



# **University of Tasmania Strategic Direction**

November 2018

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# Introduction

Conversation and collegiality are at the heart of universities, and this year we have been having rich discussions around a series of themes that could guide our future. Space for such conversations should always be available. Equally, there comes a point when we need to settle some of those themes, so they can guide our decisions and our choices. Now is a good moment to summarise where we are settling as we move from these broad discussions about identity and direction to detailed planning.

These conversations have shaped a view that our University be place-based, but globally connected and excellent, and right-sized and responsive. Also, that it shifts its operating approach from a hub-and-spoke model to one which is regionally networked and designed to deliver quality and access to higher education for the whole state. We have highlighted the importance of a people-centred approach, of working with each other through the College model to deliver our mission, and to find simpler ways to operate so more of our time is spent on what matters.

The following attempts to honour the contribution of hundreds of members of our community, drawing together the basis of a new strategic direction for our University community.

It is only a summary and as such will always be at risk of being read to over or under emphasise a theme, an idea or part of University life. I hope that where this has occurred it will be read as an invitation to a conversation.

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# Place-based and globally connected

## Honouring our first people and their ongoing contribution

Any conversation about place in Tasmania needs to start with acknowledgement of the traditional owners and their deep history with these lands and waters. As a culture whose system of knowledge is structured by place, which at times is talked about in the language of ‘country’, there is opportunity to ever deepen our understanding of what a place-based university is and might be. We can do this through conversations with Aboriginal Tasmanians and we can celebrate that, despite dispossession and invasion, their culture has the strength and depth today to make a shaping contribution to our future.

## A place where we do things for Tasmania and from Tasmania

Place shapes our mission and how we deliver it. It starts with Tasmania because that is our home, but it does not end there. Being the University of Tasmania makes us both a University *for* Tasmania but also one where we do things *from* Tasmania.

We are a university that was founded to serve an entire state and its people, and we remain the only university specifically for this society. Such societies are characterised by the value they place on education, discovery and creativity as ennobling ends of human life in themselves. Equally, sustainable social, economic and cultural progress requires ever higher levels of capability and constant discovery to solve the complex problems and questions that we face. There are always these two parts to our mission and we need to avoid false forced choices that we need to do one over the other. Our task is to find the way to do both.

Today education, knowledge and creative productions are critical to future social and economic wellbeing, and even more so in a regional island setting with a small population. In a world where globalisation favours large, globally connected metropolitan areas, regional economies will always have to work harder to find the distinctive sources of advantage that are needed to generate wealth, services and infrastructure required to support a decent quality of life here. Regional areas like Tasmania have to deal with the challenges of complex social disadvantage left by the disruptive impact of the global economy, which has seen work and opportunity leave the state to locations with lower labour or input costs, and greater economies of scale. While for some in Tasmania these are relatively buoyant times, our task is to look to these considerable long-term challenges. Our population is ageing. We have poor social and health indicators that are second only to the Northern Territory. We have challenges with our underlying measures of economic competitiveness such as productivity.

Central to our place-based mission is our ability to work in partnership with the community, industry and government to solve the complex problems underlying these issues and to create a prosperous, inclusive and sustainable future for Tasmania.

We have enormous capacity across a generation to do so through our teaching, our research, the creative output we produce and the partnerships we form.

These ideas have long characterised the University and are held dear by so many of its people. In affirming this direction, we are building on a cultural DNA that runs deep in the University.

## Our teaching has huge impact

We educate a great proportion of the population from teachers and nurses to engineers and artists. How well we equip our students for Tasmania’s future will in turn shape how well educated our children are, how healthy our community is, how well run our farms are and so on. We don’t just prepare them for careers but increasingly we support their re-skilling, up-skilling, and preparedness to successfully engage in a global society throughout their lives. The more we understand how and what we teach contributes to Tasmania, the greater the impact we will have.

