

# ANNUAL REPORT

2021



Country  
Universities  
Centre  
SNOWY MONARO

**Providing quality  
service and facilities  
to students studying  
at university.**



# 2021 Annual Report

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# Message from the Chair

## Carolyn Ewart

Another year of unexpected challenges!

It is with great pleasure that I present my Chair's Report for 2021.

Our Centre has achieved great success amid the uncertainty of COVID-19 as the idea of; 'lockdown' became a part of our everyday lives. At CUC Snowy Monaro (CUCSM) students are always at the centre of our approach. With clear direction and responses, the student's welfare and maintaining engagement was our priority. Monitoring students with check in calls from our Learning Skills Advisor (LSA), support with enrolments, continuing to provide our learning support programs under covid rules, maintaining a sense of belonging and providing opportunities to succeed, were our focus.



Thanks to the Vincent Fairfax Foundation funding, we were able to continue to employ our LSA, Dr Viveka Hocking. The value and growing benefits of an LSA have been documented this year through the evidence compiled from the student survey, which revealed academic and personal success for student outcomes. Our LSA created a wonderful learning environment; support with a collaborative approach to student success and in providing a space in which students can grow in confidence to exceed their own expectations and along with our Centre Manager, Nadine Holland, the working combination of these two has proved to be a winning formula. In response, the Board has increased LSA hours to continue demand for services as students take up the opportunities this program provides.



The results continue to support evidence that demonstrate the enormous value CUCSM provides within our regional community.

- 95.8% agreed or strongly agreed that they felt by using the CUCSM helped to improve their academic results.
- 91.5% agreed or strongly agreed that they are more likely to continue with their studies as a result of the help received at CUCSM.
- 93.5% agreed or strongly agreed felt that they have been able to better focus on their studies due to the support and facilities of the CUCSM

A student comment taken from the survey –

*“After working with the LSA I started getting my first HD level marks for assignments. This I worked on producing higher quality work for all assessments for the whole semester and got two high distinctions. First time I got HD's! I was lucky enough to be selected to an accelerated program for my final semester so after this I had one week off and then went straight into my final semester. Which I finished a couple of weeks ago and found out this week that I got a distinction. So, I've finished my degree six months earlier than I had anticipated. I know how lucky I have been to have CUC Snowy Monaro to support this journey. I feel that a lot of my success is underpinned by the foundation of support they gave me. Plus, the friendships and community feel of the centre made it a fun place to go to each day to study. The centre manager does an awesome job creating and fostering the positive environment in the Centre.”*

The students brought to light the need to update some of the furnishings and to provide more break away areas. We are addressing their requests with new chairs purchased and a fabulous new break-away multi-purpose space – ‘the pod’ for one-on-one time with our LSA, exams and provision for individual student requirements was also installed in the centre. This would have not been possible without our Manager applying for a Stronger Communities Program Round 6) grant with success. CUCSM wish to thank Kristy McBain and her team for their foresight in recognising the value of regional study hubs and the positive impact this grant provides for CUCSM and the community.

Other big happenings at CUCSM in 2021:

- Uni4life –run in conjunction with UC. This program attracted a National award for regional and remote education programs at any level
- Received a wonderful grant – Kirsty McBain the pod for working with the LSA

- Nursing program – 8 high school students from Jindabyne Central School, St Patrick's Parish School and Monaro High School. Duration was over a couple of months combining online and a 2 week intensive (delivered at CUCSM)
- 138 registrations in Semester One – the highest ever
- LSA program – academics anonymous, shut-up and write, individual learning support, study feasts and academics anonymous.

The body of work achieved by CUC Central to support the growth and development of our centres is phenomenal and invaluable. CUC Snowy Monaro would like to congratulate and thank the CUC Central team for continually working with us to ensure the best possible outcomes are achieved for our students.

Most importantly I wish to thank the Board – Gabrielle Curtin, Iain Elliot, Mayor Peter Beer, Darren Davis, Frances Robinson and Duncan Taylor for their support, continual vision in growing our centre and faith in me.

