



M I D C O A S T
connect
opportunities for youth



ANNUAL REPORT 2025



Partner with Us

We collaborate with schools, education and training providers, and local businesses to create the stepping stones that prepare young people for productive futures.

We invite you to partner with us to expand education, training, and employment opportunities for young people in our community.

We also welcome referrals to others who may be able to support or collaborate with us, helping to broaden our impact.

Through these partnerships, businesses can address workforce needs, provide real-world career insights, and help young people successfully transition into the workforce.

Our programs and activities not only benefit your organisation but also make a meaningful difference in the lives of young people.



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OUR VALUES



Empowerment

Establishing a purposeful approach aimed at uplifting and motivating ourselves and others.



Leadership

Reaching potential by embracing peoples skills, knowledge and culture, to achieve common goals.



Teamwork

Working together towards shared goals and common outcomes.



Respect

Having regard for the feelings and rights of others.



Ethical Integrity

Our actions, beliefs and motivations are honest, transparent and have the strongest moral principles.



Professionalism

Representing ourselves and our organisation to the highest possible standard.



VISION

Providing young people with life changing opportunities.

MISSION

- Promote, support, and improve existing programs in an efficient, timely, and professional manner.
- Develop and embrace partnership opportunities with organisations that share common goals and values.
- Successfully launch additional programs that complement the organisation's goals and expand its stakeholder reach.
- Provide a positive and productive work environment that empowers our employees to achieve outstanding performance and career growth.



ABOUT US

Mid Coast Connect is a not-for-profit organisation committed to helping young people successfully transition from school to further education, training, and employment.

We deliver a range of Government-funded programs, including:

- Work Placement Coordination Services (Kempsey to Bulahdelah)
- Career Connect Program (Nambucca Heads to Bulahdelah)

Our team works closely with high schools and RTOs across the region, providing interactive workshops, presentations, and industry connections that prepare students for the workforce.

We partner with local employers to create pathways into employment, apprenticeships, traineeships, and workplace learning experiences. Strong collaboration with service providers, training organisations, and businesses enables us to deliver a broad range of career-focused initiatives.

In 2025, Mid Coast Connect continued to expand its work experience and readiness programs, hosted engaging careers expos, and continued supporting the Country Education Funds across the Hastings, Macleay, and Great Lakes regions.

CHAIR REPORT

Kellon Beard



If last year was interesting, this year proved even more challenging. In January 2025, while staff were on leave, a burst hose flooded our premises, rendering it uninhabitable and forcing us to seek temporary accommodation urgently.

I'm pleased to say that Mid North Coast Community College generously provided emergency space, a testament to the high regard in which our staff and CEO, Jenny Fraser, are held within the community.

After a few weeks, we secured rental premises with more room and were back in business. In June 2025, we successfully moved back to Lord Street, relocating to another building purchased as an investment for Mid Coast Connect.

Part of the Board's role is safeguarding the organisation's long-term viability and ensuring it remains fit for purpose. To this end, the Board decided in 2025 to add another floor to our original building. At the time of writing this report, we are waiting on final approval from Council before commencing this addition.

Throughout a very challenging year, the Board and staff have been tremendously supportive, and I would like to take this opportunity to thank the staff for their dedication and hard work.

We farewelled several valued Board members in 2025:

Graham Morgan, a Board member from the organisation's inception over 30 years ago. Graham provided the Board with expertise across numerous areas; he also served as Chairperson and held other executive positions during this time. Graham's insight and expertise will be greatly missed.

Steve Pares, another long-term board member, left in 2025. Steve's insight and comprehensive knowledge of the school system proved invaluable to our work. Susan Judd, who left the Board in 2025 after a brief but impactful stint. Susan challenged the way we did things, providing a healthy reminder to examine why we follow certain processes.

At Mid Coast Connect, the Board are volunteers and at times serving on the Board requires considerable time and effort, to keep pace with developments in an increasingly challenging environment. I would like to thank all the other Board members for their support and efforts over many years.

OUR BOARD

Mid Coast Connect is a not-for-profit incorporated association and a registered charity with both the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission (ACNC) and NSW Fair Trading. The organisation fully complies with the NSW Associations Incorporation Act 1990 and maintains Public Benevolent Institution status with Deductible Gift Recipient benefits, qualifying for applicable tax concessions.

Governance is provided by a local Board of Management comprising seven voluntary representatives from business, industry, education, training, and community organisations across the service region. The 2025 Board Executive includes Kellon Beard (Chairperson), Ian Chegwiddden (Deputy Chairperson), Frances Sargent (Secretary), Mick Eller (Treasurer), with members Maura Luxford, Mark Nunan and Susan Judd.

