

# JCU – The Future

*Crystallising our Purpose*

## JCU – The Future Taskforce

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- Michelle Barker, Bradley Smith and Lisa Westcott who contributed to the background research and the writing of this report;
- Maree Conway who developed, presented and reported on the consultation around the Four Futures scenarios;
- Julia Nielsen who coordinated and developed the JCU – The Future website and the Word Cloud, both of which served important roles in the consultation with staff and students;
- Kaye Griffiths and Debbi Taylor for their work in desktop publishing and proof reading the report; and
- Staff and students who contributed to the project, through their comments and participation in workshops and discussions.

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## Acronyms

ARC	Australian Research Council
DIISRTE	Department of Industry, Innovation, Science, Research & Tertiary Education
ERA	Excellence for Research in Australia
HDR	Higher Degree by Research students
HEPPP	Higher Education Participation & Partnership Program
MNU	Multinational University
MOOCS	Massive Open Online Courses
NGOs	Non-Government Organisations
NHMRC	National Health & Medical Research Council
NTEU	National Tertiary Education Union
RAM	Resource Allocation Model
TEQSA	Tertiary Education Quality Standards Agency



## Executive Summary

In June 2012 the Vice-Chancellor launched a project titled JCU – The Future, to give stronger expression and effect to the Statement of Strategic Intent, thereby establishing the foundations for James Cook University to become a *great* university, renowned for education and research relevant to the tropics. The project is led by a Taskforce.

*JCU - The Future* is a natural outgrowth of the strategic path on which we have embarked over the past five years and responds to the challenges we face as an institution operating in the current higher education environment. The mandate is to identify opportunities for innovation in learning and teaching, research, engagement, professional services and operations.

This report addresses the first phase of the project – *Crystallising our Purpose* – and is directed principally at the three elements of our core business as defined in the University Plan – Learning and Teaching, Research and Engagement.

In developing this report the Taskforce has considered internal and external contexts. From an internal perspective this report elaborates on, and aligns with, existing strategic documents and initiatives including the Statement of Strategic Intent, the University Plan, Curriculum Refresh Project, Tri City Harmonisation Project and the JCU Research Plan. The University's external context is defined as comprising two main domains - the tropics, including northern Queensland, and the higher education sector.

The Taskforce sought the views of the staff and students on what the future could and should hold through extensive consultation. There were three main elements to this: (1) a facility for comments and submissions via the web and email; (2) a 'Word Cloud' as a device to elicit descriptors of the future, and; (3) a scenario exercise through which we explored with staff what the future might hold and how we might prepare for it. Staff and students embraced the opportunity to be involved, making more than 900 individual contributions through these consultation mechanisms. In doing so, there was clear indication that staff care deeply about the future of the organisation and want it to succeed.

Building upon this input the Taskforce has identified key attributes and principles to underpin our learning and teaching, research and engagement. In combination these attributes and principles define a "James Cook University Model", which will be:

- Focused on the tropics
- Research rich
- Student focused
- Connected to community
- Internationally engaged
- Culturally informed

And underpinned by the following principles:

- We will fulfil the aims, ambitions and expectations expressed through the *James Cook University Act 1997*.
- The James Cook University Model will give effect to the Statement of Strategic Intent, including our values and beliefs.

- The three elements of our core business – learning and teaching, research and engagement – will be closely integrated.
- The special opportunities presented by our three tropical campus locations will project our University’s distinctiveness, individually and collectively.
- The University will be sustainable financially and in terms of its social and environmental performance.

In order to give expression to this model, the Taskforce has delivered a set of recommendations that extend across the three elements of our core business – learning and teaching, research and engagement. While individual recommendations often refer to one of the elements of core business, the intent is that collectively we achieve stronger integration across these elements.

The ambition is to uphold a university that is unique in the Australian higher education setting, in terms of its focus, the student experience, and its engagement. To this end, substantial changes in learning delivery, organisational culture and structure, and the way we work will be required.

## Recommendations

1. That a grand challenges framework should be developed as a means to elaborate on the four themes embedded in the University’s Strategic Intent.
2. That the further development of signature programs, responding to grand challenges facing the tropics, be considered.
3. That the Resource Allocation Model be reviewed in terms of its suitability to facilitate the development and delivery of interdisciplinary learning programs.
4. That subject and course offerings be assessed in regard to their alignment with the Strategic Intent, student demand, community interests, and link to quality research with a view that:
  - a) Courses and programs that are not adequately aligned will be disestablished;
  - b) The policy in respect of low enrolment subjects will be strengthened and enforced;
  - c) Areas where existing learning opportunities might be expanded will be considered; and
  - d) Course offerings in terms of their spread across campuses will be considered.
5. That a culture of research excellence be strengthened and given effect through the following strategies:
  - a) Invest in staff and infrastructure to support the research agenda for the long term;
  - b) Remove structural and financial barriers that hinder inter-disciplinary, multi-disciplinary or trans-disciplinary research;
  - c) Introduce more explicit and ambitious performance expectations in respect of research;
  - d) Assist staff in the ‘translation’ of their research, including the commercialisation of research outcomes;
  - e) Identify areas of existing or potential research strength and develop and recruit staff to further build capacity in these areas;
  - f) Discontinue investments in research areas which do not align with the Strategic Intent and where existing research is below world standard;
  - g) Adopt a default standard that staff appointed at Level B and above have completed their PhD at time of appointment; and
  - h) Revise workload models to encourage staff participation in research.
6. That additional resources be allocated to increase the amount of HDR stipend scholarships available to students who wish to pursue a PhD on a topic aligned to the Strategic Intent.



7. That our doctoral education program be redesigned to strengthen graduate skills sets, improve completion rates and times, and establish exit pathways for underachieving HDR candidates. Consideration should also be given to potential changes to entry pathways to a PhD.
8. That specific proposals be developed to strengthen research-informed learning and to increase the exposure of students to our active research.
9. That we strengthen our focus on students through the following initiatives:
  - a) review traditional course structures and sequencing of subjects;
  - b) assess the net benefits of moving to trimesters;
  - c) explore opportunities for more customisation of degree programs;
  - d) establish a standard definition of a major;
  - e) simplify course structures for all degree programs and joint degree programs;
  - f) consolidate preparatory programs and learning support available to students; and
  - g) develop programs to cater to high performing students, including specifically the establishment of an Honours College.
10. That we consider technology-based approaches to enhance course delivery, improve flexibility for students and assist academic staff with the delivery of course content.
11. That a University-wide strategy be developed to provide a coordinated approach to supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students from recruitment and transition, through their course of study and on to graduation and alumni relations.
12. That there is an ongoing investment in the delivery of a high quality on-campus experience, that is flexible and technology enabled.
13. That a University-wide engagement strategy be developed to provide a framework for engagement across our core business
14. That work-integrated and practice-based learning opportunities for students be consolidated and extended.
15. That research which is impactful, relevant and translatable be fostered through engagement with industry, professions, community end-users and policy makers.
16. That an internationalisation strategy be developed that carefully integrates internationalisation across all aspects of our core business.
17. That a more deliberative approach to international engagement be adopted that acknowledges existing relationships and looks to establish 'deep partnerships' with a select number of institutions with shared interests in the tropics.
18. That exchange and mobility opportunities for staff and students between our Australian and Singapore campuses and other partner institutions be encouraged and supported.
19. That the National Best Practice Framework for Indigenous Cultural Competency in Australian Universities be embedded.
20. That more programs to develop cultural competence be established and made accessible to staff and students.

