



# ANNUAL REVIEW

December 2023



*Celebrating 30 years supporting rural and regional youth  
when they need it most.*

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*In the spirit of reconciliation, CEF acknowledges the traditional custodians of Country throughout Australia and their connections to land, sea and community and pay our respects to elders past and present.*

## OUR BOARD

### CHAIRMAN

Nick Burton Taylor, AM

### TREASURER

David Smithers, AM

### SECRETARY

Julia Burton Taylor, OAM

### DIRECTORS

Katie Walker, OAM

Dougal Geddes

Peita Burton Taylor

Jonathan Forrest (*Appointed Oct 2023*)

Paula McLean

## OUR TEAM

### CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Juliet Petersen (*Retired Dec 2023*)

Wendy Mason (*Appointed Dec 2023*)

### FINANCIAL CONTROLLER

Deborah Carroll

### HEAD OF OPERATIONS

Donna Roberts

### HEAD OF DEVELOPMENT AND COMMUNITIES

Lisa Carrick

### HEAD OF ENGAGEMENT, MEDIA AND IMPACT

Nicole Wright

### COMMUNITY SPECIALIST

Sarah Washbrook

### MANAGER OF PARTNERSHIPS

Hilary Matchett

### COMMUNICATIONS SPECIALIST

Joshua Matic

### ALUMNI AND PROGRAMS SPECIALIST

Zanna Christian

### ACCOUNTS AND OFFICE ADMINISTRATOR

Naomi Barrett

## ABOUT US

Country Education Foundation of Australia (CEF) is a national for purpose organisation helping rural and regional youth access education, training and jobs through grants, scholarships, support services and resources.

Since establishment of the Boorowa Education Fund in 1993, CEF has awarded more than 8000 grants and scholarships to rural and regional youth.

Almost \$17.5 million in direct financial support has been provided thanks to the passion of volunteers and belief of donors, partners and supporters.



Students at Charles Sturt University Experience Camp.

## OUR MISSION

To promote and enable equal access to further education and career opportunities for rural and regional youth irrespective of background, circumstances or location through community-based encouragement and financial assistance.

## OUR VISION

To support rural and regional youth (16-25) to access the services and resources they need to maintain their wellbeing and fulfil their personal potential, so they are able to contribute fully to the vibrant and thriving communities in which they live and the broader society.

## OUR VALUES

### EQUALITY

Promoting equality for everyone irrespective of background or circumstance.

### EMPOWERMENT

Inspiring people to achieve their goals with the right resources, investment and encouragement.

### CONNECTION

Building meaningful and genuine relationships through collaboration and encouragement.

### SUSTAINABILITY

Working harder and smarter to secure a better future.



Jayden Reid, Central Australia.

## CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

The past year was marked by a consolidation of the organisation post COVID-19 and repositioning our senior management team to accommodate the retirement of Juliet Petersen as our CEO.

The year also marked the 30th anniversary of our Foundation in Boorowa, New South Wales. The intervening period has seen us develop into a national organisation incorporating a network of 46 local community foundations and awarding over 8000 individual grants and scholarships to the value of over \$17 million. This year it awarded 679 individuals with grants and scholarships to a total dollar value of \$2,204,436.

The individual stories around each of these grants reflects both the challenges, hardships and personal sacrifice that younger generations confront when embarking on their careers, whether it be at university, or seeking a vocational career and trade certification. The determination and commitment of those we encounter is inspiring and gives great hope for the future prosperity of regional Australia.

During the latter half of the calendar year, we engaged in a recruitment program to appoint a successor to Juliet Petersen. This process was not without its challenges, as Juliet has given remarkable service and seen the organisation grow significantly under her leadership. Notwithstanding, we have been fortunate in the extreme to attract a leader of Wendy Mason's calibre to the role. She brings a deep and committed understanding of the not-for-profit sector and understands our ambitions and need to grow our coverage in regional Australia.

### **Financial Position**

The Financial Statements of the Foundation for the Year ended 31st December 2023 reveal impressive success in fundraising, increased financial support for students and ongoing growth in reserves and liquidity.

### *Income and Expenditure*

Generous donors and two very successful matched giving campaigns contributed to an increase in income before investment and other income of 10%. Coupled with prudent cost control, this has enabled special projects to be undertaken and, importantly, for increased funds to be made available to students. Income from investments continues to grow and reflects the steady accumulation of Reserves over the



last four years, and their investment. This result is consistent with a decision of the Board five years ago to steadily increase Reserves to ensure the Foundation can continue its work indefinitely.

### *Balance Sheet*

A strong (and liquid) financial position is evident in the Balance Sheet at 31st December 2023. Total Assets exceed \$7.4m. Liabilities comprise principally funds for 2024 grants and scholarships (\$1.6m) which, together with trade payables and employee benefits reduce the Total Assets to Net Assets of \$5.7m. Net Assets reflect Reserves and Retained Earnings, the majority of which are invested in shares and freehold property. These Reserves are not intended to be funds which should be distributed immediately to students, rather to provide capital to support, long term, the ongoing vital work of the Foundation.

### **Our Board**

I would like to thank Katie Walker OAM for her dedication to the Country Education Foundation since the organisation commenced. She will be stepping down from the Board after the 2024 AGM. We welcome Jono Forrest to the Board and look forward to the contribution he will make.

### **Our Family**

We are blessed with an outstanding team based in Orange, NSW, and supported by more than 430 volunteers across the regional network. They, together with a remarkable group of supporters, including families, individuals and companies, provide a powerful source of energy and enthusiasm to bring about their many individual stories of success that we revel in.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Nick Burton Taylor'.

**Nicholas Burton Taylor, AM**  
**Chairman**

## CEO'S REPORT

It is my pleasure to write this report as the incoming CEO of Country Education Foundation of Australia. Having taken up the position after Juliet Petersen's retirement from the organisation in December 2023, I was grateful to be part of celebrations as the organisation marked 30 years of operations, an incredible milestone for any charity and a reflection of the valuable and important contributions of CEF to lives and communities in regional Australia.

Firstly, I must acknowledge and thank Juliet for her leadership and contribution during her time as CEO, which has left the organisation and team in a wonderful and exciting position to continue our critical work in supporting the educational pursuits of our rural and regional youth.

