



Country
Universities
Centre
NORFOLK ISLAND

Autumn Newsletter

May 2026

Supported by the Australian Government through the Regional University Study Hubs Program.

Manager's message

It has been a busy Autumn on Norfolk Island, with an exciting influx of residents interested in exploring study options.

Enrolment at University is fairly straight forward as the processes are similar for any institution, but vocational education and training (VET) is more of an iterative process whereby once we have undertaken course consultation and guidance, the potential student visits a separate service provider administering Commonwealth VET support, and liaison with TAFE Queensland, and sometimes this results in a different course selection.

This quarter we farewelled Lotus Rana who has decided to work full-time at the school, but we know we will work closely with her in supporting students with a tertiary component to their secondary studies. Andy Seaton also has gone full-time at the school, and we are grateful that he continues to work with us during school breaks.

Michelle Sanson
Centre Manager

Our first graduate



Tilly Menzies-Thompson, pictured at her graduation from Southern Cross University with a Bachelor of Education, is our first graduate, having registered with us in our opening semester in 2025. Tilly has secured full-time employment as a teacher, and says of her achievement: "I now get to step into my dream job and do what I've always hoped to do. It's not just about earning a degree — it's about having the opportunity to inspire a love of learning in my own students. Knowing that I can make a difference in their lives and help shape their confidence and curiosity is incredibly meaningful to me."

Raising awareness of our Centre

We had an Open Day at the Centre on 17 April, with residents young and old popping in to check out the Centre and some commencing the course guidance process with us.



On 23 May we had a stall outside of FoodWorks, a successful approach for raising awareness of the study hub amongst residents coming in for their weekend shop. We have two new students as a result.



Celebrating International Women's Day



Our Centre Manager Michelle Sanson was invited by the Women's Action Group of Norfolk Island (WAGNI) to speak at an International Women's Day event in March.

The event was held at Government House and emceed by senior leadership students from Norfolk Island Central School, two of whom are students at CUCNI as they have tertiary pathways as part of their secondary schooling.



Michelle spoke to the theme of the day, 'Balance the Scales'. Amongst other things, Michelle recognised that women and girls who experienced gender-based violence and as a result discontinued their studies and emphasised that "It is never too late, and we are never too broken".

Student support hits and misses

Our top priority is supporting CUCNI students to succeed, and we are feeling our way forward with the best ways to do that.

👎 We offered a workshop on 20 March for Parents and Caregivers but had only one parent attend.

👍 Our Assignment Planning workshop on 7 April was better attended with three students.

👎 Our Exam Preparation workshop, hosted by Zara Elliott on 7 May, was a 'no show' by students, even though it was the second most popular selection on the student 'Interests Survey'.

👍 We have decided to proceed with these topics and others within individual student support sessions to ensure we hit the mark for each student's needs.

👍 We are having good success in guiding residents who dropped out from past studies on available and alternative pathways to pick back up their education and pursue their dream courses.

👎 We did not succeed in our efforts negotiating to allow us to remotely invigilate testing/ examinations, resulting in travel costs for one student and a course applicant changing their course selection to a course without the in-person test requirement.

👍 We have provided support for studying with dyslexia, guiding on text to speech for Word, PDF and websites, and use of speech to text.

👍 A student told us her brother is planning to return to the island to live now that there's a place for supported study with reliable fast Wi-Fi connectivity.

Catering to diverse study practices

The CUCNI Team received some feedback that not all students prefer to study in an ergonomic chair at a desk in front of a screen, and decided to trial a 'down down' area in the Centre. Turns out some students enjoy doing their course reading while reclining on a beanbag.

The 'down down' space now also has options for students to take a study break, stretch and do some exercises, or even relax with some crafts, such as Norfolk traditional weaving or crochet.



Announcement of funding success

CUCNI has been approved for approx. \$210,000 in funding which will enable it to implement four key initiatives.

The first is to bring over some career professionals to Norfolk Island to coincide with the Norfolk Island Careers Market. They will engage with students at the CUCNI Centre and at Norfolk Island Central School (NICS).

“When students choose their studies in health, they may overlook less-known roles like health-related data management and communications, or allied health roles, so it is great to be able to expand their awareness of these interesting and varied roles” said Liz Unkles, Manager at NIHRACS.

The second initiative is having ‘Virtual Reality’ equipment available in the Centre for any Norfolk Island student, or resident considering higher learning, to experience different career and study environments via the ‘Work Window’ software, as well as an interview simulator and interactive exercises.

“Back to reality’ with our third initiative – the ‘Go-See’ visits. We are thrilled to be able to send some CUCNI students over to Brisbane or Sydney, for a week of shadowing a career professional in the type of role they aspire to when they complete their studies. The project will support their travel and living costs for this week of professional exposure and can reinforce their motivation and commitment to complete their course, plus gain them career contacts in their chosen industry.

The fourth initiative is for student equity and access. The last thing we want is for some students to miss out on educational opportunities because of cash flow issues so we are excited to put energy into an initiative that can take some of the pressure off. We are here to support all sullen and do everything in our power to help achieve successful completion of whatever courses our students are enrolled in.

