



# ANNUAL REPORT

Country Education Partnership  
Date: March 2025  
ABN: 67 537 996 143



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For more information visit  
[www.cep.org.au](http://www.cep.org.au)

## CEP'S

# STRATEGIC DIRECTION

Country Education Partnership (CEP) is valued as an independent and credible advocate that provides a voice for regional and rural communities. CEP facilitates a cross-sectoral approach, engaging with young people, education professionals, schools, government and regional and rural communities to deliver innovative place-based solutions. In 2024, CEP continued to focus on 3 key areas of support in line with the [Strategic Intent Document](#) as well as 4 specific programs.

The focus areas of support in 2024 were:

- Advocacy: Raising key issues and challenges with a range of government individuals and groups and key stakeholders. A feature of this process was the number of opportunities principals were able to access through the creation of consultative groups.
- Cluster support
- Sharing knowledge and best practice examples between schools

The key programs in 2024 were the:

- Rural Youth Ambassador Program
- Energy Breakthrough Program
- Teach Rural initiative
- PD online series

Additional professional development opportunities were offered through the delivery of a small school forum and a P- 12 Alliance session at the Statewide Principals Conference for Government Principals.



# THE CEP COMMITTEE

Peter Greenwell

**Chair**

Jason Whiteley

**Deputy Chair**

**Katamatite Primary School**

Jodi Walters

**Secretary**

**Swan Hill Specialist School**

Kevin Hill

**Treasurer**

**Everton Primary School**

Lachlan Day

**Meredith Primary School**

Damian Lappin

**Loch Sport Primary School**

Samantha Meerbach

**Ballarat Diocese**

Kimberly Tempest

**Cobram Secondary**

Arn Gorman

**Sacred Heart Primary School**

**Yarrawonga**

Daniel Forrest

**Wedderburn College P-12**

Patricia Perry

**Lancaster Primary School**

Brenda Keenan

**Sandhurst Diocese**

Leigh Mellberg

**Tarnagulla Primary School**

Jo Amott

**Education Improvement Leader  
- Wimmera**

Nathan Neff

**Wunghnu Primary School**

Simon Blake

**Community Representative**

## CEP STAFF 2024

Mark McLay

CEO

Shane Mathison

Manager - Cluster initiative

Maurice Billi

Manager - Youth programs

Susan Jackson

Manager - Teach Rural

Annette Driscoll

Manager - Teach Rural mentors

Madi Downing

Social Media acting manager

Kira Burvill

Social Media manager

Nigel Preston

EB Education Leader

Brendan Ryan

Consultant

Leslie McGregor

Teach Rural Mentor

Trish Hodge

Business Manager

Bill Jeffs

Teach Rural Mentor

Dave Love

Teach Rural mentor

Heather Macalister

Teach Rural mentor

Stephanie Garoni

Teach Rural Mentor

2024

# FOCUS

## ADVOCACY AND REPRESENTATION:

Continue building strong connections with rural and regional schools across Victoria to gain deeper insights into their unique experiences, strengths, and challenges in achieving equity and excellence in education. Through ongoing engagement with CEP's 235 member schools, the creation of concise one-page information documents, and a dedicated focus on small schools and staffing issues, CEP will persist in advocating for policy and practice changes that better align with the needs and priorities of rural and regional schools.

## CLUSTERS:

Facilitate the development of new cluster partnerships to enable rural and remote schools to share resources, expertise, and support networks. Continue assisting established clusters through school visits, cluster meetings, and guidance in implementing collaborative initiatives.

## YOUTH WORK:

Deliver Rural Youth Ambassador Programs across Victoria, featuring four in-person forums in Melbourne and year-round support for Ambassadors. Assist them in designing and implementing local community projects that create meaningful impact.

## TEACH RURAL:

Expand the Teach Rural program by placing 123 Pre-Service Teachers in rural schools and communities across Victoria. Provide comprehensive support, including welcome events, peer networking opportunities, access to a mental well-being mentor, and guidance from a school mentor.

## PD ONLINE:

Host four seasons of professional development, each featuring expert guest speakers who address real-world challenges faced by educators. Sessions will provide practical toolkits to help teachers navigate and overcome industry-specific issues.

## DIGITAL UPDATES:

Strengthen audience engagement across all social media platforms and enhance website functionality to improve user experience and accessibility.

## ENERGY BREAKTHROUGH:

Expand curriculum resources and continue encouraging schools to engage in hands-on learning with electric vehicles, pedal-electric hybrids, and robotics. Strengthen ties with the Rural Youth Ambassador Program by creating leadership opportunities within the EB program.

# CHAIR'S REPORT

Once again, I begin this Report by acknowledging the CEP staff, Executive and Committee members in their tireless efforts to support the interests of rural school communities. CEP's strength is a direct result of their commitment to improving the lot of students in rural schools.

In 2019, the Expert Panel on Rural and Remote Students acknowledged the ongoing challenges in attracting and retaining qualified staff to rural locations as a major impediment to improving outcomes for rural students. The Government responded by implementing an incentive program to attract applicants to a limited number of advertised positions in identified hard-to-staff schools, many of them in rural and regional Victoria. Fast forward to 2025, and the staffing situation in rural and remote Victoria is part of a larger staffing crisis affecting rural and metropolitan schools, but which disproportionately impacts rural schools. Too many students in rural classrooms are taught by unqualified teachers given permission to teach by the VIT, and too many of the Student Support Services positions who support their health and wellbeing needs remain vacant.

CEP has put forward proposals around incentives and the provision of teacher housing, which would make it easier to attract applicants to rural positions. This year, we have encouraged CEP members to participate in the development of the AEU's log of claims to ensure that the incentives to work in rural areas are locked into the new EBA.

Aside from its advocacy role, CEP has played an active part in supporting the attraction of graduates to rural locations. Our Teach Rural Program, which has been extended until the end of this financial year, has been an extraordinary success in bringing graduate teachers to the bush. While the staffing challenge has tested and will continue to test schools in rural locations, there is a tendency to see it as the only challenge. It is not.

