



20

ANNUAL  
REPORT

25



Country  
Universities  
Centre

MOUNT ISA









We wish to acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land, the Kalkadoon people who have walked these lands, where our site is located, for generations.

We pay our respects to elders past, present and emerging.







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# Message from The Chair



**Peta MacRae**

Chair

**This has been a year of significant growth and achievement for our Centre, marked by expanded services, strengthened partnerships, and an unwavering commitment to increasing access to higher education in our region.**

Key milestones this year include the appointment of a Student Services Coordinator and Learning Skills Advisor, which have enhanced our ability to support students. The introduction of Learning Skills Advice has boosted student confidence and performance, while our new Student Wellbeing initiatives, including monthly social events, have built a stronger sense of community. Additionally, we've expanded practical support for course exploration and application processes. Our collaboration with QUT's EQUIPT Program is addressing the teacher shortage by supporting local students and attracting city-based teachers. We're also excited about our partnership with James Cook University, which will

see JCU Prep delivered locally in 2026, providing an important pathway for local students.

Our team's attendance at the Widening Participation Forum has provided valuable insights to further increase access to education. The ideas, connections, and resources gained from this national forum are already informing our planning for activities and initiatives that can further lift access to higher education across our region. Looking to 2026, we are well-positioned for continued growth as we welcome expanded Board representation and progress opportunities to support students in the broader region.

Congratulations to the forty-two students who graduated this year, and thank you to everyone who contributed to our success.



# Centre Manager Report



## Sean Bower

### Centre Manager

**2025 highlighted the impact of investing in people—our students, our staff and our community partnerships—to create lasting change.**

This year has been one of meaningful consolidation for CUC Mount Isa as we focused on strengthening the depth and quality of our services. The expansion of our team has allowed us to take a more hands-on, proactive approach with students, particularly through personalised skill-building support and clearer pathways into study. Our wellbeing and community-building efforts have also grown, with social events becoming an important anchor for students balancing study, work and family commitments. A significant focus has been preparing the ground for long-term regional outcomes.

Our involvement in teacher-pipeline initiatives, including QUT's EQUIPT Program, is helping position Mount Isa as a practical training destination.

Momentum around JCU Prep has also been encouraging, with local delivery set to remove yet another access barrier for aspiring university students.

This year's graduates have been a powerful reminder of why our work matters. Many balanced shift work, parenting, and the challenges of returning to study after years away from education. Each graduate's journey—whether stepping into a new career, upskilling within their field, or becoming the first in their family to attend university—reinforces the transformative impact of accessible local support.

I would like to acknowledge the dedication of our staff and partners this year. Their commitment ensures our students are not only supported, but genuinely empowered to succeed.



*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 Mount Isa 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 students and ensuring they have the tools to succeed in their higher education journey.*



*"This centre became my essential lifeline, aircon, Wi-Fi, and unlimited snacks. I was also guaranteed a spot to complete my work with full concentration. To the CUC team, I thank you for the space you have provided for me."*



**Abbie Chandler**  
Bachelor of Early Childhood  
and Primary Education  
Australian Catholic  
University



# CUC Mount Isa Strategy

## Our Vision

Driving change in regional education by empowering local and visiting students in our region to fulfil their potential through higher education. Increasing access to higher education by providing a highly connected learning community in our region to promote success in learning.

## Our Mission

To provide Mount Isa students with the space and tools they need to create a vibrant and more prosperous future for themselves and their wider community.

## Our Values

Accessible  
Safe and Secure  
Equitable  
Success in Tertiary Education

### GOAL 1: Local needs and partnerships

Empower regional voices by actively consulting and partnering with local stakeholders

### GOAL 2: Student sense of security & belonging

To enable strong sense of belonging within a safe and inviting learning environment

### GOAL 3: Student success and progression

Foster a culture of academic success and improve progression and graduation rates

### GOAL 4: Regional workforce development

Support workforce readiness and enhance regional economic development

### GOAL 5: Sustainable centre operations

Ensure the long-term sustainability of the CUC Mount Isa Centre





# Board Members

Locally managed to respond to local need.



