

# ANNUAL REPORT

# 2024



**NADINE HOLLAND**  
Centre Manager

**DENISE**  
Grad Dip in TESOL & Foreign Language Teaching  
University of Canberra

**“Our mission is to support students to succeed, widen access to higher education for regional, rural, and remote communities; and to change higher education to better fit regional Australia.”**

**CHRIS RONAN**  
CUC Chief Executive Officer



**CHARITY**

**Certificate IV in Project Management  
TAFENSW**

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

We begin by acknowledging Ngarigo/Ngarigu Country – an important place to many Aboriginal peoples – the birthplace of rivers.

Country in our (Aboriginal) way of understanding things is more than just the dirt under our feet, although that is an important part of Country too. Country is the landscapes (high country, swamplands, mountains, plains, and deserts), the animals (from the microscopic to the colossal), the vegetation (grasses, trees, bushes, vines, and flowers), the rocks (from pebbles to mineral deposits), the waterways (puddles, rivers, creeks, and oceans), the seasons (many more than just four), the weather (the sunshine, winds, storms, and dry periods), and the stories (the ancient through to the contemporary).

In acknowledging Country we assert our reliance on Mother Earth for all things (shelter, sustenance, and beauty to satisfy the soul). We equally affirm our respect for the Elders (experts in their cultural ways and holders of the knowledge and stories that are embedded in this place), for their enduring custodianship.

**Adam Gowen**

**Wiradjuri, connections to Yuin Country, culture, and community**

**Centre Manager, CUC Southern Shoalhaven**



# OUR BOARD



**CAROLYN EWART**  
Chair, Life Member



**DARREN DAVIS**  
Deputy Chair



**FRANCES ROBERTSON**  
Secretary



**IAIN ELLIOTT**  
Treasurer



**NARELLE DAVIS**  
Director

# OUR TEAM



**NADINE HOLLAND**  
Centre Manager



**HAN WORSLEY**  
Education Coordinator



**BRONTE TOZER**  
Education Support

# CHAIR

## Carolyn Ewart

**As we close out 2024, we can reflect on a transformative year for CUC Snowy Monaro (CUCSM).**

A significant achievement was the successful change in our organisational structure. We transitioned from being incorporated to becoming a Limited by Guarantee entity. This constitutional change aligned CUCSM with the other Centres in the CUC network positioning our Centre to enable greater consistency across operations and reporting. The transition, which involved extensive planning, took 10 months of careful preparation and was successfully completed by January 9, 2024. I wish to thank the board for their wisdom and Nadine for her support with the logistics of such a comprehensive change.

I am pleased to highlight some of our achievements and milestones of 2024. This year has been one of growth, innovation, and strengthened community engagement, all of which have laid the foundation for an even more dynamic 2025.

### **KEY ACHIEVEMENTS OF 2024**

#### **Education Support Officer – Bronte**

We welcomed Bronte Tozer as our Education Support Officer, whose role has been pivotal in enhancing our educational initiatives. Bronte's dedication has already made a measurable impact on our programs, ensuring more students and Centre operations receive the support needed.

#### **Record Number of Registered Students**

We are thrilled to report a record number of students enrolled in Semester 1, reflecting the growing demand for regional, rural and remote access to education, cultivating awareness and growth within our community.

## **Common Ground (RPPP)**

Our Common Ground events have continued to generate positive engagement. This year, we hosted and were involved with a variety of community-based activities. These events have become a key platform for connection, learning, and community-building. A big thank you to Han Worsley for their work with this project.

(Common Ground is funded by the Australian Government, Department of Education's Regional Partnerships Project Pool Program)

## **Academic Support**

The team have done an amazing job working with our registered students to provide them with individualised academic and IT support. Reflecting our the large number of students registered in Semester One, Han and Bronte worked with students for 66 hours. In Semester Two, the team worked with students for 50 hours.

## **FutureMe Program (UOW)**

This year, we collaborated with University of Wollongong to deliver the FutureMe Program to Cooma and Jindabyne based, year 12 students. We look forward to delivering our own Year 12 Program in 2025. CUCSM's program will provide invaluable support to students, preparing them for the workforce and equipping them with the tools for future success.

## **Government Support for Regional Education**

The Federal and State Governments continue to recognise the value and advantages of the CUC model, especially in enhancing access to education in regional, rural, and remote areas. We are grateful for their ongoing investment and support, which underpins our mission to bridge the education gap for students in our local community. Their clarity of thinking and commitment to regional education are instrumental in driving meaningful change, and we thank them for their vision and continued investment.

