

2025 SNAPSHOT

Supporting stronger families,
resilient children and empowered
young people across Far North
Queensland.

4308 Young People engaged

613 Parents supported

53 Schools partnering

32 Communities served

Image: Local family enjoying Mareeba Family Fun Day, co-hosted by VPG and MCC in support of Child Protection Week.

VPG



Acknowledgement of Country

VPG acknowledges the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples of this nation. We acknowledge the traditional custodians of the lands on which we deliver our services, and we pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging.

Message from the CEO

Why local matters

This year, I found myself standing over a BBQ cooking 500 sausages at one of my favourite days of the year, our Mareeba Family Fun Day. Held in support of Child Protection Week and delivered alongside our friends at Mareeba Community Centre, it's a day we've shown up for together for ten years now.

I looked up and saw children dancing, families laughing, locals connecting with local services. In that moment I felt so proud. Proud to be part of these communities. Proud that the support we offer comes from people who understand these communities because they are part of them.

Over the years I've come to believe that relationships are our most important infrastructure. Programs and funding make the work possible. But relationships are what make it work. The kind that take time, proximity and genuine commitment to build.



That belief shows up in who our staff are. They're locals. Parents, neighbours, community members who understand what people in Far North Queensland are navigating because they're navigating many of the same things themselves. The trust they build with the people we support isn't something that can be fast-tracked or delivered from a distance.

That trust creates opportunities. Families finding their footing, young people stepping into employment, students building futures without leaving home, industry connecting with local talent.

The needs of our communities will keep evolving, and we'll keep evolving with them. Listening, learning and pushing for the things that matter, so that Far North Queensland continues to have the services and opportunities it deserves, right here at home.

To our staff, partners, families and communities across Far North Queensland, thank you. This impact belongs to all of us.

Maryanne Tranter

Chief Executive Officer
Vocational Partnerships Group

Our Year *in numbers*



40

Communities Served



613

Parents Supported



97%

Families Reported Positive Changes



53

Schools Engaged



1369

Work Experience Opportunities Created



2217

Children & Youth Engaged in Respectful Relationship Education



284

Young People Accessed Coordinated Care



191

Young People Skilled



75%

Young People Achieved Positive Outcomes Through Skilling



673

Industry Partnerships



247

Regional Higher Education Students Supported



28

Staff Employed to Achieve our Impact

Our Reach



Strengthening Families

Supporting children...

starts with supporting the adults around them.

Across Mareeba, Tablelands and Cassowary Coast, VPG worked alongside parents and carers to build confidence, strengthen relationships, and create the conditions children need to thrive.

Through parenting support, practical guidance and opportunities for connection, families gained new strategies, stronger support networks and greater confidence navigating everyday challenges. Parents built meaningful connections with other families, while children benefited through stronger relationships at home, increased confidence, and positive foundations for learning, wellbeing and development.

Building Stronger Family Connections

Ziras didn't come to VPG because things were falling apart. She came because she wanted to be better - a single parent of three who was already deeply invested in her children and looking for new ways to support them. Through parenting support and coaching, she gained new strategies to strengthen communication, navigate challenges and respond to her children in ways that helped them feel safe and understood. "I realised I couldn't expect things to change around me if I wasn't also working on myself," she says. "Learning how to respond to my kids in a way that helps them feel safe, that's been huge." Over time, she noticed stronger connections with her children and greater confidence in responding to their individual needs. Conversations that didn't escalate. Moments where repair happened more quickly. A home where her children felt heard, understood and supported. "One of my kids never used to apologise - now he comes to me to say sorry, and we talk it through. That just didn't happen before."



Finding a Village

When Louise moved to Mareeba just before the birth of her first son, she didn't know anyone. She joined VPG's supported playgroup desperate to meet people, and found more than she expected. Nearly three years later, her family still attends almost every week, a reflection of the connection and support they've found there. She's since joined VPG's parenting workshops too, finding value not just in the knowledge but in the space to talk openly without judgement. "You can discuss what you're going through without feeling like you're doing something wrong if it's tough." But it's the community that stayed with her most. When her baby was sick and she couldn't make an event, messages poured in - offers of food, help, company. "Supported playgroup helped us find our village, people going through similar life stages who understand."



Image: VPG Youth Support Officer Katelyn engaging with child at community event.

