

Hunter TAFE Foundation

Annual Report 2024/2025



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President's message



This year, the Hunter TAFE Foundation has witnessed firsthand the shifting realities facing students who aspire to build their futures through vocational education. The challenges are real and growing; rising living costs, housing pressures, and the need to balance work, family and study are now everyday experiences for many.

Yet, in the face of the obstacles, recipients of our scholarships and awards continue to show extraordinary courage and resilience. Their stories remind us why our work matters. Every scholarship and award is more than financial support. It's a message that someone believes in their potential and is willing to stand behind them.

This year, we were honoured to support 82 students across 28 categories, each with their own unique story and vision for their future. These opportunities are only possible because of the generosity of our valued donors.

Your support is a lifeline, helping students stay enrolled, complete their training, and step confidently into the workforce.

I would also like to acknowledge our dedicated volunteer Board; your time, energy and expertise are truly valued. Your support helps us stay responsive to student needs, inclusive in our approach, and focussed on what really matters. Your leadership and commitment are helping us grow, evolve and reach more students than ever before. In addition, I would like to give a special welcome to our newest Directors, Melissa Rowe and Sam Gannon. We're thrilled to have you on board and already grateful for the fresh perspectives and enthusiasm you bring. It's exciting to see how quickly you've jumped in and started contributing to the Foundation's work. We are lucky to have you.

As we look ahead, our focus remains clear: breaking down barriers to education and ensuring that no one is left behind because of their circumstances. Together, we can help more people access the skills and opportunities they need to thrive.

Thank you for being part of this vital work. Your belief in our students is shaping a stronger, more inclusive future for our communities.

Yours sincerely,
Karen Howard, FAICD
President

2024/2025 financial year achievements



\$ 181,514

total donations received*



\$ 246,228

total value of awards and
scholarships presented



82

recipients



*Excludes donations received after 30 June 2025.
These donations will appear in 2025/26 financial year.

2024/2025 in focus

Award/Scholarship	Donor	Activity
Andy Lindsay Memorial Award for Music	Musos Corner	Awarded
Anthony Carter Memorial Scholarship	Ted and Christine Carter and the Klosters Group	Not awarded*
Barker Maritime Scholarship	The late Don Barker and Annette Lynch	Not awarded*
Bean Counters Achievement Award	Bean Counters Ball Committee	Awarded
Brett Graham Scholarship	Hunter Culinary Association and TAFE NSW	Awarded
Carol Duval Memorial Award for Painting	Valerie Duval	Awarded
Central Coast Campus Friends Award	Central Coast Campus Friends Inc.	Awarded
City of Newcastle Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Scholarship	City of Newcastle Aboriginal Employment Strategy	Awarded
Hunter TAFE Foundation Scholarships (Aboriginal, Mature Age, Student under the age of 35)	Hunter TAFE Foundation	Awarded
Henry Harding Memorial Encouragement Award	Annette Harding and Chris Harding	Awarded
Josh Woolfson Memorial Encouragement Award	Liz Woolfson	Awarded
Kaiyu Encouragement Awards	Hunter TAFE Foundation	Awarded
Kay Peno Encouragement Award	Hunter TAFE Foundation	Awarded
Neville Sawyer Scholarship	Neville Sawyer AM	Awarded
Newcastle Airport & Astra Aerolab Aviation Scholarship	Newcastle Airport & Astra Aerolab	Awarded
Newcastle Lord Mayor's Arts Scholarship	City of Newcastle	Awarded
Newcastle Lord Mayor's Inclusion Scholarship Program	City of Newcastle	Awarded
Regional Development Australia (RDA) Hunter Aviation Scholarship	RDA Hunter	Awarded
Sonia Walkom Memorial Award	Walkom Real Estate	Awarded
Strategic Group Scholarship	Strategic Group	Awarded
Together Today Award	Together Today Cooperative	Not awarded*
Trevor Drayton Scholarship	Trevor Drayton Committee	Awarded
Walkom Encouragement Scholarship	Walkom Real Estate	Awarded
Woolfson Encouragement Award	Liz Woolfson	Awarded
Varley Scholarships	Jeff Phillips, Varley	Awarded
Zonta Club of Hunter Newcastle TAFE NSW Scholarship	Zonta Club of Hunter Newcastle	Awarded

Honouring a legacy: The Kay Peno Encouragement Award

Established in memory of long-serving Hunter TAFE Foundation Board Director, Kay Peno, the Kay Peno Encouragement Award honours her deep commitment to education and passion for helping learners realise their potential. Kay joined the Foundation in 2008, bringing with her strong educational leadership from her role as Director with the NSW Department of Education, where she supported schools and principals across Lake Macquarie from 2007 to 2016. This special award supports students in their chosen career path and encourages future female leaders into the workforce, reflecting Kay's enduring legacy of empowerment through education.