## Farewell to Board Director, Gabrielle Curtain

In August we said goodbye to Gabrielle, whose passion and professionalism demonstrated over the eight years of service to CUC Central and CUC Snowy Monaro have left a lasting legacy. Gabrielle invested her expertise to be instrumental in the growth of the CUC Network. Without her belief in building communities and equitable access to higher education for regional and rural communities, the CUC Network may not be where it is today.

*From a personal note, I wish to thank Gabrielle for all the help and support she has extended to me as we all navigated our way to where we are today. She particularly brought her key skills to the table in the area of Human Relations and a deep knowledge of corporate enterprise. We wish her all the best for her next chapter.*

## Strengthened Local Partnerships

Our relationships with local not-for-profit organisations and Snowy Monaro Regional Council (SMRC) and other community stakeholders have been stronger than ever. Those accessing our facilities for their own meetings and training purposes included:

- Snowy Hydro Ltd.
- The Rotary Club of Cooma
- Steve Whan MP
- The Alpine School
- South East Arts
- the Rail Trail working group
- Upper Snowy Landcare
- Lovegrass committee
- Windfarm project
- Monaro FM (community radio)
- Cooma Challenge Ltd.
- Cooma Multicultural Centre
- CISCO

## 2024 Snapshot

We are proud of the diverse and dynamic student body that continues to benefit from local access to tertiary and other education through our Centre.

- **33% of our students are first in their family to attend university**, which underscores our commitment to improving access to higher education for all.
- **5.7% of our students identify as Indigenous**, reflecting the Centre's growing inclusivity and support for First Nations students.
- Our students **study across 50+ different education providers**, a testament to the wide range of academic opportunities we facilitate.
- **50% of our students study full-time and 50% study part-time**, demonstrating the flexibility we offer for students balancing education with other commitments.
- Our students are pursuing **studies across 20 different areas**, with the largest proportions in:
  - 17% in Health
  - 16% in Education
  - 12% in Business and Management
- In terms of gender, **73% of our students are female, and 26% are male**, reflecting the diverse demographic we serve.

## Thankyou

I wish to thank the Board Directors, Narelle Davis, Frances Robertson, Darren Davis, Iain Elliot and Gabrielle Curtain for their intelligence and contributions during the year. I particularly would like to thank Frances Robertson for her expertise and continual support of Centre happenings and her exceptional support of me as chair.

To our wonderful staff, Nadine Holland, Han Worsley and Bronte Tozer who have always gone above and beyond to make sure the students experience at our Centre is second to none. This is what it is all about, community and education coming together for personal and regional growth. Thank you for making 2024 a year of remarkable achievement.

## Looking Ahead to 2025

As we reflect on these accomplishments, we are energised by the possibilities that lie ahead. 2025 promises to be an exciting year as we continue to evolve to meet new educational demands on our students, community and local industry.



**HAN WORSLEY**  
Education Coordinator



# OUR STORY

**BEN**

Graduate Diploma in Divinity  
**MORLING COLLEGE**

## CUC's origins were in the establishment of the Cooma Universities Centre in 2013

The Cooma Universities Centre was designed to provide improved, supported, higher educational opportunities in their small, regional town

### What we do

We are a dedicated learning and study space that supports any student, studying any course, at any university. We also provide the services to students studying with other providers as well as outreach services with local school students and other community members.

We are focused on supporting the academic success of students and ensuring they have the tools to succeed in their higher education journey.

**Cheers to 75 years – Snowy Hydro Ltd.**



# PARTNERSHPS

Partnerships have been essential to the success of CUC Snowy Monaro including support from the Australian Government, NSW State Government, Snowy Monaro Regional Council, university 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 Study Hubs at sites across regional Australia. CUC Snowy Monaro is a recipient of this funding.

## **NSW Government**

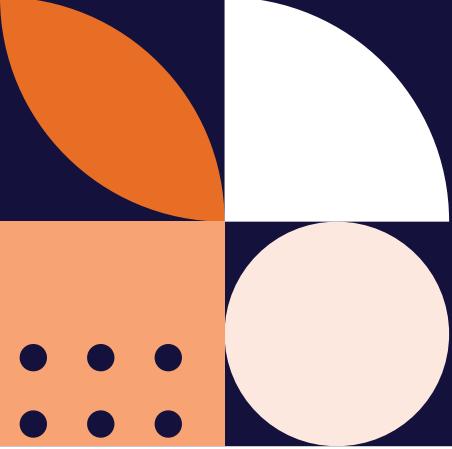
The NSW Government's \$16 million dollar Higher Education Strategy focuses on increasing participation in higher education. CUC Snowy Monaro is proud to assist the government to achieve this by supporting people in the Snowy Monaro to pursue higher education in our local community.

