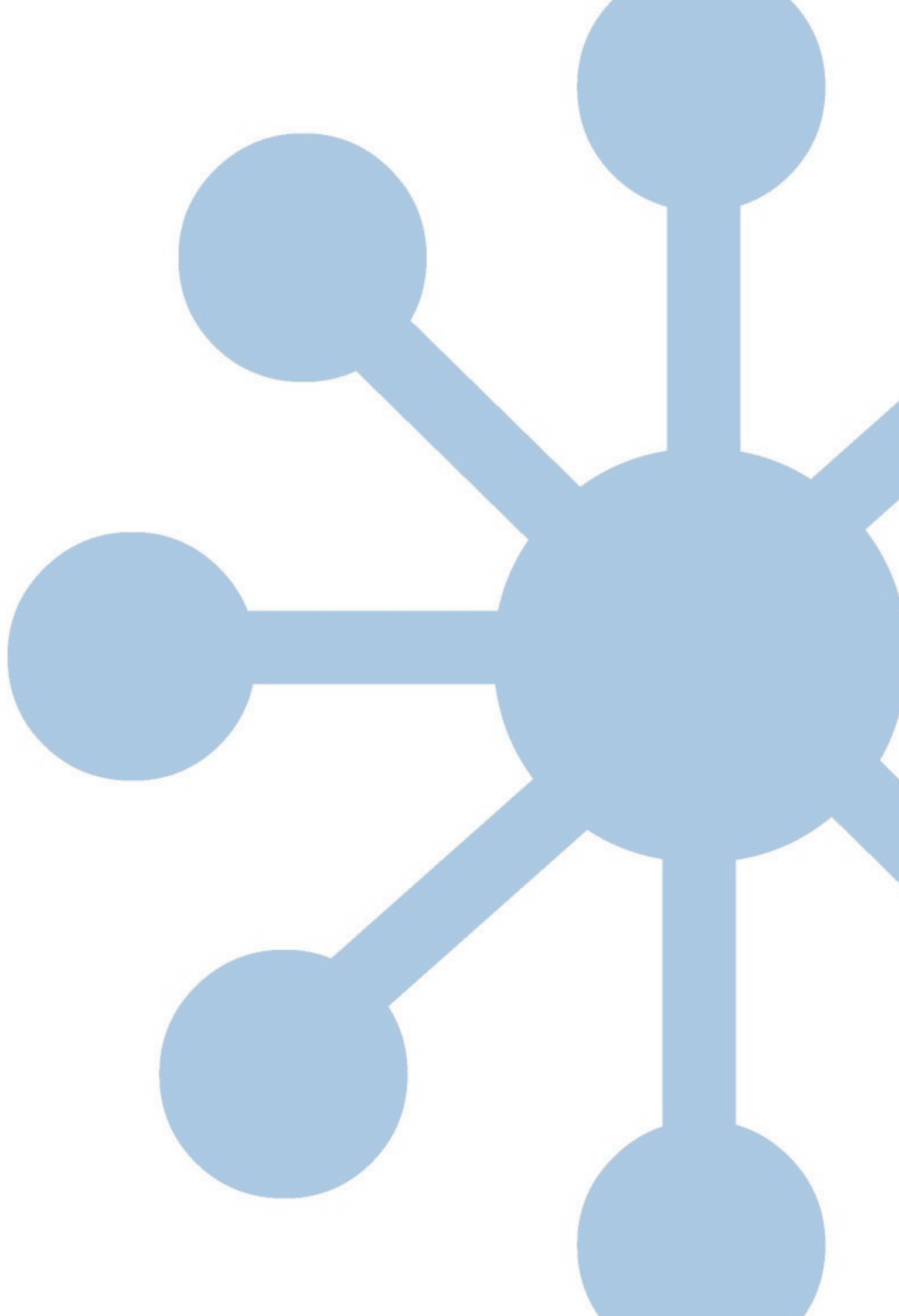




M I D C O A S T
connect
opportunities for youth

ANNUAL REPORT 2024





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Our Core 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.



ABOUT US

Mid Coast Connect is a not-for-profit organisation dedicated to supporting young people as they transition from school to further education, training, and employment.

We deliver Government-funded programs, including:

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

We work closely with high schools and TAFE campuses across the region, providing workshops, presentations, and industry connections to help students prepare for the workforce. We also support educators with resources and professional development.

Mid Coast Connect collaborates with employers to create pathways for employment, apprenticeships, traineeships, and workplace learning opportunities. Strong community partnerships with service providers, training organisations, and local businesses allow us to deliver a range of career-focused initiatives.

In 2024, we expanded our work experience and readiness programs, hosted engaging careers expos, and continued supporting the local Country Education Funds in the Hastings, Macleay, and Great Lakes regions.