During our handover, I was encouraged to hear about the successes of CEF throughout 2023. A new local foundation in Coolah, increased support and resourcing for our volunteers, a continued upward trend in the number of students supported and the dollar value of financial assistance distributed, additions to the student supports offered and two very successful matched giving campaigns to name a few.

The part of our work that strikes me most is that the impact of CEF is driven by more than 430 volunteers across Australia, and this is where the real work takes place. I have had the opportunity to meet with some of our local foundations and volunteers, and their passion and commitment to the mission is clear – it is inspiring.

The continued success of our unique, community-based model 30 years on from the establishment of the Boorowa Education Fund in 1993 illustrates how vital and important this approach is, and how it can create change. Not only for regional youth, but for their families and for our communities.

I cannot write about my start at CEF without mentioning the young people we work to support. From those studying medicine and engineering, to teaching, plumbing and even fashion design, the talent in regional Australia is vast.



We are privileged to know and understand this because of where we live and the work we do, and part of our mission must be to shine light on these young people, so everyone can see the potential we do, and can benefit from the ways they will contribute to our society when given the chance.

As we reflect on 30 wonderful years, we also look to the future and a commitment to build on this legacy.

On a personal note, I am extremely passionate about the purpose, mission and vision of CEF, and truly believe in education as a tool that can empower and enable our youth. I look forward to continuing to support the incredible grass-roots volunteers that make the work of CEF possible.

We have exciting plans to grow our impact, seek to build truly meaningful and collaborative partnerships and aim to contribute to conversations of importance, to become leaders and a strong voice that advocates for education equity, access and opportunity for our remarkable regional youth.

Finally, the opportunity to work with all of you to address the post-school education participation gap that exists between regional students and their metropolitan counterparts, and to provide opportunities to our youth that will help them to fulfil their potential, is a journey I am thrilled to be part of.

*Wendy Mason*

**Wendy Mason**  
**Chief Executive Officer**

## 30 YEARS OF CHANGING LIVES

Today, there are 46 local foundations and more than 430 volunteers driving the work of the CEF across NSW, SA, QLD, Victoria and NT. Australia wide, CEF has provided over 8000 grants and scholarships to the value of over \$17 million over the last 30 years.

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

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.

CEF Boorowa awarded \$5,000 in local grants in its first year, with five students receiving \$1,000 each to put towards their further education. 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.

*Reflecting on our 30 years of activities at Country Education Foundation of Australia, one can't help be taken by the profound impact that we have achieved at a community and regional level.*  
*Nick Burton Taylor, AM - Chairman*

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.

This development was led by the Burton Taylors, Katie Walker, Stuart Black, David Smithers, AM, and Rick Hutchinson as the inaugural Board; the Hon. Tim Fischer, AC, as Patron, and CEF employing its first staff the same year.

In 2004, the Foundation participated in a senate inquiry to gain tax deductibility status (DGR1).



Julia and Nick Burton Taylor.

In documents submitted to the committee Mr Burton Taylor explained: “[We] seek to expand on the community-based principle of investing in and encouraging rural youth to promote their personal development and to help them make the step beyond their schooling.”

Tax deductibility was granted, the wave of community engagement continued, and this sentiment became – and remains – the mission of the Foundation today.

In 2005, CEF expanded outside of NSW for the first time, forming a local foundation in Eudunda, SA. Paroo then became the first QLD foundation to form a year later.

*All our communities, all our volunteers are amazing. They just keep doing what they're doing because they believe in the cause of what we're able to do for rural youth. We just want it to keep going.*  
*Julia Burton Taylor, OAM - Secretary*

The Hon. Tim Fischer, AC, served as CEF Patron for more than 15 years, saying: “CEF has lifted the lives of many and in the process lifted the fabric of rural and regional communities across the nation,” and he held this role with the Foundation until his passing in 2019.

The role of Patron remained unfilled until 2022, when the wife of the late Mr Fischer, Judy Brewer, AO, accepted an invitation to assume this position. Ms Brewer shares her late husband's dedication to improving educational outcomes and has a passion for rural and regional Australia. She is also an accomplished professional and devoted advocate in her own right.

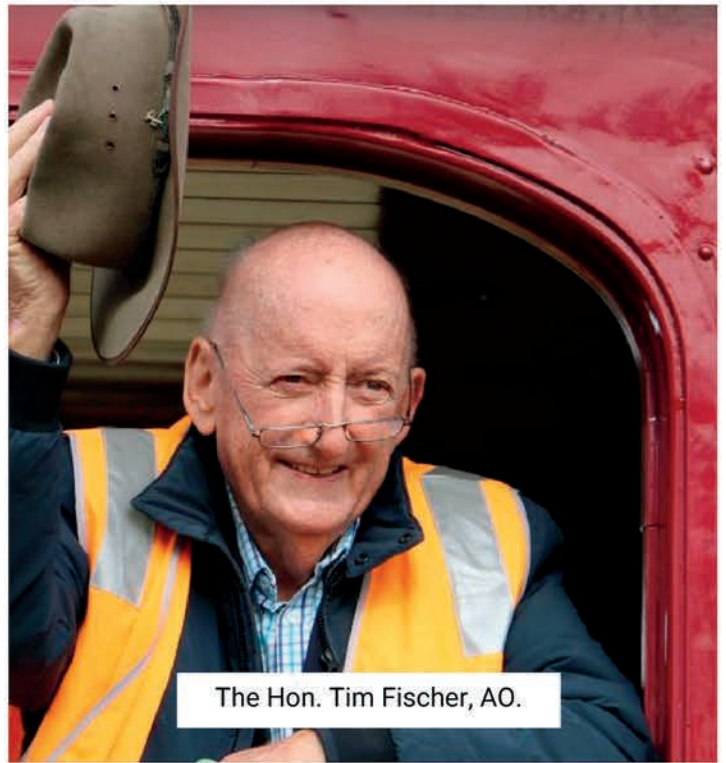
"He (Tim) loved his involvement with Nick, Julia and the team at CEF, and so it was not a difficult decision for me to continue his role as Patron when honoured with the invitation to do so," said Ms Brewer.



Judy Brewer, AO.

