



Country
Universities
Centre
BASS COAST

2022

ANNUAL
REPORT



A wide-angle photograph of a coastal scene. In the foreground, there is a sandy beach with some sparse vegetation and a small, dark, rocky outcrop. The ocean is visible with gentle waves breaking onto the shore. The sky is filled with soft, white clouds, and the overall lighting suggests a calm, overcast day.

Provide our people with access to
university education

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

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Message from the Chair

Martin Keogh

The changes forced upon communities during the COVID lockdowns provided an extraordinary opportunity to revisit how we interact, work and socialise. Whether the community was a workplace, a service provider, an educational site or one of many clubs that enable like-minded and interested people to interact, our traditional ways of being were challenged.

Coming out of this time most of us experienced a combination of traditional approaches to interacting along with some of the practices that were introduced during the pandemic. Flexible work arrangements have been maintained, remote meetings are more broadly accepted and other efficiencies have been found.



Whilst the pandemic was at first a disruption to the Country Universities Centre Bass Coast, we have benefited from the opportunities recognised during the pandemic. Disruption to how students accessed higher education accelerated the acceptance of the CUC Bass Coast as a genuine partner and supporter of higher education.

CUC Bass Coast forms part of a bigger picture in the Bass Coast and South Gippsland region. It plays an important role in delivering post-secondary higher education that will prepare graduates to contribute and succeed in the modern workplace and contribute to the ongoing development and success of our broader community. One of the strengths of the Regional University Centre program is that students attending university can continue to contribute to their community without needing to leave. The CUC also provides a social outlet to students, who otherwise would be isolated as they undertake remote university courses.

The Board of Directors of the Country Universities Centre Bass Coast continue to work to sustain the opportunity that the CUC provides our community. We acknowledge the great support of our partners, the Commonwealth Government, the Bass Coast Shire Council and CUC Central. We are also indebted to our Centre Manager, Andrea Evans-McCall, for her tireless work and her commitment to our students, along with our staff.

As we progress it will be important to continue to identify and challenge the traditional ways of operating that limit the opportunities of country students to access higher education and to progress their knowledge through career opportunities within their community. This is a challenge for the broader education sector, all governments and industry.

We look forward to the support of our entire community as we work to reduce the barriers to higher education for all members of our community.

Centre Managers Report

Andrea Evans-McCall

Since CUC BC opened its doors in March 2021, the pandemic has dominated our lives. COVID again disrupted university delivery in semester two, 2021. Universities were forced to close campuses, cancel face-to-face classes and transition to online-based teaching and examinations. Sixteen of our registered students had no choice but to return home from campus. This circumstance impacted our student age distribution data, with our largest student cohort being those under twenty-five.



This cohort moved from 24 students at the end of semester one 2021 to 31 after semester two 2021. It was wonderful to support these students at our Centre. Many of them had parents and siblings undertaking work or remote learning from home. Our Centre provided them access to technology, high-speed internet, and a quiet place to concentrate on their studies. As we adapt to a new normal, I am delighted to say that our Centre has been abuzz as we have provided face-to-face social interaction to support our students in navigating student connection, a vital element to succeeding in distance education.

Our Centre is constantly evolving as an innovative educational setting, that allows our registered students to remain engaged in education while their well-being needs are supported. A notable achievement for us at CUC Bass Coast has been implementing the Learning Skills Advisor Program, offering students face-to-face support with academic skills development. This program aims to give students the resources and tools needed to thrive in their studies and has been met with a fantastic student response. At the beginning of Semester two, 2021, we appointed Dr Aidan Windle as our Learning Skills Advisor. At the beginning of Semester one 2022, we expanded our team further as we welcomed Sibby Wilson. Sibby is our Centre Support Officer – her role is to support the staff and students at CUC BC.

I feel very privileged to lead our team as we build a reputation as a high-quality local learning community in the Bass Coast and South Gippsland local government areas of Victoria. Our success and reputation have been shaped by the standard of our promotional campaigns and the high level of enthusiasm and perspectives applied by our team to create an academic community within the fantastic physical space that CUC BC provides our students. I want to acknowledge our Board for their commitment to CUC BC and their ongoing support and belief in my leadership.



