

## **CQUNIVERSITY SUBMISSION TO THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES STANDING COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT**

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### **Terms of Reference**

The Minister for Industry, The Hon Ian MacFarlane MP, has asked the Committee to inquire into and report on the role played by TAFEs.

The Terms of Reference for the Inquiry are:

TAFEs have played a critical role in the training and development of Australians for more than one hundred years. For many Australians, TAFEs provide a critical pathway to training and skills which are increasingly needed to access employment. They also play a critical role in regions and in providing access for disadvantaged groups.

The Committee will inquire into and report on the role played by TAFEs in:

- the development of skills in the Australian economy
  - the provision of pathways for Australians to access employment
  - the provision of pathways for Australians to access University education; and
  - the operation of a competitive training market
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### **Introduction**

The CQUniversity is appropriately placed to provide relevant and pertinent information in response to the Terms of Reference for the following reasons:

- 1 With the largest university footprint across Australia, and the values of engagement, leadership, a 'can do' approach, openness, and inclusiveness, CQUniversity plays a critical role in regions and in providing access for disadvantaged groups and increased access to employment.
- 2 On 1 July 2014, the CQUniversity merger agreement with Central Queensland Institute of TAFE will be completed, transitioning CQUniversity to become the first 'comprehensive' university in Queensland as well as the TAFE public provider for the region.
- 3 To provide guidance during the merger process, and to pursue growth of the combined institutions going forward, CQUniversity has developed a Vocational Training Strategy underpinned by five core elements - *Vocational Training growth, Vocational internships, unique VET qualifications and pathways, a One-stop-shop CQUniversity, and comprehensive university research.*

It is from this unique operational setting that CQUniversity offers its perspective to the Standing Committee, regarding the role of TAFEs in the Australian education landscape.

## About CQUniversity

CQUniversity Australia has a unique and interesting history. Founded in 1967 in Rockhampton as the Queensland Institute of Technology (Capricornia), CQUniversity was among the first institutions to introduce comprehensive distance education in 1974. Between 1978 and 1989, the University established campuses in Central Queensland at Gladstone, Mackay, Bundaberg and Emerald and achieved full university status in January 1992.

In 1994, with a full-time student load of just 5000, CQUniversity embarked on a significant journey of expansion, establishing its first onshore teaching site for international students in Sydney, then Melbourne in 1997, followed by Brisbane in 1998 and the Gold Coast in 2001. An additional learning site was also established at Noosa in 2001. By 2006, CQUniversity was acknowledged as the largest provider of tertiary education to international students studying in Australia.

CQUniversity is now responsible for providing higher education programs to almost 20,000 full-time and part-time students across a broad range of discipline areas. The University has also established campuses in several metropolitan cities as well as a number of distance education study centres.

On 11, September, 2013, the largest development in the history of the university took place when Vice-Chancellor, Professor Scott Bowman and Queensland Minister for Education, Training and Employment, John-Paul Langbroek, signed an agreement to merge the university with the Central Queensland Institute of TAFE, a move that will see the establishment of Queensland's first dual sector university on 1 July, 2014.

CQUniversity is a member of the Regional Universities Network (RUN), a group of six universities, working together to make a transformative difference to regional Australia. It is also a participant in the Greater Northern Australia Regional Training Network.

## What CQUniversity does

CQUniversity Australia delivers more than 100 programs across a diverse range of disciplines including education, the arts, nursing and midwifery, health and humanities, medical and applied sciences, business, and engineering. The University continues to be a leader in the delivery of distance education with more than half of the student cohort being made up of students studying via distance education.

Compared to other universities, CQUniversity has the highest ratio of students from mature age, Indigenous and low socio-economic backgrounds. This philosophy of inclusiveness is what sets CQUniversity apart as the University is defined by who it embraces rather than who it excludes.

Recent data released by Graduate Careers Australia shows that CQUniversity has an overall full-time graduate employment rate of 81%. This figure is 10% higher than the national average of 71% for Australian Resident Bachelor Degree graduates.

CQUniversity has developed a key role in the national research and innovation system, contributing through fundamental and applied research in selected priority areas. The University is proud of its category 5 (well above world standard) ranking in the fields of Agricultural and Veterinary Sciences, Medical and Health Sciences and Mathematical Sciences during the last Excellence in Research for Australia (ERA) assessment round.

