

2024



# Annual Report

**Empowering Individuality; Your Path, Your Potential**

We acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the land on which we meet and pay our respects to Elders past and present. We also recognise the contributions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples across Mountain District Community College and their ongoing leadership in supporting strong, culturally connected communities for young people.

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# Mountain District Community College



Mountain District Community College (MDCC) is a specialist secondary school dedicated to providing alternative, supportive education pathways for young people. We offer the Victorian Certificate of Education – Vocational Major (VCE-VM), the Victorian Pathways Certificate (VPC), and a modified Year 10 program.

## Our Approach to Learning

Our curriculum is built around the principles of:

- Flexibility - allowing students to progress at their own pace and follow a learning pathway suited to their ambitions.
- Individualisation - recognising that every student is unique, with their own learning style, strengths, and interests.
- Relevance - ensuring the education provided is meaningful, practical, and directly linked to real-world outcomes.

This approach helps students succeed academically while developing the skills and confidence they need for life beyond school.

## Wellbeing and Support

MDCC offers a comprehensive Wellbeing program that is integral to our learning model. This program:

- Helps students overcome personal and social barriers to learning
- Supports emotional development and resilience
- Enhances social connection and confidence
- Assists students in making smooth transitions to further education, training, or employment

We believe that wellbeing and education go hand in hand.

## LEADERSHIP



**Mike Kertes**  
Chair



**Elise Hopkins**  
Principal



**Allan Langley**  
Assistant Principal



**Jen Anderson**  
Wellbeing

# Our Board

The Mountain District Community College is a not-for-profit entity registered as a Company Limited by Guarantee which is run by a College Board and is subject to the Corporations Act 2001 (Cth) and administered by the Australian Securities and Investments Commission (ASIC).

The College Board members are local people who have an interest in the advancement of education for disadvantaged and disengaged young people. They are selected for their commitment to educational equality and for the skills and experience they can bring to the role.



**Mike Kertes**



**Paul Garnsworthy**



**Robyn Young**



**Michael Puddy**



**Elise Hopkins**

# Mission and Values

Our College thrives on strong relationships and a shared commitment to student success. The MDCC community includes:

- Students and their families
- Guardians and carers
- College staff and leadership
- Local organisations and service providers
- The College Board
- The broader public

We place a strong emphasis on community involvement to create a learning environment that is inclusive, empowering, and genuinely responsive to the needs of our students.



## MISSION

MDCC aims to provide school education in a positive and supportive environment, to give young people who have been disengaged from education the best possible chance to succeed.



## VALUES

- Inclusivity - we all belong together
- Accountability - we own our behaviour and mistakes
- Respect - we value each other
- Honesty - we tell the truth
- Teamwork - we work together

2024 was a year of significant transition and achievement for Mountain District Community College. As we continue to deliver essential educational opportunities to young people seeking to re-engage with their learning, the College has made important strides in strengthening its foundations and planning for future growth.

A major highlight of the year was the successful relocation of our campus to Langwith Avenue in Boronia. This move represents a fresh chapter for MDCC, with a new facility that better supports the learning environment and wellbeing of our students and staff. The relocation process, while not without its challenges, was handled with professionalism and care, and I commend everyone involved.

Governance reform was another key focus for the board throughout 2024. While we experienced some changes in board composition early in the year, I am pleased to report that by year's end we had established a strong, stable board with a renewed commitment to good governance. We made progress updating the College's constitution and improving induction processes for new board members—foundational work that sets us up well for the years ahead.

As always, the heart of our College is the remarkable team led by Principal Elise Hopkins. Elise's exceptional leadership throughout 2024, alongside her dedicated staff, ensured that our students continued to thrive, even amidst transition. Their unwavering commitment to empowering and supporting our young people is the true engine of the College's success.

On behalf of the Board—Paul Garnsworthy, Elise Hopkins, Michael Puddy, Robyn Young, and myself—I extend thanks to our staff, families, and broader community. Together, we've positioned MDCC for a strong and exciting future.