CEP strongly supports the Government's commitment to 1800 hours of early childhood education and has put forward proposals that would enable small rural schools to provide a composite class consisting of 3 and 4 year olds alongside prep students in the same room. This model, implemented alongside other models that align schooling and early childhood, will ensure that children will not miss out on the promise of early education, and it can be available in their own community without the need for excessive travel.

In last year's budget, funding was made available to support out-of-school-hours care programs in rural, regional and small schools. While the funding is welcome, it provides

only a short-term solution, and programs last only as long as the funding continues to be provided.

CEP would like to see an OSH and early learning program at every rural school and in every rural community and will continue to press for the full-service school model that is a given in metropolitan Melbourne and regional centres.

Early last year, CEP met with former secretary Jenny Atta to talk about the importance of clustering as a form of organisation that provides economies of scale to rural schools so they can provide the best possible education opportunities for their students. For many schools, it underpins their viability. There is always additional work for school leaders and a great deal of organisational compromise required to make a cluster effective, and in many cases, that work is squandered when an individual leader decides that they can “go it alone”.

We arranged for her to visit rural clusters and, as a result of that advocacy, significant work is now taking place with Department Officers to have a policy document that supports and guides the work of initiating and sustaining clusters in rural areas. It’s a tribute to the hard work of CEP staff and their counterparts in DE that so much progress has been made, and we look forward to a policy position being announced soon. It’s not since the 1984 Joint Cluster Development Task Force between the Department and the teacher unions that clustering has been such a focus.

Advocacy for very small schools remains an integral part of our work. CEP has been very active in advocating for services that support small schools including school banking locations, access to the SASH service and support for the OHS small school facility support program.

Through our Service agreement with the Department, CEP also runs a number of highly valued and very successful programs, including the long-running Energy Breakthrough, the cluster support including the new and very active P-12 alliance, the Rural Youth Ambassadors and Teach Rural. All of them are highly valued and align with our core mission of being the leading Voice for Rural Education in Victoria.

This past year has been a productive and successful year for CEP. We have strengthened our connection with our members, maintained the strength of our program offering and ensured that the issues that affect rural schools and students and their communities are brought to the attention of decision makers.

**Peter Greenwell, Chair,  
Country Education Partnership**

# 2024

# ADVOCACY

## CEP ADVOCATES FOR, AND SUPPORTS, RURAL EDUCATION COMMUNITIES TO FACILITATE THEIR INTERESTS AND NEEDS.

Advocacy remains CEP's most important area of engagement, playing a crucial role in driving change for rural education. CEP's advocacy efforts focus on:

- Raising Awareness: Highlighting the unique challenges rural schools face.
- Influencing Policy and Legislation: Engaging with key stakeholders to shape education policies.
- Giving a Voice to Small Schools: Ensuring their concerns are heard at all levels.
- Mobilising Communities: Bringing schools and communities together to push for change.
- Providing Education and Resources for Rural Communities: Equipping educators and leaders with the tools they need.

CEP continued its role on a variety of key stakeholder groups as well as initiating specific consultative groups including issues around VSBA, school finances and banking, early childhood matters, before and after school care provision, independent review into Administration and Workload, communications, MARC/MACC Vans and others.

In 2024, CEP continued to advocate and support rural communities through:

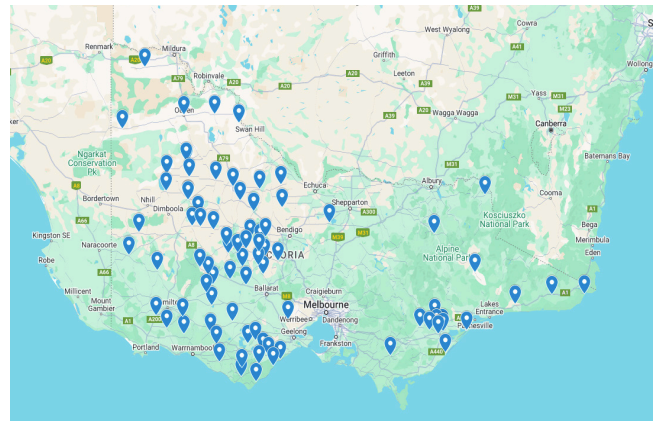
- Actively engaging in ongoing discussions with key stakeholders, including the Department of Education, Catholic Dioceses and Universities.
- Raising key issues through meetings with Minister for Education and key personnel from both the Government and Catholic sectors.
- Collaborating with the VPA, VASSP, PASS and APF for change.
- Developing a series of position papers on key issues for rural communities.
- Supported a series of sub committees and consultation groups on a variety of areas including MARC/MAAC Vans, VSBA, DE Communication, Small School accountability, staffing and alternative settings.
- Provide a voice for rural Victoria through a range of consultation and sub committees.
- Provide a National rural voice through representation on the SPERA executive and participated in consultation groups for Regional Australia Institute.
- Continued to further develop relationships with Key stakeholders including Parents Victoria and AEU.
- Facilitated an educational summit.
- CEP staff visited 247 schools throughout 2024, spanning government, Catholic, Lutheran, Anglican, and independent sectors. Meeting with school leaders in their own community at the scale that CEP provides is matched by no other stakeholder.
- Provided a clear line of communication between member schools and a range of CEP staff.
- Developed and delivered a free professional development online series featuring a variety of high quality speakers and practicing rural educators from across Australia.