As we think about the impact of teaching and learning, we must never lose sight of the intrinsic value and excitement of learning and inquiry itself. For all we think about the many and broad purposes of education, it should never be reduced to a utilitarian or instrumental project.

## Our research and creative expression can shape the state

The freedom to expand the frontiers of knowledge and creative expression should always be the starting point of universities. Such freedom is integral to progressing knowledge and securing a plural society. It is a freedom we can choose to exercise in many ways. Our mission invites us to choose to focus a significant portion of our inquiry on shaping the future of the state.

The ways our research can shape the state start with its ability to offer insights and creative productions that change our understanding of the nature of Tasmania itself. Virtually every part of the University can contribute to those new and evolving understandings, from our historians, sociologists and lawyers to our economists, climatologists, ecologists and epidemiologists. Our great strengths in the

creative arts offer the capacity to generate the unique perspectives only available through the arts and to communicate them in compelling ways.

While reshaping how we understand things can be the most powerful form of change, where we choose to direct our research attention and energy will also have an impact.

On the policy front, the research we do generates evidence-based, long-term policy ideas for our tough problems from housing and transport, to environmental management and improved public health.

On the economic front, we have the capacity to create the knowledge that will both keep enterprises competitive across the state and create new jobs that Tasmania's future needs. Across the sectors of our economy, enterprises need to be more productive and competitive in a global marketplace that works against regional players.

Productivity is important, creating jobs is vital. In Australia, enterprises older than about five years are on average net destroyers of jobs. Most new jobs come from growing new enterprises, and these jobs are more likely to be well paid if they rely on the type of skills and knowledge that come from university-level education.

Our place-based focus insists that we remember that many of Tasmania's social difficulties are grounded in economic disadvantage. We must, therefore, work both to support the creation of quality jobs and provide the education to make them accessible. As we think about these social challenges, we have capacity for our research to discover innovative solutions to deliver public and community services and, critically, to build capability in communities to lead the solutions themselves.

Our work occurs in an environment of extraordinary significance and beauty. Islands are great reminders that we have to work with ecosystems not against them. Sustainability is a theme that needs to echo through all that we do. There

are few places where the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, which the University has embraced to help shape its strategic direction, could be more important. Our research is vital to understand what they could mean for the University, Tasmania and the world.

All the while, we continue to discover the undiscovered in our wild places on land and at sea. Those living things that are new to us are reminders of the preciousness of the place where we live, work and explore. And that sense of wonder in the discovery itself also reminds us that, whatever good it does, great research is always an end in itself.

## **Partnerships are critical to our mission**

As the sole university for Tasmania, we have a unique ability to work in partnership with government and community to deliver public services like health and education. Similarly, we can engage in long-term partnerships for economic development with different levels of government and industry. Equally important can be the way we work collaboratively with companies or community organisations. These university partnerships should be characterised by both a commitment to collaborative work and the essential preservation of a truly evidence-based and independent perspective. To manage any tensions, they need to be relational and built around a shared mission and values, rather than be transactional in nature.

## **From Tasmania to the world**

If part of our place-based mission is to be the University *for* Tasmania, we are strategically placed in the world to do vital things *from* Tasmania.

Many of Tasmania's world-class research strengths are built on our rich history and remarkable place in the world. Our proximity to the Southern Ocean

and Antarctica has produced research strengths in oceanography and climate science. Our view of the southern sky has for years led to a world-class academic pedigree in astronomy and astrophysics. The nature of our island and its population allows the study of population health not possible anywhere else in the world. We are an island whose dependence on the sea has given us a rich maritime history. It makes us a natural home for the Australian Maritime College with its national mission and international reach. With its distinctive expertise the College has a vital role to play for Australia as we seek to create a sovereign naval shipbuilding capability.

## **Place shapes how we deliver our mission**

Being place-based doesn't just shape our mission, it shapes how we deliver it. We have an incredible natural environment close at hand and the possibilities to provide a truly immersive experience for our students. Few other universities can offer the opportunity to engage with wilderness and ecosystems like our University can. The student learning experience can engage with the rich and complex history on our doorstep. Equally, our smaller scale and closeness to local communities should characterise our University communities as personal and connected. That unique experience we create for our students should always be at the centre of our concerns.

