

United Nations University success

Charles Darwin University (CDU) has been selected by the United Nations (UN) to establish a United Nations University Centre on Traditional Knowledge.

Coinciding with the International Day of the World's Indigenous People on 9 August, the Northern Territory Government announced an investment of \$500,000 a year for a period of five years, to help establish the Centre. The UN also will fund the Centre and funding has been committed from various philanthropic funds such as the Christensen Foundation.

The Centre's work initially will focus on:

- Research into the role of traditional knowledge in local communities adapting to climate change.
- Promoting awareness about traditional knowledge for water management.
- Developing an information service about international policy developments in the overall field of traditional knowledge.

Given the importance of this type of research to the Northern Territory and the benefit it will provide to all Territorians, especially in Indigenous, regional and remote communities, CDU and the NT Government will work closely with the Centre to ensure its success. The Centre was launched on 12 December.

An internationally focused traditional knowledge research and training institution provides a unique opportunity to make the linkages necessary to develop innovative and effective approaches that fully recognise the value of traditional knowledge and foster the sustainability of communities for whom traditional knowledge is the cornerstone of culture and survival.

– Professor Helen Garnett, Vice-Chancellor CDU.



Director of the UNU-IAS, Professor AH Zakri (centre) with CDU Vice-Chancellor Prof Helen Garnett and Deputy Chief Minister, Marion Scrymgour MLA

Foreword from the Peak Group

In this edition of Partnership Highlights, we present you with a range of successes which demonstrate the strength of the Partnership in achieving positive outcomes for the Territory.

With most of the Schedules under the second Partnership Agreement 2007-2012 now approved, Schedule Leaders have commenced work on a broad spectrum of initiatives and projects.

These include professional development opportunities for teaching staff in the early childhood field; managing change in relation to local government reform; and achieving sustainable natural resource management in the Territory in the era of climate change.

The Peak Group welcomes the potential for positive outcomes for Indigenous Territorians through the NT Government's 20-year, \$286 million commitment to overcoming Indigenous disadvantage under the NT Generational Plan of Action, Closing the Gap.

We look forward to implementing the strategies of Closing the Gap through collaborative research, evaluation, workforce development and training wherever possible under the Partnership Agreement.

We invite you to read more about the Partnership and how it continues to forge pathways that provide real solutions for the Territory on how we grow, how we maintain our unique culture and environment, and how we achieve competitiveness and efficiency in the national and global spheres while fulfilling the local needs of our citizens.

What's inside

02 > Strengthening international education, trade and connections

Closing the gap

03 > Retaining Territory Nurses

Meeting Government needs: Professional development opportunities for NTPS staff

What's been happening in Alice?

- Charles Darwin Symposium
- Opening of the \$7 million University Building

04 > Profile on Associate Professor Ram Vemuri

06 > Partnership structure

Strengthening international education, trade and connections

Joint trade and study missions are a key strategy of the Australian and Global Connections Schedule under the Agreement with the shared aims of promoting the NT as a study, work and investment destination, and increasing international student enrolments at the University.

In September 2007, the former Chief Minister, the Hon Clare Martin MLA, led a trade and education mission to Vietnam to progress talks with key political and business leaders on opportunities for live cattle exports to Vietnam, growing tourism, promoting skilled migration and exploring educational links through CDU.

The Chief Minister was accompanied by the Vice-Chancellor of Charles Darwin University, Professor Helen Garnett, PSM.

A range of educational opportunities which CDU could provide in Vietnam and in the Northern Territory were identified, and as a result, CDU is set to provide more training places for Vietnamese students and public servants as early as next year.

These courses will include research training for Vietnamese academics, English as a second language, governance and capacity building particularly for regional development.

The Vietnamese Government currently awards up to 50 scholarships for students to study in Australia each year. In particular, CDU hopes to attract postgraduate students who have the potential to occupy senior positions of influence in their home country.

In addition to the trade mission, follow-up talks were held with individual companies. Of particular interest were talks with the Phoung Nam Group of Companies.

This group is looking to develop a vocational holiday program with CDU that will include courses in English, animal husbandry, public health care and maritime services.

This is a niche area that is currently not offered by educational institutions in the region and combines two of the Territory's great strengths – tourism and education.

The strengthening of the Territory's political ties with Vietnam was underlined by the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding on Trade and Economic Development, including education and training services, with the Ba Ria-Vung Tau Province.

Collaboration with Vietnam and other international markets is important for stimulating the local economy, enriching the community's cultural experiences and diversity, and enhancing CDU's reputation in the region.