## CEP BUILDS, FACILITATES AND EMBEDS COLLABORATIVE PARTNERSHIPS.

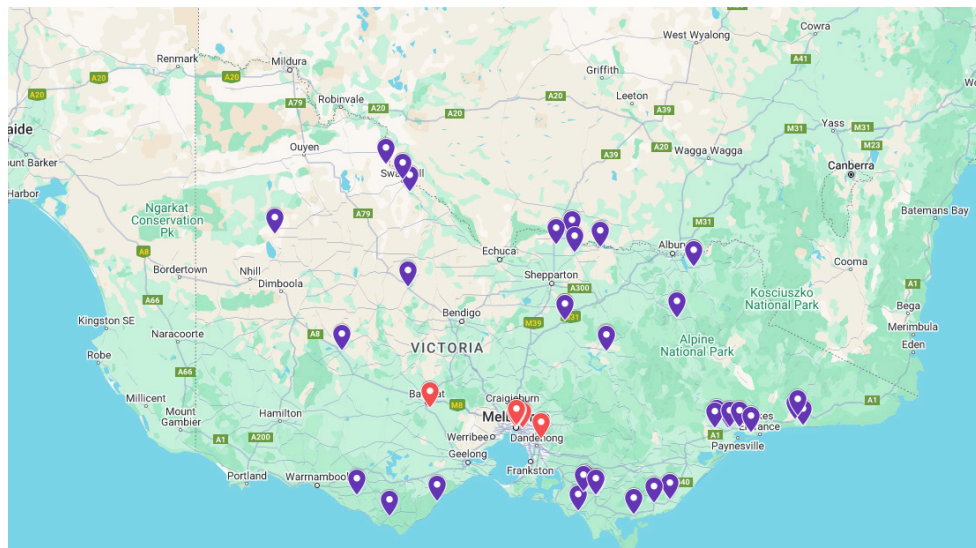
In 2024, CEP strengthened its commitment to rural education through meaningful connections and strategic partnerships. Recognising the power of collaboration, CEP worked closely with young people, educators, and government bodies to drive innovative solutions tailored to the unique needs of rural communities. These partnerships not only amplify the voices of rural schools but also ensure equitable access to high-quality education for all students. Through advocacy and engagement, CEP continues to champion a brighter future for rural education.

CEP continued to build collaborative partnerships with:

- Clusters of schools through the cluster initiatives
- DE and the Sandhurst and Ballarat Catholic Dioceses
- Explored opportunities with other educational institutions including Country Education Foundation (CEF), Schools Plus, Foundation for Rural and Regional Renewal (FRRR), Youth Thrive, Regional Education Support Network (RESN) and a range of rural health organisations
- Further developed the P-12 Alliance, a representation group of rural P-12s
- Partnered with Central Goldfields Shire to deliver the Energy Breakthrough program and festival
- Deliver a Rural Youth Ambassador Program and Local Youth Ambassador Program
- Embed the relationship with the Regional centres of the Victorian Academy of Teaching and Leadership
- Further developed relationships with rural communities and schools through the Teach Rural initiative
- Further developed relationships with Universities through the Teach Rural program
- Continued to grow and maintain the relationship between CEP and its life members.



Clusters formed in 2024



Teach Rural program placement spread 2024

- Universities involved
- Communities PSTs completed placements

2024

# MEDIA OVERVIEW

In 2024, CEP focused on strengthening its identity and refining its messaging to ensure a clear understanding of our mission and impact. Enhancing brand awareness was a key priority, leading to several new initiatives, including a website revamp, the launch of the Cluster Corner newsletter, and innovative social media content. These efforts were designed to reinforce CEP’s purpose, engage our target audience, and elevate our online presence. As a result, we have seen increased engagement and recognition, reflecting a growing appreciation for the work we do in supporting rural education.

**405** POSTS ACROSS 3 PLATFORMS IN 2024

**235** NO. SCHOOLS REPRESENTED

**2,171** EMAIL SUBSCRIBERS

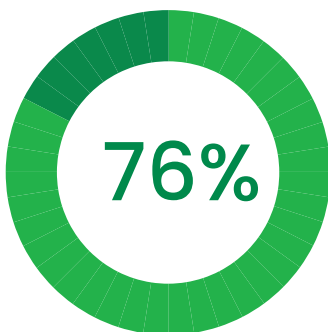
## Followers on social media

**f** **989**  
Facebook followers

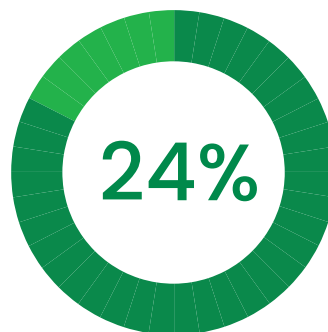
**Instagram** **401**  
Instagram followers