## **Place-based beyond the island and online**

We need to consider what place-based means for the important work we do off the island, especially on our campus in Sydney and through our partnerships in China. ‘Place-based’ is an approach to education rather than something for Tasmania alone. We can apply it anywhere we are operating. Critically, it means attending to the needs of the communities and people we are working with and asking how does the place we are working in shape what we do? In Sydney, we have a very focused program built around deep relationships with the healthcare system. Being place-based in approach is critical and it is one of the ways we can sustain being a distinctive contributor in a highly competitive system.

Equally, what does place-based mean when we are delivering our online offerings? Our online courses are an opportunity to share with a much wider community the fruits of what we have learned from our place-based approach. Indeed, some of our most successful online offerings, like family history and the dementia MOOCs, have arisen from a very strong engagement with the specifics of our place and they offer people the opportunity to engage richly and distinctively with their places.

## **Globally connected and excellent**

While a strong local focus is a starting point, in today’s world we have to look to the globe. One of the great strengths of a geographically remote university is that we are part of a global community of scholarship that is remarkably borderless. Across our disciplines are globally uniting practices of inquiry and standards for scholarship. The enterprise of discovery and learning is a global one. It reminds us that the project of pushing the boundaries of understanding and creativity is a project of and for all humanity.

Our connectivity long pre-dates globalisation and should never be reduced to it. We are united through values and relationships rather than through the value of transactions. Through these relationships we can bring the best of global understanding to the most remote places, and from those places contribute the insights that come from the unique vantage point of looking from the edge rather than the centre.

We should always care about our standing in global academic communities. It is part of the calibration of our competence and how we signal to those looking to make important contributions here in Tasmania that they are joining a community of peers of equal standing.

It is here that rankings have their place. For all their imperfections, they are a signal to others and provide us with data that invites questions about aspects of our performance and ensures we are never just self-referential in our evaluations.

It matters for Tasmania that we have our eye firmly on international standards because, in many ways, global excellence matters more in regional places than it does in big metropolitan places. Where our success is so tied to the world, we and our students should always have a global outlook. It is why it matters so much that we welcome international students and academic colleagues to be part of our community. For whatever opportunity we provide, they give us the opportunity to see the world through a global prism. Being part of our community brings long-term relationships that build global networks. These help our island to be truly connected to the world today. In time, as students and colleagues – local and international – make their home here or far away, they will retain their bonds and affections for this place.



Image courtesy Tourism Tasmania and Jason Charles Hill

# Right-sized and responsive

## Challenging the growth model by allowing mission to shape our scale and scope

When we have a clear place-based mission, we don't need to grow indefinitely. Rather, we can determine what size and shape we need to be to sustainably deliver our mission of contributing to Tasmania's future and making our global contribution over the long term.

These are questions of **breadth**, **regionality** and **access**, which shape the size we need to be to deliver our mission.

**Breadth:** We need to have the staff to offer the broad range of subjects a modern society and economy require, and at the levels required from pre-degree to postgraduate. Similarly, we are the principal agent for conducting the research that the island needs, and we have to be suitably equipped for that task.

**Regionality:** For reasons we will explore below, we need to be able to offer place-based education across the state and place-based research that is connected to the needs of our regions.

**Access:** We need to be able to offer higher education for people with a whole range of backgrounds. There is not a single model to do so and we need to support multiple models, which is why developing our University College is so important.

Such a broad scope is resource intensive. It requires more people and a wider spectrum of skills than in universities with narrower missions. The physical footprint of campuses and buildings needed to support this mission is considerable and costly.

