

PECAN+ Capture The Flag 2025

Snapshot



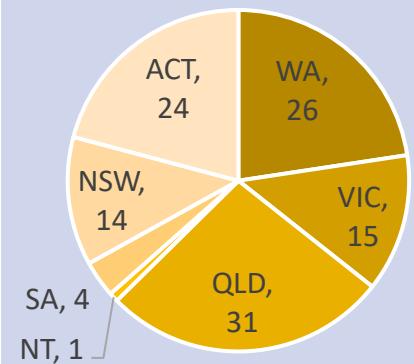
INTRODUCTION

PECAN+ Capture The Flag (CTF) is a free, national cyber security competition for beginner through to advanced high school-aged students. PECAN+ CTF is a collaborative initiative, led by Edith Cowan University, which brings together Australian higher education and vocational institutions, cyber security industry, Government, teachers and students around the aim of raising cyber security awareness, skills and aspirations.

The PECAN+ CTF 2025 Competition was held on August 24th, 2025, and was preceded by a range of national Training opportunities to upskill and prepare students to tackle cyber security and problem-solving challenges.

2025 ENGAGEMENT FIGURES

PECAN+ CTF 2025 saw participation by **115 Teams** of high-school aged competitors (years 9-12). Total, national registration numbers were 448 students.



Divisions of Teams

Advanced (15)

Intermediate (34)

Beginner (66)

8
All Female Teams
+ further female and non-binary competitors.

2025 NATIONAL HOSTS & LOCATIONS

PECAN+ CTF is led by Edith Cowan University (Western Australia) and invites agencies around Australia to host PECAN+ CTF activations and provide the opportunity for students across States and Territories to participate. In 2025, PECAN+ CTF activations were located in:

- WA: Edith Cowan University, Joondalup Campus.
- NT: Charles Darwin University – led by NT Department of Corporate and Digital Development.
- SA: University of Adelaide - led by Starknex.
- QLD: TAFE Queensland, South Bank/Coomera/ Toowoomba/Townsville Campuses – led with support from Cyber In Motion and ACS.
- ACT: Australian National University & University of Canberra – led by Canberra Cyber Hub.
- NSW: University of Wollongong, Wollongong Campus.
- VIC: Box Hill Institute, Box Hill Campus.

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national Training & Competition sites.



Australian Government
Australian Signals Directorate

 AISA Australian Information Security Association

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 Department of the Premier and Cabinet
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 CYBER WEST HUB

 Triskele Labs

 Mantel

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pecanplus.org

2025 SPONSORS AND SUPPORTERS

National Lead

- Edith Cowan University, School of Science

2025 Platinum Sponsor

- Australian Signals Directorate

2025 Gold Sponsors

- Australian Information Security Association (AISA)
- Triskele Labs
- CyberWest Hub

2025 Silver Sponsors

- Western Australia Office of Digital Government
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Technology Lead

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+ local Sponsors and supporters.

CYBER TRAINING ACTIVITIES

PECAN+ supports the development of cyber security skills in youth. To prepare participants, training activities were offered across the country in the lead up to PECAN+ CTF Competition Day. Training addressed topics ranging from: cyber tools; Linux skills; cryptography; steganography; digital forensics; OSINT; reverse engineering; web exploitation and more.

Under a whole-of-cyber-ecosystem model, PECAN+ training was delivered by TAFE and university students, Industry and Government representatives and cyber security academics. Embedded in Training Days were additional guest presentations and panel sessions from Government and Industry representatives.

13% respondents reported involvement of cyber security Industry and Government guest presenters as their **favourite** part of Training Day.

STUDENT FEEDBACK

Response to PECAN+ CTF 2025 has been overwhelmingly positive. Feedback from 150 respondents (i.e.; 2025 competitors) indicated:

- A shift in confidence in addressing cyber security challenges from 2.17 to **3.00** (out of 5), on average, following participation in PECAN+ CTF 2025.
- An average **3.77** (out of 5) rating for the whole of PECAN+ CTF 2025 experience.
- That **81%** of respondents will compete in PECAN+ CTF again.

Themes in the feedback for PECAN+ CTF included strong use of the words: "**learning**", "**good**", "**amazing**" and "**challenge**".

Drawn from feedback, the popular aspects of PECAN+ CTF 2025 included: "**Meeting new people**", "**Team**", "**Learning**", **Guest presenters**" and "**Food**".

CHALLENGES

PECAN+ is a Capture The Flag (CTF) competition that sees students tackle challenges using cyber security and problem-solving skills. The goal of each challenge is to recover a novel string of text - letters, numbers and characters - called a "flag".

All PECAN+ CTF 2025 challenges were created and contributed by Tafe/University students and members of the greater cyber security ecosystem. **Sixty-three** CTF challenges were presented during the 2025 competition, across a range of categories:



The most popular challenges, based on feedback on "favourite challenge" from 150 respondents, were found in the categories: OSINT, Web Exploitation, Cryptography and Misc. The top 11 most solved challenges were majority OSINT, Cryptography and Steganography themed.



"Very fun experience."

"It was a lot more complex than I expected."

"Fun challenge, will definitely consider coming back next year."



2025 PRIZE WINNERS

National prizes were awarded to a total of 13 Teams in ACT (5), VIC (3), WA (2), QLD (2) and SA (1). PECAN+ CTF focuses on inclusion of all skill levels and diversity in experience and background. Prizes were awarded across Beginner, Intermediate and Advanced divisions and to Top All Female (and non-binary member) Teams.

All Competitors were provided with Certificates of Participation and a token 2025 PECAN+ CTF competitor Challenge Coin, in recognition of their achievement.



"This is amazing, do it again every year."

- Feedback from PECAN+ CTF 2025 competitors.