CHAIR REPORT

Kellon Beard



It has been a very interesting year for Mid Coast Connect. Our long-serving Chair, Ian Chegwidgen, stepped down after many years of dedicated service. I would like to thank Ian for his hard work and for leaving the organisation in such a strong position. I am pleased to announce that we have awarded Ian our first Life Membership in recognition of his years of dedication and service. Ian will continue as a valued Board member, and his experience and expertise remain invaluable assets. I have had many discussions with Ian since taking on the role of Chair, and I continue to confer with him regularly.

I would like to thank our Board for their valuable counsel and for speaking up with their views. Their ability to challenge decisions and provide insights has been instrumental in ensuring we do the best we can for Mid Coast Connect. This year, the Board members have been Kellon Beard (Chairperson), Ian Chegwidgen (Deputy Chairperson), Frances Sargent (Secretary), Graham Morgan (Treasurer), Mick Eller, Mark Nunan, Maura Luxford, Steve Pares and Susan Judd.

This year, we have reworked our Strategic Plan to redefine the direction of the organisation, focusing on growth and financial independence. New members have joined the Board, ensuring our continued focus on improving our performance.

As a non-profit organisation and registered charity with multiple stakeholders, it is always a challenge for the Board and our staff as we work across the region. I would like to extend my heartfelt thanks, along with the gratitude of the entire Board, to all Mid Coast Connect staff. Your unwavering dedication and efforts in supporting the region's youth with their education, training, career choices, and employment have been invaluable. The ongoing success and esteemed reputation of Mid Coast Connect are direct results of your expertise and commitment.

NorthCorp recently completed the annual audit and once again found that Mid Coast Connect is professionally managed and is in a sound financial position. I extend my gratitude to them for their thorough investigation and courteous interactions with our staff during the audit.

We currently have several Government contracts with the NSW Department of Education that provide us with the income necessary to continue our services. These include Work Placement Coordination Services and the Get Back in the Game initiative.

I would like to thank Jenny Fraser, our CEO, for her dedication, support, and hard work during what has been a challenging year at times.

OUR BOARD

Mid Coast Connect is a not-for-profit incorporated association and charity registered 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 nine voluntary representatives from business, industry, education, training, and community organisations throughout the service region. The 2024 Board Executive includes Kellon Beard (Chair and Public Officer), Ian Chegwiddden (Deputy Chair), Frances Sargent (Secretary), and Graham Morgan (Treasurer), alongside members Stephen Pares, Mick Eller, Maura Luxford, Susan Judd and Mark Nunan.

The Board leads Mid Coast Connect's strategic direction, monitors implementation, and ensures stakeholder expectations are met. It holds responsibility for overall organisational performance, compliance with relevant laws, codes of conduct, ethical standards, and risk management oversight. The Board empowers and works with the Chief Executive Officer to manage operations within Board-established parameters.

**BUSINESS
NSW**

TAFE^{NSW}



**MISSION
AUSTRALIA**



MORGAN
Human Resource Management

CEO REPORT

Jenny Fraser



In this Annual Report for 2024, I am pleased to share the achievements and on-going impact of Mid Coast Connect in creating meaningful opportunities for young people. Our commitment continues to deliver a range of services, programs, and events to support young people in their transition from school to further education, training, and employment.

Marking our 27th year, Mid Coast Connect has solidified its role as the leading organisation dedicated to fostering career development for young people. As trusted community connectors, we work in close partnership with local stakeholders to create tangible career pathways for young people. In a constantly evolving economic and funding landscape, our sustained growth and resilience are testaments to the dedication of our team and our strong relationships with those who support our work.

We firmly believe that collaboration is key to empowering young people. Our collaborative partnerships with local businesses, education and training providers ensure young people have the connections, guidance, and experiences they need to confidently step into their futures. These relationships remain integral to the success of our programs and the lasting impact they have on our region and local communities.

It is essential that young people see a viable and promising future within regional communities—one that offers career prospects, education pathways, and a high quality of life. Retaining young talent is critical for long-term regional growth, and many of Mid Coast Connect's initiatives are designed to support this goal. By creating valuable opportunities for workplace learning, training, and employment, we are equipping young people with the skills and confidence to contribute meaningfully to our communities and have successful futures.

The team at Mid Coast Connect remains passionate about delivering high-quality services and fostering positive outcomes for our young people. Our success is driven by the dedication of our staff, the support of our Board, and the strength of our local community partnerships. Working alongside those who share our vision is always a privilege, and I look forward to continuing this important work together to support the next generation.

OUR TEAM



WORK PLACEMENT

Work placement remains a vital component of industry-based vocational education and training (VET) courses that students can complete as part of their Higher School Certificate (HSC). In 2024, Mid Coast Connect continues to facilitate the placement of students from schools and TAFE campuses with host employers across 21 designated industry sectors, requiring a minimum of 70 hours of experience during Years 11 and 12. This opportunity enables students to refine their industry competencies and cultivate essential employability skills in a real-world work environment.

