

Annual Review

Country Education Foundation of Australia | 2024



**Country
Education
Foundation**
AUSTRALIA



Acknowledgement of Country

*In the spirit of reconciliation and respect,
CEF acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of Country
throughout Australia and their connections to land, sea and communities
and pay our respects to Elders past and present.*



"WARRUMBUNGLE WAY"
GEORGIA DITCHFIELD;
CEF COONAMBLE & DISTRICTS
FOR THE 2023 GALAH
REGIONAL PHOTOGRAPHY PRIZE

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Country Education Foundation of Australia (CEF) is a national charity that was **established in 1993**, 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.

Today, we have a strong **network of 49 local foundations** across regional and rural Australia, working **to support young people achieve their education dreams**.



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.**



Chairman's Report

Nick Burton Taylor AM

The past year has been one of progress and growth for our organisation, as we continued to build on the solid foundations of the past 30 years. With that in mind, our focus now turns to the next 30 years to grow our collective impact, ensuring sustainability across the CEF network and, as always, empowering more regional students to achieve their educational goals.

A standout achievement this year has been the sustained growth of our local foundations, expanding our network to 49 foundations, with new additions in South Australia, Victoria and New South Wales. Throughout our network, our dedicated volunteers continued to work tirelessly to support the aspirations of young people in their communities.

The number of young people we impact each year continued to grow and we were proud to award grants and scholarships to over 700 individuals, with a pleasing 14% increase in direct financial support. From aspiring educators, healthcare workers and skilled tradespeople, the determination of our grant recipients provided motivation to us all.


We continued to invest in our most valued asset – our committed network of volunteers. This year, we held our National Conference in Canberra, to learn, share and celebrate. With the theme of 'Let's Thrive Together', topics covering succession, governance, fundraising and committee sustainability provided insight into growing our collective impact into the future.

Under the leadership of Wendy Mason, we undertook important work to focus on our committee health and governance, increased the financial support we provide students and developed our partnerships to create more value for the organisation. Through this work, we will continue to broaden our reach and deepen our impact across rural and regional Australia.

Our thanks are extended to our valued donors, partners and supporters, especially those who increased their commitment or gave generously for the first time, including those who left a gift in their will.

Our Board

Last year saw the retirement of Katie Walker OAM after 20 years of service and commitment, while this year sees Julia Burton Taylor OAM and David Smithers AM standing down from the Board after the 2025 AGM, making way for a new generation. I would like to thank David for his service and his efforts to ensure that the organisation is in such a sound financial position. Collectively, their contributions have been extraordinary and fundamental to who and where we are today. Julia was at the kitchen table when the idea for the Country Education Foundation was formed and David in turn has shaped, protected and planned for our sustainability and "future proofing".



Jono Forrest has assumed David's role as Treasurer and Peita Burton Taylor, a Director for eight years, has been appointed as Deputy Chair.

Our Board, as with our individual Foundation committees continue to refresh and plan for the future. We would not be in our privileged position without the contributions of Katie, Julia and David, three remarkable individuals.

Financial position

The Financial Statements of the Foundation for the year ending 31st December 2024 demonstrated continued success in fundraising, increased support for students and strong reserves to ensure the future of the organisation.

Income and expenditure

Generous donors and two matched giving campaigns enabled the CEF network to successfully raise funds, enabling a strong organisation with increased funds available to directly support students. Revenue from investments and special purpose funds provided by a major donor has increased reserves in line with the Board's future proofing efforts.


Balance sheet

The balance sheet presents a strong financial position. Total assets exceed \$7.9m. Liabilities of \$1.45m are comprised principally of funds received for distribution to students in 2025 and are provided for by liquid assets. Reserves of \$6.49m are intended to provide capital to support the ongoing work and long term impact of the organisation.

Our collective effort

Lastly, I would like to extend my deepest thanks to the national team and our hardworking volunteer network who dedicate their time and passion to our cause. Together with our supporters, from individuals and families to partners, we have created a powerful community that drives the CEF's mission forward.





“The funds from CEF have assisted me in my studies in many ways, from easing my financial stress and supporting any expenses involved. It has allowed me to focus on clinical placements, where I get to engage in a healthcare setting, providing compassionate and holistic care to patients, putting my new skills into practice.”

SARANNA | CEF NYNGAN
DIPLOMA OF NURSING, TAFE DUBBO

CEO's Report

Wendy Mason



As we reflect on another year at the Country Education Foundation, it is with great pride that we share the progress we've made and celebrate the continued impact we create for rural and regional youth and communities across the country.

In my first year as CEO, I was inspired by the work and dedication of our network to addressing the unique challenges faced by young Australians in rural and regional areas, to ensure they have the support they need to pursue their dreams. After witnessing our on the ground effort and meeting many of our volunteers, students and alumni, it is clear that our organisation is delivering on our mission.

We have supported over 700 students and provided more than \$2.5 million in direct financial support. We introduced initiatives including Boot Bash cost of living top-ups and Student Placement Assistance to address the financial challenges that our students face.

Despite the challenges posed by the ongoing effects of the rising cost of living, economic uncertainty and environmental pressures that our communities are so attuned to, our staff, volunteers, and supporters have shown unwavering dedication. Our local foundations significantly increased their locally raised funds by 14% compared to 2023, a result that will create an increased impact and continue to make a lasting difference for youth across rural and regional Australia.

Our focus remained on deepening our impact across regional Australia, ensuring our students and communities continue to be empowered while maintaining the sustainability of our network. As part of this effort, we welcomed new local foundations in Port Lincoln, Bendigo and Narromine.

We gathered in Canberra for our National Conference, with an increase in representation from across Australia. Over that weekend, we held our inaugural CEF Awards, celebrating the dedication and achievements of our volunteers, students and alumni. We received overwhelming positive feedback, with 99% of delegates saying they would recommend the event to another volunteer.

We will continue our efforts to innovate and build on the strong foundation of our place-based model, ensuring our volunteers feel supported to do what they do best – support their local youth to succeed in their studies. We look to grow our partnerships and fundraising efforts to enhance our national support offerings, including additional financial assistance initiatives and opportunities for students and alumni to undertake mentoring and professional development. We will extend our student support program to include offering Mental Health First Aid training to our network, equipping volunteers, staff and students with the knowledge to help someone who might be in need of support.