The Board directs Mid Coast Connect's strategic vision, monitors implementation, and ensures stakeholder expectations are met. It is responsible for overall organisational performance, compliance with relevant laws, adherence to ethical standards and codes of conduct, and risk management oversight. The Board works collaboratively with the Chief Executive Officer, empowering them to manage operations within Board-established parameters.

**BUSINESS
NSW**



NEWMAN
Senior Technical College



CEO REPORT

Jenny Fraser



2025 was another productive and rewarding year for Mid Coast Connect. Working closely with young people and a wide range of community partners, our team supported practical career pathways and smoother transitions from school into further education, training, and employment. By spending time in schools, workplaces, and the community, we stay connected, build strong networks, and respond in ways that genuinely support young people.

Work Placement continues to be an important collaboration with schools and local employers. We supported students to access meaningful workplace experiences that build confidence, develop skills, and provide a clearer understanding of working life. These opportunities are only made possible by the generosity and commitment of our valuable host employers. We're truly grateful for their willingness to offer placements and for the support given to students while they're learning about the world of work.

Get Back in the Game helped young people understand their options, recognise their strengths, and connected them with training and work opportunities, as well as support services. The success we see through this program is significant, and it can be life changing for the growing number of young people who needed this additional help.

Partnerships remain central to our work. Our connections enabled us to introduce new Life Launch activities, expand training and continue to grow major events such as the Mid Coast Careers Market and Coffs Coast Career Connections. These shared efforts strengthen our programs and allow us, together, to contribute to positive futures for young people across the region.

I'd like to sincerely thank our staff for their professionalism, care, and commitment — to young people and to each other. Our work is supported by a dedicated Board who continue to give generously of their time and expertise. I'd also like to thank our partners and stakeholders for their ongoing collaboration and support.

Mid Coast Connect is proud to be an integral part of the community, and we value the trust placed in us. Looking ahead to 2026, we'll remain focused on what we do best — working locally, building strong partnerships, and supporting young people to take confident and positive steps toward their future.

OUR TEAM



WORK PLACEMENT

In 2025, Mid Coast Connect continued to deliver high-quality, structured workplace learning opportunities for students undertaking Vocational Education and Training (VET) as part of their Higher School Certificate (HSC). Across 21 designated industry sectors, students completed the required minimum 70 hours of work placement during Years 11 and 12, gaining practical experience that strengthened both technical skills and workplace confidence.

Our Work Placement Coordinators maintained strong relationships with long-standing host employers while actively engaging new businesses across the region. Employer participation continues to grow; however, certain industries such as IT, Travel –Tourism and Events, Business Services, and Electrotechnology, remain areas where student interest exceeds available placements.

The Work Placement team remains committed to fostering collaborative partnerships with employers and schools to ensure meaningful and positive experiences for all participants. Regular employer visits, feedback collection, and ongoing school support, including workshops, industry guest speakers, online learning, and work readiness activities continue to strengthen school and industry partnerships.

Mid Coast Connect contributed to sector-wide discussions and sharing best practice approaches. Our Work Placement Reference Group continued to meet twice annually via Microsoft Teams, enabling strong regional representation from schools, the Department of Education, and industry stakeholders.

Through these collective efforts, the Work Placement program continues to provide meaningful pathways that connect classroom learning with real-life opportunities.

