



Employment White Paper

University of Tasmania Submission

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UNIVERSITY of
TASMANIA 

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Acknowledgment of Country

The University of Tasmania pays its respects to elders past and present and to the many Aboriginal people that did not make elder status and to the Tasmanian Aboriginal community that continues to care for Country. We acknowledge the profound effect of climate change on this Country and seek to work alongside Tasmanian Aboriginal communities, with their deep wisdom and knowledge, to address climate change and its impacts.

The Palawa people belong to one of the world's oldest living cultures, continually resident on this Country for over 40,000 years. They have survived and adapted to significant climate changes over this time, such as sea-level rise and extreme rainfall variability, and as such embody thousands of generations of intimate place-based knowledge.

We acknowledge with deep respect that this knowledge represents a range of cultural practices, wisdom, traditions, and ways of knowing the world that provide accurate and useful climate change information, observations, and solutions.

The University of Tasmania likewise recognises a history of truth that acknowledges the impacts of invasion and colonisation upon Aboriginal people, resulting in forcible removal from their lands.

Our island is deeply unique, with cities and towns surrounded by spectacular landscapes of bushland, waterways, mountain ranges, and beaches.

The University of Tasmania stands for a future that profoundly respects and acknowledges Aboriginal perspectives, culture, language, and history, and a continued effort to fight for Aboriginal justice and rights paving the way for a strong future.

Executive Summary

The National Skills Commission (2022) projects that over the five years to November 2026, 91.7% of new jobs will require post-school education, and more than three-fifths of the total projected employment growth will be in high skill level jobs.

Education is the vehicle through which knowledge and skills are strengthened. It helps to overcome poverty, injustice, and inequality, promoting human rights while benefiting our environment, health and economic outlook. With higher rates of education, employment rates increase, along with productivity and average incomes. Crime and substance abuse drop. Data shows we become healthier. We live longer. More knowledge leads to more sustainable environmental management. Further, through education, we can create safe spaces for learning, enlightenment, and development for all.

In responding to the Employment White Paper, the University of Tasmania proposes more flexible funding arrangements combined with some targeted additional support that will increase education and employment outcomes, provide the necessary workforce in critical areas for Tasmania and enhance life-long learning and skill building through improved regional access and engagement.

We propose achieving this through:

- Funding flexibility to enable further differential pricing, removing financial barriers to grow disadvantaged cohorts accessing education in Tasmania
- Leveraging our experience in delivering micro-credentials to lead a pilot that demonstrates short-term learning as building blocks to higher education for disadvantaged cohorts, especially those in rural and remote communities
- Increasing scholarships to support undergraduate, postgraduate and vocational education and training for students who face disadvantages
- Supporting the design and implementation of a community-led, place-based employment model through the \$15 million Regional Jobs Hub program, that increases access, employment, workforce preparedness and participation across our regions

We provide access and expertise for and from Tasmania

As the sole University based in Tasmania, we are responsible for educating much of the future workforce that Tasmanians will rely upon during their life, such as teachers, farmers, lawyers, paramedics, nurses, doctors and social workers, just to name a few. It is therefore imperative that the graduates we train meet the needs of our community and can adapt and evolve to suit changes in industry.

Despite the attractions of living in Tasmania and strong population growth in recent years, we face serious challenges in increasing employment and participation both now and into the future. Tasmania has a disproportionately high number of people facing disadvantage in all its forms, including those living in rural and remote areas, First Nations people, unique and complex health challenges and the lowest digital literacy in Australia. Tasmania has the highest proportion of people living in the most disadvantages areas (37%)¹. We have the highest rate of disability (26.8% compared with 17.7% nationally),² and we have some of the poorest health outcomes in the country. Tasmania also has the lowest proportion of people with a university degree at 16.2%, compared 22% nationally³, and 48% of adults are functionally illiterate⁴.

