

# CHILDREN'S UNIVERSITY ADELAIDE

## 2024 Report

**make  
history.**

# Children's University



One of the highlights for me was seeing the rocks and fossils at the University. I want to learn more about the University, and I'd like to go back there. It's actually pretty cool. **Isaac Franks**

# Children's University

## Contributing to Communities

When the University of Adelaide (UoA) began in 1874 its goal was to prepare young South Australian leaders shaped by education rather than birth or wealth. To achieve this aim, the University understood that education needs to be not only excellent but equitable.

Following research highlighting the importance of early learning initiatives, the innovative Children's University (CU) program was launched in 2013 to address inequality from a child's critical early years through primary and into high school.

CU is a unique partnership between Higher Education (HE) and community organisations that has strengthened the bonds between the UoA and the wider community, drawing communities together, celebrating inclusive learning, and raising awareness of career and HE pathways.

Activities are chosen to empower children with a love of learning, and the skills and attributes that will last a lifetime. Importantly, they align with crucial stages on the student journey that reflect important milestones for achieving academic success. CU's dedication to fostering a love of learning among young students aligns seamlessly with the core values that define the UoA. Working within the state's most vulnerable communities requires a deep understanding, sensitivity and respect for the diverse needs of the children, their caregivers and participating school staff. Activities and skills' development are designed to combine students' interests, community needs and values, and HE aspirations.



The transformative power of CU is evident in the impact it has on students from disadvantaged backgrounds. The program doesn't just change individual lives; it lifts entire communities by inspiring future generations.

Most activities, program training and meetings happen within local community settings to reinforce the importance of the university being part of the community. This is balanced with on-campus activities and events that break down perceived barriers into HE and demonstrate that universities belong to

all in the community.

2024 has been a momentous year with the dual celebrations of the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the UoA and the founding of a new university for the future – Adelaide University.

28 on-campus activities provided a platform for Children's University, UoA staff, and students to engage in community service and experiential learning, thereby enriching their professional development and reinforcing the university's commitment to social responsibility.

CU is proud to stand with the University as an important example of how universities and communities can work together to build a stronger, fairer, society for all.





# In 2024 Children's University Adelaide successfully



- Supported **4,893 South Australian children** (5-18) across **179 schools/Learning Hubs** and 45 communities
- Delivered **241 events**: 64 school holiday events, 19 in-term events and 158 Learning Lunchtime activities. 5,309 students explored and developed new talents, supported by 1,405 adults
- Worked with **406 community-based organisations**, businesses and tourist destinations across SA, facilitating access to community group activities and clubs
- Delivered **388 school support and staff training activities** engaging with 9,268 students and 1,035 staff and caregivers
- 107 students, UoA staff and VIPs provided 601 hours of **volunteering and in-kind** support for program activities and graduations
- Collaborated with over **70 UoA staff** and students to deliver 28 activities across North Terrace, Roseworthy and Waite, supported by SET, ABLE and HMS
- Recorded 25% increase in **SA activity submissions** through the CU website portal at **35,324 submissions**.
- **Sponsored 1,637 regional** young people, facilitating access to potential life-changing experiences, skills development, and social mobility outside the classroom
- Celebrated learning at 11 metro and 7 regional graduation ceremonies across South Australia, with **3541 students graduating**
- Supported **10 University partners and the AfrAsia Foundation** in delivering the CU program across NSW, TAS, WA, NT, VIC, New Zealand and Mauritius, widening participation in equitable educational activities for 11,850 students at 423 schools

## Pivotal

Providing activities and events to children from a young age can have a profound effect on the paths young people take later in life.

James, a previous CU graduate who has gone on to obtain his advanced diploma in interior design and runs his own business, directly attributes his academic direction to his experiences in the program.

*"Children's University was absolutely pivotal for me. It was a community that embraced every child regardless of background and believed in our potential. Children's University gave me an avenue to connect with other kids, it built my confidence and helped me develop an interest in subjects that otherwise wouldn't have appealed to me. Being exposed to a wide range of passionate individuals meant I was not only able to learn with enthusiasm but am now able to pass this passion onto the next generation of kids coming through. The program helped shape my path, instilled in me the belief I could go on to pursue the career of my choice, and now offers many opportunities to volunteer within the community—something I love to do."*

**James (Onkaparinga Now online article, 17<sup>th</sup> Jan 2024)**



# 150th and University of Adelaide

**In 2024, Children's University collaborated in 24 on-campus events and activities, both in support of the University of Adelaide 150<sup>th</sup> celebrations and as part of regular CU activities.**

**Highlights** included a collaboration with Wirritu Yarlur and the 150th team to support the attendance of more than 150 students, parents and staff from CU-member schools during the Kurna Day community event celebrating Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and culture.

