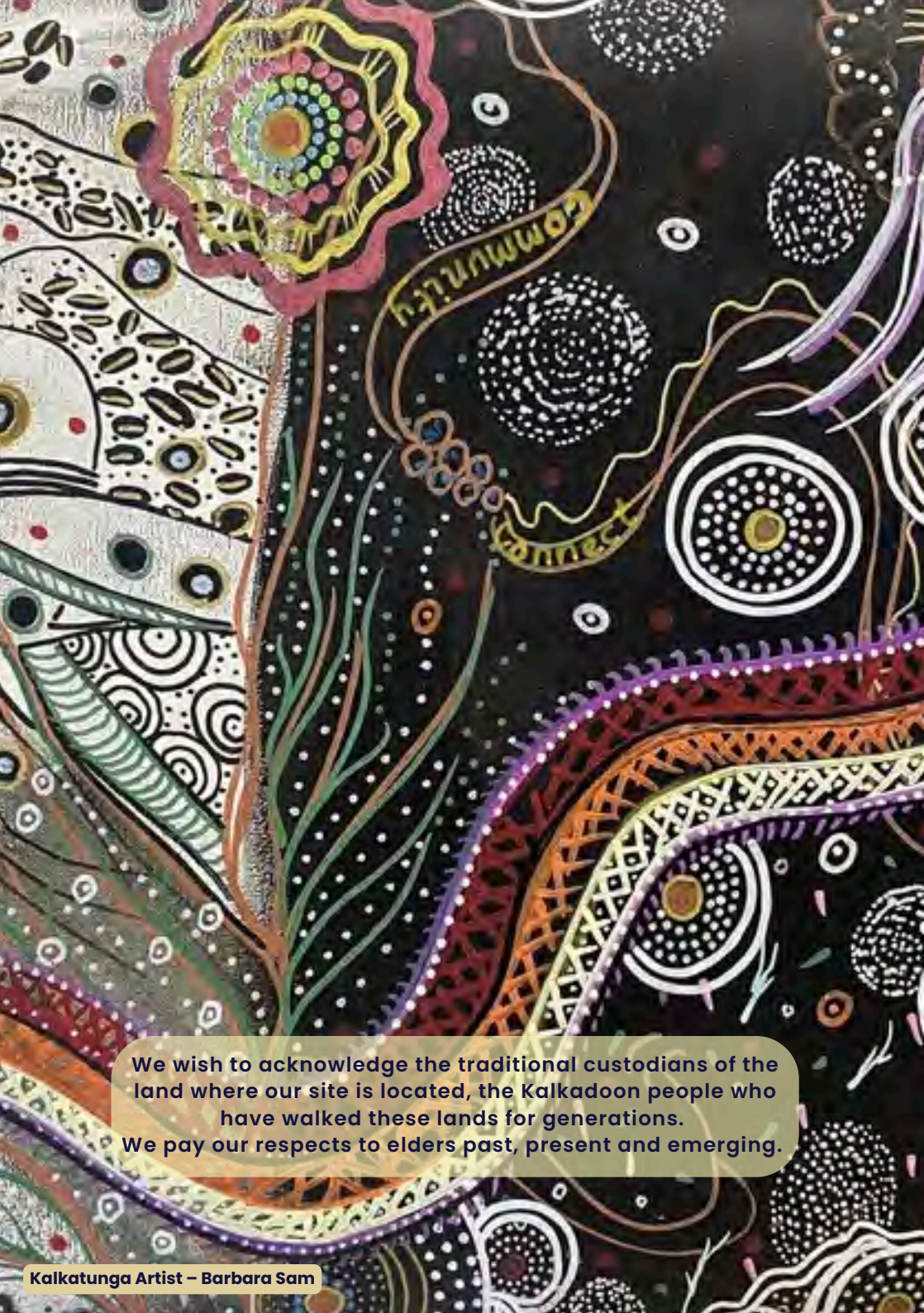


2026 ANNUAL REPORT

Country Universities Centre
MOUNT ISA



We wish to acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land where our site is located, the Kalkadoon people who have walked these lands for generations.
We pay our respects to elders past, present and emerging.