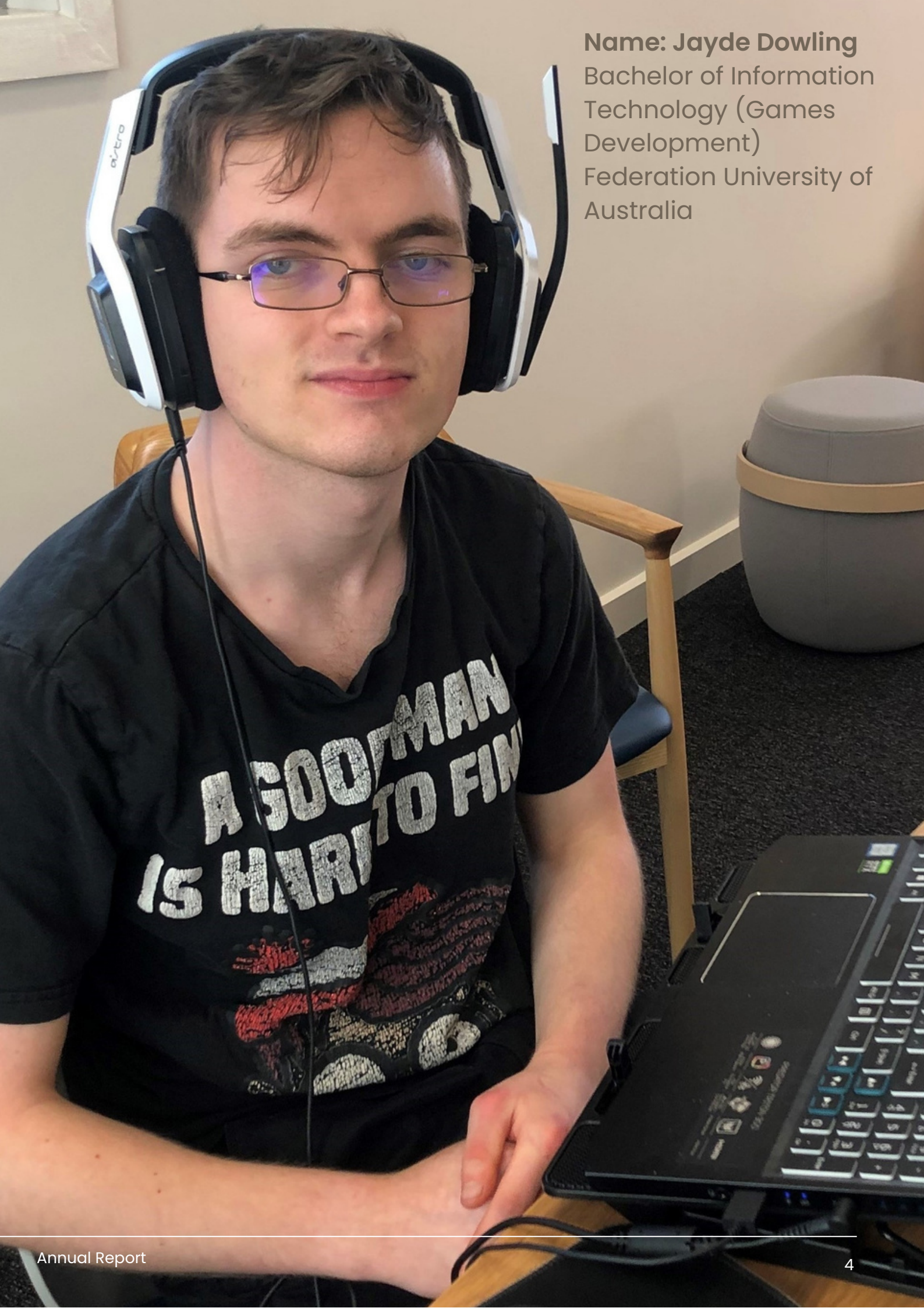
Our Story

The Country Universities Centres' 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. 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.

The Country Universities Centre Bass Coast began as a grassroots community-led project. It was first conceptualised by the Bass Coast Higher Education Steering Committee, formed in 2017, and was a priority in Bass Coast Shire Council Plan 2017–21. In December 2019, an application for a Regional Universities Centres Grant was submitted, and in June 2020, it was announced that the application was successful. The country University Centre Bass Coast opened in March 2021.

CUC Bass Coast has demonstrated good growth in student registrations in the last twelve months. We have built a digital-friendly approach to our brand identity. We want our brand to be associated with quality student support and alumni success. Our posts that feature student profiles and quotes get excellent social media engagement. Word-of-mouth marketing is powerful, and at CUC BC we work hard at creating a student support experience worthy of being passed from person to person. Our students provide recommendations that empower others in the community to engage with our Centre; word of mouth is the most frequent reason students seek registration at CUC BC.

We are committed to supporting the learning journeys of all our registered students to impact student retention data. This year CUC BC has introduced a Student Ambassador program. We are excited to have Meg, Heidi and Trish representing our Centre as our student ambassadors. As ambassadors, they support new students settling into study and speak at various events and functions. They help organise student events, programs, and initiatives. They will also represent CUC BC at official functions and share their experience, knowledge, and insights on Regional University Centres and regional education with our community.