**The Andy Thomas Centre for Space Resources** treated CU children and their parents to a behind-the-scenes tour of the brand-new **Exterres Analogue Facility** at Roseworthy. Participants were given a unique view of The Australian Rover Challenge, an annual robotics competition where university students battle it out in a full-scale Lunar mission, using semi-autonomous rovers that they have designed and built themselves. Children observed the competition up close whilst also having the chance to speak with representatives from the Australian Space Agency, Mini Mammoth Games and the CSIRO.

**Floods of Fire** connected South Australia's diverse cultural narratives of creation to our natural world and extreme weather events and was one of the largest collaborations in the history of South Australia. CU supported this event with a dedicated CU activity.

In April, twelve University of Adelaide Health Students, from the **Adelaide University Rural Health Alliance** (AURHA) ran the beloved Teddy Bear Hospital program. Nursing, Dental, Medical, Speech Pathology, Physiotherapy, Occupational Therapy and Psychology students joined together to share some wonderful and universal health concepts with 16 CU children. Working with regional students, families and schools, CU provides a way for the University to engage with some of our most isolated communities, driving awareness and building

knowledge of the multiple pathways available into higher education.

CU also worked with the **Faculty of Health and Medical Sciences** to welcome 20 CU members and 20 adults to the



Lyell McEwan Hospital for a rich 'University Experience' with the Adelaide Health Simulation team. Students worked with educators from the university to learn about the value of technology in teaching undergraduate doctors and nurses, whilst also hearing directly from current students about their experiences in their studies.

*Myth, Minoan, Minotaur*, an event led by **University of Adelaide research fellow Dr Jacqueline Clarke** saw 31 students and their parents learn about myths, what they reveal about ancient societies and how they're relevant today. 22 children and 16 adults also participated in a tour of the **TATE Museum**, supported by the **Faculty of SET**.

Still in July, CU hosted 53 students plus 16 adults from Wallaroo primary, Reynella Primary and Lake Windemere on the University's North Terrace campus in collaboration with the **School of Business, School of Biomedicine, Special Collections** and the **Open Music Academy**. Students took part in activities around mastering money, product design, looking into DNA, investigating health and nutrition, and exploring rhythm in music.

North Terrace on-campus activities were also supported by Learning Destination partner Animals Anonymous whose interactive workshops reached full capacity of 68 within 2 hours of opening bookings.

Thanks to funding from Zoos SA, CU were able to welcome 28 regional students and 8 staff/parents from Port Augusta West Primary School for a two-day bespoke learning experience. Students were given overnight accommodation at both Adelaide Zoo and Monarto Safari Park during which time they received

rich learning experiences in ecology, sustainability, sociology, and Indigenous connections with land. As part of the regional trip, CU staff delivered a Special Collections workshop at the **Tate Museum** followed by a campus tour. The child-friendly historical walk around the University's North Terrace campus was developed as part of the 150<sup>th</sup> celebrations and introduced children to the University's role in some key historical moments whilst also showcasing state-of-the-art features available to students today.

In August, CU had a presence at **The University of Adelaide's Open Day**, delivering both a child-friendly physics lecture and a hands-on coding workshop. These events, as well as a self-guided scavenger hunt, engaged more than 150 students from 35 different member schools.

The **On Campus Experience Day** in September saw over 150 students from seven CU partner schools take part in activities offering students a dynamic introduction to university life and a firsthand glimpse into the exciting opportunities awaiting them in higher education. The day featured sessions led by experts from the **Institute for Photonics and Advanced Sensing**, **Bachelor of Oral Health** students, **AU Sport**, the **School of Chemical Engineering**, the **Adelaide Business School**, and the **School of Economics and Public Policy**.

In October, more than 200 students from six schools visited the University campus to experience **Wonderverse**, an interactive light and art installation designed to nurture creativity and inspire scientific curiosity. Commissioned by the University of Adelaide for the 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebrations, Wonderverse was created in collaboration with Patch Theatre and musicians and composers from the Centre for Aboriginal Studies in Music (CASM). Learning Destination partners along North Terrace supported the day with activities and venue tours while Zoos SA provided free tickets to the Adelaide Zoo for all participating children.

During October, CU hosted students at **Roseworthy** and the **Waite Historical Precinct**. Activities at Roseworthy were delivered by staff from the **School of Veterinary Science**

who led students in making stethoscopes and creating model micro-organisms, followed by a tour of the campus. At **Urrbrae**

**House**, students from Lake Windemere took part in a historical re-enactment before completing a sensory activity at the Waite Gardens.