Thank you to our wonderful Manager, Nadine Holland for her continued agility, always putting our students first and highly effective running of the centre. Thank you to our LSA Viveka Hocking as she continues to make a difference in the lives of our students.

I would also like to extend thanks to the Central board members as well.

As an inaugural board member for CUC Snowy Monaro, it has been my privilege to be a part of the growth and evolution of the CUC family as we continue to fill the educational space for regional, rural, and remote learning now positioned across the East coast of Australia. With vision and foresight by the then local council, Snowy Hydro Limited and local business, the foundation has been built for our future and continued growth in this educational realm. We thank Snowy Hydro Limited and the Snowy Monaro Regional Council for their continued investment in regional tertiary education and the community.

I am looking forward to 2022 as CUCSM continues to grow and flourish, albeit against a backdrop of our new world.

**Carolyn Ewart**  
Chair, CUC Snowy Monaro

## Nadine Holland



In years to come we will all look back on 2021 and be amazed by what was achieved during such a challenging year. The pandemic could not stop us from being innovative and flexible when supporting future and current students and even earned us the prestigious Australian Rural Education Award for the Uni4Life School Holiday Program. This new Program was developed in partnership with University of Canberra and engages school aged children to think about their future education and careers while their parents are completing intensive study.

Semester One, 2021 saw the highest ever number of registered students using the Centre. This unusually high number of students was attributed to CUC

Snowy Monaro's ability to provide a COVID safe study space for normally campus-based university students to complete their studies online. Whenever permitted, the Centre remained open and creative solutions were found to meet our students' needs.

We are privileged to have the very skilled and knowledgeable, Dr Viveka Hocking as our Learning Skills Advisor at CUC Snowy Monaro. Viveka's approach to student needs has resulted in many students reporting higher assessment results and less anxious assessment preparation. Viveka is also responsible for developing a sociable atmosphere where students engage in activities and learning experiences together.

This year CUCSM also engaged the support of Student Ambassadors. Daniel, Denise, Kellie and Bob volunteered to assist with promoting the Centre, settling new students into their study and well-being support. They are all fun, approachable and flexible and I look forward to developing this Program further in 2022.

To conclude, I thought I would share a student story that I believe represents why we do what we do. Earlier this year, Emily Griffin graduated from Charles Sturt University with a Bachelor of Ecological Agricultural Systems. During the eight and a half years she needed to complete this study, Emily has also had two children, been a foster mum, had a marriage breakdown, lost her Dad, fostered kittens for RSPCA and spent many hours working as a volunteer with Landcare and WaterWatch.

Upon finishing her final assessment, Emily burst into tears of happiness and relief. Emily is now employed fulltime with the Snowy Monaro Regional Council.



**Nadine Holland**  
Centre Manager



CUC Snowy Monaro Student Ambassador

## Daniel Shirvington

The CUC has become a home away from home for many of our students. The dedicated study area and the friendly face of our Learning Skills Advisor have been an integral part of their tertiary experience. The last two years have been unprecedented times for everyone due to COVID-19. Building connections with fellow students and staff was vital to surviving the lockdown experience. We connected during lockdowns for Zoom catchups and mental health check-ins and focussed on things other than COVID such as gardening and Podcast recommendations.

During lockdowns when the Centre continued to operate, the staff ensured that the CUC was COVID safe. Restrictions on attendee numbers, mask and vaccine mandates were all well communicated to all students. With the booking system employed to control numbers, students who were completing end of semester exams were given preference to the study spaces. An additional aid of click and collect printing was made available during this time.

Our Learning Skills Advisor, Viveka, banded together a group of students to develop a series of bite sized exam preparation videos. These were posted out to students via our Facebook student group. Throughout the year, student workshops were provided on topics including time management, assignment development and academic writing. Online Learning Support, especially during lockdown, offered both academic and student wellbeing support.