*"It has at so many levels become a team of volunteers and now alumni, who appreciate that small contributions of both financial and community encouragement at a key time in young lives has a disproportionately positive outcome."*  
Nick Burton Taylor, AM - Chairman

Students that live in or attend school in locations with a CEF local foundation are eligible to apply for grant and scholarship funding they can put towards various expenses related to their education, such as accommodation, living expenses and equipment.



The Hon. Tim Fischer, AO.

The organisation also offers additional financial assistance through the CEF Extra national scholarships program and a range of support initiatives including an Alumni Program, Student Support Assistance Program, peer support and mentoring; and the CEF Scholarships Guide and 'Make it Possible' inspiration hub free online resources.

Mr Burton Taylor said there had been "no greater reward" than witnessing "the individual stories of triumph" by CEF grant and scholarship recipients.

"Education, whether in a trade or at university, opens the opportunities for the lives of young Australians living in rural areas and goes some way to redressing some of the disadvantages imposed by distance and lack of educational facilities".

Julia Burton Taylor, said it was very exciting to make it to 30 years and she looked forward to seeing CEF continue to grow its footprint and impact. "The excitement we get out of every student that we're able to help is extraordinary," she said.

*"Thirty years of grant giving has resulted in thousands of stories of student success and extraordinary collective impacts for our regions. Thank you to everyone who has helped make it happen."*  
Julia Burton Taylor, OAM - Secretary

# 30th Anniversary Gala



CEF celebrated its 30th anniversary with a gala cocktail party at Printhe Wines, Orange, NSW, on Saturday 18th November.

Around 115 people gathered to celebrate the momentous occasion, which included speeches from founders Nick and Julia Burton Taylor, former 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.



Founders Nick and Julia Burton Taylor.



Harry Crouch, Eleanor and Jennifer Edwards.



Juliet Petersen and Wendy Mason.



Amelia and Barbara Manion, Dougal Geddes.



Peita Burton Taylor, George Shannon and Eliza Fessey.



Jackson Robbins and Zanna Christian.





Scott Petersen, Jack Brennan, Chris Grant, Peter McGee, Mark Owens and Justin Fleming.



Tyrone Anderson and Skala Hamawandy.



Katie Jayne O'Brien and Ilona Gray.



Julia Burton Taylor, Helen Macphillamy, John Harrison, Tim Macphillamy, Lyndall Harrison and Nick Burton Taylor.



Andrew and Sarah Walker, Sarah Bruen and Laurie Poretti.



Belinda and Chloe Wilson.



# STUDENT IMPACT

## Support Programs Resources

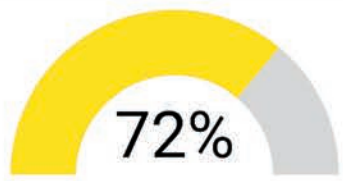
Carly Elwin, Temora.

**\$1,208,300** Local grant funding  
**+**  
**\$310,106** Education partner funding  
**+**  
**\$686,030** National partner funding  
**=**  
**\$2,204,436** In direct financial support  
**&**  
**679** Individual grants and scholarships

*\*Final numbers subject to audit*



1 out of 5 students report financial assistance from family



72% Of students hope to take their education back to a regional area



2 out of 5 students are eligible for or receive government support



79% Of students leave home to access education or employment

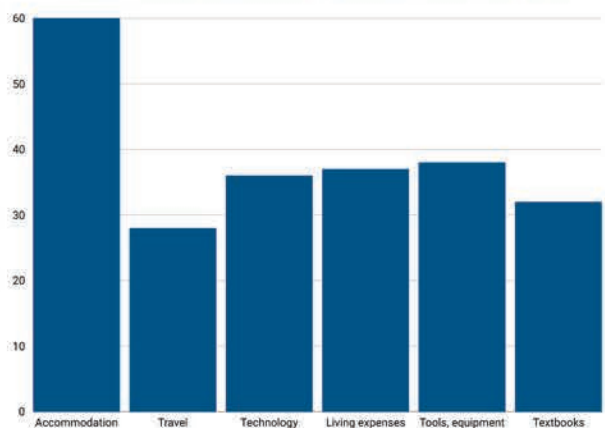


1/2 recipients are interested in becoming involved with CEF

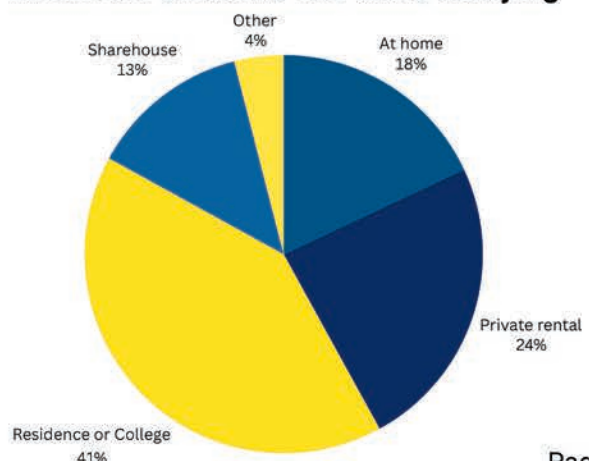


95% Of students have a GREAT or GOOD relationship with their local foundation

What our students spend funding on



Where our students live while studying





### Peer Connection

On-campus events create a sense of connectedness for students, reducing the isolation, homesickness and loneliness they may feel when they leave home.



### Aspirational Influencers

Our CEF Aspirational Influencers are made up of current and former grant recipients who visit schools, attend events and participate in promotional activities for CEF.



### Scholarships Guide

This is a purpose-built, searchable online resource updated annually, and is a leading source of tertiary scholarships for rural and regional families.



### Online Inspiration Hub

Thanks to Waratah Education Foundation, this FREE online resource informs and inspires post-school options, and includes everything our youth need to thrive as students AND adults.



### Mental Health Support

We partnered with PeopleSense by Altius Group Pty Ltd to provide access to a 'Student Assistance Program.' Students can access one FREE session of professional counselling.



### University Experiences

Run in conjunction with education partners, these immersive camps are scheduled and chaperoned. Such experiences can be important in helping students decide what to do after school.



### National Scholarships

A bespoke scholarships program providing additional financial support to rural and regional youth within the CEF geographic footprint, as well as personal and professional opportunities.



