

ANNUAL

2024

REPORT



OUR VISION

A vibrant place of learning.

Where people of the Southern Shoalhaven access tertiary education to enable lifelong learning that expands knowledge, changes lives and builds community.

OUR PURPOSE

Bringing degrees closer

Empowering local people and communities to succeed in education and realise their dreams.



'yaradban'
(to soar/fly over)

By Murramarang Yuin Artist: **Leanne Brook, 2021**

We acknowledge Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders people as the Traditional Custodians of all lands throughout Australia.

We recognise and respect the connection to their land, cultural heritage and community, and we pay our respects to their Elders past, present, and emerging. We pledge our commitment to reconciliation by walking together in ways that tell the truth about our history and are optimistic about our shared future.



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**WAYNE
DEDDEN**

**MESSAGE FROM
THE CHAIR**

On behalf of your Board of the Country Universities Centre Southern Shoalhaven can I start by acknowledging the considerable, and continuing, achievements gained by the Centre staff and thank them all for those efforts. Their hard work has allowed our ever-increasing Centre user student body to achieve many personal academic milestones over the past 12 months. Your Centre's growth is also represented by broad organic organisational accomplishments over all parts of the CUC Southern Shoalhaven's business. In recognising that, I also highlight the part that our committed volunteer Board has played in that as well.

Whilst acknowledging those fantastic achievements of our students, none of that would truly have been locally possible if not for the ongoing fiscal support of our Centre by both the Federal and State governments who have again committed to assisting CUC Southern Shoalhaven's journey as we move ahead over the next few years. We additionally appreciate CUC Central's role, and the value many strategic academic partnerships in that support as well.

Our plan to 2027 is now underway as we continue to embed important additional work and projects which are core to our community function, like our Reconciliation Action Plan and memorandums with many others. A sustainable future is at the forefront of our path ahead and we are pleased to see the Hive Spaces initiative now contributing towards that. CUC Southern Shoalhaven will most certainly play an accumulative role in making those academic dreams a reality for our centre users as we continue to build our capacity over time.



**ADAM
GOWEN**

**REPORT
CENTRE MANAGERS**

As the Centre Manager of Country Universities Centre Southern Shoalhaven, I am pleased to present our annual report for 2024. Since opening in December 2021, our Centre has steadily worked towards empowering local people and communities to succeed in education and realise their dreams.

Student Registration and Demographics

In Semester 1 2024, we registered our largest cohort yet with 171 students accessing our services. This figure means that we have now surpassed the 300 student mark since our inception. Our diverse student body currently includes 10% Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander students and 36% first-in-family university attendees. Top study areas are Education, Health, and Psychology/Social Work/Community Services, aligning with critical regional workforce needs.

Programs and Partnerships

Key developments this year include:

1. Team Expansion: Carly McTavish joined as Widening Participation Officer, and Sophie Linehan as Community Engagement Coordinator.
2. MyStrengths Program: An initiative for Year 8 students, focusing on personal values and strengths. With thanks to the Commonwealth Government for funding the Eastern Australian Regional Universities Centre Program (EARUCP) through the Regional Partnerships Project Pool Program (RPPPP) and our partner Universities: the University of Wollongong (UOW), the Australian National University (ANU), and the University of Canberra (UC).
3. Enhanced Community Engagement: Increased activities through CUC events and 'The Hive Spaces' social enterprise.
4. Strengthened partnerships with local community groups, our high school, and universities.

Community Engagement

Our presence has been met with overwhelmingly positive sentiment from students and the community. 'The Hive Spaces' has become a focal point for community interaction, while the MyStrengths Program has increased awareness of higher education opportunities among younger students and families.

Facility Improvements

We've enhanced our facility through:

- Rear gate installation for improved security and accessibility
- Sound panelling for better acoustics
- Room naming project using local Dhurga language
- Display of artwork from influential artist and designer Tony Lunn
- Acquisition of additional technological resources.



CONTINUED

Challenges and Solutions

We're proactively addressing the need to expand our technological offerings as student numbers grow. Our approach includes regular assessment of resources, seeking student feedback, and acquiring new technology as appropriate.