# Crystallising our Purpose

## 1 Introduction

Over the past 5 years, we have invested strongly in affirming and refining our strategic direction. This setting of strategic direction has been anchored in the *James Cook University Act 1997*, which prescribes, *inter alia*, that we are ‘to encourage study and research generally and, in particular, in subjects of special importance to the people of the tropics’.

In 2008 we developed the Statement of Strategic Intent, in which we claimed as our purpose ‘Creating a brighter future for life in the tropics world-wide through graduates and discoveries that make a difference’. The Statement of Strategic Intent was refreshed in 2011 and endorsed by University Council in February 2012, with no departure from this stated purpose.

To help give effect to the Strategic Intent, over the past 5 years we have invested in robust and rigorous planning, exemplified by the University Plan. The Plan was comprehensively restructured in 2012, following our refresh of the Strategic Intent and the revised Plan provides the updated framework for short to medium term (1-3 years) planning for the University.

At the same time we have been strengthening our strategic foundations, the higher education sector has been exposed to intensifying pressures and new challenges. As the Commonwealth Government’s Base Funding Review<sup>1</sup> noted, there is a demonstrated need for additional funding, though the Government has recently (January 2013) decided not to act upon this need<sup>2</sup>. The Commonwealth Government is pushing hard for increased participation in higher education, with consequent pressures on infrastructure and resources. International competition for students has intensified, as has the competition for students domestically through the removal of enrolment caps. Technology is opening up new opportunities for learning, with much attention on the rapid development of massive open online courses (MOOCs). To remain vibrant and competitive we must respond to these very real challenges and developments. Having affirmed our strategic direction, we must ensure that the core business activities are closely aligned with this intent, and we must ensure that our services are fit-for-purpose, effective and efficient.

‘JCU –The Future’ is the natural outgrowth of the strategic path on which we have embarked over these past few years and a response to the challenges we face as an institution. The project will give stronger expression and effect to our Strategic Intent, with the aim of establishing this as a ‘great’ university, renowned for education and research relevant to the tropics. Leading off from the revised Statement of Strategic Intent and the new University Plan, the project is directed at identifying opportunities for innovation in learning and teaching, research, engagement, professional services and operations. Intellectual leadership, backed by efficient and effective services and operations, are essential elements in charting a sustainable future for the organisation. In concert with ongoing initiatives, the project gives added effect to ‘One University, Two Countries, Three Tropical Campuses’, one of the institutional priorities encoded in the University Plan. The project is aimed at shaping the architecture for the University in order to give greater strength to our distinctiveness, lay the foundations for greatness, and provide for an organisation that is resilient and sustainable.

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<sup>1</sup> [http://www.innovation.gov.au/HigherEducation/Policy/BaseFundingReview/Documents/HigherEd\\_FundingReviewReport.pdf](http://www.innovation.gov.au/HigherEducation/Policy/BaseFundingReview/Documents/HigherEd_FundingReviewReport.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> [www.innovation.gov.au/HigherEducation/Policy/BaseFundingReview/Documents/Response-BaseFundingReviewRecommendations.pdf](http://www.innovation.gov.au/HigherEducation/Policy/BaseFundingReview/Documents/Response-BaseFundingReviewRecommendations.pdf)

The Terms of Reference for JCU – The Future are to:

1. Affirm James Cook University’s fields of intellectual excellence, represented in the domains of learning and teaching, research and innovation, and engagement.
2. Develop a distinctive ‘JCU model’ for learning and teaching, building upon the outcomes and activities of the Curriculum Refresh project and giving account to both ‘content’ and ‘delivery’.
3. Review and refresh the priorities and strategies in the JCU Research Plan as the basis for the further development and growth of JCU’s research and innovation portfolio.
4. Strengthen the framework for engagement and partnerships, regionally, nationally, and internationally.
5. Seek efficiencies and productivity improvements in the *Enablers* – professional services, capabilities and operations.
6. Identify the opportunities for harmonisation of campuses, with a view to both the scholarly and service activities of the University.
7. On the basis of 1-6, deliver recommendations as to which activities within the University might be enhanced (‘power up’), those that might be curtailed (‘power down’), those that might be refashioned and new areas in which we might invest.

In concert with the notion that ‘structure should follow strategy’, JCU – The Future has three main phases:

1. **Crystallising our purpose.** The objective is to improve the preciseness with which we define our scholarly fields of endeavour. For example, the four strategic themes of the University Plan will be elaborated upon, delivering a sharper focus for our intellectual activities.
2. **Redesigning.** Working across four domains (Learning & Teaching, Research, Engagement, Services & Operations), the objective is to identify innovative approaches to ways of working. In Learning and Teaching, for example, the objective will be to define a distinctive ‘JCU model’ that is true to our Strategic Intent and the priorities expressed in the University Plan.
3. **Implementation.** The outcome will be an implementation plan, with a focus on integrating the redesign to maximise gains.

The present report addresses the first of these. It is directed principally at the three elements of our core business, as defined in the University Plan – Learning and Teaching, Research and Engagement. At the same time that the work underpinning this report commenced, Ernst & Young were engaged to assist the University in identifying efficiencies and productivity improvements in the professional services, capabilities and operations. This work, which is ongoing, will be reported on separately.

As indicated above, the Terms of Reference for JCU –The Future includes the aim to become a ‘great’ university, and so part of the first phase of the project is to consider what this might mean in practice. In the context of a university, greatness could be defined in many different ways. Students, for example, might well refer to the quality of learning, the wider university experience and to the career opportunities delivered through their university education. In the context of a regionally located institution such as ours, greatness might be defined by local community members to include aspects of engagement. Staff might refer to work satisfaction, career progression and work-family balance – i.e., as being a great organisation in which to work. National and international rankings of universities, such as the Academic Ranking of World Universities, are based wholly or largely on indicators of research performance.

This report provides an overview of our strategic planning framework, followed by a synopsis of some of the major external influences on the University, including those of significance to the tropics. The discussion then summarises consultation with staff in terms of the broad shaping of the University, leading in to an assessment of possible directions in terms of our core business - learning and teaching, research and engagement. The report also presents some observations in regard to the implications of change for work and organisational structures within the University.

## 2 Our Strategic Intent & the University Plan

While we examined and refreshed the Statement of Strategic Intent in 2011<sup>3</sup> our fundamental purpose remains unchanged – ‘Creating a brighter future for life in the tropics world-wide through graduates and discoveries that make a difference’. This purpose has its foundation in the Act that governs the University. In a world in which distinctiveness (‘niche’) can be a powerful competitive advantage, we are fortunate in our purpose being so uniquely defined, as this bestows authenticity.