Mike Kertes  
Chair

## A message from our Chair



As I reflect on 2024, I feel incredibly proud of the progress we've made as a school community. MDCC exists to offer young people a renewed connection to education—especially those for whom mainstream systems haven't worked. This year, we've continued to see how a safe, inclusive, and flexible learning environment can shift a student's story. Whether it was a young person returning to the classroom after time away, discovering a passion through project-based learning, or building trust in a teacher for the first time—these moments have defined our year. Our staff show up every day with unwavering commitment. Their work is steady, compassionate, and quietly transformative. From delivering creative and engaging learning programs to offering practical support and care, their dedication forms the backbone of this college. 2024 also saw us deepen our approach to wellbeing, learning, and belonging. Our programs remained flexible and student-led, grounded in the understanding that young people learn best when they feel respected, known, and supported. What makes MDCC different is our people—students who bring resilience and potential, staff who lead with heart and purpose, and families who partner with us in building new pathways forward. As we look to 2025, we remain focused on expanding opportunities for our students, amplifying their voices, and strengthening our culture of high expectations and care. Thank you to everyone who has contributed to another year of meaningful work. I look forward to what we'll continue to achieve together.

Elise Hopkins  
Principal

## A message from our Principal



# Our Students

2024 was a year of significant growth and achievement for MDCC. We supported a total of 98 students throughout the year, with only five students exiting during the year — a marked improvement in retention compared to previous years. These exits were due to student relocation or the opportunity to begin apprenticeships. This exceptional retention reflects the highest levels of student engagement in our college’s history.



**Year 10**

30 Year 10 students across two classes



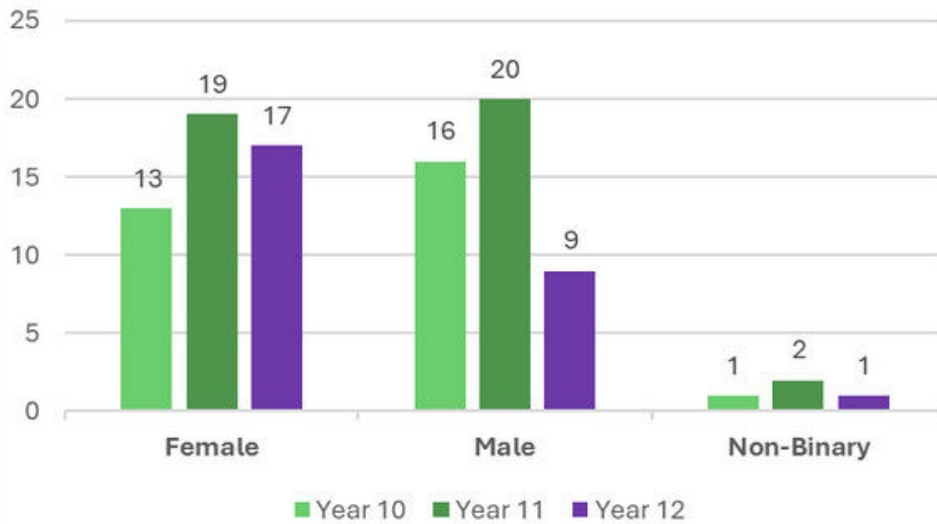
**Year 11**

47 Year 11 students across three classes



**Year 12**

27 Year 12 students across two classes

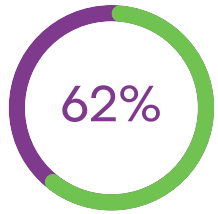


This structure allowed us to tailor both our teaching approaches and wellbeing initiatives to the developmental needs of each year level. Most notably, we celebrated the graduation of 24 of our 25 Year 12 students, with many progressing into further study in areas such as art and design, community services, events management, disability support, and nursing, while others moved into employment or apprenticeships.

