



# Australia: civic engagement in higher education

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Bellagio Meeting  
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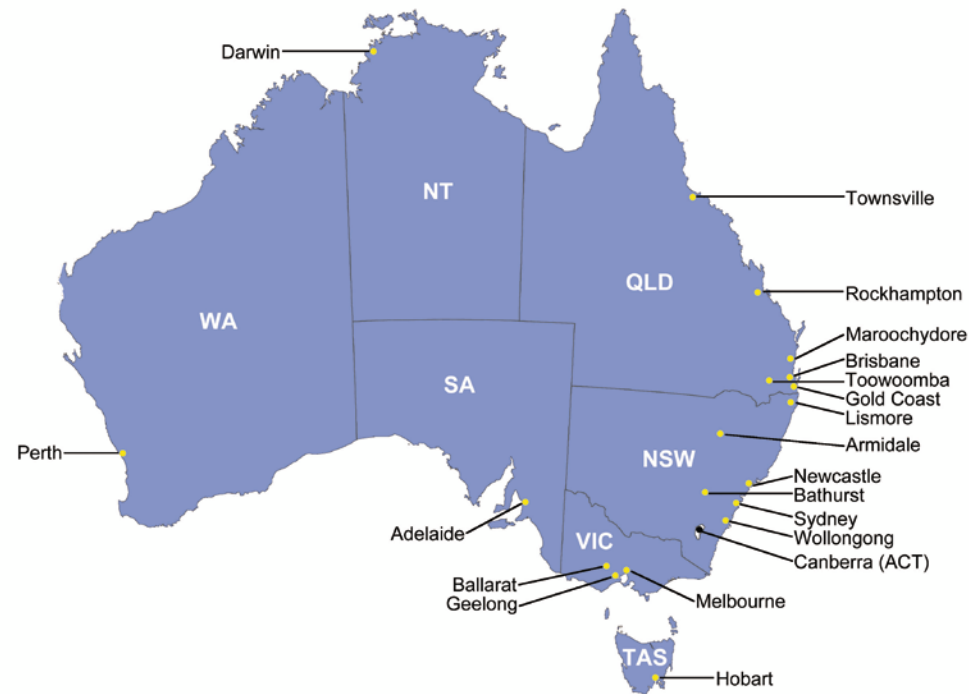
# Australia

- Size: 7.6m km<sup>2</sup>
  - 6<sup>th</sup> largest country
  - US: 9.8m km<sup>2</sup>
- Population: 22m
  - 51<sup>st</sup> in the world
  - US: 308m
- Population density: 2.8/km<sup>2</sup>
  - 233<sup>rd</sup> of 239 countries
  - US: 32/km<sup>2</sup>
- The 'tyranny of distance'



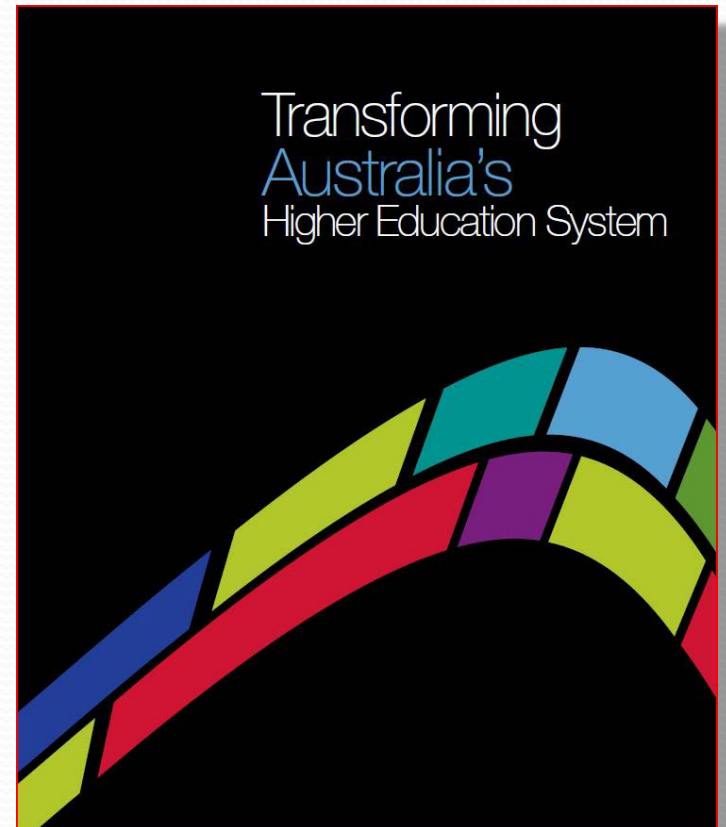
# Australian Universities

- 39 universities
- 1.1m full-time and part-time students
- 770,000 domestic students
- Almost 300,000 international students
- Less than 1% Indigenous students (2.7% of population)