**PETA MACRAE**  
Chair



**CHRIS POCOCK**  
Deputy Chair



**PETE TUPPURAINEN**  
Financial Officer



**CHAD KING**  
Board Member



**NICK DONKER**  
Board Member



**ERIN MISKELLY**  
Secretary



**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.**

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### **The Australian Government**

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.

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

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

# **Partnerships: Government & Community**

## How CUC Mount Isa Partners with Community and Education Providers

### Skills Generation

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In 2025, Skills Generation (RTO) has visited Mount Isa and provided face-to-face delivery of Community Services education to local professionals and empowered over 30 students under the DESBT Rural and Remote Pilot Program across four community-based qualifications including Certificate III in Community Services and Certificate IV in Child, Youth and Family Intervention which were completed by most students. Skills Generation team have partnered with CUC Mount Isa to ensure a wrap-around support of their students at the Centre.

### Mount Isa Mines

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As a Foundation Partner, Mount Isa Mines is supporting CUC Mount Isa through a Community Grant that contributed to purchasing integral technology for our study spaces, including computers, monitors, and docking stations. The grant also assists with decor that helps make the Centre feel like home and is regularly used by students between intensive study sessions. In addition, it supports the creation of custom cultural artwork that reflects CUC Mount Isa's values, designed by prominent Kalkatunga artist Barbara Sam, further strengthening the cultural identity and welcoming atmosphere of our Centre.

### Student Art Gallery by APA

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APA is a proud supporter of the Spinifex Senior Students Art Gallery, a project bringing community together through art. Year 12 students were encouraged to create art reflecting on the themes of 'lifelong learning' and 'stories we tell'. This project was initiated to encourage students and broader community in engaging with CUC Mount Isa and further spreading the message of lifelong learning as well as accessibility of education in the region. The artworks add a nice touch to the CUC Mount Isa decor and inspire all visitors to this day.

### University Champions

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Our collaboration with QUT's EQUIPT Program is helping address the region's teacher shortage by supporting local students into teaching pathways while encouraging city-based students to complete placements and Permission to Teach roles in Mount Isa. We are also excited about our partnership with James Cook University, with JCU Prep to be delivered locally in 2026.

Partnerships



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

# Community Engagement

## Mount Isa City Council

*Our regional study hub is strongly supported by the Mount Isa City Council, whose commitment has been crucial to the Centre's growth and community engagement. Their support provides a stable foundation for expanding services and ensuring local students can access quality study spaces close to home, reinforcing our shared vision for stronger regional educational opportunities.*



## Murtupuni Centre for Rural and Remote Health (CRRH) JCU

*Murtupuni is an internationally recognised, community engaged, regionally focused and multi-site University Department of Rural Health. We support Murtupuni's purpose of attracting, building and retaining a high-quality health workforce in rural, remote and outback Queensland. Local and visiting students utilise CUC Mount Isa's facility, services and connections while resources and opportunities to collaborate are shared. We are excited to explore how our centres can continue support each other.*

## Schools & Pathways to Education

*Our partnerships with local schools are central to encouraging more young people to pursue further education. Through outreach, we help school students see the opportunities available after graduation, while our work with youth services supports those already out of school to consider VET or university degrees. These collaborations play an important role in opening doors for young people and widening education options across our region.*

## 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. The CUC 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 provides face-to-face academic, wellbeing, technology, administrative support in a learning community 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 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 responsibilities and multiple other commitments. The CUC offers a free, safe and welcoming environment to study with flexible and personalised face-to-face support. The CUC 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.*

*in 2025, CUC Mount Isa has created even more opportunities for connection and student support by expanding the team who are guided by our values and mission in the community. These developments have strengthened the student experience and deepened our impact. We look forward to building on this progress in the years ahead, ensuring even more students can thrive.*