Melanie Cameron was one of the first recipients to receive the Kay Peno Encouragement Award in 2024, showing remarkable determination and growth since beginning her studies at TAFE NSW. Her teachers describe Melanie as a dedicated and driven student, with aspirations to study Social Science. But her journey wasn't always so clear. Returning as the keynote speaker at the recent presentation event in 2025, Melanie shared her powerful journey from domestic violence, addiction, and homelessness to becoming a passionate advocate for others through education.



Melanie Cameron



I was honoured to receive the award, and I was able to purchase a new laptop to aid in furthering my studies. Receiving the scholarship not only gave me financial help but made my confidence grow in ways I could never have imagined. To complete my studies and secure a job in an industry that I'm truly passionate about - that's my goal. Absolutely, I would encourage others to apply for the scholarship. These opportunities can truly change lives.



Bean Counters Ball: Supporting Future Financial Professionals in the Hunter and Central Coast Regions

Since its inception in 2010, the Bean Counters Ball has become a cornerstone of community support for education and youth in the Hunter region. A joint initiative of the local chapters of Certified Practicing Accountants (CPA) and Chartered Accountants Australia and New Zealand, the Ball has raised over \$280,000 to date! These funds that have directly contributed to scholarships, awards, and educational opportunities for local students.

One of the key outcomes of this initiative is the Bean Counters Achievement Award, presented twice each year to students enrolled in the Certificate IV in Accounting and Bookkeeping at TAFE NSW. The award recognises a student's commitment to their studies and encourages their transition into the workforce.

This year's recipient, Henry Weaver, is a dedicated and detail-oriented student whose strong work ethic and collaborative approach make him a standout in his field. The award provided both financial support and a boost in confidence as he completed his studies.

Henry recently completed his qualification and is actively seeking employment in bookkeeping, with plans to pursue further study.

Although nominated rather than applying directly, Henry is grateful for the recognition and support.

The Hunter TAFE Foundation is proud to partner with industry leaders to deliver initiatives like the Bean Counters Ball, which continue to open doors for students and strengthen the region's future workforce.



Henry Weaver



Finding out that I had won was a boost to my confidence that carried through as I completed my study. The funds helped support me in my search for work. My goal is to start work in the field and work towards additional qualifications.



Empowering potential: Emma Nicholson's Journey through the Mature Age Scholarship

Each year, the Hunter TAFE Foundation provides 36 Encouragement Scholarships to make a meaningful difference in the lives of students across the region, providing financial support and encouragement to those facing barriers to education. One such student is Emma Nicholson, recipient of the Hunter TAFE Foundation Mature Age Scholarship, whose story exemplifies resilience, ambition, and the transformative power of opportunity.

Emma is a high achiever, fully engaged in the Certificate III in Visual Arts at TAFE NSW Hunter Street. Balancing her studies with raising a young family and fulfilling her role as primary carer, Emma has shown remarkable determination and strength; qualities her teachers believe will carry her to any goal she sets.

The scholarship helped Emma cover essential costs such as course materials, travel, and childcare; expenses that can often be a barrier for mature age students returning to study.

Emma successfully completed the Certificate III in Visual Arts and is now undertaking the Diploma of Visual Arts, with plans to continue into the Bachelor of Creative Practice at TAFE NSW Hunter Street in 2026. She also hopes to volunteer at the Lake Macquarie Regional Art Gallery, contributing to their Arts for Children Program. "These opportunities can make a real difference in the lives of those that have very apparent barriers to accessing and participating in education," Emma said.

Emma's story is a testament to the impact of the Hunter TAFE Foundation's support; not just in easing financial burdens but in unlocking confidence, ambition, and a pathway to lifelong learning.



Emma Nicholson



Emma Nicholson's artworks



Winning this award was a significant turning point for me. It not only encouraged me to continue studying but also gave me the confidence to set goals that I previously thought were unachievable. It supported and encouraged me to look outside and beyond my home, my health and role as primary caregiver to begin building something for myself.



Aviation scholarships: Propelling Local Talent Toward High-Flying Careers

A dynamic partnership between TAFE NSW, Newcastle Airport and Astra Aerolab is helping local students take off in the aviation industry through the Newcastle Airport/Astra Aerolab Aviation Scholarships. These scholarships are designed to nurture and grow regional talent, supporting the development of highly skilled professionals needed to sustain this global sector.

