



20

ANNUAL  
REPORT

25



Country  
Universities  
Centre

MALLEE

**We wish to acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land on which we work and study. We pay respect to all Elders past, present and emerging.**



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# Message from The Chair



## Michelle Haeusler

Chair - Board of Directors

**It is with a sense of pride and responsibility that I present the Chair's Report for CUC Mallee for the year 2025.**

This past year has been characterised by consolidation, growth, and strengthened community engagement. As Chair of the Board, I continue to be inspired by the resilience, innovation, and dedication demonstrated by our students, staff, and stakeholders as we work collaboratively to address barriers to higher education in the Swan Hill region.

2025 represented a pivotal year in the implementation of the second phase of our Strategic Plan. CUC Mallee supported a significant number of students during this period, reflecting increased awareness of our services and the effectiveness of our targeted outreach initiatives.

The Board remains committed to upholding principles of strong governance, transparency, and accountability.

I would like to acknowledge and thank our Manager, Hayden Hogan, for his exemplary leadership and strategic oversight in ensuring operational excellence and responsiveness to our community's needs.

On behalf of the Board, I extend my sincere appreciation to our dedicated staff, whose efforts and commitment make a meaningful difference daily; our board members for their ongoing support and expertise; and most importantly, our students, whose courage, curiosity, and dedication are the foundation of our purpose.

As I conclude this report, I remain optimistic about the future of CUC Mallee. We are more than just an educational institution; we are a catalyst for equity, empowerment, and regional prosperity.



# Centre Manager Report



**Hayden Hogan**  
Centre Manager

**As Centre Manager of CUC Mallee, I am pleased to reflect on the significant milestones and achievements that our Centre has achieved in the past year.**

While the first year of CUC Mallee in operation was very busy, things have only seemed to get busier in the last 12 months. The response of the local communities to the presence of CUC Mallee has been nothing short of amazing. Students, stakeholders, and the wider community have embraced CUC Mallee and recognised the value that it offers. It has started to feel like the Centre is becoming an integral part of the local area.

As will always be the case, the students are the focal point of the Centre. The number of students registering to use the Centre has continued to increase at a faster than expected rate. In Semester 2 2024, 141 students were registered to use the Centre and in Semester 1 2025,

the number was 171 students. Student registrations were not projected to be this high until 4 years into operation and highlights the need for the Centre in our region.

With an increase in numbers came the need for more staff to service the needs of our students. In the past year we have added a Student Services Coordinator and an Engagement and Partnership Coordinator to our team. These two positions have significantly increased the support our students are receiving in areas such as academic writing, referencing, study skills and career counselling. The extra staff have also allowed us to extensively engage with the community to raise the awareness of CUC Mallee.

# Centre Manager Report

With our student numbers increasing significantly, it was pleasing that we were able to fund the renovation of the cells into study spaces and a second staff office. These spaces will allow the Centre to grow and cater for the needs of future students.

The support CUC Mallee receives from the Australian Government's Department of Education has continued in the past 12 months with the key announcement that we have received funding for the next four years. The Department's support is pivotal to the continued operations of CUC Mallee and to receive such support for the future provides our Centre, students, stakeholders and community with the reassurance that the Centre is here to stay.

Earlier this year we were notified that our application for funding for the Regional University Study Hubs Partnerships Plan was successful. This funding is also for the next four years and allows us to support students in a variety of ways including linking students with employment and mentoring opportunities whilst they are studying or when they graduate.

More broadly the support from the Department has continued across the wider network with the number of Regional University Study Hubs increasing from 34 to 56 in the past 12 months and within this network, the CUC network has grown from 18 to 28 Centres.

Thank you to the CUC Mallee Board of Directors for your guidance and support over the year. Thank you to past Board Chair Ann Young and Megan Stewart who stepped down from the board. We also welcome new Directors Katie Fox, Joelle Whiting and Troy Thamm.

Thank you to Chris and the team at CUC Central. Your support over the past year has been pivotal in the success of CUC Mallee.

The year ahead looks exciting. It will be one where we continue to ensure that our focus is on supporting our current students but also looking for ways to support prospective students. In addition, employers in their workforce challenges. I look forward to working with all our stakeholders to help provide local students with access to higher education.