The Statement of Strategic Intent sets the compass for this project in other important respects. It affirms the importance of our place – the tropics. The Statement also affirms that the University is committed to reconciliation and to sustainability, that the outlook is international, and that our work is underpinned by a set of values and beliefs. Importantly, the Statement of Strategic Intent also affirms that our learning and teaching and research are focused on four themes:

- *Tropical Ecosystems and Environment*
- *Industries and Economies in the Tropics*
- *Peoples and Societies in the Tropics*
- *Tropical Health, Medicine and Biosecurity*

The University Plan provides a framework in which we pursue the intent, values and beliefs expressed through the Statement of Strategic Intent. The Plan has three main elements:

- **Our Priorities** – five institution-level considerations that extend across and permeate all of our activities. These five considerations draw and elaborate upon important elements of the Strategic Intent.
- **Our Core Business** – the three activities that are the essence of what it is to be a university.
- **Enablers** – capabilities, resources, processes and services that exist to support the core business of the institution.

JCU – The Future has the remit to instantiate and elaborate upon the strategic direction embedded in both the Statement of Strategic Intent and the institutional priorities of the University Plan, to interrogate what this means for the core business, and to design the enablers in order that they are consistent with this purpose.

## 3 The World Around Us

Broadly, our external context is comprised of two main domains. The tropics – ‘our place’ – is one of those domains and to a significant extent our work is directed towards understanding the many and varied challenges of this broad region, and towards identifying opportunities and solutions in the context of these challenges. The second domain is the realm of higher education, which is in a constant state of flux nationally and internationally.

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<sup>3</sup> <http://www-public.jcu.edu.au/about/strategic-intent/index.htm>

Our understanding and framing of the challenges and opportunities of the tropics in a very real sense define James Cook University. Essential to the task of ‘Crystallising Our Purpose’, therefore, is an appreciation of the challenges and the opportunities of the tropical world.

In relation to our tropical focus, a pertinent question was recently raised by a consultant assisting the University. Their question was whether the ‘tropics’ is viewed as a *focus* or a *filter*. The question lies at the heart of discussions within parts of the University about how alignment with the Strategic Intent and the four themes in the University Plan is achieved.

The evolving character of higher education has bearing on such things as where our students and staff come from, our pedagogy, our research, the resources we have to work with, the regulatory context in which we operate, and the nature of competition in our core business activities.

Turning first to the tropics, it is commonplace these days, particularly amongst universities, to frame the world in terms of ‘grand/global challenges’, defined by The Royal Society as “those which transcend national boundaries and pose significant threats to societies and ecosystems”<sup>4</sup>. The Royal Society identified these challenges as climate change, global health, food security, biodiversity, water security, population and energy security. In a speech in 2012 to the International Forum of the Academic Consortium for the 21st Century<sup>5</sup> the Federal Minister for Tertiary Education, Senator Chris Evans, referred to the global challenges of climate change, agricultural production, health issues and water issues.

Princeton University promotes their Grand Challenges initiative<sup>6</sup> ‘as a powerful new university-wide initiative’:

*Grand Challenges addresses these pressing problems [energy, development, health] by establishing a community of engaged faculty, researchers, and graduate and undergraduate students; stimulating interdisciplinary research; introducing new courses; and creating unique opportunities for students to work alongside elite faculty in the laboratory and in the field. The Program is developing a generation of leaders with a global perspective, practical problem-solving experience, and a commitment to improving outcomes in a resource-challenged global economy.*

A selection of framings of the grand/global challenges is presented in Table 1. The table groups these challenges under broad headings – resources, development, health, environmental change, people, governance, education, and information technology.

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<sup>4</sup> The Royal Society, 2011, *Knowledge, Networks and Nations: Global Scientific Collaboration in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*. The Royal Society, London. p 72.

<sup>5</sup> <http://minister.innovation.gov.au/chrisevans/Speeches/Pages/2012InternationalForum.aspx>

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.princeton.edu/grandchallenges/>

Table 1: Grand/global challenges

Institution	Grand/Global Challenges							
<b>Princeton</b>	Energy	Development	Health					
<b>UCL</b>		Sustainable Cities	Health		Human Wellbeing		Intercultural Interaction	
<b>Edinburgh</b>		Global Development	Global Health	Environment and Society				
<b>Essex</b>		New global socio-economic political order			Eco culture (resilient communities)	Transitions to peace and prosperity		Reinventing the internet
<b>Minnesota</b>	Energy and the Environment		Global Health	Food Security and Agricultural Production	Economics and Poverty	Global Governance	Education	
<b>Aarhus</b>	Energy	Green Growth – sustainable development Cities		Food Water Oceans	Disasters		Jobs	
<b>Southampton</b>	Food and Energy			Biodiversity and ecosystems Climate change	Population	Transnational governance and citizenship		Financial and Information networks
<b>Coventry</b>	Low carbon vehicles	Low impact buildings		Sustainable Agriculture and Food	Ageing community			Integrated Transport and Logistics Digital media
<b>Singularity University</b>	Energy Upcycle		Global health	Food for Cities Sustainable Water	Poverty	Global Security	Education	Space
<b>National Academy of Engineering</b>	Solar energy Energy from fusion Carbon sequestration Nitrogen cycle		Health informatics Better medicines Reverse-engineer the brain	Provide access to clean water Restore and improve urban infrastructure		Prevent nuclear terror	Advance personalised learning	Secure cyber-space Enhance virtual reality

Megatrends – described by Frost & Sullivan as “macroeconomic forces of development that will define our future world and its increasing pace of change”<sup>7</sup> – offer a somewhat different, though prospectively complementary representation of, the evolving global order. A recent example is the CSIRO’s foresighting project *Our Future World: Global megatrends that will change the way we live*.<sup>8</sup> Six megatrends are identified:

*More from less* – limited supplies of natural resources (minerals, energy, water, food), set against increasing populations and economic growth.

*Going, going,... gone?* The decline and possible extinction of habitats and species.

*The silk highway* – a shift in the world economy from west to east, with income growth in Asia and, to a lesser extent, South America and Africa, leading people out of poverty and into the middle income classes.

*Forever young* – representing the ageing population as an asset, but with the associated challenges of retirement incomes and healthcare.

*Virtually here* – a world of increased connectivity where individuals, communities, governments and businesses are immersed into the virtual world to a much greater extent than ever before.

*Great expectations* – the rising demand for experiences over products and the rising importance of social relationships.

Representations of the global/grand challenges or megatrends tend not to be geographically oriented and the Taskforce did not find any that are specifically about the tropics. However, both challenges and megatrends have particular expressions in the tropics, such as the increasing incidence of infectious diseases or loss of biodiversity through the clearing of tropical rainforests. It is not difficult, therefore, to map challenges or megatrends to the tropics.