2657 PLACEMENTS

1309 STUDENTS

1384 EMPLOYERS

27 SCHOOLS

5 TAFE CAMPUSES

44 WORK READINESS WORK SHOPS

197 NEW HOST EMPLOYERS

2025



Joanne Everson

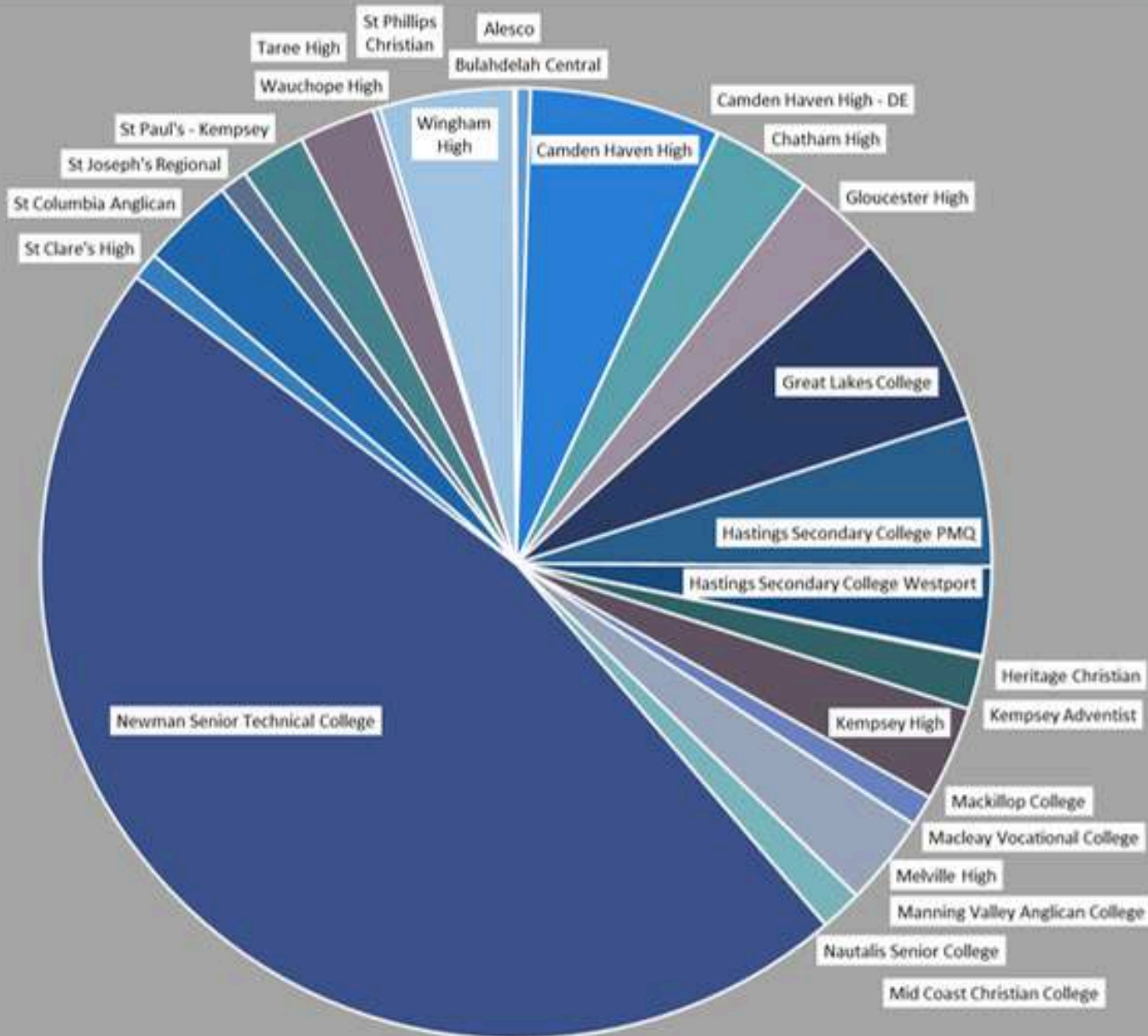
TEAM LEADER



#WORK PLACEMENT WORKS!