The right size is not just the ability to pay our staff and our way each year but also the ability to save enough each year to support our research, teaching and the broader student and staff experience. Here the University of Tasmania has a substantial task. We have not in modern times, or even before then, been able to produce a model which allows us to operate in the way we need to, to deliver a consistent process of renewal on our campuses and keep up to date the cutting-edge facilities required to be a research-intensive institution. Our existing facilities were largely built with Commonwealth funds more than a generation ago.

If not for the nationally unique Commonwealth, State and University investment in the Northern Transformation, we would be facing the prospect of campus closures in Launceston and Burnie – not their renewal. Now we are more confident in the mission we need to deliver, we cannot afford it to be dependent on scarce public resources for which there is intense competition across the sector. We have to be able to make our own way. Today we barely break even. To be sustainable, we need to generate savings of about \$30 million a year. That sounds a lot but, in reality, it is necessary for us to be self-sufficient and deliver our mission with the sense of confidence and purpose we require.

Reaching this surplus will take time and to do so we need to be bigger and more efficient than we are today. In terms of being bigger, we need to grow the number of domestic students who study our core offerings, both as undergraduates and at postgraduate level. They are the backbone of our ability to maintain critical mass in our disciplines. Yet year-on-year this number has been shrinking right across the University. Mostly, it is driven by an ever-larger number of Tasmanians going to Victoria to study. We have been losing about 1% a year for a long time, so that today more than 1 in 5 leave Tasmania, and in the North and North-West it is 1 in 4.

We have not succeeded in attracting a balancing number of students from the mainland. This decline is ultimately a threat to the character and future of the University. If we don't have a critical mass of students to support teaching and research in particular areas, these areas will cease to be sustainable and they won't be able to continue, as has already occurred. As the number of those areas increase, our capacity to have the breadth of offerings a university needs to be a generalist institution will be lost. The decline in core domestic numbers has largely been masked financially by the rise in international students, but they will always only be attracted to a limited part of our offering. The sustainability of the rest depends on us restoring those numbers in core subjects.

Our state's population of about 500,000 isn't big enough to support a university that operates at the scale and level of excellence that the Tasmanian community requires. Today, more than half the revenue that funds the University comes from outside Tasmania in the form of international students, mainland students taught online or in Sydney, and grants from the Commonwealth and other off-island funders.

Our model of being a university needs to adapt to serve the larger number of international students for educational and sustainability reasons. Our international numbers have risen very rapidly, and we





Image courtesy Richard Jupe, The Mercury, News Ltd

have work to do to ensure international students are welcomed and supported as an essential part of the University. The educational significance of international students grows as we get a greater balance of students from a wider range of places. That greater diversity then reduces the risks of being overexposed to specific countries, particularly in turbulent geopolitical and economic times.

As we set out to build the right student profile, we need to focus not just on supporting the breadth of our offering

but also ensuring that we deepen the capabilities available to the state and ourselves by growing our proportion of postgraduate and research higher degree students.

To attract sufficient Tasmanians and mainland students at every level in a very competitive higher education market, we need to make our place-based identity not just our mission but our source of competitive advantage. We need to be bold about being place-based, using this to shape how we offer our degrees and

creating a truly distinctive offering that sets us apart from other Australian universities. On one view, this is an existential challenge. From another, it is a moment of freedom. What might seem bold or risky to others may simply be essential for us. We can be energised by this, as there is much power in differentiating and optimising yourself around your intrinsically valuable mission compared to something that you are doing only to be competitive.

# Regionally networked to provide quality and access

## Regionality, access and quality

As a university for Tasmania and its people, part of our distinctive mission is to provide a regional and accessible offering. We do that for a state with the most regionally distributed population and with far greater levels of disadvantage than other states. A strong university presence in regions is important both for their economic and social futures, and for the ease of access to education for regional communities.

For Tasmania's regions to have levels of prosperity and inclusivity comparable to other parts of Australia, they need to be producing an equivalent value of exports. This brings wealth into regions. What enables the trucks made in Burnie to be sold around the world and to beat those from lower labour-cost countries is the knowledge and skill embodied in their design and production. To sustain that advantage requires the knowledge and skill to advance ahead of competitors around the world.