For the purposes of JCU – The Future, the mapping of challenges to the four themes that underpin our learning and research programs is one input to ‘crystallising our purpose’. The reference in the Strategic Intent to a ‘brighter future’ affords a narrative which implicitly acknowledges that there are challenges, that in these challenges lie opportunities, and that James Cook University can be oriented towards solutions. We have a role to play in improving knowledge about the challenges, in fostering innovation as a means of providing solutions, and in fostering opportunities in support of a ‘brighter future for the tropics worldwide’.

Alongside these developments there are several established and emerging trends in the domain of higher education that will profoundly influence our future. *Blue Skies*, a project of The Pearson Think Tank<sup>9</sup>, “is a deliberate attempt to fundamentally broaden the conversation about higher education”. In the introduction to their 2012 volume of essays Louis Coiffait, Head of Research at Pearson Think Tank, opened his remarks with the question “Are universities currently experiencing an unprecedented volume, velocity and variety of change?” He closed his remarks by saying “I would argue that universities are facing a unique confluence of trends at the same time, creating an unprecedented ‘inflection point’.” The leading trends he identifies are funding, quality, fairness and technology.

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<sup>7</sup> [www.frost.com](http://www.frost.com)

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.csiro.au/Portals/Partner/Futures/Our-Future-World-report.aspx>

<sup>9</sup> <http://pearsonblueskies.com/>

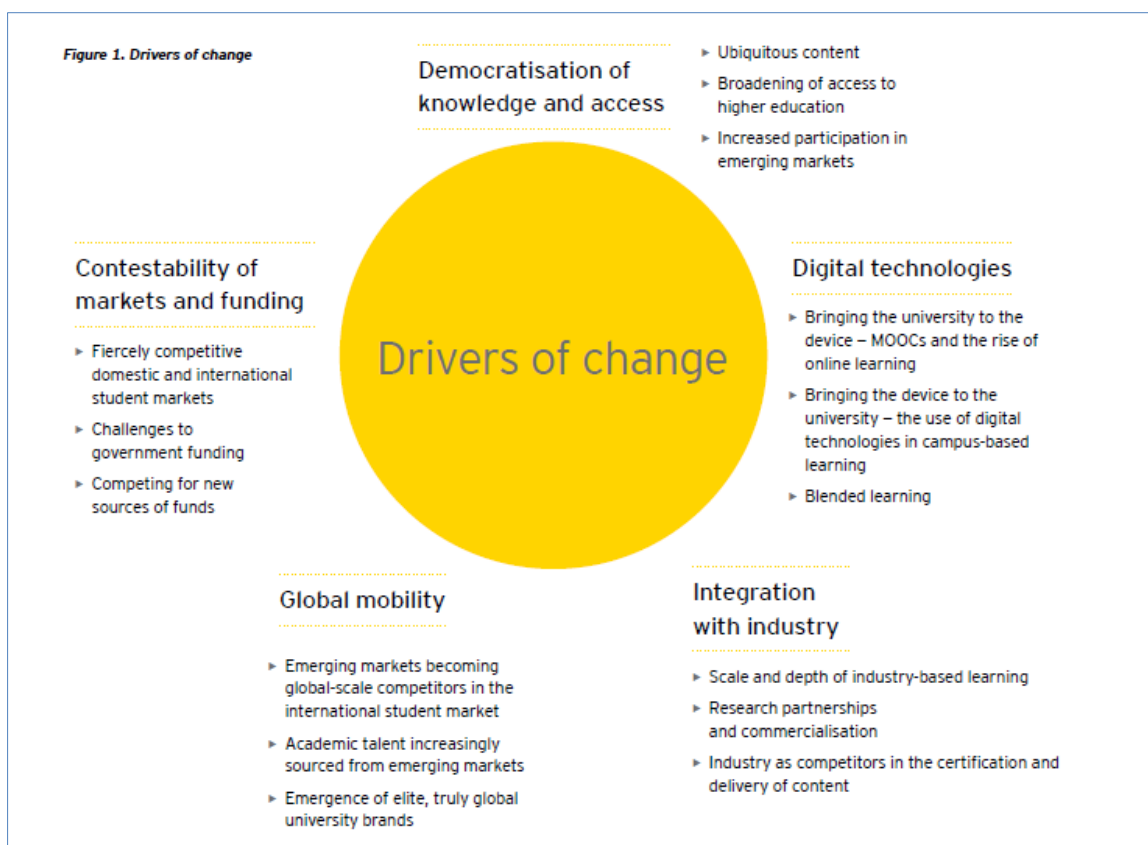
Closer to home, Professor Stephen Parker, Vice-Chancellor at the University of Canberra, commented in *Campus Review*<sup>10</sup> that:

*The future of higher education globally is bright, but the current conception of a university in countries like Australia is not sustainable in the long term, except perhaps for a small number of institutions.*

*The organisational forms, cultures and practices which developed over the centuries to provide university education for society’s elite have been stretched and panel-beaten as far as they will go for an era of mass participation in higher education. The model is too expensive, capital-intensive and inflexible.*

On the theme of profound change in higher education, a report delivered by Ernst & Young in 2012 was provocatively titled ‘University of the future: A thousand year old industry on the cusp of profound change’<sup>11</sup>. Figure 1 summarises what Ernst & Young identified as the main drivers of this profound change.

Synthesising these and other commentaries on change in higher education, the Taskforce distilled 6 main drivers of change – internationalisation, quality, pedagogy, participation, public versus private, competition. Each is a substantial topic in its own right and we seek only to outline the issues here.



Source: Ernst & Young, 2012.

<sup>10</sup> Parker, Stephen, 2012, Time to trade in a well-worn university model, *Campus Review*, Oct 2, p 13.

<sup>11</sup> Ernst & Young, 2012, *University of the future: A thousand year old industry on the cusp of profound change*.



**Internationalisation.** ‘International’ has been raised in many guises recently, with some of the current interest in Australia sparked by downturns in international student enrolments, occasioned by adverse publicity in regard to the safety of international students studying in Australia, changes to visa regulations, the appreciation of the Australian dollar, and the increasing competitiveness of other country destinations. In respect of the latter, a recent report in *The Australian* cites a 43 per cent increase in Chinese undergraduates going to the USA, along with predictions that in 2012 there will be a decline in the number of Chinese students studying in Australia and that for the first time in a decade the number of Chinese students studying in the US will be greater than in Australia<sup>12</sup>. Recent reports for the NSW Department of Trade and Investment<sup>13</sup> and for the British Council<sup>14</sup> are among several that forecast quite dramatic shifts in the pattern of international student participation. There have also been influential commentaries on the internationalisation of research, including the 2012 British Council report and another published by the Royal Society<sup>15</sup>, which provides incisive analysis of the reasons for, benefits of, and future directions for international research. Of great significance for us – and indeed universities everywhere – is the shifting balance of economic power towards Asia, along with strong commitments amongst several nations within Asia to significant investment in education generally and higher education specifically. One message that has recurred in much of the national commentary is that Australia has to move away from regarding international students as primarily a source of revenue, towards deeper, reciprocal and more meaningful engagement with international partners. How Australian universities can position themselves to participate in a much more competitive environment is an important strategic question. In addition to student recruitment, internationalisation of the curriculum is increasingly important, along with the matter of the quality of the international student experience.