CQUniversity Australia is also among Australia's most engaged universities. Throughout the years CQUniversity has established valuable partnerships with government, community and industry groups, right across the University's national footprint.

CQUniversity has five campuses in regional Queensland; Bundaberg, Gladstone, Mackay, Noosa and Rockhampton and three campuses located in the cities of Brisbane, Melbourne and Sydney.

In addition, the University also operates:

- the specialised Appleton Institute research facility in Adelaide, South Australia
- the Distance Education Study Centres (DESC) in Adelaide, Brisbane, Cairns, Cannonvale, Emerald, Melbourne and Sydney
- Train@CQUniversity, a Registered Training Organisation (RTO) in Brisbane, Melbourne and Sydney;

In Geraldton, Western Australia, the CQUniversity participates in a Study Service Centre.

The merge with CQ Institute of TAFE in July 2014 will incorporate the additional campuses at: Barcaldine, Biloela, Blackwater, Clermont, Emerald, Gladstone, Mackay (including a Trade Training Centre), Moranbah, Rockhampton and Yeppoon.

## **Engagement**

CQUniversity aspires to be the most engaged and connected university in Australia and a leader in supporting the development of sustainable communities. The Office of Engagement and Campuses is instrumental in shaping the University's overarching engagement philosophy and strategy and aims to facilitate the development of mutually beneficial partnerships with a range of local, national and international stakeholders.

CQUniversity Office of Indigenous Engagement provides teaching, research and support activities to improve outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities. In addition to teaching enabling, undergraduate and post graduate courses that increase knowledge and understanding of the history of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and the issues affecting them in contemporary society, the Office of Indigenous Engagement provides support to other Schools within CQUniversity to increase their accessibility to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people

## **Post 1 July – A Comprehensive CQUniversity**

Following approval by the Queensland Government, and backed by almost \$74 million in funding from the Commonwealth government, CQUniversity Australia will merge with CQ TAFE on 1 July 2014. This places the university on track to become Queensland's first comprehensive university, offering all levels of post-school education and training 'under one roof' to better meet the unique workforce and skills needs of Central Queensland and beyond.

Under a merged model, CQUniversity will be a completely comprehensive university, providing students from all backgrounds, with access to better education and training pathways, improved facilities and job placement opportunities, more campus locations, more streamlined articulation into further study, and more study options than ever before.

CQUniversity will also establish new campus infrastructure across the current University and TAFE network, create local jobs, and improve the learning and teaching environment.

This merger will benefit the entire Central Queensland community, with the region receiving almost \$74 million in Federal Government funding as part of the project – money that will be invested directly into infrastructure, jobs and new programs and training pathways for students. The project is also supported by the Queensland Government, and effects more than 40,000 students and staff across five states. The two institutions will merge on 1 July, 2014. CQUniversity will commence operating as a dual sector organisation on the same day, and full integration is expected in 2015.

*‘Currently CQUniversity is one of the fastest growing universities in Australia and CQ TAFE the second largest [deliverer of apprenticeships] in the State. ... Both Institutions have had a long, proud history of strengthening our communities with generations of highly skilled graduates that are second to none. And now, finally, both institutions can merge together to create one of the most coordinated, holistic and innovative education and training providers in the country.*

*... Central Queensland is a region unlike any other in Australia, and we are at a time unlike any other, with opportunities and challenges being thrown at us that only come along once in a lifetime. The communities, industries, economies, workforce pressures, skills needs, environments and lifestyle options of Central Queensland cannot be found anywhere else in the state, yet for decades we have had the same cookie-cutter post-school education options as every other region. But not for much longer.*

*The merger of CQUniversity and CQ TAFE will unlock the region’s potential to respond more quickly and effectively to the education and training demands in our own backyard.*

