



Country  
Universities  
Centre  
BASS COAST

20  
23

ANNUAL REPORT





## **PROVIDE OUR PEOPLE WITH ACCESS TO UNIVERSITY EDUCATION**

We wish to acknowledge that 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

I am delighted to present this Chair Report to acknowledge the accomplishments of CUC Bass Coast as we endeavour to evolve into a pivotal educational institution within the Bass Coast Shire.



Our unwavering commitment to establishing ourselves as a cornerstone of higher education within the Bass Coast Shire is evident through the consistent enrolment numbers, which bear testament to the value we provide to our community. We remain steadfast in our dedication to enhancing our educational offerings, aligning them more closely with the aspirations of those who choose to embark on higher education journeys in our region.

It is imperative to recognise the pivotal role that our Centre Manager, Ms. Andrea Evans-McCall, has played in charting the course of growth and development at CUC Bass Coast. Andrea's visionary leadership, relentless dedication, and tireless efforts have been instrumental in firmly establishing our institution as a beacon of educational opportunity within our region.

We extend our sincere gratitude to our partners, including the Bass Coast Shire Council, the Commonwealth Department of Education, and CUC Central, for their unwavering support, which has been integral to our continuous progress. We eagerly anticipate the continuation of our collaborative endeavours to advance education within the Bass Coast Shire.

In addition, I wish to express my heartfelt appreciation to my fellow directors for their unwavering dedication and substantial contributions to the sustained growth and vibrancy of CUC Bass Coast. The insights and commitment that they bring to our mission have been invaluable.

In conclusion, I take pride in the significant milestones we have achieved and the positive impact we continue to generate within our community. With the steadfast support of our partners, the dedication of our exceptional staff, and the shared vision of our board and stakeholders, I hold the utmost confidence that CUC Bass Coast will further solidify its position as a preeminent educational institution within our region.



# CENTRE MANAGER'S REPORT

**ANDREA  
EVANS-  
MCCALL**

**I am delighted to reflect on the significant achievements and progress that our Centre has witnessed in 2023.**



One of the standout accomplishments of this year has been the funding and launch of the Eastern Australia Regional University Centre Partnership Consortium project. This milestone initiative, funded by the Federal Government- Regional Partnerships Project Pool Program (RPPPP), brings together schools, regional university centres, universities, community organisations, and industry partners. Through place-based partnerships, the project seeks to increase access to higher education and foster regional growth. Bass Coast is one of 21 communities actively engaged across the three states, each crafting unique interventions tailored to their communities' specific needs. This approach reflects our commitment to working closely with our local community to make a real impact with the potential to revolutionise access to higher education, providing transformative opportunities for learners. Thanks to the funding received for the EARUCP project, we have been able to welcome a dedicated outreach officer to our team. Rebecca Prowd will play a pivotal role in building connections, fostering collaboration, and ensuring the successful implementation of our community-based initiatives.

One of the proudest moments in my life was being announced as a Churchill Fellow recipient 2020. After a 25 month wait at the end of October 2022, I took off on my Churchill Fellowship. My project was to experience innovative programs that develop employability skills for people with a disability in inclusive learning environments in community and educational settings. My travels encompassed Canada, the USA, Finland, and the UK for six weeks. I was able to network and observe strategies, tools and methods being delivered internationally in authentic, fully integrated learning environments. I am very grateful for this amazing learning opportunity and have begun implanting and sharing my learnings.

Our core mission is to provide our people with access to university education remains at the heart of what we do. We are thrilled to report that since we opened, we have supported **260** regional students in their pursuit of higher education. Furthermore, **38 students** have successfully graduated, marking a significant milestone in their lives, and reinforcing the impact of our initiatives. This year, we proudly celebrated our 2nd birthday, marking two years of growth, learning, and progress. Our journey has been shaped by the dedication of our Board, staff, students, and partners who have contributed to the success of CUC Bass Coast. I am incredibly grateful for the support that has enabled CUC Bass Coast to become a Centre of higher education excellence and opportunity.





# OUR STORY

## OUR HISTORY

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.

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 Universities Centre Bass Coast opened in March 2021.

## WHAT WE DO

CUC Bass Coast 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 our students and ensuring they have the tools to succeed in their higher education journey.



**Michael Reda**  
Bachelor of Nursing  
Federation University of Australia





# PARTNERSHIPS

## GOVERNMENT AND COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

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

### 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.

### FOUNDATION FOR REGIONAL RURAL AND RENEWAL (FRRR)

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

### BASS COAST SHIRE COUNCIL

CUC Bass Coast is proud to acknowledge its strong partnership with Bass Coast Shire Council, which continues to provide invaluable support for our mission and initiatives.

### BASS COAST HEALTH

CUC Bass Coast partners with Bass Coast Health and Federation University (Berwick) to support local nurses in their training, and provide a clear pathway to local employment.