**Quality.** The quality and standards agenda has emerged strongly and is particularly evident in Australia through initiatives such as the Excellence for Research in Australia (ERA) and in the closer regulation of higher education via the Tertiary Education Quality Standards Agency (TEQSA). More widely, the ranking of universities has emerged as an industry in itself. At the most general level, the assessment and regulation of quality is welcome, particularly with the increasing presence of private operators in higher education. As in so many things, though, the devil is indeed in the detail. There are questions, for example, about the methods employed to assess research quality and those employed to develop rankings. In respect of TEQSA, there has been concern to ensure that regulation is risk-based and proportionate and, more recently, questions have emerged as to whether the TEQSA framework will inappropriately constrain innovation in learning and teaching.

**Pedagogy.** Very much to the fore has been the convergence of open access education and the opportunities for this that are afforded by digital technologies. Unlike the predictions before the dotcom crash of a transformation to online learning, there is more substance to the current trends. This substance lies in the fact that well respected universities – Yale, Harvard, Melbourne and the ANU – have invested in the new online opportunities such as Coursera and edX. Of course, there is also enhanced functionality this time around, which makes for even more innovative delivery. In a very real sense, students can now learn anywhere, anytime, from many, many providers; and there are implications for universities as they seek to articulate and enact a distinctive ‘value-add’ in this new environment and identify the specific contribution they make to the student experience of learning. Alongside the technological innovations, questions have been raised about the structure of tertiary qualifications. For example, in the US concerns have been expressed about the cost of the traditional 4-year degree, amid suggestions that degrees should be shorter and more vocationally oriented. The

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<sup>12</sup> *The Australian*, Higher Education Supplement, 3/10/12, p33.

<sup>13</sup> Gallagher, S and Garrett, G., 2012, *From University Exports to the Multinational University: The Internationalisation of Higher Education in Australia and the United States*. United States Study Centre.

<sup>14</sup> [http://ihe.britishcouncil.org/sites/default/files/going\\_global/session\\_attachments/GG2012%2012.1%20Janet%20Ilieva.pdf](http://ihe.britishcouncil.org/sites/default/files/going_global/session_attachments/GG2012%2012.1%20Janet%20Ilieva.pdf)

<sup>15</sup> The Royal Society, 2011, *Knowledge, Networks and Nations: Global Scientific Collaboration in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*. The Royal Society, London.

linearity of our traditional degree models has also been questioned, along with suggestions that higher education should be much more flexible and, indeed, tailored to individual needs, especially those of non-traditional learners. A shift in educational focus to assuring and demonstrating student learning outcomes also suggests that quality in curriculum design and learning support for new and diverse cohorts should be a critical focus.

**Participation.** Within Australia especially, there are strong drivers to support the widening of participation in higher education. Participation amongst socio-economic groups that have been poorly represented in university education is very much to the fore. The Commonwealth Government has set its participation target as 20 per cent of students from a Low-SES background by 2020 and is supporting this aim through the Higher Education Participation and Partnership Program (HEPPP). This has several implications, not the least being the prospect of growth in student numbers and the attendant issues in terms of infrastructure and learning resources. It also raises questions about pathways into higher education. The development of dual sector institutions, merging university and TAFE operations, has been one response to the focus on pathways. There is a real opportunity here for higher education providers to be explicit about their value proposition of delivering the transformative effects of higher education more broadly.

**Public versus Private.** The debate about the balance of public versus private benefits that accrue from higher education is quite active again, not only in Australia. The debate goes immediately to how the costs of university education should be apportioned between government and individuals and the prospect of future reforms that would lead to deregulated fees in Australia. There are other interesting implications that might arise from increased private contributions. In particular, will this drive a more vocational emphasis amongst students, subtly but profoundly, reshaping the nature of what universities do?

**Competition.** In 2012 the Commonwealth Government removed the caps on undergraduate degree enrolments<sup>16</sup>, creating a partially deregulated market in student places – partially, because controls on fees have remained in place. We have some advantage in this partly deregulated market as there are not, at this time, serious competitors geographically located in our two main undergraduate markets – Cairns and Townsville. This is a very different circumstance to the capital cities, where several universities operate. That said, the removal of the caps has expanded the opportunities for northern Queensland students to travel to capital cities, including Brisbane. But competition is not restricted to the Australian undergraduate market. As indicated above, the international competition for students – both undergraduate and graduate – is intensifying strongly. Additionally, the increased access to online content presents another source of competition and one that is also increasing strongly. For any university, including our own, the question then looms as to what our value proposition is – why would a student choose our institution over others, either within Australia or the many around the world that have online options? At an even more fundamental level, we need to ask also – in the context of online and/or blended learning environments - what is the value-add for students who come on-campus for their learning?

The forces of change upon higher education have many and varied implications. They go directly to issues of business sustainability for example, as income is threatened by competition and as costs might escalate through necessary investments in new learning technologies. Also, the nature of work at universities will change. For example, a shift towards online delivery through MOOCs and earlier initiatives such as the Khan Academy<sup>17</sup> and an associated move towards more individualised learning opportunities could cast professional academics more in the role of mentors and tutors, or intelligent bundlers of resources. There is talk of ‘blended’ positions, where the distinctions between professional and academic staff become increasingly blurred. Staff mobility might increase, if the forecast growth in

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<sup>16</sup> Diplomas and post-graduate coursework degree enrolments remain capped.

<sup>17</sup> The Khan Academy is a website that delivers a free online collection of learning resources through YouTube.

the ‘multinational university’ (MNU) is realised. More immediately, some universities have already acknowledged that the division of academic labour is differentiated through, for example, the designation of ‘teaching oriented’, ‘practice oriented’ and ‘research oriented’ classifications.

In the face of the quite profound changes that are upon higher education, institutions should plan carefully. Important questions include:

- What opportunities and threats lie in the various changes? How well prepared is the University to grasp these opportunities and minimise the threats? Is the University’s culture today an asset or a liability in the face of change?
- What assumptions about how the University operates today may not be valid in the context of anticipated change?
- Is the University insufficiently prepared for particular changes that the future might bring? What are the specific vulnerabilities?
- Are there things that could be done today to improve our resilience?
- What are the University’s current strengths and areas of distinctiveness that will enable it to be successful in the future?

These questions lie at the heart of the JCU – The Future project.

## 4 Shaping the University for the Future

Against the backdrop of the grand challenges and the changes affecting higher education, fundamental questions arise in respect of the future of the University. The Taskforce sought the views of the staff on what the future could and should hold, through extensive consultation. There were three main elements to this: (1) a facility for comments and submissions via the web and email; (2) a ‘Word Cloud’ as a device to elicit descriptors of the future, and; (3) a scenario exercise through which we explored with staff what the future might hold and how we might prepare for it.