**in** **313**  
Linked In followers

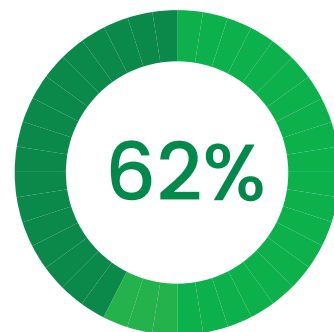
## Follower Demographic



Female followers



Male followers



Followers based in rural Victoria

# PD ONLINE

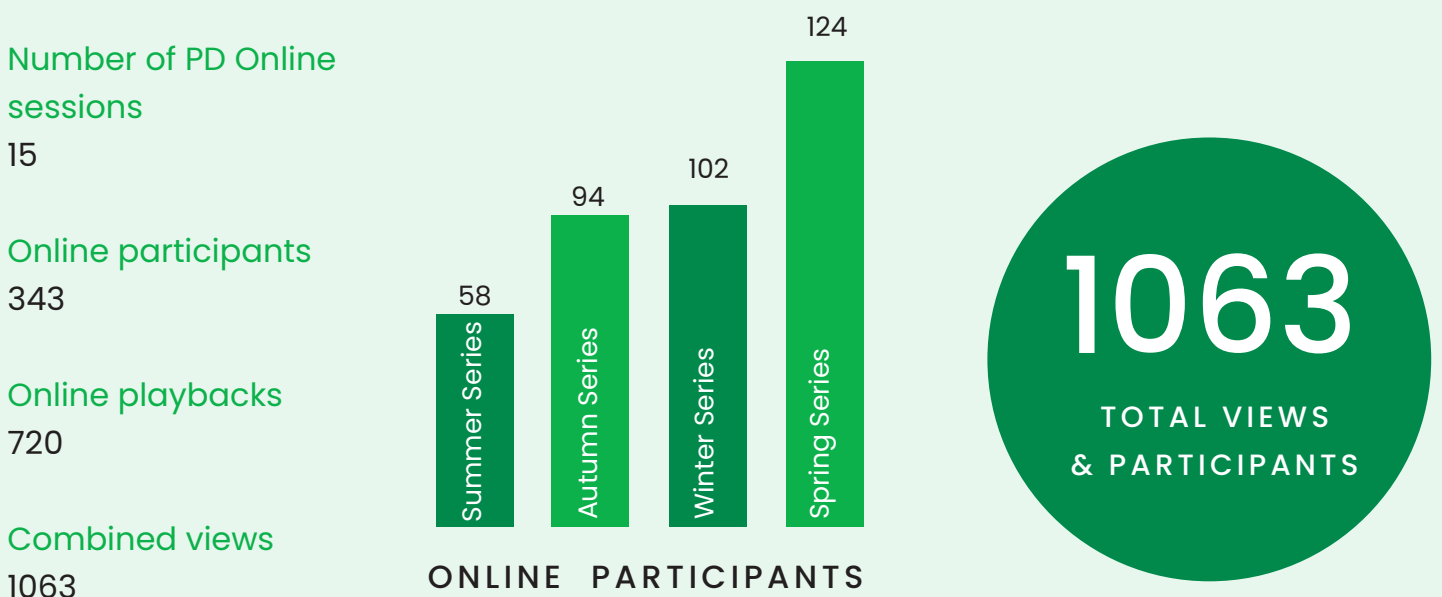
In 2024, CEP continued the success of PD Online, launching Series Two. Each term featured a new season, consisting of four consecutive weekly sessions, allowing for ongoing professional development opportunities throughout the year.

Conducted virtually, each session was led by an industry expert, covering key challenges in the education sector. Guest speakers included renowned figures such as Dr Adam Fraser, Peak Performance Researcher and Keynote Speaker, international experts like Jill Benoit, Department of Education representatives such as Angela Gardner, Senior Emergency Management Officer and Frank Handy, Chairperson of the Independent Office for School Dispute Resolution. School leaders, principals, and university researchers also shared their valuable insights and the latest educational research.

The sessions remained highly interactive, with many participants engaging through the chat box feature, asking questions, and receiving direct feedback from experts. Many attendees also opted to watch recordings at a time that suited them, ensuring accessibility and flexibility.

With its expert-led discussions and engaging format, PD Online continues to be a valuable platform for professional learning, equipping educators with practical strategies for both their professional and personal growth.

## PD ONLINE BY THE NUMBERS



2024

# ENERGY BREAKTHROUGH

The 2024 Energy Breakthrough (EB) event was held from Wednesday 20 to Sunday 24 November in Maryborough, Victoria. The program engaged 3,500 students in 250 teams from 97 schools from across Victoria, New South Wales and South Australia.

## ABOUT THE ENERGY BREAKTHROUGH

Since 1991, the Energy Breakthrough has provided opportunities for students, teachers, parents and local industry to work together to design and construct a vehicle, a machine or innovation in technology that will represent an 'energy breakthrough'.

Teams of students participate in a progression of activities from Robotics, Pushcarts, Human Powered Vehicles (HPVs), Pedal-Electric Hybrids, and Electric Vehicles.

They bring these machines to Maryborough for challenges that are as short as a few minutes through to 24 hours in November.

This education program is unique in that all teams must compete across three areas of assessment:

- Design and Construction (25 points / 100),
- Display and Presentation (25 points / 100) and
- Trials (50 points / 100).

The program has a focus on encouraging girls in STEM and supporting schools of all shapes and sizes to engage in hands-on learning.



## EB BY THE NUMBERS

97

SCHOOLS ENTERED  
THE PROGRAM

3500

STUDENTS  
PARTICIPATED  
IN 250 TEAMS

3.8M

ECONOMIC IMPACT  
FOR THE CENTRAL  
GOLDFIELDS SHIRE  
COUNCIL

700

VOLUNTEERS  
INVOLVED IN JUDGING,  
MARSHALLING  
AND PROGRAM  
ADMINISTRATION

61%

OF PARTICIPATING  
SCHOOLS FROM  
REGIONAL AND RURAL  
VICTORIA, CEP'S  
TARGET AUDIENCE

44.6%

OF PARTICIPANTS  
WERE FEMALE IN 2024



The EB Program has the highest concentration of participants in Year 6. Numbers of students in Years 7 to 11 are relatively similar by year, before an understandable drop off in Year 12. Entries come from public, independent, specialist and catholic sectors in primary, secondary, P-12 and senior secondary schools from across rural, regional and metro settings. The program also attracts schools from Metro Melbourne (33%) and Interstate (6%), and these schools help to bring new connections and experiences to the EB.



Estimated 10,000 - 15,000 students, teachers, friends and supporters attended the celebration event in Maryborough.

## EDUCATION TEAM ACTIVITIES

The Energy Breakthrough education team were very active throughout the whole of 2024:

- Hosted a 'Test N Tune Day' in Bendigo in March and Ballarat in October for teachers to learn and grow, with a total of 40 teams in attendance across the two days. These events include the opportunity for new students to ride vehicles for the first time and also a facilitated sharing time for students to meet and greet with students from other schools.
- Hosted professional development sessions for teachers involved in the Robotics,
- Provided phone support to schools participating in Robotics, Pushcarts, Human Powered and Energy Efficient Vehicle events.
- Visited in-person and presented to students in over 10+ schools.
- Published safety advice around handling of lithium batteries for electric vehicles.
- Collated curriculum resources for schools from a wide range of schools.