I would like to extend my deepest gratitude to all our supporters, volunteers, staff, and students. Your collective efforts have made a significant impact on the lives of young Australians, and together, we are building a brighter future for regional and rural communities.

Wendy Mason

Board of Directors



Nick Burton Taylor AM | CHAIRMAN

Nick is the founding Chairman of the Country Education Foundation of Australia and Boorowa Education Foundation, established in 1993 with his wife, Julia Burton Taylor, and individuals from the Boorowa community.

He is a Principal of Hillgrove Pastoral and Past Chairman of Delta Agribusiness. His experience includes founder and former Managing Director of Hays Personnel (Australia), Chancellor of Southern Cross University and President of the Institute of Chartered Accountants. He served on the boards of CSR Limited, Hazelton Airlines, Rural Press, Sydney Airport Corporation, Meat Research Corporation, Australian Agricultural Company, Airservices Australia and Australian Topmaking Services Limited.



Julia Burton Taylor OAM | SECRETARY

Julia is a founding member of the Country Education Foundation of Australia and an active committee member of CEF Boorowa.

She worked with her husband, Nick Burton Taylor and members from the local community to help establish CEF. She is also part of the Management Committee for Hillgrove Pastoral.

In 2015, Julia was awarded a Medal of the Order of Australia (OAM) for her service to youth in rural and remote areas and to the not-for-profit sector.



Jonathan Forrest | TREASURER

Jonathan joined the Country Education Foundation of Australia Board in the second half of 2023.

He brings with him a wealth of CEF experience, having volunteered for the Country Education Foundation of Snowy Monaro as a committee member from 2005 until 2019.

He also completed work for CEF during his time as an accountant and Director at Boyce Chartered Accountants.

He works as General Manager for Mulloon Consulting, an organisation that focuses on landscape rehydration.



Peita Burton Taylor

Peita is a founding family member of the CEF and the CEO of the Burton Taylor Foundation, overseeing initiatives supporting rural and regional education, environmental sustainability, and social impact. She has held roles across the not-for-profit sector both locally and internationally, bringing a strategic and values-driven approach to her work. With a strong background in marketing, client engagement, and project management, Peita has worked with leading global brands in the experiential marketing industry. After several years in her family's agricultural enterprise she now focuses on the Burton Taylor Foundation.



Dougal Geddes

Dougal was a Principal of Foulsham & Geddes Solicitors from 1982 to 2015 and continued as an Executive Lawyer and Consultant to the firm until 2022. He has practiced law since 1978 and has vast experience in a variety of legal matters. He has been a member of several Law Society of NSW Professional Committees (including the Ethics Committee, Practice & Conduct Committee and the Succession & Elder Law Committee). Dougal was also involved with youth mentoring programs including being a Mentor for the Raise Foundation, Youth Off the Streets and Police and Community Youth Clubs employees.



Paula McLean

Paula has a background as an editor in book publishing including education and fiction. She is a founding trustee of McLean Foundation which supports rural and Indigenous education, preschool literacy, conservation, domestic and family violence and Australian literature. She is the immediate past Deputy Chair of The Stella Prize for women's writing, a Stella Patron and Stella's NSW Ambassador. She is Founding Advocate for She Gives and serves on their National Advisory Group. She was honoured with Philanthropy Australia's Life Membership Award in 2021.



David Smithers AM


David is a Director of the James N Kirby Foundation, a Fellow of Chartered Accountants Australia and New Zealand and the Australian Institute of Company Directors. He was previously the Chairman of PwC Australia, President of the Institute of Chartered Accountants in Australia, a Director of Rabobank Australia and New Zealand and a Director of Genea Ltd. He was appointed a Member of the Order of Australia (AM) for his service to the community through the National Heart Foundation, the Institute of Chartered Accountants and to the Sydney 2000 Olympic Bid as a Board member and Chairman of the Finance Commission.



Katie Walker OAM

Katie was a Founding Director on the CEF Board since 2003 and a founder of the Country Education Foundation of Yass Valley. Katie officially retired from the Board at the AGM in May 2024, but continues to support regional youth as the Secretary of CEF Yass Valley.

She was honoured for her longstanding service to education and the community on Australia Day in 2024, with her inclusion on the Honours List and an Order of Australia Medal (OAM).



“CEF was the reason why I managed to pay for my first couple of months of rent, as well as paying for groceries and textbooks.

None of this would have been possible without CEF and I will forever be grateful for that.”

SAMANTHA | CEF HARDEN
BACHELOR OF SECONDARY EDUCATION,
UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN QUEENSLAND

Tributes

As these founding Directors retire from our Board, we express our profound thanks for their work, commitment and wish them all the best for the future.

Julia Burton Taylor OAM

We acknowledge Julia Burton Taylor OAM, co-founder of CEF for her exceptional service to our organisation. Julia's contributions over the last 30 years have been invaluable, and her dedication has significantly influenced the direction and growth of CEF.

Since 1993, Julia brought not only her expertise, but also a deep commitment to improving educational outcomes for young people in rural and regional areas. The time spent in the car alongside Katie Walker OAM, travelling hundreds of kilometers from town to town and advocating for this community-driven concept has significantly contributed to the success of the model today.

Julia's insightful perspectives, strategic guidance and passion for the volunteer driven effort has been integral in shaping CEF's mission. Her leadership, passion and unwavering support for our cause have left a lasting impact, and we are deeply grateful for the time and energy she dedicated to our work.

Her tireless efforts in advocating for rural and regional youth will continue to inspire and guide the organisation as we move forward into the next 30 years.



"The excitement we get out of the students that we're able to help is extraordinary. All our communities, all our volunteers are amazing. They keep doing what they're doing because they believe in the cause of what we're able to do for rural youth."



David Smithers AM

Our deepest gratitude is given to David Smithers AM for his service as a founding Director and Treasurer.

David played an instrumental role in cementing CEF's mission to support educational opportunities for young people in rural and regional communities. His strategic and financial insights were crucial in guiding the organisation through the early years and setting it on a path for long-term success. In his role as Treasurer, David's meticulous financial stewardship and forward thinking approach were key in securing CEF's financial stability and have ensured the organisation is well positioned to continue our vital work for years to come.