Central to what makes these challenges hard to address are low levels of educational attainment in Tasmania. Currently, Tasmania has the highest proportion of adults with only year 11 education outcomes or below. This poor educational attainment magnifies our economic challenges, with unemployment in Tasmania consistently higher than nationally at 3.7%, compared to the national 3.4% for July 2022, and we have the lowest level of workforce participation at 60.6% compared with the national average of 66.4%. Our geographic remoteness adds further complexity, with Tasmania being the least digitally inclusive state, recording an average score of 66 compared to the national average of 71.1.⁵

Delivering our mission to address these challenges has allowed our university to develop expert teaching and support practices to regional, remote and low SES cohorts, attracting more of these students than the average university, with higher number of:

- regional and remote domestic students (61% vs national average of 24%),
- low SES students (27% vs national average of 18%), and
- mature age students (~80% of our total student cohort), compared to 60% of other universities that teach predominately school-leavers

We have also tailored our offerings to meet the areas of high need in Tasmania, such as key occupations with skill shortages, and this is delivering strong employment outcomes. For example, our Graduate Outcome Survey results from 2017-2021 show:

- 100% employment outcomes for UTAS graduates in Rehabilitation Studies
- Over 96% employment outcomes for UTAS Pharmacy, Agriculture and Medical graduates
- Over 90% employment for teachers, process and resource engineers, nursing and allied health, behavioral science and architecture graduates

These outcomes are compared to the national undergraduate bachelor domestic employment rate of 87.9% (2017-2021). And we seek to do more of this.

¹ ABS 2016 Census, Index of Relative Socio-Economic Disadvantage

² [Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers 2018](#)

³ <https://www.abs.gov.au/census/find-census-data/quickstats/2021/6>

⁴ ABS (2018), 2016 Census QuickStats

⁵ <https://www.digitalinclusionindex.org.au/dashboard/National.aspx>

With funding flexibility to enable further differential pricing, we can continue to remove financial barriers and increase equity and access for disadvantaged cohorts in Tasmania

In 2020 we were able to deliver strong growth in equity and access to higher education using differential pricing. However, our current projections indicate that the number of students we expect to articulate to further study in 2023 and 2024 means that we will exceed our MBGA funding cap.

Reaching our cap will restrict our ability to provide training and education that meets our skill shortages areas, especially to those who face challenges to entering the workforce.

Additional government support in increasing our cap will enable the University to have broader impact through attracting low SES and disadvantaged groups to higher education that contribute positively to social and economic outcomes for Tasmania.



Proudly from Burnie, Bonita Raimondo has overcome self-doubt in her ability to succeed and a series of life challenges, to be undertaking the final year of a Bachelor of Social Work with Honours

“I came from a low-income family that did it pretty tough at times, and I’d left school after finishing Year 10,” Boni said

Moving away to study wasn’t an option, but the ability to study different units in health and social work at the Cradle Coast campus enabled Boni to embark on a university journey without having to leave the region.

“I don’t think I would have pursued university if the course and campus had not been here. The leap of faith of doing study was big enough, let alone moving away,” Boni said.

We can leverage our experience in delivering micro-credentials to lead a pilot that demonstrates short-term learning as building blocks to industry-focused higher education for disadvantaged cohorts

Since COVID, we have seen strong demand in short-term skills and education, with 12,500+ short course participants, 2,474 enrolments in undergraduate certificates and 7,758 enrolments in Grad Certs from 2020-2022. These offerings have quickly become a pathway into higher education for students with no prior educational attainment, and we continue to attract more than the national average (22.4% in UGC vs 13.2%, and 4.9% in UG Bachelors vs 3.2% nationally). Offering these micro-credentials is successfully breaking down barriers of higher education to upskill or retrain for our high proportion of regional and disadvantaged communities and enhancing life-long learning for all Tasmanians.

Further, we have more than 1,500 students enrolled this year across our suite of undergraduate certificates in agribusiness, ICT, community support, education support and sustainable living, demonstrating how we are leveraging government policy changes to inject the Tasmanian workforce with skilled professionals.

We know though that price is a significant barrier for our students, particularly our non-school leaver cohorts who additionally worry about finding a balance with study and life commitments. However, our current funding model prioritises and rewards completion of entire degrees, which at times is at odds with industry need. A more adaptable funding model that encourages flexible use of CGS funding would leverage our credentialing framework to build university qualifications through shorter-form offerings. This would enable us to deliver more education and upskilling to professionalise emerging industries and build a more sustainable workforce for Tasmania.

The University would like the opportunity to further demonstrate how we can be innovative with funding systems to deliver industry-focussed micro-credentials through the Microcredentials Pilot in Higher Education.



During the pandemic we experienced first-hand the benefit of short form education, to lift industry capability quickly and efficiently.

As COVID-19 first broke, our staff and students were called upon to assist the State's Health Department to respond and provide upskilling to Departmental staff in managing the disease.