Building Resilient Children & Youth

A Network of Support

For many young people, challenges don't arrive one at a time. Mental health, housing, education, family relationships and financial pressure can all affect their ability to feel safe, stay engaged and move forward. In 2025, VPG worked alongside young people across schools, communities and outreach settings, connecting them with the right support, advocating on their behalf and showing up consistently through uncertainty. For some, that meant staying connected to school. For others, it meant stable housing, improved wellbeing or a first step toward employment. Whatever the goal, the approach was the same: a trusted adult in their corner, helping them navigate a path forward.



Building Confidence & Belonging

Based at Herberton, Ravenshoe, Mareeba, Mission Beach and Atherton State Schools, VPG staff worked alongside students, families and school support teams to strengthen wellbeing and support positive engagement with learning. At Ravenshoe State School, VPG Student Wellbeing Officer Kerry supported students to build practical life skills, try new experiences and take greater ownership of their school experience. A cooking program was a highlight, with students developing confidence in meal preparation and many taking those skills home to support their families. Students were also supported to identify opportunities that mattered to them, including a student-led initiative to establish a dedicated girls' gym session at the school. Opportunities like these help young people develop confidence, independence and a stronger sense of belonging.



Creating Safer Futures

Safer communities start with respectful relationships. In 2025, VPG delivered 1,763 respectful relationships education sessions, reaching 2,217 young people across schools and community settings. Adolescence is a critical time for shaping attitudes, behaviours and expectations around relationships. Through these conversations, young people strengthened their understanding of consent, boundaries, healthy relationships and help-seeking. By working alongside students and school communities, VPG is helping create safer environments where respect, consent and healthy relationships are understood, practiced and expected.



**Behind every resilient young person
is a network of people who believe in them.**

Image: Through consistent support and goal-focused case management, Josiah strengthened his confidence, improved his wellbeing and secured full-time employment through a local traineeship.

Skilling Up The Region

Strong communities need skilled local people.

VPG worked alongside young people to build the skills, confidence and experience needed to move into employment, training and further study. Through practical learning, industry engagement and personalised support, including access to driver training, young people took meaningful steps toward their goals.

A core part of our approach is getting young people in front of local employers early. Throughout 2025, participants visited industries across construction, agriculture, tourism and more - meeting people doing the work, asking questions and starting to picture themselves in roles they hadn't considered before. For some, those industry connections became pathways into training, apprenticeships and employment.



Supporting Young People Into Work



From Training to Employment

In 2025, VPG supported 116 young people into employment. Working closely with local employers, VPG matched young people with opportunities that reflected regional workforce needs. Young people gained stable, skilled employment aligned with their interests and aspirations, while employers gained access to motivated, job-ready workers.

Shyanne (pictured) graduated Year 12 knowing she wanted a career in tourism. Working with VPG, she built the confidence and skills needed to compete for a traineeship with Voyages Indigenous Tourism Australia. Through resume preparation, interview coaching and ongoing support, Shyanne successfully secured a Housekeeping Attendant Traineeship. Since completing the traineeship, she has moved into full-time employment and is now studying a Certificate III in Hospitality.

What began as a career goal has become a career pathway into tourism.



A Foot In The Door

Lochie came to VPG with Year 9 as his highest level of education and a goal to work with his hands. Through accredited training, industry tickets and licences, and practical learning opportunities, he built the skills and confidence to step into the workforce.

When SMC Marine Project Manager and Engineer Bernard Kennedy spoke to a group of VPG participants about the company's infrastructure works in the region, Lochie didn't wait to be picked. He put his hand up and asked for a work experience placement.

SMC Marine said yes. By the end of the week, after gaining hands-on experience in concrete stripping, metal framing and site preparation in a working shipyard, he was offered a full-time job.

Lochie graduated the program and joined SMC Marine as a General Operative, starting a promising career in civil construction.

Turning Opportunity Into a Career

Image: After building work readiness skills and industry connections through VPG, Teerapoom secured a plumbing apprenticeship with PlumbNorth and is now building a career in a trade he loves.

Supporting Young People Into Work

From Participant to Australian Trainee of the Year

In 2025, VPG Youth Worker Kayla Gagai was named Australian Trainee of the Year, the highest traineeship honour in the country.

Kayla's connection with VPG began years earlier as a participant looking for support after school. She later returned as a trainee, discovered a passion for youth work and built a career helping other young people navigate their future, build confidence and achieve their goals.

Today, Kayla delivers VPG programs across Far North Queensland, helping young people prepare for work and life after school, build confidence and develop healthy, respectful relationships.