Kalkatunga Artist – Barbara Sam

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Message from **The Chair**



Peta MacRae

Chair

As Chair of the Board, it is my pleasure to reflect on another successful year for CUC Mount Isa. Throughout 2026, the Centre continued to strengthen its role as a vital educational hub, supporting more local people than ever before to access higher education and training. Student registrations grew to 480 by October 2026, reflecting the increasing value the community places on local study opportunities.

One of the most encouraging outcomes has been the strong alignment between student aspirations and regional workforce needs. More than half of our students are studying in health and education-related fields, helping to address critical workforce shortages across North West Queensland. We have also seen continued growth in vocational pathways through providers such as Skills Generation, creating new opportunities for learners at all stages of life.

The appointment of a Widening Participation Officer and the commencement of community consultation activities have strengthened our efforts to make education more accessible across the region. New and emerging partnerships with universities including James Cook University, Central Queensland University, Queensland University of Technology and Charles Darwin University are expanding pathways and support for students.

The Centre maintained a strong community presence through local events, outreach activities, and the unveiling of our commissioned artwork by local Kalkadoon artist Barbara Sam during NAIDOC Week, celebrating culture, learning, and inclusion.

While facility and funding challenges required ongoing attention, the dedication of our staff, Board, partners, and supporters ensured the Centre remained focused on delivering positive outcomes for students. As we look toward 2027, we do so with confidence, supported by strong growth, expanding partnerships, and a shared commitment to educational opportunity across our region.

Centre Manager Report



Sean Bower

Centre Manager

2026 has been a year of growth, innovation and impact for CUC Mount Isa. As student registrations increased from 284 at the end of 2025 to 480 by October 2026, our focus remained on delivering personalised support that helps regional students access, participate in and succeed in tertiary education.

A significant achievement this year has been the expansion of student support services. New resources including the Pre-Study Toolkit, School Leaver Toolkit and a suite of online learning support tools have strengthened pathways into tertiary education, while our Learning Skills Advisor program expanded to include regular supportive gatherings in the Centre over brekky and a cuppa. The opening of the Wellbeing Oasis and introduction of regular student connection activities further enhanced the student experience.

Community engagement continued to be a cornerstone of our work. Through partnerships with schools, universities, industry and community organisations, CUC Mount Isa delivered student events, hosted visiting cohorts, participated in regional expos and supported initiatives including QUT EQuIPT, STEM Changemakers and the onboarding of a Widening Participation Officer to drive community consultation towards lifting aspiration and attachment to tertiary education in Mount Isa.

The year also laid important foundations for the future. While faced with the challenge of significant cost increases, we secured new grant funding, completed a major network upgrade, progressed building compliance works and commenced delivery planning for the Widening Participation Program. These initiatives position CUC Mount Isa to extend our reach and impact in the years ahead.