WORK PLACEMENTS PER SCHOOL

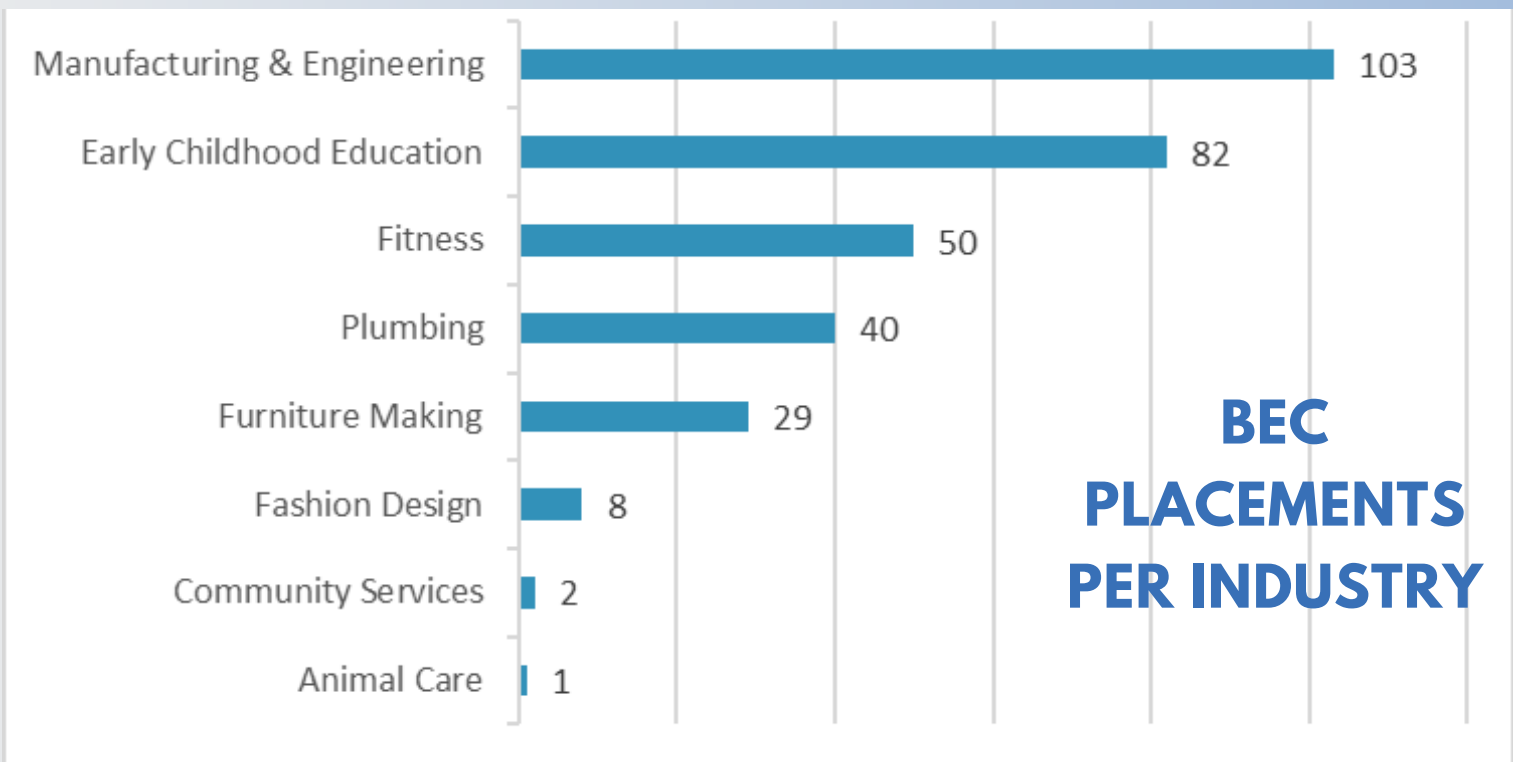
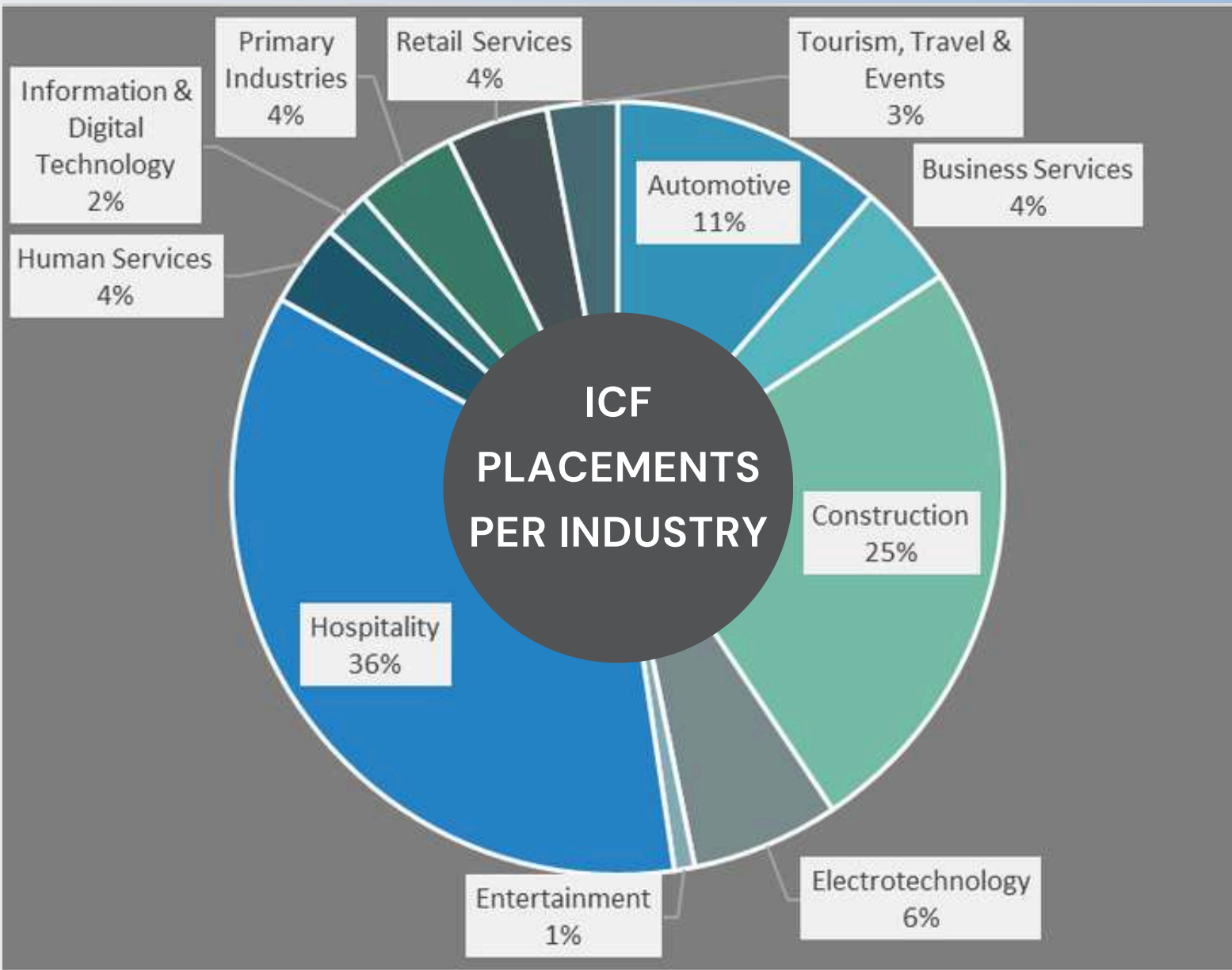


