



Transforming the lives of rural and regional youth through education, training and careers

From the CEO's desk...

There are so many exciting things happening at CEF and amongst our family of volunteers and students, it's difficult to know where to start.

The 2017 grant recipients are well into their studies and training now and it's wonderful to hear from so many of them already that their experiences are positive, challenging and affirming.

One such recipient, Isabella De Franceschi of Broken Hill, is supported by our friends at the Eureka Benevolent Foundation and is featured this issue.

Our new 'class of '17' recipients can also find inspiration in our other alumni stories this issue, Chris Mercer and Ceridwen Boel, who epitomise all that is so important and rewarding about our purpose. Chris, Ceridwen and Isabella are all outstanding young people, who, without your support may not have had the opportunity to study and grab hold of their exciting futures.

We have extraordinary donors and partners at CEF and I am thrilled to announce our latest partnership with the newly launched Audi Foundation. In partnering with Audi Foundation for the next four years, CEF will be able to help even more wonderful young people achieve their goals, continue to develop our very special and hardworking volunteer-run committees, like Cootamundra on page 4, and continue to grow our presence in all states increasing our impact nationally.

Tom Keenan of the Audi Foundation has long been a champion of CEF and



we are all very excited to be working with him and Audi to continue to invest in rural and regional students and their communities.

In early May, CEF held its annual Friends' Lunch at the beautiful Art Gallery NSW. Science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) was very much the theme of the lunch with guest speakers Dr Karl Kruszelnicki

AM and CEF alumni James Ansell – a Phd science communication student at ANU - speaking about the importance of education through a STEM lens.

Dr Karl challenged us to think outside the box – in his usual energetic style – and James, and other alumni ambassadors attending, reinforced how crucial, and life-changing, our combined investment in their education really is. I loved meeting our friends – donors, volunteers, supporters, recipients and partners - and it was a great privilege to be in a room filled with so much commitment to and hope for young people in country Australia.

As the end of the financial year approaches I hope you'll consider further contributing to the futures of our young people – you can feel confident that your donation has a tangible and long-lasting impact on the students we support.

We are a small charity with no government funding which needs all the help we can muster as we aim to create equal access to education for all.

Thank you all again so much for your ongoing support and vision.



**Audi Foundation**

Strengthening Communities

The Country Education Foundation of Australia is proud to announce a new partnership with the newly established Audi Foundation.

The Audi Foundation is a corporate philanthropic foundation funded by Audi Australia and the Audi Australia Dealer Network. Their primary method of support is through a grants program, where they will provide funding to not-for-profit organisations that share the same focus and ambition. This is where CEF comes in.

"The Audi Foundation and CEF have common goals in helping to provide access to vital education and training across rural and regional Australia to students looking to better themselves," Mr Keenan said.

"The Audi Foundation is proud to be partnering with CEF and we believe the work of CEF will be extremely beneficial and bring long-lasting value for scholarship recipients and their respective communities."

The Audi Foundation and CEF's collaborative interests include:

- Helping strengthen rural and regional Australia.
- Assisting young people in achieving their potential through improved health and educational outcomes.
- Promoting STEM studies and helping women to secure non-traditional careers

Welcome to the CEF family, Audi Foundation.

CEF Principal Partners:



MACQUARIE University

## Friends Lunch 2017

This May we were proud to host an array of friends, partners, supporters, alumni and recipients at our annual Friends Lunch. The annual gathering is a chance for us to thank our contributors and supporters who are key to transforming the lives of our recipients and furthering the careers of so many more young country Australians. It is also a chance for us to spread the word about some of our recipients' successes, meet faces we talk to often and have a meaningful conversation about where CEF is heading.

This year we were lucky enough to have Dr Karl Kruszelnicki address the audience, and entertain them with his fast-paced information drop. Dr Karl (pictured left) is a hero of one of our recipients James Ansell (pictured right). James also attended and spoke of how CEF has helped him make his dreams a reality.



The day was made possible through the generosity of our donors, CEF board and event partners. We would like to thank Chiswick at The Art Gallery of NSW for hosting CEF.

## Ceridwen digs deep to make most of her passion

Ceridwen Boel has worked hard to get where she is, and proudly proclaims her love of learning is the reason she continues to take on more work and study opportunities.

"I get a huge thrill out of learning new things, and get really excited by some of the amazing things that science can do," she says.