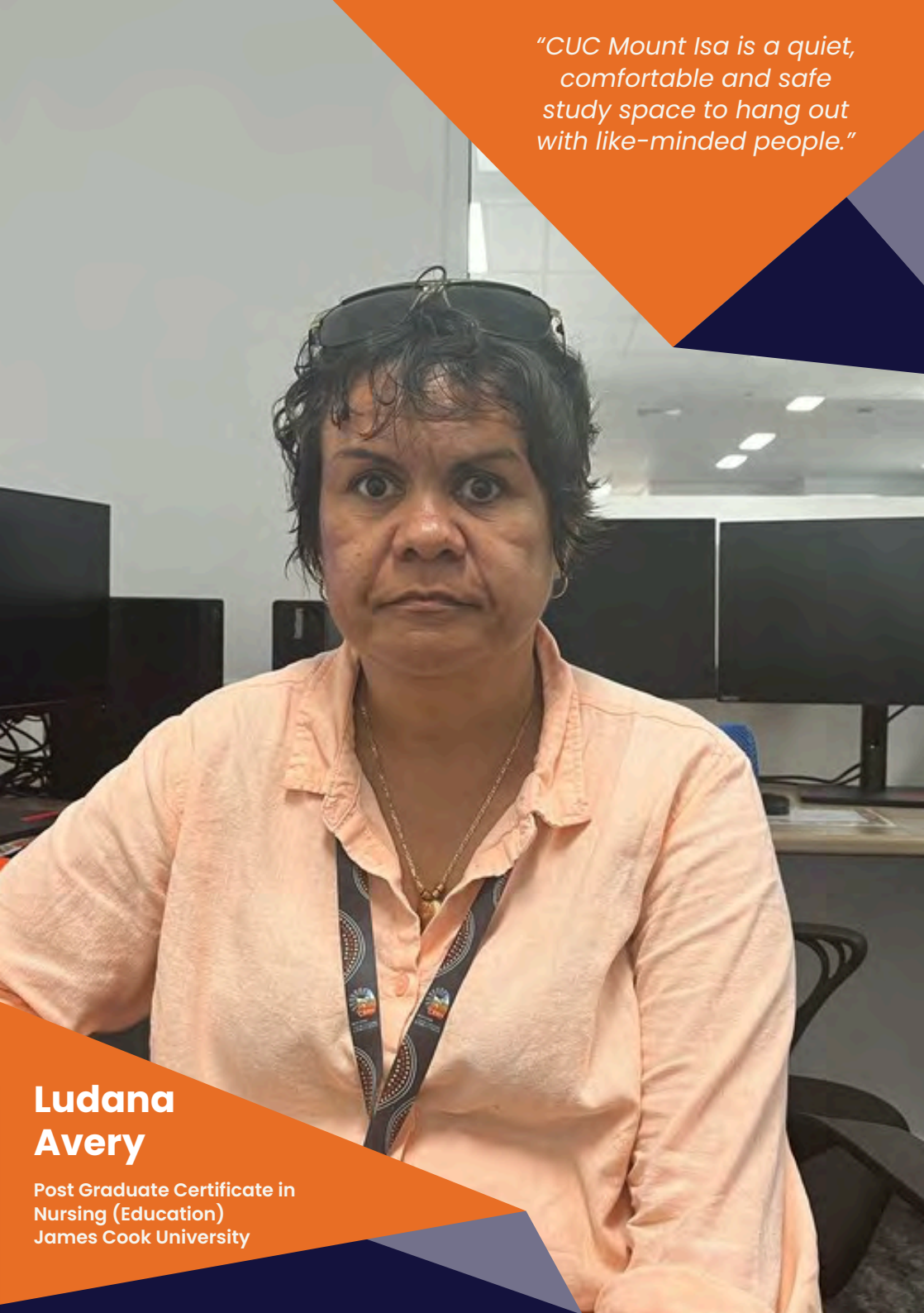
Most importantly, I thank our staff, Board, partners and students. Their commitment, resilience and belief in the value of education continue to transform lives and strengthen our region.

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 locally owned, dedicated learning and study space that supports any student, studying any course, at any Australian tertiary 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.

"CUC Mount Isa is a quiet, comfortable and safe study space to hang out with like-minded people."



Ludana Avery

Post Graduate Certificate in Nursing (Education)
James Cook 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



ROIANNE WEST
Board Member



NICK DONKER
Board Member



DARRIN MACKENZIE
Board Member

Partnerships: Government & Community

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

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.

Foundation for Regional Rural and Renewal (FRRR)

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

How CUC Mount Isa Partners with Community and Education Providers

Mount Isa Mines

Mount Isa Mines supported CUC Mount Isa through a Community Grant that contributed to an upgrade of CUC Mount Isa's technical network resulting in easier and more reliable access to systems for students. In addition further funding has been provided to uplift CUC Mount Isa facilities to ensure the growing student cohort are equipped to succeed into the future.

Powerlink

Powerlink supported CUC Mount Isa through a Community Grant that contributed to the Wellbeing Oasis, providing space and facilities in support of student's taking a break, refreshing and maintaining wellbeing while completing their studies.

Skills Generation

CUC Mount Isa has continued its support of Skills Generation's local delivery of qualifications in Community Services and Mental Health.

QUT

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.

QUT is engaged to research, design and deliver tools specific to Mount Isa that assist students digital and online learning.

Murtupuni - 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.

Partnerships

Community Engagement

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.

Bell & Moir Toyota

LOCALS SUPPORTING LOCALS

Bell and Moir Toyota's generous support of a Toyota Landcruiser ensures CUC Mount Isa can reach out to our community, building awareness and lifting aspirations towards tertiary education in North West Queensland.



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 establishment and community engagement.

