

# The Talloires Network

## Institutional Assessment Summary, Charles Darwin University, Australia, August 2007

Charles Darwin University's (CDU) civic role and social responsibility is central to the University's vision, mission and strategic directions. CDU's vision is "to be a thriving university that dares to be different and takes advantage of its unique geography and demography to benefit the whole community through education, research and community engagement". CDU's mission is to be "the regional leader in education and research and an asset to the broader community, supporting the social, cultural, intellectual and economic development of northern Australia and surrounding areas".

CDU defines community engagement as "key to all of CDU's activities, characterised by two way relationships in which the University forms partnerships with its communities to yield mutually beneficial outcomes".

The University in its various forms has been part of the Territory community since 1951. A commitment to community has been at the forefront since CDU was founded through a merger in 2003 of the Northern Territory University, Alice Springs based Centralian College, Menzies School of Health Research and the Northern Territory Rural College.



**Palmerston Campus in the tropical north**

From the outset, CDU established an Office of Community and Access alongside the traditional core business areas of Teaching and Learning and Research. Community and Access is managed at the Pro Vice-Chancellor (executive) level and supported by a Community Engagement Coordinator, RemoteLink (regional and remote coordination), SchoolsLink (secondary schools liaison) and an Indigenous Academic Support Unit. C&A Champions

provide internal links between each School/Faculty and the core Community and Access team. A Business Development area was also established to facilitate the provision of short courses and consultancies to meet the specific needs of government, business, industry and the community sector.

The University shapes its activities and offerings to meet the specific needs and challenges of Northern Australia and the surrounding region. Capacity building in the context of the diverse needs of a small population is one major regional challenge in which the University plays a major role.



**CDU students are from diverse community backgrounds**

CDU has nine campuses and centres across the Northern Territory, a jurisdiction that covers one sixth of the Australian land mass. Thirty percent of the population of 200,000 is of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent and more than 100 nationalities are represented. Half of the population is concentrated in and around the capital city of Darwin and the remainder live in the regional centres of Alice Springs, Katherine, Nhulunbuy and the smaller towns and remote Aboriginal communities dispersed across the Territory. The University is committed to increasing access to education and training opportunities and this is facilitated through provision of Mobile Adult Learning Units (MALUs), mobile classrooms that are stationed in remote Aboriginal communities for up to three months at a time.



**old mobile classroom on site in the desert**



**new Mobile Adult Learning Unit (MALU)**

Engagement informs and influences the University's operations at the governance level and through all core business areas. Eight of the fifteen members of the University Council are community representatives. Course advisory groups, industry stakeholder groups and regional reference groups provide input into course accreditation and reaccreditation. The Indigenous Reference Group provides meaningful Indigenous community input into the university. Other reference groups provide input into specific research projects, consultancies or formal agreements.

CDU's commitment to its communities is fundamental to its strategic directions as outlined in the *Futures Framework 2007-2016 "1<sup>st</sup> in 5 in 10 Strategy"*. The five benchmark areas of the *Futures Framework* are:

1. Indigenous Participation and Relevance
2. Pathways for Learning
3. Professional, globally oriented education and training
4. Knowledge to solve complex problems
5. Expanding capacity through partnerships

Trend indicators for civic engagement and social responsibility objectives implicit in the *Futures Framework* benchmark areas include improving the retention level of Indigenous students, improving outcomes for regional and remote communities, increasing the number of Indigenous employees, improving access, retention and success of equity group students, improving responses from internal and external stakeholder feedback and survey instruments, increasing flexibility of educational and training provision, increasing value of work undertaken through partnerships and improving research performance in relation to the impact of quality research regionally and internationally.

As the only university and the largest training organization in the Northern Territory, CDU has an obligation to the community as well as to the Northern Territory Government (NTG) to provide the Territory with a source of future workers, leaders and researchers to grow the Territory's social, regional and economic capacity.

In recognition of this, CDU has a formal partnership agreement with the Northern Territory Government which "provides for the economic and social development of the Northern Territory to be supported by a robust and resilient university working in partnership with government agencies and the wider community to contribute to education, research, policy development and program delivery".

The Schedules in the Agreement address regional needs and provide a framework to guide the development of specific projects. The Schedules include Economic Development, Indigenous Opportunities, Learning Environment, Healthy Communities, Strong Regions, Good Governance, Sustainable Terrestrial and Aquatic Resources and Sustainable Marine Resources.