"Every now and then I start feeling discouraged and overwhelmed, and then I get lost in an amazing concept or think of an application for some cool technique I've been learning about, and the excitement picks me up out of my slump and spurs me on.

"I guess I'm just a massive nerd! It's a label that was used to attack and shame me when I was younger, but one that I've really come to embrace as I've moved on and surrounded myself with positive, like-minded people."

After growing up on a small hobby farm in Yass, surrounded by her large family, some sheep and chickens and "an amazing veggie patch", Ceridwen knew she needed to jump head-on into her future, no matter how it turned out.

She is now a field archeologist, casual academic and assistant researcher looking to pursue postdoctoral research opportunities and work her way toward a tenure-track research role.

Ceridwen says she has been "bold



and lucky", and taken opportunities that required guts, determination and a lot of courage.

She said the Yass District Education Foundation, a committee of the Country Education Foundation of Australia (CEF), was one of her first big encouragers when she was exploring leaving her home town and looking to study away.

"More than the financial support that it offered, receiving a CEF scholarship feels like a huge vote of confidence in you and your abilities," Ceridwen shares.

"It says 'we believe in you' – and that really counts at one of the most daunting times in a young life."

She says the CEF community scholarship gave her the freedom to focus and immerse herself in university life.

**"It says 'we believe in you' – and that really counts at one of the most daunting times in a young life."**

"I lived on campus for my first year of university. The CEF grant money was largely used to get me set up there and ahead on my rent. It also helped with textbooks and such," she says.

"Being a little ahead on my rent and able to afford textbooks without going into debt took a huge amount of pressure off. I was able to really immerse myself in uni life and my classes without spending a ridiculous amount of time working."

"Don't get me wrong, I still worked – McDonald's, twice a week! But I was mostly able to avoid working during the week when I was supposed to be attending classes, so I wasn't skipping lectures and falling further and further behind like so many other students in my cohort."

When asked for advice she would give to country students thinking of applying for help from CEFA or other organisations, Ceridwen is adamant: "Be brave. Don't be afraid to ask questions, and don't be too proud to ask for help. People will astound you if you give them the chance".



### World opens up for Isabella

“I know without this scholarship I might not have actually been able to afford to live on campus, or live in Melbourne.”

For first year radiology and medical imaging student, Isabella De Francheschi, leaving her hometown of Broken Hill has been an overwhelming experience, but one she has had time to embrace and settle into with the help of the \$10,000 Eureka/CEF Scholarship\*.

“I’m loving it so far. The work load is difficult, but I’m handling it really well. I’m interested in what I’m learning and my marks are showing that,” Isabella said with honesty, and enthusiasm.

Based at the Clayton campus of Melbourne’s Monash University, Isabella said having the time to find her feet, and not work in her first few months was invaluable.

“I can’t even begin to explain how much the scholarship has been helping. I can’t imagine if I had to be working, I think I would honestly be struggling with my course especially since I have not experienced university before.”

She said the scholarship has not only enabled her to focus on her coursework and assessments, but also find friends and concentrate on her new life in the city.

“The scholarship has definitely helped my life balance, it’s enabled me to have that time to study and do my assignments instead of working. But I’ve also just moved to a new city, I don’t really know anyone here so having that time outside of not working and studying has enabled me to make

some really good friends, do activities, explore the city a little bit, which has helped my mental wellbeing as well. A lot. If I was just working and studying, and working and studying I’d be really stressed out and not very happy.”

Isabella has nothing but praise for CEF’s work and the opportunities it gives country kids.

“It enables people to actually go to university. In many rural places there aren’t universities that actually offer the courses that people want to do. It enables us to start our lives in a new place. It relieves that pressure, it allows us to do better in everything. It gives us good opportunities. It’s definitely worthwhile.”

\*The Eureka Scholarship is a \$10,000 scholarship granted to first year students from the Broken Hill region administered by CEF. For more information about our scholarships or to donate go to [www.cef.org.au](http://www.cef.org.au)



### Dreams come true for Chris

Chris Mercer has seen the world thanks to help from the Country Education Foundation of Australia. The Cooma boy had dreams of studying theatre, and after years of building a career in Australia and overseas, is now the Head of Production at Sydney Theatre Company.

Chris says the CEF grant made him believe in himself and his dreams, no matter how unrealistic they felt as a young man leaving home for the first time.