In 2024, our Work Placement Coordinators continued to support both existing and new host employers, further enhancing the program's reach. The number of employers available for placements has seen a significant increase, with growth expected to continue. Nonetheless, sectors such as Construction, Hospitality, and Electrotechnology still face considerable demand, as the number of students pursuing studies in these fields surpasses the available placements.

The Work Placement Team was and is, always committed to fostering strong collaborations with employers and schools to create rewarding experiences for both students and employers. As part of our dedication to continuous improvement, we conducted regular visits to employers to collect feedback on the program. Additionally, schools received ongoing support through workshops, guest industry speakers, online training sessions, and work readiness programs to better prepare students for their placements.

Mid Coast Connect participated in the NSW Work Placement Service Providers' Managers Forum, providing a valuable chance to connect and exchange best practices with representatives from various provider organisations.

Mid Coast Connect's Work Placement program is sustained by a Reference Group that meets at least twice a year, with meetings conducted via TEAMS to enhance participation among stakeholders across the region. In 2025, we anticipate the involvement of representatives from various schools, the Department of Education, and employer guests, further enriching the collaborative efforts to support students in their vocational journeys.

Sandra Slattery

PROGRAM MANAGER





#WORK PLACEMENT WORKS!

24

schools

5

TAFE campuses

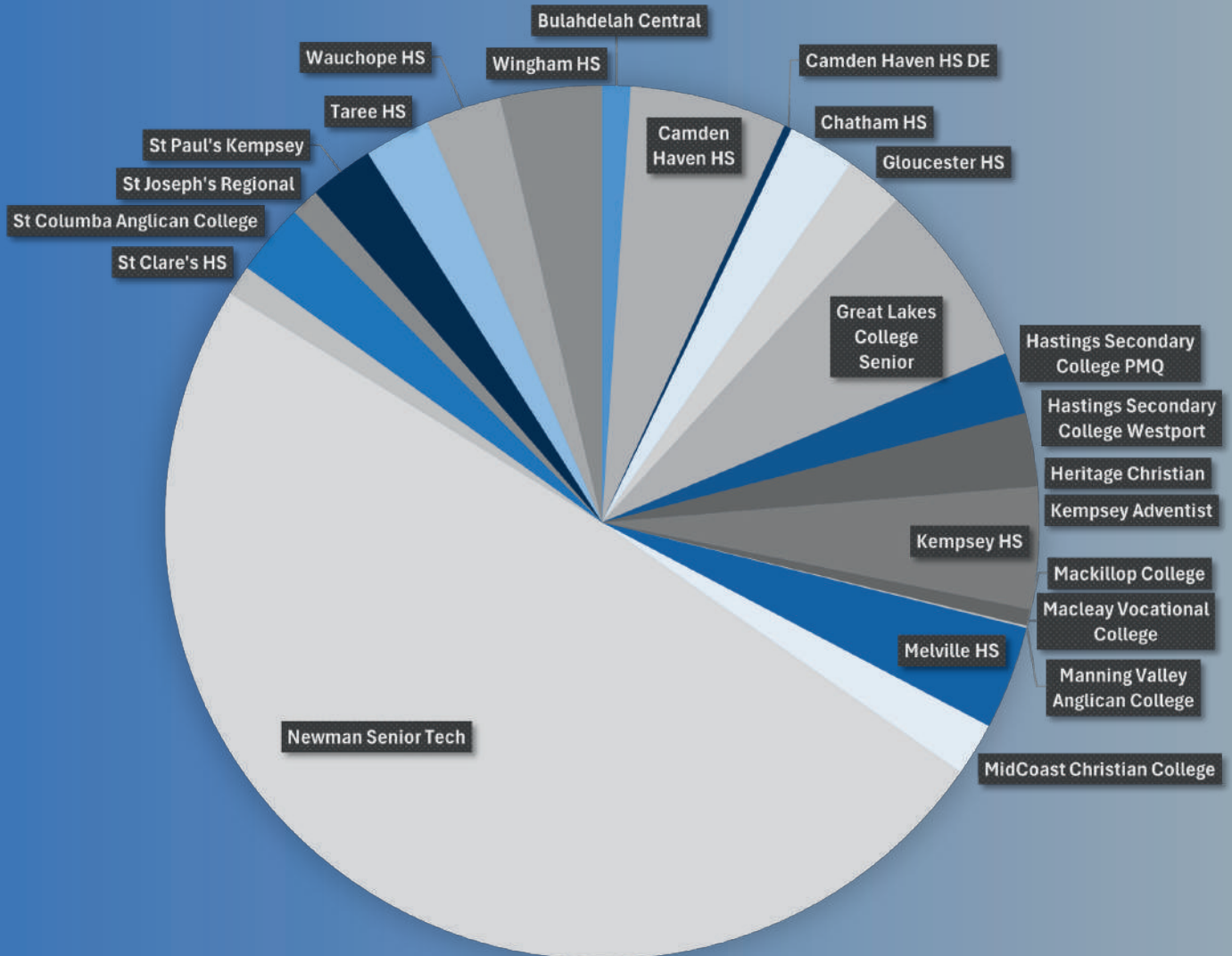
1152

students

2479

placements

WORK PLACEMENTS PER SCHOOL



PLACEMENTS PER SECTOR

Department of
Education

1017

Catholic Schools
NSW

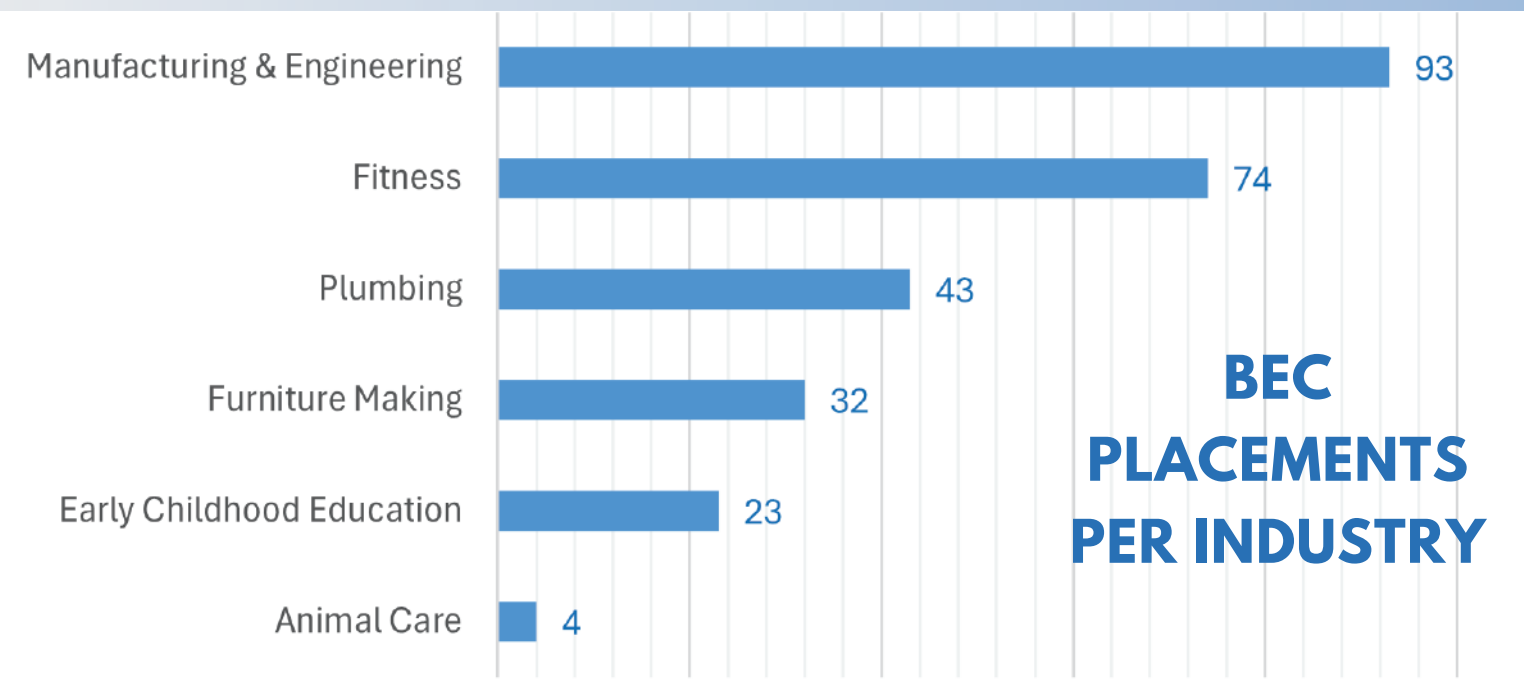
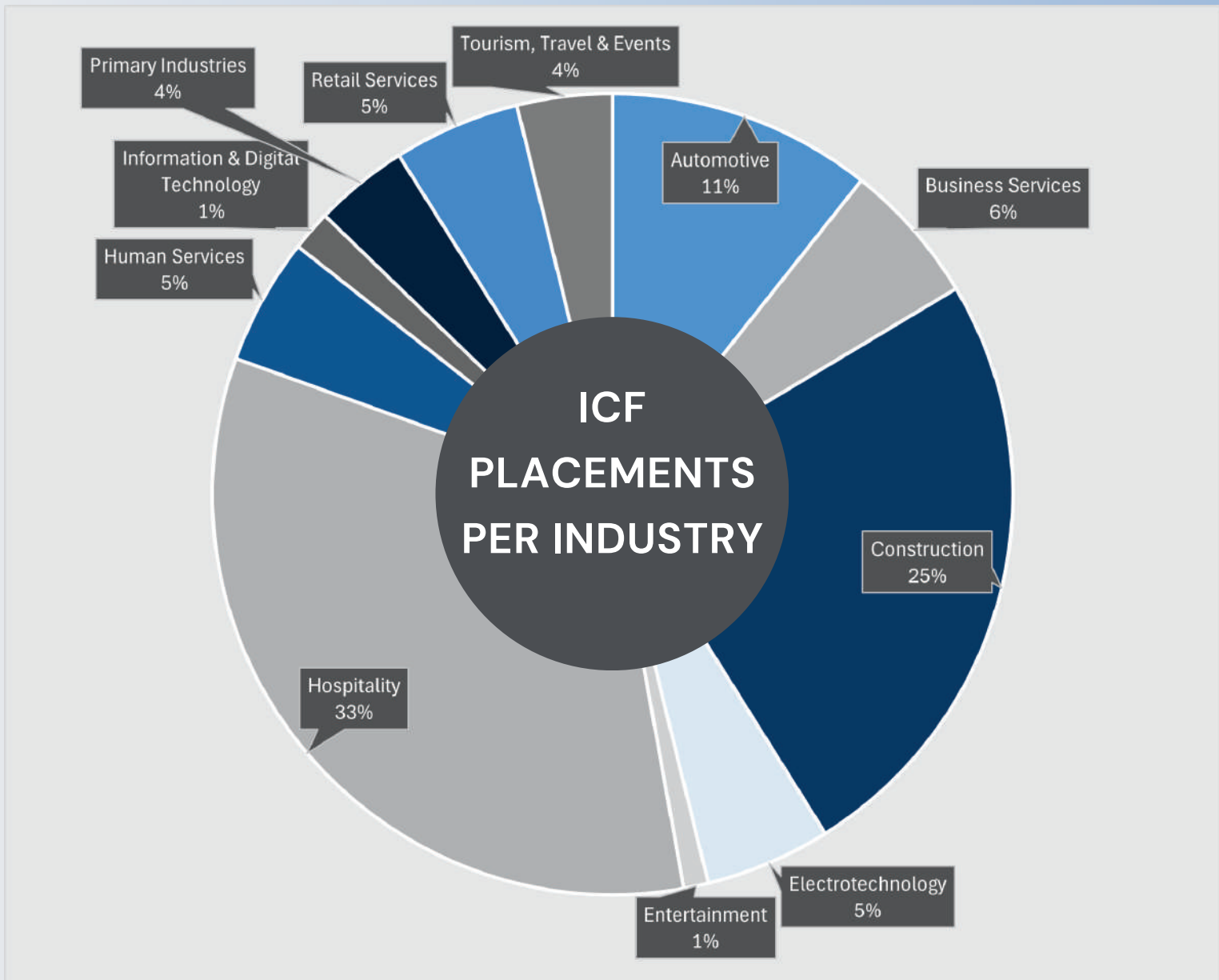
1345