Among the latest recipients is Michael Shain, who is charting a bold new course. He is balancing full-time work and family life with night classes in the Certificate II Aeroskills course at TAFE NSW Newcastle. With a hands-on mindset and a natural talent for mentoring, Michael has embraced everything from lockwire techniques to digital submissions, proving it's never too late to pivot into a passion.

“Winning the Newcastle Airport/Astra Aerolab Aviation Scholarship has given me the encouragement to continue with the Certificate II in Aeroskills, knowing I have the backing of the scholarship,” Michael said.

Michael's dedication has already opened doors. He recently secured a position as an Aircraft Worker with BAE Systems, a role that complements his studies and offers valuable industry experience.

Looking ahead, Michael is focused on completing his qualification and exploring further opportunities in aviation.

Beyond financial support, the scholarship offers recipients a boost in confidence and valuable industry connections - key ingredients for a successful career.



It has provided me with a financial benefit to relieve the pressure whilst studying, making it easier to continue to learn and grow. I am still continuing studying the Cert II Aeroskills course during the night and was lucky enough to gain a position as an Aircraft Worker with BAE Systems. The Aeroskills course has helped me transition into the workforce through the positive learning experience the course has given me. My next goal is to finish the Cert II Aeroskills course which will help me with my current training at BAE Systems. Following this, maybe it's possible to pursue an apprenticeship in the aviation industry.



Empowering futures: Hayden Payne's Journey in Pathology Assistance

Hayden Payne is a standout student whose journey at TAFE NSW Newcastle exemplifies resilience, determination, and the power of opportunity. Having completed the Certificate III in Pathology Assistance, Hayden has shown exceptional drive – despite starting his studies later in life and managing a disability, he completed all units early, maintained perfect attendance, and is already planning his next steps in health sciences.

Awarded the Henry Harding Memorial Award through the Hunter TAFE Foundation, Hayden received not only recognition for his efforts but also vital support to continue his educational journey. This support has helped Hayden invest in resources that enhance his learning experience and fuel his ambition.

Currently enrolled in an online course, Hayden is working toward completing a Certificate III in Medical Administration, with plans to follow it with a Certificate IV in Business. His goals reflect a clear vision for a future in the health and administration sectors – one built on a strong foundation of education and perseverance.

Hayden's story is a powerful example of how targeted support can help students overcome barriers and thrive. "Yes, it is beneficial for anyone who is struggling," he says, encouraging others to apply for the scholarship.

The Henry Harding Memorial Award has given Hayden the confidence and tools to build a bright future in the industry. His journey highlights the profound impact of community-backed initiatives and the importance of investing in students who show promise, passion, and resilience.



Hayden Payne



The award assisted me in the accumulation of study tools and encouraged pursuit of more training.



Event photos



Teachers and staff committed to making a difference

Since the inception of the Employee Charitable Contribution fund in 2016, employees of TAFE NSW from the Hunter and Central Coast region have continued to invest in the future of our students. A partnership between TAFE NSW and the Hunter TAFE Foundation established the program, allowing employees to contribute a chosen value as part of a post-tax-deductible donation.

The funds raised through the payroll program are dedicated to supporting the increasing number of students experiencing financial

and/or personal hardship that reach out to the Foundation for financial support. The Employee Charitable Contribution initiative is another example of how the Hunter TAFE Foundation is contributing towards a positive community spirit and endeavouring to change the lives of students choosing to study with TAFE NSW in the Hunter and Central Coast.

For more information about making a donation to the Hunter TAFE Foundation, visit tafensw.edu.au/hunter-tafe-foundation



Our board



Karen Howard

Karen Howard is an award-winning entrepreneur, with over 24 years' experience as a successful business owner in professional services sectors. She brings to the Foundation over 23 years' successful track record as a respected Non-executive Director and Board Chair with cross-sector expertise including regional development, co-operatives/membership-based organisations, small business, health, tourism and education. Karen is currently a Non-executive Director of previously publicly listed and now private, Alloggio Group Limited, and Independent Board Chair of Australian fintech business Nuvola Group.

Previous directorships include Business Hunter (formerly Hunter Business Chamber – Director and President), Hunter Medicare Local (now known as Hunter Primary Care – Director and Board Chair), NSW Business Chamber (now known as Business NSW – elected Director) and Hunter Central Coast Development Corporation – Board member.