Widening Participation

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



Cultural Artwork

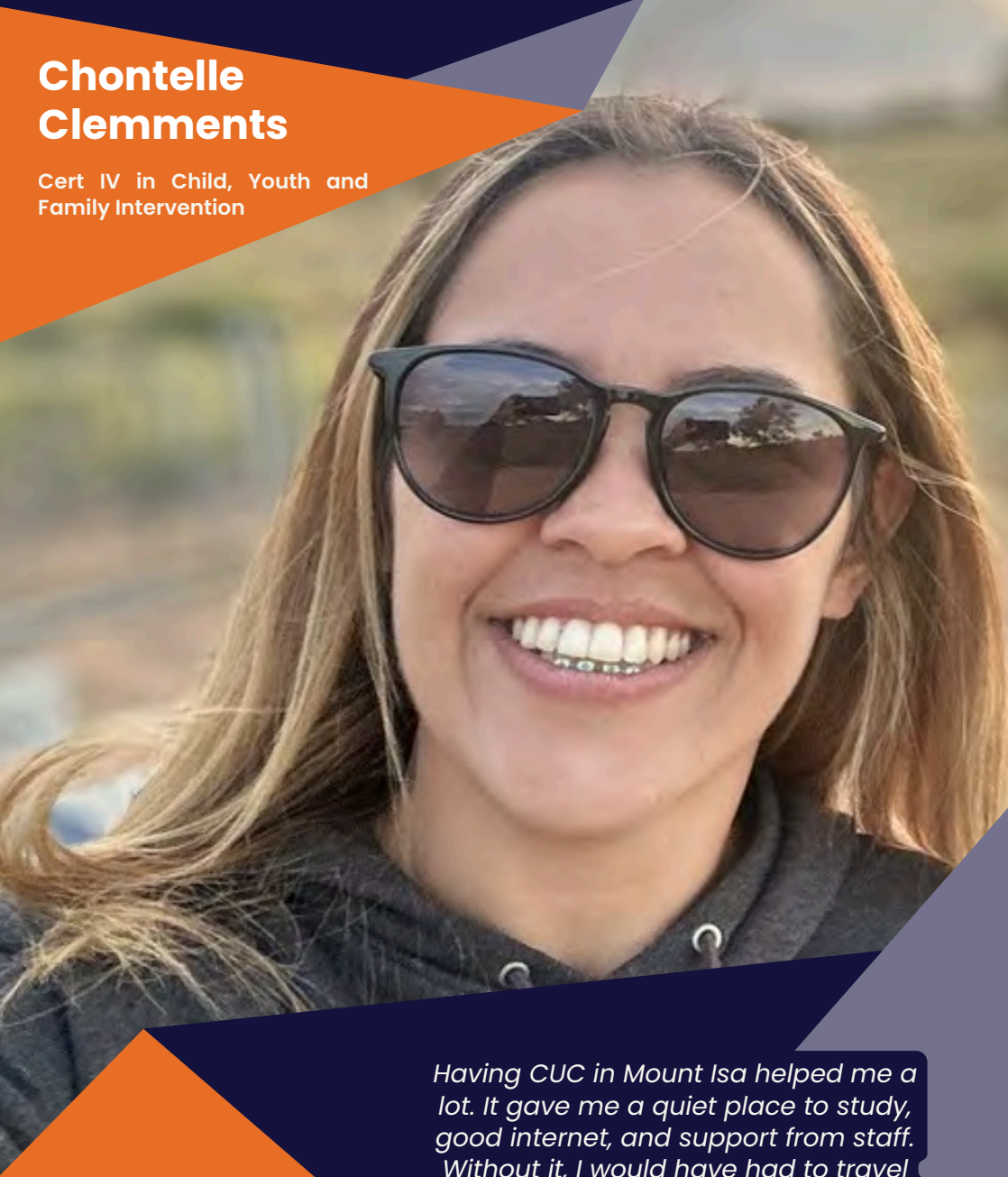
CUC Mount Isa proudly unveiled a new culturally significant mural during NAIDOC Week, celebrating local First Nations culture, connection and education through the work of Kalkadoon artist Barbara Sam.

Barbara Sam, local Kalkadoon artist, created a striking and culturally rich artwork that now welcomes students, visitors and community members at the entrance to CUC Mount Isa. Her piece captures the spirit of connection, learning and cultural pride that underpins the Centre's work.