Association of
Independent Schools

117

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





Work Placement is getting BIG!

Big Boiz Café has shown outstanding support for the Work Placement program, with owner Jordan making a significant impact since joining in July 2024. Through his dedication, eleven students have gained hands-on experience in the hospitality industry, developing essential skills for their future careers.

Beyond providing placements, Jordan and his team actively invest in students' futures, with several securing employment after demonstrating exceptional potential.

Mid Coast Connect sincerely thanks Jordan and the Big Boiz Café team for their generosity and mentorship, helping young people build confidence and valuable industry experience.



Careers at the Club

For over 15 years, Club Taree has been a valued supporter of Mid Coast Connect's Work Placement program, providing students with hands-on experience in the hospitality industry. Among the many success stories are Brock Hyson and Ethan West, who completed Work Placement at Club Taree in 2022 while studying Hospitality at Taree High School. Impressed by their dedication, Club Taree offered both students apprenticeships.

Now in their third year, Brock and Ethan are working towards becoming fully qualified chefs, with aspirations to pursue opportunities in the mining industry. They credit Club Taree's supportive workplace and strong sense of community for helping them grow professionally.

Jonathan Flanagan, Club Taree's Food & Beverage Manager, is a passionate advocate for Work Placement and youth development. Under his leadership, the club has employed at least eight Work Placement students, providing them with career opportunities while remaining in their local community.



Constructing Careers

Mitchell Joyce, owner of Joyce Constructions, has been a dedicated supporter of the Work Placement program for over a decade, hosting numerous students, including nine this year alone. His commitment to mentoring young people has provided invaluable hands-on experience in the construction industry.