# Student Services



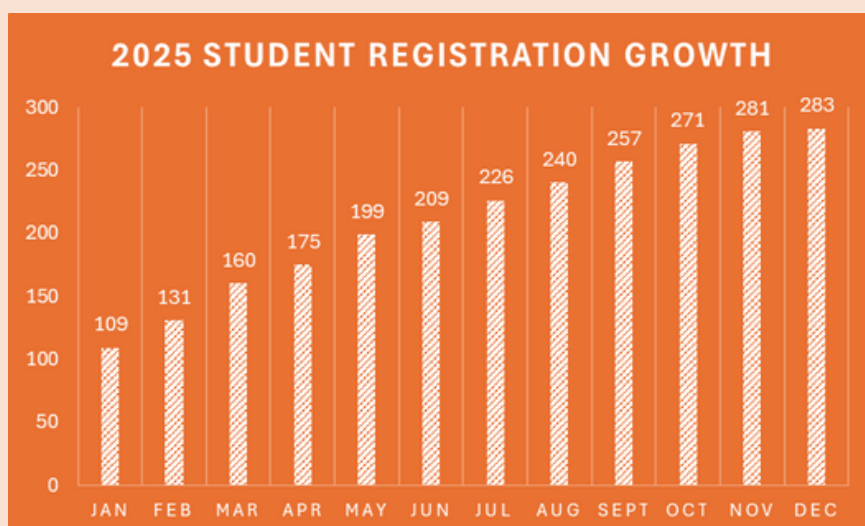




# Year In Review

## A Time For Growth

- 38 attended five student-centred events
- 100+ students, family and friends attended two graduations
- Organised and attended 20+ local community events, including CUC Art Gallery Opening, University Visits, School Events and Job Expos
- 7 students attended Learning Skills Advice Sessions in Sem 2
- 8 students engaged in pre-study support in Sem 2
- 15 Invigilated exams
- 30+ Professional Development sessions attended by the team, including RUSH Network Sessions, CUC Central Community of Practice Sessions and a three-day Widening Participation Forum in Canberra
- Additional 184 students joined the Centre



## Growing Team

The expansion of our team through the addition of a Student Services Coordinator and Learning Skills Advisor has been a major milestone this year. These positions have enabled us to provide more consistent and student-centred support than ever before.

## Community Connection

CUC Mount Isa has been slowly chipping away at the hearts of the community by the consistent presence at local events, radio stations and even local office competitions. We are proud of our Centre's mission and continuously spread awareness about our services in town.

## Study Space Upgrades

Our Centre is equipped with all facilities students might require and we are grateful for the key partners who helped make the space look cosy and functional for daily use. The Centre is pleasant to be at, has all the required equipment to study (including VR Headsets) and to take meaningful breaks.

## Forty-Two Graduates

It is a tremendous achievement for our dedicated local students, who consistently showed up, pushed through moments of self-doubt, managed competing work and family commitments, and ultimately walked away with meaningful outcomes that strengthened both their professional development and personal growth.



2025 Highlights



# 2025 SNAPSHOT



**50%**  
are the first in  
their family  
to study



**34%**  
of students  
identify as  
Indigenous

## 285 STUDENTS



**40+**  
UNIVERSITIES  
& NUHEPS

**40%**  
study  
full  
time



**60%**  
study  
part  
time

## TOP AREAS OF STUDY

**30%**

Health

**22%**

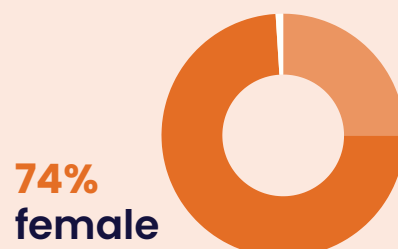
Education

**20%**

Psychology,  
social work &  
Community  
Services

**15** <sup>+</sup>  
different  
areas of  
study

**1% other**



**74%**  
female

**25%**  
male

*"CUC has been invaluable throughout my practicum, providing a dedicated space where I can focus on preparing lesson plans without distraction. In addition to essential resources such as printing facilities and (most importantly) coffee, the CUC has played a crucial role during my placement in Mount Isa."*



