

Regional Universities Network: Engaging with regions, building a stronger nation

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Executive Summary

Background

The Regional Universities Network (RUN) is an alliance of Australian regionally headquartered universities committed to making strong contributions to the economic, social, cultural and environmental development of their regions, and to the nation.

Government innovation policy in Australia and overseas has historically emphasised the role of universities in stimulating regional economies, particularly through business innovation and job growth in technology-based industries. The contributions of universities to regional development, however, extend beyond helping businesses thrive. The competitiveness, growth, prosperity and liveability of regions are also dependent on a complex inter-play of social, cultural and environmental factors.

In support of RUN's commitment to strengthening the contributions of member universities to regional development, the Network commissioned a study to investigate the full scope of the member universities' engagement with their regions and associated contributions, including social, cultural, environmental and economic aspects.

The study methodology

The Pascal International Observatory's framework for benchmarking the regional contributions of universities was selected for the purposes of the study. It is an internationally validated and multi-dimensional framework based on research relating to the drivers of regional competitiveness.

For each dimension of the Framework, the study identified examples of regional engagement activities undertaken by the RUN universities between 2011 and 2013. Three examples from each university were selected for more detailed analysis and documentation as case studies. An 'illustrative activity catalogue' was also compiled for each university, including a sample of regional engagement programs and projects.

In addition, consultations were conducted with university executive managers and regional stakeholders to seek input on the nature and perceived value of the universities' contributions to their regions and opportunities for enhancing regional engagement.

The performance of the RUN universities against the Pascal framework

The study found substantive evidence of the positive performance of the universities, with respect to the social, cultural, environmental and economic drivers of regional competitiveness reflected in the Pascal framework.

This performance relates to:

- Human capital development
 - *Raising educational aspirations, enrolling low SES, Indigenous and mature aged students and breaking the cycle of intergenerational disadvantage*
 - *Supplying high-level skills for regional growth and quality of life.*
- Regional governance and planning
 - *Building capacity for effective regional governance and planning and supporting the development and implementation of regional strategies for economic, social, cultural and environmental development.*
- Community development
 - *Building community capacity for addressing a range of social issues that impact on the liveability, resilience and sustainability of their regions.*
- Health and ageing
 - *Facilitating regional healthcare provision by addressing health workforce shortages, delivering affordable health services through teaching clinics and developing innovative research-based health interventions and programs.*
- Arts, culture and sport
 - *Enriching the quality of life of their regional communities by providing arts, cultural and sporting facilities and programs, and also contributing to the development of creative industries in their regions.*

- Environmental sustainability
 - *Building regional capacity for understanding and effectively managing the impacts of climate change and developing knowledge-based solutions to support regional environmental sustainability.*
- Industry and business development
 - *Addressing industry skill shortages, stimulating the growth of knowledge-based industries and partnering with industry and business to build capacity for innovation and sustainable management.*

In the consultation process, regional stakeholders confirmed the importance of the contributions being made by the RUN universities to regional development.

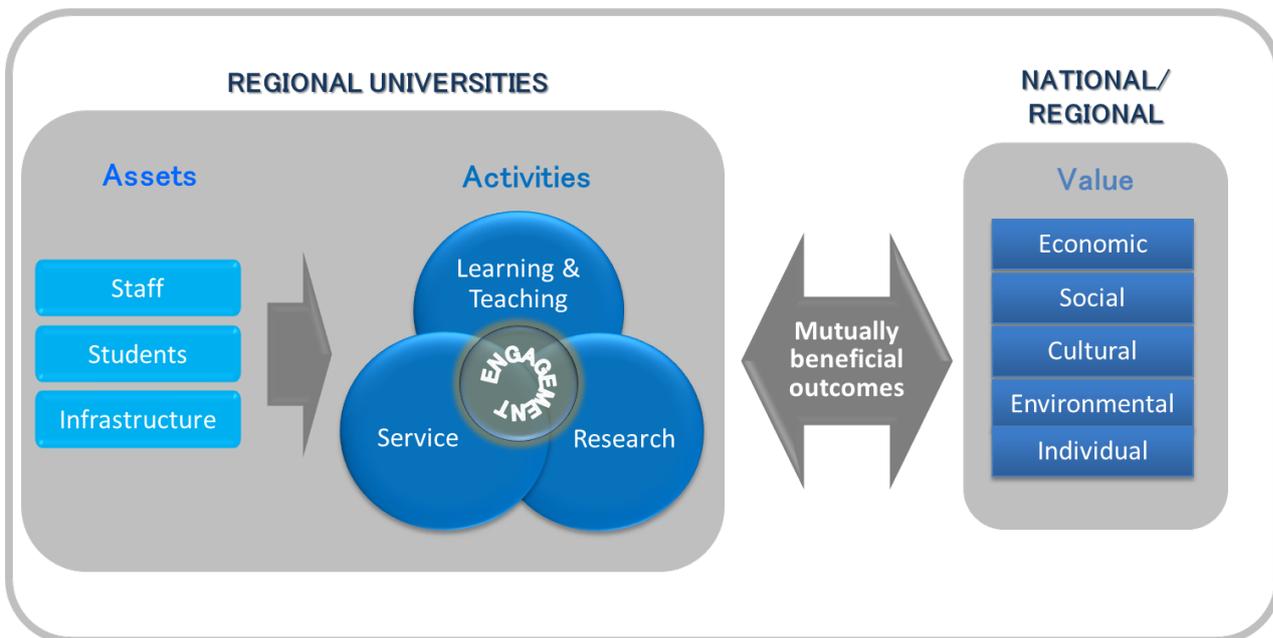
The process of regional engagement

The study findings highlight that regional engagement is a complex and multidimensional phenomenon. The Figure below provides a

summary representation of the process of regional engagement as revealed by the study findings.

Through engagement with their regions, the RUN universities are leveraging their assets (staff, students and facilities) through core activities (learning and teaching, research and service) to produce economic, social, cultural, environmental and individual 'value' outcomes for the universities' specific regions and more broadly for Australia.

At the same time, regional engagement delivers important benefits to the universities. In particular, the universities are strategically leveraging the opportunities offered by the distinctive characteristics of their regions to develop academic programs and research expertise, in relevant niche areas, that enhance the quality of their academic outcomes and strengthen their national and international competitiveness. This includes developing research strengths relating to regional issues of national and global significance.



The distinctive nature of the regional engagement process

The study findings also highlight the important distinctive strength that the RUN universities bring to the Australian government's goal of building a diverse national system of higher education responsive to the needs of different students and communities.

This distinctive strength of the RUN universities relates to two inter-related features of their regional engagement processes.

Firstly, for each of the universities, its regional engagement 'story' simply couldn't exist anywhere else. While there are many common themes applicable across regional and rural Australia, and hence across the RUN

universities, each institution and each campus, has a strong sense of place and unique identity that is inextricably linked to the historical, physical, demographic, social, cultural and environmental characteristics of its region.

Secondly, at the whole-of-institution level, the universities are integrating their learning and teaching, research and service activities to build a strong engagement agenda that optimises their regional contributions. In particular, what makes the process of engagement at the regional level so distinctive is the enabling role being played by the universities in community capacity building.

The development of strong collaborative networks, together with shared norms, values and understandings, are essential in enabling regional communities to self-organise, manage change, realise their potential and lead their own development. In this context, collaboration is utilised as a powerful tool for creating new knowledge and fostering innovation.

The capacity of the RUN universities to play this role not only comes from their academic expertise in relevant fields and the other resources they are able to apply. It is also critically dependent upon their immersion in regional communities on a day-to-day basis, a deep understanding of their specific regional contexts and issues, and the mutually beneficial relationships and levels of trust, credibility and goodwill they have built through continuous and multiple interactions with regional organisations and communities over substantial periods of time.

Universities headquartered in regional Australia are uniquely positioned to deliver such an integrated and place-based contribution to their regions.

National benefits of RUN university regional engagement

Through their regional engagement activities, the RUN universities are delivering national benefits including:

- Contributing to national prosperity, productivity and community wellbeing through their role in building capacity for regional development.
- Making significant contributions to the achievement of national targets for higher education attainment and exceeding

national targets for higher education participation by low SES students.

- Addressing skill shortages and workforce needs, and building capacity, in key regional industries of significance to the national economy.
- Contributing to the provision of regional infrastructure and building capacity for the provision of a range of public and private community services (e.g. school education, health services).
- Strengthening the national research and innovation system through the development of niche areas of research strength that address regional issues of national and global significance.

With respect to the last point, the universities possess knowledge and expertise relating to a range of pressing issues and challenges impacting on regional and rural areas across Australia. In this regard, collectively, the RUN universities represent a national resource for the provision of expert advice on a broad range of matters impacting on the prosperity, wellbeing, resilience and sustainability of regional Australia.

Realising the full potential of regional engagement

The categorisation of institutional regional engagement activities against the eight dimensions of the Pascal framework has enabled each RUN university to assess its areas of strength and areas of lower contribution in relation to the social, cultural, environmental and economic drivers of regional competitiveness. Each university acknowledges that its potential for contributing to regional development is not yet fully realised and has identified areas for increased focus within the limits of available resources.

In the consultation process, regional stakeholders also put forward a number of suggestions for realising the full potential of university regional engagement.

Recognition of university regional engagement in national policy

Each of the RUN universities represents one of the largest, if not *the* largest, publicly funded organisation in their region. Their communities expect them to play a significant enabling role in contributing to the development of the regions

where they are located and the universities see it as their civic duty to do so.

Regional engagement, however, represents much more than civic duty for the universities; it provides a means for enhancing the quality of their learning and teaching and research in a globally competitive higher education marketplace and contributing to the national higher education and innovation systems.

National regional development and higher education policy and funding frameworks, however, do not currently acknowledge the distinctive regional engagement role of the RUN universities.

Next steps

Given the central importance of effective regional engagement to the universities, the RUN members will continue to work together to identify international and national best practice approaches and strengthen their engagement policies and practices. The findings of this study provide a solid basis for moving forward.

In addition, RUN plans to advocate for a greater recognition in national higher education and regional development policy, of:

- The distinctive contributions its member universities are making to the social, cultural, environmental and economic development of their regions.
- The universities' collective knowledge, expertise and experience in working with regional and rural communities across Australia to build capacity and address pressing regional issues and challenges.

1 Introduction

Utilising an internationally validated framework, the Regional Universities Network (RUN) undertook a study to assess and report on the member universities' social, cultural, environmental and economic contributions to their regions and the nation.

1.1 Regional Universities Network

The Regional Universities Network (RUN) is an alliance of Australian regionally headquartered universities committed to making strong contributions to the economic, social, cultural and environmental development of their regions, and to the nation.

The members of RUN are:

- CQUniversity
- Southern Cross University (SCU)
- University of Ballarat (UB)
- University of New England (UNE)
- University of Southern Queensland (USQ)
- University of the Sunshine Coast (USC).

The Network was established in October 2011, with three key objectives:

1. To provide policy advice to government, particularly with regard to tertiary education and regional development.
2. To strengthen and promote the contributions of regional universities to regional and national development.
3. To build institutional capacity and sustainability through the sharing of best practice in educational delivery, training, research and organisational management, particularly with reference to regional contexts.

1.2 The national significance of regional and rural Australia

Over 7.5 million Australians live outside Greater Capital City Statistical Areas, representing 34 per cent of the national population (ABS 2013). In addition, the majority (68 per cent) of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians live in regional, remote or very remote parts of the country (Australian Government 2012).

Despite common misconceptions, the population in regional Australia is rising. It is projected that the Australian population will grow by 30 per cent between 2007 and 2026, with 32 per cent growth in capital cities and 26 per cent growth outside capital cities (ABS 2008). Recent ABS figures indicate that, at a national level, major cities, inner regional, outer regional, remote and very remote regions of Australia all experienced population growth between 2011 and 2012 (ABS 2013).

Regional Australia plays a vital role in national prosperity and productivity. It is a major source of Australia's largest export industries: agriculture, mining and tourism. Regional education providers are also playing a key role in the education export industry, which is now the fourth largest export industry in Australia.

These core regional export industries stimulate the development of other industries and sectors both within the regions and nationally. While farm production delivers approximately three per cent of GDP, for example, the farm-dependent economy amounts to 12 per cent of GDP and employs approximately 15 per cent of the national workforce and one quarter of the rural workforce (NSW Government 2012).

Tourism also generates benefits for other industries and sectors: while its direct contribution nationally in 2010-11 was \$34.6 billion, representing 2.5 per cent of GDP, its total contribution was \$73.3 billion, representing 5.2 per cent of GDP (Tourism Research Australia 2012).

Regional economies are consequently based on a diversity of industry sectors, with the majority of employment concentrated in the services, health, education, and infrastructure sectors (BITRE 2008). Increasing access to high speed broadband connectivity is weakening the 'tyranny of distance' and expanding opportunities for the diversification and growth of regional economies. There are also opportunities for regional Australia in emerging industry sectors, including services, niche manufacturing, creative arts, environment, and food and wine tourism.

With the Australian economy in transition, however, some regions are experiencing rapid economic and population growth, while others are struggling to remain sustainable, or are in decline. Many regions are facing significant challenges, including: lack of diversity in the regional economy; strains on infrastructure, services and the environment associated with rapid population growth; high unemployment and outward migration of young people; the impacts of climate change; and, shortages of health and other public services.

Internationally, there is increasing recognition of the role that universities can play in stimulating regional growth and innovation and building regional capacity for addressing social, cultural and environmental issues (OECD 2007).

1.3 Purpose and objectives of the study

The Network recently commissioned an independent study to estimate the economic impact of each university in its local region. On conservative estimates, incorporating only the main campuses of each university and selected outputs, RUN contributed \$2.1 billion in gross domestic product, \$1.2 billion in household income and more than 14,000 full-time equivalent jobs to the Australian economy in 2011.

Government innovation policy in Australia and overseas has historically emphasised the role of universities in stimulating regional economies, particularly through business innovation and job growth in technology-based industries. The contributions of universities to regional development, however, extend beyond helping businesses thrive. The competitiveness, growth, prosperity and liveability of regions are also dependent on a complex inter-play of social, cultural and environmental factors. The OECD (2007, p. 166) observes that:

Social, cultural and environmental developments have demonstrable indirect economic as well as intrinsic benefits. They offer benefits underpinning and stabilising economic growth, as well as direct benefits in terms of community health and welfare, social cohesion, a diverse cultural and community life, and a clean, healthy, sustainable and self-renewing natural and man-made environment with robust and education institutions themselves.

In addition, the World Bank (2006) has estimated that intangible capital (human, social and governance) represents 80 per cent of wealth in high-income OECD countries.

In support of RUN's commitment to strengthening the contributions of member universities to regional development, the Network decided to complement its economic impact analysis with a second study to investigate the full scope of the member universities' engagement with their regions and associated contributions, including social, cultural, environmental *and* economic aspects.

The objectives of the study were to:

1. Identify or develop an appropriate and detailed framework to cover the social, cultural, environmental and economic contributions of the universities.
2. Collect, review and analyse relevant data on the performance of the RUN universities under the framework.
3. Using the collected data, report on the performance of RUN universities against elements under the framework.

In undertaking the study and reporting on its findings, RUN aims to raise awareness and understanding of the nature, scope and diversity of the institutions' engagement with and contributions to their regions. The study also importantly provides an opportunity for the RUN

members to share their knowledge and experience of regional engagement and to identify opportunities for further strengthening their role in regional development.

1.4 Scope of the study

The RUN members are comprehensive universities, each offering a diverse range of undergraduate and postgraduate coursework programs to domestic and international students, undertaking high quality regional, national and international research, and providing research training. Through this comprehensive approach, and in the national interest, the universities are:

- Building human capital and producing graduates to meet the needs of government, industry and the community.
- Contributing to Australia’s fourth largest export industry.
- Advancing knowledge in key research priority areas.

Geographically, the activities and contributions of the RUN universities extend well beyond the boundaries of regional and rural Australia, for example:

- A number of the member institutions have campuses in capital cities.
- In addition to enrolling almost 65,000 internal or multi-modal students each year, RUN member universities enrol approximately 47,000 distance education students living in rural, regional and city locations across all Australian States and Territories, and overseas.
- The universities undertake research in regional, national and international contexts.
- The universities deliver educational programs in a number of overseas locations through partnerships with in-country education providers.

This study, however, is focused on the contributions of the RUN universities to their regions, as defined by their regional and rural campus and study centre locations listed in Table 1.

TABLE 1: RUN UNIVERSITY REGIONAL LOCATIONS

RUN University	Campuses and study centres	
CQUniversity	Rockhampton^ Mackay Emerald* Gladstone	Bundaberg Noosa Cairns* Geraldton*
Southern Cross University	Lismore^ Coffs Harbour	Gold Coast and Tweed Heads
University of Ballarat	Ballarat^ Ararat	Stawell Horsham
University of New England	Armidale^ Tamworth* Taree* Coonabarabran* Glen Innes* Gunnedah*	Inverell* Moree* Narrabri* Guyra* Tenterfield* Parramatta*
University of Southern Queensland	Toowoomba^ Fraser Coast (Hervey Bay)	Springfield Stanthorpe
University of the Sunshine Coast	Sippy Downs^ Noosa	Gympie

Excludes capital city locations

^ Regional headquarters * Regional study centres

1.5 Methodology

Selection of a framework for assessing contributions

Following the identification and comparative analysis of a range of possible frameworks for assessing the contributions of the RUN universities to their regions, the Pascal International Observatory's framework for benchmarking the regional contribution of universities (Pascal International Observatory 2009) was selected for the purposes of this study.