**CDU is renowned for its research expertise and leadership in tropical knowledge of the Australian and Asia-Pacific region**

CDU staff and students are strongly engaged with our communities through structured and assessed work experience and work placements with business, industry, government and community organizations. These range from formal trade apprenticeships through to practicums in courses such as Teaching and Learning, Nursing, Social Work and Welfare Studies. Work Integrated Learning Scholarships are available under the Northern Territory Government partnership agreement and combine full-time tertiary education with work experience during semester breaks.

Virtually all of the University's research activity is directed towards the needs of the local and regional economy and society. CDU is nationally and internationally renowned for its research expertise and leadership in tropical and desert knowledge of the Australian and Asia-Pacific region, with particular focus on Indigenous knowledge. Addressing problems of importance to the peoples of the region underpins CDU's research foci of Natural and Cultural Resource Management, Human Health and Well-being, Teaching, Learning and Living and Community Development and Identity.



### **Research and training with communities in Eastern Indonesia**

CDU's culture of civic engagement and social responsibility is evident among the many staff whose involvement in community events or as members of Committees of Management and Advisory Boards often occurs after working hours. Selection criteria for relevant staff include developing and managing relationship capital, sensitivity to the needs of equity and diversity target groups and understanding of Northern Territory social, cultural and economic contexts. Membership of professional or industry organizations, community groups or advisory bodies, development of mutually beneficial partnerships, engaging the professions and recognition of the impacts of research are some of the relevant criteria recognized in the academic promotions process.

CDU has developed a set of Staff Competencies and Graduate Attributes that include skills relevant to civic engagement and social responsibility. Staff Competencies include developing and maintaining networks, engaging with stakeholders to maximize student learning, developing knowledge of business and industry priorities and recognizing and understanding the needs of identified equity groups. CDU's Graduate Attributes include citizenship and a world view which

specify the importance of communication, teamwork, social responsibility, flexibility and leadership skills.

CDU has a wide range of operations and activities that enhance the intellectual and cultural life of the region. Each year, the University hosts a number of public symposia, forums, lectures and seminar series, often outside the University grounds, that stimulate public discussion and debate on issues of importance to the region.

The University coordinates the Garma Forum each year as part of the Garma Festival of Traditional Culture in North-east Arnhem Land and presents the biennial Darwin International Guitar Festival. CDU is home to the Darwin Symphony Orchestra, the Centre for Youth Music, community radio station Territory FM, the CDU Gallery, Northern Editions Printmaking Studio and Gallery and CDU Sport. Members of the public can also dine at the Desert Lantern Training Restaurant in Alice Springs or the Karawa Training Restaurant in Palmerston or visit the Training Beauty Salon.



**Art exhibition opening in The Gallery at CDU's Casuarina Campus**

CDU undertakes a number surveys on an annual basis to obtain stakeholder feedback. There is an annual Industry Satisfaction Survey that polls all businesses that sponsor a trainee/apprentice, targeted industry satisfaction surveys as part of continuous improvement, informal polling at the delivery team level and student satisfaction surveys. Results from the last Industry Satisfaction Survey indicate a high degree of satisfaction with the quality of teaching and learning, the competence of CDU staff both as trainers and industry specialists and the skill level and employability of graduates.

CDU has received numerous national and Territory awards for excellence. It has a Five Star rating from The Australian Good Universities Guide on the criteria of Indigenous participation, the proportion of students over 25 years of age and gender balance.

Each year, hundreds of stories that recognize, celebrate and publicize CDU's engagement activities and partnerships are featured prominently on the CDU website. There is a community engagement website and regular newsletters, bulletins and research updates provide opportunities for information exchange with our communities.

In 2007, CDU hosted the 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Australian Universities Community Engagement Alliance National Conference as part of its commitment to promoting civic engagement and social responsibility. CDU is developing measurable approaches to monitoring and evaluating its community engagement through internal and external consultation processes and dialogue with Australian and overseas universities to share best practice, ensure continuous improvement and align with national and international benchmarks.

## **CDU Civic Engagement and Social Responsibility Highlights CDU Yolngu Studies**

Yolngu Studies is Charles Darwin University's global classroom of the languages and culture of Yolngu people of North-east Arnhem Land in the Northern Territory, Australia. Yolngu Studies is unique in the world for its contribution to the body of external knowledge of a major Aboriginal language group. In 2005, the Yolngu Studies program won the Prime Minister's prize for University Teacher of the Year, Australia's most prestigious teaching award.

A group of Yolngu elders from five major communities has guided the program since the outset over thirteen years ago, establishing principles of engagement that ensure both traditional Aboriginal practices and western academic standards are respected.

Yolngu Studies is the only program available nationally and internationally where Aboriginal teachers teach their own languages and culture at vocational, undergraduate and post graduate levels under the supervision of community elders.



