

TERRITORY 2030: CHARLES DARWIN UNIVERSITY RESPONSE
June 2009

1. Support for Territory 2030

Charles Darwin University welcomes the Territory 2030 document and congratulates the Steering Committee on its work in putting the strategy together. The University supports the aspirations that are contained within it and notes that it is in the interests of the Northern Territory to ensure that the strategic directions of the University are tied closely to those of the Northern Territory Government. The strategy will shape University thinking and planning; thus ensuring a strong correlation between the priorities of the NTG and those of Charles Darwin University. Mutual priority setting under the Charles Darwin University/Northern Territory Government Partnership Agreement will be greatly enhanced through the NTG response to the work of the Territory 2030 Steering Committee.

As the centerpiece of the strategy and underpinning the focus areas, education is clearly critical. The University is pleased to respond to the draft strategy, to provide the strategic operating context of the University and to highlight national initiatives in the education and research arena that may influence the strategy and the role of the University in supporting it.

As the major provider of tertiary (VET and Higher Education) education and training in the Northern Territory, the University is a major contributor to the development of the workforce in the Northern Territory and the provision of evidence-based research; elements identified as significant throughout the strategy.

The University therefore sees its role as pivotal and recognizes a need for its contribution to be integrated throughout the strategy.

This response has been prepared with input from the University Executive, staff and students.

2. Commonwealth initiatives

Two influential studies commissioned by the Federal Government which will influence future policy making in the university sector and which may be relevant for the 2030 Steering Committee to consider are: The Bradley Review of Australian Higher Education¹ (the Bradley Review) and Venturous Australia: Building Strength in Innovation² - (the Cutler Review).

¹ Review Panel, 2008, *Review of Australian Higher Education: Final Report*, Commonwealth of Australia
<http://www.deewr.gov.au/HigherEducation/Review/Pages/ReviewofAustralianHigherEducationReport.aspx>

² Cutler & Company Pty Ltd, 2008, *VenturousAustralia: Building Strength in Innovation*
<http://www.innovation.gov.au/innovationreview/Pages/home.aspx>

2.1. Bradley Review of Australian Higher Education

The Bradley Review sets out key national targets for Australia's Higher Education system, many of which have been accepted by the Federal Government in its response, *'Transforming Australia's Higher Education System'* (see Attachment 1). Of significance to the T2030 strategy, these targets include:

- 40% of 25-34 year-olds will have attained at least a bachelor-level qualification by 2025 (current attainment is approx 32%);
- Students from low socio-economic backgrounds will comprise 20% of undergraduate enrolments in higher education by 2020;

2.1.1 Increasing access

The targets above complement targets set by the Council of Australian Governments to increase access to university study by: improving outcomes for young people achieving Year 12 or equivalent; halving the gap for Indigenous students in Year 12 or equivalent; increasing the number of Australians with VTE qualifications (Certificate III; diplomas and advanced diplomas).

Other elements of the Bradley Review of relevance to T2030 include:

2.1.2 National Regional University

The Bradley Review notes that a regional stand-alone university requires a minimum population catchment of 500 000 to be economically viable with an enrolment of 5000 (full time equivalent) students. It went on to recommend consideration of the development of a national regional university to provide higher education and training across regional and remote Australia. The Federal response has been to undertake a feasibility study into how Charles Sturt University and Southern Cross University might combine to provide enhanced services and support for regional education more broadly.

Charles Darwin University believes that, as the University of the Northern Territory, it has a significant responsibility to be responsive to the needs of the Territory and that it is an essential component of the Territory's social, environmental and economic prosperity. The delivery of tertiary education in northern Australia is considerably more challenging than many other regions of Australia due to the population size, infrastructure and delivery costs. The strong support of the Northern Territory Government and the Northern Territory community is crucial to the long term viability of the Territory's university.

In response to the issues raised in the Bradley Review and the Australian Government's response to it, Charles Darwin University is developing a partnership model as one solution to the difficulties facing regional universities and communities seeking high quality tertiary education. Partnerships with Flinders University in South Australia; the Australian National University; Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education and James Cook University will build

critical mass and increase opportunities for students in the Northern Territory to obtain degrees accredited by institutions in collaboration with Charles Darwin University without the need to leave the Territory.

However, the debate highlights the difficulties faced by education and training institutions in the Northern Territory where the market for students is ‘thin’ and the viability of additional providers establishing themselves in this context is questionable even when considering the projected population growth of the Northern Territory over a 20-year period.

It also emphasizes Charles Darwin University as the University of the Northern Territory and as such, it is the view of the University that Charles Darwin University warrants greater profile and support in the 2030 strategy.