The Observatory, with representation or operations in more than 50 countries worldwide, has developed a comprehensive and internationally validated benchmarking tool for identifying and assessing the social, cultural, environmental and economic contributions made by higher education institutions to the development of their regions. The Pascal framework is also underpinned by research on the drivers of regional competitiveness. These features of the framework were key factors in RUN's decision to adopt it as a robust analytical tool for identifying and assessing the regional contributions of its members.

The Pascal framework has eight dimensions:

1. Enhancing regional infrastructure
2. Human capital development processes
3. Business development processes
4. Interactive learning and social capital development processes
5. Community development processes
6. Cultural development
7. Promoting sustainability
8. Promoting engagement within the university.

RUN gratefully acknowledges the permission granted by the Observatory for the framework's use within this study.

Data collection

In the data collection phase of the project, information was sourced relating to the universities' contributions to their regions against each of the Pascal framework dimensions. This phase had three main components: case studies; illustrative activity catalogues; and, consultations with members of university executive staff and regional stakeholders.

Case studies

Each member university nominated five or more potential case studies and three from each institution were chosen for inclusion in the study. The selection process sought to ensure that the case studies reflected a broad coverage of the Pascal framework dimensions, with some case studies covering two or more of the dimensions.

Relevant university staff, and in some instances, regional partners were subsequently interviewed to collect information about each case study. A case study template was utilised to provide a consistent tool for the collection of information and the documentation of the 18 case studies.

Illustrative activity catalogues

In addition, an 'illustrative activity catalogue' was developed for each member university, capturing an illustrative sample of regional engagement activities undertaken between 2011 and 2013, across the Pascal framework dimensions.

Activities for inclusion in the catalogues were identified from:

- Key documents and electronic sources (e.g. Annual Reports, webpages and media releases).
- Two-day campus visits to each university and interviews with staff members who were actively involved in regional programs and projects.

Consultations with university executives and regional stakeholders

The campus visits also included consultations with members of the university executive team to seek their views on the university's role in the region and perceived areas of strength and lower contribution with regard to the Pascal framework dimensions.

In addition, where possible within the constraints of the study timetable, consultations were conducted with external regional stakeholders (e.g. representatives of Regional Development Australia [RDA] Committees, Chambers of Commerce, local government, regional arts organisations) to seek input on the nature and perceived value of the universities' contributions to their regions and areas of 'unfulfilled potential' worthy of further consideration by the universities.

Analysis and reporting

The 18 case studies, six catalogues and consultation findings provided the basis for an analysis of the extent, nature and scope of the RUN universities' contributions to their regions, as they relate to each of the eight Pascal framework dimensions.

The findings of this analysis are presented in the following sections of the report. The sections are closely, though not strictly, aligned with the eight Pascal dimensions. On the basis of the analysis, together with a consideration of current topical policy issues of relevance to regional Australia, the report sections have been structured as follows:

- Human capital development
- Regional governance and planning
- Community development
- Health and ageing
- Arts, culture and sport
- Environmental sustainability
- Industry and business development.

Information relating to the Pascal framework dimensions not represented in the section headings (i.e. 'Enhancing regional infrastructure', 'Interactive learning and social capital development processes', 'Promoting engagement within the university') is included at appropriate points in the report.

1.6 Advisory Group

An Advisory Group provided guidance to the design and conduct of the study. The Group comprised:

- Mr Ben Roche, SCU (Chair)
- Professor Pierre Viljoen, CQUniversity
- Professor Todd Walker, UB
- Ms Evelyn Woodberry, UNE
- Associate Professor Paul Collits, USQ
- Professor Mike Hefferan, USC.
- Professor Bruce Wilson, Coordinator Pascal International Observatory and Director, European Union Centre, RMIT University (Expert Advisor)
- Dr Caroline Perkins, Executive Director of RUN.

Professor Michael Cuthill (USQ) and Professor Peter Matthews (UB) also provided helpful advice in the early design stages of the study.

1.7 Structure of the report

This report is presented in two volumes.

The first volume reports on the findings of the study and includes:

- A summary overview of the nature of the RUN universities' contributions to their regions.
- A description of the universities' contributions in each of the categories identified in section 1.5, with reference to example case studies and activities.
- Conclusions, issues and next steps.

The second volume presents the 18 case studies and also includes a summary table mapping the case studies against the Pascal framework dimensions.

2 Summary overview

The RUN universities have made strategic decisions to invest in those areas of education and research that resonate with the needs of their regions and enable them to make strong contributions to regional development.

2.1 Introduction

The study found substantial evidence to confirm that the RUN universities, through mutually beneficial and reciprocal regional partnerships, are making significant and diverse contributions to the social, cultural, environmental and economic development of their regions. Later sections of this report outline this evidence in greater detail.

The study findings have also highlighted that regional engagement is a complex and multidimensional phenomenon. It is influenced by the importance of 'place' in regional development and the distinctive nature of regional higher education settings. It is realised through the universities' core learning and teaching and research functions, and through a commitment to service, knowledge exchange and community capacity building. This section provides a summary overview of the nature of the universities' engagement with their regions and related contributions.

2.2 The importance of 'place' in regional development

Regional diversity and the importance of 'place'

Regional development policy, in Australia and internationally, increasingly recognises the importance of 'place', including regional histories, assets and cultures, in determining solutions for enhancing regional development, prosperity and quality of life.

As evident from Table 1, the RUN universities collectively serve a significant number of Australian regions, each of which has its own distinctive identity, challenges and opportunities. Each university, in itself, interacts with a number of regions that are often separated by significant physical distances and also substantially different in terms of their regional governance capacity, industry configuration and demographic characteristics.

The Appendix provides a brief description of the main regions served by the RUN members. The descriptions reveal some common themes, including the significance of the agriculture, mining and tourism industries, and for many regions, rapid population growth. They also point to differences in regional attributes, trends, lifestyles and cultures.

The case studies and regional engagement activities identified in this study also revealed common themes across the Network, reflecting generic issues impacting on regional Australia (e.g. relatively low higher education attainment rates, lack of diversity in regional economies), together with points of difference reflecting the variable characteristics of the regions served by the institutions.

The interconnectedness of regions and their universities

It is evident from the study findings that the distinctive attributes and needs of their regions have historically been, and continue to be, highly influential in the selection and development of the universities' niche areas of expertise. The RUN universities have made strategic decisions to invest in those areas of education and research that resonate with the needs of their regions and enable them to make strong contributions to regional development.

By way of demonstration, examples of some of the universities' research concentrations, are outlined below:

- CQUniversity's research strengths in Agriculture and Land Management, Applied Mathematics and Other Medical and Health Science, linked to issues in regional Queensland with global significance, including growth in resource industries, environmental management and health care in rural and regional communities.
- SCU's strengths in forestry and plant science research, linked to key industries in the Northern Rivers including forestry, horticultural and plantation crops, herbal medicinal products and nutritional food.
- UB's research strengths in informatics, applied optimization and internet commerce security, aligned with the development of Ballarat, through the University's Technology Park, as a hub for ICT companies and the ICT functions of major corporations.
- UNE's strengths in earth sciences, environmental science, zoology and agriculture, linked to the University's location in the Northern Murray Darling Basin and its proximity to some of the more highly productive agricultural areas in Australia and to numerous, significant National Parks.
- USQ's specialty in community controlled Indigenous health research involving partnerships with local Indigenous health providers in Western and Northern Queensland.
- USC's expertise in societal adaptation to regional environmental change, linked to the region's valuable biodiversity and the challenges that population growth and climate change are presenting for its preservation.

The universities' academic course profiles have similarly been influenced by regional characteristics and associated skill needs. SCU, for example, offers the only four-year forestry science degree in Australia, developed in direct response to the needs of a key regional industry. Other examples of academic courses linked to specific regional characteristics include: agriculture (e.g. UNE, CQUniversity); mining (e.g. UB, CQUniversity); wine technology (USQ) climate change adaptation (USC). Later sections of the report (e.g. section 6.2) provide further explanation.

Collaborative Research Networks

The Australian-government funded Collaborative Research Networks (CRN) program is designed to develop the research capacity of smaller, less research-intensive and regional higher education institutions by supporting them to team up with other institutions in areas of common interest, with flow-on benefits for the national research and innovation system as a whole.

The RUN universities are strong supporters of the CRN program as it has provided a valuable mechanism for strengthening their research capacity in areas that will, over the longer-term if not immediately, equip them to better support the social, cultural and environmental development of their regions. Each of the CRNs established under the program has a focus on research within regional and rural settings and addresses priority issues for the institutions' regions, as follows:

- Health (CQUniversity).
- Policy and planning for sustainable regions, with a focus on tourism, economic and environmental sustainability, health and nursing, and children and young people (SCU).
- Science and technology innovation, connectedness and health innovation and landscape change within regions (UB).
- Mental health and wellbeing in rural and regional communities (UNE).
- Digital futures – social and policy challenges, participation in higher education and technology rich learning environments, including mobile technologies and web-based decision support systems in agriculture (USQ).
- Aquaculture, forest sciences, water sciences, sustainability (USC).

2.3 *The distinctive nature of regional higher education settings*

In consultations, both regional stakeholders and university staff asserted that regional higher education settings are qualitatively different to capital city settings, in a number of ways:

- The regional university represents one of the largest and most visible assets in the region and is looked to for 'thought leadership' in stimulating positive change in the region.

- The regional university 'co-exists' with its regional community, in closer physical, social and cultural proximity than is the case in capital city locations.
- The university and its regional communities are both directly impacted by key local economic, social, cultural and environmental issues, creating incentives and imperatives for shared problem solving and innovation.
- There are significant interdependencies between a small number of key regional organisations, including the regional university, creating the need for regular communication and joint planning.
- Reduced economies of scale and inadequacies in infrastructure, resources and services generate a need for the community to work together in attracting funding and resources to the region.
- University staff members are immersed in the regional community and play an active and visible role in local professional, community and not-for-profit organisations.

In this context, issues of trust, integrity, credibility, consistency and reciprocity become vitally important in underpinning each regional university's long-term sustainability, capacity to contribute to regional development and delivery of high quality education and research outcomes.

Community expectations of regional universities

Consultations with regional stakeholders revealed a clear and strong expectation that regional universities will actively contribute to the regions in which they are based, through an alignment of their education, research and service activities with the distinctive needs of their regions. These expectations are communicated to the universities on a regular, if not a weekly and daily, basis through a complex web of formal and informal relationships and interactions.

While the study found substantial evidence of the RUN universities actively and effectively responding to the expectations of their regional communities, each of the RUN universities, together with their regional stakeholders, acknowledge that there are specific areas of 'unfulfilled potential' where the university and community could come together to strengthen regional development. This is discussed further in section 10.

2.4 Extent, levels and scope of regional contributions

Extent of regional contributions

Through the process of case study nomination and selection, and compilation of institutional illustrative activity catalogues, the study identified an immense number of examples across the Network of university regional engagement activities and contributions. This report does not attempt to provide coverage of all the information collected, however, a sample of activities is described in the case studies and following sections of the report to demonstrate and 'bring to life' the diversity and scope of the regional contributions being made by the RUN universities.

Levels of regional contributions

Regional activities and contributions were identified at a number of levels:

- *Program level* – strategic, long-term and systemic activities, usually based on well-established partnerships within the region.
- *Project/team level* – specific-purpose and time-limited activities (often research projects) and sometimes involving exploratory regional partnerships.
- *Individual level* – activities undertaken by individual members of staff.

While many examples of individual level activities and contributions became apparent during the course of the study, no attempt was made in the study to map the immense number of activities occurring at this level.

In closely integrated regional and rural communities, all three levels of activity are vitally important in engendering trust, building credibility and reinforcing notions of mutual benefit and reciprocity. It is the accumulation of positive exchanges that occur over time and across the three levels of activity that define the richness and depth of the universities' regional contributions.

The three levels of activity are also inter-dependent:

- The regional strategic level relationships and partnerships established at the program level provide a 'top down' enabling framework that supports both project and individual level contributions.

- Project level activities provide an important opportunity for the university to demonstrate that its academic and technical expertise can add value in a timely and practical manner to the real issues, challenges and opportunities facing the region. Short-term projects that successfully add value often mature into deeper long-term partnerships.
- Individual level activities enable the development of trust, confidence and understanding of regional needs and priorities, the precursors to collaboration at the project and program level.

Scope of regional contributions

The study found that each of the RUN universities is making substantial regional contributions across all, or most of, the Pascal Framework dimensions. Some universities are stronger in certain dimensions than others, consistent with the Pascal Observatory's observation that all institutions will have a combination of strengths and areas of lower contribution, often as a consequence of strategic choice in the most effective deployment of resources.

2.5 University core functions and regional engagement

The RUN universities make contributions to their regions through three inter-related core functions: learning and teaching; research and innovation; and, service.

Learning and teaching

The study identified a variety of mechanisms adopted by the Network universities for aligning their teaching and learning with the needs of their regions and making contributions to regional development. These include:

- Establishing partnerships with schools and other education providers to raise educational aspirations and create learning pathways.
- Expanding and adjusting academic program offerings to respond to specific skill shortages, community needs and development opportunities within their regions.
- Partnering with regional employers and organisations to create student community engaged learning opportunities that deliver

benefits to partners and also enhance the employability of graduates in the region.

- Encouraging and facilitating student practicums in rural and remote locations, and designing curriculum to equip graduates for professional practice in regional and rural settings.
- Seeking regional stakeholder input to the design and delivery of academic programs to ensure the programs respond to regional, as well as national and international, knowledge and skill requirements.

Selected examples of contributions of this nature are described in following sections of the report.

Research and innovation

Research at the RUN universities can broadly be characterised as:

- *Regionally embedded and applied*, delivering knowledge and solutions for practical application in addressing specific development needs and opportunities of their regions.
- *Globally relevant*, with many of the research topics arising at the regional level also prominent at a global level (e.g. climate change adaptation, health service delivery in rural areas).
- *Multidisciplinary and collaborative*, consistent with emerging best practice, and in response to the complexity of many regionally relevant research questions and the relatively smaller scale of research teams in regional universities and local organisations. This collaborative approach includes partnering with other universities where appropriate to facilitate regional access to knowledge and expertise not locally available.

As noted earlier, research undertaken by the RUN universities reflects a strong alignment with the distinctive characteristics of their regions, and at the same time, extends beyond regional boundaries to incorporate national and international partnerships and impacts.

In this regard, the study findings highlight two important aspects of the research and innovation activities of the RUN universities. Firstly, research undertaken in response to regional issues often leads to innovations in policy and practice that are taken up nationally and internationally. A number of the case studies

included in the study and referenced later in the report clearly demonstrate this point.

Secondly, research projects undertaken by a university at the three levels (regional, national and international) are mutually reinforcing and cumulative in nature, creating a 'virtuous cycle' of knowledge generation, knowledge exchange and innovation that produces benefits for the institutions, their regions and the national research and innovation system.

For the RUN universities, their regions provide readily accessible 'living laboratories' for study that support them in building international quality research capacity. For the regions, the universities' broader research partnerships and activities provide important conduits to national and international knowledge, networks and research funding sources, supporting improvements in decision-making, innovation and service delivery within the region. For the national research and innovation system, the universities contribute expertise on topics of relevance across many regions of Australia and globally.

Figure 1 provides a specific example of this 'virtuous cycle'. The Sustainability Research Centre at USC has over 60 researchers and PhD students and is actively engaged in research at the regional, state, national and international levels. Under the guidance of the Sunshine Coast Regional Council/USC Research Partnership Management Committee, the featured regional projects addressed specific priorities of the Council and also facilitated knowledge exchange between the Council and a consortium of 15 Sydney Coastal Councils.

The state, national and international projects are drawing on case studies and experiences of extreme weather events and coastal management responses in the Sunshine Coast region, across Australia and internationally. Thus, the region provides the Centre with a 'living laboratory' that supports its development of a niche research strength of global significance, and the Centre's research provides the region with access to national and global knowledge and good practice.

USC Sustainability Research Centre – Selected Projects

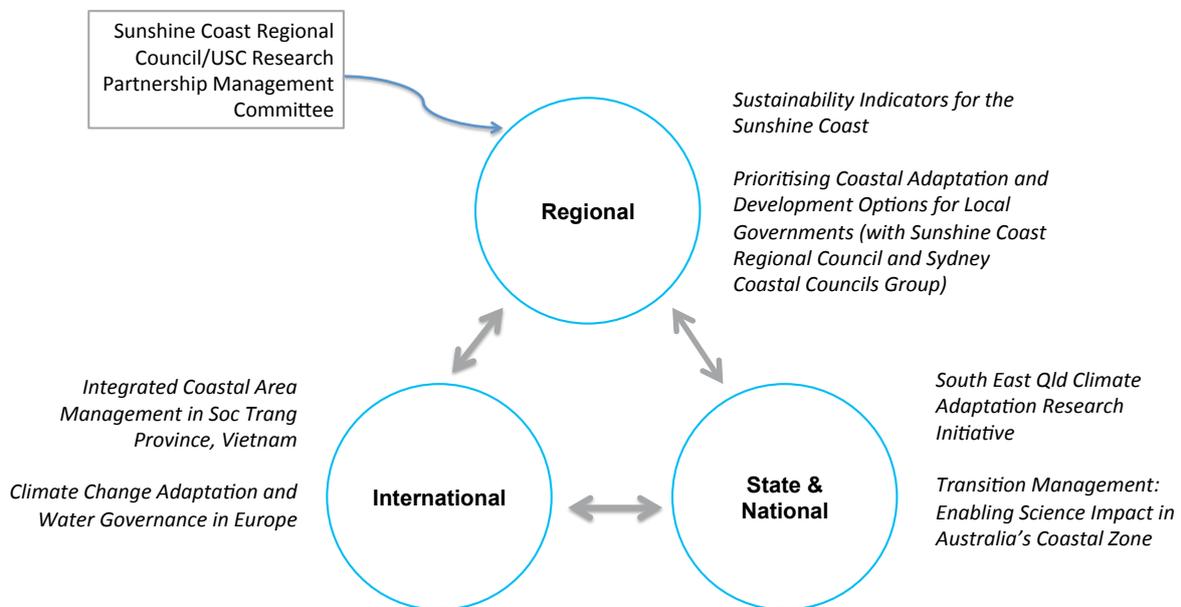


FIGURE 1: THE 'VIRTUOUS CYCLE' OF REGIONAL, NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH

Service

The study revealed substantial evidence of the contributions made by the RUN universities to their regions through mutually beneficial service activities and knowledge exchange. These activities provide regional access to the universities' physical and intellectual resources, including the academic, technical and management expertise of their staff and students. The activities also deliver benefits to the universities by: providing access to networks, information and knowledge that inform institutional agendas and strengthen their education and research functions; building goodwill; and, enhancing institutional reputations.