For CUC Mount Isa, the mural is more than a piece of public art—it is a visible expression of belonging. By welcoming local culture into the heart of the Centre, the artwork helps create a space where students, families and community members can feel safe, represented and connected throughout their educational journey.

Chontelle Clemments

Cert IV in Child, Youth and Family Intervention



Having CUC in Mount Isa helped me a lot. It gave me a quiet place to study, good internet, and support from staff. Without it, I would have had to travel far or study at home with distractions. It helped me stay motivated and complete my course.

Student Services

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 understands 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 2026, CUC Mount Isa has created even more opportunities for connection and student support by expanding the team, tools and services that 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.







Year In Review
A Time For Growth

Student Engagement 2026

49	Students attended seven student-centred events
32	Learning Skills Advice support sessions
10	Pre-Study support sessions
8	Wellness and General support sessions
19	Invigilated exams
200	Additional students joined the Centre
56	Graduations



2026 SNAPSHOT

56%
are the first in their family to study



484 STUDENTS

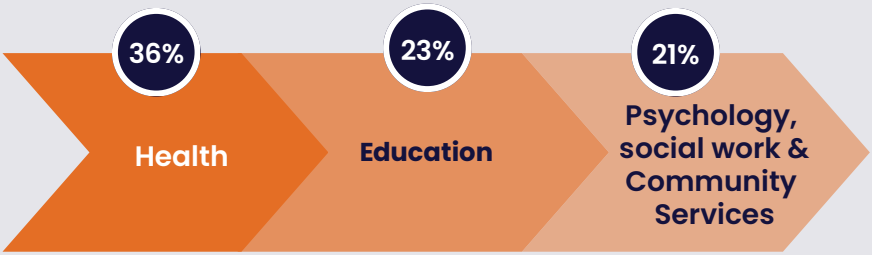
40+
UNIVERSITIES & Ed Providers

56% study full time

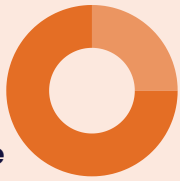


44% study part time

TOP AREAS OF STUDY



15+ different areas of study



25% male

75% female

STEM Changemakers

Founded and facilitated by Sarah Chapman, the STEM Changemakers program connected students with industry and university experts to solve local issues specific to Mount Isa - including mine rehabilitation, plastic waste and remote health.

- 20 local students
- 6 week program
- 4 local real-world problems to solve
- Local Industry and Community Mentors
- 1 big celebration and student presentations



STEM Changemakers



Debbie Gibson

Graduate Diploma of Early Childhood Education
Swinburne University

Completing my Graduate Diploma in Early Childhood Teaching challenged me, helped me grow, and gave me the confidence to believe in my abilities and pursue my passion for working with young children.
I have developed a deeper understanding of the importance of the early years in shaping children's lives.

My studies have opened the door to new career opportunities and enabled me to take meaningful steps towards becoming a qualified early childhood teacher.

CUC Mount Isa provided a place where I could study, access resources and connect with others while balancing my personal and academic responsibilities. Knowing that I had support available when I needed it made the journey feel much more manageable.

CUC Mount Isa's support helped me stay motivated, to overcome challenges and believe in myself. Completing my Graduate Diploma in Early Childhood Teaching is something I am very proud of, and CUC Mount Isa was an important part of that journey.



2026 ALUMNI
CUC Mount Isa

Susan Lafaele
Bachelor of Public Health -Environment Health
Central Queensland University

Cathryn Carlisle
Graduate Diploma of Rural Generalist Practice
James Cook University

Evelyn Charles
Diploma of Chaplaincy
Eva Burrows College Vocational Training

Glen Charles
Diploma of Chaplaincy
Eva Burrows College Vocational Training

Christine Brauer
Diploma of Paralegal Studies
University of New England

Whitney Andia
Certificate III Early Childhood Education and Care
College Australian Early Childhood Educators

Emy Tefoto
Certificate III in Business Administration
TAFE Queensland

Ryan Taylor
Bachelor of Education (Secondary)
Queensland University of Technology