**Bottle Moments:** In collaboration with Professor Kevin Dutton, Dept of Psychology, CU launched *Bottle Moments* for the first time in Australia. Bottle Moments was first run in the UK during COVID to offer care workers a way to capture positive moments in their lives and provide hope in a time of crisis. The CU team worked with Professor Dutton to engage with 25 schools across the state with CU asking students to think about the one thing they most look forward to in their own future. Children shared moments such as holidays, birthdays, reunions and careers. CU offered all participants the opportunity to share their Moments as part of World Mental Health Day, displaying their creative art submissions in the Hub.



***"You cannot put a price on this, it helps children to believe that they can be anything!"***



*'It makes school more fun, and I learnt how to play chess!'*

## Regional Engagement

**EyreLab** Funding through the Bendigo Community Bank Port Lincoln supported multiple school holiday activities that took place in community venues across the Port Lincoln catchment area. CU members from around the lower Eyre Peninsula participated in experiential workshops in May and again in June. Delivered in collaboration with EyreLab, students visited native oyster reefs in Coffin Bay, learning about their importance to the environment and local industry.



*"This has been an amazing and worthwhile activity for our children. For many it has been their first visit to the area and to see and hear about the native oysters has stimulated interest in wanting to learn more."* **Teacher, Lincoln Gardens Primary School.**

### Chemistry fun explodes



**Nautilus Theatre** July saw the Nautilus Theatre stage a **Colourful Chemistry Show** with Nitro Nat. Taking place over 90 minutes, Nat treated 230 children to a show of explosive colour and crazy chemical reactions that filled enquiring minds with the wonders of science. Port Lincoln and Tumby Bay libraries hosted Children's University school holiday workshops engaging 48 children and adults in the playful side of financial literacy while others got messy learning about tie dye or tried

their hand at basic coding using Indie sensor cars.

**Streaky Bay Area School** In August, CU members attended an informal and personal gathering at Streaky Bay Area School attended by the Governor of South Australia, her Excellency, the Honourable Francis Adamson AC and CU Board member, Mr Rod Bunten. The Governor unveiled a mural completed by CU students and facilitated by **First Nations, Wirangu Elder, Susie Betts**. During the event, Susie explained the importance of native plants featured in the artwork and the ways in which they've been used in traditional bush medicine for thousands of years.



**Fleurieu, Limestone Coast, and Riverland** In Yankalilla, an agriculturally based town situated **on the Fleurieu Peninsula**, CU members took part in hands-on biology workshops giving them practical insights into plant germination, growth, and reproduction. In Kangaroo Island, the Riverland and Naracoorte members were treated to STEM-based coding activities delivered by members of the CU Learning and Support team.

**Spencer Gulf** In the Spencer Gulf area, 9 schools took part in multiple CU-led activities,

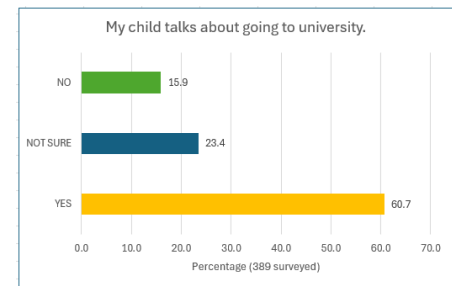
including the Big Rock Roadshow with SIMEC Energy Australia donating in excess of \$2,000 worth of rock, mineral and fossils for a CU resource collection.



# Impact

In 2024, CU surveyed over **1000 parents, students and school coordinators** across South Australia. Their responses highlight the positive impact CU is having:

- 74.4% of parents say their children are more confident because of CU. 100% of school coordinators agree
- 81% of students say they have learnt new skills with 91% of parents agreeing
- 68% of students (69% of parents) say they are more interested in learning
- 92% school coordinators say that children are more motivated after a CU event
- 71% school coordinators say children are more positive to learning
- 92% school coordinators say that CU supports school learning
- 66% of parents say that their child has developed new hobbies or interests

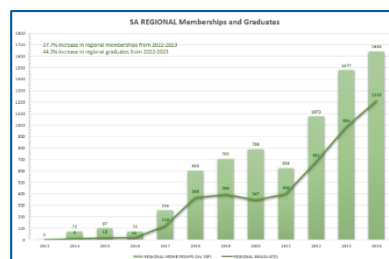
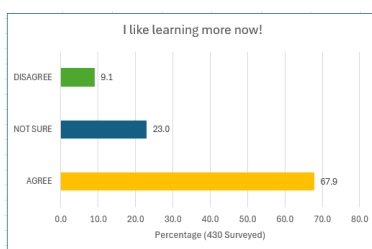


Sponsorship of our regional and low SES members ensured that participation is equitable and inclusive and that children are connecting with their communities and the rich events and activities they provide.