This dedication has led to real opportunities, with two former Newman Senior Technical College students, Jack Edwards and Dereje Thompson, securing full-time apprenticeships after completing their placements.

Mid Coast Connect sincerely thanks Mitchell for his generosity and ongoing support in shaping the careers of young people in our region.



Workplace Adventures

Renee King, Director of Little Adventures Early Learning in Kempsey, hosted Year 12 student Dakotah Harris from St Paul's College for a Work Placement this year. As part of her HSC studies in Early Childhood Education and Care, Dakotah gained hands-on experience at the Long Day Care Centre.

Her strong work ethic and dedication during the placement led to a full-time traineeship, highlighting the effectiveness of the Work Placement program in creating career pathways.

Mid Coast Connect sincerely thanks Renee and Little Adventures Early Learning for their support in nurturing the next generation of early childhood educators.



CAREER CONNECT

Mid Coast Connect's Career Connect program remains a vital initiative for career planning and work readiness among young people in 2024. Funded by the NSW Department of Education under the Get Back in the Game initiative, the program continues to support school leavers aged 15–21 by providing essential education, training, and employment pathways.

The program maintained its focus on personalised case management and support, complemented by engaging group activities. The collaboration with the Mid Coast Connect Work Placement team has proven successful, allowing participants to gain invaluable work experience across various industries. This hands-on experience not only helps build confidence but has also led to numerous success stories, with participants securing full-time, part-time, or casual employment, as well as apprenticeships in fields aligned with their interests.

In 2024, the Youth Pathways Coordinators at Mid Coast Connect have been dedicated to offering tailored practical support to participants. This includes mentoring and guidance aimed at facilitating their transition into further studies or the workforce. Support mechanisms encompass one-on-one mentoring, assistance with training materials, driving lessons, and sourcing appropriate work attire. Additionally, the program continues to facilitate access to critical support services such as mental health resources and housing assistance.

Building robust relationships with stakeholders—including employers, schools, and training providers—remains a key priority. Mid Coast Connect aims to be recognised as the premier organisation that empowers young people in their successful transitions from school into further education, training, or employment, ensuring they have the tools and support they need to thrive in their future endeavours.

Sandra Slattery

PROGRAM MANAGER



351 Engagements	75% undertook VET Training	25% entered the workforce	2% reengaged with school
184 Enrolments	79% 5 days study or work	75% 3 months study or work	53% 6 months study or work

LEARNING TO WORK



WORKING TO LEARN

GET BACK IN THE GAME

Logan's Story

At 18, Logan faced barriers to employment without his Year 10 ROSA, transport, or financial resources. With Mid Coast Connect's Career Connect program, Logan enrolled in a Certificate II in Work and Vocational Pathways, gaining his Year 10 equivalent.

Mid Coast Connect supported Logan in securing a Tax File Number, Medicare card, and a work experience placement with J.R. Richards & Sons. To remove financial barriers, we provided safety boots and work clothing. Logan thrived in his placement, impressing his employer with his dedication and teamwork.

Now, Logan is working towards an apprenticeship and gaining driving hours, feeling confident about his future. With the right support, Logan has turned challenges into opportunities.



Cameron T's Story

Cameron, 17, from Wauchope, was unsure about his future after leaving school. Through Mid Coast Connect's Get Back in the Game program, he explored his interest in the Automotive industry, completing his White Card, a Certificate I in Automotive, and two work experience placements.

To support his career goals, Cameron also gained his Learner's Licence with assistance from the program. He secured part-time work at McDonald's, with resume and work attire support.

Now, Cameron is confident about his future, building his driving hours and actively seeking employment in the Automotive industry. Mid Coast Connect is proud to have supported his journey.

Cameron J's Story

After finishing school, Cameron felt lost about his future. With support from Mid Coast Connect's Get Back in the Game program, he explored opportunities in Hospitality and Early Childhood Education.

We arranged work experience at Roto House, where Cameron impressed his employer and was offered a job. This also helped him complete the practical units of his Certificate III in Hospitality, earning his full qualification.

Once withdrawn, Cameron is now confident and engaged. His mother has seen a remarkable change in his outlook. He plans to move to Toowoomba to finish his Certificate III in Early Childhood Education and Care while continuing Hospitality work.

With guidance and hands-on experience, Cameron has built a clear path forward.



Liam's Story

After completing a Certificate II in Career Preparation, Liam was referred to Mid Coast Connect to explore career options. With a strong interest in construction, he joined our program for support.

Liam had some experience assisting his father on job sites but needed hands-on industry exposure. We arranged work experience with a local builder, who was impressed by his enthusiasm but was unable to offer an apprenticeship. Liam took a café job while continuing to pursue construction. To improve his job prospects, we also arranged a professional driving lesson.