Her story is a reminder of why traineeships matter. They help young people take their first step into meaningful careers while building the workforce our communities need.

“VPG believed in me and gave me the space to grow.

~Kayla Gagai



Eight Trainees. Eight Jobs.

Over 22 weeks, eight VPG trainees pulled on their boots and got to work. They maintained trails, restored natural environments and contributed to land management projects across the Tablelands, gaining qualifications, practical experience and the confidence that comes from being part of a team.

By the end of the traineeship, every single one had secured employment.

The result was just as significant for employers. After hiring graduates from the first cohort, NQ Land Management returned to recruit from the second - a strong endorsement of the skills, work ethic and work readiness these young people brought to the job.

Today, former trainees are working across conservation, landscaping, horticulture, infrastructure and the trades. They are building careers, filling workforce gaps and contributing to the communities where they live and work.

Eight trainees. Eight jobs. A great outcome with lasting benefits for both young people and the region.

Connecting Young People With Careers

Seeing What's Possible

1,369 opportunities to explore future careers.

For many young people, work experience is their first chance to step into the world of work.

It's an opportunity to explore interests, develop practical workplace skills and gain a deeper understanding of what different industries and occupations involve. Sometimes it confirms a path they're already considering. Sometimes it introduces them to opportunities they may never have imagined.

For more than 25 years, VPG has connected students, schools and employers across Far North Queensland, creating opportunities for young people to experience workplaces, build confidence and learn from people working in the industries that interest them. We know that one week of meaningful work experience can make a lifetime's difference.

In 2025, 1,369 work experience placements connected students with 561 employers across healthcare, hospitality, construction, tourism, trades and many other industries. Behind every placement is an employer willing to share their time, knowledge and passion for what they do.

For some students, that week is the beginning of a career. For others, it's the confidence to keep exploring. Either way, they leave with a clearer sense of who they are, where they want to go and what's possible.

Finding Her Path

Kara, a year 10 student at Trinity Anglican School had been thinking about a future in healthcare, but before making any big decisions, she wanted to see what the job was really like. A week at Gordonvale Family Medical Centre gave her the chance to do just that. Working alongside doctors, nurses and clinic staff, she got a feel for life inside a busy medical practice, from patient care to the teamwork that keeps a clinic running. By the end of the week, Kara had a clearer picture of what a future in healthcare could look like, and she liked what she saw. She left feeling motivated, with her sights firmly set on a career in midwifery.



Paying It Forward

Michael, Director of HiTune Marine, was once a work experience student himself. As a teenager, a placement introduced him to the marine industry. It led to an apprenticeship, then a career, and eventually a business of his own. Today, Michael is the one opening the door. In 2025, he hosted Year 10 St Mary's Catholic College student Matthew at HiTune Marine, giving him the same opportunity that launched his own career - a firsthand look at what is possible.



Image: Diana, Year 10 St Monica's Catholic College student, gets a firsthand look at graphic design with Ingeous Studios.

Growing Our Own Professionals

From Study to Regional Careers

Building the workforce our communities need.

Through the Tablelands and Cassowary Coast University Centres, VPG is helping grow the region's future workforce. By making higher education accessible closer to home, more regional people are gaining qualifications without leaving the communities that need them.

By the end of 2025, 247 students had registered across both centres, studying in critical demand fields including healthcare, education, human services and agriculture. Together, they represent a growing pipeline of future nurses, teachers, social workers, counsellors and other professionals helping meet the workforce needs of our regional communities.



Backing Local Talent

Growing a skilled workforce is a shared responsibility. In 2025, local employers and industry worked alongside VPG through Advisory Groups, Professional Mentoring Networks and workforce engagement activities, helping students build connections with the industries and professions they hoped to join. Engineering firm Civil Geotechnical Consultants also partnered with VPG to provide \$20,000 in scholarships and additional sponsorship support. Importantly, the scholarships were open to students across all fields of study. Not just engineering. Every discipline. A partnership built on the belief that strong regional communities are grown from within.