*The Country Universities Centre began with the establishment of the Cooma Universities Centre in 2013, created to offer enhanced, supported higher education opportunities in the regional town of Cooma,.*

# Our story Degrees closer



*CUC Mallee is a dedicated learning and study space that supports any student, studying any course, at any Australian institution. 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 students and ensuring they have the tools to succeed in their higher education journey. We are also assisting students and employers to link up with each other in order to assist in addressing the skills shortages in our region.*



Danika  
Bachelor of Accounting  
University of South Australia

*"I use CUC mainly during exam periods, as it provides a quiet and focused space to study, though I also use it throughout the semester to stay on top of my coursework."*



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

### **The Australian Government**

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The Australian Government is investing more than \$150 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)**

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

### **La Trobe University**

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CUC Mallee and La Trobe University have been working closely in the last 12 months. CUC Mallee is assisting La Trobe students who are studying the LTU Nexus program and also provides general assistance to all LTU students.

# **Partnerships: Government & Community**





DRINK & ENJOY  
LIPTON'S TEA

RAE, EVERINGHAM & CO.  
STOCK & STATION AGENTS.

J.H. BARKER



Our community are our biggest supporters. CUC Mallee has extensively engaged with local industry, schools, and organisations. The success of CUC Mallee depends on the support from our local community.

# Community Engagement

## Local Schools

*CUC Mallee staff have engaged with schools in our region by supporting the Headspace Work and Study Month Expo in our Secondary Schools. We have also presented to school staff and students about how CUC Mallee can help them achieve success in higher education. School staff and students often participate in tours of the Centre.*



## Local Organisations

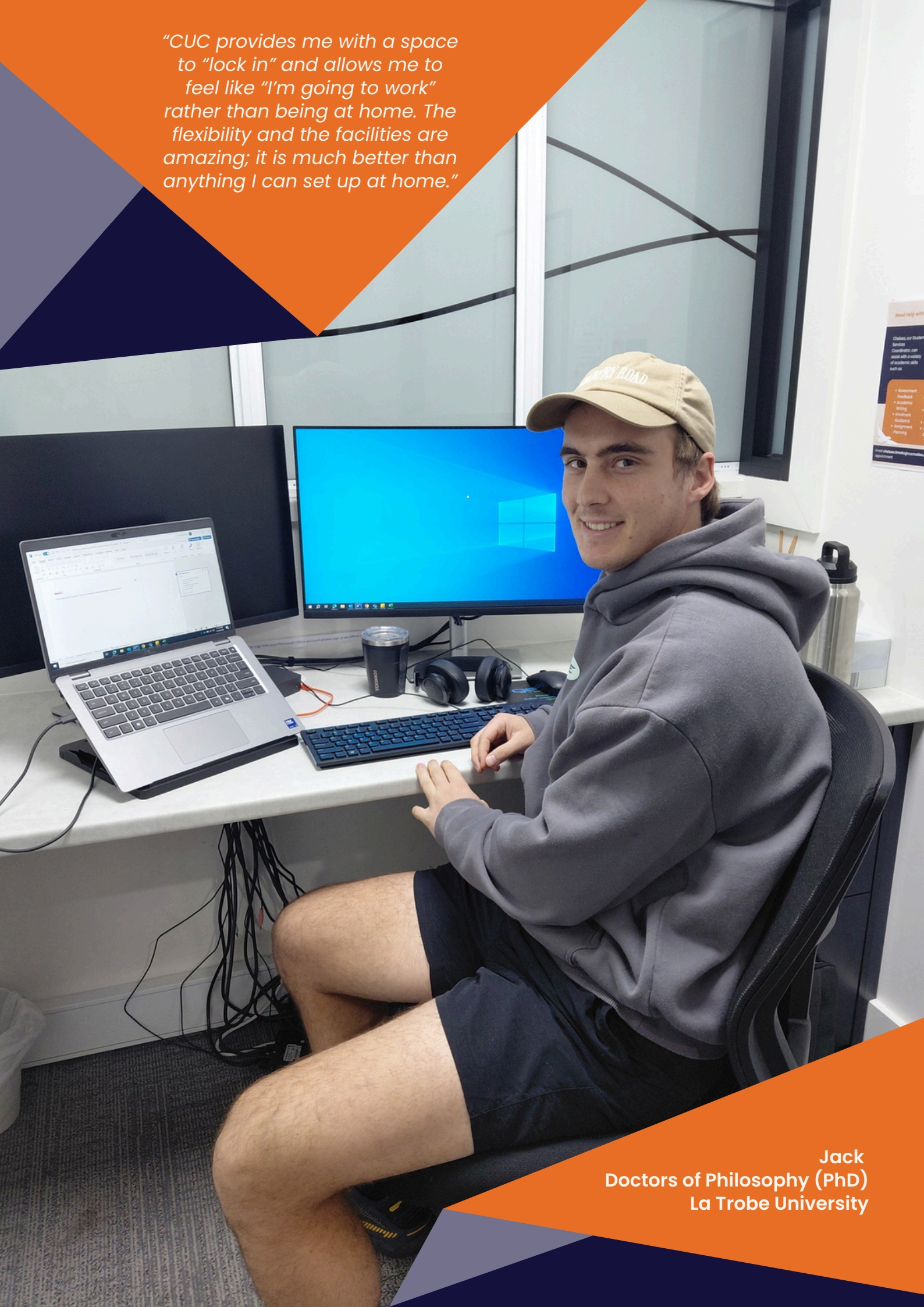
*CUC Mallee has been busy building connections with local organisations and groups across the region. This has allowed us to begin forming a picture of what the community and individual organisations need in higher education.*