A second construction work experience placement led to part-time work, and soon after, he received two apprenticeship offers. He chose to begin his apprenticeship with Dan Warren Builder, where he remains employed.

Liam's journey shows how dedication and the right support can turn aspirations into opportunities.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Mid Coast Connect recognises that the success of our programs and service delivery depends on stakeholder relationships and engagement with our community. Without the assistance of the community and other local organisations, we cannot fully support our young people and help them on the path to a successful future.

In 2024 participation included:

- Business Port Macquarie
- Chambers of Commerce – Wauchope, Macleay Valley, Greats Lakes, Taree & Forster
- 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
- Salvation Army Christmas Appeal
- Team Taree



SES Networking Night

In August, Work Placement Coordinator Lyn Schrader attended a Business Port Macquarie networking evening at the NSW State Emergency Service (SES) in Port Macquarie. Attendees gained insight into the vital work of SES volunteers through live demonstrations and a facility tour.

The event, sponsored by Port City Bowling Club, also featured Operations Manager Adam Barrett, who shared exciting renovation plans, including a new bar and grill, rooftop terrace, and function space.

Mid Coast Connect is grateful to Port City Bowling Club for recently joining the Work Placement Program and hosting Leo, a Hospitality student from St Clare's High School.



Connect Gloucester

In September, we attended the third annual Connect Gloucester event, showcasing career and training opportunities to local students. Held at the Recreation Centre, the event welcomed Gloucester High School and primary school students, encouraging early career conversations.

With strong community support, exhibitors provided interactive displays, offering hands-on industry insights. Feedback has been overwhelmingly positive, reinforcing the importance of connecting young people with local opportunities.



PARTNERSHIPS

2024 Impacts of Youth Futures Network

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

In 2024, YFN harnessed its collective strength to create unparalleled opportunities for young people transitioning from school to work across NSW. Our reach is vast, our impact is powerful and our commitment is unwavering.

Together, we are shaping the future, breaking down barriers, and ensuring every young person in NSW has the support, skills, and opportunities to thrive!

54,000

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

36,500

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

26,500

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



3,501

First Nations youth.

1,640

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



CareerQuip

CareerQuip on the Manning River attracted community members, parents, teachers, and students to explore career options in Taree. Exhibitors offered career information to around 2000 attendees, focusing on skills shortage areas. The event catered to Year 10 students, HSC students, and career changers seeking guidance on future paths. Organisations like Mid Coast Connect and Taree Universities Campus supported the initiative.

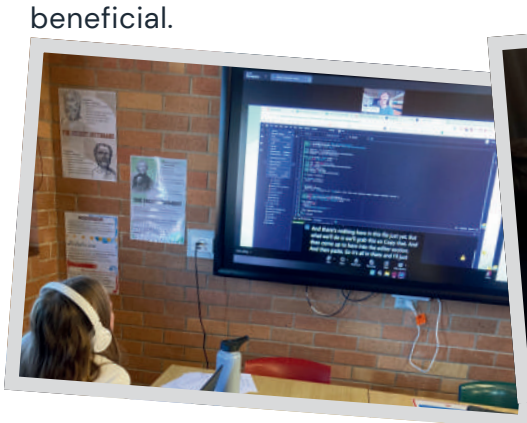


IDT Virtual Work Placement

In May, over 500 students statewide participated in the IDT Virtual Work Placement with Amazon Web Services (AWS), gaining valuable industry experience in cloud computing and data management.

Mid Coast Connect's Tim Myers visited Gloucester High School, where IT teacher Sam Cornall guided Year 11 Information Technology students through the program. Students engaged in coding activities, data set inputs, and self-paced workshops, simulating real-world workplace experiences.

Sam highlighted the program's accessibility, allowing students to gain industry skills without the need for travel. The students demonstrated maturity, enthusiasm, and collaboration, making the experience highly beneficial.



TAFE Try a Trade Taster Day

In August 2024, Mid Coast Connect partnered with Taree TAFE to host an event for year 9 and 10 students, featuring workshops in Automotive, Horticulture, and Equine Lunging/Primary Industries. Forty-five students from three schools gained hands-on experience and industry insights. Feedback was positive, with students expressing excitement about TAFE's offerings and teachers appreciating the event's engaging nature. The day aimed to showcase TAFE's programs and career paths, leaving students enthusiastic about their future opportunities.



Cows Create Careers

More than 100 students from seven schools completed the Cows Create Careers program in 2024. Local farmers lent poddy calves to the schools so the students could learn in a very hands-on way. The farmers showed the students how to feed and care for the calves over a 3-week period. Dairy industry advocates also visited the schools and shared their industry knowledge, with the aim of increasing awareness of the wide range of career paths in the dairy industry as well as the broader agricultural sector.