**Aaron Knight**  
Master of Teaching (Primary)  
Queensland University of  
Technology



# Celebrating Our Students

## *Our greatest achievements*



**Rebecca Johnson**  
**Graduate Certificate in  
Education (Science of Learning)**  
*Edith Cowan University*

I am a 25 year old teacher originally from Hobart, Tasmania. I ventured up to Mount Isa this year for the opportunity to teach First Nations students in a remote setting and contribute to closing Australia's education gap. I didn't have WIFI at my house so I couldn't study from home. The free WIFI at CUC Mount Isa made accessing content and completing readings possible. Balancing full time work and part time study was also challenging. I preferred to study on weekends, the out of hours access at CUC made studying on weekends possible and easy for me. I completed my Graduate Certificate in Education in September this year, earning two distinctions and two high distinctions for my efforts. The free and flexible access to CUC Mount Isa was fundamental to my success.

I am originally from the Republic of Ireland and moved to Australia in 2004. My Background was in Hospitality for the last 15 years. Upon moving back to Mount Isa, I decided to start a career in Youth Residential Work which I am really enjoying. I have just completed my Certificate IV in Child, Youth and Family Intervention. Currently with staff shortages, we are very busy at work so it has been difficult to fit my studies in whilst working. It has been challenging at times but I pushed it through and got it done. I have learned a lot about the industry through the training received with Skills Generation, supported by CUC Mount Isa, I can't thank them enough for their professionalism. It is very important to have CUC in local towns as it helps people with learning new skills and gaining a good education which normally wouldn't be easy in a rural town.



**Richie O'Sullivan**  
**Certificate IV in Child, Youth  
and Family Intervention**  
*Skills Generation*



# Sheree O'Loughlin

**Certificate III in Community Services**  
*Skills Generation*

I chose to study because I've always had a strong desire to support people in need and to make a positive impact in my community. This course offered me a solid foundation to understand social issues, develop practical skills and work effectively with diverse groups. It also aligned with my long-term goal of building a career in social work or community development where I can contribute to meaningful change in people's lives. Having the CUC in my town is incredibly valuable to me. It offers essential resources like study spaces, reliable internet and academic support that I wouldn't easily access otherwise.

Being able to study locally allows me to remain connected to my community and family while advancing my education. It makes it easier to manage my commitments and stay focused on my goals, which is something I truly appreciate. Through both classroom learning and practical placements, I developed confidence and real world experience. Each step has deepened my passion for the field and motivated me to continue learning through further study or more hands-on roles in the future. I am proud of myself for what I have achieved and graduated. I haven't had a qualification before, I have received multiple job offers elsewhere.