Future Plans and Goals

Building on our remarkable staff retention – no core staff departures in four years – our future plans include:

1. Expanding personalised student support services
2. Deepening community ties through continuing outreach programs and events
3. Continuing to add to our technological offerings
4. Growing and deepening partnerships with local businesses and community organisations
5. Ensuring long-term sustainability

Country Universities Centre Southern Shoalhaven has made significant strides in bringing higher education closer to our home. Our growing student numbers, expanded programs, facility improvements, and strong community engagement point to a bright future. We remain committed to our vision of being a vibrant place of learning in the Southern Shoalhaven that changes lives and builds community.

Thank you for your continued support as we work together to empower local people and communities to succeed in education and realise their dreams.



STUDENT QUOTE – ASHLEIGH KOMAL

I've just completed my certificate for in veterinary nursing and am working at Ulladulla Veterinary Hospital. I literally couldn't have done it without coming here. I have two young children and two dogs at home so it's a bit crazy. So it was late nights and I had quiet time to use the facilities and it was literally the most amazing place I could come to.

I could just get work done and focus on that. I'm actually really thankful because I couldn't have done it without CUC

PARTNERSHIPS

GOVERNMENT AND COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

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

NSW GOVERNMENT

The NSW Government has supported the CUC through multiple funding grants exceeding \$16 million, which facilitated its successful expansion. The NSW Government's Higher Education Strategy focuses on increasing participation in higher education, CUC is proud to assist the government to achieve this by supporting people in our region to pursue higher education in their local 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 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 through its not-for-profit fundraising account.

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.





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. UNE are also an Outreach and Widening Participation partner with the CUC.

CQ UNIVERSITY

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. CQUniversity are also an Outreach and Widening Participation partner with the CUC.

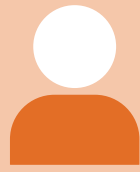
CHARLES STURT UNIVERSITY (CSU)

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

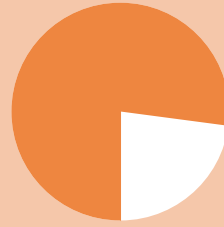
FEDERATION UNIVERSITY

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 RPPPP.

2024 SNAPSHOT



171
Students



77% Female
23% Male



36%
are the first
in their family
to study

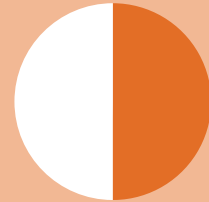


11%
of students
identify as
Indigenous



42
UNIVERSITIES
& NUHEPS

49%
study
part
time



51%
study
full
time

TOP AREAS OF STUDY

26%

Education

24%

Health

18%

Psychology, Social
work & Community
Services

50
Graduates



- 13** Health
- 11** Psychology, Social & Community Services
- 9** Education
- 5** Languages
- 4** Science
- 3** Business
- 2** Engineering
- 2** Philosophy & Humanities
- 1** Design

A NOTE FROM OUR CORE STAFF



CARLY McTAVISH

As one of the first university students to utilise CUCSS, I was already aware of the supportive and expansive community the Centre created. I valued it as a place to not only study and learn, but engage in robust conversations over lunch and walk alongside likeminded students as they achieved their educational goals.

After graduating and moving into the role of Widening Participation in the **MyStrengths Program** at CUCSS, I've witnessed the very real ripple effect my role has had - not only on empowering Year 8 students at Ulladulla High School to uncover their own personal strengths and values - but on strengthening our broader community. Just a few of the highlights for me have been:

- Witnessing the vibrant mentoring relationships our university student mentors are building with Year 8 students throughout the year.
- Listening to parents share the ways in which **MyStrengths** has expanded their children's imaginations in terms of what their futures could be.
- The willingness and generosity of both individuals and organisations in our community to passionately invest their time in empowering our young people.
- The growing network of people in our community who are passionate about educational equity.



AMY LAWRY

My 2 years in the role of Operations Assistant and Student Support Officer at CUCSS have been extremely rewarding. Connecting with our students and supporting them with practical hurdles as well as lending a friendly ear over a cuppa is always a highlight for me.

It was an exciting day when we registered our 300th student since opening. Knowing that we are here to facilitate the student journey in regional areas, seeing this number finally tick over excites me about our future in the local educational and community landscape.