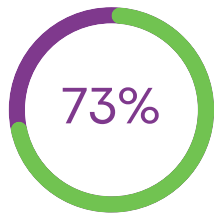
As in previous years, our students often arrived at MDCC with significant gaps in learning and social-emotional needs that had not been met in mainstream settings. Through strong relationships, targeted wellbeing support, and engaging curriculum delivery, we re-engaged young people in education, equipping them with the skills, knowledge, and experiences needed to shape their own futures. By prioritising student voice and agency, we encouraged autonomy, personal growth, and a sense of ownership over learning.

Student engagement was strengthened in 2024 by the continued dedication of our teaching staff and the expanded, highly active wellbeing team. The move into our new school building also played a pivotal role, providing a fresh start for students and the introduction of dedicated spaces including a Wellbeing Hub, Careers Room, and Student Hub. These facilities offered students a sense of belonging, ownership, and access to vital supports in a purpose-built environment.

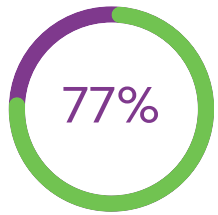
# Attendance



**Year 10**



**Year 11**



**Year 12**

Attendance remained a focus area in 2024, with results showing growth in student consistency and participation.

The Year 10 cohort, while recording the lowest average attendance, experienced notable growth across the year, following the implementation of a second Year 10 class and strengthened wellbeing supports. However, this group was also strongly impacted by staffing changes, which posed challenges to continuity in the early part of the year. Despite this, the cohort showed increasing consistency as the year progressed, supported by strengthened relationships and new structures.

Year 11 and 12 attendances reflected a continuation of positive engagement, bolstered by academic focus and pathway support. Across the College, the wellbeing team played a key role through proactive outreach, daily connection strategies, and targeted case management — ensuring students felt safe, supported, and motivated to attend regularly.



# Curriculum



2024 has been a milestone year for MDCC as we moved into our new school building. This transition marked the beginning of a renewed focus on Resilience, Flexibility and Adaptability — values that now shape not only our learning environments, but also how we support students through their academic and personal development.

## VCE-VM Program

The implementation of the VCE-VM (Vocational Major) continued to centre on five key streams of learning: Literacy, Numeracy, Personal Development Skills, Work Related Skills, Industry Related Skills (VET)

Students in Years 11 and 12 completed their senior secondary certificate through individualised, project-based learning aligned with their personal interests and career aspirations. This approach not only strengthened academic knowledge and core competencies but also fostered soft skills, including collaboration, communication and initiative.

Throughout 2024, MDCC continued to develop the VCE-VM curriculum to include as many hands-on and real-world applications as possible. Year 11 students participated in volunteering placements across a local animal shelter, primary school, and opportunity shop — further reinforcing the value of community contribution and applied learning.

VET offerings were expanded through the delivery of two in-house certificate programs:

- Certificate II in Community Services, delivered by Rachael Kennedy
- Certificate II in Workplace Skills, delivered by Cymone Levell

These courses provided students with valuable qualifications and experience in service and enterprise industries, helping to build confidence, direction and job-readiness.

Ewen, our dedicated Careers Practitioner, worked closely with students to help them map meaningful pathway options, and by the end of the year, 24 of our 25 Year 12 students successfully graduated — a strong indicator of the engagement, support, and curriculum alignment we are achieving across the College.

# Curriculum

## Year 10 Program

The Year 10 curriculum, delivered and reported in line with the F–10 Victorian Curriculum, expanded to seven streams of learning in 2024 with the introduction of Digital Technology.

The full program now includes:

- English Mathematics
- Humanities
- Science
- Art
- Health/Physical Education
- Digital Technology

In addition to curriculum expansion, Year 10 enrolments grew to two full classes, reflecting strong community engagement and trust in MDCC’s progressive and supportive approach to learning. This growth has allowed for richer classroom dynamics, stronger peer collaboration, and more targeted group instruction.

The Year 10 program continues to build students’ core knowledge while also preparing them for the increasing independence required in senior pathways. Emphasis remained on developing strong literacy and numeracy foundations, independent work habits, and collaborative learning skills.

