroad. I enjoyed the connections, with like-minded people, I made through my degree.

Were there any specific challenges that you faced as an online regional student and did the CUC help you to overcome these?

The lack of support from other classmates when I moved online was challenging. I couldn't go to uni and study with my friends, which made it hard to motivate myself at home. The Centre fixed my lack of motivation.

Are you still living in a regional town and what do you love about it?

I still live in the Bass Coast. I love how quiet it is, I may move to the city but I love being by the ocean.

Where are you working now and what do you like about it?

I am currently working for the local water authority, never had a select career path and not sure where I will end up. I am currently happy with my career and job.



"I would not have been able to complete my thesis without the Centre. It gave me the ability to step away from my home desk and find somewhere dedicated to studying. It provided a great environment to focus on my degree."

Community Engagement



At CUC Bass Coast, we aim to drive regional education change by empowering regional communities to fulfil their potential through higher education. It is predicted that Australia will need around 49,000 early childhood educators by 2023. That means we will need an extra 29,000 qualified early childhood educators.

In response to this skills shortage, CUC Bass Coast hosted an Early Childhood Education information session with presenters from Federation University Australia, Chisholm Institute, Bass Coast Adult Learning and Bass Coast Shire Council. Participants learnt about University and TAFE study options, pathways from previous study or work experience, and heard from those currently working in the sector.

In partnership with South Gippsland Bass Coast Local Learning and Employment Network (LLEN), CUC Bass Coast has developed an interactive careers pathways session. This session aims to raise aspirations while supporting year ten students to explore careers pathways and higher education options.

Bringing degrees closer
to regional, rural and
remote Australia.

Proudly supported by



Australian Government
Department of Education,
Skills and Employment



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