Name: Jayde Dowling
Bachelor of Information
Technology (Games
Development)
Federation University of
Australia

Partners

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

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



- **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.



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 Bass Coast Students

SEMESTER 1, 2022



52%

are the first in their family to study

26



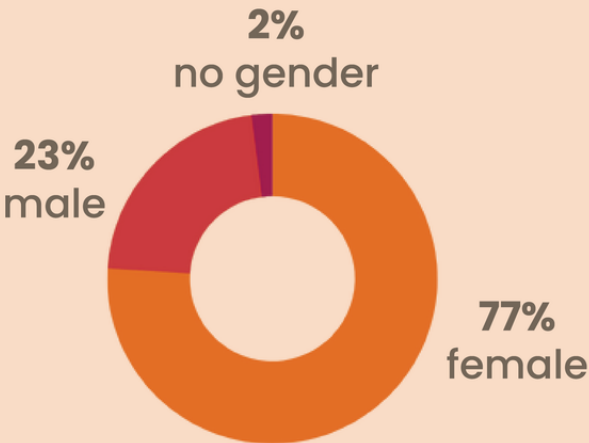
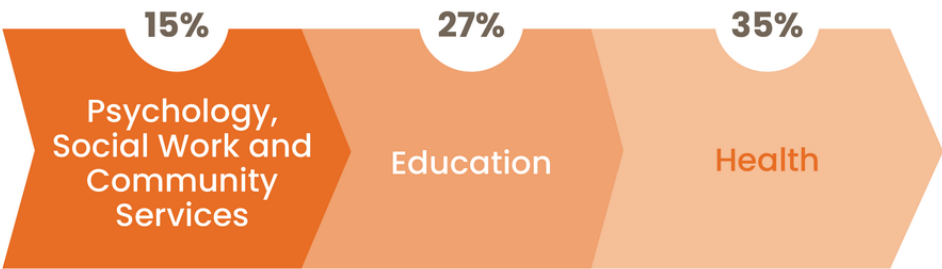
different universities

52% study full time



48% study part time

TOP Areas of Study



Student Age Cohorts



Under 25	31%
25 – 34	33%
35 – 44	34%
45 – 54	12%

Student Support

Here for our students

We are proud to support university aspirations in our region; 52% of our registered students in semester one of 2022 were the first in their families to attend university.

CUC Bass Coast provides wraparound support for any student studying online or in blended modes at any Australian university and complements the support that each student's university already offers. With the appointment of our Learning Skills Advisor (LSA) from mid-semester 2021, our LSA program has provided our students face-to-face support with academic skills development. The LSA program aims to give students the resources and tools to thrive in their studies. The program has included one-on-one learning skills sessions and workshops covering various topics.

At CUC Bass Coast, our student well-being is essential as research indicates student well-being and academic success are intertwined. A vital element to succeeding in distance education is the opportunity for social interaction. During semester one 2022, we invited our students to a series of Lunch & Connect events in our student lounge. These events supported our students in navigating student connections.

During the academic year, we have run Wellness Wednesday at our Centre. Our students are invited to join our Centre Manager Andrea at the Centre at 9 am each Wednesday for a 20-minute walk around town, picking up a coffee on the return trail. We also set up five-minute creative activities in our student lounge to promote mini breaks to refocus and relax as part of our Wellness Wednesday.

CUC Bass Coast is immensely proud to have supported our 2021-22 graduates. Despite the pandemic and the associated challenges, these students have completed their course of study through La Trobe, Monash, Federation, Charles Sturt, Deakin, or Victoria universities. Their areas of study undertaken were health, psychology, social work, design, and education.

”

Visiting CUC Bass Coast prior to enrolling gave me the confidence to study online. Because I felt assured by the facilities available to me.

”

Dual monitors, reliable Wi-Fi, academic support, and heating! All close to my home and away from my kids!

Name: Kerry McLean
Master of Teaching (Primary)
Deakin University



Name: Eva Lazzaro
Juris Doctor
RMIT University



Highlights

Happy Birthday

Celebrating CUC Bass Coast's 1st birthday by reflecting on what education aspiration means to our community.

162 Students

At the end of semester one, we celebrated having supported 162 students since we opened in March 2021.

LSA Program

Implementing the L.S.A program, providing students face-to-face academic support.

Graduates

We have supported 12 students to graduate since opening.