### Vocational Training Funds

We are extremely grateful to an anonymous philanthropic organisation who has invested in this co-funding initiative because of their belief in the value of trades in our communities.



Andrew O'Brien from Three Rivers Department of Rural Health, CEF Scholarship recipients and Hilary Matchett.

# COOPER IS ON A MISSION TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE

As soon as he was notified of receiving a scholarship, Cooper made contact to find out how he could promote CEF and advocate for teaching in regional areas. Below, Cooper explains for us why he wants to become a teacher.

“My name is Cooper Wielozynski and I graduated from Broken Hill High School, with my HSC in 2022. I was accepted into Charles Sturt University in Bathurst to pursue a Bachelor of Education. I grew up in Broken Hill and truly understand the outcome of a lack of teachers.

I am just a young student who's seen it first hand and now wants to jump in the deep end and try to do my part to raise awareness. I want to inspire the next generation, hence doing a teaching degree.

I have experienced merged classes and watched a lot of teachers leave. This happened during my senior years of schooling which were the important years. I strongly believe there needs to be more information out there about what is really happening, especially in rural areas.

I have seen the good and bad of the school experiences and the outcome of such things as bullying and the cruelty social media brings and strive to make it a better environment for all children. School should be a happy place, a place of safety, something a lot of children might strive for, depending on their living situation.

I have seen the amazing impact positive teachers who provide guidance and advice can have on a child's education. Two teachers in particular have had a tremendous influence on me. Mr Jason Bradley has inspired me immensely. He is a person who is passionate about his colleagues and students. An extremely knowledgeable teacher who is always helpful and willing to assist and give advice, both to staff and students.

Miss Sarah Gillespie has helped shape who I am today. She has shown me what effort and putting 100% into her job looks like. Sarah gives me such motivation in becoming a teacher in a rural school.



Upon completing my studies, I hope to return to Broken Hill to give back to my local community and everyone that helped me achieve my goals throughout my schooling years.

I look forward to becoming a teacher and being a role model for future teachers. It shouldn't matter where you live, every child deserves a wonderful education. One important thing people need to remember is to be thankful for the education available to them because some people aren't as fortunate. All you have to do is your best and look at the opportunity you've been given.

I truly believe with the help I am receiving, I will always continue to try my best to inspire others to pursue a teaching degree and to give back, and help with the shortage of teachers willing to live and work remotely.

Cooper joins a growing list of students from the region who have been able to pursue tertiary education thanks to longstanding CEF supporters:

- *The McLean Foundation (Rob and Paula McLean)*
- *Eureka Benevolent Foundation (The family Foundation of Roger Massy-Greene and Belinda Hutchinson)*
- *The Zagora Foundation (Leigh and Sue Clifford)*

With strong connections to the Far West NSW region, these families are committed to providing continued support to students from the region looking to attend university. Their dedication to improving education outcomes for our regional youth and the belief in CEF to support students during their journey is unwavering.



Callum Furner, Goulburn.

Elise Prior, Kapunda.

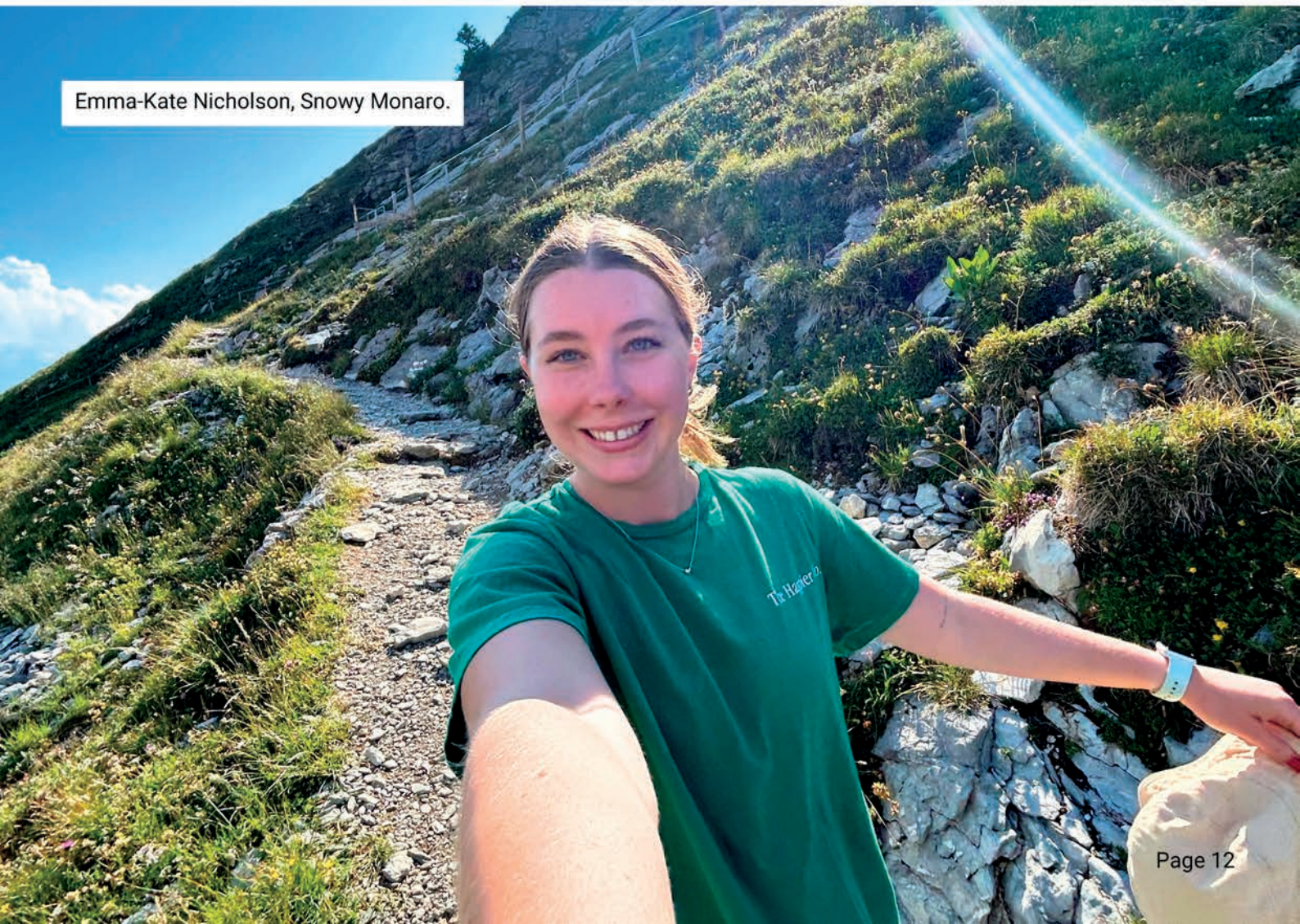


***Celebrating 30 years supporting rural and regional youth when they need it most.***

Help rural and regional students fulfil their potential by becoming a partner, donor or volunteer.