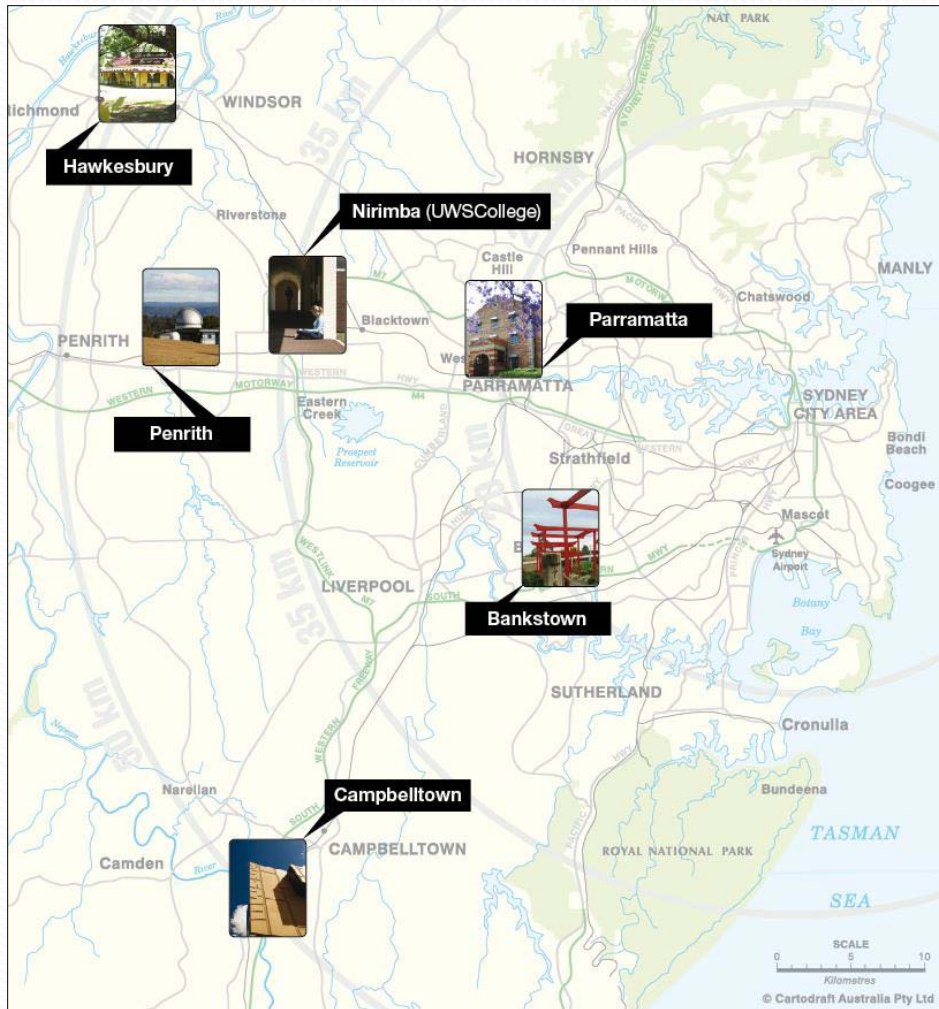


# Current Policy Context

- Major national higher education review (2008-2009)
- Significant additional funding for universities
- Renewed focus on widening participation
- Incentives for engagement with disadvantaged groups, but no 3<sup>rd</sup> stream funding



# The University of Western Sydney



## The University

- 37,000 students
  - 88% local
  - 12% international
- 2,500 staff
- 6 campuses
- \$588m budget

## The Region

- 1.9m people (9% of Australia)
- 170 nationalities
- 3rd largest regional economy
- 9000 km<sup>2</sup>

# Schools Engagement at UWS

- Low higher education participation rate for the region: 3.2% vs. 5.3% for the rest of Sydney
- UWS students
  - 40% are first in family to enter higher education
  - 21% come from a disadvantaged background
  - 170 nationalities (refugees and migrants)
  - 20% transition from technical and community colleges



# Schools Engagement at UWS

- UWS goals: raise aspirations, build confidence and improve academic skills
- Over 500 schools as partners
- UWS students mentor Indigenous and refugee school students
- Senior high school students 'shadow' a UWS student for a day
- Recognition for high achievers at local schools in awards and competitions
- Multiple on-campus programs to introduce school students to university life



# Industry Engagement at UWS



- 13% of the nation's businesses (10% of the national GDP) in the region
- More than 50% of small and medium-sized businesses fail in their first year
- Small business owners characterised by low post-secondary education
- UWS College of Business offers
  - Free online education
  - Over 800 students each year work with a local business through the training “toolkit”

The screenshot shows the SMExcellence website, a platform for small business training. The header includes the SMExcellence logo and the University of Western Sydney logo with the tagline "Bringing knowledge to life". The main banner features a woman in a pink shirt holding a red folder, with the text "Free online learning & planning for small business". Below the banner is a navigation menu with categories: Business Planning, Marketing, Legal, Finance, Employment, Export, and More. A search bar is also present. The main content area includes a welcome message, a "Free Online Small Business Training" section with six industry icons (Construction, Retail & Wholesale, Hospitality & Tourism, Property & Business Services, Manufacturing, and Personal & Home Services), and a "Test Yourself" section with a login form and a "Test Yourself" button.