Sustaining such advantages is far easier if a university is around the corner rather than hundreds of kilometres away. Much the same can be said of agriculture: if we can produce higher yields of valuable crops with fewer inputs, and deliver them fresher to market, the size and value of what is created can grow. Constantly increasing those outputs involves solving challenges on farms, literally on the paddock or in the hothouse. The nearer you are to being on hand, the easier that is to do.

Similarly, we have long ago discovered that changing social conditions from outside communities – let alone at a distance – is hard, if not impossible. To tackle complex embedded social disadvantage is a place-based project. You need people working in communities, with communities, in ways that regional campuses make possible. For the social and economic futures of these regions we need a university that is networked into the communities in each of the state's regions.

These geographic presences are critical to deliver on the value of accessibility. In

absolute terms, there are people whose circumstances mean that travelling great distances or living away from home is simply not possible. They need an offering close enough to home. Online study is only a partial solution, especially for people whose prior education has not built strong learning skills, and whose success is best enabled by face-to-face education. If we are to be a more inclusive state, then it is precisely these populations for whom education will make the greatest difference.

More broadly, there is a basic equity concern that where there is publicly funded higher education there should be equivalent opportunities to access that education for all citizens, especially given the lifetime expansion of opportunity and income it provides. Where the distances to access that education for significant groups of the population are very much greater than for others, then they can't meaningfully be said to have equitable access. Again, this makes the case for the importance of regionally based education in a state and country committed to equivalent opportunities for all.

What these regional and access elements of our mission mean is that we need to seek to provide equivalent access to

courses that provide professional pathways across the state and, in each location, to conduct the research that meets the distinctive needs of that region. We will further enhance the equitable nature of our offering as we offer more of our courses statewide.

A way of talking about having our capability located across the state, rather than focused in a single location, is in terms of changing from a 'hub-and-spoke' model to a regionally networked model. Over time we can further strengthen our networked model by locating key professional services regionally as well.

The Northern Transformation project is our vehicle to deliver for the North and North-West this model of regional and accessible education. It is first and foremost a regional social and economic development effort for which we need buildings. It aims to ensure that we create access to a broader range of professional pathway qualifications, a regionally focused research effort, quality course offerings and vibrant campuses, which helps us achieve a critical mass of students in these locations. The last of these points is critical because in the North and North-West more than 25% of students leave the state for their higher education.



# People-centred

Given that we don't have the capital to renew our physical infrastructure, it is only through Commonwealth and State funding that we can provide it. Before we received that support, the question the University faced was the viability of our Launceston campus. Unless the Northern Transformation project is a success, that question will arise again, so it is critical we get this right.

Importantly, the Northern Transformation project is not a standalone effort. It is a one-off opportunity to deploy the pillars of our university-wide mission ('place-based', 'right-sized' and 'regionality, access and quality') in the North and North-West of the state.

Our regional presence is important for access, but this alone is not enough. There are two other critical elements of our access model.

Firstly, we need an offering for students of all ages whose educational experiences haven't equipped them for a traditional university pathway or who are looking for the advanced skills needed to progress in life, but not as part of a full university degree. This is where our University College plays an essential role. University College provides a distinctive set of offerings for those students. Importantly, the way the courses are delivered is designed to enable students to reach a standard that, if they want to continue their studies, they can articulate straight into the third year of a bachelor degree program. To achieve that uplift in capability requires a different pedagogy. This is critical if we are to sustain both access and excellence.

Secondly, we need to ensure that we operate as a single higher education system with TasTAFE. It is vital to ensure the University College and TasTAFE have complementary offerings, that there are clear articulations from TasTAFE courses into the University's courses, and that our University students can readily access TasTAFE courses that will provide valuable skills to build on their degrees.

## Putting our people at the centre

Universities are purposeful communities committed to a mission and the growth and flourishing of the people who are a part of them, both staff and students.