Service activities include:

- Contributing to regional governance and planning, including the development of regional bids for new funding and infrastructure.
- Community capacity building.
- Providing cultural facilities and programs.
- Hosting community forums, events and festivals.
- Opening up university facilities to the community.
- Student-led community initiatives.

The role of the RUN universities in contributing to community capacity building deserves further explanation here. The evidence from the study, supported by the views of regional stakeholders, is that contributions of this nature are a vitally important feature of the universities' contributions to regional development.

Community capacity building

There are many definitions of community capacity. For the purposes of this report, community capacity is defined as *'the ability of individuals, organisations and communities to manage their own affairs and to work collectively to foster and sustain positive change'* (Howe and Cleary 2001 cited in Hounslow 2002).

The importance of community capacity in mobilising groups to address local social and economic issues, and in stimulating regional innovation, is widely acknowledged. The challenges facing Australian regional and rural communities, however, can pose threats to social cohesion and weaken the capacity of

communities to pull together in solving problems. On the other hand, strongly internally bonded community groups can lack access and openness to new ideas from outside the region.

The study identified many examples of the RUN universities, as *brokers, boundary spanners and 'boundary crossers'* (Kilpatrick and Wilson 2013), making significant contributions to community capacity development in their regions by:

- Playing leadership and supportive roles in bringing regional stakeholders together to collaboratively develop shared directions and priorities for action in response to regional issues.
- Facilitating collaborations to address regional issues and opportunities that cross the boundaries between regional, state and federal jurisdictions.
- Conducting independent research that assists the regional community in developing a shared understanding of regional issues and their possible solutions.
- Planning and hosting forums and events that bring major regional stakeholders and the community together to explore and address key regional issues.
- Leveraging resources, ideas and information from formal institutions beyond the regional radius, together with national and international networks, to enable regional access to funding, knowledge, ideas and the latest innovations in policy and practice.

While the universities often provide enabling leadership for building community capacity, the study findings also highlight that this leadership role is frequently and appropriately shared with other regional organisations, as observed by Kilpatrick and Wilson (2013, p. 70):

... leadership is shared or dispersed over time as no one person or organization has the expertise or capacity to master the complex system of various spheres of knowledge and policy that must come together for the series of successful projects that can be achieved in a regional innovation system.

Specific examples of the value being added by RUN universities through their service activities are provided in later sections.

Linkages between functions

It is at the intersection of the functions of learning and teaching, research and service where the greatest mutual benefits can be derived for the universities and their regions. In practice, specific regional engagement activities of the RUN universities vary in the extent to which they involve an integration of core functions. The study found, however, that the concept of integration to strengthen the quality of teaching and research, and enhance contributions to regional development, is a major guiding principle for the RUN universities.

Figure 2 provides a summary representation of the nature and process of regional engagement as revealed by the study findings. Through engagement with their regions, the RUN universities are leveraging their assets (staff, students and facilities) through core activities (learning and teaching, research and service) to produce economic, social, cultural, environmental and individual 'value' outcomes for the universities' specific regions and more broadly for Australia. The process of regional engagement also produces beneficial outcomes for the universities by providing opportunities for knowledge exchange that strengthen the quality of their academic outcomes and support the achievement of their core missions.

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CASE STUDY 1: UB Horsham Campus exemplifies the ways in which the RUN universities integrate their learning and teaching, research and service functions to act as catalysts of regional development and innovation. Through an integrated approach at its Horsham Campus, UB is making significant contributions to the regeneration of an agriculturally productive region of national importance that is facing a range of challenges, including a relatively narrow economic base and high vulnerability to the negative impacts of climate change.

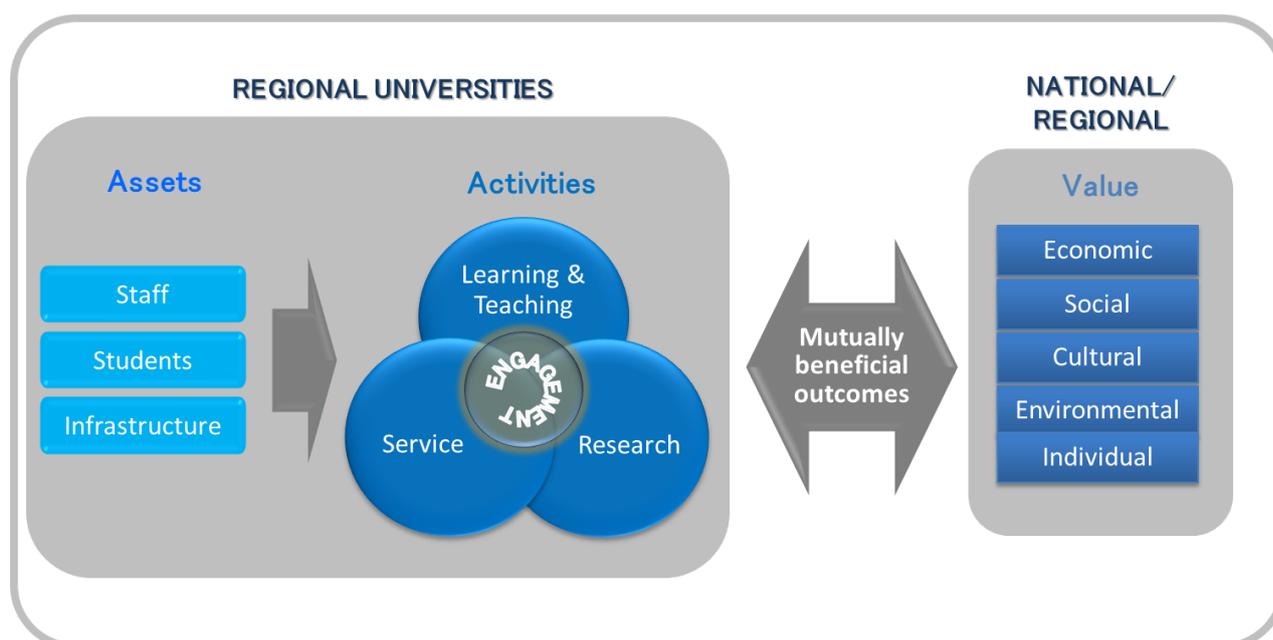


FIGURE 2: THE PROCESS OF REGIONAL ENGAGEMENT TO ACHIEVE MUTUALLY BENEFICIAL OUTCOMES FOR RUN UNIVERSITIES, THEIR REGIONS AND THE NATION

3 Human capital development

The RUN universities have a strong track record in raising educational aspirations and enrolling low SES, Indigenous and mature aged students. They are playing a key role in breaking the cycle of intergenerational disadvantage in their regions and are supplying high-level skills for regional growth and quality of life.

3.1 Context

Regional Australia needs access to high-level skills and well-qualified people if it is to meet the demands of a rapidly changing economy and build strong and resilient communities.

There is a significant differential, however, in higher education attainment between city and regional Australians, with the differential increasing with distance from a major city. In 2006, 27% of people aged 25-64 who lived in major cities held a Bachelor degree or above. This figure declined to 15% for Australians living in inner regional areas, to 13% for outer regional areas and down to only 10% for very remote areas (ABS 2008). There is evidence that the gap between capital city and regional Australia in university qualification levels is growing (DEEWR 2010).

This differential in educational attainment is particularly evident for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in regional and rural areas. Indigenous people are significantly less likely than non-Indigenous people to participate in university or to complete their course when they do participate (Australian Government 2012).

Young people in regional Australia continue to be less likely to aspire to a higher education. While 63% of young people in metropolitan areas intend to enrol in higher education, only 39% in provincial areas and 32% in remote areas intend to do so (Richardson and Friedman 2010).

Research on this topic points to a complex variety of factors contributing to differing higher education participation rates across metropolitan and non-metropolitan regions. The report of a recent government study (DEEWR 2010, p. 3) observed:

These include distance from a university campus; the socioeconomic status of people living in regional and remote areas; differences in aspirations and attitudes of regional students; Year 12 retention and completion, and the cost of university study. Many of these factors are interrelated.

The study concluded, however, that lower participation rates were largely associated with the educational and occupational profile of a region, highlighting the importance of breaking the cycle of intergenerational disadvantage by raising educational aspirations and participation and also building regional economies that generate high skill jobs.

The contribution of the RUN universities in addressing these issues and developing highly-skilled and sustainable regions is outlined below.

3.2 Breaking the cycle of disadvantage and supplying graduates to the regions

By enabling readily accessible higher education for their regional communities, the RUN universities are playing a key role in closing the gap between regional and metropolitan educational attainment.

Following the opening of USC in 1996, for example, the percentage of the population aged 15 years and older in the Sunshine Coast LGA with a Bachelor or above qualification increased from 6.6 per cent in 1996 to 14.2 per cent in 2011. The University is planning for continued expansion in enrolments to assist the region in further increasing its education attainment levels.

The RUN universities are national leaders in enrolling and supporting students from low SES backgrounds: in 2011, 29 per cent of their domestic students were from low SES backgrounds. The comparable figure for the national higher education system as a whole was 16 per cent (DIICCSRTE 2012).

The Network universities also play an important national role in Indigenous education, with Indigenous students representing 2.4 per cent of domestic enrolments, compared with 1.3 per cent at the national level (DIICCSRTE 2012).

Mature aged students represent a large proportion of the student cohort at the RUN universities, underscoring the significant role the institutions play in their regions with regard to lifelong learning and professional upskilling.

Regional universities represent the only viable choice for many regional students who do not have the mobility to study elsewhere. Students at regional higher education institutions, for example, are twice as likely as students at urban institutions to be caring for dependents. Many regional students are turned away from acquiring a higher education when their only choice is to move to the city: the higher costs of living and the separation from networks of family and friends are major factors (ACER 2011).

Each year, the Network produces over 10,000 Australian graduates across a comprehensive range of fields of study, supporting human capital development and meeting skill needs at the regional and national levels. The presence of the universities in regional Australia is particularly important in providing their regions with the human capital required to grow knowledge-based regional economies and support the social, cultural and environmental development of their communities.

Data analysed as part of the RUN Economic Impact Study revealed that between 60 and 80 per cent of RUN Bachelor level graduates employed four months after graduation were

employed in a regional location. Also, ACER (2011) reports:

- Five years after completing their course, 66 per cent of graduates from regional universities remain in regional areas for employment, and those most likely to remain are individuals with longstanding regional connections.
- In contrast, 74 per cent of students who leave regional areas to study in an urban institution remain in cities after graduation.

In addition, graduates who undertake their study in regional areas are better prepared for the specific demands of professional practice in regional Australia. Students at regional higher education institutions are more likely to feel that their courses integrate employment-focused work experiences into their study, and are more likely to report that they have developed industry awareness and have acquired job-related or work-related knowledge and skills than students enrolled at metropolitan institutions (Richardson and Friedman 2010).

3.3 Raising educational and career aspirations

The RUN universities provide their regional communities with access to an extensive array of programs designed to raise awareness of career opportunities and build aspirations to undertake post school education and training. Many programs are undertaken through partnerships with schools located within low SES, regional and remote areas.

The school programs delivered by the Network vary in their design and focus, however, they typically involve a range of in-school and on-campus outreach activities that employ a diversity of strategies, such as engaging current university students, providing inspiring experiences and practical information, building confidence and self-awareness and working with parents. Examples of programs of this nature include:

- CQUniversity's Engage Education program working, in 2012, with over 6,000 school students across 34 high schools and 107 primary schools selected according to low-socio economic, regional and remote and Indigenous statistics. The University's purpose-designed Mobile Education Trailer facilitates student access to the program throughout Central Queensland.

- SCU's UNI-BOUND program delivering an in-depth program of engagement with 15 secondary schools located in low SES areas within the University's regional footprint.
- UB's Regional Schools Outreach Program interacting with over 5,000 students, between Grade 5 and Year 12 across 50 schools in western Victoria, together with 1,000 of their parents.

At USQ, the Building Engagement and Aspirations through Mentoring in Schools (BEAMS) program trains volunteer USQ students to work within schools as role models and to support school students through a range of age-specific activities designed to motivate their interest in careers and post school education and training.

To assist in breaking down barriers to higher education study, the universities also open their campuses to large numbers of school students to give them an opportunity to experience university life. In 2012, for example, more than 1,300 students from 26 schools participated in 'Experience USC Day', where students could choose from over 30 workshops on different industries and careers.

Other examples of programs offered in partnership with regional schools include:

- Head Start programs, supporting secondary students to get a 'head start' on their university study by undertaking university subjects in their final years of schooling.
- Career Expos, involving other educational providers, government agencies and employers.
- Priority Country Area Program Enrichment Camps.
- Programs for gifted and talented students.

Programs for Indigenous regional communities

The RUN members are committed to building further on their strong track records in encouraging and facilitating the higher education participation of their regional Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. Through their specialist Indigenous education units, each university has programs in place to engage with Indigenous school students and communities to raise aspirations and encourage the completion of secondary school studies. A few examples are highlighted below.

Four RUN universities (CQUniversity, SCU, UB and USC) are partners in the Australian Indigenous Mentoring Experience program. This program, engaging university students as mentors, aims to give Indigenous high school students the skills, opportunities, belief and confidence to finish school at the same rate as their peers. In addition:

- USQ's Burunga-m Gambah program initiated at its Fraser Coast campus in 2011, includes a series of on-campus events throughout the year for regional Indigenous youth, aimed at raising awareness of post secondary pathways and motivating them to achieve academically at school.
- CQUniversity's Badi Athu (Grow to Know) program provides culturally sound advice and guidance to assist Indigenous students to prepare for learning and life beyond school, drawing on experiences and knowledge from academics, Indigenous elders, students, graduates and staff.

The universities are also implementing strategies to increase the employment of Indigenous staff and to develop the cultural competency of all staff. SCU, for example, is implementing a cultural competency framework and training as a fundamental requirement for all employees. In collaboration with the Northern Rivers Regional Organisation of Councils, the university is also making this training available across the region.

Science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) programs

While STEM skills are critical for Australia's national productivity and global competitiveness, and employment in STEM occupations is projected to grow at almost twice the pace of other occupations, the nation faces significant STEM skill shortages (AIG 2013). Regional Australia relies on local, readily accessible STEM skills to underpin key regional sectors such as agriculture and mining and to address important regional issues such as health services delivery and climate change.

The Network universities are very active in providing programs to increase student interest in STEM subjects and raise awareness of related career options. Each year, for example, the universities engage thousands of school students in regional Science and Engineering Challenges. The Challenges are hosted in

partnership with government, community and professional organisations such as Rotary Clubs, local branches of Engineers Australia and CSIRO.

UNE's annual Science in the Bush program, involving hands-on workshops and exposure to cutting edge research, attracted more than 700 school students from 29 schools throughout northern NSW in 2012. Funding was made available to assist with travel costs for students attending from small, rural and low SES schools.

Other programs delivered by the RUN universities include: on-campus HSC Booster Days for a range of STEM subjects; Engineering Camps; enrichment programs for high achieving students; and, delivery of 'head start' university-level engineering units of study within schools.

Agriculture and related programs

The Australian agriculture sector is facing a significant undersupply of people with postsecondary qualifications in agriculture that, if not addressed, will limit the sector's capacity for continued growth. Regional economies will be hardest hit by skill shortages. The Network universities are engaged in a range of activities designed to spark students' interest in agriculture and agribusiness. Some examples follow.

Three of the RUN universities (UNE, USQ, USC) host nationally designated Primary Industry Centres for Science Education. The Centres deliver science activities in schools, teacher professional development, teaching resources, student camps and student industry placement programs in collaboration with schools, research agencies and regional primary industries employers and businesses.

UNE's *Smart Farm* (see CASE STUDY 2) provides school students in the region with access to a working model of the 'farm of the future'. Structured on-site activities assist young people to better understand the diversity of agricultural career opportunities available to them, the knowledge- and technology-intensive nature of modern farming and the changing nature of the farming lifestyle.

Programs in other fields of study

The universities also deliver a range of school-based programs designed to give students an insight into other specific fields of study and

related careers, including: creative arts; law; business and finance; accounting; and sustainability.

Community programs

A number of the universities also offer programs targeting mature aged members of the community.

USQ's Fraser Coast Community Career Education Seminars, for example, provide free community access to a structured career education program. USC's 'Adult Entry to Uni Week' provides a range of activities, including information sessions and career planning workshops. CQUniversity's Community Education Engagement Project assists community members to better understand the range of careers and higher education study options available to them.

USQ also offers a number of programs specifically tailored for key migrant groups within its regional catchment.