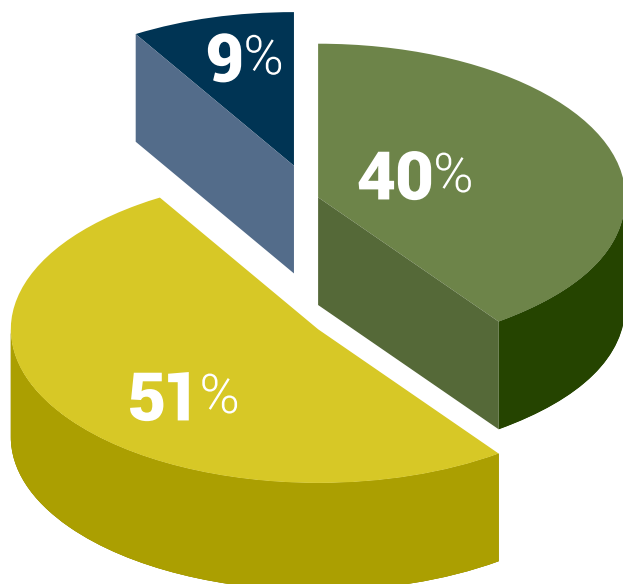
His indomitable enthusiasm for the benefits that flows from education have guided many of the strategic decisions we have made over many years. His focus on protecting our future through strong and meticulous provisioning is his key legacy.

701

STUDENTS SUPPORTED

\$2,522,807

DIRECT FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE



EDUCATION PARTNER FUNDING
\$215,000



NATIONAL PARTNER FUNDING
\$1,012,257



LOCAL GRANT FUNDING
\$1,295,550



\$2,522,807

1 in 5

students receive **financial assistance** from family



2 in 5

students are **eligible or receive government assistance**



50%

of students **undertake part time employment**



99%

of students are **on track to complete their studies**



96%

of students say the **support they have received from CEF** is very important or important

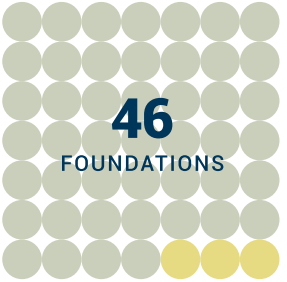
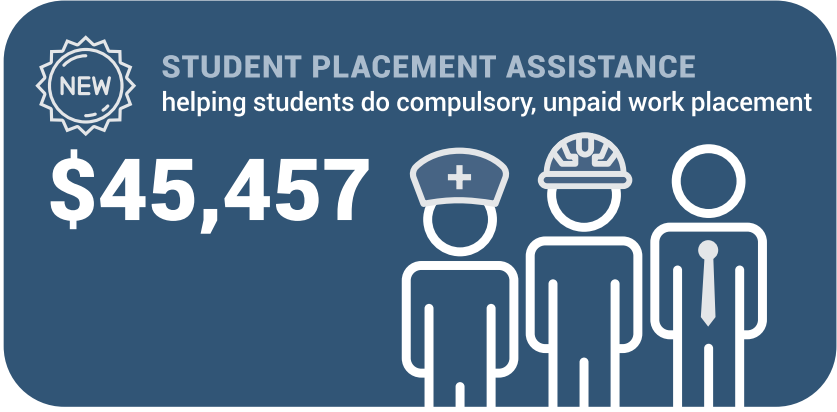
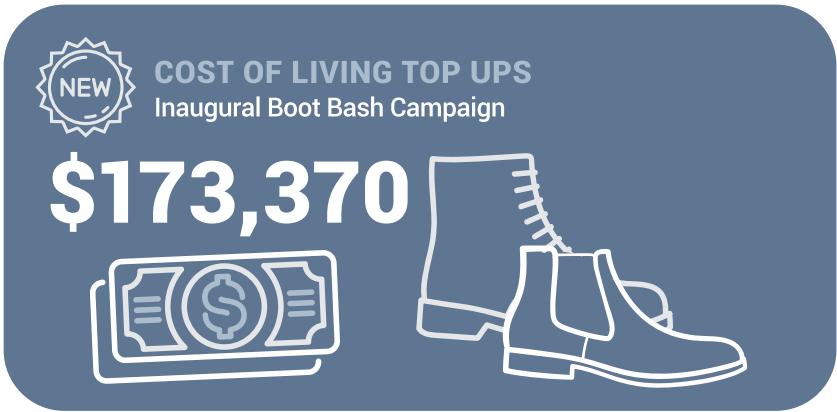
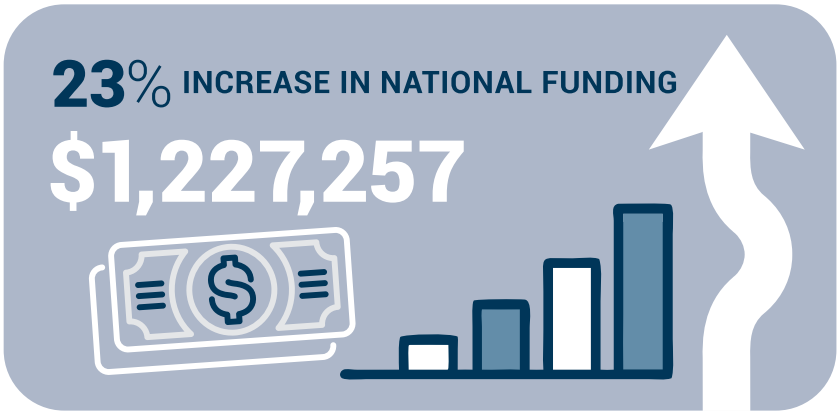


81%

of students plan to **take their education back to a regional area**



2024 Student Impact



3 new foundations:

Port Lincoln (SA)
Narromine (NSW)
Bendigo (Vic)

430 estimated **volunteers**
across Australia

46 local **CEF** foundations
(49 by December 2024)

95% of **students** **satisfied**
or very satisfied with the
contact they have with
their local foundation.

2024 National Conference

Our people thrive together

Every two years, we bring together the CEF network for a biannual national conference; a great way to connect our volunteers, staff, board, students and alumni.