## Local Events

*CUC Mallee has been visible and active in supporting community events, groups and networks. This has enabled us to spread the word about the Centre but also to project that CUC Mallee is a valued member of the community and is dedicated to sustained growth.*



*"CUC provides me with a space to "lock in" and allows me to feel like "I'm going to work" rather than being at home. The flexibility and the facilities are amazing; it is much better than anything I can set up at home."*



**Jack**  
**Doctors of Philosophy (PhD)**  
**La Trobe University**



## Here For Our Students

*With the support of their local CUC regional, rural and remote students can follow their dreams when it comes to study. CUC Mallee has responded to student needs and created an innovative model that allows choice by supporting any student, studying any course, at any Australian Tertiary Education Provider.*

*The wrap-around model of student services extends existing university services by providing face-to-face academic, wellbeing, technology and administrative. Students are integrated into the center to provide a learning community. These extra layers of support are crucial for many students who study at CUC Mallee.*

*Regional students are often at greater risk of attrition. Many students are from low socio-economic backgrounds, are the first in their family to attend university, or have caring responsibilities and multiple other commitments. CUC Mallee offers a free, safe and welcoming environment to study with flexible and personalised face-to-face support. CUC Mallee understand that students are individuals that need a variety of services to meet their needs so that we meet students where they are in their education journey.*

*CUC Mallee supports students from across the region, with the provision of a well-resourced study space. The students are also supported by a Centre Manager, Centre Administrator, Student Services Coordinator and a Partnership and Engagement Coordinator.*

# Student Services







# Year In Review

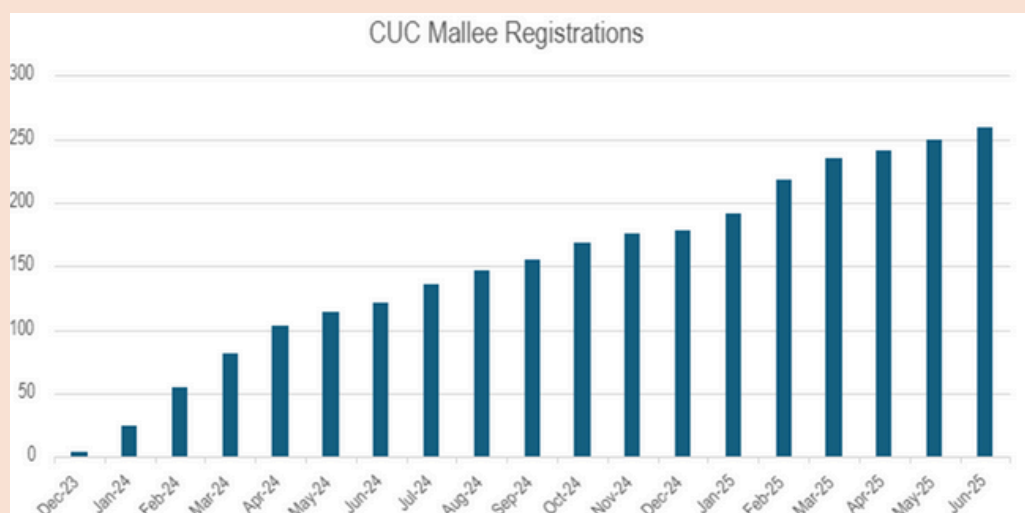
## A Time For Growth

### 2024

- September - CUC Mallee's first Open Day
- September - VCE students given access to the Centre for school holidays and SWOTVAC
- September - 150<sup>th</sup> Student registered
- October - Meeting with Peter Walsh, state member for Murray Plains, leader of the Nationals and Deputy Leader of the Opposition
- November - CUC Mallee's First AGM
- November - Three new directors appointed to the board
- November - End of Year celebration
- December - One year anniversary of CUC Mallee

### 2025

- February - Ann Webster, Federal Member for Mallee and Shadow Assistant Minister for Regional Health toured the Centre
- February - Launch of the Nexus program with La Trobe University at CUC Mallee
- February - 200<sup>th</sup> Student registered
- March - Outdoor area opened
- May - New study rooms opened
- June - 250<sup>th</sup> student registered



## New Study Spaces

With our students numbers increasing at a rapid rate, it was pleasing to see the development of two of the cells in two study spaces and also an extra space for our staff. With many lessons learnt from the original spaces, these rooms will prove to be very popular with students.