PLACEMENTS PER SECTOR

Department of Education	1148
Catholic Schools NSW	1374
Association of Independent Schools	135

INDUSTRY CURRICULUM FRAMEWORKS (ICF) BOARD ENDORSED COURSES (BEC)





A Taste for Success



Seasalt, owned by Cassie, has been a valued supporter of Mid Coast Connect's Work Placement program for over ten years. Cassie, whose career in hospitality began as a pathway to travel, now runs Seasalt and Rocksalt, employing 35 staff across both businesses.

A highlight of her commitment is Nathan, a former work placement student who progressed to Supervisor and remained with the business for five years. Cassie emphasises that hospitality provides transferable skills, career flexibility, and opportunities for growth.

Mid Coast Connect thanks Cassie and the Seasalt team for their long-standing dedication to mentoring young people and creating local career pathways.

Mixing Skills with Experience

Wharf St Distillery Restaurant joined Mid Coast Connect's Work Placement program last year and has quickly become a valued partner in supporting young people pursuing careers in hospitality. Year 11 student Phoebe Green from MidCoast Christian College recently completed a placement at the restaurant, gaining practical, hands-on experience under the guidance of owner Tim Cooke and his team.

Phoebe was one of three students undertaking placements, with more from Great Lakes College set to follow. The supportive and professional environment at Wharf St has allowed students to develop industry skills, confidence, and a clear insight into hospitality careers.

Tim and the Wharf St team are committed to mentoring local youth, providing meaningful pathways for students to explore and grow in the industry.



Design Your Future

Collins W Collins Building Designers have been valued supporters of Mid Coast Connect's Work Placement program since 2018, providing opportunities for students to gain practical experience in the design and construction industry.

Recently, Year 11 student Allyssa completed a two-week placement with the team, where she gained hands-on experience designing homes, contributing to real projects, and attending a site visit. The team praised Allyssa's initiative, creativity, and enthusiasm for learning.

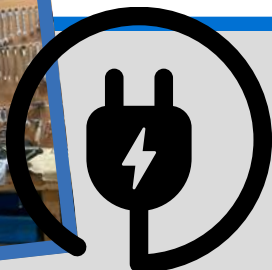
Experiences like these provide students with valuable insight into potential career pathways. Mid Coast Connect sincerely thanks Collins W Collins Building Designers for their ongoing commitment to supporting local young people.



Igniting Careers in Automotive



MID NORTH COAST
AUTO ELECTRICS



Mid North Coast Auto Electrics has been a long-standing supporter of Mid Coast Connect's Work Placement program, with Wade hosting Year 11 and 12 students studying Automotive and Electrotechnology for more than ten years. During this time, over 30 students have been given the opportunity to gain valuable hands-on experience in the industry.

Most recently, Daisy, a Year 11 student from Newman Senior Technical College, completed a term of work placement with the business. Daisy enjoyed the experience, particularly the variety of tasks and the chance to learn new skills in a real workshop environment.

Mid Coast Connect thanks Wade for his ongoing commitment to supporting local students and helping them explore careers in the automotive industry.

GET BACK IN THE GAME

In 2025, Mid Coast Connect's Get Back in the Game program continued to support young people aged 15–21 as they navigate the transition from school to further education, training, or employment. Funded by the NSW Department of Education through the Get Back in the Game initiative, the program remains a vital early-intervention and re-engagement service across the region.

Get Back in the Game provides personalised case management, ensuring each participant receives guidance tailored to their goals and circumstances. Youth Pathways Coordinators provide one-on-one mentoring, practical assistance, and structured planning to support informed career decision-making.

Collaboration with the Mid Coast Connect Work Placement team gives participants hands-on industry experience, building confidence, work readiness skills, and positive employment outcomes, including traineeships and apprenticeships.