This year's conference theme 'Let's Thrive Together' focused on strengthening our local foundation's operations, sustainability, fundraising capacity and discussing governance, compliance and succession planning. Keynote presentations from Grace Brennan from Buy from the Bush and Dan Geaves from Marlin Communications equipped volunteers with new strategies to encourage donations, share empowering stories about their students and communities and garner wider support from their network.

Students and alumni enjoyed a professional development session to hone their CV's and cover letters alongside a roundtable discussion with CEF representatives about starting out in the workforce.

The inaugural CEF Awards were held that evening where the network celebrated the achievements and contributions from students, alumni, volunteers, and a founding Board member.





Katie Walker Outstanding Service Award

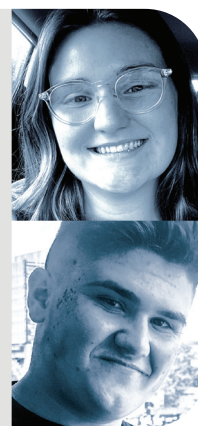
Katrina Norwood, from Shoalhaven Education Fund (SEF), was honoured for her exceptional service and dedication to local youth by receiving the prestigious Katie Walker Outstanding Service Award 2024.

Presented at the inaugural CEF Awards Dinner in Canberra in October, the peer-nominated award honours a CEF volunteer who has demonstrated outstanding commitment to providing life-changing education and training opportunities for their local youth. Since 2012, Katrina has served as Treasurer of the Shoalhaven Education Fund, playing a crucial role in supporting students. In addition to providing them with essential resources to succeed in their studies and training, she has also offered valuable mentorship, guidance, and overall support.

Previous students and Shoalhaven Education Fund grant recipients Chloe Hadley and Mason Forrester were both glowing in their praise of Katrina, describing her as a thoroughly deserving recipient.

"From the get go, Katrina was kind and warm hearted and I could tell she was just one of those people who loves helping others," Chloe said. "Katrina just goes above and beyond what she is doing in her role at SEF. She makes sure the lives of people around her are a lot easier which is something so special and meaningful."

Mason added, ***"I've known Katrina for a little over three years and honestly, I wouldn't be where I am without her and I'm incredibly grateful for everything she's done, especially because she volunteers – it's an incredible thing that she does."***



"Receiving this award is very humbling and to be recognised by your peers is a wonderful feeling.

When I was younger, I didn't attend university because I couldn't afford to go.

I just want to make it as easy as possible for young people to have the best opportunities for a good, quality education."

KATRINA NORWOOD

CEF CEO Wendy Mason paid tribute to Katrina, describing her as a wonderful volunteer and role model.

"On top of the ongoing support Katrina provides to students in the Shoalhaven region, she selflessly devotes an extraordinary amount of her personal time each week to assisting the foundation in a variety of important ways including fundraising activities, administration, being part of interview panels and much more."

"Katrina is well respected by her peers and students for her tireless work ethic and compassion, and her exceptional service is making a meaningful difference in the lives of countless young people each year."



“The support from CEF has allowed me to relieve some of the financial stress that comes with paying for accommodation and travel to and from TAFE. I have also spent some of my grant on tools which will be needed for me to start my own business once I have finished. Tools are expensive and I couldn't have afforded them without my CEF grant.”

JACK | CEF WALGETT
CERTIFICATE III ENGINEERING & FABRICATION
(BOILER MAKING)

Students' Success Stories

Claire is a young Indigenous woman with a passion for agricultural mechanics, who was raised by a single mother in Molong, Central West NSW, population 1,600.

Claire admits that when she was at school, she didn't have a clear plan but had always been interested in the agricultural industry. Doing work experience with On-Trac Ag opened her eyes to mechanics and she started her apprenticeship in 2023. She is determined to become a fully qualified agricultural mechanic; an incredible achievement for a young woman in a male-dominated field.

Receiving a grant from CEF Orange & Districts in 2023 and 2024, alongside additional funding, meant that Claire could purchase the necessary tools and toolbox for her job, costing her just under \$10,000 in the first year of her apprenticeship. Her funds have also helped with her accommodation and travel costs to TAFE in Wagga Wagga; a 640km round trip for classes where accommodation and fuel costs approximately \$650 each trip.

With a couple of years left of her apprenticeship, Claire is looking to build up her experience, knowledge and confidence working on a wide variety of machinery. After that, she would like to move to a big property up north working as a mechanic and get as much experience as possible.

Claire Miller

CEF Orange & Districts | CERTIFICATE III IN AGRICULTURAL MECHANICAL TECHNOLOGY

“I wanted to prove that you can do any job you wish if you are persistent and willing to learn, it doesn't matter who you are.

CEF not only provides financial assistance but also supports your mental health and wellbeing. Knowing that you have someone that takes the time to check in and provide additional support and connections is phenomenal.”

CLAIRE | CEF ORANGE & DISTRICTS



"I would like to say thank you to the CEF supporters, especially CEF Gwydir and MH Premium Farms, for their time and dedication to helping young people in rural communities.

I've been very fortunate to have such amazing people in my corner, and that has made being first in my family to graduate university possible."

CHELSEA | CEF GWYDIR

CEF Gwydir | BACHELOR OF AGRICULTURE, UNIVERSITY OF NEW ENGLAND

Chelsea Stevenson

Chelsea grew up in the small town of Bingara, in the Gwydir region of NSW, 160km west of Armidale. She has overcome financial, geographic and family adversities to get where she is today, at times saying it was 'almost impossible'.


She began working at 13 years old to lessen the financial burden on her family and worked four jobs for the duration of her schooling. While working in stock mustering, assisting the local vet and doing stock and station work, she experienced first hand the devastating effect drought has on regional communities.

Her passion for agriculture was demonstrated in her determination to complete her senior agriculture subject at school. With no teaching staff for the subject, she completed this via distance education and gained entry into the University of New England in 2021.

When she applied to CEF for financial support, Chelsea confessed that she'd reach a point where her hard work alone may not be enough to successfully take the next step in her journey. With CEF Gwydir supporting her with a local grant, Chelsea also received the inaugural MH Premium Farms-CEF Scholarship. For Chelsea this meant buying a laptop and other tools, alongside paying for accommodation on campus.