# 2025 ALUMNI

## CUC Mount Isa

**Shantel Busch**

**Certificate IV Child Youth and Family  
Intervention**

*Skills Generation*

**Gavin Casey**

**Certificate IV Child Youth and Family  
Intervention**

*Skills Generation*

**Lenora Spina**

**Certificate IV in Mental Health**

*Skills Generation*

**Namfon Thaweenan**

**Certificate III in Individual Support  
Ageing and Disability**

*Skills Generation*

**Emma Rosso**

**Certificate IV in Mental Health**

*Skills Generation*

**Sarah Schraag**

**Certificate III in Community Services**

*Skills Generation*

**Courtney Smith- Marshall**

**Certificate III in Community Services**

*Skills Generation*

**Rene Thompson**

**Certificate III in Community Services**

*Skills Generation*

**Sheree O' Loughlin**

**Certificate III in Community Services**

*Skills Generation*

**Lynette Sarmardin**

**Certificate III in Community Services**

*Skills Generation*

**Thomas Potter**

**Certificate III in Community Services**

*Skills Generation*

**Bonnie McCash**

**Certificate III in Community Services**

*Skills Generation*

**Tatenda Makomichi**

**Certificate IV Child Youth and Family  
Intervention (Residential and Out-of-  
Home Care)**

*Skills Generation*

**Charlize Ferguson**

**Certificate IV Child Youth and Family  
Intervention (Residential and Out-of-  
Home Care)**

*Skills Generation*



# 2025 ALUMNI

## CUC Mount Isa

### **Margaret Major**

**Certificate IV Child Youth and Family  
Intervention (Residential and Out-of-  
Home Care**

*Skills Generation*

### **Trevor Dempsey**

**Certificate IV Child Youth and Family  
Intervention (Residential and Out-of-  
Home Care**

*Skills Generation*

### **Enriquita Ramiso**

**Certificate IV Child Youth and Family  
Intervention (Residential and Out-of-  
Home Care**

*Skills Generation*

### **Kiana Smith**

**Certificate IV Child Youth and Family  
Intervention (Residential and Out-of-  
Home Care**

*Skills Generation*

### **Melisah Svareva**

**Certificate IV Child Youth and Family  
Intervention (Residential and Out-of-  
Home Care**

*Skills Generation*

### **Emily French**

**Certificate IV Child Youth and Family  
Intervention (Residential and Out-of-  
Home Care**

*Skills Generation*

### **Aaron Woodbury**

**Certificate IV Child Youth and Family  
Intervention (Residential and Out-of-  
Home Care**

*Skills Generation*

### **Elizabeth Major**

**Certificate IV Child Youth and Family  
Intervention (Residential and Out-of-  
Home Care**

*Skills Generation*

### **Richie O'Sullivan**

**Certificate IV Child Youth and Family  
Intervention (Residential and Out-of-  
Home Care**

*Skills Generation*

### **Kristy Crittenden**

**Certificate IV Child Youth and Family  
Intervention (Residential and Out-of-  
Home Care**

*Skills Generation*

### **Annastasia Muller**

**Certificate IV Child Youth and Family  
Intervention (Residential and Out-of-  
Home Care**

*Skills Generation*

### **Teaaka Portch**

**Certificate IV Child Youth and Family  
Intervention (Residential and Out-of-  
Home Care**

*Skills Generation*

### **Cherie Johnstone**

**Certificate IV Child Youth and Family  
Intervention (Residential and Out-of-  
Home Care**

*Skills Generation*

### **Travis Parker**

**Certificate IV Child Youth and Family  
Intervention (Residential and Out-of-  
Home Care**

*Skills Generation*





# 2025 ALUMNI

## CUC Mount Isa

**Shaleece Ah-Wing Johnstone**  
**Certificate IV Child Youth and Family  
Intervention (Residential and Out-of-  
Home Care**  
*Skills Generation*

**Jodi Brown**  
**Doctor of Philosophy (Health)**  
*James Cook University*

**William Davidson**  
**Graduate Certificate in Business  
Administration**  
*University of New Castle*

**Anna Peterson**  
**Bachelor Of Business (Accounting)**  
*Queensland University of Technology*

**Abbie Chandler**  
**Bachelor Of Early Childhood**  
*Australian Catholic University*

**Megan Crowther**  
**Diploma of Project Management**  
*TAFE Queensland*

**Susan Morey**  
**Bachelor of Psychological Science  
(Honours)**  
*Federation University of Australia*

**Keith Stalling**  
**Bachelor of Information Studies**  
*Charles Sturt University*

**Renee Collins**  
**Diploma in Community Services**  
*Central Queensland University*

**Kayla Handley**  
**Bachelor of Education (Early Childhood  
and Primary)**  
*University of New England*

**Loretta Gladstone**  
**Diploma of Leadership and  
Management**  
*TAFE Queensland*

**Gabrielle Gordon**  
**Masters of Learning and Teaching**  
*University of Southern Queensland*

**Rebecca Johnson**  
**Graduate Certificate in Education  
(Science of Learning)**  
*Edith Cowan University*

A woman in a police uniform, wearing a cap and sunglasses, is shown from the chest up. She has numerous medals on her left chest and a 'XISES' patch on her right chest. She is holding a bouquet of orange and white flowers. The background is a light-colored wall with a door handle visible. The image is framed by orange and dark blue geometric shapes.

Renee Collins  
Diploma in Community Services  
Central Queensland University

*"Having CUC welcome you with a dedicated space and support available assisted me to feel as though I had another member of my own team to push me forward in overcoming study cramps and disbelief in myself."*





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

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**Department of Education**



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MINES**  
A GLENCORE COMPANY