

# Community Colleges Australia

## 2023 Year in Review

During 2023, Community Colleges Australia reinforced its position and role as Australia's leading advocate for the not-for-profit adult and community education sector.

### Semester 2, 2023 was a time for significant reflection and dynamic change at CCA

**July 2023:** CCA congratulated outgoing CEO Dr. Don Perlgut after almost 8 years of outstanding service, advocacy and sector leadership at CCA. Our CCA Board engaged a specialist not-for-profit recruiter and conducted a national search for a new CEO and welcomed Russ Hawkins to the role. A smooth transition for uninterrupted member services was a feature of the CCA office in July 2023 via Don and Russ working diligently with Evelyn, Clare and all Board members to maximise success for CCA members.

**August and September 2023:** On three occasions early in Russ's tenure the Board and CCA staff were invited to Canberra, for ministerial meetings with the Federal Minister for Skills and Training, Hon. Brendan O'Connor MP, the Ministers' Senior Staff, Federal DEWR Senior Officers and Jobs and Skills Councils. The concept of influence rather than advocacy was a key feature of discussions as CCA influence with government and decision makers grows from strength to strength.

**October 2023:** The [CCA 2023 National Conference](#) in Sydney engaged many of Australia's most stimulating and powerful skills and training experts, with almost 150 participants and speakers. CCA was first among equals in our sector leadership in securing newly appointed NSW State Minister for Skills, TAFE and Tertiary Education, Hon. Steve Whan MP, who opened day 2 of the CCA Conference in his first public address as Minister. The 2023 Conference featured a wide ranging and high equity agenda, with emerging themes for CCA member organisations advancing in First Nations VET leadership and Special Assistance Schools (SAS).

All CCA members are advised to save the dates for the 2024 CCA National Conference back at the Sydney CBD 5-star Hotel Amora Jamison on 21, 22-23 October. You are encouraged to bring a team for what will be a unique opportunity to access quality professional learning and team leadership development in our sector.

**November 2023:** A strategic funding influence document: the [CCA Response to the NSW VET Review](#). The cornerstone of this submission starting on page 10 is the annually indexed \$20 Million claim for our members to engage in a Partnerships, Innovation and Pathways Agreement – PIPA – that significantly enhances and adds to existing funding.

**December 2023:** Targeted and focused “funding-influence” meetings were held with the Skills Ministers Offices in our two largest states, NSW and VIC, to set the scene for the National Skills Agreement initial funding rounds in January 2024 and beyond.

The CCA Board received the initial CCA membership feedback survey results which will be shared with all members early in 2024.

**January 2024:** CCA's focus remains with the needs of its members and ensuring the sustainability of member organisations and the broader sector. CCA staff will be engaged in strategic conversations to influence funding and partnership decision-makers, including Ministers at State and Federal level, Senior Officers of State and Federal Government Departments and National Jobs and Skills Councils.

## Communications and Member Engagement

A comprehensive strategy of engagement, publicity and promotions ensured members, governments and skills sector leaders were kept abreast of CCA's work and ACE issues through newsletters, social media, news items, reports and other publications, including:

- Frequent news items, policy updates and LinkedIn, Facebook and Social Media updates as soon as news breaks in our sector
- Member newsletters
- Weekly site visits by Russ, Evelyn and Clare to member sites
- Presentations at conferences, hearings, meetings and events including National Skills week at Federal and State levels in Canberra and Sydney Parliament Houses with CCA Staff, Members and Board Directors.



CCA CEO Russ Hawkins with Eric Wright, Nepean Community College

## New CCA Members in 2023

CCA welcomed four new members in 2023: PCYC NSW became a member of CCA in February 2023, followed by WEA Sydney and Hunter Plant Operator Training School (HPOTS). Bedford College in Castle Hill NSW was welcomed as a new member of CCA in December 2023.

## CCA Influence

CCA has had a busy and productive year influencing key sector decision-makers in 2023. We have always been committed to representing and advocating for our members. Under the guidance of our new CEO, we have begun to subtly shift our focus towards influencing political, government, bureaucratic, and industry decisions. Influence can be defined as the capacity to impact decision-making resulting in clear and coherent outcomes over time.

Central to CCA influence over time will be new and emerging funding opportunities to grow each member's business, a percentage of funding to run CCA office and increased funding to flow into our part of the sector as a whole. This is all about the benefit for both individuals and groups, and the benefits of owning and actively participating in CCA membership. At CCA we expect these outcomes will benefit all members as the strategy matures.

CCA continues to participate in important sector decision-making forums including:

- NSW Skills Board Provider Reference Group
- ASQA Provider Roundtable
- Federal Government Department of Employment and Workplace Relations (DEWR) VET National Stakeholder Committee
- Federal Government (DEWR) Foundation Skills Advisory Group
- Federal Government (DEWR) VET Workforce Blueprint Advisory Group
- Reading Writing Hotline National Steering Group
- NSW Department of Education CCA Reference Group
- Victorian ACE Peaks Network

Also, in mid-2023 our new CEO was invited to represent CCA member interests for the NSW VET Review with Dr Michele Bruniges and for two different Federal Government Jobs and Skills Councils in Canberra: Future Skills Organisation with CEO Patrick Kidd; and Human Ability with CEO Emma King. This engagement allows CCA to position and influence sector thinking, and to be ready to pitch for, and engage with, funding opportunities.