During the final subjects of her degree, she transitioned to online study to move home and save money on accommodation. Due to the poor internet service in her home town, she was forced to travel nearly 50km return to the nearest town library just to access the internet and complete her university assessment items.

With her determination and perseverance, coupled with support from CEF, Chelsea graduated from her Bachelor of Agriculture in 2024, becoming the first person in her family to graduate from university.

A photograph of a young man with a beard and a baseball cap, smiling in a workshop. He is wearing a dark hoodie. In the background, there are various tools and equipment, including a blue air hose reel and a white bucket.

“ CEF support a lot of young people and it's great how they check in personally just to see how things are going and make sure all is okay.

Completing my apprenticeship as an automotive mechanic as well as auto electrician and air-conditioning technician was a dream come true, but being able to start up my own business, would have to be my proudest moment.”

JAMES | CEF GRENFELL

CEF Grenfell | CERTIFICATE II IN AUTOMOTIVE ELECTROTECHNOLOGY

James Anderson

James grew up in the small country town of Grenfell, NSW, with his mum. He found school a challenge, but always had a passion for cars and mechanics, working every day after school at a local mechanic and starting an apprenticeship as a light vehicle mechanic at the age of 15. He completed his apprenticeship with flying colours and went on to do his Certificate II in Automotive Electrotechnology (Air-conditioning) at TAFE Orange.

Receiving grants from CEF Grenfell gave him the opportunity to develop and enhance his skills, meaning he could complete his TAFE course and earn his qualification without having to find the funds to pay for training and travel, especially given the 260km round trip from Grenfell to Orange.

In 2021, at the age of just 20, James used his learning and qualifications to realise his dream and open his own business, Anderson's Mobile Auto Repair, working from the backyard of his own home. He now provides service to local farmers and businesses, keeping their equipment and operations running, and contributing to the local Grenfell economy which relies so heavily on agriculture.

He continues to grow his small business and has been able to upgrade his work vehicle which is more suitable for travelling on country roads and farms. He is fitted out to carry all the necessary tools needed to operate his business successfully.

Students Returning to Regional Areas

Anjali grew up in Braidwood, a small town east of Canberra. When she started studying a Certificate IV in Business Administration at Canberra Institute of Technology (CIT) part-time, she knew there would be travel and textbook costs associated.

Her CEF grant helped pay for textbooks and fuel to drive to and from Canberra, a round trip of 3 hours, and meant she could fully focus on her studies without having to worry how to pay for it all.

After completing her studies and securing an administration position in Braidwood, Anjali wanted to pay it forward to help local students. Since 2018, she has been a volunteer with Braidwood and District Education Foundation and plays an active role in supporting local youth to achieve their educational goals.

Anjali Williams

Braidwood and District Education Foundation | CERTIFICATE IV IN BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION



“I think it is important to support rural and regional students as everyone deserves equal opportunities to learn and succeed, no matter where they live.

Rural areas may have limited resources, so providing financial support can help bridge the educational gap between rural and metropolitan students.”

ANJALI | BRAIDWOOD AND DISTRICT
EDUCATION FOUNDATION

For Lachlan completing his final year of a Bachelor of Physiotherapy meant needing to undertake 25 weeks of full-time, unpaid placement.

Like four in five CEF students, Lachlan receives no financial assistance from family and undertaking work placements meant needing to fund additional costs. His ability to work part time during these placement periods was also impacted.

"Basically working for half the year for free, while learning at the same time, was extremely challenging," Lachlan says. "But the best thing has been the skills I have learnt on placements that you do not necessarily get in the classroom. I feel like they have shaped me into a much better emerging physiotherapist." Thanks to CEF's Student Placement Assistance, offered in August 2024, Lachlan received \$5,075, helping him complete his weeks of placement, from Orange to Westmead in Western Sydney.

"The funding allowed me to not be in as much financial stress that I would have been in. Instead of using every free second to work to pay for placement expenses, I could allocate my time to important things, like further study, to allow myself to excel at the levels I did."

Lachlan has been inspired to work in rural health and is now a qualified physiotherapist in Bathurst.

Lachlan Balcombe

CEF Canowindra | BACHELOR OF PHYSIOTHERAPY



"Thank you so much for everything you have provided me with this year. I genuinely think without the assistance I had, I would not have been able to pass my degree as there would have been too much financial stress."

LACHLAN | CEF CANOWINDRA



“CEF's been a massive help and I don't think I'd be here without their support. The cost of living is high and for rural students like me, universities aren't in our backyards.

I feel privileged to be part of a community like CEF who understand the challenges of pursuing tertiary education for regional students. I plan to stay connected to CEF throughout my future years of study at university!”

PRIA | CEF GRIFFITH

CEF Griffith | DUNMORE LANG COLLEGE-CEF SCHOLARSHIP | BACHELOR OF LAWS

Pria Cerato

For CEF Griffith student, Pria Cerato, her Dunmore Lang College-CEF Scholarship provided her with the opportunity to relocate to Sydney to follow her dreams of becoming a lawyer.

During her gap year in 2023, she worked at Noyce Salmon & D'Aquino Solicitors, a local law firm in her hometown of Griffith, NSW, as a Junior Law Clerk and Receptionist, where she developed a passion for justice and a desire to study law.

Like most regional students, the reality of relocating to Sydney to study, coupled with the expense of the numerous law textbooks, was going to be challenging for Pria. Knowing that moving would also separate her from family and a support network in Griffith, she looked to her local CEF foundation. After being awarded a local grant, she was selected to receive the Dunmore Lang College-CEF Scholarship, which funds half of her accommodation fees for the year, making her move to Sydney possible.

She has followed in her father and sisters' footsteps, with both having lived at Dunmore Lang College (DLC) and studied at Macquarie University before her. She said while relocating to a college in Sydney is expensive, DLC had great value for money in the additional benefits it provided. DLC Dean of Students, Emily Sutton, said the college prides itself on being dedicated to students from the regions.

“Dunmore Lang College proudly provides over \$600,000 a year in collaboration with partners towards scholarships and bursaries for our students,” Emily said.