In a year of uncertainty, the CUC was still able to achieve great outcomes for its students. The UNI4Life School Holiday Program run in the school holidays was a great success. Students were able to bring their children into the centre where they were kept engaged with meaningful activities from the University of Canberra ASPIRE team. This allowed the parents valuable time to connect and participate in the writing program hosted by our Learning Skills Advisor in conjunction with the CUC Student Ambassadors. Mental health awareness was very big on the agenda at Snowy Monaro CUC. R U OK? Day this year occurred in the middle of a lockdown, so students were emailed tips on how to cope along with a Kit Kat to reward people for taking mental health breaks, this initiative was facilitated by our Centre Manager Nadine and Student Ambassador Daniel. In addition to CUC's ongoing support of mental health and wellbeing, our Student Ambassadors and several other CUC students completed the Mental Health First Aid Course to give them the tools to have mental health conversations with fellow students, friends and family.



### What students would like to see in the future:

There are so many things that make the CUC great for students. Our Student Ambassadors are constantly evaluating the needs of our student community and have thoughtful ideas for future development and growth at the CUC. Redevelopment and re-evaluation of learning spaces ensures that the CUC can meet the learning needs of a diverse array of students. Our Ambassadors are advocating for a revitalization of the outdoor space and to repurpose it as both a learning space and a communal gathering area. Some students have also indicated that a quiet reading area elsewhere in the CUC would be a space that could support their learning needs in a different way.

Now that the threat of Covid is subsiding we need to make connections once more within the Centre. We want students to come together and celebrate what makes the Centre great. One way to celebrate student success is to create a Hall of Fame Alumni Board where we collate photos and list achievements of our students. Another way is through graduation events and social gatherings that are now back on the agenda; which provide wonderful opportunities to bring our best and brightest together to celebrate their achievements.

# Our Story

## Our History

In 2013, Snowy Hydro Ltd and Cooma Monaro Shire Council (as it was then known as) along with key community members, jointly funded the establishment of the Cooma Universities Centre. In 2014, Snowy Hydro gifted the Centre to the Cooma community, and the Cooma Universities Centre became a charitable, incorporated, not-for-profit organisation run by a community Board of Directors. The Centre operated for five years without any government funding with Snowy Hydro Ltd and the Snowy Monaro Shire Council continuing their support. In 2017, we changed our name to “CUC Snowy Monaro” to become the first affiliate of the Country Universities Centre. 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 300 Snowy Monaro students in their learning journeys, and we look forward to being part of the future of higher education for the region.

## What we do

CUC Snowy Monaro 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 Snowy Monaro here. 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 Snowy Monaro 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 Snowy Monaro 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 Snowy Monaro 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.



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

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



### Snowy Monaro Regional Council

Snowy Monaro Regional Council continue their support by providing the amazing facilities we use.

### Snowy Hydro Pty. Ltd.

Snowy Hydro continue their support by providing invaluable funding to support the ongoing costs associated with running the Centre in the Snowy Monaro.



# 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**

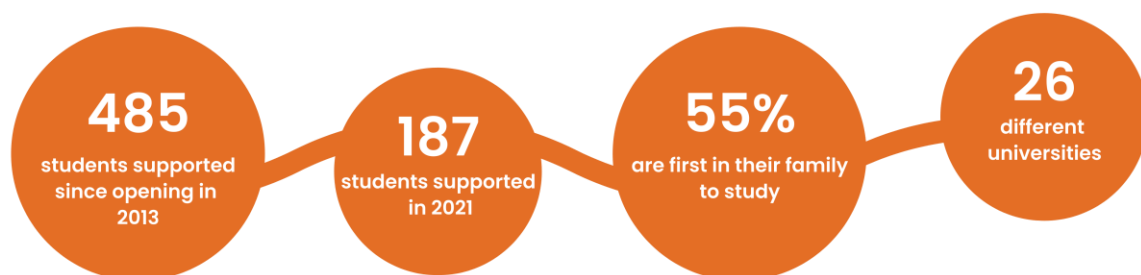
This partnership provides the framework for future collaborations to share knowledge, expertise, and support students across the CUC network.