Similarly, our work in Canberra and in State Parliaments in Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane is about positioning CCA members to take full advantage of the Five Year National Skills Agreement with each State Government.

CCA submissions to influence funding outcomes for members include:

- Smart and Skilled contract negotiations including a \$75,000 betterment for one member experiencing unique and emergent circumstances in September 2023
- Student Support Officers (SSOs) appointed by NSW DoE Training Services across the CCA member network
- NSW VET Review submission including Pathways, Innovation and Partnership Agreement (PIPA) with significant funding recommendations to the NSW State Government
- DEWR Federal Jobs and Skills Council direct participation and representation
- Australian Retail Association DEWR funding application at pilot phase, pending potential National rollout in 2024/2025 Financial Year

## Networking and professional development events

- Online CEOs and Board level meetings
- Two CEO/Chair and Director level invitations to Canberra
- Ongoing VET Managers network meetings
- CEO Induction and Governance project meetings and roundtables
- Administrative support staff network facilitation
- Active use of the CCA member Hub online



*CCA VET Managers Meeting July 2023: New CCA CEO Russ Hawkins meets St George & Sutherland Community College staff*

## CCA 2023 Conference and Awards Ceremonies

At the [CCA National Conference](#) Gala Dinner in October we announced four awards at the [Community Education Trainer of the Year Awards](#) ceremony. The awards were sponsored by the NSW Department of Education and awarded in-person by Executive Director David Collins PSM. At the Gala Dinner CCA also took the opportunity to acknowledge CCA member senior leaders who recently retired or moved on from CCA, including our former CEO Dr Don Perlgut who addressed the Conference Gala Dinner on the night. In December 2023 the [Community Education Student of the Year Awards](#) were held on Friday 1 December at Coverforce offices in Barangaroo, with panoramic Sydney Harbour views.



## Finance and Administration

CCA maintained a stable complement of three professional staff during the year, with its CEO, Member Services Manager and Manager Policy & Projects. CCA continues hybrid use of our small office base at 58 Pitt Street, working from home and member site visits. Use of Zoom and MS Teams digital platforms enables CCA staff to continue to engage members, Governments and key stakeholders in a highly efficient way.

## Membership and Member Health

[Click here to view the 2023 CCA Member Engagement webpage.](#)

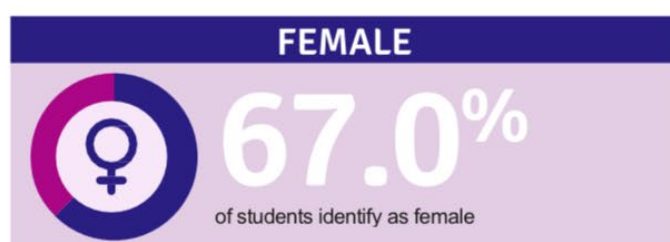
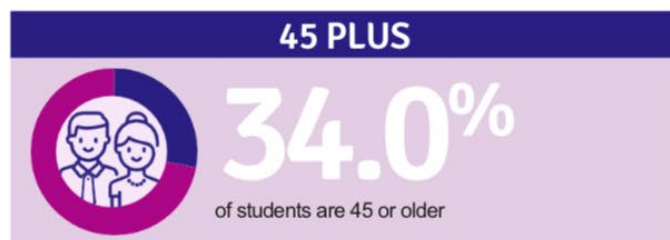
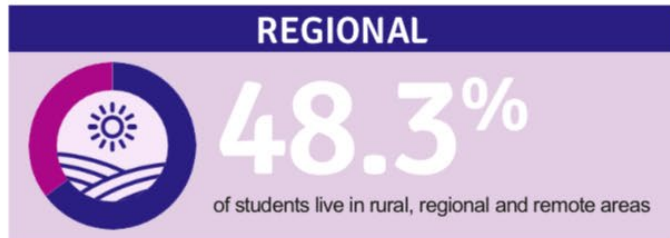
At the end of 2023, CCA sought feedback from every CCA member CEO on what is working well and how CCA can improve member services. This data will be made available in full to all CCA members early in 2024. The CCA Board has new Board Directors as elected at the 2023 AGM: CCA welcomes Greg Gahl, Sydney East Community College; and Debbie Laarkamp, Central Coast Community College. CCA remains well-positioned to continue to assist its members and the Australian ACE sector, to make a positive difference to the lives of adult learners and their communities.

## Community Colleges Australia January 2024



# ACE SNAPSHOT

Government Funded VET in New South Wales 2022



## Reaching Vulnerable and Disadvantaged Learners

NSW adult and community education (ACE) VET providers disproportionately cater for students from the state's most disadvantaged groups and regions.

ACE providers overperform compared to TAFE, private for-profit and other VET providers, on almost all tracked measures of vulnerability and disadvantage.

These achievements result from the NSW Government's "ACE Program" and Smart and Skilled funding.