3.4 Creating pathways and expanding access

The RUN universities are amongst the country's largest providers of on-campus and distance enabling courses that prepare students for success in university study: in 2011, the universities had over 5,400 enrolments in such courses. They include programs specifically designed to meet the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

TRACKS at UNE, for example, is a tertiary preparation program for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students who wish to develop the necessary skills and knowledge to undertake undergraduate study. The Program offers flexible learning and first-hand experience to provide the opportunity to access and explore tertiary education and make informed choices about the future direction of their education.

The RUN universities are also providing educational pathways and expanding access to higher education for regional and rural Australians by:

- Delivering educational programs and student support services at over 30 regional campuses and study centres.

- Providing access to university study through a comprehensive range of distance education programs.
- Partnering with regional schools and TAFEs to design educational pathways, agree articulation arrangements and jointly design dual award Diploma/Degree programs.

With respect to the last point, the universities are partnering to create innovative models for enhancing educational pathways and expanding access to higher education in their regions:

- SCU has recently developed its SCU College model that provides access, through the University's three main campuses, to two-year associate degrees as para-professional qualifications in their own right, or as entry points to bachelor degrees. In partnership with Gold Coast Institute of TAFE and North Coast Institute of TAFE, the College operates a network of five regional learning centres that form the "spokes" of the College Network.
- UB's Dual Sector Partnership initiative, in collaboration with six regional Victorian TAFE institutions, is expanding access to higher education for regional and rural Victorians through a network of TAFE-based Higher Education Centres.
- USC's new Gympie Learning Hub co-located on the Gympie campus of the Wide Bay Institute of TAFE is providing access for the Wide Bay community to enabling and degree programs.

The impending merger between CQUniversity and Central Queensland Institute of TAFE will also allow for the development of new and innovative educational pathways as well as seamless transition between higher education and vocational programs, in both directions.

The RUN universities are also core participants in multi-sector and multi-jurisdictional partnerships. Both SCU and UNE, for example, are key partners of the Clarence Valley Industry Education Forum, an alliance involving the three levels of government, schools, universities, TAFEs, industry and community. The Forum works collaboratively to share resources and build the future of young people in the region through targeted secondary and tertiary education programs and operates on the basis of distributed leadership, working closely with local enterprise and industry.

USQ's Queensland Tertiary Education Participation network (QTEPnet) project has involved broadening higher education study opportunities based on multi-sector collaboration, and includes a comprehensive articulation framework.

In addition, the governing Councils of UB and Monash University have recently agreed to proceed with the proposal for the Monash Gippsland campus to join forces with UB to form an expanded, regionally focused university from 1 January 2014. This initiative will bring together the skills and expertise developed in Gippsland, Ballarat and the Western regions of Victoria to further benefit these and other regional communities.

3.5 Building school capacity

Compared with metropolitan schools, schools in rural and regional Australia are more likely to: have difficulty in filling teacher vacancies; require teachers to teach a subject for which they are not qualified; and, have unmet demand for alternative activities to suit gifted and talented, special needs and Indigenous students and teacher professional development (Lyons et al. 2006). The RUN universities are helping to build the capacity of schools in their regions through the design and implementation of research-based programs and interventions, and teacher professional development.

UNE's National Centre of Science, ICT, and Mathematics Education for Regional and Rural Australia (SiMERR) undertakes strategic research into critical areas of need related to the enhancement of student learning outcomes in rural and regional Australia and supports regional schools in curriculum development and teacher professional development.

CASE STUDY 3: QuickSmart describes the national longitudinal impact of the Centre's partnership with two Armidale schools to develop, trial and implement research-based, small-group instructional strategies to develop the literacy and numeracy skills of persistently underachieving middle school students.

The resulting QuickSmart program has evolved to become one of Australia's most widely adopted literacy and numeracy programs across a diversity of school, workplace and other settings, and continues to be well supported in the New England region. In 2013, this includes

over 900 government, catholic and independent schools and more than 12,000 students nationally.

USQ's Leadership Research International (LRI) Group has developed the Innovative Designs for Enhancing Achievement in Schools (IDEAS) program, a school improvement initiative designed to enable school leaders to enhance and sustain success in teacher professionalism, community support and student achievement. While schools in the Toowoomba region have benefited from the program, its success has also led to it being implemented in over 400 state, catholic and independent schools across Australia, and internationally.

In other examples:

- USC's Buranga Centre organises an annual Indigenous Education Symposium that explores culturally appropriate education and teaching strategies.
- SCU facilitates the Northern Rivers Group of Environmental Educators (NRGEE), which aims to create a regional approach to environmental education through increased coordination and collaboration on environmental education programs.
- UNE brings over 100 agriculture school teachers to Armidale each year for professional development activities.

In recognition of its track record in building school capacity, RUN recently won a grant under the Australian Maths and Science Partnerships Program to pilot a 'RUN Virtual Classroom' to link Year 9 and 10 classrooms via a virtual network to inspire students to study maths and science and to deliver professional development to teachers. The initiative is being led by USQ.

4 Regional governance and planning

The RUN universities are contributing their academic expertise, management experience and infrastructure to build capacity for effective regional governance and planning and to support the development and implementation of regional strategies for economic, social, cultural and environmental development.

4.1 Context

Australian government policy emphasises the empowerment of regional communities to take ownership of their future by working in partnership to design and implement regional development strategies tailored to their distinctive environments.

The success of this devolution of responsibility to regions for charting their own futures relies significantly on local capacity for effective governance, data collection and analysis, and community consultation, participation and consensus building. Regional and rural communities, however, often lack the resources or governance infrastructure needed to build the required level of capacity.

The boundaries between the roles and responsibilities of various regional bodies (e.g. regional and city councils, Regional Development Australia [RDA] Committees, community-led development associations) can also be blurred. The lack of a coordinated approach to policy, planning and investment across all three levels of government is another common issue of concern (ABS 2013).

The study found that the RUN universities are engaging proactively with their regions in shaping regional agendas and building capacity for effective regional governance and planning.

By building partnerships with regional governing bodies and contributing their knowledge and capacity to regional governance and planning, the universities help build thriving regions. At the same time, as noted by the OECD (2007, p.12),

a thriving region creates an environment in which higher education can also thrive, helping institutions to attract and retain talented staff and students. The strength of this interdependent and reciprocal relationship between regional universities and regional governance is a key factor that distinguishes regional universities from those located in large capital cities.

4.2 Learning and teaching

Thin student markets in the field of regional and urban planning make it challenging for regional universities to offer qualifications in this area, however, two of the RUN universities (UNE and USC) offer undergraduate and postgraduate academic programs and another (USQ) offers a major within its Bachelor of Spatial Science.

Effective regional governance and planning, however, relies on a complexity of professional and technical skills. By producing a comprehensive range of graduates and professionals with high level critical and analytical skills, the universities are building the human capacity required to underpin regional governance and planning. This includes graduates in fields such as: civil and environmental engineering; infrastructure management; and, surveying.

In addition, the universities are engaged in collaborative projects with a specific aim of building human capital and capacity in major regional governing bodies. UB, for example, is currently working with five regional Councils to build the capacity of Council staff to develop and deliver effective behavior change programs in their regions (see BOX 1).

The universities have also created innovative programs, in partnerships with schools, to raise school student educational aspirations, and at the same time, add value to regional planning efforts. In SCU's 'Ambassadors for Design' program, for example, disadvantaged students who have aspirations to go into the design, environmental and engineering professions have been assisting the Coffs Harbour Council with the design of a youth communication strategy and other initiatives.

4.3 Research and innovation

The RUN universities have academic research expertise in a range of disciplines of direct relevance to regional governance and planning, including: local government; regional and urban planning; regional economic development; resource economics; environmental management; energy efficiency; digital futures; community development; health promotion; and, business and enterprise development.

To strengthen the alignment of university research programs with regional governance and planning needs, USC and the Sunshine Coast Council (SCC) have established a joint Research Partnership Management Committee (refer Figure 1). The Committee's role is to encourage and facilitate research partnerships between USC and SCC and joint funding applications by university researchers and appropriate Council departments and staff.

The study also identified numerous recent examples of the universities contributing their knowledge and expertise to the rigorous analysis of local issues and regional strategic planning. A few examples are provided below:

- CQUniversity researchers have partnered with the Mackay Whitsunday Regional Economic Development Corporation to undertake Liveability Audits of the region to inform regional policy and investment strategies (see BOX 1) and have also conducted considerable research on the impacts of resources sector growth in Central Queensland.
- Through its Regional Initiative for Social Innovation and Research, SCU has partnered with Coffs Harbour Council in the development of the Council's Economic Development Strategy (see BOX 1).

- UB's Centre for eCommerce and Communication is working in partnership with local government bodies in the Great South Coast region to develop a Regional Communication Strategy that will leverage the economic and social benefits of high speed broadband.
- UNE researchers have partnered with Armidale Dumaresq Council to assess the effectiveness of behavior change strategies for reducing wood smoke emissions - research that has implications for other areas of desirable change in community behaviours in the region (see BOX 1).

4.4 Service

Participation in regional governance and coordinating bodies

Senior staff members of the RUN universities frequently serve on regional boards and committees, contributing leadership skills, academic expertise, access to university knowledge and capacity and linkages to national and international networks. Across the Network, for example, this includes membership of bodies such as:

- RDA Committees.
- Committee for Ballarat.
- Connecting Southern Gold Coast (an entity created by Gold Coast City Council to foster economic growth and development in the Southern Gold Coast region).
- Regional development associations.
- Regional Arts NSW.

Staff members of the RUN universities are also frequently co-opted, on the basis of their expertise and experience to serve on the boards of management or advisory committees of regional organisations concerned with specific issues, such as environmental sustainability or health service provision. Academic and professional staff members also participate in a myriad of regional planning forums and workshops of relevance to their disciplines and professions.

Building community capacity

The RUN universities are playing central roles in building community capacity for effective regional governance and planning:

- USQ and RDA (Darling Downs and South-West Queensland) have jointly commissioned the Pascal International Observatory to assess the economic, educational, social and cultural needs of the region and provide advice on regional governance and planning priorities (see BOX 1).
- In partnership with the Sunshine Coast Regional Council, USC annually presents the Sunshine Coast Futures Conference (see BOX 1).
- SCU has partnered with RDA to run a Cross Border Issues Forum, with representatives from key Commonwealth and State Government departments, Gold Coast City Council and six RDA committees.

The RUN universities also play a role, through independent research and analysis, in advancing public debate and assisting their regional communities to develop a shared understanding of regional issues and their possible solutions.

In the context of community concerns relating to the amalgamation and possible de-amalgamation of various regional Councils in Queensland, for example, USC has undertaken social science research relating to community views on the issues of most importance to Noosa residents. CQUniversity has provided an independent report on the economic consequences of de-amalgamation of the Rockhampton Regional Council.

BOX 1: EXAMPLES OF RUN CONTRIBUTIONS TO REGIONAL GOVERNANCE AND PLANNING

<p>Mackay-Whitsunday-Isaac Liveability Audit In partnership with the Mackay Whitsunday Regional Economic Development Corporation, CQUniversity's Sustainable Regional Development Group and Centre for Environmental Management conducted a liveability audit in 2008, and again in 2012, to understand the liveability performance of the region and to align regional policy and investment strategies to foster growth in the region. The studies represented an opportunity for ordinary citizens and decision makers to debate the implications of the region's liveability performance as well as the socioeconomic costs of liveability. They also facilitated the development of strengthened linkages between regional organisations and communities, and decision makers at the local, regional and state level.</p>	<p>Regional Initiative for Social Innovation and Research (RISIR) RISIR is a multidisciplinary research network based at SCU's Coffs Harbour campus focusing on collaborative research activity to address regional issues that have implications for communities nationally and internationally. Recent projects have included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partnering with the local government and community organisations to provide a successful submission to the Australian government to become a lead site for the rollout of national broadband and to leverage the benefits for regional development. • Partnering with the Coffs Harbour Council in the development of its Economic Development Strategy, giving appropriate focus to the social dimensions of economic development.
<p>Local Government Change Agents Project UB's Horsham Campus Research Precinct and National Centre for Sustainability (NCS) are working in partnership with the Horsham Rural City Council and four other councils from regional Victoria to build the capacity of staff to develop and deliver effective behaviour change programs in their regions. These programs are targeted at local government sustainability priorities, including themes such as increasing youth participation in sport, reducing anti-social behaviour in public spaces or improving local recycling and waste management practices. The project draws on national and international research and survey research involving Council staff and communities.</p>	<p>Assessing the effectiveness of local government behavior change interventions Researchers at UNE, in collaboration with Armidale Dumaresq Council, are conducting research to investigate the effectiveness of educational interventions to reduce wood smoke emissions in Armidale. Two educational interventions are being evaluated: an educational strategy consisting of prompts and information about proper wood heater operation, firewood management and the negative health effects of wood smoke; and, a 'social norms' intervention in which households will be provided with feedback about their wood smoke emissions relative to average household emission levels. The project will also assess the effectiveness of a combined intervention involving both strategies.</p>
<p>Partnering with Regional Development Australia In 2011, USQ signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Regional Development Australia (RDA), to work together in advancing the socio-economic status and community well-being of the Darling Downs and South-West Queensland region. In one early initiative, USQ and RDA engaged the internationally acclaimed PASCAL Observatory to bring together an expert panel of researchers to measure the economic, educational, social, and cultural needs of the regions, and bring this knowledge to bear on policy and practice issues faced by regional authorities and the University's possible contributions to meaningful and purposeful economic, social and environmental progress. The first phase of the initiative has been completed, with a second phase scheduled for this year.</p>	<p>Sunshine Coast Futures Conference Series The Sunshine Coast Futures Conference Series, presented by the University of the Sunshine Coast and Sunshine Coast Council, attracts around 150 participants annually. Each year, the organising committee selects a critical issue for the future of the Sunshine Coast as a focus for discussion by community, business and industry, government leaders and decision makers. A piece of original academic research underpins each conference, informing and guiding delegates in their deliberations. Recent topics have included: 'Sustainable Villages - getting the balance right between identity, community, business and prosperity'; and, 'The Three Ps: Population, Participation and Productivity', opening a conversation about the central role of skills as a key driver of long term prosperity.</p>

5 Community development

Through their learning and teaching, research and service activities, the RUN universities are building community capacity for addressing a range of social issues that impact on the liveability, resilience and sustainability of their regions.

5.1 Context

A strong sense of connectedness and community spirit is an important component of the quality of life for regional and rural Australians. Social cohesion is also a critical prerequisite for regional competitiveness, community renewal and the ability to 'bounce back' from adversity (Mission Australia 2006).

Many regional and rural communities, however, are being confronted with a range of social challenges that can result in people withdrawing from local community participation, thus weakening levels of social cohesion. Economic restructuring, for example, has benefited some individuals and communities while others have been disadvantaged.

A recent analysis of RDA Committee 2010-2013 Regional Plans (ABS 2013) found that a majority of regions were facing significant challenges associated with: unemployment; high levels of socio-economic disadvantage either across the whole region, or within particular local government areas or population groups; homelessness and shortages of affordable housing; and, youth migration, disengagement, substance abuse and antisocial behaviour. In some regions, issues relating to cultural diversity can also create community tensions and reduce social cohesion.

Examples of the contributions being made by the RUN universities in assisting their regions to address community development issues are outlined below.

5.2 Learning and teaching

Academic programs

The RUN universities supply their regions, and the nation, with graduates in a range of fields of study of importance to community development,

including: social work; human services; welfare studies; social sciences; criminology; law and justice studies; community services; Indigenous studies; psychology; and, education.

Academic programs are typically designed to prepare graduates for practice in any Australian setting, however, many place a theoretical and practical emphasis on professional practice in regional and rural settings. In equipping students for rural practice, for example, UB's Bachelor of Arts (Rural Social Welfare) challenges the 'metro-centric' basis of many social work and welfare theories (see BOX 2).

Community engaged learning

As in other priority areas of regional development, the universities seek to provide students with learning opportunities that also contribute to regional community and social development.

As described in *CASE STUDY 4: Choices Applied Theatre Project*, CQUniversity Bachelor of Theatre students work in close partnership with health professionals, law-enforcement officers and community agencies to write, direct, choreograph and perform a 45-minute music and drama presentation weaved around current health, safety and legal messages relevant to Year 12 students prior to the annual 'Schoolies' celebrations. The Choices project has been running since 1999 and over 4,000 Year 12 students across 38 schools attended

performances in 2012. The effectiveness of Choices in reducing infringements and reports of crime in Schoolies week has led to its adoption as one of the Mackay Police Service's key crime prevention initiatives.

In another example, USQ's Phoenix Radio is a local online radio station serving the Greater Ipswich region on a 24/7 basis. The state-of-the-art studios are located at USQ Springfield and the facilities are used to provide training for students enrolled in the Bachelor of Applied Media and for people from the local community. The station has tremendous community support and engages with a number of community organisations.

International students

RUN universities attract significant numbers of international students from a wide range of countries to study, live and work in their regions. The students add to the cultural enrichment of regional communities, promote cross-cultural linkages and understanding, and increase attitudes of tolerance and respect for cultural and ethnic differences.

5.3 Research and innovation

The study identified numerous examples of RUN university research enhancing knowledge of regional social issues and contributing to strengthened policy and practice in support of community development. For example:

- The Queensland Centre for Domestic and Family Violence Research at CQUniversity undertakes applied research supporting policy and practice in the field of domestic violence prevention, contributing to community development in Central Queensland (see BOX 2).
- The Centre for Children and Young People at SCU is active in undertaking research in partnership with regional bodies on topics such as social inclusion for children with cognitive disabilities and the support needs of grandparents raising grandchildren.
- Through the CRN for Self Sustaining Regions Research and Innovation, UB is undertaking a longitudinal project on youth homelessness in regional areas in and around Ballarat.
- At USC, the Engage Research Lab is working with Sunshine Coast and state government partners to develop technology-

enabled interventions aimed at increasing the safety and wellbeing of children and young people (see BOX 2).