Keeping that focus is not easy in the contemporary world. There are the challenges of operating at a very large scale with the need for some standardised process; the financial pressures of limited funding in a competitive sector; the pull of transactional rather than relational models; and language from the world of profit-maximising public companies.

To ensure we keep a people focus, we are developing a clear People Strategy. Part of that focus comes from the very character of the kind of university we want to be: values-based, relational, diverse, and development-focused.

**Values-based:** To be place-based is to put at our core a broad set of values about what we are trying to improve. To have integrity, these values that guide what we do should characterise how we do it. In practical terms, that means these values should play a central role, from recruitment and promotions through to performance management.

**Relational:** To take seriously being a community, our approach to people should be relational rather than transactional. In practical terms, that means seeking more secure models of employment that embody long-term mutual commitments to one another. Where short-term employment is needed, it means we must examine closely our support for these staff. We have much work to do to move to this sort of community. Our rates of fixed-term and casual employment, and the terms we employ people on, aren't consistent with that starting point. We have already begun to make changes and our new approach to strategic planning – which incorporates multi-year people plans – will map a path to far greater change.

**Diverse:** A healthy university community will be a diverse one for a range of reasons.

Where a university serves a society, as we do, it matters that we ensure the breadth of that society is present in our University. It creates an inclusive culture and community that has within it the myriad of perspectives needed to understand what serving our society really means. Diversity is pivotal to good decision-making and rigour in our inquiry. Our diversity expresses the priority we give to these values. And our diversity makes it clear our priorities need attention. We have demonstrated that diversity can be improved. We need to create it everywhere and more substantially.

**Development-focused:** As a community focused on education, professional development and growth should be integral to how we operate. Importantly, that needs to be considered separate from performance assessment. The evaluative and the developmental are different tasks. Performance assessment is about the alignment between an organisation and an individual. It asks, 'Did someone focus on agreed goals, put their fair share of effort into achieving those goals and bring the expected level of skill to the tasks?' Professional development is a different conversation about how someone is going career-wise. This includes growing their capacity to do excellent work in their current role as well as developing the capabilities to play other roles. Ensuring we have the right frameworks for this approach, and that those in leadership roles have the necessary feedback and coaching skills, is part of the People Strategy.

## The College Model: focusing outwards and working 'with'

What we refer to as the College Model and its basic structure began as a project to organise the University more effectively and efficiently. It recognised that academic capability is best created through disciplines, and that the integrating of multiple disciplines together into Schools enables us to develop distinctive academic and professional capabilities. That said,



affirming the importance of the Disciplines, Schools and Institutes remains important.

We also have been building on that structure to devolve authority to create a more empowered and agile organisation that is outwardly oriented towards delivering our mission. The rationale for this is we should devolve authority to those best positioned to pursue our mission, and that we will move far more quickly if decisions can be taken at the most local level possible.

We need frontline leadership in our Schools, Institutes and Disciplines for pursuing our various objectives – from improving fisheries management to seeking law reform – while retaining the scope and scale we need to tackle whatever big questions we choose to ask. Equally, we need to recognise the importance of collaboration across Colleges and the University in answering many of these questions. For example, the greatest determinant of improving health or educational outcomes might be reduced poverty; the best way to create start-ups may be through commercialising engineering solutions; or a town's economic future might be best shaped by the creative arts.

In this model, our Divisions play a vital role as partners who bring distinctive expertise

and capabilities to work with Colleges to enable our mission to be successful. The first key here is the 'with'. It is not about Divisions doing things 'to' the College or even 'for' the Colleges any more than it is about Colleges going it alone. The second key idea here is that what should organise us is not the internal agenda of a College or Division but the external perspective of what we are trying to achieve for Tasmania and the World.

For this model to work, we need to invest in our academic leaders, so they can lead strategy development, look after our people, enable successful change and deepen our partnerships. We will need to bolster our regional leadership. We have heard that clearly from our campuses and community on Cradle Coast and in Launceston, particularly at a time of significant investment in the regions and our place-based and equity missions.