Recognising that career development extends beyond employment, the program also offers practical support such as access to training resources, driving lessons, work attire, and referrals to external services, including mental health and housing support.

Through strong partnerships with employers, schools, and training providers, we continue to empower young people with the skills, confidence, and support needed to successfully achieve positive outcomes.



Sandra Slattery

PROGRAM MANAGER

188 ENROLMENTS

51% UNDERTOOK VET TRAINING

30% ENTERED THE WORKFORCE

3% REENGAGED WITH SCHOOL

26% COMPLETED WORK EXPERIENCE

168 ENGAGEMENTS

63% 5 DAYS OF STUDY OR WORK

53% 30 DAYS OF STUDY OR WORK

40% 3 MONTHS OF STUDY OR WORK

27% 6 MONTHS OF STUDY OR WORK

2025

LEARNING TO WORK



WORKING TO LEARN

GET BACK IN THE GAME

Lucy's Story

Lucy had a strong interest in becoming an electrician and approached Mid Coast Connect for support in pursuing a non-traditional trade. With assistance, she enrolled in a TAFE Electrotechnology course and completed a work experience placement in the field.

To explore her options further, Lucy also undertook a second placement in plumbing to ensure she was making the right career choice. Her first host employer was so impressed by her skills, dedication, and professionalism that they offered her a full-time electrical apprenticeship.

Lucy has now commenced her apprenticeship, and her family have expressed gratitude for the encouragement and opportunities provided. Her story demonstrates the power of guidance, local partnerships, and persistence.



Levi's Story

Levi, a 16-year-old student at Macksville High School, faced significant childhood trauma, impacting his mental health, school attendance, and sense of purpose. Passionate about fitness, Levi found the gym a coping mechanism and developed an interest in mentoring others through personal development.

With support from Mid Coast Connect, Levi set realistic goals for school, well-being, and a career. He engaged in structured programs, received ongoing mentoring, and reconnected with his education.

In 2025, Levi's attendance improved from 10% to 98%, he achieved academic awards, lost 20kg, and strengthened his confidence. Levi is now pursuing a career as a personal trainer, committed to helping others.

Jamaikah's Story

Jamaikah, a 16-year-old Dunghutti woman, connected with Mid Coast Connect when the traditional school environment wasn't the right fit for her. With support, she explored her options and successfully enrolled into TAFE to complete her Year 10 equivalency, gaining confidence and clarity about her future.

Passionate about radiology, Jamaikah completed work experience at Kempsey District Hospital, where she explored allied health roles and discovered the pathway for her future.

Now she has enrolled in an Allied Health with TAFE. Jamaikah's journey highlights the power of guidance, opportunity, and self-belief, and demonstrates how Mid Coast Connect supports young people to transition successfully into education, training, and meaningful careers.



Ben's Story

After completing Year 12 at Taree High School, Ben was referred to Mid Coast Connect as he was unsure of his next steps. Working with our Youth Pathways Coordinator, Ben explored options and identified his goal of becoming an electrician.

Ben completed work experience with a local electrician who was impressed with his attitude but was unable to offer an apprenticeship. Determined to continue pursuing his goal, Ben completed a second placement with Stowe Australia, where he again impressed the team.

With Mid Coast Connects' support from Jon in preparing his resume, application and interview skills, Ben confidently attended his interview and successfully secured an electrical apprenticeship with Stowe Australia. Ben's journey highlights how the right support and determination can lead to meaningful career opportunities.



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Mid Coast Connect acknowledges that the effectiveness of our programs depends on strong stakeholder relationships and community engagement. With the support of local organisations and community partners, we can provide young people with the guidance and opportunities they need to achieve successful futures.

In 2025 participation included:

- Business Port Macquarie
- Chamber of Commerce (Forster Tuncurry, Laurieton)
- Community Justice Interagency
- Great Port Macquarie Tourism Association
- Hasting, Macleay & Great Lakes Education Funds
- Hastings Business Women's Network
- Mid North Coast Disability Network
- Headspace
- Luminosity Youth Summit
- Macleay Valley Business Network
- Mid Coast Women in Business
- MNC Ignite
- Regional Development Australia
- Resolution Network Enhance Program
- Salvation Army Christmas Appeal
- Team Taree



Community Drives

In 2025, Mid Coast Connect proudly delivered several community drives that strengthened our connection to the regions we serve. Donations to the Women in Business initiative supported women preparing for interviews and employment by donating professional attire to help build confidence and remove barriers to workforce participation.

In collaboration with Newman and led by a Work Placement student, we supported the Second Chances drive for the Port Macquarie Hastings Council Animal Shelter, collecting essential supplies for local animals.

Ending the year with the annual Salvation Army Christmas Drive, gathering donations to assist families experiencing hardship during the festive season.

These initiatives reflect Mid Coast Connects commitment to bringing the community together and giving back.