80% of parents and 97% of schools say that CU has taken them to places they have never visited before.

*'We have had the privilege of witnessing The Children's University's impact first-hand and firmly believe that their initiatives are essential in nurturing well-rounded, informed, and motivated young citizens. We want to encourage more schools to participate and more students to participate.'* **Mayor Diana Mislov, Port Lincoln, 2024**

Building strong community networks between families, schools and local organisations has been a key factor to the success of the CU program in regional South Australia and something CU believes is crucial if we are to create a fairer more equitable society that values and celebrates all young people.



**“Has Children's University helped your child in any other way?”**

CU helped my children to realise that education comes in many different forms and not just in a classroom. She now embraces alternative learning experiences and new destinations with more excitement, understanding and thoughtfulness

He has grown in confidence to control his own learning. This program has given him the tools to work through information and report about what he has learned

It has exposed them to things that they may not have considered as a career. It helps us to have discussion with them about what certain activities could lead them to as a career later in life whatever that may be

Here are just some of the answers to the final question on the CU survey: **Has Children's University helped you/your child in any other ways?**

- *It helped her pay attention more in class*
- *I love the community involvement. CU has taken us to places in the community we didn't know existed or had never been. I also love the fact that it gets us out spending time together as a family and gets us to interact doing the activities or new places*
- *The local activities have given my daughter an appreciation of nature and the history of port Lincoln*
- *Shown how their school learning can relate to jobs as adults*
- *Promoted interests outside of the general school subjects*
- *Accountability for completing tasks and attending graduation and standing in front of the large crowd*
- *Spending time on projects and learning about things he wouldn't have otherwise thought of. He was lucky enough to interview (via Zoom) the Station Leader at Davis Station in Antarctica so loved doing all the Antarctica activities*
- *CU helped me much more beyond the classroom teaching education as I interesting facts of space, exciting experiments, environment, animals and much more. I loved it and Thank You*
- *It has helped my child realise that you can do anything you set your mind to, and nothing is impossible*

**169 dedicated regional events and activities, supporting 3,589 students. 23% increase in regional graduates**



# Award Recognition

In September, CU was delighted to be recognised as **ABA100® Winner for Community Contribution in The Australian Business Awards 2024**, in recognition of the impact and proven long-term benefits that CU has on the communities it serves. This prestigious award is a testament to CU's commitment to making a difference in the field of widening participation and equity.



This award was closely followed by recognition in the **2024**

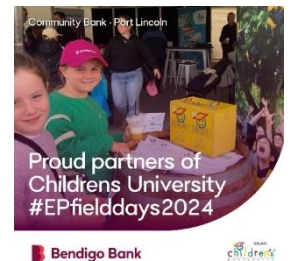
**Engagement Australia Excellence Awards**. These Awards focus on outstanding nation building initiatives across Australia and New Zealand that demonstrate far reaching impact and innovation. It was a real thrill to receive Highly Commended in Community Excellence. The work CU does in partnership with universities and organisations across NSW, Victoria, WA, SA, Tas, New Zealand and Mauritius highlights the importance of collaborations between tertiary education and communities for societal benefit.

CU has been recognised as the **Australian Charity Awards Outstanding Achievement Winner 2024**. This award acknowledges excellence and innovation in charitable and not-for-profit initiatives, highlighting organisations that demonstrate exceptional community impact, sustainability, and a forward-thinking approach to addressing societal challenges. As with all the Awards, this significant accolade would not have been possible without the support of our Learning Destination partners, CU schools, sponsors and donors.



## Funding and In-kind Support

CU activities and events were supported by over 400 Learning Destination partners and sponsors with funding provided by the State Government, Bendigo Community Bank Port Lincoln, Zoos SA, Renewal Sa's Works Program, SeaLink Kangaroo Island, the Adelaide Festival Centre and the Commissioner for Children and Young People. Learning Destinations (LD) often offered discounted or free tickets to CU members allowing CU to ensure the widest possible participation in areas of most need. Other LDs offered expert staff to provide insights into topics of interest for their own local regions through interactive and entertaining workshops. 107 students, UoA staff and VIPs provided 601 hours of **volunteering** for program activities and graduations totalling over \$26,000 in-kind support.



kind support.

Six Mayors, **Blair Boyer, Minister for Education Training and Skills**, and **Hieu Van Le, AC the 35th governor of South Australia** generously gave up their time to support graduations across SA. The 2024 graduations also saw 19 UoA senior executive staff deliver inspirational speeches and hand out certificates to children during 11 metro and seven regional graduation ceremonies. We cannot list everyone here, but each one is equally valued, and your support is of great importance to the program and to the children and communities of SA.



**Thank you and we look forward to working with you again in 2025**