*We are about to blur that line between TAFE and University to the point where our students don’t even realise they are drifting back and forth between the two. .... Our students will get to experience the best elements of each institution – from award-winning teachers to state-of-the-art facilities to real, tangible industry links – with the goal of producing the most highly skilled, well-rounded and employable graduates in the country. I’m talking about electrical engineers with practical TAFE competencies built into their degree; TAFE-trained enrolled nurses who don’t think twice about returning to their alma mater to train further to be a registered nurse; and sports science students with a personal trainer qualification built into the first year of their degree so they can work in the industry while they study, rather than at a pub or cafe. I want us to train the best welders, fitters, electricians, teachers, nurses and accountants that we possibly can. And I want this region to celebrate the graduation of a diesel mechanic at a ceremony alongside the graduation of a podiatrist, because Central Queensland is in desperate need of both.*

*An abridged excerpt from the CQUniversity’s Vice Chancellor, Professor Scott Bowman’s welcome on the CQUniversity’s Comprehensive university site - <http://www.cqu.edu.au/dual-sector-online-hub/vc-welcome>*

### **CQUniversity Vocational Training Strategy**

CQUni has developed the Vocational Training Strategy for its operations; this could be regarded as an example of TAFE and/or VET reform in action, and provides a basis from which other institutions might look to take the same journey.

The Division of Industry, Vocational Training and Access Education (IVTAE) will drive a cohesive, agile and comprehensive vocational training environment, through the University’s Vocational Training Strategy.

The strategy provides clear, accessible and articulated pathways, realising the full potential of vocational education and training through unique innovative programs that connect and engage students directly with industry and the community.

With the largest campus footprint of any university in Australia, CQUniversity provides, through this strategy, a clear vision for the current activities and future directions of vocational education and training delivery across multiple locations Australia-wide.

It is underpinned by five core elements:

## *1 Vocational Training Growth*

CQUniversity with its established network of partnerships and innovative learning models, in the merger with TAFE @, will build a stronger skills base for the region and a more seamless pathway between sectors, growing the vocational training across the University footprint.

CQUniversity is committed to growing vocational training with individuals, businesses, schools and industry to increase the skills, knowledge, educational and research outcomes for Central Queensland. The University will sustain and continue to grow the knowledge-based economies of the Central Queensland region through addressing skills shortages, providing intellectual capital, developing partnerships with local industries and attracting people to the regions.

Vocational training growth will be achieved through:

- diversifying income funding streams
- increasing enrolments of international students
- increasing domestic students enrolments
- further development of distance delivery and the expansion of Train@

Clear, accessible academic pathways will be provided for all students entering through a vocational training stream that have guaranteed progression onto the next qualification level. Students have the opportunity to build a pathway to both Vocational Training and Higher Education options.

The key features of CQUniversity vocational training pathways are:

- increased access to Higher Education and research
- guaranteed seamless progression
- multiple qualification entry and exit points
- flexible modes of delivery such as distance

## *2 Vocational Internships*

CQUniversity vocational internships will be available for students studying Vocational Training Diploma programs. Internships provide students an opportunity to gain work experience and improve career opportunities in their field of study. The internship program adds value to student qualifications and enhances career prospects in their chosen profession through direct connections to industry providing the opportunity to practice skills and contextualise learning in real environments.

CQUniversity Diploma students through vocational internships gain:

- work-place readiness and employability skills
- direct connection to industry
- enhanced qualifications.

### 3 *Unique VET qualifications and pathways*

A suite of programs will be implemented to meet the needs of industry and the community that is unique to CQUniversity - Queensland's first fully comprehensive university.

Delivery programs and models include:

- skills sets of vocational competencies embedded into Higher Education programs
- parallel Certificates delivered jointly with degree programs to enhance student employability
- all Diploma programs articulated with maximum credit into degree programs
- first year of degree programs with an interim Diploma award
- new vocational programs that focus on the unique needs of the Central Queensland region industry and community
- increased Dual Diploma – Degree awards offered through QTAC, VTAC and UAC.

### 4 *One-stop-shop CQUniversity*

Students, employers and industry partners can choose from a broad and comprehensive range of education and training programs, ranging from a Certificate 1 through to a Doctorate as well as a wide range of corporate training options. Industry and potential students will have one educational provider that will be able to meet all of their needs. Ultimately CQUniversity will reshape consumer expectations when dealing with a vocational training provider.