### Teaching and Learning Innovation

Teachers continued to refine project-based and inquiry-driven approaches across subjects, ensuring learning remained relevant, engaging and anchored in real-world applications. These methods supported deeper understanding, promoted active participation, and allowed students to explore content through personal interest and curiosity.





# Curriculum

## Parental and Community Engagement

Parent engagement in student goal-setting and IEPs continued to grow in 2024, with families increasingly active in supporting their child's individualised learning journey. The establishment of our inaugural Student Representative Council (SRC) also amplified student voice and strengthened school–community partnerships.

## Re-engagement and Wellbeing

MDCC continued to refine and expand its re-engagement strategies, with a high number of students returning to and remaining engaged in their education. Live IEPs, embedded wellbeing sessions, structured physical activity, and regular review meetings ensured students' academic and social-emotional needs were continually monitored and met.

With the move to our new building, we were proud to introduce a suite of dedicated student-focused spaces, including a Wellbeing Hub, Careers Room, and a Student Hub. These purpose-built facilities provide students with immediate access to pastoral, academic, and pathway support, reinforcing our commitment to whole-student wellbeing and personalised guidance.

Looking Ahead to 2025

## As we look forward to 2025

MDCC is preparing for another period of growth and development. Key priorities include:

- Continuing to develop our school vision and culture
- Transitioning to a new school name to reflect our evolving identity
- Working toward the strategic goal of a second campus in 2026
- Expanding and enhancing our curriculum, including the continuation of term-based Wellbeing Days
- Strengthening partnerships, student pathways, and learning supports that empower every learner
- Introducing a full-time onsite counsellor, further deepening our commitment to accessible, embedded wellbeing care

# What our community are saying...

"This school has supported me in so many ways, through learning and just helping us grow into the people we are today and the people we will be in the future. You've helped walk us through tough times if we needed it but also don't mind lending a listening ear if we just feel like it. What you have taught us will stick with us long after we leave school."

– Rosh (Year 12 student)

"I want to thank you for making this the best school year I've ever had. I was shocked at how caring you and the other teachers are. Thank you for helping me through the bad times and making them good. I have never enjoyed school except for this last year. You helped me with my confidence which I thought couldn't be done as many teachers have tried. I never wanted to repeat a year, I thought it would be embarrassing but I regret passing because I miss this school."

– Allira A (Year 12 student)

"Thank you, from the bottom of my heart, for caring so much about your students, and for being a shining ambassador. This journey to her becoming so much more confident, happy, and resilient was forged because you reached out and cared so much. You have been pivotal in her life, and for her personal growth and development - I can not thank you enough."

– Vikki C (Parent)



# Wellbeing

2024 marked an exciting chapter for our students, with our wellbeing initiatives continuing to grow, including our popular Breakfast Club, Social Club, and the provision of practical supports through the Student Pantry, Clothes Cupboard, and access to essential personal care items.

Throughout the year, we have celebrated and acknowledged important wellbeing and inclusion days such as R U OK? Day, IDAHOBIT, Harmony Day, and World Mental Health Day, creating opportunities for reflection, education, and connection across our school community.

Our dedicated wellbeing and education support staff continued to enhance their skills and knowledge through ongoing professional learning, strengthening their capacity to respond to the diverse needs of our school community.

Together, these programs and initiatives reflect our commitment to creating a safe, inclusive, and supportive environment for every student.

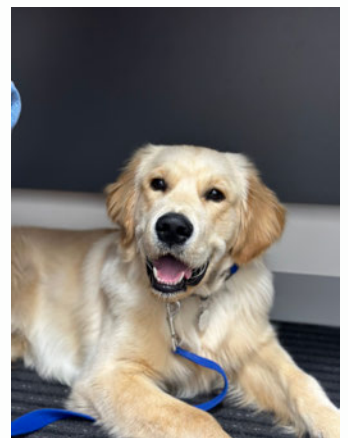
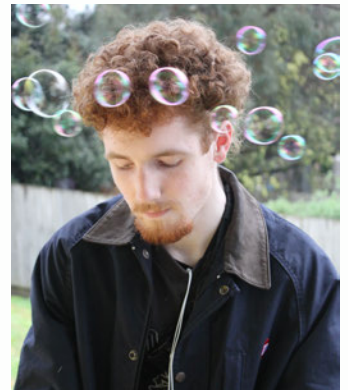
We also welcomed a very special member to our team — Bear, our therapy dog in training, who has quickly become a much-loved presence and an important part of our support offering.