## Focusing on the things and activities that add value

We have a big agenda ahead of us. Focusing on what will really make a difference and freeing up people's time to focus on our priorities is imperative. That's partly where the simplification agenda is key. We have to do less of some things, so

we can do more of other things. The only way in which we can get resources to do the activity we really need is to stop doing the activities that are wasting our time and effort and are not adding value to our core objectives.

Central to that task is working through our processes to figure out how we can make all of them work with many fewer steps and fewer requirements. Picking up the lead from other universities, like St Andrews in the United Kingdom, we are taking a Lean approach that focuses on eliminating waste in all its forms (duplication; asking for information we don't use; waiting; double and triple handling; error that leads to things being redone etc). As we take waste out, some roles will change because there will be tasks that don't need doing, freeing people up to focus on tasks that makes use of their skills. Over time as some people's roles evolve, there will not be a need to find new people to do the tasks they once did. In time, our staff profile will evolve to better support our need to work efficiently and operate sustainably.

A team has been put in place to guide and focus our effort. They will work actively with those involved in core processes to identify together any waste and to support them to implement changes that will reduce that waste. The key here is working with those who know current processes well, for they are also best placed to identify how they can be improved. Respecting this in-house knowledge is central to the Lean approach. While the team can address core university processes, there is much we can all do to get time back by embracing the Lean model in our daily work lives. We need to spot the time-wasting things we can control and change them. Likewise, whenever we see unnecessarily elaborate processes being designed, we should be comfortable pointing out that 'that's not very lean' and suggesting a simpler way.

# What all this means in practice

A challenging agenda lies ahead if we wish to achieve the strategic opportunities outlined above.

We could summarise our role as the following:

***'We are a place-based University with a mission to improve the state of Tasmania, and from Tasmania contribute to the world.'***

We have a real opportunity to show how our University can bring tangible benefit to a whole state and provide an exemplar for the world. There is only one place in Australia, perhaps one of only a few places in the world, where a university can work together with government, business, other agencies and community to deliver a new model of higher education, embedded deeply in its place.

We can do this because of our privileged role as the only university here, the wonderfully distinctive nature and scale of our island-based state, and the enduring commitment and depth of talent of our people.

Taking a mission or a vision and making it real is a challenge, and it will require us to change the ways we think about and do things. Specifically, there are a number of high-level practical imperatives that help focus us in practice. These are:

- Create and deliver across the regions a distinctive and differentiated core offering and student experience to retain Tasmanian students in the state and attract students from the mainland.
- Produce distinctive research and creative output, which make important contributions to the future wellbeing of Tasmania and the world.
- Increase the volume and diversity of learning pathways in partnership with TasTAFE, industry, government and local communities.
- Grow Tasmanian higher education participation across the regions.
- Diversify and grow our international student markets.
- Generate annual savings of \$30 million.



In addition, there are some concrete examples of how our strategic direction will be translated in practice:

### **Place-based means in practice that we will:**

- Acknowledge Aboriginal Tasmanians and ensure their understanding of place informs our curriculum, research and practices as a university;
- Articulate clearly what measurable outcomes for Tasmania we will achieve working in partnership with others in the state and what contributions we will make to the nation and the world;
- Be clear about how we will make a difference through what we do as a university whether through the capabilities we develop, knowledge we discover, the cultural products we create, and/or the partnerships we form;
- Focus on how we can use our distinctive environmental, social and historical context to inform what we teach and research, and how we do this;
- Ensure that our off-island offerings are also place-based with a focus on delivering for their communities;
- Make sure we are performing at levels commensurate with the contribution we want to make and people we want to attract; and
- Be clear on how we measure excellence, including the place of our ERA ratings and discipline rankings.