Closing the Gap

Addressing Indigenous disadvantage in the Territory

In June 2007, the *Board of Inquiry into the Protection of Aboriginal Children from Sexual Abuse* released its findings, which included 97 recommendations across 22 themes. The recommendations primarily addressed the child protection system, as well as broader social and economic factors such as housing, unemployment, offender rehabilitation, health, alcohol misuse and education.

In support of the messages from the Inquiry and beyond its recommendations, the NT Government released *Closing the Gap of Indigenous Disadvantage: a Generational Plan of Action* - a long-term generational plan to close the social and economic gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Territorians.

The Plan provides a framework of ambitious, yet achievable targets over five, 10 and 20 years to overcome Indigenous disadvantage within a generation. The vision for the plan is that, by 2030, Indigenous children born in the Territory will be as healthy and live as long as other Territorians.

Based on the best available evidence of which actions will have the greatest impact, the NT Government has committed \$286 million towards priority actions identified in the first five years, in the areas of: safety; health; housing; education; jobs; culture; and a better way of doing business.

Through investment and a well-planned allocation of human resources, the plan intends to address the socio-economic issues experienced by the Territory's Indigenous population through legislative reform, governance, employment and economic development, remote area policing, health, housing, communication and engagement.

The vision and objectives of Closing the Gap present many opportunities for collaborative research, evaluation, workforce development and training during the development, implementation and progression of the strategies to address Indigenous disadvantage in the Territory during the coming 20 years.

Through the Partnership Agreement, the Peak Group will strongly encourage government agencies to use CDU wherever possible to progress strategies outlined in *Closing the Gap*.

A copy of *Closing the Gap of Indigenous Disadvantage: a Generational Plan of Action* is available at www.action.nt.gov.au. Please phone the Department of the Chief Minister, Office of Indigenous Policy on 8999 5270 for further information.

Retaining Territory nurses

The Department of Health and Community Services (DHCS) has contracted the School for Social and Policy Research to identify how the Territory can attract and retain nurses and midwives locally, from interstate and overseas.

Based on more than 100 interviews conducted with nurses and midwives, the research team from CDU has designed a survey which will be circulated to all registered nurses and midwives in the Territory, as well as those who have moved interstate.

The results from this study will be correlated with demographic profiles to identify the sorts of people most likely to stay committed to Territory nursing and midwifery in the long term. The project has a steering committee drawn from many of the nursing and midwifery professional associations and departmental staff, and has also benefited from the extensive experience available within the School of Social and Policy Research, and the Graduate School for Health Practice. The project is due for completion in March 2008, and will provide valuable information to DHCS to address recruitment and retention issues for health professionals in the Territory.



The Department of Health and Community Services is working with the School for Social and Policy Research to help retain nurses and midwives in the Territory.

Meeting Government needs

Professional development opportunities for NTPS staff

The Department of Employment, Education and Training (DEET) and Department of Health and Community Services (DHCS) have demonstrated the effectiveness of collaboration with the University to develop, design and deliver new courses that provide Territory teachers and hospital staff with relevant and contemporary course materials and professional development opportunities that are in sync with

the future directions for Territory schools and hospitals.

Middle Years postgraduate courses

Two postgraduate Middle Years Units have been developed by CDU to provide formal pragmatic professional development for middle school teachers and leaders across DEET. This course is funded by DEET and has been designed to support up to 20 participants per unit. About 20 students have enrolled in these units in 2007.

Upskilling health workers - Certificate III Health Support Services

This pilot program is offered to personal care assistants employed at Royal Darwin Hospital (RDH). The program began on 24 July 2007 with an initial enrolment of 15 students.

The program is part of the new national commitment to train and up-skill personal care assistants to increase the delivery of quality health care. The program provides staff with the opportunity to be trained in new skills which are practical to the workforce, whilst maintaining their employment.

The program offers 15 modules over a six-month period with a mix of in-house teaching blocks at CDU, written assignments and workbooks.

What's been happening in Alice?

Charles Darwin Symposium – a skilled workforce for regional and remote Australia

The launch of the higher education building at Alice Springs kicked off a host of events on campus in September marked by the Charles Darwin Symposium on “A Skilled Workforce for Regional and Remote Australia: Keeping, Attracting, Training”, which explored the challenges of keeping, attracting and training skilled workforces in remote Australia.

The Symposium took place on 28 September 2007 and attracted a strong crowd of more than 150 representatives to Alice Springs from business, industry, government and academia to discuss issues which impact on workforce development in regional and remote areas.