5.4 Service

Community outreach, education and events

Through the delivery of a range of outreach and education activities, the RUN universities are contributing to the wellbeing, resilience and capacity of their regional communities.

A number of the universities, for example, host Harmony Days or similar community events aimed at promoting inclusiveness, celebrating cultural diversity and supporting community harmony. USQ's Multicultural Centre is a research and service centre that undertakes a range of outreach activities to build cross-cultural understanding in the Toowoomba region and beyond (see BOX 2).

The universities also provide lifelong learning opportunities for regional citizens by providing numerous public lectures, delivered by their own staff or visiting distinguished national and international speakers, on topics of general interest and issues of particular global or regional significance.

UNE, in particular, has built a strong tradition over 20 years in Armidale of providing a diverse annual program of public lectures that attract strong community participation. Building on its world standard research expertise in psychology, UNE also recently developed a six-week radio series 'Bush Remedies', exploring mental health in rural areas, for broadcast on the ABC New England North West radio station (see BOX 2).

Building community capacity

CASE STUDY 5: Community for Community (C4C) exemplifies the leadership role that RUN universities are playing in building capacity for addressing community challenges. USQ's multidisciplinary C4C team fosters the development of networks and undertakes community-based research and knowledge sharing aimed at building regional capacity for addressing a range of social problems. The C4C social research model grew out the University's close involvement in the initiation and development of the successful Toowoomba Flexi School, which offers an alternative and effective

education model for disenfranchised and disadvantaged youth.

The 'Empowering local communities' project example from SCU (see BOX 2) offers another insight into the ways in which the RUN universities are building community capacity in their regions. By contributing their academic and professional expertise and experience, university staff members are helping local community groups to effectively work together and represent themselves in regional, state and national governance contexts.

BOX 2: EXAMPLES OF RUN CONTRIBUTIONS TO REGIONAL COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

<p>Preventing domestic and family violence The Queensland Centre for Domestic and Family Violence Research (CDFVR) is based at CQUniversity's Mackay campus. With funding support from the Queensland government, it contributes to the prevention of domestic and family violence by informing, promoting and supporting the actions of individuals, communities, services and governments through state-wide leadership in research, professional development, education and community engagement. CDFVR is also committed to undertaking applied research that supports the development of policy and practice in the field of domestic and family violence prevention with a particular, though not exclusive, focus on issues for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and rural and regional communities.</p>	<p>Empowering local communities This project drew on the expertise of SCU academics in the School of Law and Justice to build capacity in local and regional communities for self-organization in relation to issues of concern to the community. It has involved assembling a team of people with required skills to develop new models of community networking and host training workshops. The focus of scholars has been upon the educational and community engagement aspects of the project, whilst communities have been able to direct these new capacities into their own current campaigns in relation to perceived threats from mining. Training workshops were delivered over eight sites with up to 80 participants in each workshop.</p>
<p>Building human capacity in rural social welfare UB's Rural Social Welfare qualifications grew out of an identified need for more welfare support in Australia's rural areas. The Bachelor of Arts (Rural Social Welfare) program challenges the metro-centric basis of many social work and welfare theories, and seeks to equip students with an enhanced framework for practice in rural settings. There is a specific emphasis on issues faced by Indigenous people, and the subject is located within a culturally respectful framework of social welfare practice. Students have the opportunity to achieve both a welfare qualification and a Bachelor of Arts. As part of the degree, students undertake 15 weeks of practical fieldwork in welfare agencies. A Graduate Diploma (Rural Social Welfare) is also offered.</p>	<p>Exploring rural mental health issues on radio Building on its world standard research expertise in psychology, UNE developed a six-week radio series 'Bush Remedies', exploring mental health in rural areas, for broadcast on the ABC New England North West radio station. The series explores some of the major factors which influence mental health in 'the bush', including: mood and food; natural disasters; suicide; adapting to change; social media; and, mental health first aid responses. It also highlights the channels of support available. While extensive research for this program was undertaken at UNE, the issues it raises are applicable nationally and the patterns found are essential in helping rural communities plan for the future.</p>
<p>Building cross-cultural understanding USQ's Multicultural Centre conducts research and develops and implement projects that address major contemporary issues relating to culture, language, racial discrimination and religion. It provides a range of community services and programs aimed at promoting inclusiveness, celebrating diversity and supporting social harmony. This includes working in partnership with regional organisations to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deliver an annual Harmony Day program of events • Organise the annual Toowoomba Multicultural Forum and community multi-faith forums • Liaise with refugee and migrant communities to improve university awareness amongst NESB communities. 	<p>Leverage new technologies to address social issues USC's Engage Research Lab builds on familiar technologies such as social networking sites, computer games and smartphone applications to provide solutions to social issues. In collaboration with Sunshine Coast community service organisations, Queensland Education and Queensland Police, the Lab developed 'Being Safety Smart' a free online educational game providing safety and anti-abduction strategies for children aged six to eight years. The game is now in use by over 350 schools and community groups across the region, nationally and internationally. In another project, the Lab is trailing, in the Sunshine Coast region and in Cairns, a mother and daughter (aged 12-14) alcohol reduction intervention using technology mediated communication.</p>

6 Health and ageing

The RUN universities are facilitating regional healthcare provision by addressing health workforce shortages, delivering affordable health services through teaching clinics and developing innovative research-based health interventions and programs.

6.1 Context

The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (2012) reports that the further people live away from major cities, the less healthy they are likely to be. It also reports an uneven distribution of healthcare professionals across the country, with significant disparities between regional and city locations in the per population number of generalist medical practitioners, registered nurses and allied health professionals. Regional areas face a consistent struggle to attract and retain a sustainable health workforce.

The National Strategic Framework for Rural and Remote Health (Standing Council on Health 2012, p. 19) notes:

The combined impact of fewer resources, poorer access to services, limited availability of key health professionals, poorer health status, lower socioeconomic status, distance and travel mean that rural and remote communities and the health challenges they face are significantly different from those that confront metropolitan Australia.

Health service delivery models that are appropriate for city-based communities do not necessarily translate well into regional and rural settings. The significant challenges associated with healthcare delivery in regional Australia, however, also provide valuable opportunities for collaborative partnerships and innovation.

Examples of the contributions being made by the RUN universities in the area of health and ageing are described below.

6.2 Learning and teaching

Addressing regional skill shortages

The RUN universities have historically been major providers of nursing graduates to their regions and have also, over recent years, been actively expanding their academic program offerings to address the significant shortages of allied health professionals in regional and rural Australia. For example:

- CQUniversity has made a significant investment in a new suite of allied health programs, including oral health, radiography, speech pathology and sonography and has introduced a new online nursing retraining program.
- SCU has introduced an Associated Degree of Allied Health, as a pathway to its expanded range of allied health degrees and in response to community and industry demand has introduced Australia's first podorthotics program.
- UNE has introduced Australia's first pharmacy course available in distance mode to students living in rural areas.
- USC has introduced new programs in nutrition and dietetics, occupational therapy, counseling and health promotion.
- USQ has become a national leader in graduating Indigenous registered nurses with its Helping Hands Indigenised model of student support, developed and delivered in close collaboration with the regional Indigenous community.

USC is playing a key role in the development of the Sunshine Coast University Hospital (SCUH), a vital infrastructure project for the Sunshine Coast region, including assisting the Hospital with health workforce planning and associated academic program provision (see BOX 3).

In designing their health programs, the universities give emphasis to preparing graduates for the distinctive nature of regional and rural practice and also encourage and facilitate clinical placements in regional and rural areas. SCU, for example, has recently built a state-of-the-art mobile health facility, housed in a semi-trailer, to support students in a range of health degrees to undertake clinical placements in regional and remote locations.

Given the significant costs associated with establishing a medical school, the chronic shortage of GPs and medical specialists in rural and regional Australia is a more challenging issue for the regional universities to address. In 2008, however, UNE established an innovative partnership with the University of Newcastle and two regional health services to offer the Joint Medical Program at its Armidale campus, with a focus on rural medicine (see BOX 3). To reduce costs and speed up program initiation, UNE adopted the University of Newcastle's highly successful medical curriculum.

In addition, SCU continues to support the University Centre for Rural Health (UCRH), a joint venture it founded with University of Sydney in 2001. Through a focus on Grafton, Lismore and Murwillumbah, the UCRH seeks to improve recruitment and retention in the rural health workforce.

Community engaged learning and provision of regional health services

Through a range of health and teaching public clinics, the RUN universities achieve the dual aims of providing health services and improved health care outcomes for their regions while also providing students with access to practical supervised clinical experience in regional settings. This includes Psychology Clinics, a Collaborative Midwifery Clinic, a community-led counseling service, an exercise rehabilitation centre and allied health clinics providing access to a diversity of health disciplines.

The USQ Psychology Clinic, for example, was established as a community psychological service centre to provide affordable services of a high quality to the region. Professionally registered postgraduate students who are undertaking advanced study in psychology at the University provide these services, under supervision.

In many instances, health facilities and services are delivered in close partnership with regional stakeholders, often stimulating innovative models of service delivery.

CQUniversity's new Allied Health Clinic (see BOX 3), for example, is operated through an innovative partnership with the State Government's Central Queensland Hospital and Health Service, which manages the facility and the provision of public health services. It is anticipated that the campus-based clinic, together with the collaborative teaching and research opportunities arising from the partnership between the University and the Health Service, will prove attractive to health professionals who may not otherwise choose to move to the region.

In *CASE STUDY 6: Northern United Football Team Wellness Program*, SCU's Health Clinic has partnered with the Northern United Football Club and Meridian Health to enhance health outcomes for Indigenous communities in the Northern Rivers and also prepare allied health students for culturally competent professional practice. This case study provides an example of a university-led health facility stimulating the development of innovative partnerships and new modes of health service delivery suited to the distinctive regional context. It also represents a model that, with appropriate adaptation, could be applied successfully in other Australian regional settings.

6.3 Research and innovation

The RUN universities contribute to the enhancement of regional and rural health outcomes through their applied and multidisciplinary research activities. UB, for example, offers world-class research in clinical sciences and human movement and sports science. USQ's Centre for Rural and Remote Area Health (see BOX 3) specialises in community-engaged research in Indigenous health, mental health and assistive technologies for aged care.

CQUniversity's Institute for Health and Social Sciences Research focuses on the behavioural determinants of health and health interventions. One of the Institute's initiatives is featured in *CASE STUDY 7: 10,000 Steps*. The case study highlights the significant national flow-on benefits of research and innovation emerging from regional environments. Rockhampton was initially selected by the Queensland Government as a pilot site for a new health promotion program due to the established collaborative links between key regional organisations, including CQUniversity.

The University researched, developed and evaluated the pilot program, facilitated its roll-out at the state and national levels, and continues to lead research and innovation in its further development and deployment. At April 2013, the program had over 228,000 individual members and over 8,000 workplaces registered nationally, and similar programs are now operating in other countries.

CASE STUDY 8: Smarter, Safer Homes demonstrates how multidisciplinary research, undertaken in collaboration with regional community partners, is providing groundbreaking broadband-enabled solutions to address shortages of regional health and aged care services and facilities, and enhance the quality of life for older people who wish to remain in their own homes.

BOX 3 provides additional examples of health-related research and innovation initiatives undertaken by the RUN members. The 'Innovations in telemedicine' example reflects the leadership role being played by the RUN universities in assisting their regions to realise the benefits of national high speed broadband. The 'Therapeutic program for people with dementia' example points to local innovations in aged care being adopted at a state and national level.

6.4 Service

Community outreach, education and events

CQUniversity's 'Research Unplugged' program delivers an annual series of community presentations and discussions on topical health and social science issues being researched by academic staff.

The universities also deliver occasional public lectures on health-related topics: a recent example from UNE was a lecture about the connections between healthy eating and the mitigation of climate change.

Community capacity building

In addition to their education and research contributions, the RUN universities are also playing an important role in building regional capacity and initiating and supporting regional networks and communities of practice.

CQUniversity, for example, is an active member of the Central Queensland Primary Care Partnership (CQPCP), providing senior executive representation from among key stakeholders in the health and community services industry. The partners work together to identify, develop and implement innovative solutions to health issues across Central Queensland. The University is also a core partner in the Central Queensland Headspace Consortium which has won funding to establish an early intervention and prevention service designed to reduce the number of young people who go on to develop early psychosis.

The USC Psychology Clinic, in partnership with Asperger Services Australia Ltd, has recently formed an Asperger Support Group for parents and extended families of those on the autism spectrum. The Group hosts guest speakers with relevant expertise and also provides a forum for postgraduate psychology students and health professionals to expand their knowledge and understanding of those on the spectrum, thus addressing a significant shortage of trained professionals in this area.

BOX 3: EXAMPLES OF RURAL HEALTH AND AGEING CONTRIBUTIONS

<p>Allied Health Clinic Helping to bridge a gap in regional health services, CQUniversity recently opened its \$7 million public access Allied Health Clinic on its Rockhampton Campus. The Clinic will provide improved health care outcomes for Central Queenslanders with capacity for up to 160 public consultations per day. It will also up-skill the region's future health workforce, supporting clinical placements for up to 200 students annually in areas including Occupational Therapy, Podiatry, Physiotherapy and Speech Pathology. The Clinic is operated in partnership with the State Government's Central Queensland Hospital and Health Services team. A \$16 million 'stage two' is planned for construction.</p>	<p>Therapeutic program for people with dementia SCU's School of Health and Human Services has partnered with the regional Baptist Community Service to develop, implement and evaluate an innovative respite care program (Stand Up) designed to actively engage people with mild dementia in the creation of humour and laughter for themselves and others. The research shows the program has many therapeutic benefits for both participants and their carers. A complementary facilitators program has also been developed, and Baptist Community Service has plans to roll out Stand Up in every one of its care facilities across the State. Other local and interstate organisations are also adopting the program.</p>
<p>Innovations in telemedicine The University of Ballarat, with support from a major Victorian Government grant, has created software, and is currently running proof of concept trials, for revolutionising the delivery of healthcare throughout Western Victoria. The University is working in partnership with the University of Melbourne, Grampians Rural Health Alliance and regional hospitals, aged care facilities and health services in Ballarat, Horsham, West Wimmera and Stawell. The software will allow the operation of high-definition three-dimensional healthcare imaging, enabling medical practitioners to analyse ailments as if they are in the same room as the patient. For instance, this imaging will lead to medical practitioners in Ballarat or Melbourne providing high-quality medical care to patients in Horsham or Stawell, in four areas: dentistry, psychiatry, wound management and oncology.</p>	<p>School of Rural Medicine The UNE School of Rural Medicine offers the Joint Medical Program (JMP) in collaboration with the University of Newcastle and the Hunter New England Health and Central Coast Health Services – an Australian first. The JMP initiative is an innovative, cost-effective response to the chronic shortage of doctors in regional, rural and remote areas of the Hunter and New England regions and across Australia. There is a particular emphasis on understanding rural and remote health care and health equity issues. The Tablelands Clinical School is one of five regional clinical schools operating within the BMed-JMP. It covers the geographic area extending from Armidale to include Glenn Innes, Inverell, and Tenterfield, and a new purpose-built facility will be opened in the near future, co-located with the Armidale Hospital.</p>
<p>Centre for Rural and Remote Area Health The Centre for Rural and Remote Area Health (CRRAH) is a jointly badged Centre of the University of Southern Queensland and the University of Queensland. Its mission is to conduct and facilitate health-related research and training in rural and remote communities for the benefit of the community and the health workforce. The Centre specialises in community controlled Indigenous health research and has formed valuable partnerships with Indigenous health providers, locally and nationally. Examples of projects include: use of the didgeridoo to improve asthma in Aboriginal Australians; and, building bridges across Indigenous communities to share successful life promotion and suicide prevention expertise.</p>	<p>Partnering with the Sunshine Coast University Hospital USC is playing a key role in the development of the Sunshine Coast University Hospital (SCUH), a vital infrastructure project for the Sunshine Coast region, important both for healthcare and the region's economy. Teaching and research will be integral to the new hospital, due to be opened in 2016. USC, alongside other partners, will create a teaching and research 'knowledge hub' within the hospital precinct – the Skills and Academic Research Centre. This dedicated collaborative space will provide opportunities for health professionals to develop new knowledge and contribute to best practice patient care. The University is also working with the hospital in relation to health and associated workforce planning.</p>

7 Arts, culture and sport

The RUN universities are enriching the quality of life of their regional communities by providing arts, cultural and sporting facilities and programs, and are also contributing to the development of creative industries in their regions.

7.1 Context

Creative Australia, the recently released National Cultural Policy (Australian Government, 2013), emphasises the critically important role played by the arts, cultural heritage and creative industries in national identity and lifestyle, community wellbeing and the economy:

In each domain, creative art has an intrinsic value in its own right as works of genius, beauty and originality, an institutional value in terms of national identity, economic value as an industry, and instrumental value in education and social cohesion. (p. 30)

The Policy also highlights the fundamental place that Indigenous culture holds in the Australian story and the nation's responsibility for nurturing and promoting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's cultural expression.

The creative arts play a powerful role in building inclusive and resilient communities, increasing awareness and understanding of key societal issues such as health, wellbeing and climate change, and engaging marginalised youth. Also, the creative industries sector is now an increasingly important part of the economic mainstream.

In regional and rural Australia, the availability of arts, cultural and sporting facilities and programs play a vital role in attracting people to invest, live and work in the regions. Regional arts, cultural and sporting organisations often have the enthusiastic support of their members and communities, however, issues of funding, infrastructure, distance and lack of coordination across levels of government often present ongoing barriers to access and participation.