Students, industry, and community, will be able to access from their local university:

- programs that are relevant, industry-current (enquiry, enrolment, study options and assessment)
- admission to VET skills sets or qualifications in parallel with undergraduate studies or embedded into their undergraduate programs
- highly trained and work-ready apprentices and trainees including support with workforce skills analysis and development
- corporate training delivered in the workplace or as required by industry to meet operational and learning requirements
- programs that support community engagement
- quality, industry- recognised instructors.

### 5 *Comprehensive University Research*

CQUniversity will implement a comprehensive university research program focusing on a framework that:

- leverages our close connections with regional industry, business and the community
- links Industry training practitioners with available research expertise
- evaluates student progress and facilitates mobility between the Higher Education and Vocational Training sectors
- promotes innovation and raises delivery standards across the Vocational Training sector
- strengthens our understanding of how a regional comprehensive university can best service its communities.

CQUniversity will create the first comprehensive university in Queensland drawing on its history of innovation and internationalisation, with the added knowledge and expertise of the VET sector derived from the merger with CQ TAFE and the acquisition of Train@CQUniversity.

This Vocational Training strategy will ensure the University will be in a strong position to expand VET provision through new innovative pathways, products and closer linkages to industry across new industries and national and international markets. It will also support the University more broadly with its aspiration to become the 'Most Engaged University' and a truly 'Great Australian University'.

### **Specific comments to the Committee regarding the role of TAFEs in the Australian education system**

The Committee is inquiring and reporting on the role played by TAFEs in:

- the development of skills in the Australian economy
- the provision of pathways for Australians to access employment
- the provision of pathways for Australians to access University education; and
- the operation of a competitive training market

One of the five core elements of the CQUniversity's Vocational Strategy is comprehensive research. CQUniversity has identified that there is a strong need for TAFE and /or VET based research to accompany and underpin further reforms in the sector.

The Council of Australian Governments (COAG) has affirmed that more Australians need to contribute to, and benefit from, the prosperity of the nation through increasing the skills and qualifications of individual workers to support Australian businesses and drive improvements in the productivity of the economy while fostering greater levels of workforce participation.

COAG's initiatives include further reform to strengthen the Vocational Education and Training sector, investment in new Training centres for school students, and strengthening the international education sector.

To ensure that the COAG initiatives are realised, the University strongly recommends the building of a research agenda into the contemporary TAFE system. TAFE staff are at the coal face of engaging with industry and business, and it is well known that Australian universities have a poor track record of research with this sector (particularly small business) in comparison with other competitive economies.

The Australian Innovation System Report Card 2013, chapter 2 states:

'collaborative innovation with research organisations more than triples the likelihood of business productivity growth...[but] despite the benefits, Australia's overall levels of collaborative business innovation and business-to-research collaboration on innovation continue to compare poorly with other OECD countries. Relative to other OECD countries, Australia's level of collaborative innovation between industry and research is [also] at or below average, depending on firm size.

<http://www.innovation.gov.au/science/policy/AustralianInnovationSystemReport/AISR2013/chapter-2-business-innovation-and-collaboration/collaborative-innovation/index.html>

Given the status quo, it appears that there is a ripe opportunity for TAFEs to be valued for the potential they have to conduct research within business and industry. Currently, the TAFE sector appears underdeveloped in terms of its research potential, yet the impact of this on the quality of training delivered by TAFEs or other private providers is not well known. Research that is needed to inform and underpin policy change is also particularly lacking.

A comprehensive university such as CQUni is well placed to develop a research niche in this area, but that would require recognition of the value of research about VET, as well as the importance of having that research conducted by the staff of TAFE institutions, equally as much as research done by university academics and/or consultants. There would also need to be sufficient resourcing to accompany growth in this nascent research field – primarily investment in people (as opposed to infrastructure).

CQUniversity reaffirms the critical importance of skill development in regions - training students in regions keeps them in regions as working professionals. This is a critical argument for regional Australia.

Finally, there is a critical need to ensure that any policy changes arising from the Inquiry are communicated clearly and early to the sector. It is important that Universities and TAFEs are sustainable and uncertainty over what reforms will take place will impact on everyone (regions, students, TAFEs and their staff).

## **Contacts**

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