The objectives of the Consultation and Communication Plan for the project were to:

- Clearly identify all project stakeholders and encourage their involvement in the project and future direction of the University;
- Provide balanced and objective information to the stakeholders to make them aware of the scale of the project and level of change that could be implemented;
- To obtain stakeholder feedback by providing scenarios as a starting point for stakeholders to raise ideas, issues and concerns;
- To work directly with stakeholders to ensure that ideas, issues and concerns are understood and considered; and
- To involve stakeholders in aspects of decisions including the development of alternatives and identification of potential “James Cook University models”.

The consultation process is already the most extensive to be conducted within the University within the last decade, or more. It has been embraced by staff, who have made more than 900 individual contributions either by attending a focus group, and/or contributing to the Word Cloud and/or providing a written submission. Staff from each of the three tropical campuses and from all but one organisational unit participated in the focus groups. Student consultation has included the opportunity to post comments on the website and to contribute to the Word Cloud. Updates on the project have been provided to the Student Association. Additionally, students were invited to participate in the focus group discussions about the scenarios, but the timing of these sessions clashed with exams and only

one student attended. There will be more opportunities for consultation with students as the project continues.

It is clear from the participation and level of engagement that staff care deeply about the future of the University and want it to succeed. The alignment of keywords gathered through an analysis of the Word Cloud, focus groups and submissions also indicate a strong congruence with attributes or areas of importance to staff and those articulated in the Strategic Intent and University Plan.

#### **4.1 Comments and Submissions**

A webpage provided the opportunity for staff and students to post views on the future of the University, and submissions were invited. Staff were also provided with the opportunity to meet with members of the Taskforce.

The web discussion board made it possible for people to post comments (anonymously, if they preferred) and this facility was open to anyone who wished to contribute (i.e., it was not necessary to have a James Cook University log in). Respondents could contribute in regard to discussion questions that were posted, the Four Future Scenarios or make comment about potential future directions.

As at 15 November 2012, 72 written submissions from 67 individuals had been received by the Taskforce. This included 14 comments by National Tertiary Education Union (NTEU) members forwarded to the Taskforce by the NTEU Industrial Officer and four submissions from students.

#### **4.2 The Word Cloud**

Through the JCU – The Future website staff and students were invited to submit up to 5 words that they would use to describe their preferred university of the future. The words were input to a ‘Word Cloud’, updated daily. The Word Cloud is a pictorial representation in which the size of individual words is a relative measure of the number of times they were submitted – large words are those submitted most frequently.

Over a period of approximately 2 months, 2019 entries consisting of 517 unique words were contributed by 409 participants. The final Word Cloud (as at the end of October) is presented in Figure 2. We sorted the words into three main groups – adjectives, words that referred to activities (e.g., research, teaching) and words that referred to particular disciplines or areas of knowledge. The distribution of words across these three categories is shown in Table 2.

For the Taskforce, the adjectives and focus words were of most interest. The 11 most cited adjectives and focus words are shown in Figures 3 and 4; *innovative/innovation* stood out strongly amongst the describing words (submitted 47 times), with *excellence*, *supporting* and *honesty* also featuring strongly. *Research* was the focus word most frequently submitted (114 times), followed by *learning and teaching* (87), *tropics* (67), *sustainability* (60), *staff* (54) and *environment* (47).

The Word Cloud exercise strongly affirms our positioning around the tropics and sustainability and speaks in favour of an institution that is innovative, dedicated to excellence and in which staff and students are supported, in a culture that respects honesty.

Figure 2: The Word Cloud



Table 2: Distribution of words within the Word Cloud

Category	Examples	Count
<b>Focus Words</b>	Leadership, Sustainability, Research, Teaching	814
<b>Discipline Words</b>	Science, Physics	619
<b>Adjectives</b>	Engaged, Respectful	570
<b>Excluded</b>	Any words that do not fit /inappropriate	16
<b>Total</b>		<b>2019</b>