## ROBOTICS GOES GLOBAL

The Energy Breakthrough formed a new partnership with the Sphero Global Challenge in 2024.

There's no other Australian event that is part of the Sphero Global Challenge: the ultimate Robotics competition where winners will progress through to the World Championships!

The Sphero Global Challenge – presented by STEM It Up Sports – is an opportunity for students to go deeper with computational thinking, engineering, and programming skills.

It challenges learners to become master programmers, stealthy problem solvers, and top-notch teammates. With Mission Objectives designed for student agents of all ability levels, learners will grow and have a blast on this undercover adventure.

Students compete in groups of five, with at least two female team members per team. Teams of all abilities are encouraged to work together to identify problems and develop solutions centered around the season's theme.

Through this challenge, students will work to accomplish their goals at the Energy Breakthrough's State Final competition before the winners can progress to the World Championships.

A highlight was the attendance of three Sphero Global Challenge representatives visiting from Texas in the USA. CEP hosted this visit on behalf of the Energy Breakthrough and it included visits to Carisbrook PS, Maryborough Education Centre, Bendigo Tech School and the Trade Training Centre at Bendigo Senior SC.



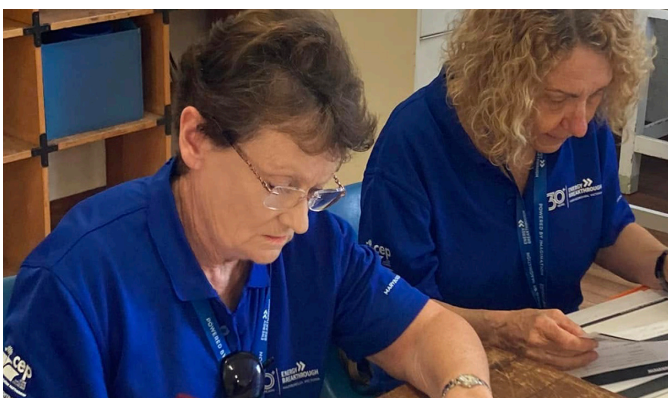
## RURAL YOUTH AMBASSADOR INVOLVEMENT CONTINUES TO GROW WITH ENERGY BREAKTHROUGH

CEP's Rural Youth Ambassador program continues to become more closely linked with the Energy Breakthrough program with a group of five RYA's involved as participants, volunteer judges and even stage announcers during 2024.

We continue to see great synergies between these two flagship CEP programs to offer opportunities for leadership development, networking and capacity building.



## CEP AT ENERGY BREAKTHROUGH 2024



# 2024

## CLUSTER WORK

2024 was a transformative year, marked by significant progress in expanding the reach and impact of clusters. Our key focus areas included strengthening connections with individual clusters, increasing awareness of their positive impact on educational communities, and fostering stronger relationships with key education stakeholders in cluster regions.

Throughout the year, CEP combined direct engagement—such as school visits, meetings with principals, and participation in cluster initiatives—with strategic collaboration with the Department of Education and organisations like Schools Plus. This dual approach enhanced cluster functionality and effectiveness, ensuring both immediate support and long-term sustainability.

### Key Cluster Initiatives and Achievements

- **Strengthening Ties with the Department of Education:** CEP developed a strong partnership with the Rural and Regional Unit to elevate cluster work. Regular meetings focused on increasing awareness of the benefits of clusters, identifying ways for the Department to support cluster initiatives, and exploring the use of cluster-wide data to drive improvements.
- **Launch of “The Cluster Corner” Newsletter:** This termly publication has been instrumental in building awareness across the state, celebrating cluster achievements, and sharing updates on ongoing initiatives. Engagement with cluster schools and key stakeholders has grown steadily, highlighting the value of communication in fostering collaboration.
- **Mathematics Initiative with the Barwon Area Small Schools (BASS) Cluster:** CEP collaborated with BASS to develop a three-year comprehensive approach to teaching mathematics. This initiative introduced the “Responsive Teaching in Primary Mathematics” model alongside a structured curriculum. A successful CEP led grant application secured over \$180,000 in funding, enabling sustained collaboration and implementation over the next three years.
- **Ongoing Support for the Tappoc Cluster:** Following its establishment in 2023, CEP continued to support the Tappoc Cluster by formalising a Cluster Development Plan and facilitating a whole-cluster professional learning day focused on cluster development.
- **Expansion of the P12 Alliance:** Dedicated to supporting and advocating for P12 schools, the P12 Alliance significantly expanded its initiatives in 2024. Key milestones included establishing termly meetings with Deputy Secretary David Howes, hosting a P12 session at the Principal Conference, and laying the groundwork for a mentorship system for new P12 principals.

## LOOKING AHEAD

The progress achieved in 2024 has set a strong foundation for further development and impact. By continuing to foster collaboration, secure resources, and champion the value of clusters, CEP remains committed to enhancing educational opportunities and strengthening school communities across the state.



