

Case studies illustrate some of the regional impact study's key themes

The case studies included in the study – *Regional Universities Network: engaging with regions, building a stronger nation* – reveal many of the social engagement themes common to universities across the Regional Universities Network. The case studies shed light on some of the generic issues affecting regional Australia (e.g. relatively low higher education attainment rates, lack of diversity in regional economies, inferior access to health services), but also illustrate points of difference that reflect the responsiveness of individual universities to the variable characteristics of the regions they serve.

This document outlines some of the themes illustrated by the accompanying case studies and how they fit into the regional impact study's overall framework. Much more detail on each of the case studies can be found in Volume 2 of the study.

Regional engagement activities

Linkages between functions

It is at the intersections of the functions of learning and teaching, research and service where the greatest mutual benefits can be derived for the university and their regions.

The **UB Horsham Campus Case Study** 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.

Raising aspirations and expanding higher education access

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 more than 5,400 enrolments in such courses. They include programs specifically designed to meet the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

As described in the **UB Horsham Campus Case Study**, UB is a core partner of the Wimmera Southern Mallee Workforce Group, established to deliver collaborative solutions for increasing post-secondary education participation, addressing skill shortages and ensuring alignment of knowledge and skills with the needs of growing industries.

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 RUN universities are engaged in a range of activities designed to spark students' interest in agriculture and agribusiness.

UNE's Smart Farm Case Study shows the university providing 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.

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. The RUN universities are helping to build the capacity of schools in their regions, through research, 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. **UNE's QuickSmart Case Study** 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.

Community development

Teaching and learning: Student engaged learning

As in other priority areas of regional development, the universities look for opportunities to provide students with engaged learning opportunities that also contribute to regional community and social development. As described in the **Choices Applied Theatre Project Case Study**, 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 more than 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.

Research and innovation: Social capital development

The **Community for Community (C4C) Case Study** exemplifies the leadership role that RUN universities can play in building social capital in support of community development in their regions. 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 innovative Toowoomba Flexi School. The School offers an alternative and effective education model for disenfranchised and disadvantaged youth.

Health and ageing

Learning and teaching: Student 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.

The **Northern United Football Team Wellness Program Case Study** provides an example of how University-led health facilities can stimulate the development of innovative partnerships and new modes of service delivery suited to the distinctive regional context, while also providing models with potential for application in other settings nationally. SCU's partnership with the Northern United Football Club and Meridian Health is enhancing health outcomes for Indigenous communities in the Northern Rivers and also preparing allied health students for culturally competent professional practice.

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.

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 the **10,000 Steps Case Study**. 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.

UNE's **Smarter, Safer Homes Case Study** demonstrates how multidisciplinary research, undertaken in collaboration with regional community partners, is providing groundbreaking broadband-enabled solutions to address shortages of health care services and aged care facilities, and enhance the quality of life for older people and their carers, in rural and regional areas.

Arts, culture and sport

Student engaged learning

Through the adoption of 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. The **Artsworx Case Study**, 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.

Research and innovation

A number of the RUN universities have established research centres with a focus on the creative arts, cultural heritage or sport. In the area of cultural heritage, the **Bundjalung Cultural Mapping Project Case Study** 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.

Service: 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.

The **USC Art Gallery and Public Art Collection Case Study** 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.

Environmental sustainability

Sustainability as a core institutional value

The **Environmental and Regional Sustainability Case Study** 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 sustainable development 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.

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.

The **Visualising Victoria's Groundwater Case Study** exemplifies the ways in which multidisciplinary research led by regional universities to meet regional needs can have national and international relevance and flow-on benefits. The groundbreaking 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.

Service: Social capital development

The **Sustain Northern Rivers Case Study** 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.

Industry and business development

Addressing skill shortages in agriculture and resource industries

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 that meet the skill needs of their key regional industries. The **Flexible and Innovative Solutions for Meeting Industry Skill Needs in Central Queensland Case Study** 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.

Capacity building and professional development programs

The **Queensland Centre for Wine Tourism Case Study** describes an exemplary 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.

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. The **Smart Farm Case Study** describes a demonstration site developed by UNE of regional, national and international significance. The site is a 2800 hectare commercial farm that is linked to the national broadband network and showcases cutting edge on-site technologies aimed at improving productivity environmental sustainability through more efficient land and water use, safety and social/business support networks for Australian farmers.

Stimulating the growth of regional knowledge-based businesses

Two of the RUN case studies feature examples of the universities creating knowledge precincts to stimulate regional business innovation and employment growth.

UB's **Technology Park Case Study** describes how the centre 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 strong ongoing support from key regional bodies.

USC's **Innovation Centre Case Study** illustrates how the centre has become a focal point for business innovation in the Sunshine Coast region, having supported the start-up and growth of more than 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.