Figure 3: Adjectives submitted to the Word Cloud

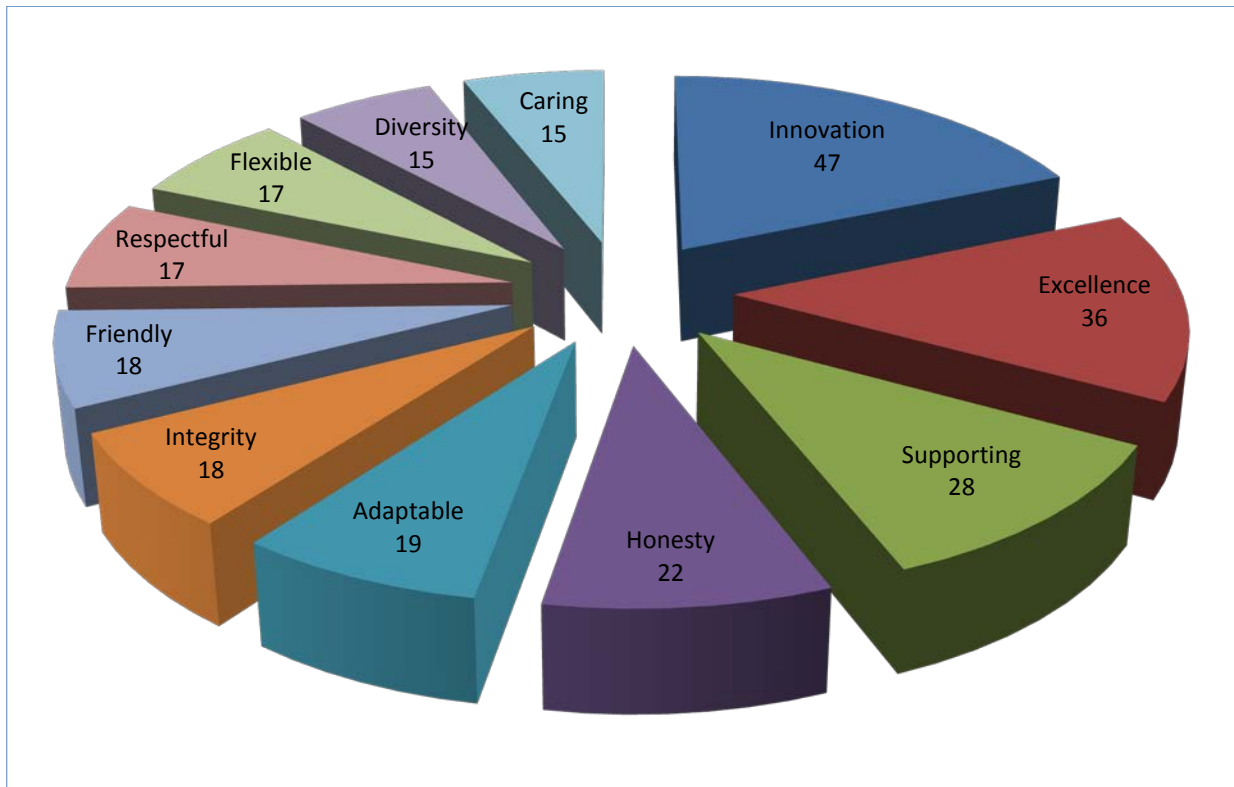
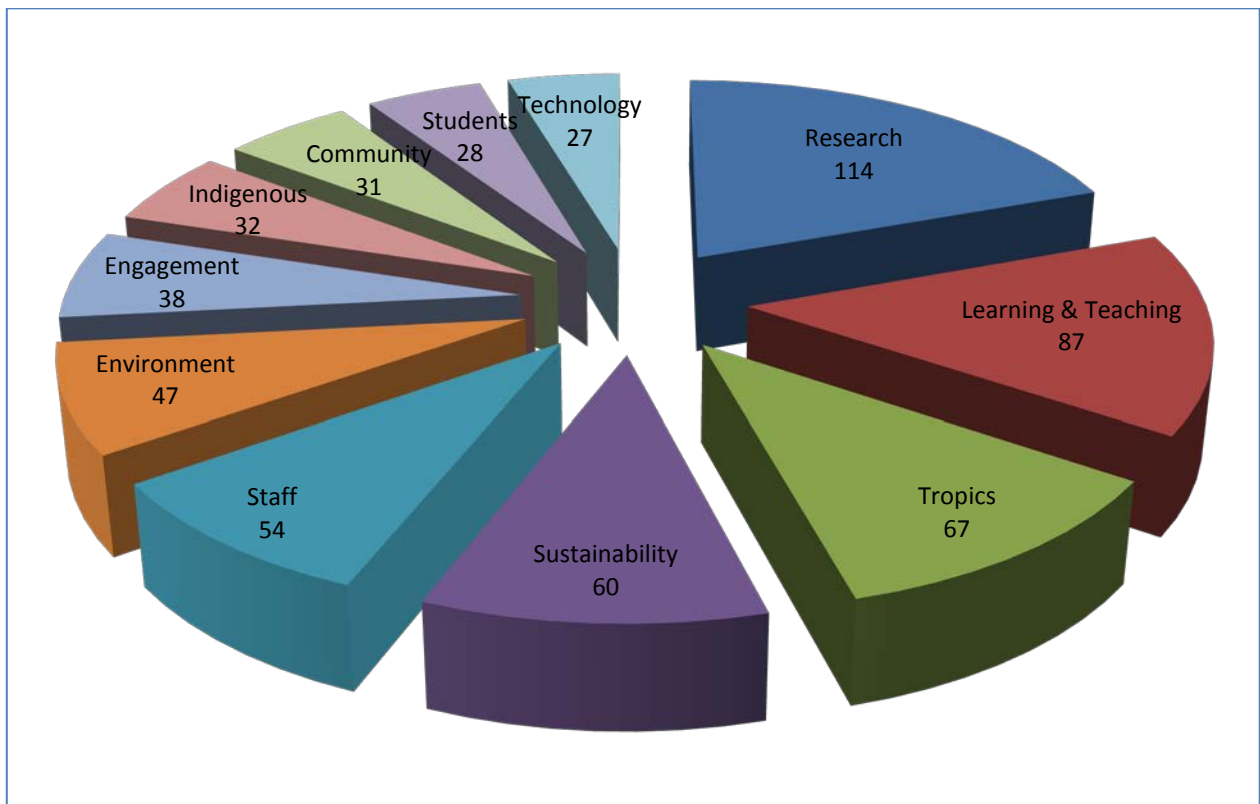


Figure 4: Focus words submitted to the Word Cloud



### 4.3 Four Futures – The Scenarios

A significant undertaking of the Taskforce in this first phase of the JCU – The Future initiative was an exploration of the future through scenarios. For this work, Maree Conway of the firm Thinking Futures was retained to assist with the preparation and presentation of scenarios to the University community. *Four Futures* – the scenarios project – has delivered two major reports, one describing the scenarios method and in which the scenarios are presented; and the second, providing a synthesis and analysis of the consultation with staff around the scenarios. These reports are available through the project web page – <http://www.jcu.edu.au/future>.

The scenarios were intended to engage staff in the wider discussion around changes needed to move the University into the future and to increase understanding of the depth of change required.

Scenarios are instruments for ordering people’s perceptions about alternative potential future environments – environments in which *today’s* decisions might have to play out. In practice, scenarios resemble a set of stories built around carefully constructed plots. Such stories can express multiple perspectives on complex events, with the scenarios themselves giving meaning to these events.

For the purposes of this project, the Global Business Network approach to scenario planning<sup>18</sup> was employed. This relies on a consideration of external drivers of change for the purpose of identifying two critical uncertainties to structure a scenario matrix. Internal issues, in our case elicited through interviews with staff, provide dimensions which are addressed in each scenario. The external drivers of change are also used to inform thinking around how each scenario world evolves, while the internal issues help to describe what the University might look like in each scenario world.

The two external drivers that were selected were:

#### **Societal Value of Higher Education**

Will higher education continue to be regarded as a private good, or will the public value of higher education reassert itself as a primary driver of policy and funding in a post Global Financial Crisis world?

#### **World Economy**

Will the West (Europe and the USA) retain the dominant position in the world economy or will the rise of Asia continue and the Asian Century become a reality?

The two critical uncertainties, when mapped on a 2x2 matrix, produce four spaces with four different potential futures. The scenarios were developed within each of these spaces, as shown in Figure 5. The headline features of these four scenarios are presented in Table 3.

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<sup>18</sup> [http://gbn.com/about/scenario\\_planning.php](http://gbn.com/about/scenario_planning.php)