# PARTNERSHIPS

## UNIVERSITY PARTNERSHIPS

**The CUC has formal partnerships with the following universities:**

- **UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY SYDNEY (UTS)**

UTS have partnered with the CUC to develop the Regional Partnerships Project Pool Program (RPPPP). This program brings together 19 universities and 16 Regional University Centres to design tailored school outreach programmes for the local community.

- **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.

- **CQ UNIVERSITY**

The CUC and CQ University 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 works with CSU to provide connections between students and the university.

- **FEDERATION UNIVERSITY**

CUC BC In collaboration with Federation University Australia (Berwick campus) and Bass Coast Health (BCH), this program offers local residents in the Bass Coast community the chance to pursue a Bachelor of Nursing degree. It also creates a well-defined pathway to local employment within the healthcare sector, fostering educational and professional opportunities within the region.



# STUDENT SNAPSHOT

## SEMESTER 1, 2023



**46%**  
are the first in  
their family  
to study



**8%**  
disclosed a  
disability



**36**  
UNIVERSITIES  
& NUHEPS

**45%**  
study  
full  
time



**55%**  
study  
part  
time

## TOP AREAS OF STUDY

**40%**

Health

**23%**

Education

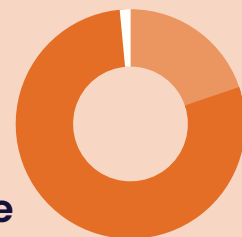
**13%**

Psychology,  
Social Work &  
Community  
Services

**20** different  
areas of  
study

**1% non-binary**

**81%**  
female



**18%**  
male

”

*After my one-on-one learning skills advisor session, I had an improved mindset towards my study.*

”

*CUC BC is a quiet, social and lovely space to study in, away from my noisy and messy family.*

# 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.

In 2023, we have implemented various strategies to build student engagement with our Learning Skills Advisor program. Our micro-student success initiative has shown to be an excellent approach to engage students and give them opportunities to grow their skills and sense of community by taking part in social events with our learning community. These bite-sized chunks of skill-building are tailored to the busy student. The 30-minute-a-month short and concise structure makes it easy for students to fit it into their busy schedules. They maximise their learning potential by developing academic skill capability and resourcefulness to manage life, study, and career development.





**Paige Smith**  
Bachelor of Education (Primary)  
Swinburne Online



**Alex Charlton**  
Bachelor of Biomedical Science  
Australian Catholic University



# CENTRE HIGHLIGHTS

## AN EXCEPTIONAL YEAR

CUC BC is constantly evolving as an innovative educational setting that allows our registered students to stay engaged in their studies. At the same time, their well-being and academic requirements are met. The past year was particularly significant as CUC BC finished the 2022 academic year with 22 of our registered students completing their course work and graduating, marking an important milestone in their careers and setting the tone for the organisation's commitment to shaping successful careers.

We proudly present our highlights from academic milestones that underscore our commitment to fostering excellence in education, to holistic approaches that prioritise the well-being of our students, and the far-reaching partnerships that amplify our impact.

### HIGHLIGHT 1

The energy in our Centre is buzzing. At the start of semester one, we had 46 new students settle into their study routines. Given our region's health workforce skill shortage, it's fantastic that 21 of the new student registrations are pursuing a Bachelor of Nursing, bringing our Centre total to 27.

### HIGHLIGHT 2

CUC BC is collaborating with Bass Coast Health (BCH) and Federation University Australia to help local nurses complete their training right here in Wonthaggi. Providing a clear path to reducing local employment shortages.

### HIGHLIGHT 3

To maximise our collective impact and support widening participation, while including cohorts in our community that typically face barriers, CUC BC and South Gippsland Bass Coast LLEN are working together to create a network model that will serve as a foundation for research into how stakeholders in our region can collaborate and coordinate student-centric partnerships.

### HIGHLIGHT 4

We were thrilled to host the Regional University Centres Network new Centre Managers Boot Camp! This two-day event was designed with insightful sessions, interactive workshops, and networking opportunities to empower and equip new Centre Managers with the knowledge and skills they need to make a lasting impact in their communities.



# CELEBRATING OUR STUDENTS

The partnership between CUC BC and Bass Coast Health is a shining example of successful education–industry collaboration. This collaboration has created a seamless path for undergraduate students to progress to graduate programs and for Bass Coast health professionals to access masters programs. This strategic approach provides a dynamic local response to the ongoing dilemma of healthcare skills shortages.