Examples of RUN universities' arts, culture and sport contributions to their regions are outlined below.

7.2 Learning and teaching

Inspiring interest in the arts and culture

Consistent with their programs for raising educational aspirations, the RUN universities also work in partnership with schools and other regional education providers and community groups to deliver programs aimed at inspiring an interest in the arts and culture.

USQ, for example, offers an extensive and diverse suite of school and community outreach initiatives in the creative arts. This includes the delivery of creative arts workshops to the Cherbourg Indigenous community, in partnership with South Queensland Institute of TAFE and Toowoomba's Empire Theatre (see BOX 4).

With a number of regional partners, CQUniversity delivered the 'Artists in Residence' program in 2012 to around 470 school students across four regional communities (see BOX 4).

In 2012, more than 600 Year 10 and 11 students from 26 schools attended three language immersion days at USC, with five European and Asian languages on offer.

Academic programs

The RUN universities offer an extensive range of academic programs, from Bachelor to PhD level, in the creative arts. Their students and graduates enrich the quality of life of their regional communities and contribute to the development of the creative industries and cultural tourism sectors.

The fields of study available through the RUN members include:

- Music
- Theatre and acting
- Visual arts, graphic design and new media
- Creative writing
- Creative industries and creative enterprise
- Arts administration and management.

In addition, some of the institutions also offer academic programs or majors in: Indigenous studies; language and culture, including Asian and European languages; history; and, cultural studies.

The universities also supply professionals to their regions in the areas of exercise and sports science, nutrition, exercise physiology and rehabilitation, physical education and sports management.

Community engaged learning

Through the adoption of community engaged learning strategies in their academic programs, the RUN universities provide opportunities for their students to gain valuable experience as creative practitioners while also delivering substantial benefits to the community.

CASE STUDY 9: USQ Artsworx, for example, describes the role played by USQ Bachelor of Creative Arts students in delivering an annual season of high quality, innovative, artistic and cultural experiences to the Toowoomba and regional community, attracting 25,000 people to USQ each year. Students are typically involved in the entire production or exhibition process, often working with acclaimed guest directors and artists, and are assessed on their participation by University academic staff.

At SCU, community engaged learning is central to the University's role in a number of iconic regional music and writers' festivals (e.g. Byron Bay Writers' Festival) that attract thousands of visitors each year to the Northern Rivers and Mid North Coast regions of NSW.

7.3 Research and innovation

A number of the RUN universities have established research centres with a focus on the creative arts, cultural heritage or sport, including:

- UNE's Heritage Futures Research Centre, with expertise in the natural and cultural history and heritage of regional Australia.
- USC's Centre for Healthy Activities, Sport and Exercise (CHASE), a nationally accredited research and engagement centre, offering the Sunshine Coast community and national sporting bodies access to knowledge and innovative programs in sports performance and rehabilitation.
- UB's Centre for Healthy and Safe Sport, which conducts research across a range of sports injury and sports injury prevention projects.

In the area of cultural heritage, *CASE STUDY 10: Bundjalung Cultural Mapping Project* outlines the role played by SCU researchers in empowering the Aboriginal people of the Bundjalung Nation to record and preserve their cultural heritage. The University's expertise in natural resource management, geographic information systems and cultural heritage management, together with its experience in collaboration with Indigenous communities, enabled it to create an innovative user-friendly computer-based system for identifying culturally significant and sacred sites and recording cultural information. SCU staff members are currently exploring opportunities for extending the model into communities in the Torres Strait, East Timor and Europe.

7.4 Service

Individual academic staff and students of the RUN universities are active contributors, as leaders and performers, to artistic and cultural groups in their regions, including: choral societies; instrumental ensembles; and, theatre groups. Examples of the types of service activities undertaken by the RUN institutions are described below.

Provision of cultural facilities

A number of the RUN universities have significant art collections, developed mainly with the support of public donations, that they make available to their regional communities through public display in university buildings and facilities. Three of the universities have also established purpose-designed public art galleries, facilitating regional community access to exhibitions featuring local and national artists across a range of art mediums.

CASE STUDY 11: USC Art Gallery and Public Art Collection, provides a description of the University's contributions to the Sunshine Coast region through: arts education; promotion and understanding of Indigenous art and culture; access to contemporary developments in art and new media; and, support for the development of creative industries.

In addition, the study identified a number of instances where RUN universities are providing regional arts and sporting organisations with access to office space, performance venues, sporting facilities, staff expertise and student placements. For example, the UB WestVic Academy of Sport, which provides talented Western Victorian athletes with access to coaching and education programs of excellence, is co-located with the University's School of Health Sciences.

Preserving and promoting cultural heritage

A number of the RUN universities have established extensive collections of historical documents and materials to preserve the social, cultural, environmental and economic heritage of their regions. UB's Geoffrey Blainey Research Centre and UNE's Heritage Centre are key examples (see BOX 4).

In addition, the USQ Historical Archives was established in 2007 to preserve key historical documents and objects relating to USQ and its regions. Housed in a purpose built building on the Toowoomba campus, the Archives includes seven major collection, including the Toowoomba Chronicle Archives Collection of more than 1.5 million photographic negatives used for publication in the Toowoomba Chronicle newspaper from 1953 to early 2002.

SCU is contributing its expertise to preserve, interpret and showcase stories associated with iconic regional historical buildings, the Nimbin Aquarius Festival of 1973, and the New Italy community. USQ's Faculty of Arts is working in partnership with regional groups and Toowoomba Regional Council to transform heritage tourism through scripted theatre vignettes.

Some of the universities have also played a key role in preserving iconic regional historical buildings. Through its restoration of a number of buildings in the Ballarat CBD, for example, UB has not only made significant contributions to the

preservation of the region's cultural and industrial heritage, but has also played an important role in revitalizing the city centre and raising the profile of the region as a tourist and heritage destination.

Provision of sporting and fitness facilities

Within their regions, the RUN universities are often the main providers of a diverse range of high quality sporting, fitness and health facilities and services for access by schools, residents, community groups and competitive sports clubs. Sports clubs, in particular, are reliant on university sporting facilities, stadiums, playing fields and courts for their ongoing viability and competitiveness. Each week, for example, over 3,000 community members access USC's extensive sporting and fitness facilities (see BOX 4).

Community capacity building

SCU is a founding member of the Northern Rivers Creative Industries Consortium (see BOX 4), a collaborative alliance for advancing community cultural development, creative industries development, cultural tourism and Indigenous arts and cultural development. In a related initiative, the University is applying its academic knowledge and research on sustainable business networks to coordinate the Southern Gold Coast Music Hub. The Hub is a network of people and businesses operating in the tourism, hospitality, entertainment and cultural sectors with a shared objective of strengthening the region's music, entertainment and tourism industries.

In another example, UB recently initiated the establishment of the Australian History Network, in partnership with multiple regional and statewide organisations with an interest in history education and research. The Network is progressing a range of initiatives, including innovative research training programs that draw on the expertise and extensive historical archives of partner organisations. The Network, together with UB's separate partnership with Sovereign Hill Museum Association, will also play a key role in strengthening the competitiveness of Ballarat as a national and international tourist destination.

BOX 4: EXAMPLES OF RUN ARTS, CULTURE AND SPORTS CONTRIBUTIONS

<p>Artists in Residence</p> <p>'Artists in Residence' is a collaborative project between CQUniversity, Creative Regions (a regional not-for-profit arts company) and Creative Capricorn (a joint initiative of the Australia Council for the Arts, Arts Queensland and Rockhampton Regional Council). It aims to inspire longer-term interest in the Arts, enliven local communities to participate in the Arts, and to promote lifelong learning. In 2012, around 470 students, as well as local residents, participated in circus skill workshops, held in four regional communities (Woorabinda, Baralaba, Eidsvold and Mount Morgan) over an eight-week period.</p>	<p>Northern Rivers Creative Industries Consortium</p> <p>SCU is a founding member of the Northern Rivers Creative Industries Consortium. In 2006 key arts and creative industries organisations came together with regional development and education agencies to form the Consortium, with the specific goal of collaborating to support creative industry development. The University has formed a complementary Creative Industries Research Network which recently facilitated a series of workshops to clarify the assets, needs and gaps in the creative industries knowledge bank in the region and identify key collaborative research and innovation projects that will take the industry forward.</p>
<p>Preserving Ballarat's cultural heritage</p> <p>Through a variety of programs, UB is making significant contributions to the preservation of Ballarat's cultural heritage, for example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Geoffrey Blainey Research Centre provides physical and online access to the University's extensive Historical Collection of material from its predecessor institutions dating from the opening of the Ballarat School of Mines in 1870. • In partnership with the Sovereign Hill Museums Association, the Ballarat & District Industrial Heritage Project is building an open and trusted 'wiki' for the storage and access of the region's nationally significant industrial heritage. • The University's Arts Academy is located in the CBD within iconic historical buildings that have been restored and preserved by the University. 	<p>UNE Heritage Centre</p> <p>This Centre, open to the public and located in the centre of Armidale, houses the UNE & Regional Archives (UNERA) established by the University in 1957 to serve as a repository for both University and regional records. The major goal of the Archives is to collect evidence of the social and economic history of the northern region of New South Wales. Over 1,500 letters, ledgers, diaries, photographs, maps and plans make up the regional holdings. Some of the earliest material dates back as far as the 1600s, but the majority relates to the century between 1850 and 1950. There were 1,021 applications to use research materials at the Centre in 2012, with usage statistics revealing extensive use by the public, both from the local community and outside the region, in addition to UNE staff and students.</p>
<p>Creative arts and Indigenous communities</p> <p>The Cherbourg Project in the Creative Arts links creative arts aspects of Southern Queensland Institute of TAFE, Toowoomba's Empire Theatre and the USQ School of Creative Arts in a unique tertiary education partnership that aims to improve access, completion and retention of Indigenous participants in creative arts initiatives. The project provides a variety of creative arts workshops in purpose-built theatre and art-workshop spaces at TAFE in Cherbourg,</p> <p>In support of Indigenous creative arts, USQ also hosts a biennial Indigenous Art Exhibition to promote Indigenous culture. The 2012 Undiluted Exhibition featured five Indigenous artists and also included two free workshops, led by an Indigenous educator, for local Indigenous artists and Indigenous high school students.</p>	<p>Sporting Facilities</p> <p>USC provides excellent sporting facilities, available for use by schools, clubs and the community. This includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A \$10million national standard indoor sports stadium • IAAF-standard athletics track • Multipurpose playing fields • Outdoor hard courts • Olympic-standard swimming pool • Gymnasium • Athlete testing. <p>An average of 3,000 community members access the facilities each week, representing 80 per cent of total usage. In addition, almost 8,000 community members access the facilities each year for events.</p>

8 Environmental sustainability

The RUN universities are building regional capacity for understanding and effectively managing the impacts of climate change and are developing innovative knowledge-based solutions to support regional environmental sustainability.

8.1 Context

The potential impacts of climate change, such as more frequent severe weather events, increased bushfire risk, flooding of coastal areas, deterioration of the natural environment and water shortages, represent priority issues for the majority of Australian regions (ABS 2013).

Rural and regional Australia is at the front line in dealing with the impacts of climate change, with significant implications for regional economies and the way of life of rural and regional communities. In particular, there are negative effects on agriculture and primary production and the entire 'farm-dependent economy'.

Environmental sustainability issues extend beyond the impacts of climate change. In regions with strong population growth, for example, there are tensions between providing expanded housing to meet the needs of growing communities and the preservation of biodiversity, native vegetation and wildlife. The growth of the coal seam gas industry is raising concerns about the potential long-term impacts on water quality and creating social divisions in some regions.

Examples of the contributions of the RUN universities in building regional capacity for dealing with the impacts of climate change and promoting environmental sustainability are given below.

8.2 Sustainability as a core institutional value

CASE STUDY 12: Environmental and Regional Sustainability describes the exemplary approach taken by the University of the Sunshine Coast in providing strategic leadership within its region, and nationally, in the promotion of sustainable development. The University's commitment to sustainability is a core value and strategic priority that permeates its governance framework, campus design and conservation efforts, management practices, educational program offerings and curriculum, research and community leadership and collaboration.

Other RUN universities are also giving strategic priority to environmental sustainability. At UB, for example, a Sustainability Committee chaired by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research) oversees the development and implementation of the University's Sustainability Strategy. The Strategy, amongst other things, emphasises UB's regional leadership in role modeling sustainable behavior and practices. SCU's Sustainability Policy Advisory Group includes representatives of regional agencies to promote regional linkages and, where appropriate, to progress environmental sustainability at a regional scale.

8.3 Learning and teaching

Academic programs

Each of the RUN universities delivers undergraduate and postgraduate coursework programs to supply graduates and build regional and national capacity for achieving environmental sustainability. Programs include: climate change adaptation; environmental

science and management; marine science and management; ecology; geoscience; natural resource science and management; geographic information systems; and, sustainability.

Some of the universities have also set a goal of embedding sustainability in the curriculum of all their educational programs. SCU and USC, for example, offer all undergraduate students the opportunity to undertake a major in sustainability.

Community engaged learning

In selected university programs, students undertake community-based sustainability projects as part of their course requirements.

The 'Collaboration in wetland management' example from SCU (see BOX 5) describes how the University has worked with regional partners over five years to develop a structured approach to engaged learning and skills development for students studying wetland management. It represents an interesting example of the ways in which the nature and scope of regional partnerships evolve over time. In this case, the partnership started with a focus on community engaged learning, and then progressed to collaborative curriculum design, before expanding to include collaborative research.

8.4 Research and innovation

RUN member universities have developed niche applied research strengths in direct response to the specific environmental sustainability issues facing their regions. While relevant to regional needs, these research strengths also address issues of national and international significance. Examples of key research centres include:

- Institute for Resource Industries and Sustainability (CQUniversity).
- Research Centres in plant science, geoscience, coastal biogeochemistry, marine ecology and forest science (SCU).
- Rural Climate Solutions (UNE) (see BOX 5).
- Centre for Environmental Management and National Centre for Sustainability (UB).
- Australian Centre for Sustainable Catchments (USQ) (see BOX 5).
- Sustainability Research Centre (USC).

CQUniversity's Vice-Chancellor recently launched an Engaged Research Initiative to further strengthen the University's contributions to sustainable regional development in Central Queensland (see BOX 5).

In addition, a number of RUN universities own and maintain significant regional assets and facilities for research and education purposes, including:

- Nanya Station and Euston Conservation Park, biodiversity assets of national significance (UB) (see BOX 5)
- Newholme, a 1,945 ha Natural Resources Field Laboratory and Douglas McMaster Research Station, a 1,012 ha property enabling research on sustainable whole-farm systems, particularly for the New England region (UNE).

CASE STUDY 13: Visualising Victoria's Groundwater provides an exemplar of the ways in which multidisciplinary research led by regional universities to meet local needs can have national and international relevance and flow-on benefits. The groundbreaking VVG project, led by UB in partnership with national, state and regional bodies, adapted new technologies and leveraged high speed broadband capabilities to capture, aggregate and spatially depict Victoria's groundwater systems for public access via intuitive web portals.

This R&D work has not only empowered local water managers and farmers to sustainably manage water use and environmental flows, but has also led to Natural Resources Canada partnering in the project and UB being invited to participate in the development and trailing of the international standard for groundwater data transfer.

8.5 Service

Community capacity building

CASE STUDY 14: Sustain Northern Rivers provides an illuminating example of the regional leadership contributions of the RUN universities. While the strong environmental ethos of the Northern Rivers regional community is a significant community asset, it also has potential to create significant social divisions and fragmentation of effort through numerous government and community-based organisations. SCU has demonstrated ongoing and significant

leadership in bringing together 26 peak regional organisations, within an innovative collaborative governance framework, to communicate, consult and collaborate for action on climate change.

Other relevant examples of the RUN universities' contributions to building community capacity for environmental sustainability are listed below:

- CQUniversity is a major partner of the Fitzroy Partnership for River Health, a collaboration involving State government, local government and industry partners that develops and implements integrated waterway monitoring and reporting for the Fitzroy Basin, Australia's second largest seaward draining catchment located in Central Queensland.
- USQ is an active member of the Condamine Alliance, a collaboration of government, industry, community and R&D organisations established to repair and conserve the environment in the Condamine catchment.
- Southern Cross Geoscience (SCU) is an active member of the Northern Rivers Floodplain Network, comprising regional stakeholders engaged in the delivery of coastal floodplain natural resource management. Members of the Network are some of the main users of the Centre's research and the Network provides a vital link for disseminating new research findings.

Community outreach and education facilities

A number of the universities offer community outreach and education facilities that support regional schools in delivering environmental education, raise community awareness of the regional environment and its protection, and contribute to regional tourism:

- In 2012, SCU's National Marine Science Centre at Coffs Harbour delivered 50 hands-on enquiry-based learning activities in the area of marine science to 2,000 primary and secondary students and members of community groups and attracted over 9,500 regional, national and international visitors to its Solitary Islands Aquarium.
- USC's Fraser Island Research and Learning Centre, located on the world heritage listed island, provides accommodation for students and staff, and access to field study sites for primary, secondary and tertiary student groups and also attracts day visitors and tour groups.

Community forums, events and festivals

The RUN universities host community forums, events and festivals to raise awareness and understanding in their communities of the science of climate change and sustainability and the innovative solutions available to households, industry and business for reducing their carbon footprints and sustainably managing natural resources. For example:

- In collaboration with regional partners, USC annually hosts the Sunshine Coast World Environment Day Festival (see BOX 5).
- UB recently held a public sustainability forum in Ballarat, in collaboration with Ballarat Health Services and the Collaborative Research Network (CRN) for Self-Sustaining Regions Research and Innovation.
- In 2012, working in partnership with a local Science Centre and a regional community-owned cooperative, CQUniversity hosted Earth Day Celebrations over three days at its Emerald campus, and plans to do so on an annual basis. The celebrations were designed to empower individuals to make a positive difference to the future sustainability of the region with particular focus on the home, industry and the waterways.