Our student cohort is diverse, with many demonstrating remarkable resilience while managing a range of specialised needs, including but not limited to: Anxiety, Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Complex Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (CPTSD), Borderline Personality Disorder (BPD), Learning Difficulties, Addiction, Depression and other Mental Health challenges.

To complement our internal supports and to provide comprehensive care, we also collaborate and refer to external partners such as Headspace, Eastern Access Community Health (EACH), Uniting, Anglicare, Child & Youth Mental Health Services (CYMHS) and Youth Support Advocacy Service (YSAS) to name a few.

As we reflect on 2024, it is clear that our wellbeing program continues to evolve to meet the changing and complex needs of our students. Supported by our skilled staff, valued community partnerships, and the genuine care that underpins every initiative — from daily supports to special events — we remain deeply committed to ensuring that every student feels seen, supported, and empowered to reach their potential. Looking ahead, we will continue to build on this strong foundation, working together to promote resilience, connection, and wellbeing for all.

Jen Anderson – Senior Wellbeing Coordinator  
Rachael Kennedy – Senior Education Coordinator/Wellbeing Support



# Staff Qualifications...

STAFF MEMBER	ROLE	QUALIFICATIONS
Elise Hopkins	Principal	Bach. Applied Science (Physical Education), Certificate in School Management and Leadership
Allan Langley	Assistant Principal	Bach. Policing (Prosecutions), Dip. Business (Frontline Management), Grad Dip. Education (Secondary).
Ewen Morris	Teacher	Bach. Science, Grad Dip. Education (Secondary), Grad Cert. Careers Education & Development.
Nikki Harris	Teacher	Bach. Education, Bach. Arts (Secondary).
Cymone Levell	Teacher	Bach. Education (Secondary).
Rachael Kennedy	Education Support	Dip. Community Services, Cert III Education Support.
Sarah Forbes	Business Manager	Cert IV Accounting & Bookkeeping.

# Professional Learning for our Staff

Professional development is essential for teachers and staff within the college because it ensures that they remain current with evolving educational practices, technologies, and industry standards. By engaging in ongoing learning opportunities, staff members can refine their teaching strategies, strengthen subject knowledge, and develop new skills that enhance student engagement and success. Continuous professional development also fosters innovation in the classroom, allowing educators to adapt their approaches to meet diverse student needs and respond effectively to changes in curriculum and policy. This ongoing growth helps maintain high standards of teaching and learning across the college.

Staff professional learning in 2024 was strongly focused on trauma-informed and wellbeing practices. This commitment underpinned the delivery of emotionally safe, inclusive and responsive classrooms. Staff also benefited from collaborative planning days, ensuring curriculum coherence and shared best practices across teams.



Strategic Design Workshop by "The Wellbeing Distillery"

Youth Mental Health First Aid Training

Medium Rigid Training (for Bus use)