Karen brings to the Foundation strong personal and professional networks throughout private, public, and not-for profit sectors Australia-wide and in 2013 was the recipient of the Hunter TAFE Inaugural Alumni Award for Contribution to Business. Awarded a Fellow of the Australian Institute of Company Directors in 2009, Karen is committed to broadening the reach of business involvement in the Foundation's scholarships and awards programs, ensuring more TAFE NSW students across the Hunter and Central Coast have the opportunity to complete their studies and are supported to achieve their career goals.



Mark Breasley

For over 30 years, Mark has been involved in the mining industry, accruing a wide range of experiences at various levels of management. He is the founder and Managing Director of MB Engineering Solutions, a market leader in the coal handling plant maintenance arena, operating throughout the mining industries of NSW and QLD.

Having earned his Associate Diploma in Mechanical Engineering from TAFE NSW Newcastle and his Master of Business Administration from the University of Newcastle, Mark has first-hand knowledge of the value that education and training can instil, making him proud to join an organisation that helps others to enjoy similar opportunities.



Colin Law

Colin Law has more than 20 years' experience in the banking industry. He is the Area Manager for Small Business in ANZ and a well-known local business person in the Hunter Region.

As a driven and visionary leader, Colin is motivated to help people. He is committed to the local community and passionate about building successful partnerships. He is the Treasurer of the Newcastle Tourism Industry Group, and also the Founder of the Surfest Women's Pro Crowd Funding Initiative and The Meg Purser Pathways Program.

Colin holds a Master's degree of Business from University of Newcastle.



Kiraley Martin

Kiraley Martin has over 15 years' professional experience within a wide range of industries; including logistics, manufacturing, mining, construction, government and not-for-profit. After holding executive roles in finance and governance, Kiraley has now entered the technology space, as Chief Information Officer (CIO) at Lake Macquarie City Council.

Kiraley holds a Master of Business Administration (MBA) and Bachelor of Commerce from the University of Newcastle. She has completed her CPA and is a graduate of the Australian Institute of Company Directors. She also holds a Certificate of Governance Practice and a Certificate IV in Workplace & Business Coaching.

Kiraley is passionate about helping her community and as CIO of LMCC, she is able to help people stay connected, innovative and resilient. She is also an advocate for diversity and inclusion and is committed to helping people gain better access to equal opportunities, especially in education. Not only is she on the Board of Hunter TAFE Foundation, Kiraley is also a Director of Equal Futures Project, a member of the University of Newcastle's Alumni Advisory Committee and a member of the Women in Mining Committee for the Hunter Valley.



Jason Darney

Jason Darney is a proud Wiradjuri man from the Central West of NSW and boasts an impressive profile working in education and government with significant long-term contributions to Aboriginal Education and Training. Jason has been part of the TAFE NSW Regional executive teams since 1999 and is currently the Acting Chief Operating Officer of TAFE NSW.

Jason is a strong advocate for social equality and promotes education without favour or bias but with the core belief of creating the best opportunities for all students.

His qualifications in social sciences, education and management and strong leadership skills enable him to focus on achieving desired results whilst still maintaining strong connectivity with the core business of teaching and learning.

Jason is well respected and known by his colleagues as a dedicated Indigenous man who has risen up the ranks of his organisation and passionately advocates on behalf of others in need. He is a man who, as his father taught him, respects others as he would like to be respected himself. These qualities make him a role model for both in his personal and professional life.



Jorja Collins

**Hunter TAFE
Foundation Coordinator**

Jorja is an experienced professional in the Vocational Education sector and shares a passion for supporting students to kick start their career journey.

Experienced in Events Management, high level Executive Support and governance, Jorja has worked in a variety of roles that recognise student achievement with a focus on positive outcomes. Jorja has previously been recognised at both a local and state level for her outstanding work with industry partnerships and community engagement activities.



Christian Southward

Christian has a background in finance and information technology, with experiences ranging from small local

businesses to large multi-nationals across a range of commercial roles and has now joined Buildcert as Chief Financial Officer.

He has completed the MBA, MIT, and Bachelor of Commerce programs at University of Newcastle, is a CPA, and GAICD.

Having benefited greatly from access to educational opportunities, Christian is passionate about doing what he can to provide those same opportunities to others who may otherwise not get them. He is proud to have joined the Hunter TAFE Foundation to be able to use his skills and experience to contribute to the continuing impact of the Foundation.



Melissa Rowe

Melissa is a high-performing executive leader with extensive experience in overseeing large multidisciplinary teams. Her expertise lies in leading primarily corporate services functions, complemented by operations, asset and project management, compliance, risk management, and infrastructure planning. Throughout her career, Melissa has occupied various senior leadership roles, showcasing proficiency in change management, culture development, safety, capability building, team growth, strategy formulation, innovation, and system improvement. Melissa excels as an effective communicator, swiftly building robust relationships with key stakeholders and exerting influence on business outcomes. Her passion lies in leading and motivating teams, inspiring others through support and growth opportunities.