BOX 5: EXAMPLES OF RUN ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY ACTIVITIES

<p>Sustainable development in Central Queensland The Vice-Chancellor’s Engaged Research Initiative at CQUniversity provides special purpose funding for research projects that explore the social, cultural, economic and environmental needs, challenges and solutions that will contribute to regional sustainability, particularly as they relate to increased industry development in Central Queensland. Current environmental projects include: biodiesel production from marginal lands; improving marine conservation outcomes by addressing generational knowledge loss; investigating the fecundity of reef corals exposed to low salinity; and, precision environmental management to enable sustainable regional development in beef production systems.</p>	<p>Collaboration in wetland management SCU, Richmond River County Council and WetlandCare Australia have worked closely together over five years to develop and refine a pathways program that provides SCU students with inspiring field-based learning opportunities. Regional partners have opportunities to influence curriculum and its delivery and build relationships with potential employees. Over time, other organisations, such as Lismore City Council, have become involved in various capacities, including guest lectures, field participation and supervision of students. The partnerships are currently being broadened to research activities. Co-supervision of postgraduate students has been initiated and collaborative external research funding applications are being pursued.</p>
<p>Nanya and Euston Conservation Parks Nanya Station (40,000 ha) and Euston (8,000 ha) are significant refuges for biological diversity located in far-western NSW, containing unique systems of natural salt lakes, old growth Mallee, and a variety of intact ecosystems. The University of Ballarat manages these properties for conservation and cultural values, education and research. Nearly 400 flora and fauna species and 22 plant communities have been recorded at Nanya alone, with a significant number not previously recorded. These ecological parks are the largest parks managed by a university in Australia, and UB is committed to preserving and enriching the biodiversity of these important national assets. Current research projects include: effect of grazing, fire and flood on plant regeneration; mobility and distribution of mallee birds; and, arid woodland tree regeneration.</p>	<p>Rural Climate Solutions Rural Climate Solutions is a collaborative venture between UNE and the NSW Department of Primary Industries. It is undertaking research and delivering solutions on a range of climate change issues. Key research strategies in climate change are to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop tools for the implementation of a sustainable and regionally based bioenergy industry; • Develop crop, pasture and livestock technologies that capture carbon, reduce emissions and are adapted to climate change; • Develop innovative approaches to coping with extreme climatic events and incursions by exotic weeds, diseases and pests; and • Provide policy and risk management solutions for drought, fire, invasive weeds, pests and diseases in a climate change scenario.
<p>Building resilient natural resource management (NRM) communities With funding from the Australian government, USQ’s Australian Centre for Sustainable Catchments is partnering with the NSW and Queensland governments and the University of Canberra to build the capacity of NRM regional bodies to more effectively integrate climate information into strategic planning and decision-making and manage ongoing adaptation. Working in close collaboration with the Condamine Alliance, Queensland Murray-Darling Committee and three regional Catchment Management Authorities, the University’s research will strengthen regional partnerships and networks and deliver a robust set of regionally-relevant biophysical and socioeconomic data products.</p>	<p>World Environment Day Festival The annual World Environment Day Festival is a collaboration between USC and the Sunshine Coast Environment Council, Sunshine Coast Council, Sunshine Coast TAFE and SEQ Catchments. It is a free community event featuring innovative green technologies, forums, workshops and entertainment, and attracts approximately 8,000 community members each year. SEQ Catchments is a community-based business that sources and coordinates investment in activities that help South East Queensland to a sustainable future. It re-located to the University’s Innovation Centre four years ago to benefit from the Centre’s facilities, networking and technical support, access to student work placements and relationships with University teaching and research staff.</p>

9 Industry and business development

In their regions, the RUN universities are addressing industry skill shortages, stimulating the growth of knowledge-based industries and partnering with industry and business to build capacity for innovation and sustainable management.

9.1 Context

The most common economic threat identified by RDA Committees across Australia is the reliance on one or few main industries and the need to diversify the region's economy. Many regions reported that their key industries were seasonally dependent and vulnerable to influences, such as climate and commodity cycles (ABS 2013).

The fragmentation of industries is another common inhibitor of economic development in regional Australia. SMEs represent over 96 per cent of all businesses in Australia and improving collaborations to intensify knowledge transfer and innovation could greatly benefit regional and national productivity (Advisory Council on Intellectual Property 2012).

The Advisory Council on Intellectual Property also notes:

Today's knowledge-based economy is characterised by an increasing volume of information, the growth of multidisciplinary research and convergent technologies, and increasingly specialised global supply chains.

Collaboration, particularly between the private and public sectors, can be a catalyst for achieving innovation that serves the community and is relevant to the marketplace.

This section of the report provides examples of the contributions of the RUN universities to industry and business innovation and development in their regions.

9.2 Learning and teaching

Academic programs

The RUN universities produce graduates across a comprehensive range of fields of study that facilitate and support business and industry innovation, growth and sustainability. In addition to agriculture and mining related courses, this includes for example: accounting; business; financial planning; hospitality management; law; property; tourism; international business; and, information technology.

The input of business and industry to academic program design is regularly sought and many industry representatives, business owners and professionals deliver guest lectures or are employed on a casual basis by the universities to teach units of study. In addition, the universities partner with regional businesses to provide students with work integrated learning opportunities and enterprises with access to students' knowledge and skills.

To help stimulate regional innovative capacity, USC has introduced entrepreneurship as a theme across its academic programs. All USC undergraduate students are required to study two of three available 'core courses', including 'Innovation, Creativity and Entrepreneurship'. In addition, all undergraduate students have the option of taking a four course minor in entrepreneurship as part of their degree, particularly those who are interested in developing their own business idea from a concept to reality.

Through its annual Business Enterprise Day, delivered in partnership with the Business Educator's Association of Queensland, USC also encourages hundreds of high school students to continue studying business at school and to consider a career in business. The students participate in workshops hosted by over 30 local business people.

Addressing skill shortages in agriculture and resource industries

As noted earlier, the Australian agriculture and mining sectors are facing significant knowledge and skill shortages. The RUN universities, through the introduction of new academic programs, and the renewal of existing programs, have been working to meet the skill needs of these key regional industries.

CASE STUDY 15: Flexible and Innovative Solutions for Meeting Industry Skill Needs in Central Queensland describes how CQUniversity has been partnering with industry peak bodies and individual companies to provide rapid, innovative and tailored solutions for addressing skill shortages in the resources and related sectors. This includes: geoscience; mine technology; mine operations management; project management; and, engineering.

UB has also recently introduced a number of new undergraduate engineering programs in mining to complement its existing strengths in providing specialised graduate mining industry programs.

UNE has recently renewed its agriculture and animal science programs, in close consultation with relevant industry sectors. Contrary to national sector trends, the programs have been attracting annual growth of 20 per cent in student demand over the last four years.

Capacity building and professional development programs

CASE STUDY 16: Queensland College of Wine Tourism describes a successful joint venture between USQ and the Queensland Department of Education and Training for building capacity in the Queensland wine tourism industry. Based in Stanthorpe, the location for 60 per cent of all Queensland wine production, the Centre has a working vineyard, winery and restaurant. It integrates the delivery of school programs in 'Wine, Food and Tourism' and specialised education and training programs, with research,

industry extension and grape and wine analysis services to support industry development in the region and across the State as a whole.

The RUN universities also offer a vast and diverse array of professional development short courses and capacity building programs to support industry and business development in their regions.

In 2013, for example, UB is coordinating the Strategic Management for Profitable Growth program designed to assist SMEs in the Ballarat region to boost business profits and competitiveness (see BOX 6).

9.3 Research and innovation

Agriculture and resource industries

The RUN universities have significant strengths in conducting research and developing innovative technologies and systems to increase the efficiency, productivity and sustainability of agricultural industries in their regions. They frequently work in close partnership with state government primary industries or similar departments, with this often extending to joint staff appointments and the physical co-location of research teams.

CASE STUDY 2: Smart Farm describes a demonstration site developed by UNE of regional, national and international significance. The site is a 7,000 acre commercial farm that is linked to the national broadband network and showcases cutting edge on-site technologies aimed at: improving farm productivity and environmental sustainability through more efficient land and water use; enhancing safety; and, providing social/business support networks for Australian farmers and their families.

In addition, the Agricultural Business Research Institute at UNE has developed flagship software products and technologies now utilised by cattle breeders in the New England region and 80 breed organisations throughout the world (see BOX 6).

Other examples include:

- USQ's National Centre for Engineering in Agriculture, which has developed precision irrigation, weed control and cropping systems for the sugar and cotton industries.

- SCU's Special Research Centre in Plant Science, which brings together leading expertise in the fields of plant genetics, phytochemistry and ethnopharmacology to investigate and improve existing crops as well as developing new useful medicinal and food plants and high value plant products.

The Central Queensland rail network is vitally important to the resources industries in the region. CQUniversity's Centre for Railway Engineering contributes its expertise in train and wagon dynamics, simulation, structural fatigue, failure analysis, erosion control, driver advisory systems, condition monitoring and train control and brake systems.

Stimulating the growth of regional knowledge-based businesses

In two of the RUN case studies, the universities have created knowledge precincts to stimulate regional business innovation and high-skill job growth.

UB's *Technology Park* (CASE STUDY 17) was established in 1995 in partnership with the City of Ballarat and the Victorian State Government. The Centre caters to large-scale organisations such as IBM (which now employs 740 staff at the Centre with plans for further growth), early stage technology focused businesses and innovative technology SMEs. The Technology Park's role in attracting enterprises to Ballarat, stimulating business start-up and growth, creating jobs and retaining young people in the region, has led to the Park's strong ongoing support from key regional bodies.

USC's *Innovation Centre* (CASE STUDY 18) has become a focal point for business innovation in the Sunshine Coast region, having supported the start-up and growth of over 100 knowledge economy businesses since its establishment in 2002. With a \$2.2 billion world-class health and medical precinct now under construction in the region, the Centre is working with regional partners to leverage the benefits of this significant new regional asset to attract and assist innovative health, science and technology related start-ups and high growth companies.

Regional planning for business innovation and development

The study identified many examples of the RUN universities applying their academic expertise and research capabilities to support the analysis of regional assets and the identification of opportunities for industry diversification, business innovation and the creation of high skilled jobs.

USQ's Economic Development and Enterprise Collaboration (see BOX 6) is a unique collaboration between the University and a number of regional stakeholders to help the Fraser Coast region to identify its economic assets and leverage them to increase investment, wealth and sustainable employment in a diverse range of industries and occupations.

Other examples include:

- CQUniversity's partnership with Enterprise Connect to undertake the Central Queensland Innovation Prospectus project involving over 100 regional SMEs (see BOX 6).
- SCU's evaluation of the Lismore Business Promotion Program commissioned by the Lismore City Council (see BOX 6).

9.4 Service

Academic staff members of the RUN universities regularly serve on the Boards or Advisory Committees of regional Chambers of Commerce and industry associations, contributing their expertise and connections to government and national and international networks.

Business and industry networks

With collaboration, both within a region and across regions, being such a vitally important driver of business innovation, the RUN universities are also contributing to the development of local and national business and industry networks.

USC in partnership with Australian forest industry stakeholders has established the Australian Forest Operations Research Alliance (AFORA) to investigate new methods of improving their industry's economic and environmental sustainability. The Alliance supports knowledge exchange between regional and national forestry companies (see BOX 6).

In response to an identified urgent need for sophisticated project management skills in Central Queensland to enable industry to deliver on billion dollar projects, CQUniversity recently led the establishment of a CQ Branch of the Project Management Institute of Queensland, linking project managers in the region to each other and also to the leading international professional association for project managers.

SCU's active role in the development of creative industries consortiums and networks was previously described in section 7.

BOX 6: EXAMPLES OF RUN INDUSTRY AND BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT CONTRIBUTIONS

<p>Central Queensland Innovation Prospectus The CQ Innovation Prospectus comprised a body of research, engagement and capacity building activities based on a unique collaborative approach between CQUniversity and Enterprise Connect's Innovative Regions Centre. The aim of the prospectus was to align the key Australian government agendas of regional development, innovation and sustainability in a planned approach across the CQ region and provide a rationale and rigorous framework by which strategic, sustainable innovation activities could be planned and implemented with regional SMEs and leading innovation organisations. Over 100 regional businesses were directly involved in the project.</p>	<p>Evaluation of Lismore Business Promotion Program Lismore City Council recently commissioned SCU to conduct an evaluation of the Lismore Business Promotion Program, a program designed to revitalize the CBD. The University: reviewed the national and international literature on improving central business districts and city centre management; designed and administered surveys to gather the views of the business owners and the community; and, assessed the effectiveness of the program in achieving its objectives. The evaluation findings will shape the Council's future CBD strategy and business engagement programs.</p>
<p>Business support for profitable growth In 2013, UB's Centre for Regional Innovation and Competitiveness (CRIC), in collaboration with government and industry, is coordinating the second round of the Strategic Management for Profitable Growth program designed to boost business profits and competitiveness. Based on 'economic gardening' principles of infrastructure, information and connections, the program is tailored to the specific needs of SMEs with high growth potential in the Ballarat region and includes workshops, high profile international guest speakers, mentoring, networking and on-site visits. The program is a collaborative initiative involving the Federal Government's Enterprise Connect program, the Victorian Government's Department of Business and Innovation and the City of Ballarat.</p>	<p>Agricultural Business Research Institute (ABRI) At least eight national cattle breed associations are located in Armidale, together with the Boer Goat Breeders Association. UNE's ABRI is a world leader in agricultural information systems and provides a wide range of agribusiness information services including comprehensive breed register software that meets the needs of modern livestock producers in the New England region, nationally and internationally. With over 35 million animals recorded on the database, covering eight different animal species, the register is used by 80 breed organisations world-wide. Flagship technologies developed by ABRI include: BreedPlan, a modern genetic evaluation system that enables breeders to estimate breeding values for cattle for a range of important production traits.</p>
<p>Economic Development and Enterprise Collaboration (EDEC) EDEC is a partnership between USQ (Fraser Coast) and a number of regional stakeholders, including state and local government and industry, a unique collaboration located in a fast growing coastal region that nonetheless faces daunting economic development challenges. EDEC's primary current task is to help the region (and other regions) to identify economic assets and to leverage them to increase investment, wealth and sustainable employment in a diverse range of industries and occupations. A critical part of this is to identify those things that a region can control or influence in achieving economic development. EDEC aims to support and drive strategic thinking about economic development in the region and provide decision makers and practitioners with the best tools to achieve their objectives.</p>	<p>Australian Forest Operations Research Alliance (AFORA) USC established the Australian Forest Operations Research Alliance (AFORA) with 18 Australian forest industry stakeholders to investigate new methods of improving their industry's economic and environmental sustainability. The objectives of AFORA are to deliver a collaborative applied research development implementation program to improve the understanding, management and control of forest operational costs for existing, evolving and new harvest systems; the planning and management of value recovery within harvest operations; and the application of optimisation to supply chain efficiency planning and management. AFORA aims for strong economic outcomes, improved sustainability of the forestry industry and opportunities for development in new areas such as bio-energy supply chains.</p>

10 Conclusions, issues and next steps

The study found substantive evidence of the RUN universities' positive performance against the dimensions of the Pascal framework. Through distinctive regional engagement processes, the universities are delivering regional and national benefits, and strengthening their academic outcomes. The study findings also highlight that there are further opportunities for regional engagement.

10.1 Assessing the performance of the RUN universities against the Pascal framework

This study set out to assess and report on the performance of the RUN universities against the Pascal International Observatory's framework for benchmarking the regional contribution of universities. As outlined in sections 3 to 9, the study found substantive evidence of the positive performance of the universities, with respect to the social, cultural, environmental and economic drivers of regional competitiveness reflected in the Pascal framework. This performance delivers regional, institutional and national benefits.

At the *regional* level, the universities are playing a critical role in building capacity for regional governance, innovation and economic diversification, environmentally sustainable growth and social and cultural development.

At the *institutional* level, the universities are strategically leveraging the opportunities offered by the distinctive characteristics of their regions to develop academic programs and research expertise, in relevant niche areas, that enhance the quality of their academic outcomes and strengthen their national and international competitiveness.

At the *national* level, the universities are:

- Contributing to national prosperity, productivity and community wellbeing through their role in building capacity for regional development.
- Making significant contributions to the achievement of national targets for higher education attainment and exceeding national targets for higher education participation by low SES students.
- Addressing skill shortages and workforce needs, and building capacity, in key regional industries of significance to the national economy.
- Contributing to the provision of regional infrastructure and building capacity for the provision of a range of public and private community services (e.g. school education, health services).
- Strengthening the national research and innovation system through the development of niche areas of research strength that address regional issues of national and global significance.

With respect to the last point, the universities possess knowledge and expertise relating to a range of pressing issues and challenges impacting on regional and rural areas across Australia. In this regard, collectively, the RUN universities represent a national resource for the provision of expert advice on a broad range of matters impacting on the prosperity, wellbeing, resilience and sustainability of regional Australia. The commitment of the RUN member universities to building collaborative links in

research and research training will strengthen the capacity of the network to provide this advice.

The study findings also highlight the important distinctive strength that the RUN universities bring to the Australian government's goal of building a diverse national system of higher education responsive to the needs of different students and communities.

The distinctive nature of the regional engagement process

This distinctive strength of the RUN universities relates to two inter-related features of their regional engagement processes.