Paige Dunstone
Bachelor of Education (Secondary)
Griffith University

Loren Wilson
Master of Teaching (Secondary)
Central Queensland University

Trami Vuong
Graduate Certificate in Health Services Management
University of Technology Sydney

Merel Van Castel
Diploma of Child Youth and Family Intervention
Skills Generation

Kanyarat Thompson
Bachelor of Business
Swinburne University of Technology

Tobey Manning
Bachelor of Education (Secondary)
Queensland University of Technology

Charlotte Rose Stevenson
Master of Education (Secondary)
Queensland University of Technology

Nathan Garnsworthy
Master of Education (Secondary)
Queensland University of Technology

Circe Ramirez
Bachelor of Nursing
University of Southern Queensland

Anilia Lynch
Certificate III in Library and Customer Services
TAFE Queensland

Samantha Taylor
Bachelor Of Human Services
James Cook University

Nicholas Pascoe
Master of Business Administration
University of New South Wales

Nicole Mills
Diploma of Community Services
Australian College of community Services



Chelsea Peterson
Bachelor of Education (Primary)
University of Southern Cross

Jenna Groves
Graduate Certificate in Diabetes Education
James Cook University

Ruby Donovan
Bachelor of Education (Early Childhood and Primary)
Charles Sturt University

Benjamin McLeish
Bachelor of Education
Queensland University of Technology

Rhiannon Forde
Bachelor of Social Science (Behavioural Studies)
Swinburne University of Technology

Mia Eaton-Campbell
Certificate III in Business Administration
TAFE Queensland

Kennedy Benson
Bachelor of Nutrition and Dietetics
Griffith University

Taylan Aldas
Master of Education (Guidance and Counselling)
University of Southern Queensland

Joshua Wright
Bachelor of Science (Major in Computing)
University of Southern Queensland

Sarah Bohan
Master of Healthcare Redesign
University of Tasmania

Deborah Gibson
Graduate Diploma of Early Childhood Teaching
Swinburne University of Technology

Svitlana Cernoia
Graduate Certificate in Urban and Regional Planning
University of Queensland

Louise O'Connor
Bachelor of Nutrition and Dietetics
Griffith University

Samuel Sande
Certificate IV in Child Youth and Family Intervention
Skills Generation



Kirsty Mott
Certificate IV in Child Youth and Family Intervention
Skills Generation

Winnie Toriro
Certificate IV in Child Youth and Family Intervention
Skills Generation

John Marshall
Certificate IV in Child Youth and Family Intervention
Skills Generation

Lisa Dempsey
Certificate IV in Child Youth and Family Intervention
Skills Generation

Joy Mangachena
Certificate IV in Child Youth and Family Intervention
Skills Generation

Cecile Brumby
Certificate IV in Child Youth and Family Intervention
Skills Generation

Rollet Otieno
Certificate IV in Child Youth and Family Intervention
Skills Generation

Nicole Lutwyche
Certificate IV in Child Youth and Family Intervention
Skills Generation

Kevueli Nawaqaivalu
Certificate IV in Child Youth and Family Intervention
Skills Generation

Maui Manuela
Certificate IV in Child Youth and Family Intervention
Skills Generation

Tarsha-Rae Marshall
Certificate IV in Child Youth and Family Intervention
Skills Generation

Joanne Beuachamp
Certificate IV in Child Youth and Family Intervention
Skills Generation

Tyson Kahukiwa
Certificate IV in Child Youth and Family Intervention
Skills Generation

Louise Dempsey
Certificate IV in Child Youth and Family Intervention
Skills Generation

Elijah Alefaio
Certificate IV in Child Youth and Family Intervention
Skills Generation

Chontelle Clemments
Certificate IV in Child Youth and Family Intervention
Skills Generation

Karlee Marshall Barber
Certificate IV in Child Youth and Family Intervention
Skills Generation

Stevie Jacks
Certificate IV in Child Youth and Family Intervention
Skills Generation

Shayna Maea
Certificate IV in Child Youth and Family Intervention
Skills Generation

Karlieha Lyons
Certificate IV Child in Youth and Family Intervention
Skills Generation

Jessica Derr
Certificate IV in Child Youth and Family Intervention
Skills Generation