PARTNERSHIPS

2025 Impacts of Youth Futures Network

Mid Coast Connect is a proud founding member of the Youth Futures Network (YFN).

In 2025, YFN continues to bring together organisations across NSW to support young people transitioning from school to further education, training, and employment. Through collaboration and shared expertise, the network helps strengthen opportunities and reduce barriers for young people as they build skills, confidence, and future pathways.

36,500

Young people built employability skills through workshops, online learning and one-on-one support.

54,000

Young people connected with industry, opening doors to real career pathways.

26,500

Businesses, social enterprises and community organisations have backed YFN, supporting young people in navigating career pathways and securing their future success!



1,640

Young people with diverse learning needs engaged in work preparation programs – championing inclusion, equity and promise.

3,501

First Nations youth.



CareerQuip

CareerQuip brought the Taree community together for an inspiring day of career exploration and opportunity. Community members, parents, teachers, and students gathered to discover pathways and connect directly with industry representatives. With approximately 2,000 attendees, the event showcased exhibitors focused on skills shortage areas, providing valuable insights into local and emerging career opportunities. Designed to support Year 10 students, HSC students, and even career changers exploring new directions, CareerQuip offered practical advice, course information, and real-world connections to help shape future pathways. Organisations such as Mid Coast Connect and Taree Universities Campus proudly supported the initiative, reinforcing a shared commitment to strengthening workforce development across the region.



VET Awards

In 2025, Mid Coast Connect sponsored 21 Awards for Excellence in VET across 11 regional schools, recognising student achievement in practical, industry-aligned learning.

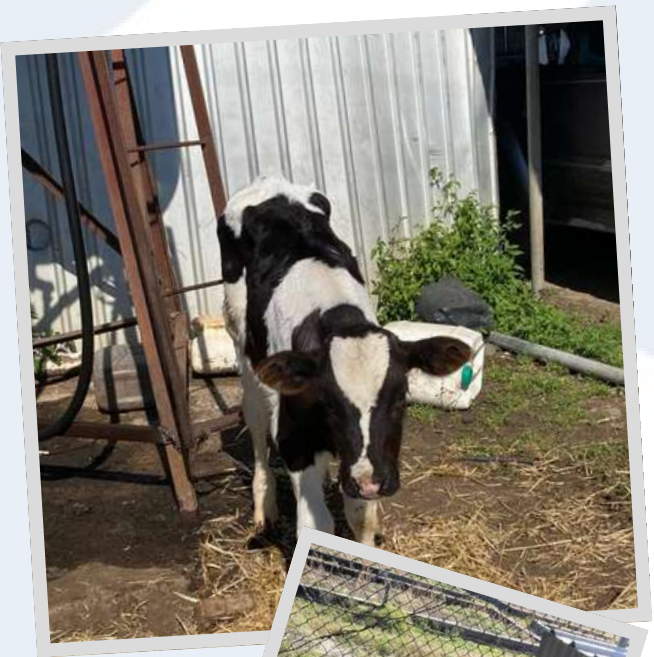


Cows Create Careers

The Cows Create Careers program continued in 2025, with local farmers lending poddy calves to schools so students could learn in a hands-on way.

Students were shown how to feed and care for the calves. Dairy industry advocates also visited the schools, sharing their knowledge to raise awareness of the wide range of career paths in the dairy industry and broader agricultural sector.

Despite flooding across the Mid North Coast impacting the region and reducing participation, the Cows Create Careers program continued on.



Beach Safety Awareness Program

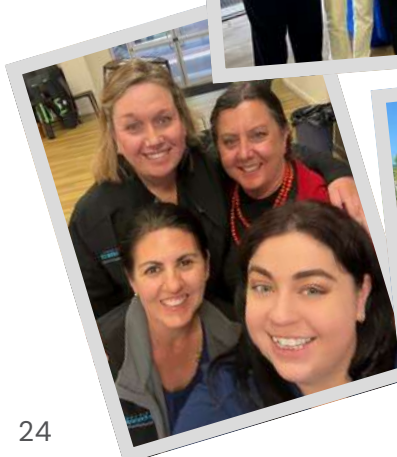
In November 2025, Supported Learning students from Hastings Secondary College – East Port Campus participated in the Beach Safety Awareness Program in partnership with Tacking Point Surf Life Saving Club. Students learned to recognise rips, the importance of swimming between the red and yellow flags, and the safety equipment used by lifesavers, including jet skis. Practical sessions included CPR training and broader beach safety awareness, giving students the skills and knowledge to stay safe in aquatic environments. The program supports confidence, personal safety, and responsible participation in local beach and water activities.