## CLUSTERS BY THE NUMBERS

Number of clusters linked to CEP

11

(inclusive of P12 Alliance)

Number of schools involved

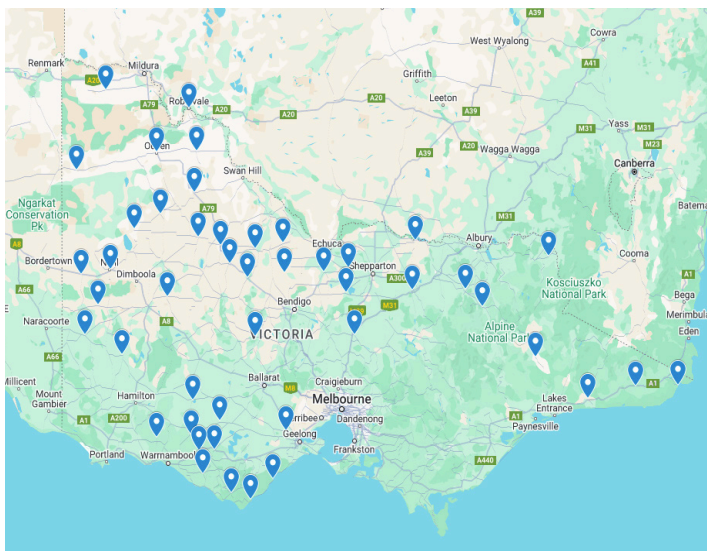
102

Approximate student numbers impacted

OVER  
5,000

## P- 12 ALLIANCE

In 2024 CEP continued to support the development of the P-12 Alliance. In its first full year of operation the Alliance executive:



P-12 Executive Schools in 2024

- Delivered a workshop at the Statewide Principals Conference
- Developed an MOU and series of actions to implement in 2025
- Met each term with key DE representatives including Dep Secretary David Howes, APF and AEU president
- Hosted a P-12 Breakfast
- Offered consultative opportunities to members, including a P-12 specific working group on the Independent review into Administration and Principal Workload

2024

# RURAL YOUTH AMBASSADORS

The Country Education Partnership (CEP) developed the Rural Youth Ambassadors program to empower young people in rural communities by enhancing their leadership skills and ambassadorial confidence. Through partnerships with education sectors, rural communities, and government bodies, the program aims to improve the lives, learning opportunities, and educational outcomes of rural youth.



## ABOUT THE RURAL YOUTH AMBASSADORS PROGRAM

Each year, the Rural Youth Ambassadors participate in four face-to-face forums held in Melbourne and regional centers. These forums provide a platform for young leaders to engage in meaningful discussions about rural and remote education, using a solutions-focused approach to tackle key challenges.

Ambassadors will:

- Present to senior education leaders
- Meet with the Minister for Education
- Engage with philanthropic organisations and key stakeholders
- Speak at education workshops, forums, and conferences

This initiative ensures rural young people have a strong voice in shaping the future of education and community development.

## REFLECTING ON 2024 – A YEAR OF LEADERSHIP AND IMPACT

In 2024, the Rural Youth Ambassadors program delivered a range of leadership-focused initiatives across the state. Our flagship, yearlong statewide program was an overwhelming success, receiving fantastic feedback from students, schools, the Department of Education, and parents/carers.

The Ambassadors worked collaboratively, focusing on key areas such as:

- Meeting the challenges of supporting disengaged and disadvantaged students.
- Rural Students accessing Virtual School Victoria
- Developing a Rural Focussed Youth Voice
- Meeting the challenges of recruitment and retention of rural teachers

We are incredibly grateful to have had such a dedicated and inspiring group. They not only developed valuable leadership skills but also built lifelong friendships—and we have no doubt they will continue making a difference in their communities and beyond. Our Ambassadors also had a strong focus on their local school and community Youth Voice. Many of them are now in leadership roles and taking on broader community engagement.

A huge thank you to Martha Haylett MP for organizing such a fantastic day for our Rural Youth Ambassadors at the Victorian Parliament. Our young leaders had the opportunity to meet with key Ministers, witness Parliament Question Time, and engage in insightful discussions with Department of Education representatives. They also had the chance to present their ideas and suggestions on several key education priorities, ensuring that the voices of rural young people are heard at the highest levels.

We were thrilled to see so many of our 2024 Rural Youth Ambassadors volunteering their time to support this year's Energy Breakthrough. Their contributions—assisting with marshalling, stage interviews, presentations, and promoting the work of our Rural Youth Ambassadors—were truly invaluable. It's always inspiring to see these young leaders giving back to their communities and continuing to make a difference!