**Yolngu Studies team wins the Prime Minister's Award**

Study units cover Yolngu language and culture, life and literature, conversation and texts. Independent study units and independent research projects are negotiated with the unit coordinator and the Yolngu advisors ensuring that community engagement is an integral part of the student learning experience. Yolngu students study their own languages and connections in the Yolgnu world.

The internet and an interactive CD make Yolngu Studies accessible to students across Australia and the world. The website has text in both Yolngu and English and has an online database with texts, pictures, video and sound files. Over the years, Yolngu students have made a significant contribution to the bank of resource materials.

The Yolngu studies team is dedicated to support the cultural and economic viability of very remote communities through two related research programs. The first is a range of collaborative research projects dedicated to ICT and Remote community sustainability (see [www.cdu.edu.au/centres/inc](http://www.cdu.edu.au/centres/inc)) The second is the Yolngu Aboriginal Consultancy Initiative which involves professionalising bicultural consultants to take leading roles in research and consultancies which affect the futures of their communities. It also involves collaboratively addressing some key methodological, ethical and philosophical issues in negotiations and translations between divergent knowledge systems. (See for example [www.cdu.edu.au/centres/macp](http://www.cdu.edu.au/centres/macp))

The dictionary, video and library of Yolngu literature are part of a growing repository of Yolngu language resources at a time when Indigenous languages are in decline around the world. Yolngu Studies is a remarkable opportunity for strengthening cross-cultural understanding as well as remote Aboriginal community sustainability. Yolngu Studies is a powerful vehicle for engagement between Yolngu people and the wider world.

For more information go to <http://learnline.cdu.edu.au/yolngustudies/>

## **The Darwin Symphony Orchestra**

Charles Darwin University (CDU) has been the home of the Darwin Symphony Orchestra (DSO) since its first official concert in 1989. Comprised of over 75 volunteer players, a professional Concert Master, Principal Cello, Woodwind Leader and brought together by an Artistic Director and Conductor, the Orchestra has become an important community icon.

The DSO's mission is to perform a range of orchestral music for the community of the Northern Territory for their entertainment and education, whilst providing an avenue for growth of skill and experience of its players.

Establishing an orchestra for the Northern Territory and establishing demand for orchestral performances was an enormous challenge. The Northern Territory covers one sixth of the Australian land mass yet has a population of just 200,000 people, thirty percent of whom are of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent. In 2006, eighteen years after its first performance, the DSO accompanied the Australian Ballet's performance of Giselle to nearly ten percent of Darwin's population.



**The Darwin Symphony Orchestra Ampitheater**

CDU's School of Creative Arts and Humanities with its focus on "Community Music" has been the training ground for orchestra members. To achieve the aim of establishing a symphony orchestra, programs of study were devised at the University and talented amateur musicians were encouraged to enroll as students in order to up-skill themselves. The Artistic Director/Conductor is also on staff as the University's Violin and Conducting lecturer.

One of the goals of the DSO was to engage Indigenous communities. Connections had to be made, a bridge across the musical cultures had to be built, and mutual trust established. Essential to this was involving the traditional owners whenever performing on traditional lands. Local dancers and musicians, the local rock band or ladies choir would become part of the performance. In 1993, the Year of Indigenous People, the DSO commissioned "Earth Poem Sky Poem" from Richard Mills, a work that integrates both Indigenous and non-Indigenous musicians in a musical journey through an Aboriginal day. The DSO has also performed with Yothu Yindi, Warringa Band from Millingimbi, Don Weluk, the Songman from Maningrida, as well as with the Brass Ensemble from the Maningrida High School in performance in Darwin city.

The community orchestra is recognized for taking its music to remote locations across the Northern Territory; communities which rarely have the opportunity to experience a live symphony orchestra. Twice presented with the National Australia Day *Community Event of the Year Award*, the DSO also received the award for *Outstanding Contribution to Australian Culture* from the Centre of Australian Cultural Research in 1995, and in 2000 was presented with the award for a *Community orchestra that has extended the public's perception of Orchestra* by The Orchestras of Australia Network.

The DSO community orchestra connects music, people and places across the Northern Territory. Local audiences have access to major concerts and ballet performances not usually available in a small capital city or remote town. Local musicians have the opportunity to perform with renowned national and international artists. CDU's support of the DSO enriches the social and cultural fabric of Darwin and the Northern Territory.

For more information go to <http://www.dso.org.au/index.php>

**For more about Charles Darwin University go to <http://www.cdu.edu.au/>**