[cef.org.au](http://cef.org.au)

Emma-Kate Nicholson, Snowy Monaro.



CEF volunteers, Board members, staff and recipients at 2022 conference.



# OUR NETWORK

## Foundations and volunteers

In 2023, CEF was represented in 46 communities across five states and territories.

Every rural and regional community is different, and our unique model allows volunteers to run their foundations in a way that works best for their own town or region. We believe there is no substitute for the intimate knowledge they have of their own people and communities when it comes to making the biggest impact. The success of this model is thanks to the dedication and passion of our volunteers.

More than  
**430**  
volunteers

**46**  
Local  
Foundations

### NEW SOUTH WALES

- |                              |                |
|------------------------------|----------------|
| Balranald                    | Gunnedah       |
| Boorowa                      | Gwydir         |
| Braidwood                    | Hastings       |
| Far West NSW (Broken Hill)   | Harden         |
| Canowindra                   | Macleay Valley |
| Coleambally/Darlington Point | Merriwa        |
| Coolah                       | Moree          |
| Coonamble                    | Namoi          |
| Cootamundra                  | Nyngan         |
| Cowra                        | Orange         |
| Edward River                 | Shoalhaven     |
| Gilgandra                    | Snowy Monaro   |
| Goulburn                     | Temora         |
| Great Lakes                  | Walgett        |
| Grenfell                     | West Wyalong   |
| Griffith                     | Yass           |
| Gulargambone                 | Young          |



CEF Coolah volunteers, Lisa Carrick and Juliet Petersen.

### CEF COOLAH JOINS THE FAMILY!

We were thrilled to welcome the community of Coolah in NSW to the CEF family, with our new volunteers hitting the ground running in May.

### QUEENSLAND

- Blackall-Tambo
- Clermont
- Maranoa
- Paroo

### NORTHERN TERRITORY

- Central Australia

### SOUTH AUSTRALIA

- Clare Valley
- Eudunda
- Kangaroo Island
- Kapunda
- Kimba
- Port Lincoln

### VICTORIA

- Warracknabeal

## ROBYN RALLIES FOR REGIONAL YOUTH



Robyn Phillips with fellow CEF Gwydir volunteers.

**“Robyn’s support for the recipients, and to other committee members, is no less than extraordinary. She understands the value of investing in the futures of our youth to ensure they have every opportunity to reach their potential.”**

**CEF Gwydir volunteers**

### CEF CHANGEMAKER

Robyn Phillips has been involved with the Gwydir local foundation of CEF for the past 10 years and has undertaken the role of Secretary since 2019. She has been instrumental in promoting the purpose and benefits of CEF Gwydir, and Country Education Foundation of Australia, for regional and remote students. She understands the value of investing in the futures of our youth to ensure they have every opportunity to reach their potential. Our volunteers know that showing confidence in our recipients is as important as the funds provided. Showing our regional youth that their community believes in them is life-changing.

Whilst student well-being is paramount, Robyn appreciates that emotional support alone won't buy textbooks. So she set to initiating high-profile fundraisers.

The song and dance of the 'Oliver Twist' performance was a local hit and fundraising event that put the CEF brand in front of the community. The 'Discover Gwydir Car Rally' involved participants travelling throughout Gwydir Shire to complete tasks at designated locations. Robyn devoted her time and effort to planning the many details and delivering a memorable Rally.

The 'Change Makers' theme of National Volunteer Week for 2023 certainly resonated with us.

Particularly with our belief that education changes lives. And families. And communities.

It was the perfect time to formally thank our volunteers and take the opportunity to highlight our own outstanding 'Change Maker' for 2023.

The Katie Walker Outstanding Service Award is an honour bestowed annually to a volunteer for their extraordinary efforts.

An independent panel joined the award namesake, founding board member and volunteer advocate Katie Walker, to review the compelling nominations and select Robyn Phillips as our winner for 2023.

### CEF LIFE CHANGER

Thanks in large part to Robyn, we are now seeing a student flourishing in study, work and personal growth. When Chelsea, a CEF Gwydir supported student, was going through an extremely challenging and difficult time, Robyn was there. Going above and beyond without hesitation, providing a safe-haven, guidance and support for Chelsea, who explains the immense gratitude and respect she has for Robyn:

**“Robyn is a kind and generous community leader, whose passion for helping disadvantaged children has been important to the ongoing success of the community and my own personal growth, as a young person.”**

*I will always have a deep gratitude for her taking me under her wing. She not only supported me through financial needs but also provided a caring environment that fostered me through times of hardship.*

*Her ongoing dedication to my wellbeing has been a great pillar of support and encourages me to face challenges and pursue opportunities. Robyn has spent countless hours volunteering.*

*She is extremely deserving of this award. Robyn is one of my biggest role models and I will be forever grateful for our friendship.*

# ALISON REFLECTS ON IMPACT 23 YEARS LATER

*Dr. Alison Southwell is one of thousands of success stories to come out of CEF, and given she now finds herself as the CEO of the Holbrook Landcare Network, is a true stand-out.*

Growing up on a small family farm near Yass, NSW, her parents found themselves in a tricky situation when it came to working out how to support her university ambitions financially.

According to Dr. Southwell her parents were “caught in the middle” financially and found it difficult to access government study support for her, as owning farmland meant they were “asset rich,” but they were in fact “cash poor.”

Her mum worked a full time job, and her dad worked other paid jobs at the same time as running the family’s small farm to make ends meet.