Firstly, for each of the universities, its regional engagement 'story' simply couldn't exist anywhere else. While there are many common themes applicable across regional and rural Australia, and hence across the RUN universities, each institution and each campus, has a strong sense of place and unique identity that is inextricably linked to the historical, physical, demographic, social, cultural and environmental characteristics of its region.

Secondly, at the whole-of-institution level, the universities are integrating their learning and teaching, research and service activities to build a strong engagement agenda that optimises their regional contributions. In particular, what makes the process of engagement at the regional level so distinctive is the enabling role being played by the universities in community capacity building.

The development of strong collaborative networks, together with shared norms, values and understandings, are essential in enabling regional communities to self-organise, manage change, realise their potential and lead their own development. In this context, collaboration is utilised as a powerful tool for creating new knowledge and fostering innovation.

The capacity of the RUN universities to play this role not only comes from their academic expertise in relevant fields and the other resources they are able to apply. It is also critically dependent upon their immersion in regional communities on a day-to-day basis, a deep understanding of their specific regional contexts and issues, and the mutually beneficial relationships and levels of trust, credibility and goodwill they have built through continuous and multiple interactions with regional organisations

and communities over substantial periods of time.

Universities headquartered in regional Australia are uniquely positioned to deliver such an integrated and place-based contribution to their regions.

10.2 Measuring regional engagement outcomes

The research literature on university-community engagement acknowledges a range of challenges in measuring engagement outcomes. These include: a lack of standardised instruments and tools; the significant investment that would be required to measure the broader whole-of-institution impact of engagement; the need to collect longitudinal data to validly assess outcomes; and, the sheer number, complexity and variety of engagement activities (Hanover Research 2011).

While the RUN study identified examples of regional engagement programs and projects for which rigorous evaluation data exists, the study findings support the view emerging from the research literature that approaches for assessing the impact of universities' engagement with their regions and communities are only at a formative stage.

The views of regional stakeholders

Consultations with regional stakeholders, however, sought their views on the outcomes being achieved through their local university's regional engagement activities. It was not possible, within the time and budget constraints of this study, to comprehensively survey the views of all key regional stakeholders and hence the consultation findings should be considered as indicative rather than conclusive.

The views expressed by regional stakeholders, however, provide positive confirmation of the value of the contributions being made by the RUN universities to regional development and validate the nature of those contributions as described in preceding sections. Regional stakeholders nominated a variety of positive outcomes, including:

- The impact of the university, and its staff, as catalysts for innovation and positive change, as brokers and facilitators of regional partnerships and alliances, and as major contributors to regional governance.

- The provision of higher education in the region, enabling access by low SES, Indigenous and mature aged students who do not have the financial capacity or personal circumstances to allow them to move to a city to study.
- The impact of the university as a knowledge hub in attracting and retaining intellectual and creative talent and skills in the region, and in stimulating the start-up and attraction of innovative companies and creative industries.
- The retention of youth in the region, particularly high achievers who would otherwise move to the city to pursue higher education, and the positive impact on the regional age demographic.
- The diversification of the regional economy, through the economic impact of the university as a major employer and its attraction of international students.
- The enhancement of the liveability of the region, through the provision of publically accessible regional infrastructure and the provision of creative arts and cultural facilities, performances and events.
- The promotion of reconciliation between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and the broader regional community.
- Attraction of international students to the region, contributing to the social and cultural fabric of the region and raising the region's profile overseas.

10.3 Realising the full potential of regional engagement

Opportunities for strengthening regional engagement

The RUN study has enabled each of the universities to identify opportunities for further strengthening its contributions to regional development. In particular, the categorisation of institutional regional engagement activities against the eight dimensions of the Pascal framework has enabled each university to assess its areas of strength and areas of lower contribution in relation to the drivers of regional competitiveness.

As noted earlier, it is not expected that all universities will aim to achieve strong performance across all dimensions. It is legitimate for strategic choices to be made in the

context of regional priorities and resource capacity. Nevertheless, each university acknowledges that its potential for contributing to regional development is not yet fully realised and has identified areas for increased focus within the limits of available resources.

In the consultation process, regional stakeholders also put forward a number of suggestions for realising the full potential of university regional engagement. These suggestions varied across regions and across stakeholders, reflecting the diversity of regional contexts and differing areas of interest of the organisations represented in the consultations.

The suggestions put forward by regional stakeholders included:

- Being more forthright in 'claiming the space' as the major regional institution in terms of providing 'non-political thought leadership'.
- Increasing engagement with regional businesses, including expanding opportunities for community engaged learning and supporting the SME sector through capacity building partnerships.
- Undertaking a more comprehensive analysis of regional skill needs to align university curriculum and research development with regional workforce planning.
- Further enhancing research facilities and strengthening research capacity aligned with regional needs.
- Expanding existing strategies for 'bringing the gown to town' to reduce the separation of the university's campus from the CBD.
- As blended learning models increasingly become the norm in higher education, taking action to enhance and maintain the vibrancy of regional campuses.
- Expanding strategies for opening up the campus to the community to raise awareness of what the university has to offer.
- Strengthening partnerships with TAFE institutions to provide pathways for regional skills development.
- Continuing to focus on building and sustaining alumni relations, especially for graduates living and working in the region.
- More actively communicating the university's successes and contributions to the region to further strengthen regional

engagement and community pride in the university.

Building institutional capacity for regional engagement

In its Regional Engagement Toolkit, the US Association of Public and Land-Grant Universities (2010) notes:

An institution's engagement capacity is reflected in its organizational structure, its policies and processes and in the tools available to faculty and staff to initiate and implement engagement activities. Engagement leadership should be formal and visible. Policies, for example on hiring, promotion and tenure, should recognize engagement activities.

The study found a diversity of approaches across the RUN universities for developing institutional capacity for regional engagement. A key point of difference concerns the extent to which regional engagement is explicitly represented in organisational structures. Three of the universities, for example, have a designated officer, appointed at an executive or senior level, with responsibility for leading the University's regional engagement strategy. In each case, a small organisational unit has been established to support them.

There are non-trivial costs associated with this approach, however, and resource constraints have prevented some of the universities from giving priority to implementing similar structural arrangements. There are also questions around the best policy approach. Is a separate engagement function inimical to the concept of regional engagement as embedded in core academic functions and hence the responsibility of all executive members and staff? How does a university effectively provide institutional leadership for an agenda that crosses multiple portfolio areas?

Consultations with regional stakeholders revealed the very important role being played by the designated officers appointed to lead the universities' regional engagement. They personally provide a readily accessible contact point for regional agencies and play a key role in fostering collaborative relationships and networks. Their organisational units also provide a 'front door' to the university for the community at large, an important consideration given the size and complexity of universities,

and the opaqueness of their organisational structures.

At the same time, some stakeholders expressed the view that the universities needed to avoid the tendency to automatically nominate those in engagement leadership roles whenever a new high-level regional engagement opportunity arises. In their view, dispersing responsibility for strategic engagement partnerships more broadly across the executive and management teams enabled greater regional access to the diversity of talent and experience within the institution and also supported the continuity of relationships in the event of the designated engagement leader resigning or retiring.

The role of those appointed to lead regional engagement within their institutions, however, extends beyond managing regional relationships to building internal commitment and capacity for effective regional engagement. Evidence from the study suggests that the availability of dedicated engagement staff resources does facilitate the development and adoption of innovative and best practice models. A few examples are provided in BOXES 7 and 8.

BOX 7: CQUINIVERSITY'S REAP PROCESS

The University's Regional Engagement and Participation (REAP) Process empowers local community members to work with the University in identifying issues in their region and collaborating in finding beneficial solutions. For each regional campus, a Regional Engagement Committee (REC) is established with a community member as Chair and community and University leaders as members. Every year, each REC hosts a Community Connection Forum, attracting between 60 and 80 community members, to identify regional priorities. Each REC subsequently establishes Engagement Reference Groups (ERGs), chaired by community members, to further develop and action each priority and report back on a quarterly basis. Once an assigned project is completed, the associated ERG is disestablished.

BOX 8: SCU POLICIES FOR BUILDING CAPACITY IN REGIONAL ENGAGEMENT

The Excellence in Community Engagement Awards are awarded annually in the categories of: Learning; Research; Community Impact; Leadership; and, Partnership.

For the purposes of academic promotion and performance review, academic staff members document their academic practice in an academic portfolio. The portfolio includes a framework for community engagement as a research method, teaching pedagogy or form of knowledge exchange through service.

Community Engagement: Scholarship and Practice, a unit within the Graduate Certificate in Academic Practice, was developed and introduced in 2012.

The Community Engaged Learning policy mandates that all courses should include a form of community engaged learning as part of the overall student experience.

Recognition of university regional engagement in national policy

Each of the RUN universities represents one of the largest, if not *the* largest, publicly funded organisation in their region. Their communities expect them to play a significant enabling role in contributing to the development of the regions where they are located and the universities see it as their civic duty to do so. Regional engagement, however, represents much more than civic duty for the universities; it provides a means for enhancing the quality of their learning and teaching and research in a globally competitive higher education marketplace and contributing to the national higher education and innovation systems.

National regional development and higher education policy and funding frameworks, however, do not currently acknowledge the distinctive regional engagement role of the RUN universities.

With respect to higher education policy, there has been extensive policy discourse over the last decade or two about the role of universities in knowledge exchange and the mutually beneficial nature of university community engagement to address social, cultural, environmental and economic issues. A clear

national policy framework, however, has not yet emerged.

While the RUN universities have recently benefited from a number of special purpose funding schemes directed at regional universities (e.g. Collaborative Research Networks program, Structural Adjustment Fund), there is no dedicated or recurrent stream of higher education funding that enables, promotes and sustains their comprehensive regional engagement efforts on a consistent and ongoing basis.

In addition, national regional development policy has not aimed, to date, to promote the critical role that regional universities can and do play in developing regional resilience, economic diversification, good governance, social cohesion and community capacity.

The study findings demonstrate that the RUN universities, together with their regional partners, are finding creative ways of resourcing their regional engagement activities. At the same time, consultations with regional stakeholders surfaced concerns that funding pressures and national policy settings were weakening the universities' focus on regional priorities. As noted above, there is also clear recognition that there is scope to further strengthen the value-adding role of the RUN universities in their regions.

10.4 Next steps

RUN is committed to enhancing its capacity and sustainability through greater collaboration among its member universities. The RUN Accord (RUN 2012) outlines a number of collaboration goals that will strengthen the universities' contributions to their regions, including:

- Collaborating to support improved policy developments for the regions.
- Making subjects available to students across the RUN universities.
- Collaborating in research and research training, including the joint supervision of higher degree by research students.
- Consolidating appropriate support functions across the RUN universities.

With regard to the first point, RUN has recently initiated an annual Digital Rural Futures Conference, with the inaugural conference to be held in Armidale in June 2013 (see BOX 9). A different RUN member will host the Conference each year.

BOX 9: RUN DIGITAL RURAL FUTURES CONFERENCE

The theme of the 2013 inaugural RUN Digital Rural Futures Conference is 'Smart Farms – Smart Regions'. It will be a three day national forum aimed at raising awareness of, and promoting discussion about, the enormous opportunities and some of the challenges for agriculture in Australia's digital economic future. In addition, smart farms will create a new generation of smart services that will create jobs and economic opportunities for the future growth of rural Australia. A high-calibre array of speakers including business innovators, regional development and community groups, small and large farmers, farmer peak bodies, and technology developers have been assembled for the event.

Given the central importance of effective regional engagement to the universities, the RUN members will continue to work together to identify international and national best practice approaches and strengthen their engagement policies and practices. The findings of this study provide a solid basis for moving forward.

In addition, RUN plans to advocate for a greater recognition in national higher education and regional development policy, of:

- The distinctive contributions its member universities are making to the social, cultural, environmental and economic development of their regions.
- The universities' collective knowledge, expertise and experience in working with regional and rural communities across Australia to build capacity and address pressing regional issues and challenges.

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Appendix: Brief regional descriptions

The following regional descriptions cover the main regional campuses of the RUN universities as listed in Table 1.

Central Queensland University

CQUniversity's Regional Queensland footprint spans approximately 1600kms from Cairns in the north to Noosa in the south. Comprising more than half of the Queensland population, Regional Queensland has a proud multicultural heritage of Indigenous and non-Indigenous groups residing in regional, rural and remote communities. It is home to some of the most significant mining operations and port systems in the country, and the Bowen Basin plays host to some of the largest coal mining operations in the world. Regional Queensland also has abundant and diverse agricultural and horticultural industries with strong connections to the manufacturing and logistics sectors. Its economy is further sustained by a strong tourism market, linked particularly to the World Heritage listed Great Barrier Reef, together with strengths in construction, health care and social assistance, retail (including prolific small business), accommodation and food services, and education and training.

Southern Cross University

The regional footprint of Southern Cross University incorporates the sub regions of South-east Queensland and Northern New South Wales. This area is characterised by a sub-tropical vibrancy that influences the social, natural and cultural climate. It is an area associated with high quality lifestyle values. From the hinterland to the coast the diversity is evident in the people, the culture and the natural environment. The area has numerous small villages, medium to large regional centres linked in the North to one of the fastest growing metropolitan areas in the country. Tourism, agriculture, industry and education are important economic drivers. The South-east Queensland and North Coast NSW region is characterised by rapid population growth, an ageing population, and a relatively high Aboriginal population in comparison to state and national averages. There are challenges around ageing infrastructure, low socio-economic capacity, high unemployment and a lack of services, in particular public transport. Located within this region, each of the Southern Cross University campuses provide a unique environment for work, research, and study.

University of Ballarat

UB is Australia's only regionally-headquartered, regionally-located and regionally-focused multi-sector university. The chancellery is located 115 km north-west of Melbourne in Ballarat, a major service centre associated with information technology, health, education, manufacturing, transport and tourist activities. UB provides pre-tertiary transition, higher education and vocational education and training programs through six campuses located in Ballarat (3), Ararat, Stawell and Horsham supplemented by a network of TAFE partners who deliver UB higher education programs in Mildura, Shepparton, Bendigo, Wodonga, Morwell and Bairnsdale. UB coverage therefore extends to 80% of regional Victoria, to 35 of 41 regional local government areas (the south-west excepted), and to 975,000 Victorians. UB's Technology Park is Australia's leading regional ICT hub which, in combination with the University, contributes 13% to the economy of Ballarat and central Victoria. Within the University's geographical areas of responsibility there are increasing demands for health and social welfare, construction, education, mining engineering, and education and training services, and for initiatives to contend with challenges associated with agricultural and manufacturing transition, with the needs of a sustainable, low carbon economy, with population ageing, and with information, communication and transport logistic futures. UB is realigning its student recruitment, teaching, learning, research and community engagement endeavours to accommodate Ballarat's accelerating peri-urbanism and the rapid population growth of Melbourne's north-west corridor.

University of New England

UNE serves the Northern Inland Region of NSW covering a land area of 98,606 square kilometres and a population of 172,403. The Narrabri and Moree Shires are the most productive and wealthiest agricultural areas in Australia. The region is home to the globally recognised fine wool industry together with primary production of cotton, beef cattle, fat lamb, pork, poultry, cereal crops and timber processing. World-standard facilities are based around Armidale, Tamworth and Narrabri -attracting international scientists to see the latest research in agriculture. Globally competitive companies associated with animal genetics, animal breed societies and associated research professions operate around the world from their base in Armidale – harnessing expertise from UNE to aid with Education, IT, Research and Development industries. Major aviation facilities located in the region feature world-standard flying schools, aircraft maintenance and charter services, together with land transport corridors from Brisbane, Sydney and Melbourne. Natural resources in the region include coal, sapphires, gold and antimony. The emerging tourism industry is based around sport, agriculture, food, wine and cultural activities including leading galleries and musical events.

University of Southern Queensland

USQ has four campuses, in three very different regions with divergent regional contexts, in terms of population, land area, key industries and regional challenges. The Toowoomba and Stanthorpe campuses are in the Darling Downs and South West Queensland region. The region covers 23% of Queensland's total area and is home to approximately 260,000 persons. The region includes the Surat Basin which is facing massive change through new mining activity. Key employment sectors for the region by industry are health and social assistance, retail, agriculture, education and manufacturing. The Springfield campus is in one of the nation's fastest growing corridors, to the south west of Brisbane. It is also close to the city of Ipswich. The region is expected to grow to over 100 000 people by 2030. Springfield is part of the Ipswich and West Moreton RDA region. The Fraser Coast campus is located in the rapidly growing Wide Bay Burnett region. Key industries on the Fraser Coast are health and social assistance, retail, education and construction. Tourism is also important.

University of the Sunshine Coast

The Sunshine Coast region is approximately 100 km north of Brisbane city and easily accessible through the Bruce Highway or through Queensland rail. The 330,000 (2012) population is 'spoilt for choice' in either living close to the coastline along Caloundra, Mooloolaba, Maroochydore, Coolum, and Noosa or in the hinterland villages of Maleny, Montville and Mapleton. The region is historically known for its laid-back feel and natural attractions and is particularly popular as a holiday destination to Australian city dwellers. The region's \$13 bn economy is still largely driven by the traditional sectors of tourism, retail, and construction. However, that is set to change as the Sunshine Coast is the location of the largest greenfield hospital complex in the southern hemisphere. A \$2 bn health complex development is undergoing construction on a 20-hectare site called Kawana Health Campus. It incorporates the 450-bed Sunshine Coast University Hospital (SCUH), the hospital's Skills, Academic and Research Centre (SARC), a co-located private hospital operated by Ramsay Health Care, and the Kawana Health Innovation Park that will accommodate other health-related commercial developments. The SCUH is scheduled to open in late 2016.