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

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

## **Snowy Monaro Regional Council**

Snowy Monaro Regional Council continue to support CUC Snowy Monaro by recognising our commitment to supporting the current and future students of the local community.



# PARTNERSHIPS

Country Universities Centre has formal partnerships with the following universities:

## LaTrobe University

A new strategic partnership between La Trobe and CUC will enhance support for rural higher education students choosing to stay in their local community. This partnership is a testament to the shared vision of improving low participation rates in higher education outside of metropolitan areas through a community-led approach.

## University of Technology Sydney (UTS)

UTS have partnered with the CUC to develop the Regional Partnerships Project Pool Program (RPPP). This Program brings together 19 universities and 16 Regional University Centres to design tailored outreach programs 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 CUC. Sharing of knowledge between UNE Support Staff, and CUC Centre team members has developed an enhanced understanding of the challenges online regional students face. UNE are also an Outreach and Widening Participation partner with CUC.

## CQ University

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 CUC since its establishment and continues to provide expertise and support to students across the CUC Network. CQUniversity are also an Outreach and Widening Participation partner with CUC.

## Charles Sturt University (CSU)

In a collaboration between industry, community and university, CUC works with CSU to provide connections between students and the university. CSU are also an Outreach and Widening Participation partner with CUC.

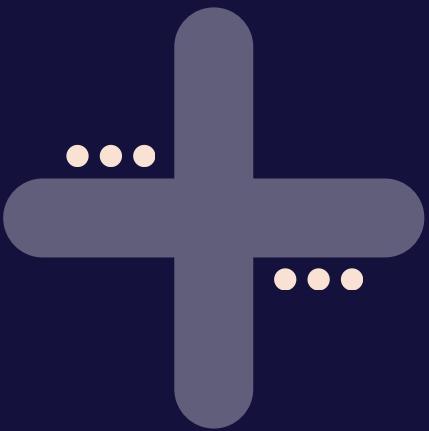
## Federation University

This partnership provides the framework for future collaborations to share knowledge, expertise, and support students across the CUC network. Federation are also an Outreach and Widening Participation partner on the RPPP.

A photograph of a woman with curly hair, wearing a dark polo shirt with a logo, smiling and interacting with a group of students outdoors. One student in the foreground is wearing a pink shirt and sunglasses, looking towards the camera. The background is a blurred green outdoor setting.

**BRONTE TOZER**  
Education Support Officer

# COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT



## OUR COMMUNITY NETWORK ARE OUR BIGGEST SUPPORTERS

### Our local schools

This year, we have engaged local schools through various initiatives, including the UOW Future Me Program, regular school visits, and the Illustrator Competition, which foster student aspirations. At the Monaro High School Trade and Careers Fair, we showcased educational opportunities, while other initiatives like the Cooma North Public School STEM Day, Rotary Club of Cooma Debating Competition, and a Year 12 Study Hub with University of Canberra tutors helped us reach more local school kids. Additionally, a free coding workshop during the school holidays, made possible through a partnership with CISCO, provided hands-on tech skills for students, further enhancing our outreach efforts. Overall, we have worked with, visited, or supported every school in the district across 2024.

### TAFENSW, Cooma

This year, we have developed a strong relationship with TAFE Cooma. As a partner, they play a key role in the Common Ground program, co-delivering workshops and actively participating in events. TAFE also refers students to us for additional support, ensuring a seamless pathway for prospective students. This collaboration enhances the reach of both institutions, benefiting students seeking higher education or vocational training. Together, we also regularly collaborate at events like the Monaro High School Trade and Careers Fair, further promoting educational opportunities and creating a supportive network for local students.

### Community

We support the community by promoting educational equity and fostering lifelong learning opportunities. Bringing the whole community on board has been the focus of our Common Ground program which uniquely targets adults, complementing our school and centre-based programs. Our commitment to collaboration with organisations like TAFE Cooma and CISCO enhances skills development and prepares students for future challenges. By engaging with the community, we uphold our mission to create inclusive and supportive environments that respect and leverage local strengths.



**DIANA**

Diploma of Leadership and Management  
TAFENSW

# STUDENT EXPERIENCE SURVEY 2024

35% COMPLETION

**81%**

of students strongly agree that they felt safe and welcomed at CUCSM.

A further 19% agree.



**52%**

said CUCSM makes it easier for me to stay, study or work in my community



Great to have the support when I am visiting for a placement block. I have been very much welcomed into the CUC community.



**60%**

said they strongly agree that the CUCSM contributed to their wellbeing.

A further 38% agreed.



The main reasons students attend CUCSM are because they love...