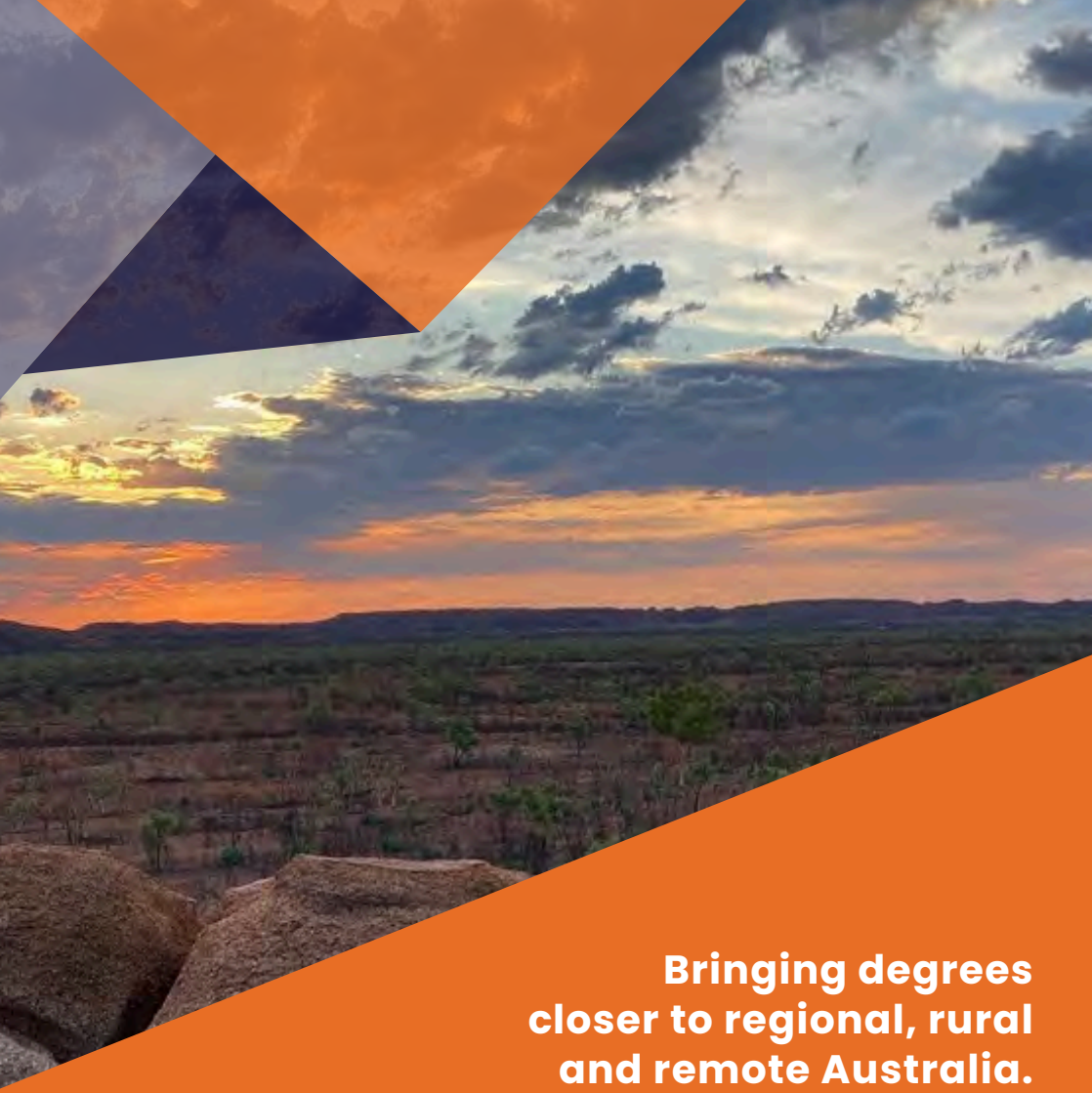




Nathan Garnsworthy

Master of Teaching (Secondary)
Queensland University of Technology

"Having a welcoming, reliable, and consistent place to study in Mount Isa has been incredibly important to me. Without the CUC, meeting assignment deadlines would have been extremely challenging. It provides not only a productive workspace but also a supportive environment. I always know the doors are open and that I will be greeted with a friendly face."



Bringing degrees closer to regional, rural and remote Australia.

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