In response, we worked with the Department and broader healthcare industry to develop a four-day, face-to-face micro-credential in outbreak management. This short course has since attracted interest from State Health Departments across the country.

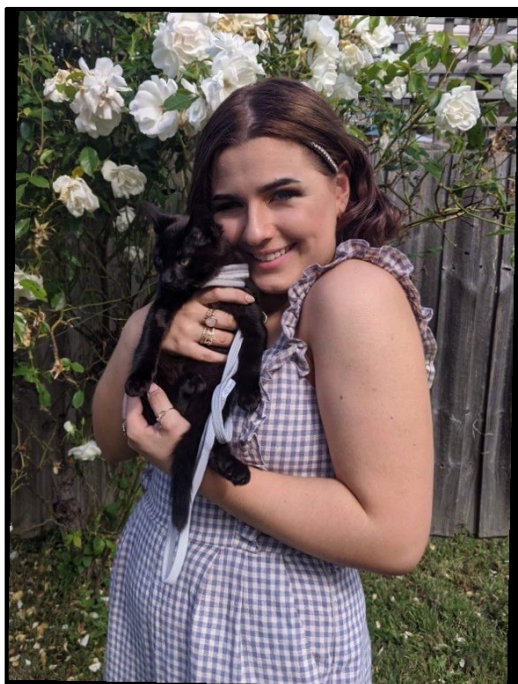
We continue to deliver the microcredential as a service to our communities.

Through increasing the number of scholarships available to support higher education and training for students, we can increase access to education and employment for those who face disadvantages

We know that many mature students from low SES backgrounds at regional Australian universities experience significant financial pressures that can contribute to their struggles to complete study. These pressures include the cost of study materials and university travel on top of the usual living expenses, such as supporting a family, often while on a reduced income. Many of these students must make difficult choices about their priorities that other students do not have to make.

The University is deeply committed to eliminating barriers to education, yet we know we can do more. Every year approximately 1,000 Tasmanians who have been offered a university place can't afford to take up this opportunity.

With additional support we seek to increase the number of students accessing a university education through needs-based scholarship support from 150 to 1000 students every year.



Growing up in an environment of instability and domestic abuse, Ali experienced prolonged homelessness at the age of 17. As a result, she struggled to complete Year 12.

Thankfully, Ali's teachers believed in her and together they advocated for her education. Ali knew that she belonged at university. She never wanted her past to prevent her from moving forward, and she wanted to reclaim control over who she became.

Accepted into the Bachelor of Justice Studies, Ali was awarded a Southern Lights Access Scholarship. The regular payments she receives make it possible for Ali to live comfortably while focusing on her studies.

Ali believes we can uplift and encourage the students of tomorrow, helping their dreams to come true. Not only has access to university given Ali a career pathway, but it also allowed her to think forward, instead of back.

Support the design and implementation of community-led, place-based employment models that increase access, employment, workforce preparedness and participation across our regions

Beyond accessing relevant education opportunities, job seekers in regional Tasmania face additional barriers to securing and sustaining work which vary from community to community, and further contribute to low rates of workforce participation. Development of new and innovative approaches are required to further build access and participation to employment.

The University is supporting the development, implementation and evaluation of community-led, place-based employment models, for example through the Tasmanian Government's \$15 million Regional Jobs Hub (RJH) program. The RJH is an innovative community-led model now operating at seven sites across Tasmania, with a view to coordinating training and employment services to better meet community needs. The RJH approach supports sub-regional networks that connect employers with potential workers, and which provide skills and other supports (such as digital inclusion) to enable and sustain access to employment through partnership with community sector agencies.

Preliminary evidence indicates the effectiveness of the RJH model, and the University will continue to work with the Tasmanian Government, industries and communities to evaluate and measure the impact and effectiveness of the program. We would welcome the opportunity to work with the Australian government to scale this program and deliver better employment outcomes across regional Australia.



The Tasmanian Government, in partnership with industry and the University, has invested more than \$15 million into the creation of the Regional Jobs Hub Network to coordinate efforts to increase employment, training and workforce participation in our regions.

This model has been proven to work, with the initial pilot delivering more than 2,000 job outcomes and a better joined up approach between service providers and funders.

The model has been shared as an exemplar approach to community led work through Stronger Places, Stronger People agenda.