**"the dedicated study areas"**



**"the support provided by the staff"**

## Our students love

the study spaces

the Centre's cleanliness

the location

**The academic support**

the hours of access

the free printing

the kitchen facilities

the staff

**the internet quality**

the support to settle into study

**the friendliness of staff**

the scholarship support



# HIGHLIGHTS OF 2024

## **UOW FutureMe**

UOW Future Me ran for 12 weeks and involved 26 students from Monaro Highschool, Jindabyne Highschool, Snowy Mountains Grammar School, and St Mary MacKillop College. Students explored career options, budgeting, moving away from home, and post-school pathways. All students graduated, receiving an early entry offer to University of Wollongong. This year saw student number increases of 100% and 150% on 2023 figures for Cooma and Jindabyne respectively. Students also showed interest in future support, with 100% of Cooma students opting to continue informal sessions and over 90% of Jindabyne participants expressing interest in ongoing support from CUCSM. **UOW FutureMe is funded by University of Wollongong.**

## **Meeting Schools Where They're At: Reciprocal Partnerships for Place-Based Aspirations**

In 2024, Han's Meeting Schools Where They're At: Reciprocal Partnerships for Place-Based Aspirations article, was published in Transform Volume 8 – Where to Now for Community Engagement? The article highlights how CUC Snowy Monaro's Illustrator Competition fosters aspirations based outreach in regional communities. It critiques traditional university led approaches and showcases reciprocal partnerships with local schools, students, and the University of Canberra. Using the Carnegie Community Engagement Framework, it demonstrates how Regional University Study Hubs are uniquely positioned to support rural participation in higher education.

## **Year 12 Study Hub**

The Year 12 Exam Prep Program offers local Year 12 students a free, quiet and safe space to study with a CUCSM team member remaining onsite during the scheduled study periods. Yet again, University of Canberra have collaborated with us on this Program and have provided tutors for the students.

Recognising that our local year 12 students may be completing their study in NSW, ACT, another Australian State or an alternate method we welcome any Snowy Monaro resident currently completing Year 12 final exams and assessments to book in to study during the allocated times.

**Year 12 Study Hub is a collaboration with University of Canberra.**

# HIGHLIGHTS OF 2024

## Common Ground

The CUCSM Common Ground Program offers free support to prospective students, parents, and employers to understand the higher education landscape. CUCSM has led a partnership including UC, ANU, ACU, UNE and TAFE Cooma, with other support from CISCO and CIT. In 2024, two workshops have been run with 62 participants total, and another 40 are set to join the Canberra Higher Education Tour on 11th October. Early evaluation shows that the Program directly converts participants into CUC users and higher education students, who have improved understanding of the benefits of higher education, and increased confidence to seek help.

Common Ground is funded by the Australian Government's Regional Partnerships Project Pool Program

## Rotary Club of Cooma Debating Competition

We proudly supported the Rotary Club of Cooma in hosting the grand finals of the Margaret Hassall Memorial Trophy and John Clarke Memorial Trophy Debating Competitions. These competitions provide a valuable opportunity for local students to develop their critical thinking and communication skills, while representing their schools within the community.

Congratulations to all the teams who competed, especially the Year 7/8 winners, St Patrick's Parish School Cooma, and the Year 9/10 winners, Snowy Mountains Christian School! A fantastic effort by all!

## I Wonder Why... Book Project

The 2024 CUC Snowy Monaro Illustrator Competition received over 600 entries from 14 local schools. The submissions will be compiled into a book titled "I wonder why..." featuring more than 50 winners selected by local judges. This year's competition was a tremendous success, showcasing the creativity of students across a wide range of career aspirations. The book will celebrate the most inspiring illustrations, reflecting the community's diverse dreams for the future.

I Wonder Why... Book Project is funded by NSW Government.