Participating schools included: St Paul's College, Great Lakes College - Forster Campus, Gloucester High School, Melville High School, Chatham High School, Hastings Secondary College - Westport Campus and MidCoast Christian College.



Mid Coast Connect Careers Market

Bringing together students from Kempsey to Taree, the Mid Coast Careers Market provided a valuable platform for exploring local opportunities. With the participation of education and training providers, industry representatives, and support services, the event aimed to inform students about their future options within our community.

Featuring over 80 exhibitors, the event showcased a wide array of locally available training and employment opportunities. From apprenticeships to various career paths, students were encouraged to consider the benefits of living, working, and studying locally as they navigated their future careers.



Presented by:



Proudly sponsored by:



Charles Sturt
University



PORT MACQUARIE
HASTINGS COUNCIL

Coffs Coast Careers Connections

The 17th annual Coffs Coast Career Connections aimed to inspire and inform the 1220 young people in attendance about vocational opportunities and the various pathways to employment within the region.

Organised in collaboration with the Clarence Coffs Careers Advisers Network and supported through partnerships with Southern Cross University, the City of Coffs Harbour, ETC and BCU as event sponsors there were sixteen schools participating.

The structure of the initiative revolved around 50 Career Champions with a total of 77 booths featuring employers showcasing their opportunities in an auditorium setting, along with an outdoor area dedicated to trades and professions involving machinery, such as a semi-trailer displaying vocational pathways in logistics.

Careers in health received special attention with a dedicated separate room, highlighting the importance and opportunities within the healthcare sector with hands-on learning experiences.

A special feature was a Life Skills Precinct organised by the Office for Regional Youth of the Department of Regional NSW. The purpose of the Life Skills Precinct being to assist young people to navigate their way with government agencies and to provide opportunities to access life skills information and tools by talking directly to government representatives.



GOVERNANCE

Mid Coast Connect adheres to the Australian Charities & Not-for-profit Commission (ACNC) Governance Standards, which require charitable organisations to operate lawfully, maintain accountability, and function responsibly. These standards help preserve public trust and support charities in fulfilling their missions.

Standard 1: Purposes and Not-for-profit Nature

Mid Coast Connect operates as a not-for-profit Incorporated Association and registered charity dedicated to supporting disadvantaged young people through school transitions and into further education, training, and employment. Our services specifically assist youth experiencing socio-economic disadvantage, disability, mental health challenges, isolation, and behavioural or family difficulties.

Standard 2: Accountability to Members

Our organisation is governed by a Board that convenes at least five times annually. Formal reporting mechanisms provide comprehensive information on organisational activities and finances. Mid Coast Connect operates under a constitution that clearly outlines the process for appointing Board members, all of whom are registered as Responsible Persons with the ACNC.

Standard 3: Compliance with Australian Laws

Mid Coast Connect maintains full compliance with Australian laws through documented policies and procedures that ensure we meet all legal obligations and safeguard our charity's finances and assets.

Standard 4: Suitability of Responsible People

The organisation takes reasonable measures to verify that Board members are not disqualified from managing a corporation under the Corporations Act 2001 (Cth) or from serving as a Responsible Person by the ACNC Commissioner.

Standard 5: Duties of Responsible People

Mid Coast Connect Board members commit to:

- Acting with reasonable care and diligence
- Acting honestly and fairly in the organisation's best interests and for its charitable purposes
- Not misusing their position or information gained as a Responsible Person
- Disclosing conflicts of interest
- Ensuring responsible management of the charity's financial affairs
- Not allowing the charity to operate while insolvent



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 2024.

PROGRAM	FUNDING	SOURCE
Work Placement Coordination Services	\$639,681	NSW Department of Education
Get Back in the Game	\$682,877	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:

- Bellingen High School
- Bishop Druitt College
- Bowraville Central School
- Bulahdelah Central School
- Camden Haven High School
- Chatham High School
- Chrysalis Steiner School
- Coffs Harbour Christian School
- Coffs Harbour High School
- Coffs Harbour Senior College
- Dorrigo High School
- Gloucester High School
- Great Lakes College
- Heritage Christian School
- Hastings Secondary College
- Kempsey Adventist School
- Kempsey High School
- MacKillop College
- Macksville High School
- Macleay Vocational College
- Manning Valley Anglican College
- MidCoast Christian College
- Melville High School
- Nambucca Heads High 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!

How you can help

We work closely with schools, education and training providers and businesses to provide the stepping stones that will help prepare young people for productive futures.

We invite you to partner with us to further develop education, training and employment opportunities for our local young people.

Our partnerships can help businesses meet workforce needs and provide real-life career pathway information, to prepare young people for their successful participation in the workforce.

Our programs and activities can provide positive benefits to your organisation as well as making a real difference in the life of a young person.

www.midcoastconnect.com.au



M I D C O A S T

connect
opportunities for youth

Find Us



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