Scratching their heads trying to figure out how to get her to the University of New England (UNE) in Armidale, NSW, they came across CEF Yass Valley. Founder of CEF Yass Valley, Katie Walker, who is still a committee member today, came to Alison’s aid and signed her up for a \$1,000 grant, which allowed her to purchase a desktop computer to complete her course work with.

*“I used it (the computer) throughout my degree for all assignments. I could work in my room away from distractions and on a level playing field with peers in my degree who all seemed to be ‘born on the gravy train.’”*

“It even had a floppy disk drive. It took up the whole amount [grant funds] and I’m pretty sure had about a tenth of the processing power of my [current day] smart phone!”

She completed a Bachelor of Rural Science at UNE, finishing with first class honours, before moving to Charles Sturt University in Wagga Wagga, NSW, and completing a PHD investigating the ecophysiology of native grasslands.



During her PHD studies she also worked full time as a lecturer at Charles Sturt across subjects including agricultural systems, pasture management and workplace learning.

She continued her work at Charles Sturt while also starting a broadacre cropping contracting business from her family farm in Yass, as well as becoming a mother to two daughters, all between 2011 and 2014.

In 2018 she was promoted to Course Director for the Agricultural Science degrees at Charles Sturt, before pursuing a career change in 2021 to land in her current position.

*“I now employ 11 staff who assist me to deliver community-focused, natural resource management and sustainable agriculture projects to 480 members and the broader communities around the Holbrook, Upper Murray and South-West Slopes regions of NSW.”*

Looking back on the CEF Yass Valley grant she received 23 years ago, she said it was more important from her parents’ perspective at the time.

“As a young person, you don’t always appreciate the gravity of the gift you’re being given. But my parents did. From my parent’s perspective, little funds ever seemed to come over the great divide to people like us,” she said.

“It was localised support and controlled by the Yass community as a first attempt to support ongoing education for local students. It tended to support less well-off kids and it made us feel ‘thought of.’”



## END OF FINANCIAL YEAR

Thanks to a generous donor, end of financial year donations were matched up to \$500,000 to support national programs and resources that will help rural and regional youth and communities thrive. A dedicated fundraising campaign was run to maximise this opportunity, and donations made combined with the matched pledge raised over \$1.1 million, an incredible result.



## LOCAL MATCHED GIVING

This campaign has been running for 4 years, and is dedicated to activating and supporting the grant making, fundraising and other activities of our local foundations, with local funds raised during September and October matched to a cap of \$5,000 per foundation. 2023 was the most successful year so far, the total of funds raised and matched funds paid out was an outstanding \$453,412.



## GALAH STUDENT AND ALUMNI PHOTOGRAPHY PRIZE

This competition ran concurrently with the Galah Regional Photography Prize. Any student, past or present, that had received a grant from one of the 45 local CEF foundations was eligible to enter, with two winners - Heather Walker and Georgia Ditchfield - awarded and receiving a fully subsidised trip to Galah events in Murwillumbah in November.



Galah Editor-in-Chief Annabelle Hickson, Georgia Ditchfield, Heather Walker and Taleah Anderson.

## EXCITING NEW PARTNERSHIPS

CEF was thrilled to enter into two new partnerships in 2023 with AuctionsPlus and Sancta Sophia College. The partnerships are designed to not only alleviate the costs of post-school education for our students, but to provide collaborative support to empower the next generation of rural and regional youth to achieve their goals.



Wendy Mason and AuctionsPlus CEO Wynand Snyman.

# Alumni Awards 2023

Country Education Foundation of Australia (CEF) announced the winners of the 2023 Audi Foundation – CEF Alumni Awards, with five very deserving recipients claiming the honours in their respective categories.

The excitement to celebrate the achievements of regional youth this year was clear with 56 nominations received.

While the Alumni Awards were judged and announced virtually, winners were celebrated in person at CEF’s 30th anniversary gala event at Printhe Wines, Orange, NSW, on 18th November.

Each winner received a cash prize and access to the CEF free mentor program, with a minimum of three sessions with a reputable mentor assigned by CEF, which is a first time offering for our award winners.



Ilona Gray, Chloe Wilson, Inga Neilsen and Heather Walker.

*“Having seen the incredible achievements of the winners and the passion they inspire in their communities, we are proud to support CEF in not only delivering its alumni awards, but also in our scholarships for rural and regional students studying STEM. Congratulations to each award winner.”*  
**Hayley Nissim, Former Head of Audi Foundation**

## 2023 AUDI FOUNDATION - CEF ALUMNI AWARD WINNERS



**ALUMNUS OF THE YEAR**  
**Inga Neilsen**  
 Braidwood & District Education Foundation

**COMMUNITY CHAMPION**  
**Lochie Ramm**  
 Braidwood & District Education Foundation

**YOUNG ACHIEVER**  
**Chloe Wilson**  
 Country Education Foundation of Grenfell

**LAUNCHING STAR**  
**Heather Walker**  
 Country Education Foundation of Grenfell

**RISING STAR**  
**Ilona Gray**  
 Shoalhaven Education Fund

# INSPIRATIONAL ALUMNUS OF THE YEAR INGA

*Growing up in little old Braidwood, a town of just 1000 people located west of Batemans Bay in NSW, Inga Neilsen was laughed at when she said she dreamed of one day being a TV journalist. Despite facing so much adversity, she has beaten all odds to become exactly that. Here is our 2023 Alumnus of the Year, Inga Neilsen.*

## **Can you tell us a little about your life growing up?**

My dad was the Deputy Principal of my school. My mum was unfortunately diagnosed with a neurodegenerative disorder when I was only 5 years old. When I was 11, she went into full time care in a nursing home. She is one of my biggest inspirations in striving to achieve every day as if it's your last, because you just don't know what's around the corner. From when I was five to when I was about 20, my dad and I would spend three days per week travelling 45 minutes from Braidwood to Batemans Bay to visit her in a nursing home where she couldn't walk, talk or feed herself, and most of those car trips were spent doing my homework and assignments.

