

MEDIA RELEASE

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Access to education for rural and regional students unites Country Universities Centre and the Country Education Foundation

Country Universities Centre (CUC) is excited to announce a partnership with the **Country Education Foundation (CEF)**. The organisations are united in their drive to empower rural and regional communities and support their youth who aspire to achieve further education after high school.

CUC and the CEF currently operate in several shared geographic areas, and with expansion front of mind for both organisations, a partnership is the perfect way to collaborate and grow.

CEF has 44 Foundations throughout Australia and provides financial, social and emotional support to students during a key transition time to further study. CUC increases access to learning opportunities by building highly connected learning communities to overcome the barriers to success. Their NSW operations include Centres in Clarence Valley (Grafton), Far West (Broken Hill), Goulburn, North West (Narrabri & Moree), Snowy Monaro (Cooma) and Western Riverina (Griffith & Leeton).

For current university students adjusting to full online study as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic; the CUC offers quiet study spaces with free access to high-speed internet and general academic support through its Learning Skills Advisors. CEF is providing local community support to ensure students adapt as well as possible.

“Being such an unprecedented situation, studying from home is proving challenging for everyone involved. I have signed up for Country Universities Centre Far West which will be a great source of support,” says 2020 Zagora Foundation – CEF University Scholarship recipient Kelsey Graham.

The organisations will work together in providing resources to country students in the coming months, ensuring their aspirations and ability to undertake further study are not hindered. Examples include practical support as well as virtual and face-to-face mentoring and providing pathway opportunities and resources such as the **CEF Scholarships Guide**.

By working together to increase access to education in rural and regional Australia, we hope to

increase the aspirations and participation in further education by our country youth. This mission is now more important than ever on the back of severe drought, devastating bushfires and unprecedented challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic.

“Working with the CUC is a wonderful opportunity to broaden the horizons of CEF students, and to support them in more ways to achieve their education goals post-high school. The assistances provided by CUC is a wonderful complement to support CEF Foundations provide,” said CEF CEO Juliet Petersen.

“The CUC and CEF were both pivotal to my learning journey. I was fortunate to receive a CEF grant at a time when I was considering withdrawing from my undergraduate degree at The University of Newcastle, but with the grant, access to the local academic support and a study space through the CUC, I completed the degree and further online postgraduate degrees. The CUC looks forward to working with CEF to create more opportunities for our regional students to achieve their dreams,” said Snowy Monaro CEF recipient and CUC Network Manager Shannon Payten-McDonald.

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