



# Summer Newsletter 2023



Education changes lives. And families. And communities.

## FROM THE CEO'S DESK...

Well, the time really has come for me to say goodbye. And what a way to finish with our 30th gala celebration. Our Chairman, Nick, referred to it as 'a night to remember,' which is exactly what it was, with so much to celebrate and be grateful for!

As I reflect on my own time with the Foundation, I am filled with wonderful memories, lasting friendships, and enormous admiration towards the many people I've worked with along the way. What an absolute pleasure and privilege it has been to lead this organisation. With an extraordinary team alongside me, I'm so proud of all we have achieved, much of it through the haze and disruption of the pandemic.

And now equipped with a new structure, expanded team, our first multi-year corporate partnership, a budding new committee in South Australia and several more in the works, a growing Alumni Program, new Student Assistance Program, and Mentoring Program, I am pleased to pass the baton over to a new CEO, Wendy Mason, who will lead us into the next exciting chapter.

With a career built around the power of education, Wendy brings experience in management and business operations, excellent networks, and a substantial track record in stakeholder relations. She is eager to build on our legacy of 30 years to strengthen and grow the CEF network to deliver greater impact across regional Australia. I wish Wendy every success.

In stepping away from the role and my day-to-day work at CEF, I can assure you I have no plans to leave it all behind me.

I will never stop believing in CEF's mission and consequently, look forward to increasing my involvement with the local foundation here in Orange.

Thank you everyone for your support, hard work, and dedication. In 30 years, we have come so far in closing the education participation gap for Australia's rural and regional youth, with still so much to be done. CEF can't change lives without you.

Best wishes to you all for a wonderful and safe festive season.

*Juliet Petersen*



Outgoing CEF CEO, Juliet Petersen, with new CEO Wendy Mason.

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## FROM BRAIDWOOD TO ADELAIDE: INGA NEILSEN WINS 2023 ALUMNUS OF THE YEAR



CEF 2023 Alumnus of the Year, Inga Neilsen.

When 2023 Country Education Foundation of Australia Alumnus of the Year, Inga Neilsen, dreamed of one day being a TV news reporter, her classmates laughed at her.

The mere thought of it seemed such a long way from what was possible for someone from Braidwood, NSW, a tiny town of only 1000 people located west of Batemans Bay.

But, at just 26 years of age, Ms Neilsen has beaten all odds, and now finds herself working as the Police Reporter for Nine News in Adelaide, thanks largely to self-determination as well as the help of her community during some tough times in her life.



Inga Neilsen working for Nine News Adelaide.

Right behind her was the Braidwood and District Education Foundation (BDEF), part of the CEF local network, which supported Inga with two \$2000 grants to support her during the first two years of her studies in a Bachelor of Law and Bachelor of Communications at the University of Technology, Sydney.

She said moving to Sydney from Braidwood was overwhelming, and the support she received from BDEF was a huge help.

Just finishing high school and getting to university was a tough ask for Inga, whose mum was diagnosed with a neurodegenerative disorder when she was just 5 years old.

When she was 11, her mum went into full time nursing home care in Batemans Bay. She would travel there three times per week with her dad until she was 20 years old, completing homework and assignments while in the car on the 45-minute trip.

While studying at UTS, Inga was one of just two students in her cohort of law students from a regional town, and one of very few that had a public school education - something she said made her feel proud.



Inga Neilsen working for the Nine Network's Today Show.

“It shows it doesn't matter where you're from, if you have determination and a community behind you like the CEF, you can achieve whatever you want.”

*Inga Neilsen*

Since graduating from university Inga has worked for Channel Nine on its news website, at the Today Show and now in Adelaide as its Police Reporter - a promotion she got just a few months after starting there.

Inga said the work of CEF was extremely important in supporting all students like her from the country. “In my cohort there were 22 kids that graduated year 12. The majority of them received a grant to go to university or TAFE or further education. The money aside, the fact that as a young person you know you have an organisation backing you and supporting your goals is really important,” she said.

### Other Award Winners

**Community Alumni Champion**  
Lochie Ramm, Braidwood NSW

**Young Achiever**

Chloe Wilson, Grenfell NSW

**Launching Star**

Heather Walker, Grenfell NSW

**Rising Star**

Iлона Gray, Shoalhaven NSW

# 30th Anniversary Gala



EDUCATION CHANGES LIVES.  
AND FAMILIES. AND  
COMMUNITIES.

## “A PROFOUND IMPACT”: CEF CELEBRATES 30 YEARS OF HELPING COUNTRY YOUTH



CEF Founders Nick and Julia Burton Taylor.

Country Education Foundation of Australia (CEF) Chairman Nick Burton Taylor, AM, has described CEF as having “a profound impact” on regional and rural youth, after it celebrated its 30th anniversary on Saturday 18th November with a Gala event at Printhee Wines, Orange, NSW.

Around 120 people gathered to celebrate the momentous occasion, which included speeches from founders Nick and Julia Burton Taylor, CEO Juliet Petersen, and the presentation of the 2023 Alumni Award winners, supported by Audi Foundation. The audience was also treated to the stunning voice of local student Eleanor Edwards, a classically trained singer from Blayney, NSW, and a CEF Orange and District recipient.



2023 Alumnus of the Year, Inga Neilsen, receiving her award from Orange Motor Group's Jackson Robbins, on behalf of Alumni Awards sponsor Audi Foundation.

CEF's first local foundation, CEF Boorowa, was established in 1993 by a group of like-minded community members, including Mr Burton Taylor and his wife, Julia Burton Taylor.

The community saw a great need for country youth to access funding and support to assist them in travelling away from home for further education – one of the major barriers they face compared with their metropolitan counterparts. The idea quickly spread with Yass, NSW, becoming the next town to form a local CEF foundation in 1998, headed by Katie Walker who would also become a founding Director of the national foundation.



CEF Partnerships Manager, Hilary Matchett, with her mum and Chair of CEF Grenfell, Clemence Matchett.

Several other local foundations across regional NSW formed in the early 2000s and in 2003, Country Education Foundation of Australia incorporated as a national charitable entity to support the growing network of local foundations. Today there are 45 local foundations and more than 430 volunteers driving the work of the organisation across NSW, SA, QLD, Victoria and NT. Australia wide, CEF has provided almost 8000 individual grants and scholarships to the value of over \$17 million over the last 30 years.



Amanda and Barbara Manion with CEF Board member Dougal Geddes.



CEF Board member Peita Burton Taylor with AuctionsPlus representatives George Shannon and Eliza Fessey.



Charles Sturt University's Sandra Sharpham, incoming CEF CEO Wendy Mason, Heather Walker and Charles Sturt's Julia Andrews.



Harry Crouch with Eleanor and Jennifer Edwards.

# Give the gift of education this Christmas!



As we finish celebrating 30 years and bring 2023 to a close, please consider donating to help us support country students for another 30 years.



@countryeducationfoundation

**Direct deposit details:**  
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BSB: 062-629  
Acc. No: 1009 0818  
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