## **What have been some of your greatest achievements to date?**

I'm the Police Reporter for Channel 9 in Adelaide, which means I cover all of the major crimes and police issues across the state. That would have to be my greatest career achievement to date given I've only been with Nine News Adelaide for 12 months and received the promotion when I'd only been there for five months. It's been a steep learning curve and a steep career progression since being there and with that has been a lot of weight and a lot of expectation, but it's something that I'm proud that I have been doing a good job in.

## **What do you remember most about receiving your grants from CEF?**

I remember my first year that I received the grant from Braidwood & District Education Foundation (BDEF), that went straight to buying my laptop, which was a huge asset to me because you can't go to university without a laptop. It's bread and butter. The whole process of going through the BDEF grant in terms of writing a CV and doing an interview; it sets you up for the real world. As a country kid you might not have exposure to that and that's something else I'm grateful for.



Inga Neilsen, Braidwood.

*When I finished school I studied at UTS and studied a law and journalism degree. In my whole cohort of law students I was one of only two people that were from a regional town, and one of few that was educated at a public school, and that is something I'm extremely proud of. It shows it doesn't matter where you're from, if you have determination and a community behind you like CEF, you can achieve whatever you want.*

## **What advice would you give to students who are unsure or worried about study after school?**

It sounds cliché but if you put your mind to what you want to achieve you will get there. I feel like I've achieved so much in a short period of time, and I have so many goals and so much more I want to achieve. If 26 year old me could turn around to 18 year old me, who had just received that first BDEF grant, and say "you have done this", it would have blown me away. It was always something that I wanted to achieve but didn't think I could, so I guess my advice is, if you put your head down and work hard, you can achieve no matter where you come from.

## **What is next for you?**

I have a lot of goals. I see myself as one day being a foreign correspondent or being a newsreader on the desk. That is my ultimate goal, to present the news. That's very much a long-term goal. In the short term, Channel Nine has the rights to the Olympics next year, so I'd love to go to Paris and help Channel Nine with their coverage of the Olympics, and maybe find some regional kids who are there competing. In my job I always have a soft spot for regional stories, and I try to grasp onto them when I can.

## PRINCIPAL PARTNERS IN 2023



## CORPORATE AND PHILANTHROPIC PARTNERS

- Allan & Gill Gray Philanthropies
- Chartered Accountants ANZ
- Country Universities Centre
- Estate of the Late SM Connell
- Eureka Benevolent Foundation
- IEC Advisory
- McGregor Gourlay Pty Ltd
- MH Premium Farms
- Packer Family Foundation
- Protrust Ltd t/as Profield Foundation
- SELX
- Stirling Pastoral
- Stranfield Foundation (Vernon Foundation)
- Sydney Business Lawyers
- The James. N Kirby Foundation
- The Loder Foundation
- The McLean Foundation
- The Raymond E. Purves Foundation
- The Trustee for the William McIlwrath Charitable Foundation
- The Zagora Family Foundation
- Rye Park Renewable Energy Pty Ltd
- VERTO Ltd

## EDUCATION PARTNERS



## MAJOR DONORS

- A Bowman
- Agaru Fund
- Anonymous Donor
- AWKID
- Blackwood Foundation
- Burton Taylor PPF Foundation
- C & G Grubb
- Charles Warman Foundation
- D Gauchat AM
- D & I Smithers
- D & M Anthony Foundation
- L & P Plaskitt
- Estate of the Late SM Connell
- E Wheeler
- Future Generation Investment Company
- Good 2 Give
- Goodridge Foundation
- Greenlight Foundation
- Greenwich Capital Advisory Pty Ltd
- I & H Palmer
- J Brewer AO
- L Kinghorn
- Millett Family Foundation
- Philanthropy Australia
- R Gardos
- S Maple-Brown AM
- The Alfred & Jean Dickson Foundation
- T Fairfax AC
- Unconscious Potential Pty Ltd

## USE OF FUNDS

CEF national office holds DGR1 tax deductibility status and is a registered member of the Fundraising Institute of Australia (FIA). CEF undertakes the required annual financial audit, conducted by Boyce Chartered Accountants. CEF is a registered charity with the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission (ACNC).

### STUDENT SCHOLARSHIPS AND GRANTS

Direct financial support is provided to students in the form of 'non-cash' grants. Grant money is provided to students in the way of reimbursement for goods or services purchased directly relating to study or paid on invoice direct to a supplier e.g. for a new laptop the student cannot afford to pay for upfront.

### ADVOCACY AND COMMUNITY EDUCATION

Costs associated with being involved in and promoting education equity for our rural and regional students.

### STUDENT RESOURCES AND SUPPORT

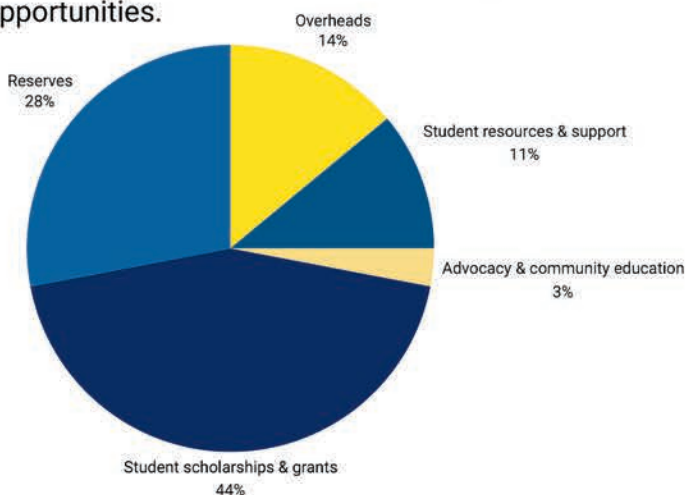
Funds directed to CEF developing student resources and support programs – the Scholarships Guide, Make it Possible Inspiration Hub and the CEF Alumni Program. This also includes the costs of maintaining relationships with education partners, supporting local foundations, providing other resources for members of the CEF family, and staff time associated with student, scholarship and local foundation support.

### OVERHEADS

Overhead expenses of the CEF national office include administrative staffing, IT, fundraising & other running costs. This is essential to ensure good governance and business operations that can continue to support local CEF foundations, volunteers and students.