As new students come to the Centre they really don't know what to expect, it is so special watching their faces light up as they see what resources and support they can utilise here. A wave of confidence washes over them as they realise that the burden of whatever study barriers they have are going to be alleviated from that day on.

The last 12 months have seen our plans evolve and many projects come to fruition. A highlight for me has been the acquisition of our Art collection. Our rooms and spaces are now enhanced by the spectacular works of renowned artist Tony Lunn. His abstract landscapes breathe life and connection to the environment which has created a sense of calm and inspiration for all those that utilise the Centre.



SOPHIE LINEHAN

Since I joined the team at CUCSS, I have implemented The Hive Spaces online booking system. This has streamlined the booking procedure for staff, and increased accessibility to our spaces for both clients and students.

In collaboration with our team, I have contributed to the Dhurga Language room naming project, which I am proud to see successfully take form as an immersive cultural inclusion and learning experience for all our students and wider community.

I created and implemented a fortnightly events calendar for our students focusing on wellbeing, networking, and social connection. This has been a positive addition to the student and staff community and continues to develop. What I have enjoyed the most about becoming a staff member at CUCSS is belonging to our unique community and the connections and friendships I have formed and continue to make.



BRENDAN RIDDICK

The LSA Sessions have really grown in number over the last 12 months to July 2024. There are an increasing number of students booking appointments and many of these students are booking LSA Sessions on a regular basis. There has also been a significant increase in students booking online appointments when they cannot physically attend the centre on Wednesdays. The online appointments are conducted using MS Teams or by email correspondence.

STUDENT STORY



Emma Cole

Graduating 2025

University: Torrens University Australia

Degree: Bachelor of Health Science (Naturopathy)

Emma, has been registered with CUCSS since the beginning of 2023. She is like the enigmatic fairy of our students – quiet, caring, gentle, and extremely studious, disappearing into her studies for the entire day without coming up for air sometimes. We have always admired her ability to focus and to remain so outwardly calm despite the stresses that come with being a university student. It was really nice to have a cuppa with her and find out a little bit more about her journey.

What was early life like for you?

I grew up in Sydney, in the Sutherland Shire for the most part and then my mum is Swedish so when I was a teenager I moved to Sweden and did my last years of school over there. I'm really grateful that my parents decided to do that. I wasn't so stoked at the time because I was 15 and wasn't keen on leaving my friends. However the school I was attending was like any public school and they were offering me a chance to go to the best school in Stockholm. Sweden provides free education so I was very fortunate to have had that opportunity.

In what ways has CUC Southern Shoalhaven facilitated better outcomes for you?

I am in the Centre probably around 4 days a week. It really is amazing having a place like this to come to. It's really difficult to find motivation, especially when you are stressed. Coming to the Centre helps with this. Also, when you study from a distance and feel alone, having that connection and to be around people that understand what you are going through is such an important part of making it through and achieving what you need to. Additionally, the support the Centre provides has been great, and having another place to go to so that your home and study life can be separate is a healthy balance that you need as a student. I feel really grateful for the CUC.

What advice would you give to other people considering studying higher education?

I think the biggest thing for me that was really significant would be to find your true core passion. As corny as it sounds to go out and find yourself, it's true. The motivation you need to learn and get through a degree comes from your core of wanting the knowledge. You can't set your sights on money or any external benefit to get you through a degree; it has to come from passion or the motivation will fade very quickly. So, my advice to anyone that has just left school would be to travel or work, do whatever it is you need to do to find out what it is that matters to you most.

STUDENT STORY



Kirrily Dowling

Graduating 2024

University: University of Wollongong (UOW)

Degree: Master of Teaching (Secondary)

When did you decide to pursue higher education and what was your motivation?

Well, this is my second wave of motivation. The first time was when I was completing my HSC I was doing really well and was offered early entry to Macleay College to study commerce. I wanted to study, I wanted to do commerce but I didn't want to leave my home town. Everything I loved and needed was here, the reality of leaving it all was something I wasn't prepared for so I didn't go. In 2016 I decided to begin my Bachelor of Arts with a double Major: Community Culture & Environment and Indigenous Studies. I had been working as an SLSO in schools and loved it so decided to pursue my Master of Teaching.

In what ways did the CUC facilitate better outcomes for you?