# Service Learning



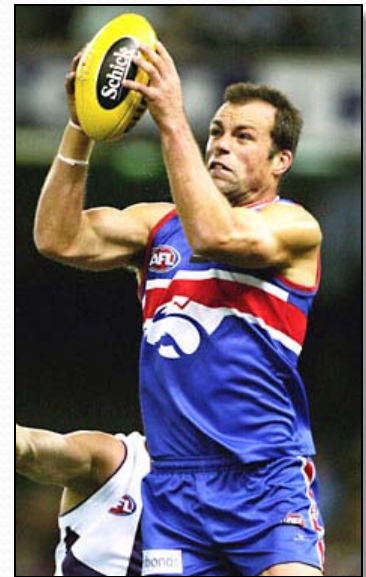
## Embedded service learning in the undergraduate program

- Over 2,500 students each year work on a business problem with a local business (event planning, marketing plan development, business plan development, market research, and consulting projects)
- IT and graphic design students design web pages and architecture
- Enthusiastically received and supported by State and Federal government agencies

The screenshot displays the Small Business NSW website. At the top, the NSW Government logo is on the left, and the text 'Industry & Investment' and 'Small Business NSW' is on the right. Below the header is a navigation bar with links for Home, Start a business, Run your business, Grow your business, Help with exporting, Specific initiatives, and About us. A search bar is also present. The main content area features a 'Small Business Tool Kit' section with a welcome message and a grid of icons for 'check readiness', 'learn how', 'test knowledge', and 'start planning'. A sidebar on the left contains links for 'Check Readiness', 'Learn how', 'Test Knowledge', 'Start planning', 'Watch instructional video', 'Case Studies', 'Contact Us', 'Feedback survey', and 'SMExcellence'. A login section on the right includes fields for Username and Password, and links for 'Register here for free' and 'Forgot password?'. The footer contains links for 'NSW Government', 'Industry & Investment NSW', 'business.nsw.gov.au', 'Privacy', 'Terms of use', and 'Site Map'.

# Victoria University

- In western Melbourne: significant historical social and economic disadvantage
  - High unemployment, low post-secondary participation, poor infrastructure, highly multicultural
- Provides vocational training and higher education
- 20% of the students are from low income backgrounds; 41% speak a language other than English at home; 25% work full time
- The region is experiencing
  - Rapid growth and gentrification
  - Transition from low-skilled jobs to knowledge intensive jobs
- Partnership with the Western Bulldogs Football Club
  - 'Bulldogs Friendly Schools Program' where VU student teachers work with school students building leadership skills
  - VU Achievers Award: Scholarships for high achieving school students sponsored by the Club
  - Australian Community Centre for Diabetes (joint partnership with community groups for diabetes treatment and prevention in disadvantaged communities)



# James Cook University

- In northern Queensland: large Indigenous population with very poor education and health outcomes
- **Remote Area Teacher Education Program**
  - Bachelor of Education delivered in remote locations
  - 134 Indigenous graduates to date
  - Develops qualified teachers for remote schools
- **Indigenous Health Careers Access Program**
  - Assists Indigenous students to enter and succeed in programs such as nursing, medicine, pharmacy, dental surgery and others
  - Incorporates English language component
- **Tertiary Access Course**
  - Pathway to undergraduate education for Indigenous students



# Curtin University of Technology



- **Western Australia**

- 2.6 million km<sup>2</sup>, 10 times the size of the UK
- Less than 1 person per square kilometre
- Nearest large city (>1m people) to capital Perth is over 2,000 km away
- A third of the state's production is dependent on the mining and resources industry

- **The University**

- Extensive Applied Research Partnerships (government and private sector)
  - Renewable energy; spatial information, innovative mining; deep exploration; greenhouse gas technologies; ageing, wound management innovation, remote area economic participation
- Largest Aboriginal enrolment in Australia
  - Community partnerships, flexible tailored programs, travelling teachers: courses in school education, nursing, community development



# Curtin University of Technology



- **Curtin Volunteers**
  - 1,000 self-organising student volunteers
  - Industry, school and community partners
  - Focus on remote disadvantaged communities
- **John Curtin Weekend**
  - Students travel to 37 separate communities, 40 buses at a time
  - Activities include repairing, painting, tree-planting and supporting community organisations
  - Student-led and managed; University supported
- **Go Global**
  - 100 students at a time travel to Asia, Africa and Eastern Europe
  - Work with children with disabilities





# Lessons Learned

## Internal

- Adopt a strategic point of view
- Take a long term perspective
- “Think globally, act locally”
- Establish a comfortable ‘fit’ with the University’s mission
- Invest University money
- Invest staff time
- Embed engagement over time in teaching and research

## External

- Develop a clear understanding of mutual benefits with community partners
- Build regional networks and alliances
- Be culturally congruent
- Be locally meaningful
- Involve political representatives and interests (nearly 40 state and federal electorates)