Complex Trauma Fundamentals

Profile Awareness Assessments & Team Qualities

First Aid, CPR & Anaphalaxis Training

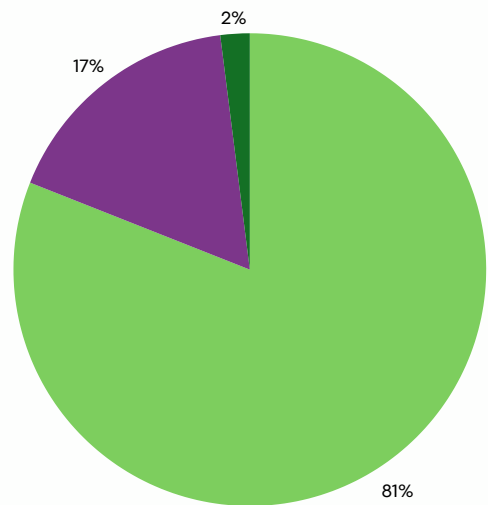
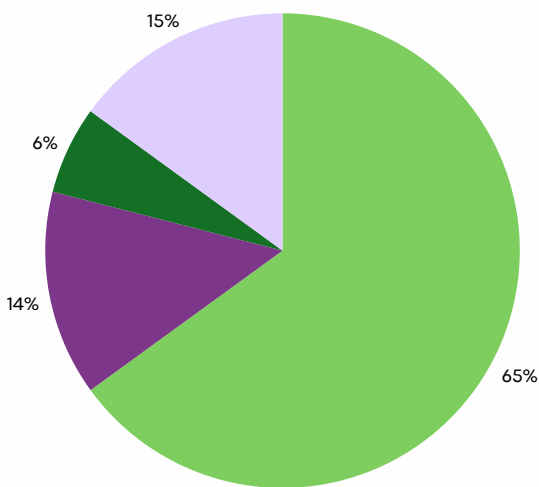
Enhancing Student Learning

# 2024 Finance Report

The College recorded a significant increase in revenue, supported primarily by government grants, while maintaining disciplined control over expenses. This resulted in a healthy operating surplus and a marked improvement in overall financial position. The balance sheet highlights a substantial strengthening of net assets, largely due to the repayment of borrowings and continued investment in property, plant, and equipment. Positive operating cash flows further underline the College’s ability to generate sustainable income, despite notable reinvestment into facilities and resources. Overall, the results reflect a solid financial foundation that positions the College well for future operations and continued delivery of its educational mission

Expenditure Breakdown		%
Wages and Salary	\$1315789	65%
Infrastructure	\$296595	14%
Student Wellbeing and Curriculum	\$117625	6%
Administration	\$310314	15%

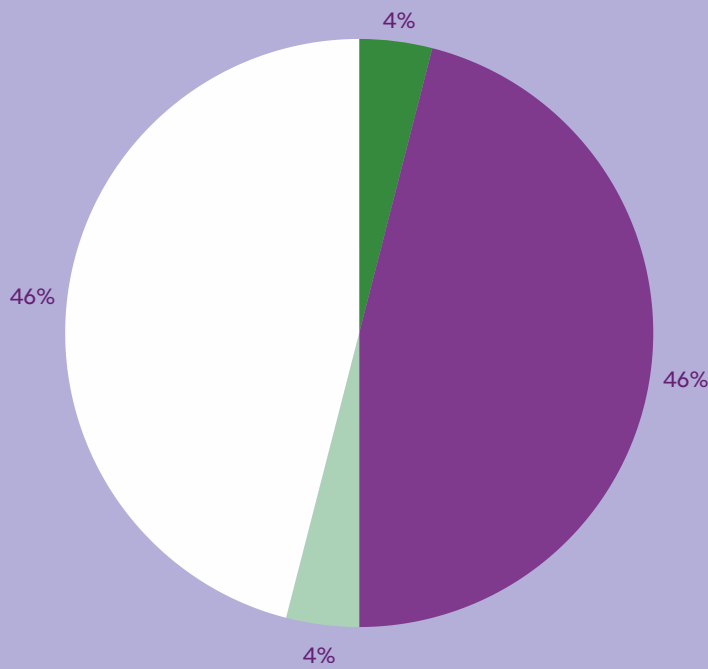
Income Breakdown		%
Federal Grants	\$4518156	81%
State Grants	\$926333	17%
Other Income	\$117646	2%



# Our Year 12 Success Stories...

We had 24 students graduate from MDCC in 2024 and we are very proud to report that all 24 of our Graduates moved onto further education or employment.

Students after graduation:	%
Went on to further study in 2025	46%
Went onto a Apprenticeship	4%
Went on to Employment	46%
Went onto Employment, but changed to further study in 2025	4%





Thank you  
for your  
ongoing  
support...



8203 2444



2-4 Langwith Avenue, Boronia, Vic 3155