## RYA BY THE NUMBERS



80

Individual students took part in our different Ambassador programs



30

Schools involved in our programs from across the state

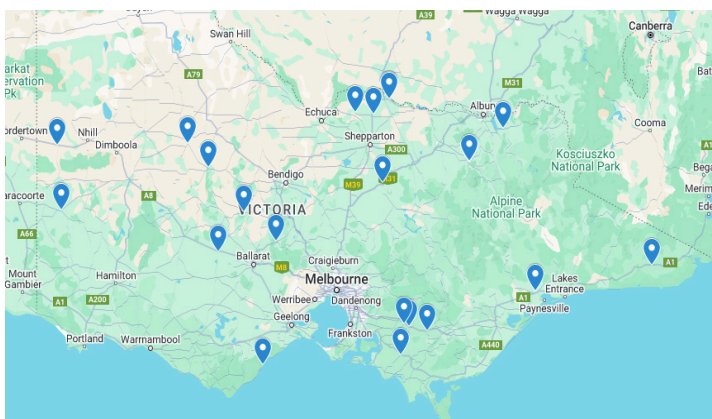


50

School staff were connected to our various programs

Hours of face-to-face programs delivered in 2024

OVER  
**160**  
HOURS



RYA Schools in 2024



2024

# TEACH RURAL

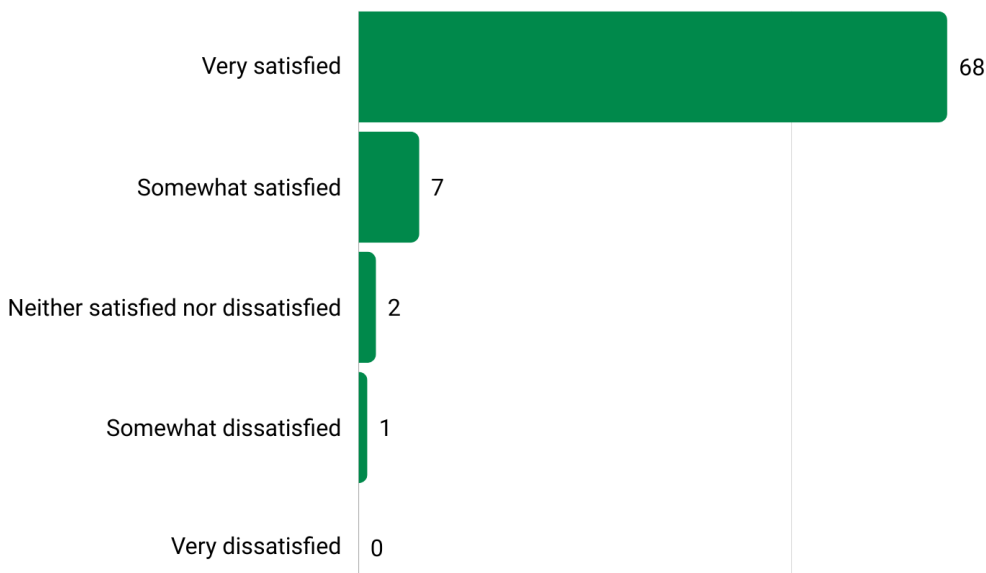
The Teach Rural initiative continued into its second full year of operation in 2024. The Teach Rural initiative involves Pre-Service Teachers (PSTs) being placed in rural areas in government schools across Victoria. PSTs are placed in groups or clusters. The process is managed by the CEP Teach Rural (TR) team and funded by the Department of Education (DE).

123 Pre-Service Teachers were placed into rural government schools in 2024 through the Teach Rural program. The Teach Rural program requires PSTs to be placed in groups. Group sizes varied with the most common group size being 3 or 4. One group of 38 were placed together in the Bairnsdale area in November/December as part of a partnership with Monash University.

The Teach Rural program supported PSTs through:

- Coordinating placement with schools
- Securing group accommodation
- Provision of a Well-Being Mentor
- Coordinating community activities and welcome packs/events.

## SUPPORT OF CEP MENTOR



PSTs are welcomed into the Teach Rural initiative with a number of online meetings to 'meet and greet', check in prior to placement and monitor and discuss progress throughout placement. These meetings include a range of staff from CEP, (including mentors), relevant universities, schools and PSTs.

PSTs are invited to complete a pre-placement and post-placement survey. The information gathered from the surveys provides valuable data for both CEP and DE to monitor and modify or replicate in the future.

Accommodation is organised for all PSTs (in groups of 3-4 where possible) to ensure collegiality, support and efficiency in accommodation costs. This provides an opportunity to create a learning environment - a community of learners - which supports, enhances and promotes collaborative decision-making and reflection on a day-to-day basis.

Each placement is supported by a CEP mentor, digital and physical welcome packs, a welcome event, a leadership dinner and a peer networking/community immersion event. CEP appoints a mentor who establishes a close working relationship with each PST and school prior to the beginning of placement. Each PST is well-informed and confident to begin their teaching experience. The CEP mentor monitors the progress of PSTs to ensure stability, success and community connections are achieved.



Local place-based mentors have been a positive addition to the program in 2024. Local place-based mentors are experienced educators who live locally and have an in-depth knowledge of the community and its citizens. This model notably improved the facilitation and monitoring of community interactions.

## ABILITY TO CONNECT AND INTEGRATE WITH LOCAL COMMUNITY

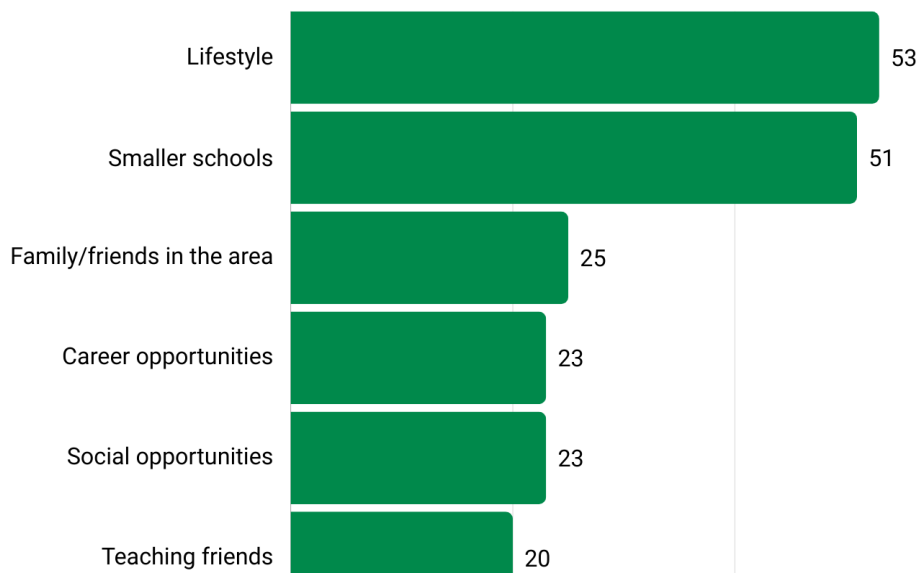


CEP acknowledges the experience and qualifications of the Teach Rural mentors, which has played a significant part in the continued success of this feature of the program. In particular, the extensive applied experience and high level of education the CEP mentors bring to the program provide extremely valuable skills, knowledge and expertise.

Post placement data indicate that over 90% of PSTs considered both their school-based mentor and CEP mentor either very important or important during their placement. This confirms the valuable and significant roles experienced mentors play in supporting PSTs into a career in teaching.

Connecting PSTs into their cluster communities has been and continues to be a focus of the Teach Rural initiative. Anecdotal feedback from PSTs who have completed placements suggests this has been a significant positive influence on some PSTs choosing to return to do another rural placement and/or accepting positions in rural areas.