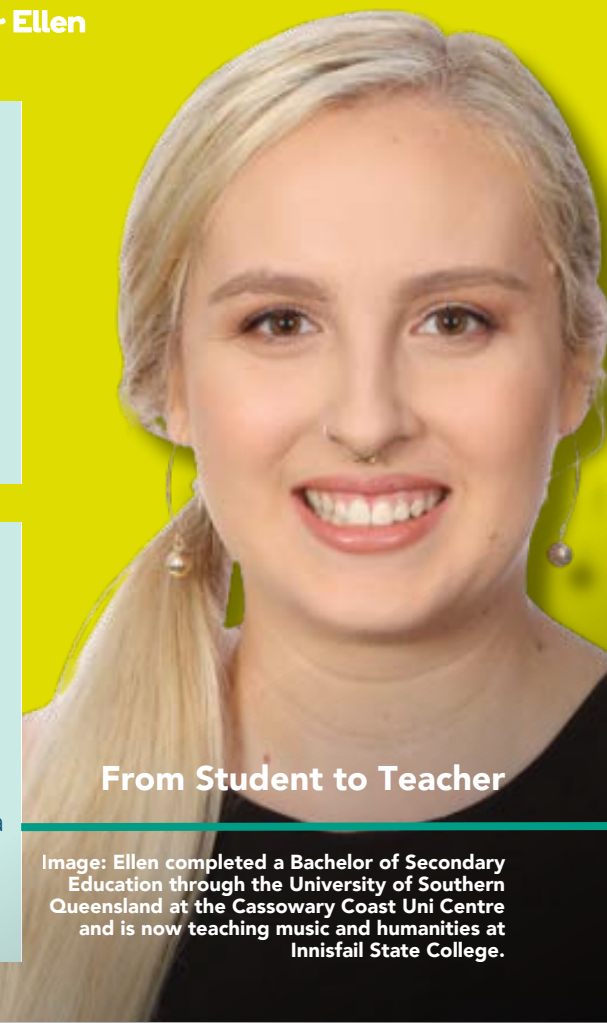
Making University Possible

For many regional people, university has traditionally meant moving away, travelling long distances or putting study off altogether. Through the Tablelands and Cassowary Coast University Centres, VPG is helping change that, making it possible for more locals to pursue higher education while staying connected to their work, family and community. Our students include parents, career changers, first-in-family learners and people returning to study after years in the workforce. Madeleine (pictured) is one of them. While working in an education support role at Goondi State School and raising a young family, she completed her Bachelor of Education through JCU at the Cassowary Coast University Centre. For students like Madeleine, higher education no longer means choosing between family and future career goals. They can do both.

“

Living regionally can sometimes make you feel like your options are limited, but that's not the case. We live in a digital age where study and skill-building opportunities are available, and having a local hub like CCUC shows that our small town can support big goals. If I can do this, others here can too.

~ Ellen



From Student to Teacher

Image: Ellen completed a Bachelor of Secondary Education through the University of Southern Queensland at the Cassowary Coast Uni Centre and is now teaching music and humanities at Innisfail State College.

Message from the Board



The world around us will keep changing. VPG is ready for it.

The needs of our communities evolve. Workforce demands shift. Government priorities change. New opportunities emerge. For more than two decades, VPG has met every one of those shifts from a foundation of purpose, focused on supporting children and young people and strengthening regional communities. That hasn't changed, and it won't.

Throughout 2025, the Board remained focused on ensuring VPG keeps building on its strong, stable base. Financially sound, future focussed and agile, we are well positioned to seize whatever comes next.

That means continuing to listen carefully to our communities, thinking strategically and adapting to back the people, partnerships and support networks that create opportunity across our region. We will keep strengthening families, creating safe spaces for our young people, facilitating tertiary education access to hundreds of regional students and supporting our trainees to achieve national recognition.

On behalf of the Board, thank you to our CEO, leadership team, staff, funders and partners. What you bring to this work every day is what makes VPG the organisation it is.

We're confident in our direction, and we're confident in our people to carry it forward.

Tamilyn Brennan

VPG Board Chair

Our Partners

It Takes a Community

Behind every young person who secured employment, every parent who found support, every student pursuing higher education and every employer investing in local talent is a network of people and organisations working together.

Thank you to our partners for helping create stronger families, resilient young people and thriving regional communities.



Funding Partners

Australian Government Department
of Education

Australian Government Department
of Social Services

Northern QLD Primary Health Network

QLD Government Department of Education

QLD Government Department of Families,
Seniors, Disability Services and Child Safety

QLD Government Department of Trade,
Employment & Training



Local Government Partners

Cairns Regional Council

Cassowary Coast Regional Council

Mareeba Shire Council

Tablelands Regional Council



We also acknowledge the 600+ employers, schools, universities, community organisations and industry partners who worked alongside VPG throughout 2025.





CREATING OPPORTUNITIES

vpginc.com.au

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