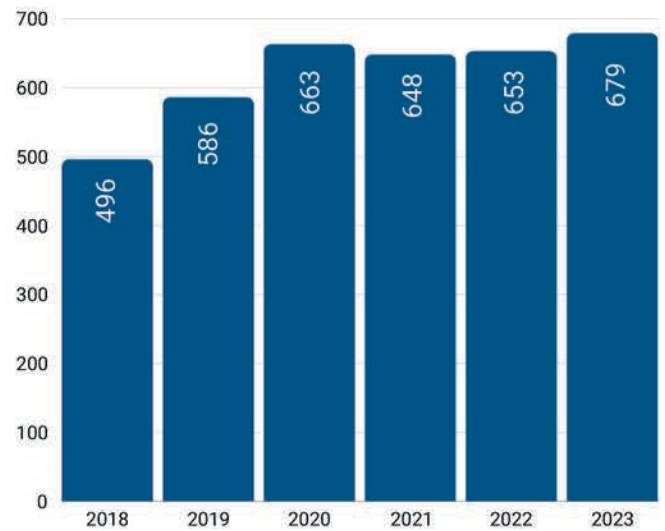
### RESERVES

Funds on hand to improve the long-term sustainability of the organisation. It is necessary to provision reserves when operating in regional Australia to accommodate setbacks and enable expansion opportunities.

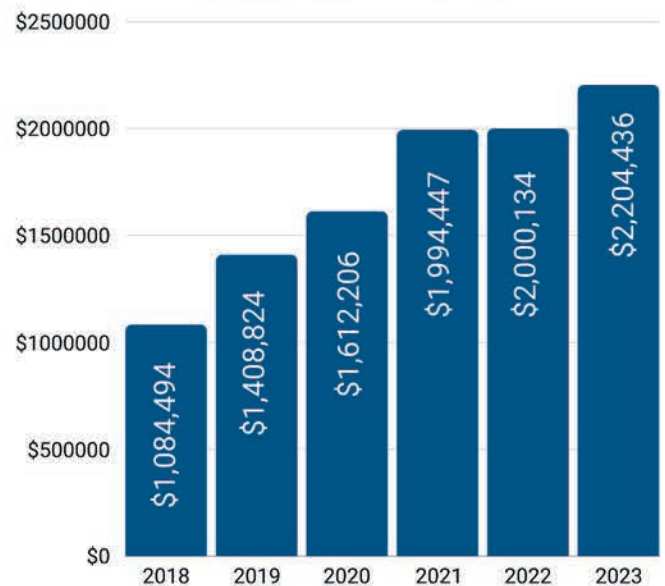


## ORGANISATIONAL GROWTH

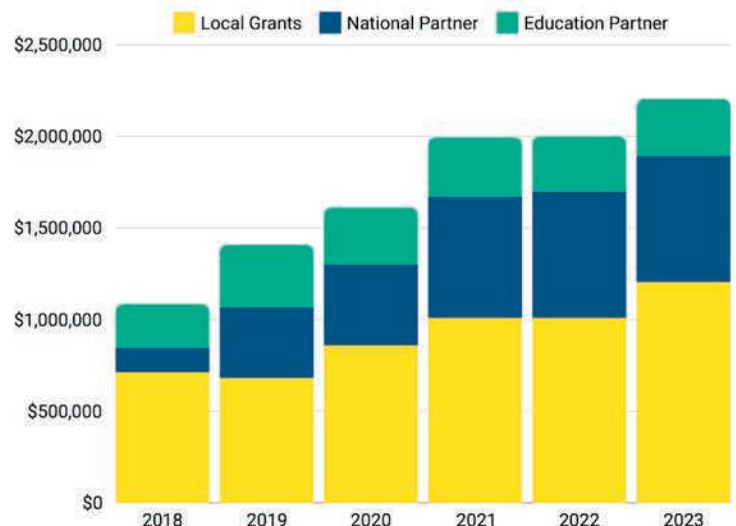
### INDIVIDUAL GRANTS AND SCHOLARSHIPS



### TOTAL CASH FUNDING



### FUNDING SOURCES



# CONDENSED FINANCIALS

## 1ST JAN - 31ST DEC 2023

	2023	2022
<b>Funds we raised</b>		
Donations to program funding	3,755,000	2,919,000
Donation to build our future		510,000
Income from funds invested	380,000	166,000
Other income	288,000	235,000
	4,423,000	3,830,000
<b>What we spent</b>		
Scholarships & funds distributed to regional foundations for students	1,953,000	2,031,000
Student resources	29,000	29,000
Other programs to support students	459,000	296,000
Advocacy and community education	147,000	179,000
Fundraising events		8,000
Fundraising, accounting and administration	574,000	482,000
Depreciation, amortisation	26,000	25,000
	3,187,000	3,050,000
Fair value gains (losses) on our investments	95,000	(22,000)
<b>Retained for ongoing initiatives</b>	1,331,000	758,000
<b>What we own</b>		
Cash	2,441,000	1,136,000
Investments	3,709,000	2,795,000
Property plant & equipment	1,194,000	1,232,000
Other assets	84,000	32,000
	7,428,000	5,195,000
<b>Liabilities</b>	1,665,000	763,000
<b>Our net assets</b>	5,763,000	4,432,000

On 26th February 2020, CEF was granted permission by the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission (ACNC) to change its financial year from a year ending 30th June to 31st December.

In addition to the income reported in the condensed financial report, our network of 46 local foundations individually raise money to support their local beneficiaries.

To read a copy of Country Education Foundation of Australia's full audited financial statements visit [cef.org.au](http://cef.org.au)

## IMAGERY

The images in this annual review have been taken at CEF events or supplied by our wonderful stakeholders, students and volunteers.

### FRONT COVER:

The images on the front cover have been supplied by and are of the following students supported by CEF: Ross Charles, Hastings; Bronsun Walters, Great Lakes; and Sophie Barclay, Nyngan.

### ANNIVERSARY GALA:

Images from our 30th Anniversary event were taken by Orange photographer, Robert Bruce.

### BACK COVER:

The image on the back cover was organised by our partner, VERTO Ltd, and taken by Orange photographer David Smyth of CEF supported student Claire Miller, Orange.



Campbell Quintrell, Broken Hill.



**EDUCATION**  
CHANGES LIVES.  
AND FAMILIES.  
AND COMMUNITIES.