## FACTORS INFLUENCING ACCEPTANCE OF RURAL/REGIONAL TEACHING ROLES



Following the introduction of the Government Pre-service teacher Placement Grant program (PPG), it became evident that not every PST was eager to connect with the community. Feedback from schools, cross-checked with data and feedback from PSTs suggests some PSTs do not appear to be as motivated to engage with the community and participate in opportunities provided. CEP believes this is the result of PSTs applying for rural placement motivated by government subsidies rather than a genuine interest in rural placement and a potential career in a rural area.

CEP is very aware that connections to the community are vital in establishing positive relationships within and beyond the school. As a result, TR modified the PST application form to include the following question: Suggest ways you could contribute/be involved with the wider community during placement. CEP believes this will encourage applicants to think deeper about the definition and meaning of community connections and how that might apply to their placement. CEP believes this may encourage PST applicants to consider the authenticity of their application to teach in a rural area.

## CEP ACHIEVES COMMUNITY CONNECTEDNESS THROUGH:

- Community Immersion/Peer Networking Days (community of learners): PSTs in the cluster are invited to attend a day/event organised by CEP to socialise with their peers. This is an opportunity to learn about local community attractions whilst supporting local businesses.
- Welcome Event: On this day, PSTs enjoy a welcome event/morning tea to be introduced to staff at the school level. PSTs have commented that this inclusive event makes them feel 'noticed' in the school.
- Leadership Dinner: At this event, PSTs, mentor teachers and members of the leadership team are invited to share a meal together to celebrate their placement in a rural community.



## KEY ACHIEVEMENTS OF 2024

A total of 123 PSTs were placed in rural schools in 2024. 51 schools accommodated these students. CEP worked with 9 universities: Monash, RMIT, Federation University, ACU, Swinburne, Swinburne online, UTAS, Melbourne University and Charles Sturt and has established strong ongoing working relationships with these universities, which will continue into 2025.

## SUCCESS STORY

Rebekah Hibberd is one of Teach Rural's success stories.

She completed a placement at St. Arnaud Secondary College in 2023. She was subsequently employed in 2024 through Permission To Teach. Rebekah has been afforded leadership opportunities this year and is currently writing and directing the College's first whole school production. Rebekah is pictured with Teach Rural team members Annette and Susan.



2024

# FINANCE REPORT

Country Education Project Inc.

## Statement of profit or loss and other comprehensive income

For the year ended 31 December 2024

	Note	2024 \$	2023 \$
Revenue	2	1,471,911	1,212,551
<b>Expenses</b>			
Salaries and oncosts		726,805	717,067
Depreciation expenses	6(a)	46,470	26,827
Consulting projects		712,539	437,481
Administration and operating expenses		46,899	86,039
Vehicle and travel expenses		15,747	11,640
<b>Total Expenses</b>		<u>1,548,460</u>	<u>1,279,054</u>
<b>Operating surplus/(deficit) for the year</b>		<u>(76,549)</u>	<u>(66,503)</u>
Income tax expense	1(b)	-	-
<b>Net surplus/(deficit)</b>		<u>(76,549)</u>	<u>(66,503)</u>
<b>Other comprehensive income</b>		-	-
<b>Total comprehensive result for the year</b>		<u>(76,549)</u>	<u>(66,503)</u>

## Statement of Financial Position

As at 31 December 2024

	Note	2024 \$	2023 \$
<b>ASSETS</b>			
<b>Current Assets</b>			
Cash and cash equivalents	3	405,191	590,351
Trade and other receivables	4	268,966	781,012
Other	5	16,789	8,430
<b>Total Current Assets</b>		<u>690,946</u>	<u>1,379,793</u>
<b>Non-Current Assets</b>			
Plant, furniture and equipment	6	139,117	164,204
<b>Total Non-Current Assets</b>		<u>139,117</u>	<u>164,204</u>
<b>Total Assets</b>		<u>830,063</u>	<u>1,543,997</u>
<b>LIABILITIES</b>			
<b>Current Liabilities</b>			
Trade and other payables	7	498,136	1,155,011
Provisions	8	88,591	69,101
<b>Total Current Liabilities</b>		<u>586,727</u>	<u>1,224,112</u>
<b>Total Liabilities</b>		<u>586,727</u>	<u>1,224,112</u>
<b>Net Assets</b>		<u>243,336</u>	<u>319,885</u>
<b>EQUITY</b>			
Accumulated surplus		243,336	319,885
<b>Total Equity</b>		<u>243,336</u>	<u>319,885</u>

## Statement of Cash Flows

For the year ended 31 December 2024

	Note	2024 \$	2023 \$
<b>Cash Flows from Operating Activities</b>			
Receipts from grants and customers		1,394,739	1,578,418
Payments to suppliers and employees		(1,580,190)	(1,198,721)
Interest received		12,324	5,976
<b>Net cash inflow/(outflow) from operating activities</b>	9	<u>(173,127)</u>	<u>385,673</u>
<b>Cash Flows from Investing Activities</b>			
Proceeds from sale of property, plant and equipment		39,091	40,000
Payment for property, plant and equipment		(51,124)	(152,811)
<b>Net cash inflow/(outflow) from investing activities</b>		<u>(12,033)</u>	<u>(112,811)</u>
<b>Net Increase/(Decrease) in Cash Held</b>		<u>(185,160)</u>	<u>272,862</u>
Cash at the beginning of the financial year		590,351	317,489
<b>Cash at the End of the Financial Year</b>	3	<u>405,191</u>	<u>590,351</u>

Country Education Project Inc.

**Auditor's Independence Declaration under 60-40 of the *Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Act 2012***

For the year ended 31 December 2024

As Auditor for the audit of Country Education Project Inc. for the year ended 31 December 2024, I declare that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, there have been:

- (a) No contraventions of the auditor independence requirements of the *Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Act 2012* in relation to the audit; and
- (b) No contraventions of any applicable code of professional conduct in relation to the audit.

*Jamal*

Johnsons MME  
Chartered Accountants



Ryan Schischka  
Director

03 March 2025



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Country Education Partnership

Date: March 2024

ABN: 67 537 996 143