Celebrating our Students

Our greatest achievements



Name: Patrisha Tayler
Masters of Teaching Secondary
Victoria University

Patrisha is a proud mum of three daughters, has always dreamed of being a teacher. Despite an extremely challenging financial situation, Patrisha refused to let anything stop her from graduating with a Bachelor of Education Studies from Victoria University at the end of 2021. Fuelled by a desire to pursue a career as a Home Economics Teacher, in Semester one 2022, Patrisha enrolled in a Master of Teaching Secondary. Patrisha has been rewarded for her resilience and academic dedication by being announced as the 2022 recipient of the Woman Graduate Victoria E.D. Daniel Education – Masters Scholarship. Receiving this generous scholarship will reduce financial obstacles and allow Patrisha to focus on her studies and realise her academic goals. Patrisha was formally presented with the scholarship at an awards ceremony via Zoom on Saturday, June 18, 2022. The ceremony allowed her to share her success with her family and support network and acknowledge the scholarship donor.



Name: Sophie Thorn
Bachelor of Psychological Sciences
Swinburne University of Technology

Sophie received a Letter of Commendation from the Senior Deputy Vice-Chancellor & Chief Academic from Swinburne University of Technology. The letter recognised her dedication to study, congratulating her on her Distinction and High Distinction grades that placed her among Swinburne's top students for teaching period 3, 2021. This letter is a testament to Sophie's hard work and resilience during a year that brought unprecedented challenges due to COVID.



Name: John Taylor
Bachelor of Education
(Primary)
Curtin University

Student Success

Graduate Student Story



Name: Matthew Hiriart

**Master of Professional Psychology
Deakin University**

Why did you choose your degree?

After having a gap year working in a pub in London at 32, I realised I had a passion for mentoring. I completed a Certificate IV in youth work. I had an awesome teacher who said, Matt, you are good enough to do a bachelor. No one had ever told me that before. In 2016 I returned to study, enrolling in a bachelor's degree, and then Master of Professional Psychology at Deakin University.



**The support the
Centre staff provided
was invaluable, the
Learning Skills
Advisor
accountability buddy
program was great,
just knowing that
someone was on this
journey with me kept
me motivated.**

**How important has having CUC Bass Coast
been to your studies?**

The academic community that CUC Bass Coast provides meant more to me than the fantastic physical space. The support the Centre staff provided was invaluable, the Learning Skills Advisor accountability buddy program was great, just knowing that someone was on this journey with me kept me motivated.

**What advice would you give to other regional
and rural people who are considering higher
education?**

My message to others wishing to return to study is to scaffold their learning. Set yourself up for success by not biting off more than you can chew. It is essential to reach out for support, ask for help, and create networks. Basic admin and organisational skills are critical to managing your conflicting schedules

Community Engagement

Our community are our biggest supporters



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

At CUC Bass Coast, we work towards identifying and promoting opportunities to foster collaboration between Industry, schools, community, and universities to nurture higher education participation and localised career opportunities. We have developed and undertaken a range of aspiration-raising and career exposure activities to influence the future academic behaviour of Bass Coast and South Gippsland communities.

In late November 2021, we were delighted to be back in schools supporting students to explore post-school education options. In partnership with the South Gippsland Bass Coast Local Learning & Employment Network (LLEN), we delivered Exploring Careers sessions with year ten students at Mirboo North and Leongatha Secondary Colleges. Our Centre Manager (CM) was honoured to be the M.C at two LLEN Inspiring Young People (IYP) events for Leongatha and Mirboo North secondary college students. The IYP events support young people in making important decisions about their future career pathways by bringing them together with professionals from the local community. The professionals shared their experiences, pathways, and ambitions with students over lunch.

In May this year, our team visited Newhaven College and Bass Coast College to share the message with the year 12 students that you do not need to relocate to undertake university studies; you can learn right here in your town in the Bass Coast or South Gippsland at our Country Universities Centre.

ALUMNI

CUC BASS COAST

Name: Emma Ward

Bachelor of Applied Science &
Master of Speech Pathology
La Trobe University

Name: Hannah McFadden

Bachelor of Nursing
Federation University

Name: Jade Ray-Angarane

Bachelor of Social Work
Victoria University

Name: Kirby Ireland

Bachelor of Nursing
Federation University

Name: Laura McGuirk

Bachelor of Nursing
Federation University

Name: Matthew Hiriart

Master of Professional
Psychology
Deakin University

Name: Patrisha Tayler

Bachelor of Education Studies
Victoria University

Name: Emma Carlisle

Bachelor of Psychology
Monash University

Name: Hannah Alexander

Master of Teaching (Primary)
Deakin University

Name: Izaak McCall

Bachelor of Design
(Architecture)
Deakin University

Name: Emilie Masi

Masters of Wound
Management
Monash University

Name: Stephanie Hrvatin

Bachelor of Design
Monash University

Bringing degrees closer to regional, rural and remote Australia.

COUNTRY UNIVERSITIES CENTRE
Bass Coast

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