## **Tina O'Leary and Kirsten Hockett**

### **Bachelor of Nursing**

*Federation University*

Tina and Kristin have been given an incredible experience in the spirit of cultivating global perspectives and broadening horizons. Their acceptance into the highly anticipated 2024 Federation University Indonesia Public Health Study Tour marks a pivotal chapter in their academic pursuits. This dynamic project was meticulously crafted to grant undergraduate Nursing students an immersive encounter with health promotion activities in the unique context of developing nations. The tour's focal point dissects the intricate influences shaping health and well-being within resource-constrained environments, by exploring various facets, from healthcare settings to health-seeking behaviours, social determinants, risk factor distribution, and cultural intricacies. We applaud Tina and Kristin for their participation, and we remain excited to share the profound impacts of their experiences, echoing the ethos of global engagement.



## **Gabrielle Dixon**

### **Masters of Wound Care**

*Monash University*

Gabrielle is a dedicated and versatile employee at Bass Coast Health, and her story embodies the value of lifelong learning. A narrative of the commitment to learning and professional growth of a student whose career was elevated by this commitment.

Holding roles as both a compassionate district nurse and a valuable member of the Learning and Development team, Gabrielle's desire to enhance her expertise led her to CUC Bass Coast where she is undertaking a master's degree in Wound Care. This deliberate choice to upskill was a testament to her commitment not only to her own professional growth but also to providing the best possible care to her patients. The ability to undertake her learning online and access our Centre resources has provided the ideal platform for her to delve deep into the intricacies of wound care management. As a result of her dedication to academic excellence and the practical application of her knowledge, Gabrielle has been promoted. She is currently employed as a wound care consultant by Bass Coast Health, a position that not only recognises her expertise but also serves as an example of the crucial role that education plays in career success.



# CELEBRATING OUR STUDENTS

The presence of PH.D students at our Centre fosters an environment of mentorship and collaboration. Their experience and insights can guide fellow students, fostering a dynamic exchange of ideas and promoting interdisciplinary thinking. PH.D students embody the pinnacle of academic pursuit, setting high aspirations and showcasing the tangible results of dedication and hard work.

**Mary Clare Relihan**  
**Doctor of Philosophy**  
*Monash University*

A former primary school teacher, Mary-Clare's PhD studies focus on mentoring and coaching in initial teacher education. In particular, she is exploring the impact of this role on school based mentors as they work to support and mentor pre-service teachers during their placements in their classrooms. She is hoping her research will shed some light on how universities and schools can better support mentors in their growth and development by examining the training and professional development – or the lack of – that is currently available. In doing so, she hopes to raise the profile of these school based mentors by acknowledging the huge emotional labour and the emotional intelligence required as these mentors support and train the next generation of teachers. For Mary-Clare, access to CUC has been a huge lifeline, allowing her to continue her research after moving to regional Gippsland at the end of 2022. Being part of an educational community like CUC has helped her to build a social network and have a sense of connection and community with other students, something that a lot of PhD students struggle to find.



**Rees Quilford**  
**Doctor of Philosophy**  
*RMIT University*

Engaging with the everyday historical forces that shape post-colonial Australian localities, Rees's PhD involves project-based creative research that examines experimental storytelling practices. Deliberately focused on a local and personally significant place – the Bass Coast area – it investigates the complex, intimate and sometimes fraught associations that exist between people, place, history and archives. The project has involved Rees developing a suite of speculative place-based stories that explore how to do history creatively and respectfully, but also why do it. As a regular user of the Bass Coast CUC facilities over the past two years, Rees has found studying there provides structure for his research as well as interaction with a local peer and support network. "Doing a PhD is a long and largely self-directed journey so having access to a dedicated and comfortable place to study is enormously helpful. Andrea, Sibby and Bec have provided amazing support for my study journey."





**Greg Eddy**

Graduate Certificate of  
Secondary Mathematics  
Deakin University





## GRADUATE STUDENT STORY

**LAUREN PENDLINGTON**

**Bachelor of  
Psychological Science**  
*Charles Darwin University*



Neither of my parents finished high school. My two younger brothers and I did not finish high school. I never imagined any of us would go to university. There was just never any influence in the family to do so. Instead of studying, we all went straight into the workforce. I think for myself that this was a good thing. I had no idea what I wanted to do long-term, and working and gaining life experience helped me figure out the career path I wanted to take. From the first time I considered going to university it took me two years to fully commit and to take the leap and enrol. I think if I'd had family members who had gone to university it might have been easier for me to make that choice and get started! Being first in family meant I didn't have anyone who could fully relate to the decision I was making to study, or to empathise with me and understand what it was like to undertake university level study. I think being first in family, I felt like I had something to prove which made me work harder.

Without CUC, my academic journey would have been much more difficult. I attend the centre to do my exams online. This was extremely crucial to me because my exams were usually in the evening when the house is chaotic with my daughter's evening routine. Being able to go somewhere to undertake these exams without having to worry about a tiny child barging in at any time was invaluable to me. During my university study, I did not step foot on my university campus, and rely heavily on online groups to connect with other students. Having CUC has meant I've been able to meet other students in person and have meaningful interactions.