## Staffing

The past 12 months have seen the Centre become fully staffed. This has ensured that students have the full range of wrap around support services. It has also enabled Centre staff to engage with local organisations, schools, industry and community groups.

## New Funding Including Partnership Funding

Securing funding for the next four years has given CUC Mallee the confidence to continue the implementation of current programs and look to establish new ones. Gaining access to Partnership funding has allowed us to begin the process of investing in new programs to assist our current and future students.



2025 Highlights

# 2025 SEMESTER 1 **SNAPSHOT**



**40%**  
are the first in  
their family  
to study



**3%**  
of students  
identify as  
Indigenous

## **171 STUDENTS**



**35+**  
UNIVERSITIES  
& NUHEPS

**62%**  
study  
full  
time



**38%**  
study  
part  
time

## **TOP AREAS OF STUDY**

**36%**

**Health**

**26%**

**Education**

**16%**

**Psychology,  
social work &  
Community  
Services**

**13+**  
different  
areas of  
study

**77%**  
female



**23%**  
male



# 2025 ALUMNI

## CUC Mallee



**Bridgette**

**Bachelor of Education (Primary)**  
*La Trobe University*

**Paige**

**Bachelor of Education (Primary)**  
*La Trobe University*

**Sonja**

**Bachelor of Nursing**  
*Charles Sturt University*

**Tracie**

**Bachelor of Nursing**  
*Federation University*

**Maya**

**Bachelor of Education (Primary)**  
*La Trobe University*

**Shaniah**

**Graduate Diploma in Midwifery**  
*La Trobe University*

**Lucy**

**Master of Professional Psychology**  
*La Trobe University*

**Caelah**

**Masters of Advanced Nursing**  
*Monash University*

**Emily**

**Graduate Certificate in Agriculture**  
*University of New England*

**Olivia**

**Certificate in Accounting and Bookkeeping**  
*International Institute of Technology*

**Kathryn**

**Bachelor of Social Work (Honours)**  
*Charles Sturt University*

**Jacinta**

**Certificate IV in Celebrancy**  
*Rose Training Australia*

**Matisse**

**Bachelor of Nursing**  
*Federation University*

**Fiona**

**Bachelor of Counselling**  
*Sydney College of Divinity*

# 2025 ALUMNI

## CUC Mallee continued ...

**Veerpal**

**Bachelor of Social Work**  
*Australian College of Applied Professionals*

**Emma**

**Certificate IV in Community Services**  
*TAFE Digital NSW*

**Bonnie**

**Bachelor of Speech Pathology (Honours)**  
*La Trobe University*

**Christopher**

**Bachelor of Biomedical Science**  
*Victoria University*

**Kamani**

**Certificate III in Early Childhood Education and Care**  
*SuniTAFE*

**Mahli**

**Bachelor of Criminology and Psychological Science**  
*La Trobe University*

**Renee**

**Bachelor of Nursing**  
*Charles Sturt University*

**Cassandra**

**Certificate IV in Business**  
*TME Trade Training*

**Emily**

**Graduate Diploma in Mental Health Nursing**  
*Victoria University*

**Renee**

**Bachelor of Early Childhood Teaching**  
*Victoria University*

**Courtney**

**Bachelor of Nursing**  
*Charles Sturt University*

**Bryanna**

**Certificate IV in Accounting and Bookkeeping**  
*SuniTAFE*

**Jenna**

**Diploma of Community Services**  
*Aspire to Succeed*

**Eunis**

**Diploma of Childhood Education and Care**  
*Bendigo TAFE*

**Kasey**

**Certificate IV School Based Education Support**  
*Edutrain Australia*

**Ricky**

**Certificate IV School Based Education Support**  
*Edutrain Australia*



*"CUC Mallee has provided me with the perfect space for me to fully immerse myself in my studies and feel like I can receive the specialised support I received at uni in Melbourne."*



**Bonni**  
**Masters of Professional Psychology**  
**La Trobe University**





**Bringing degrees  
closer to regional, rural  
and remote Australia.**

Proudly supported by



**Australian Government**  
**Department of Education**