2.1.3 Research

The Federal Government response to the Bradley Review allows for an increase in funding to support the indirect costs of research through the Research Infrastructure Block Grant Scheme. Incentives to encourage joint research engagement are also a feature of the Bradley Review and the response. Collaborative Research Networks will be established and are intended to encourage such partnerships. The partnership model being developed by CDU will directly enhance our collaborative research linkages and opportunities to leverage funding from the Australian Government.

2.2 Cutler Review

The Cutler Review of August 2008 focuses on the need for innovation and its role in determining prosperity. A thriving research environment provided by the university sector is an essential element. One national innovation priority identified by the Review is in solutions in tropical environments and applications to utilize broadband infrastructure. Annex 11 of the Cutler Review is provided in Attachment 2 and outlines the opportunities Tropical Innovation for the Northern Territory.

Research and Innovation in the tropical North will remain a priority for Charles Darwin University and should be given a greater emphasis in the 2030 strategy particularly given the projected growth in the ‘tropical economy’ world wide over the next 20 years and the opportunities that will provide to Australian research and innovation.

James Cook University in conjunction with CDU and other major agencies is preparing the response to the Cutler Review, to be presented to the Chief Scientists of Queensland, NT and WA in August 2009.

3. Territory 2030 strategy

Certain elements of the 2030 strategy are of particular interest to the University. In addition to the goals set for the education sector which will be addressed later, these elements comprise: the aspiration for Darwin to be recognised as a ‘university city’ and a hub for international students and Alice Springs a hub for remote education.

3.1 University City and Knowledge Clusters

The challenges facing an education provider in the Northern Territory have been referred to earlier. To maximize the exposure of the education sector in such a thin market, Charles Darwin University supports the development of knowledge clusters throughout the NT and particularly focused in the greater Darwin area.

These knowledge clusters could, for example, consist of a cultural precinct in the City of Darwin supported by the University's School of Creative Arts and Humanities; the re-location of the University's School of Law and Business to the city to give proximity to the business sector, NTG and the judiciary; the University is very supportive of the expansion of the Menzies School of Health Research and the Flinders University joint medical program with CDU at Royal Darwin Hospital which will form a major internationally significant health and medical research and education cluster. Furthermore, the desert knowledge precinct in Alice Springs could be further enhanced by greater involvement from CDU and other organizations. In addition, the University is considering co-location possibilities on the University's Casuarina campus that could lead to a science, technology and education knowledge cluster featuring the recently announced Australian Centre for Indigenous Knowledge and Education in collaboration with BIITE. Such 'knowledge cluster' opportunities are only possible through coordinated action by the University, Northern Territory Government and key organizations and agencies and are based on the premise that maximum opportunity can be achieved through models of proximity and co-location particularly in relation to education, research and innovation.

Closer links are also required with Darwin City Council and government agencies responsible for town planning and events management for the vision of a university city to be realized symbolically and materially. For instance, greater involvement of the community in major academic activities would enable members of the public to celebrate the achievements of the community's staff and student population. The goal would be to ensure the presence of Charles Darwin University as a pervasive aspect of the economic and social lives of all Northern Territory towns and communities. It is already one of the largest employers, but more work is required to encourage small to medium enterprises to see campus populations as target groups that could be catered for; whilst also highlighting the presence of the University and its existing business centres (such as Territory FM; the book store – one of only two independent bookstores in Darwin; CDU Press; and the Northern Editions) as additional contributions to the Territory economy.

3.2 Hub for International Students

The University strongly supports the role of the Northern Territory in being a bridge between Asia and Australia, with this aspiration aligning very closely with the University's own. The University has established a strong reputation for its research and collaborative teaching activity in eastern Indonesia and Timor-Leste in particular, where there has been active engagement for many years.

The University currently has approximately 0.25% of the onshore higher education student population in Australia and expects this to grow to 1%, equating to 4000 international students by 2030.

It is the view of the University that the challenges from the relatively modest population and market are such that we would question the long term economic viability of other quality providers of international education entering the market with a major base in Darwin. These challenges could partly be addressed through partnership arrangements with Charles Darwin University to share facilities and student support and accommodation services and the University would be interested in exploring such options.

The University would also like to suggest that the impact of dramatic increases in international student numbers be considered carefully in framing the long term targets for international student numbers. In particular there are concerns in many large metropolitan and regional universities about international students dominating some classes due to comparatively low numbers of domestic students in some programs; pressures on access to affordable and quality student housing in close proximity to facilities and support services for international students would all need to be considered and enhanced and steps taken to ensure tensions, similar to those recently witnessed in Melbourne, do not develop. This need to develop a more holistic approach to the education of international students is recognized and recommended by the Bradley Review and is critical to maintaining a sustainable international student presence in any jurisdiction. The potential reputational damage that can occur to an educational organization through incidents with poor support for international students in overseas markets cannot be underestimated.