“The grant gave me determination and confidence. I dreamt of going to drama school and after graduating, working in London for the Royal Court and National Theatre.

“It felt like a fantasy and very unrealistic but the grant gave me confidence, and also a sense of responsibility that I had to work hard and give myself the very best chance to succeed.”

Chris says the feeling of achievement never feels old, and he has never forgotten how the Monaro Education Foundation helped him during his first year at the University of Wollongong.

“It was a huge help, it covered all my books for the first year. There have been a couple of moments in my career when I have sat in a theatre in New York, London or at the Sydney Theatre Company and thought I can’t believe this actually happened. I am grateful to the Foundation for providing its support.”

Having worked from the bottom up, Chris said he has taken every opportunity to come his way, but has never left his roots behind.

“I often think of home and have several friends who live in Cooma. Sydney is home for now. Sydney Theatre Company is the 10th largest theatre company in the world and a pleasure to work for.”

“In the future I would like to return (to the country). I hope to teach technical production at a regional university.”

While it has been more than 10 years since Chris was granted the \$500 gift of confidence and belief, he sees CEF’s work as a valuable opportunity for any country kid looking to dream big.

“The funds ease the pressure. It’s a huge expense for regional students to leave home and study. Receiving a grant gives you confidence knowing someone else believes that you can achieve your goals.”

“If you are passionate and it’s your dream, commit 100 per cent to achieving it. The talented and the elite in their fields are the ones that have had the passion and determination to succeed.”

Chris hopes to contribute at a CEF committee level at some stage in the future.

## Friends Lunch 2017 photos



Michael and Christine Kirby



John Charrington and Martin Dimond



Sarah Inglis

## Local foundation focus - Cootamundra and District

Anna Ingold is taking a leading role when it comes to country students' futures as Cootamundra and District Country Education Fund's secretary. The 24-year-old is a 2010 recipient, and knows personally how much the support can affect a student's future and self-esteem.

"I always tell the kids to apply even though you don't think you'll get it. We've given grants to kids that don't think they'll get anything and then they get something from us. It encourages them more, even at uni."

"It's great when they get a grant and they just weren't expecting it. It's not based on how smart you are or how sporty you are – it depends on need and want of education."

Having seen both sides of CEF's story she said the experience has been invaluable and continues to be – through networking and informal mentoring of recipients.

"It gives the student a leg up into their future. And it does create a network between the recipients. That's one thing I do tell kids when I go into schools - this is a networking opportunity."

"The networking is the most valuable thing, not the money at all. I've got jobs not because of what I know, but who I know."

Twice a year the Cootamundra and District CEF holds a farewell dinner for



**Chairman Paul Braybrooks (seated) with grants supervisor David Hain and secretary Anna Ingold.**

its newest recipients, a night to wish them well in their studies.

"We always invite the old recipients back, just to keep them in touch. Most of the older recipients are at uni and get to talk to the younger recipients, it's a really good night. It's a good social night for those recipients to talk to one another, about what they're doing at uni and how they found uni."

Anna said one of the challenges Cootamundra and District CEF faces is around communicating. One of the biggest hurdles is getting your name out there, about what we do and why we're doing it."

"The cause is a worthwhile thing to pursue. It's definitely a process, but is all worth it for that one meeting where you get to choose the kids. It all comes together and makes everything you've

been working for worthwhile."

Cootamundra and District CEF is also working on increasing applications for TAFE and vocational training applicants.

"Our application times mean we have trouble getting future apprentices to apply, because when the applications are taking place they haven't secured an apprenticeship yet. Generally, we have one or two apprentices apply a year."

Anna admitted she did not see herself taking on the Cootamundra and District CEF secretary role when she returned home after studying Agricultural Science at Charles Sturt University in Wagga.

"When I came home from uni, a long-time family friend was the secretary and asked me to be a committee member. I was on the committee for two years before he asked/told/suggested that I should become the secretary," Anna laughed.

Anna lives and works in Cootamundra as a livestock consultant and likes to work on the family farm in her spare time.

If you would like to find out more about becoming a CEF committee member or establishing a committee in your community please visit our website [www.cef.org.au](http://www.cef.org.au)



**Don't let a young person's postcode hold them back**

Support CEF and you'll be helping change the lives of many ambitious and talented young people who otherwise might not have the chance to study at all

Make a tax deductible donation at [www.cef.org.au](http://www.cef.org.au) or give us a call on **1300 652 144**