Sam Gannon

Sam is the Director of SOLVD Agency, a results-driven marketing leader who helps businesses define the messages that set them apart and fuel growth. With a strong focus on strategy and performance, he works at the intersection of creative and commercial thinking to unlock how businesses can better communicate value. Under Sam's leadership, SOLVD has grown from a startup to a nationally recognised agency, recently earning a spot on the AFR's Top 100 Fastest Growing Companies list in 2024. Beyond SOLVD, Sam is also a director and advisor for several startups and incubators, bringing a passion for product launches and market penetration, and helping emerging businesses break new ground.



How to donate

The Hunter TAFE Foundation accepts donations from individuals, organisations and community groups who share the vision of the Foundation to support and encourage students studying in the vocational sector in the Hunter and Central Coast regions.

Why donate?

- Directly support local TAFE NSW students in their career journey
- Build a lasting legacy for your business
- Stay connected with the award recipients
- Be part of your community

How can I donate?

There are two ways to donate:

- A one-off or ongoing donation to the Hunter TAFE Foundation, to support scholarship programs in priority areas.
- Establish a new, customised scholarship fund in your business, organisation or individual name.

All contributions made through a donation to the Hunter TAFE Foundation, to further or advance education at TAFE NSW in the Hunter and Central Coast, are fully tax deductible.

Want to pledge an annual donation?

Become a Friend of the Foundation.

The Hunter TAFE Foundation invites individuals and organisations to make an annual donation to support continued education in the Hunter and Central Coast regions. As a Friend of the Foundation, you will contribute to supporting TAFE NSW students across the Hunter and Central Coast who are financially disadvantaged or suffering from personal hardship and in need of support to complete their studies.

For donor enquiries or to become a Friend of the Foundation, please contact hunter.foundation@tafensw.edu.au.

Financial report

Taken from the Independent Audit Report to the Members of the Hunter TAFE Foundation Limited for the Financial Year ended 30 June 2025 prepared by PKF.

	FYE 30/6/25 \$	FYE 30/6/24 \$
Audited statement of profit and loss		
Donations	181,514	217,702
Investment income earned	123,061	141,958
Other income	20,434	20,807
Total income	325,009	380,467
Awards, Grants & Scholarships	(105,478)	(105,030)
Other Expenditure	(14,936)	(12,809)
In-Kind Expenditure	(140,750)	(139,815)
Total Expenditure	(261,164)	(257,654)
Surplus/(deficit)	63,845	122,813
Audited statement of change in equity		
Funds invested at the beginning of the last financial year	1,535,084	1,412,271
Surplus/(deficit) for year	63,845	122,813
Funds invested at the end of the financial year	1,598,929	1,535,084

Funds invested by type

Taken from the Independent Audit Report to the Members of the Hunter TAFE Foundation Limited for the Financial Year ended 30 June 2024 prepared by PKF.

	2025 \$	2024 \$
Undedicated**	909,041	811,078
Dedicated***	689,888	724,006
Total	1,598,929	1,535,084

* Excludes donations received after 30 June 2025.
These donations will appear in 2025/26 financial year.

** Undedicated funds – donations and bequests not relating to a specific award to support scholarship programs in priority areas.

*** Dedicated funds – donations and bequests relating to a specific award.

Audited statement of financial position

Taken from the Independent Audit Report to the Members of the Hunter TAFE Foundation Limited for the Financial Year ended 30 June 2025 prepared by PKF.

	FYE 30/6/25 \$	FYE 30/6/24 \$
Current assets		
Cash and cash equivalents	40,141	29,539
Trade and other receivables	46,972	47,230
Held to maturity investments and term deposits	1,526,316	1,473,957
Total current assets	1,613,429	1,550,726
Current liabilities		
Trade and other payables	3,500	4,142
Other liabilities	11,000	11,500
Total liabilities	14,500	15,642
Net assets	1,598,929	1,535,084
Equity		
Retained earnings	1,598,929	1,535,084
Total equities	1,598,929	1,535,084

The Hunter TAFE Foundation would like to sincerely thank our donors who generously provide financial assistance and support to our students to pursue their career goals and create a better future through education and training in the Hunter and Central Coast.



tafensw.edu.au/hunternatafefoundation
hunter.foundation@tafensw.edu