### **Right-sized means in practice that we will:**

- Deliver our core mission within five years and generate savings of \$30 million a year;
- Have a truly distinctive place-based 'only at the University of Tasmania' offering;
- Stop any further flow of Tasmanian students to the mainland and attract enough to the state that all our core offerings have numbers that mean they are economically self-sustaining;
- Provide a high-quality experience to our international students;
- Focus on increasingly diversifying the origins of our international students; and
- Sustain and grow a distinctive, sizeable and profitable online offering of our distinctive courses for an off-island audience.

### **Regionality, access and quality means in practice that we will:**

- Provide a model of statewide access to courses that create an excitement and increased value in learning and that support professional pathways;
- Grow our distinctive academic offerings to support each region, starting next year;
- Continue to expand the reach of our offerings through models like the one we have established on the West Coast, especially after the new campuses in Burnie and Launceston are established;
- Sustain, grow and, where needed, create the centres of research excellence that each region's distinctive social and economic futures require;
- Strengthen our Schools, such as Education, that are in locations outside Hobart;
- Ensure that we give sufficient priority to the successful delivery of the Northern Transformation program;
- Continue to grow the University College in both scope of qualifications offered and number of students it reaches; and
- Establish clear articulation pathways between TasTAFE and the University of Tasmania, and ensure TasTAFE and University College offerings are complementary.

# Embedding action into our strategic processes

With finite time and resources, it is important for us to be able to plan over longer time frames. It is also important to recognise that we cannot do everything and that we will need to prioritise around a small number of activities, staged appropriately, where we can make a difference and guide people day-to-day.

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It is vital that we are able to draw together themes from across our organisation, so that we are all aligned to one plan for the University and a core set of priorities. This would include recognising good work that has already occurred, in developing a number of strategies and plans for research, student retention, teaching and learning, inclusion, diversity and equity. As we turn our mission into a strategic plan, we need to focus on what impact we can make for Tasmania through our teaching, research and partnerships. Our true measures of success lie on a horizon of more than five years.

The five-year Strategic Planning Process will commence in early 2019. The Colleges, Schools and some Disciplines will be crafting their own individual plans, outlining how they will contribute to the key outcomes for Tasmania, in the context of the institutional strategic direction. Their plans will consist of key strategies, the initiatives needed to deliver these strategies (both new and existing) and also the supporting plans that will enable them to deliver these strategies.

These supporting plans include the People Plan, Financial Sustainability Plan, and Stakeholder Engagement Plan. Key themes from the Colleges' long-term Research Strategies and areas where planning has been underway for some time will need to be included in the plans.

The Colleges, Schools and Disciplines will be expected to develop SMART (specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, timebound) Goals for their strategies, with progress against these reported quarterly. The Divisions will play a key role in supporting the Colleges, Schools and Disciplines in the development of these SMART Goals, and their plans and activities will be guided by the strategies of the Colleges.

All of these strategies should be designed to work towards long-term goals while retaining the agility to respond to the unexpected opportunities that can accelerate our progress and manage the risk of an uncertain world.

These plans will be developed from February with presentation to our University Executive Team (UET) in early April. Amendments and redrafting will occur from April – May, followed by final presentation to University Council.

# With thanks



The Cascading Conversations of these past few months have informed and shaped the formulation of this strategic direction. No document can capture all the richness or diversity of those conversations. While I am sure conversations will continue, as they should, I hope there is here a sense of a common ground and a basis upon which we can work together.

Our task now is to take these ideas and work with them both individually and institutionally. They will challenge us to create and adapt to change in ways both obvious and subtle. Each of us needs to be ready to embrace new ideas and park old ones that don't fit with this new way of working. An important part of having a shared strategic direction is that it empowers everyone to make the change whenever they see the opportunity.

Together, we can shape a University driven by a sense of passion and creativity, made truly unique by both its place in the globe and the people who belong to it – people bonded by a shared vision of making a positive difference to a place we love and a world we care for.

Thank you for helping bring this vision to life.

Kind regards,

**Professor Rufus Black  
Vice-Chancellor**

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