

Foreword

Regional University Futures

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It's been my privilege to have served in varying capacities at four different Australian universities over the last two decades that cater the education and research needs of 'regional' communities. And I say *privileged* because Regional Universities indeed offer opportunities unlike metropolitan-based institutions to work on a personal level with a significant number of staff and students and other stakeholders.

The benefits of these relationships are numerous, but what I value most is the level of engagement and proximity to change that they afford. By that I mean Regional Universities are especially attuned to subtle changes within their communities and can gauge their impact on the Higher Education sector long before larger, more insulated organisations realise the wind is blowing in a new direction. Examples of this at CQUniversity Australia include the long-standing priority we place on making higher education more accessible and inclusive throughout Central Queensland.

For more than 20 years we have run one of the most responsive, successful Enabling Programs in Australia. In recent years, however, we have doubled our capacity and introduced new features which **now** allow us to enrol approximately 1000 students annually in five different programs, each designed so we can cater to more Central Queenslanders with different life and education experience. Building on that heritage and in partnership with Central Queensland Institute of TAFE, CQUniversity is also poised in 2010 to become Queensland's first Dual Sector University in direct response to local skills shortages and the requirements of industry here – an area three to four times the size of Victoria – to have comprehensive access to education programs and services across the entire Australian Quality Framework.

The Review of Higher Education recommends that *flexible and [new] collaborative arrangements in partnership with other providers* be instituted to help communities address and respond to the challenges of regional provision. As this issue of *SLEID* demonstrates, not only are regional universities doing that they are actually *driving* change throughout the sector and *leading the way*, in many aspects, across Australian Higher Education.

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