The Centre has saved me! It has been so central to successful outcomes for me. Having a business and being a single parent makes pursuing higher education almost unachievable but having somewhere to go and focus purely on what I needed to changed everything.

Where do see your career heading?

Teaching is my bliss, working with kids that face challenges of any kind to connect with education is my main focus. Whether those challenges are physical, emotional or both. I especially love the "naughty ones" gaining their respect and being part of their journey from not wanting to be there to actually achieving great things and starting to have dreams is the most rewarding feeling.

What advice would you give to other people considering studying higher education?

Have a go! We are so lucky now to have the infrastructure and means to stay regional and study. That just wasn't an option when I was young. Having a place like The Country Universities Centre is a game changer too, being able to study online is one thing but having a physical place to go to and get support when you need it makes it more achievable. I think the big misconception around going to University is that you need to be a genius. You don't have to be in the top ten of your class or be really smart to kick goals at University, you just need to do the work and stay focused. You can also learn at your own pace and do it one subject at a time so it is not so overwhelming or time heavy.

Directors Declaration

CUC SOUTHERN SHOALHAVEN LTD

For the year ended 30 June 2024

The directors of the CUC Southern Shoalhaven Ltd declare that:

1. The financial statements and notes are in accordance with the *Australian Charities and Not for Profits Commission Act 2012* and the *Australian Charities and Not for profits Commission Regulation 2013* and:

(a) comply with Australian Accounting Standards as stated in Note 1; and

(b) give a true and fair view of the financial position as at 30 June 2024 and of the performance for the year ended on that date in accordance with the accounting policy described in Note 1 of the financial statements.

2. the internal controls exercised by the organisation are appropriate and effective in accounting for all income received.

3. there are reasonable grounds to believe that the organisation will be able to pay its debts as and when they become due and payable.

This declaration is made in accordance with a resolution of the Board of Directors.

Director: _____

Wayne Raymond Dedden

Sign date:

Auditor's Report

CUC SOUTHERN SHOALHAVEN LTD For the year ended 30 June 2024

Opinion

We have audited the accompanying financial report, being a special purpose financial report, of CUC SOUTHERN SHOALHAVEN LTD (the company), which comprises the assets and liabilities statement as at 30 June 2024, the income and expenditure statement for the year then ended, notes comprising a summary of significant accounting policies and other explanatory information, and the certification by directors.

In our opinion, the accompanying financial report of CUC SOUTHERN SHOALHAVEN LTD, is in accordance with *Division 60 of the Australian Charities and Not for profits Commission Act 2012*; including:

(i) Giving a true and fair view of the registered entity's financial position as at 30 June 2024 and of its financial performance for the year then ended:

(ii) Comply with Australian Accounting Standards to the extent described in Note 1 and *Division 60 of the Australian Charities and Not - for Profit Commission regulation 2013*.

Basis For Opinion

We have conducted our audit in accordance with Australian Auditing Standards. Those standards require that we comply with relevant ethical requirements relating to audit engagements and plan and perform the audit to obtain reasonable assurance whether the financial report is free from material misstatement.

An audit involves performing procedures to obtain audit evidence about the amounts and disclosures in the financial report. The procedures selected depend on the auditor's judgment, including the assessment of the risks of material misstatement of the financial report, whether due to fraud or error. In making those risk assessments, the auditor considers internal control relevant to the association's preparation and fair presentation of the financial report, in order to design audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of the association's internal control. An audit also includes evaluating the appropriateness of accounting policies used and the reasonableness of accounting estimates made by the committee, as well as evaluating the overall presentation of the financial report.

We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our audit opinion.

Director's Responsibility for the Financial Report

The Board of Directors of CUC SOUTHERN SHOALHAVEN LTD are responsible for the preparation and fair presentation of the financial report, and have determined that the basis of preparation described in Note 1 is appropriate to meet the requirements of the ACNC Act and the Company's constitution. The directors' responsibility also includes such internal control as the board determines is necessary to enable the preparation and fair presentation of a financial report that is free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.



John Nevin

Office 1, 134 Princes Highway, Ulladulla, NSW, 2539

Dated: 13/09/2024



Bringing degrees closer to regional, rural and remote Australia.

Proudly supported by:



Australian Government
Department of Education



NSW
GOVERNMENT