Completing my degree with a 6.1/7 GPA is my most proud achievement. Graduating and getting my degree in person made me feel like all the effort I'd put in over the last few years was finally paying off! This year I am completing Psychological Science Honours. I cried happy tears when I received an offer email. My aim is to be accepted into a Psychology Masters program for next year, to continue studying to become a registered psychologist and then to work locally both in the hospital and private clinic settings, and also in public health policy and research.





# COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

## NURTURING HIGHER EDUCATION PARTICIPATION

We firmly believe that aspirations are not just dreams of the future, but rather the vital connection between the present and the future. With this vision in mind, we continuously strive to create multi-sectoral partnerships that foster collaboration between industry, schools, community, and universities.

One of the recent events that exemplify our mission is the “Speed Career Conversations” event, held in partnership with South Gippsland Bass Coast LLEN, YES Youth Hub, and Maxima. This remarkable event brings together year nine students from the Bass Coast College and volunteers from various professions. After the inaugural event last year, “Speed Career Conversations” has become an annual event on the Bass Coast College calendar. The objective was to provide these young minds with a deeper understanding of the world of work and introduce them to a wide range of career options.

During the event, students were organised into groups, and volunteers rotated around the room, engaging in 10-minute conversations with each group. The students were equipped with thoughtfully crafted questions, curated by young people themselves, to guide them in exploring the unique job and career journeys of each volunteer. This event was an incredible success, as it not only exposed the students to diverse career paths but also broadened their horizons and encouraged them to dream big. By fostering meaningful interactions between young minds and professionals, we aimed to instil in our region’s young people the confidence and ambition to pursue their aspirations fearlessly.



# 2023 ALUMNI

## CUC BASS COAST

**ANNA KALLSTROM**  
**Master of Teaching**  
**(Primary and Secondary)**  
*Deakin University*

**ANDREW SCHMUTTER**  
**Bachelor of Education**  
**(Technology and Applied Studies)**  
*Charles Sturt University*

**MAHLEE O'DONNELL**  
**Master of Wound Care**  
*Monash University*

**LEANNE EAMES**  
**Master of Family and**  
**Systemic Therapy**  
*Australian Catholic University*

**CASSY ANAGNOSTOU**  
**Bachelor of Nursing**  
*Federation University*

**DANIEL BAKER**  
**Graduate Diploma in**  
**Clinical Education**  
*Flinders University*

**WILLIAM CRINALL**  
**Master of Business Administration**  
**(Experimental Learning)**  
*Federation University*

**OLIVIA HOWELL**  
**Bachelor of Nursing**  
*Federation University*

**ELLA HUGHES**  
**Bachelor of Psychology**  
*Deakin University*

**TARA PRYOR**  
**Bachelor of Nursing**  
*Federation University*

**EMMA WILSON**  
**Bachelor of Education (Primary)**  
*Swinburn University of Technology*

**MICHAEL HANSON**  
**Chisholm Institute**  
**Certificate IV in Training**  
**and Assessment**





# 2023 ALUMNI

## CUC BASS COAST

**RORY WOOD-INGRAM**

**Graduate Certificate of  
Secondary Mathematics**  
*Deakin University*

**ALISHA GILLILAND**

**Master of Business Administration  
(Experimental Learning)**  
*Federation University*

**ELLA MORCOM**

**Bachelor of Nursing**  
*Federation University*

**JOHN CUTTRISS**

**Certificate IV in Youth  
and Family Intervention**  
*Australian College on Community  
Service and Care*

**MICHELLE BARNES**

**Certificate in Education**  
*Federation University*

**LAUREN PENDLINGTON**

**Bachelor of Psychological Science**  
*Charles Darwin University*

**BELINDA MATTHEWS**

**Master of Advanced  
Clinical Nursing**  
*Monash University*

**LETICIA LAING**

**Graduate Diploma in Legal Practice**  
*Leo Cussen Institute*

**TAYLOR FORREST**

**Bachelor of Early  
Childhood Education**  
*Deakin University*

**ERIN DE SANTIS**

**Bachelor of  
International Business**  
*Monash University*

**CLARE WILSON**

**Graduate Certificate in Social  
and Community Services**  
*Federation University*

**TRAVIS BLACKNEY**

**Bachelor of Psychology  
(Honours)**  
*Monash University*

**KATE LINDSAY**

**Master of Advanced  
Clinical Nursing**  
*Monash University*





**Christina Lomagno**  
Graduate Certificate in Specialist  
Teaching (Literacy)  
Federation University



The  
**CUC** **BASS**  
**COAST**  
team



Sibby Wilson

Rebecca Prowd

Andrea Evans-McCall

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