The potential contribution that international students could make to workforce development in the Northern Territory could also be mentioned in the strategy in support of reasonable growth targets.

3.3 Alice Springs: A hub for remote education

The University strongly supports this aspiration and notes that it is crucial to build the capacity of the community in Alice Springs to support research and higher education in Central Australia.

The use of broadband technology will be essential to improving access to education and training in Central Australia. The University, with support from the Northern Territory Government, is making an application to the Federal Government's Education Investment Fund to support technological development for the delivery of education and training in Central Australia, including the border lands in South Australia, Queensland and Western Australia.

4. 2030 Priority: Education

Northern Territory residents currently account for between 0.35 and 0.4% of higher education completions nationally. It is significant that 30% of Charles Darwin University students are from interstate, studying externally (the University currently has more than 3% of the distance education market in Australia). From a total number of higher education students (head count) of 6397, in 2007, Charles Darwin University had 4265 higher education Territory resident students.

The University estimates, given the higher education targets agreed to by the Federal Government and referred to in 2.1, that the Northern Territory would need to provide places for approximately 20 000 resident students in 2030 to reach the 1% target set by the strategy.

It is the view of the University that this target, whilst consistent with the proportion of population, is extraordinarily challenging, particularly given that there has been an overall 18% decline in the number of Territorians participating in higher education between 2001 and 2007. Consequently this decline would need to be reversed and a significant new cohort of students would need to be attracted into higher education. Clearly, a growth of this magnitude, even over this time-frame would create major infrastructure and human resource challenges for any education or training provider in the NT. It will also create a very significant need for additional enabling and foundation programs to provide pathways for students from disadvantaged backgrounds into higher education.

The following points, relevant to the goals set in this section, might also be made:

- Formal recognition of the knowledge and skills of Indigenous people is a missing element and should be incorporated into the strategy;
- That a large proportion of international students could dominate classes/student demographics in Darwin as the higher education international student population grows without a commensurate growth in Australian Territory resident students and that the impact of a growth in international student numbers need to be considered carefully;
- Better school outcomes are required to increase tertiary study opportunities for Northern Territory residents – the increased access referred to in 2.1;
- The achievement of targets in vocational education and training (VTE) will be dependent on funding, particularly for remote delivery;
- The University suggests the establishment of a committee/think tank to examine labour market demands to inform planning in relation to VET and higher education;
- Access to preferred areas of study will require critical mass to allow for delivery and sustainability.

4.1 Quality

The University is aware of perceptions that the quality of the teaching and learning experience for some students in some courses at Charles Darwin University is less than satisfactory and that the University does not compare favourably on certain specific measures of the quality of higher education teaching and learning in use across the sector in Australia. However it is worth noting that in terms of measures in common use to assess the quality of training delivered by VET providers, Charles Darwin University has outcomes that are at or above national average performance. Charles Darwin University also offers a range of professional programs in higher education which have met stringent external accreditation requirements and in several areas produces graduates with strong employment outcomes. It should also be noted that the quality of Charles Darwin University's postgraduate research programs are highly regarded.

The University confirms that it aspires to be a higher education provider that is recognized for the quality of its teaching and learning and that this is a current strategic priority for the University. The University has recently received significant funding from the Australian Government's Diversity and Structural Reform Fund to progress a major project to achieve a step change towards achieving best practice in flexible delivery with a concomitant improvement in teaching and learning involving upgrading of learning management systems, training of staff in modern pedagogic practice, external evaluation by national experts of the quality of learning

methods and materials across a wide range of disciplines coupled with application of resources to achieve improvement were identified as needed and work on identifying and implementing best practice in the use of learning technologies to effect maximum outcomes for students from equity target groups. The University will make further significant investment over the next few years in additional staffing, staff support and infrastructure to lever further improvement in the quality of its teaching and learning enterprise.

In particular in the period 2009–2012, Charles Darwin University will be making a total investment (including Federal Government and partner funding) exceeding \$10 million directly addressing the implementation of flexible delivery and the quality of teaching and learning at the University.

The aspiration of the University is to obtain 5-star recognition for the quality of its teaching and learning in the Good Universities Guide.

5. Territory 2030 Focus Areas

Charles Darwin University would like to highlight its ability to contribute to all of the identified focus areas, particularly in providing evidence-based research and contributing to workforce development. In particular, the School of Social Policy and Research has already provided a significant contribution to work of the 2030 strategy and will continue to be an active participant as will the School of Education with its focus on producing quality teachers for the Northern Territory.

The University, as well as the Menzies School of Health Research, has a major focus on, and significant expertise in, Health and Wellbeing through the School of Health Sciences and the Graduate School of Health Practice and the Environment, through the Schools of Environmental Research and Environment and Life Sciences.