**SHANNEN**

**Bachelor of Education (Early Childhood Teaching)**  
**Charles Sturt University**

# SNAPSHOT OF 2024

# 198 STUDENTS

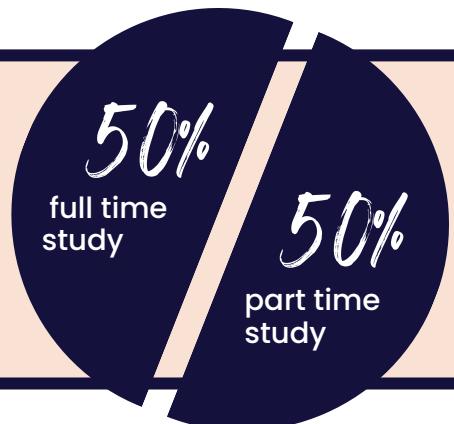


**33%**  
are the first in  
their family  
to study

**5.7%**  
of students identify  
as Indigenous or  
Torres Strait Islander



our students study with  
**50+**  
EDUCATION PROVIDERS



**17%**

HEALTH

**16%**

EDUCATION

**12%**

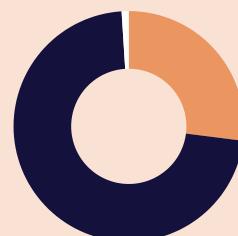
BUSINESS AND  
MANAGEMENT

## AREAS OF STUDY

**20**

different  
areas of  
study

73%  
female



20  
24

SUPPORTING OUR  
LOCAL STUDENTS  
SINCE 2013

**737**   
**STUDENTS**  
over 11 years

**3.5%** ABORIGINAL OR  
TORRES STRAIT  
STUDENTS

CUC SNOWY  
MONARO 

Cooma and Surrounds  
has 3.6% people identifying as  
Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander (ABS, 2021)  
3.5% of CUC Snowy Monaro students identify  
as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander

**448**   
**UNIVERSITY  
COURSES**  
have been studied by our students

&  
over **119** OTHER  
COURSES

**31%** students were  
**FIRST IN FAMILY  
TO STUDY AT UNI**  
2013 – 2024

Our students  
have studied  
with **41** DIFFERENT  
UNIVERSITIES

&  
over **117** TOTAL  
PROVIDERS

# CELEBRATING OUR STUDENTS

## OUR GREATEST ACHIEVEMENTS



**Tayne**

**Undergrad. Cert. in Surveying**  
University of Southern Queensland

**How is completing this study helping you to achieve your goals?**

I've just pivoted into surveying recently, and this course is a great place to start. I prefer the option of university over TAFE, and the ability to chew away at the course units at my own pace while gaining hands-on experience in the field is a big plus. It feels like I'm getting ahead, I guess you could say.

**How do you find studying as a regional student?**

I'm lucky that one of my classmates is also my co-worker, but generally online study can be pretty isolating. It's great to know there's a space for us when we need it, or just to connect with other students.



**Hayley**

**Masters of Social Work**  
University of Canberra

**How is completing this study helping you to achieve your goals?**

I am building my skills and deepening my understanding of social theories and how to apply them. This study will help me better impact the communities I am working with as well as better advocate for social justice and systemic change.

**How do you find studying as a regional student?**

I am so grateful that I have access to CUCSM. The environment and facilities are exceptional! Juggling young children, work and living out of town, would prove extremely challenging to study without CUCSM. I can pop in after work while my children are at sport, attend online tutorials uninterrupted and study in a quiet space where keeping focused is much easier than at home!



# STUDENT SUCCESS

## Bronte Tozer

**Bachelor of Science (Honours)**  
University of Canberra



Bronte, a proud Cooma local, has made remarkable strides in her academic and professional journey, all while staying connected to her roots. Having completed her schooling at Monaro Highschool, she pursued a Bachelor of Science at the University of Canberra, specialising in ecology, biology and sustainable landscapes. After earning her degree in 2022, she continued her studies with Honours in 2023, achieving First Class Honours.

Her Honours thesis involved studying an endangered Australian native rodent, the smoky mouse. Bronte was able to be a part of smoky mouse translocations in Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve on the outskirts of Canberra. Through these translocations, she was able to assist in determining if the captive-bred smoky mice faced significant competition for resources – including food and habitat. Throughout her Honour's journey, Bronte faced many challenges but is proud of her accomplishments and the added recognition and possibilities this degree has provided.

Throughout her academic journey, Bronte utilised the support of CUC Snowy Monaro (CUCSM), where she found invaluable resources and guidance. She was able to receive both emotional and academic support from staff, while greatly benefitting from the Centre's physical resources, including the free printing and bookbinding to create her thesis.

Today, Bronte serves as the Education Support Officer at CUCSM, bringing her first-hand experience as a student to her role. Her deep understanding of the Centre's role in helping students succeed allows her to offer assistance across various areas, including IT troubleshooting, Centre maintenance, and general support. Based on her own experiences and knowledge, Bronte has developed help guides that are available on the CUCSM website for all students to utilise in a suitable student-friendly format.

Bronte's journey is a testament to her dedication and the value of local education support services like CUCSM.



**KATRINA (L)**  
Bachelor of Nursing  
University of Canberra

**HAYLEY (C)**  
Masters of Social Work  
University of Canberra

**SASHRIKA (R)**  
Masters in Human Rights  
University of Colombo



**live locally**  
**LEARN LOCALLY**  
**work locally**