“We recognise the significant impact moving away from home has for students both emotionally and financially. If we are able to take away some of the financial burden, we know there will be strong academic success for the students.”

2024 Audi Foundation-CEF Alumni Awards

Country Education Foundation of Australia (CEF) announced the recipients of the 2024 Audi Foundation-CEF Alumni Awards at the CEF Awards in October, with six, dedicated and community-minded recipients claiming the honours in their respective categories.

With 44 nominations received across the entire network, the recipients' passions range from supporting First Nations communities, to rural health and education, showcasing that education not only changes individuals, but also families and communities. The achievements of this year's recipients are so inspirational that it was hard for the panel to select the winners.

“Every day, I am blown away by the achievements of our students and alumni, with the recipients of this year's awards no exception. The commitment towards their education and career goals, and dedication to their communities, is nothing short of extraordinary. We celebrate these students and alumni, but also the CEF local foundations who believed in their aspirations from the very beginning.”

WENDY MASON | CEF CEO

CEF is thrilled to have the Audi Foundation sponsor the Alumni Awards in 2024 and 2025, with Jeff Mannering, Director of Audi Australia proud of the meaningful change the winners are creating.

“At Audi, we believe that progress is an attitude, and through sponsoring the Alumni Awards, we are committed to fostering that progress by celebrating the achievements of these promising students and alumni,” he said. “In turn, their success contributes to the betterment of their communities and society as a whole.”



2024 AUDI FOUNDATION-CEF ALUMNI AWARD WINNERS WITH ZANNA CHRISTIAN, ALUMNI & PROJECTS SPECIALIST, AND KATRINA BOSCO, SENIOR EXECUTIVE AUDI FOUNDATION

This year's recipients showcase the diverse and inspiring paths that our students embark on, reflecting the multitude of opportunities that education creates.



Audi Foundation-CEF Alumnus of the Year

Brooke Kinsela COUNTRY EDUCATION FOUNDATION OF CANOWINDRA

After achieving first class honours Brooke is now completing her PhD in cellular and molecular initiation, specialising in the progression of human brain cancer, and hopes to improve cancer patient outcomes for people in rural and regional areas.



Audi Foundation-CEF Community Alumni Champion

Lachlan Barrett COONAMBLE & DISTRICT EDUCATION FOUNDATION

Lachlan describes himself as a "future focused educator who works with the community to build partnerships and promote learning." Growing up in far western New South Wales, he now works as a primary school teacher and volunteers for CEF Orange & Districts, fostering a genuine love of learning in the young people he teaches.



Audi Foundation-CEF Young Achiever

Gemma Pol GREAT LAKES EDUCATION FUND

After completing a Bachelor of Public Relations and Communications/Bachelor of Business (International Business), Gemma has recently been appointed as CEO of Common Ground. She leads a team of eight First Nations people to build a network of Indigenous storytellers from across Australia to amplify and support their voices.



Audi Foundation-CEF Young Achiever

Grace Kelly COUNTRY EDUCATION FOUNDATION OF GRENFELL

After completing a Nursing rotation in Walgett, Grace is now a valued part of a dedicated midwifery team at Dubbo Base Hospital, playing a vital role in supporting families and babies, including those who travel from remote areas of NSW to access reliable healthcare services.



Audi Foundation-CEF Launching Star

Harry Tiernan COUNTRY EDUCATION FOUNDATION OF COOTAMUNDRA

Harry completed a Bachelor of Advanced Science with First Class Honours in Microbiology and was then accepted into a Doctor of Dental Medicine at the University of Sydney. He remains steadfast in his ambition to become a regional dentist, wanting to give back to the community that has supported him throughout his academic journey.



Audi Foundation-CEF Rising Star

Emma McMahon SHOALHAVEN EDUCATION FUND

Emma is completing a Bachelor of Social Work at the University of Wollongong and is undertaking an Aboriginal Social Work cadetship at Illawarra Legal Centre. She is deeply committed to social justice and empowering Aboriginal communities to overcome systemic challenges.

Futurity Education Foundation Partnership

Country Education Foundation's commitment to breaking down barriers, establishing education pathways and ensuring young people from regional and rural Australia have access to further education has been strengthened, with a three-year, \$225,000 grant from Futurity Education Foundation.

The grant will allow CEF to support regional students facing extenuating financial pressures who hold a strong desire to succeed in their tertiary teaching and education studies.

Futurity Investment Group's impact stretches back decades and is supported through the work of Futurity Education Foundation, which was established in 2021. Futurity Investment Group CEO, Sam Sondhi said the partnership with CEF will allow Futurity Education Foundation to positively impact more families, increase its reach and impact and enable education pathways for regional and rural students to access tertiary education. "Futurity Education Foundation and Country Education Foundation are united in the belief that education changes lives," Mr Sondhi said.

"In our 50th year, it's humbling Futurity Education Foundation can champion philanthropic endeavours that break down barriers and create educational pathways for students who experience barriers to education. It's critical for Australia's long-term success that quality education is affordable, accessible and inclusive across all parts of society. Futurity Education Foundation will help make this vision a reality. Futurity Education Foundation's partnership with Country Education Foundation will see select university students awarded scholarships to help pay for textbooks, laptops, accommodation and other education expenses."

CEF CEO, Wendy Mason said the grant from Futurity Education Foundation will help support even more regional students.

"Futurity Education Foundation's generous support will help rural and regional youth to access the services and resources they need to fulfil their personal potential, and to contribute fully to the communities in which they live," Ms Mason said.

"However, the reality is that to shape a career or undertake further education, young rural Australians must often leave home, travel and live in or move closer to metropolitan centres."



SAM SONDHİ, CEO FUTURITY INVESTMENT GROUP;
WENDY MASON CEO CEF, CRAIG DUNSTAN CHAIR
FUTURITY INVESTMENT GROUP

"For many of these rural and regional students, the financial, emotional and social obstacles are great. With Futurity Education Foundation's support, we are addressing the inequity in accessing tertiary education that exists between them and their metropolitan peers."

WENDY MASON | CEF CEO

Supporter Acknowledgements

There are many individuals and organisations that have contributed to our impact over 2024. On behalf of CEF, thank you for believing in the importance of our work and the potential of regional and rural youth.