The University is willing to contribute to any further development of these focus areas of the strategy. A number of points on the strategy's focus areas have been provided to the University from its canvassing of thoughts on the strategy.

5.1 Prosperity

In terms of economic development the University notes the strategy's recognition that there is a great deal that needs to be done both to develop the existing activities and to attract new ones. The Northern Territory is not unique in its search for economic development; the same is true of every Australian State and Asian nation. The Northern Territory needs to differentiate itself if it is to gain sustainable competitive advantage. The University makes the following points on this particular focus area:

- The provision of environmental services is largely missing from the economic aspirations and a statement in relation to this should be given a greater profile in the final strategy;
- There was no mention of support for the growth of creative/knowledge-based industries in this focus and this should be addressed;
- That opportunities may arise from the carbon constraints likely to be imposed from outside for attracting investment in carbon management by natural systems;

- That entrepreneurship needs to be developed as a culture and Charles Darwin University could contribute to this as well as acting as a catalyst for innovation and the commercialization of research;
- That it will be a major challenge to turn Darwin into one of Australia's most affordable cities (comments from students and staff);

5.2 Environment

The University supports the aspirations of the strategy and makes the following points:

- Aspirational targets for the proportion of Indigenous people actively engaged in caring for country as an indicator of Indigenous well-being could be considered;
- Biodiversity is seen largely as a liability/responsibility; it could become a major asset in terms of adding value to carbon investments;

5.3 Knowledge, Creativity and Innovation

The University acknowledges its role in expanding, developing and capitalising on Territory opportunities in innovation, knowledge and creativity. The University has an obligation to assist with the dissemination of research outcomes covering issues of importance to the communities of the regions in all of the focus areas, to the widest possible audience, including both academia and general public.

The University supports the development of a number of major centres of research and teaching around existing strengths and recommends that attention be paid to the opportunities for tropical innovation.

Opportunities for accessing Federal Government funding will be enhanced through strong partnerships with local and national institutions and the University is actively pursuing this model. The University seeks the support of the 2030 Steering Committee in emphasizing the important role of Charles Darwin University in the provision of quality research of relevance to the Northern Territory.

6. Implementation

Charles Darwin University seeks to actively contribute to the future development of the Territory 2030 strategy and to the implementation plans across the focus areas. In addition, the University would be willing to participate in the education alliance/committee recommended in the strategy and would support its immediate establishment.

In particular, the University requests that any targets related to education, training and research be aligned with those that are being developed nationally.

Summary of CDU recommendations

It is recommended that:

1. Charles Darwin University be recognized as the University of the Northern Territory and as such, be given greater profile in the 2030 strategy;
2. That there be a greater emphasis on the opportunities for research and innovation in the tropical North in the 2030 strategy;
3. The development of 'knowledge clusters' to promote Darwin as a University City and more broadly in major centres across the NT be considered as part of the 2303 strategy;
4. The impact of increases in international student numbers be considered carefully as a more holistic approach to the education of international students is being considered at a national level;
5. The potential contribution that international students could make to workforce development in the Northern Territory be mentioned in the strategy;
6. The 1% target set by the strategy be revised in the light of the fact that this would require the Northern Territory to provide places for approximately 20 000 resident students in the Northern Territory in 2030;
7. Formal recognition of the knowledge and skills of Indigenous people be incorporated into the strategy;
8. A committee/think tank to examine labour market demands to inform planning in relation to VTE and higher education be established;
9. The University aspires to obtain 5-star recognition for the quality of its teaching and learning in the Good Universities Guide;
10. The provision of environmental services be given a greater profile in the prosperity focus in the final strategy;
11. Support for the growth of creative/knowledge-based industries be addressed in the prosperity focus area on the final strategy;
12. The strategy note, in the prosperity focus, the opportunities that may arise from the carbon constraints likely to be imposed from outside for attracting investment in carbon management by natural systems;

13. The prosperity focus note that entrepreneurship be developed as a culture and Charles Darwin University could contribute to this as well as acting as a catalyst for innovation and the commercialization of research;
14. Aspirational targets for the proportion of Indigenous people actively engaged in caring for country as in indicator of Indigenous well-being could be considered;
15. Biodiversity is seen largely as a liability/responsibility in the environment focus and it is recommended that it be seen as a major asset in terms of adding value to carbon investments;
16. Charles Darwin University actively contribute to the future development of the Territory 2030 strategy and to the implementation plans across the focus areas as well being a participant in the education alliance/committee;
17. Any targets related to education, training and research be aligned with those that are being developed nationally.

Attachments

Attachment 1: *Transforming Australia's Higher Education System*, Commonwealth of Australia, 2009

Attachment 2: Annex 11, *VenturousAustralia: Building Strength in Innovation*, Cutler & Company Pty Ltd, 2008