Education Funds

In 2025, Mid Coast Connect was proud to support the Country Education Fund organisations across our region. Through our involvement with the Get Back In the Game and Work Placement Programs, three Mid Coast Connect participants successfully secured scholarships to support their transition into university.

As a sponsor of the Country Education Foundation, we are committed to helping create brighter opportunities for rural and regional young people. We value the important role this organisation plays in strengthening pathways to further education and empowering communities across our region.



Thank you Events

In October 2025, Mid Coast Connect hosted three Thank You Events across the Mid North Coast to recognise the support of employers, schools, RTOs, and community partners. Over 100 attendees joined staff and Board members to celebrate the partnerships that support local young people.

Life Launch

The Life Launch project engaged over 80 young people across the Mid North Coast, helping them build confidence, practical skills, and stronger community connections. Through hands-on workshops, students explored workplace readiness, financial literacy, personal safety, and everyday life skills, including managing finances, professional presentation, and vehicle safety. Surf Life Saving NSW delivered an interactive session on water safety and volunteer opportunities, inspiring ongoing community involvement. Life Launch equips students for further education, training, and employment, fostering independence, resilience, and social participation, while encouraging pride and connection within their local communities.



Industry Immersion Program

The Industry Immersion Program gave students from Kempsey over multiple days hands-on experience with local employers, including Akubra, Expressway Spares, and Eastern Air. Participants explored different areas of each business, learning about operations, workplace expectations, and career pathways. This real-life industry exposure allowed students to understand employment opportunities, develop workplace awareness, and connect directly with professionals. By engaging with local businesses, the program supports informed career choices, builds confidence, and inspires students to consider a range of pathways in the workforce and further education.



Mid Coast Connect Careers Market

For the first time in its 17-year history, the Mid Coast Careers Market was met with rain, but that did not dampen our region's annual career event. With students, job seekers, and local employers attending and taking advantage of the valuable opportunities on offer.

Twelve schools attended from Kempsey through to Taree, providing the 1065 students in attendance with a valuable platform to broaden their awareness of career opportunities and helping them explore potential pathways.

This year's careers market featured sixty-one exhibitors, including education and training providers, industry representatives, and support services, effectively offering a 'one-stop shop' for career information. Exhibitors were able to offer real-world advice while providing hands-on activities and practical demonstrations, encouraging students to consider their future career paths.



Presented by:



Proudly sponsored by:



Charles Sturt University



PORT MACQUARIE HASTINGS COUNCIL

Coffs Coast Careers Connections

In 2025, Mid Coast Connect proudly delivered the 18th annual Coffs Coast Career Connections — our largest event to date.

With 1,500 students attending from 16 schools across the Coffs Harbour region, the event reached full capacity, highlighting its growing reputation and strong demand for career pathway engagement.

Supported by valued sponsors — Southern Cross University, City of Coffs Harbour, ETC and BCU — the event featured fifty-eight exhibitors representing a diverse range of industries and employment sectors.

Coffs Coast Career Connections continues to connect young people directly with employers, training providers and industry professionals, supporting informed decisions about future education, training and employment opportunities within the region.



Planning for the Future:

Coffs Coast CAREER CONNECTIONS

Thursday 5th June 2025

Venue: Coffs Harbour Racing Club

Event Partners



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Mid Coast Connect is audited annually by NorthCorp to produce the Special Purpose Financial Report. The following financial contributions were provided to support our programs and activities in 2025.

PROGRAM	FUNDING	SOURCE
Work Placement Coordination Services	\$655,003	NSW Department of Education
Get Back in the Game	\$504,846	NSW Department of Education

Mid Coast Connect would like to thank the following schools and colleges for their ongoing support and participation in our programs and activities:

- Allegra School
- Aspect Hunter School
- Bellingen High School
- Bishop Druitt College
- Bowraville Central School
- Bulahdelah Central School
- Camden Haven High School
- Chatham High School
- Coffs Harbour Christian School
- Coffs Harbour High School
- Dorrigo High School
- Gloucester High School
- Grafton High School
- Great Lakes College
- Heritage Christian School
- Hastings Secondary College
- Kempsey Adventist School
- Kempsey High School
- MacKillop College
- Maclean High School
- Macksville High School
- Macleay Vocational College
- Manning Valley Anglican College
- McAuley College
- MidCoast Christian College
- Melville High School
- Nambucca Heads High School
- Nambucca Valley Christian School
- Nautilus Senior College
- Newman Senior Technical College
- Orara High School
- St Clare's High School
- St Columba Anglican School
- St Joseph's Regional College
- St John Paul College
- St Paul's College
- TAFE NSW
- Taree High School
- Toormina High School
- Wauchope High School
- Wingham High School
- Yulinbal College



ANOTHER GREAT YEAR AT MID COAST CONNECT!



M I D C O A S T

connect

opportunities for youth

Find Us



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