The Symposium examined the labour market in the region, its short-term and future trends and drivers of those trends, ways to attract skilled people to the region, and strategies to make the most from the existing (Indigenous and non-Indigenous) workforce.

Keynote speaker Peter Sheahan spoke on “Generation Y and the challenges for workforce development”. Other speakers included the Hon Fred Chaney AO, Professor Robert Gregory AO (ANU), and Professor Tony Barnes from NT Treasury. Speakers discussed issues such as demographic trends and challenges; regional and remote employment; why people come to or leave the NT; and Indigenous employment.

In addition to the Symposium, an 'Employer Masterclass' session was run by Peter Sheahan for senior NT Government staff (mainly Alice Springs based) and the private sector. The Department of Primary Industry, Fisheries and Mines' Strategic Leadership Team, including the Chief Executive John Carroll, made the trip from Darwin to Alice Springs to attend the seminar and the Symposium. The Commissioner for Public Employment, Ken Simpson, also participated.

The interactive session explored:

- practical tips for managers in dealing with Generation Y
- what is important to Generation Y and how Generation Y views the public sector
- what are the barriers to Generation Y employment, and how to remove them.

The Charles Darwin Symposia series is an initiative of the Partnership Agreement and is supported by the NT Government and the Australian National University. The symposia engage the community, and encourage lively and informed debate on current issues that affect Territorians.

Further information on the Alice Symposium, including speakers' presentations is available at: <http://www.cdu.edu.au/cdss0709>



Leon Morris, from the NT Department of Business, Economic and Regional Development, speaking at the Alice Springs Symposium.

Opening of the \$7 million University building in Alice Springs

Higher education students in Central Australia now have a new home with the opening of a \$7 million building at the Charles Darwin University Alice Springs campus.

The building was officially opened on 27 September 2007 by Senator Nigel Scullion, Commonwealth Minister for Community Services, and Mr Karl Hampton MLA, representing the NT Minister for Employment, Education and Training.

The NT Government provided \$2.5m towards the energy-efficient building, which has multi-media-equipped lecture theatres, tutorial and research rooms, a science laboratory, offices and an administration area for more than 30 staff and 190 undergraduate, postgraduate and research students.

Local firms Susan Dugdale Architects and Associates and Jackman Goodman Architects designed and administered the building construction while Sitzler Brothers constructed the building.

The opening of the higher education building will contribute to government's key objectives in providing access to quality higher education and training facilities to all Territorians, and stimulating regional growth.

Pro Vice-Chancellor (Community and Access) Don Zoellner said the facility was built in response to the current and future needs of Central Australians.

The new building further cements CDU's commitment to tertiary education and research in regional and remote Australia.

– Don Zoellner, Pro-Vice Chancellor Community and Access, CDU.



CDU's new higher education building on the Alice Springs campus.

Profile on Associate Professor Ram Vemuri

Providing economic advice to contribute to the building of a strong and sustainable Territory economy.

Associate Professor Ram Vemuri is an economics researcher and lecturer at CDU in the School of Law and Business. Dr Vemuri has been involved in the Partnership both as a member of a Schedule under the first Agreement, and as Schedule Leader of the Strong Regions Schedule of the second



Associate Professor Ram Vemuri

Agreement, in conjunction with Dave Malone, Executive Director Regional Development, Department of Business, Economic and Regional Development.

Dr Vemuri's research specialties include:

- health economics
- macroeconomic management
- South-East Asian economics
- role of Indigenous knowledge in decision-making
- economics of education and
- natural resource economics including waste management, economic impact assessment and sustainable development.

As an example of how the Partnership has been effective at building firm relationships between government and university staff, Dr Vemuri has been called upon regularly to provide a range of services to government agencies. Recent collaborative projects include the:

- Review of Darwin Aquaculture Centre and competitive neutrality issues for NT Treasury
- Alice Springs Economy and Business Survey project for the Department of Business, Economic and Regional Development
- Provision of expert advice on economic policy issues affecting the NT for the Department of Planning and Infrastructure.

By working closely with government on key economic issues affecting the Territory, Dr Vemuri says that not only does his economic analysis take on a broader perspective but his own research also is enriched since he grasps a wider dimension that includes the realities of economics in practice in the Territory.

“Being involved in the Partnership has been a rewarding experience that has allowed me to work with Agencies on important matters and to contribute to decision making that builds a sustainable and robust NT economy.”

– Associate Professor Ram Vemuri



Partnership Agreement – Structure