## **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.

# CUC Snowy Monaro Fact Sheet

## 2021



**80%**  
female



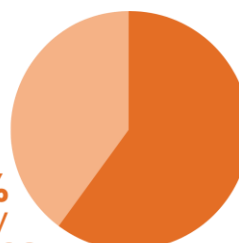
**20%**  
male

**60%**  
students are over  
the age of 25



**2%**  
Aboriginal and  
Torres Strait  
Islander heritage

**35%**  
study  
part time



**65%**  
study  
full time

## Top Areas of Study



Health **18%**



Education **23%**



Psychology, Social Work &  
Community Service **13%**

# Student Support

CUC Snowy Monaro provides wrap around 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.



Viveka is invaluable, she is so approachable and was so helpful. She really tries to work around my work hours because I couldn't find a good time to get away from work to see her.



Cooma CUC provides a supportive environment and the group activities are helping to make it a fun place too. I have really noticed how the group activities have contributed to developing and fostering friendships amongst the students.

# 2021 Year in Review

## Australian Catholic University Step-Up Program – Nursing

In January, 2021, eight local high school students completed the two week intensive Australian Catholic University (ACU) Step Up Nursing block. Upon successful completion of this Program, the students completed a full first year university subject and received an early offer to complete the Bachelor of Nursing/Paramedicine at ACU.

## Uni4Life School Holiday Program –with University of Canberra

Uni4Life is a pilot program that aims to provide consistent, uninterrupted study time across the school holiday period for parents who are studying at the CUC, while simultaneously nurturing the aspirations and understanding of university for their children. In April, over 5 days, the University of Canberra provided outreach activities for the children of parents who study at CUCSM. This allowed parents to study uninterrupted with the support of the on-site CUCSM Learning Skills Advisor. The Program developed the children's understanding of university.



CUC Snowy Monaro won a 2021 Australian Rural Education Award for the Uni4Life School Holiday collaboration with University of Canberra.



# Celebrating our Students



## Denise Menshic

With COVID related Government incentives for people to complete study, Denise decided to complete some post-grad study. Denise had not studied for more than 25 years and came to the Centre very nervous and self-doubting about her ability to complete the study.

She worked hard with our Learning Skills Advisor and found that she loved studying so much that when she completed the COVID short course at the end of 2020, she decided to continue the study. Denise has recently submitted her final assessment for a Graduate Diploma in TESOL and Foreign Language Teaching and is now considering future study opportunities. Denise has achieved a GPA of 7.

Denise has also been an amazing support to many of our students in her role as a volunteer student ambassador.



## Bronte Hely

Bronte commenced her nursing degree with The Australian Catholic University in Semester Two, 2021 after her plans to take a gap year in England were interrupted by COVID-19.

Bronte is now achieving fantastic results and is balancing a fulltime study load with part time work and a weekly trip to Canberra to attend her campus-based classes.

# Student Success

## Graduate Student Story



### Duncan Goozeff

Bachelor of Nursing  
University of Canberra

Duncan epitomises the reasons why CUC Snowy Monaro exists. Duncan was a mature-aged student who decided to make a career change from social work to nursing.

After completing a Diploma in Nursing in 2019, Duncan enrolled to complete the Bachelor of Nursing at University of Canberra.

Duncan lives in the Snowy Monaro village of Nimmitabel and struggles with poor internet and inadequate study space. For most of his study, he was affected by COVID restrictions on face to face attendance at the campus so he instead used the facilities at CUC Snowy Monaro.

Duncan emersed himself in the CUC environment and became a regular participant in all Centre activities. Duncan was also integral to welcoming new students and assisting with settling them into the Centre routine.

Duncan completed his studies at the end of Semester 1, 2021 and he is now working fulltime at the Cooma Hospital.



Where I live, I can't rely on the internet, so I really appreciate having our Centre. The atmosphere at the Centre makes studying a lot like studying on a uni campus with other like-minded people all around you.



Bringing degrees closer  
to regional, rural and  
remote Australia.



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