Major Donors

A Wallman
Anonymous Donor
Audi Foundation
Birds in the Bush
Broadwaters Foundation
Burton Taylor Foundation
Charles Warman Foundation
D Smithers AM & I Smithers
Eureka Benevolent Foundation
Findex Community Fund
Future Generation
Investment Company
J Brewer AO
McLean Foundation
MH Premium Farms
Millett Family Foundation
Packer Family Foundation
Profield Foundation
Rye Park Renewable Energy
S Maple Brown AM
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The Trustee for the William McIlrath
Charitable Foundation
Thyne Reid Foundation
Unconscious Potential
Vernon Foundation
VERTO
Waratah Education Foundation
Zagora Foundation

Education Partners

Australian National University
Charles Sturt University
Dunmore Lang College
Flinders University
International College of Management
Sydney (ICMS)
Macquarie University
Queensland University of Technology
Sancta Sophia College
St Andrew's College
St Martin's College, Wagga Wagga
Swinburne University of Technology
Three Rivers Department of Rural Health
UNE Foundation
University of Adelaide
University of Canberra
University of New South Wales
University of Newcastle
University of South Australia
University of Sydney

Fundraising Initiatives

Hand to the Land

Probono Providers

AuctionsPlus
Boyce Chartered Accountants
Sydney Business Lawyers

Our Team



Wendy Mason

CHIEF EXECUTIVE
OFFICER



ALUMNI AND PROJECTS
SPECIALIST

Zanna Christian



Deborah Carroll

FINANCIAL CONTROLLER



PARTNERSHIPS
AND IMPACT MANAGER

Michelle Tripp



Donna Roberts

HEAD OF OPERATIONS



ACCOUNTS AND
OFFICE ADMINISTRATOR

Naomi Barrett



Lisa Carrick

HEAD OF DEVELOPMENT
AND COMMUNITIES



COMMUNITY SPECIALIST
(ACTING FROM NOV 2024)

Johanna Scott




Hilary Matchett

HEAD OF ENGAGEMENT,
MEDIA AND IMPACT



COMMUNITY SPECIALIST
(MATERNITY LEAVE FROM NOV 2024)

Sarah Washbrook



“The best thing about this year has been meeting all the blokes I work with now and learning new skills.

My grant funds have helped me buy tools, uniforms and other essentials I need for my study and work.”

TAJ | HASTINGS EDUCATION FUND
CERTIFICATE III IN ELECTROTECHNOLOGY



Condensed Financial Report

For the year ended December 2024

	2024	2023
Revenue and other income		
Donations to program funding	3,393,000	3,755,000
Donation to build our future	255,000	
Income from funds invested	329,000	380,000
Other income	284,000	288,000
	4,261,000	4,423,000

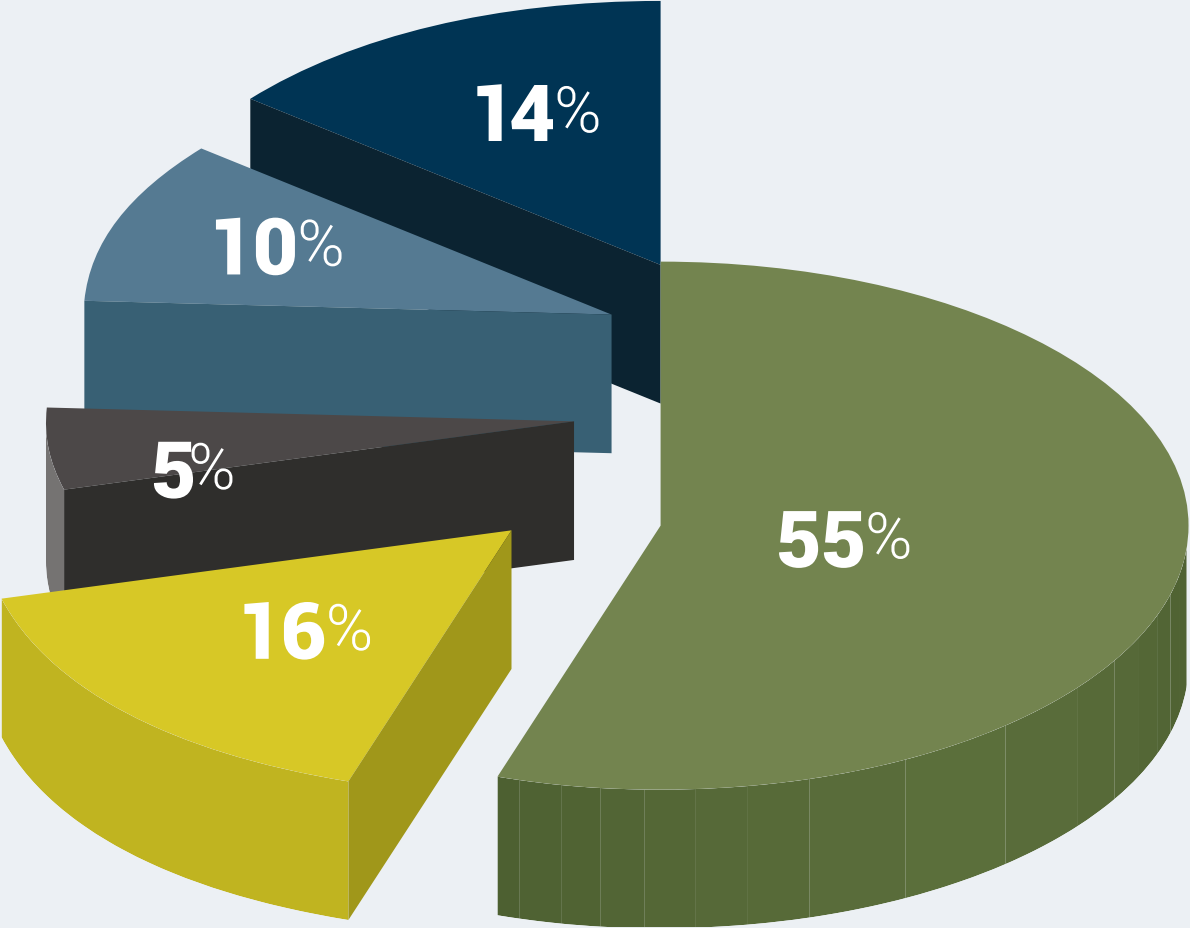
Expenditure






Scholarships & funds distributed to regional foundations for students	2,354,000	1,953,000
Student resources	38,000	29,000
Other programs to support students	536,000	459,000
Advocacy and community education	119,000	147,000
Fundraising	196,000	201,000
Accounting and administration	403,000	372,000
Depreciation, amortisation	15,000	26,000
	3,661,000	3,187,000
Fair value gains (losses) on our investments	134,000	95,000
Retained for ongoing initiatives	734,000	1,331,000

Financial position

Cash	2,183,000	2,441,000
Investments	4,579,000	3,709,000
Property plant & equipment	1,182,000	1,194,000
Other assets	59,000	84,000
	8,003,000	7,428,000
Liabilities	1,506,000	1,665,000
Our net assets	6,497,000	5,763,000

2024 statistics



	2024	
% of income		
Student scholarships & grants	55%	
Other support for students and their communities	16%	
Fundraising	5%	
Accounting & administration	10%	
Reserves*	14%	
	100%	

***RESERVES:**

Funds on hand to improve the long-term sustainability of the organisation.

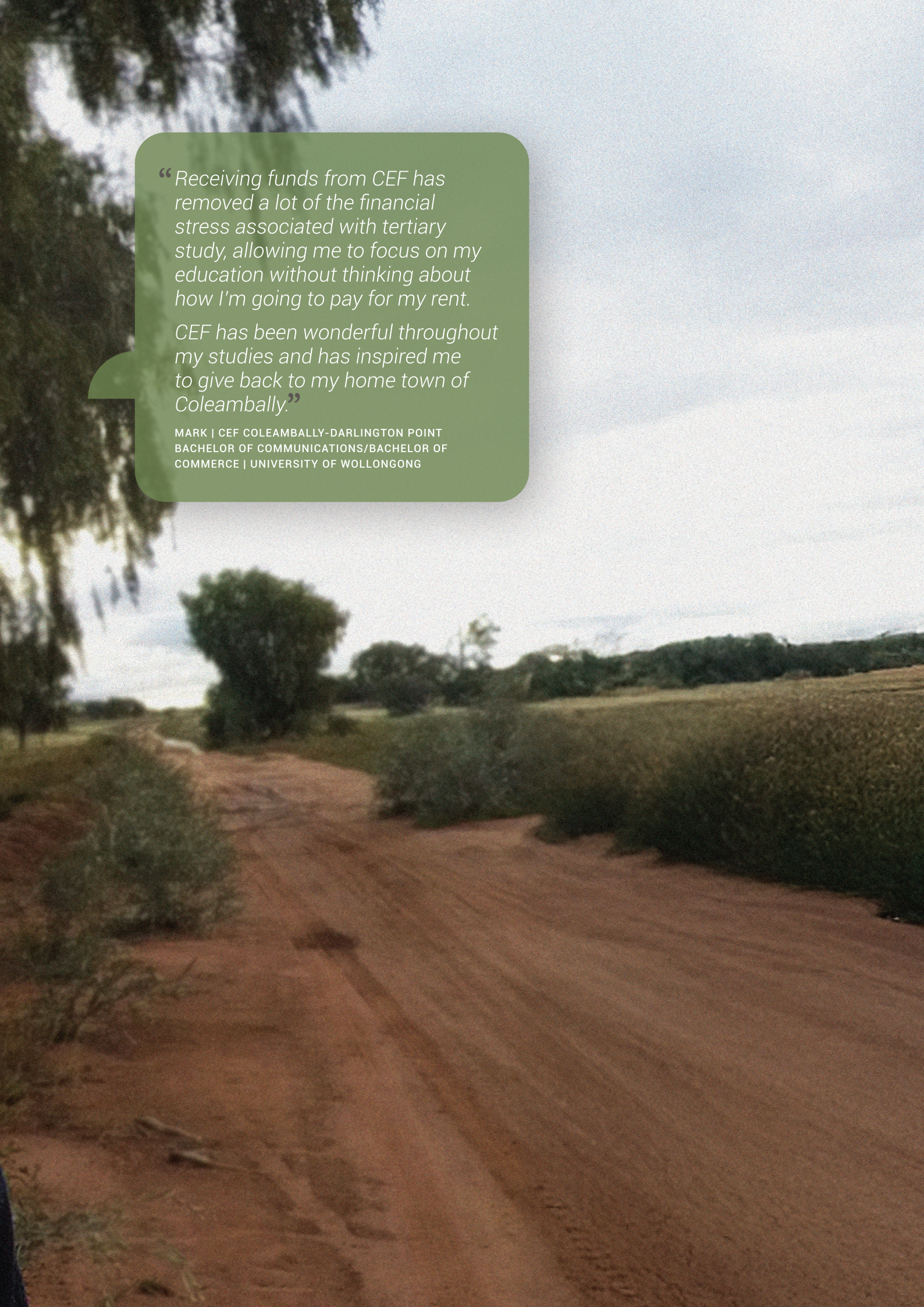
CEF operates in regional Australia where the dependency on primary production is paramount. This industry is exposed to dramatic climatic and seasonal impacts and it is necessary to provision reserves to accommodate potential setbacks in funding capacity, and provide a level of funds to enable expansion of opportunities to students in new areas.



Donate

SUPPORT REGIONAL YOUTH ACROSS AUSTRALIA AND
UNLOCK THE POWER OF EDUCATION BY DONATING TODAY.

YOUR DONATION HELPS CREATE BRIGHTER OPPORTUNITIES
FOR RURAL AND REGIONAL YOUTH AND COMMUNITIES.



“Receiving funds from CEF has removed a lot of the financial stress associated with tertiary study, allowing me to focus on my education without thinking about how I’m going to pay for my rent.

CEF has been wonderful throughout my studies and has inspired me to give back to my home town of Coleambally.”

MARK | CEF COLEAMBALLY-DARLINGTON POINT
BACHELOR OF COMMUNICATIONS/BACHELOR OF
COMMERCE | UNIVERSITY OF WOLLONGONG



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