Figure 5: Scenario Worlds

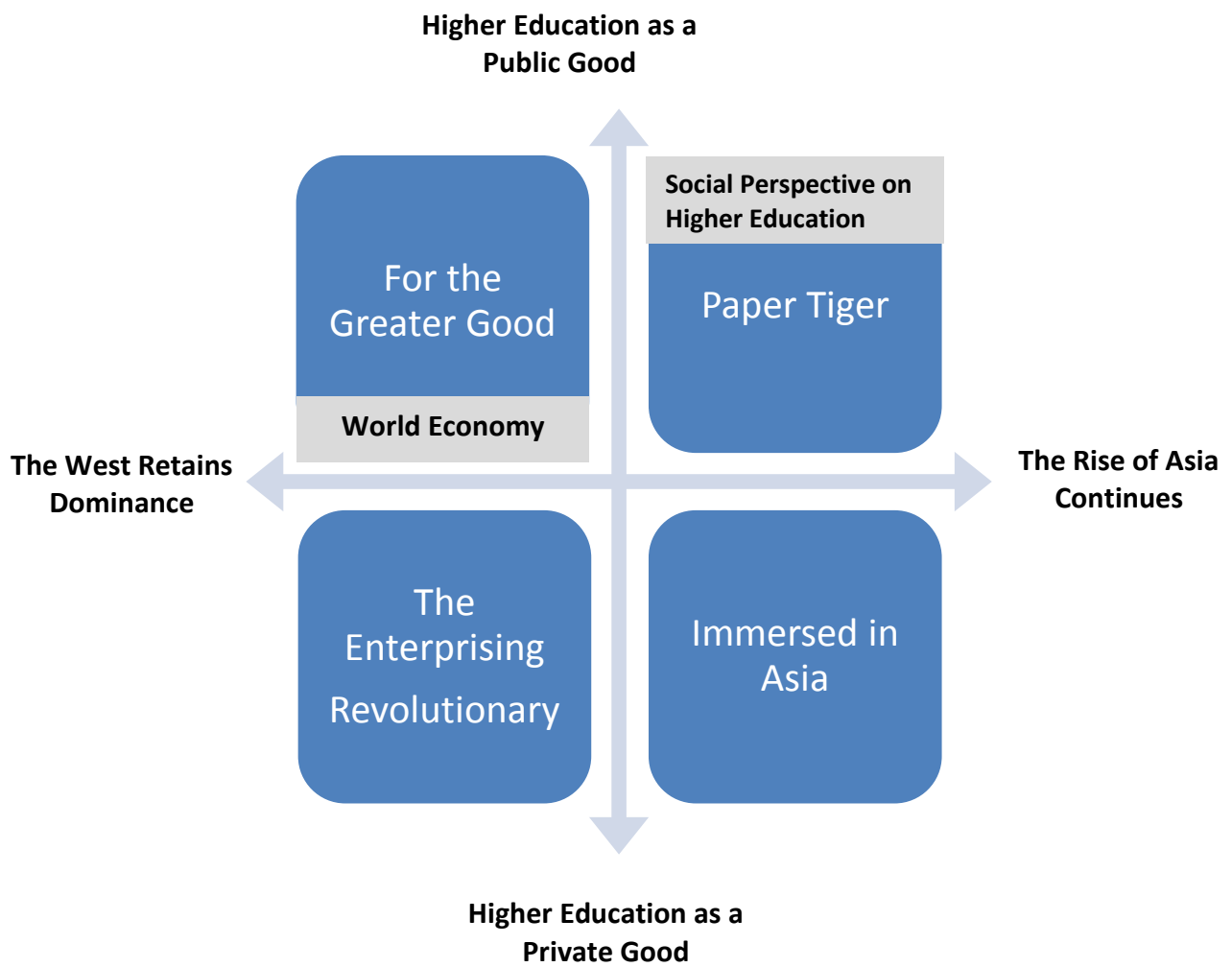




Table 3: Four futures

**For the Greater Good (Public Good/West Dominant)**

A strong social focus underpins economic models in this environment, accompanied by a renewed focus on local communities and a commitment to making a difference at the local level. Higher education is highly valued as a public good, and universities are recognised as important organisations in helping people build capacity to solve local and regional problems. Open access is the norm, underpinned by technological systems enabling both delivery of learning and social connections. Globally, university reputation is about social contribution and is reported using metrics around social outcomes rather than primarily research outcomes.

**Paper Tiger (Public Good/Rise of Asia)**

Always highly valued in Asia, higher education remains at the core of policy and funding decisions to build national innovation capacity. Asia has become the economic powerhouse of the world, Australia has developed close connections with the region and its education systems are focused on building the capacity of students to work in the Asia arena. Universities are a critical element of the Australian national Asia capacity building framework implemented following the Henry taskforce recommendations, and have focused their activities around Asia. The Australian government funds universities on their ability to achieve Asia focused outcomes for students, and research funding is focused around addressing Asian challenges.

**The Enterprising Revolutionary (Private Good/West Dominant)**

The Western economy (US and Europe) has recovered sufficiently from the after effects of the Global Financial Crisis in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century, maintaining its dominant position in the world economy. Policy and funding decisions aim to keep the costs of education low and universities are viewed as corporate businesses. The vocational orientation of higher education is strong in this environment, where universities exist in a highly competitive environment. Rankings matter, and government funding is low. Higher education is viewed here as a private good, with the desired outcome of getting a job, and students are expected to fund the majority of their education. Because of the vocational emphasis, courses have moved away from traditional degree structures, are heavily underpinned by technology, and are offered on a continuous cycle to allow students to complete quickly.

**Immersed in Asia (Private Good/Rise of Asia)**

The rise of Asia as the world economic powerhouse has increased the wealth of Asian countries and focused the attention of the rest of the world on the region. The ability of the region to develop technological solutions quickly has allowed it to become the centre of educational technology solutions. The private higher education sector – both physical institutions and online - has developed to the extent where it is now a major competitor for public universities, largely because of its low cost business models and its ability to harness technology to deliver learning in ways that suit the needs of individual students. Students are increasingly willing to pay for an education that is customised for them and their needs, and which allows them to engage with learning anywhere in the world. In Australia, universities have implemented the recommendations of the Henry taskforce report on Australia in the Asian Century and have refocused their activities and operations on Asia.

Twenty focus groups were held between 16 October and 5 November to discuss the Four Futures scenarios. This was made up of:

- 3 focus groups at the Singapore campus
- 10 focus groups at the Townsville and Cairns campuses, open for any staff member to register (two of these were video-conferenced from Townsville to Mt Isa and Cairns)
- 1 focus group at the Cairns campus specifically for students
- 2 focus groups for research leaders
- 4 faculty meetings used as focus groups by the respective faculties.

Four hundred and twenty people attended the focus groups comprising 419 staff and one student. As noted earlier, the scheduling of these discussion sessions during exams probably explains the limited student participation.

Staff from all organisational units (with the exception of the Advanced Analytical Centre) attended the focus groups. Three of the four faculties had dedicated faculty meetings to discuss the Four Futures scenarios. In addition, the scenarios were discussed at meetings of University governance committees, including University Council, Academic Board, Education Committee and Research Committee.

Focus groups were limited to 20 participants where possible to enable free flowing discussion and ensure all staff felt able to contribute. Staff did contribute to the discussions and it was evident that they appreciated the opportunity to be involved in the consultation process. The scenarios provided a useful mechanism to encourage staff to think about possible future directions and identify the areas they most valued in the University.

The themes emerging from the discussions about the scenarios have been clustered into four change domains. The four domains (Figure 6) are derived from the work of Ken Wilber and his four quadrant model, which is at the core of his integral theory.<sup>19</sup> The horizontal axis is set along the range of interior/exterior while the vertical axis is individual/collective. The Upper Left Quadrant – the interior/individual – relates to human values, perceptions and how meaning is constructed, while the Lower Left – the interior/collective cultural world – deals with what is happening in terms of culture, language and ‘the rules of the game’. The Upper Right – the exterior/individual - deals with how people behave in the external world, the visible manifestation of human capability, while the Lower Right – the exterior/collective – deals most with the measurable, empirical, knowable external world.

For our purposes, the four domains are translated to:

Upper Left: Individuals

Lower Left: Organisational Culture

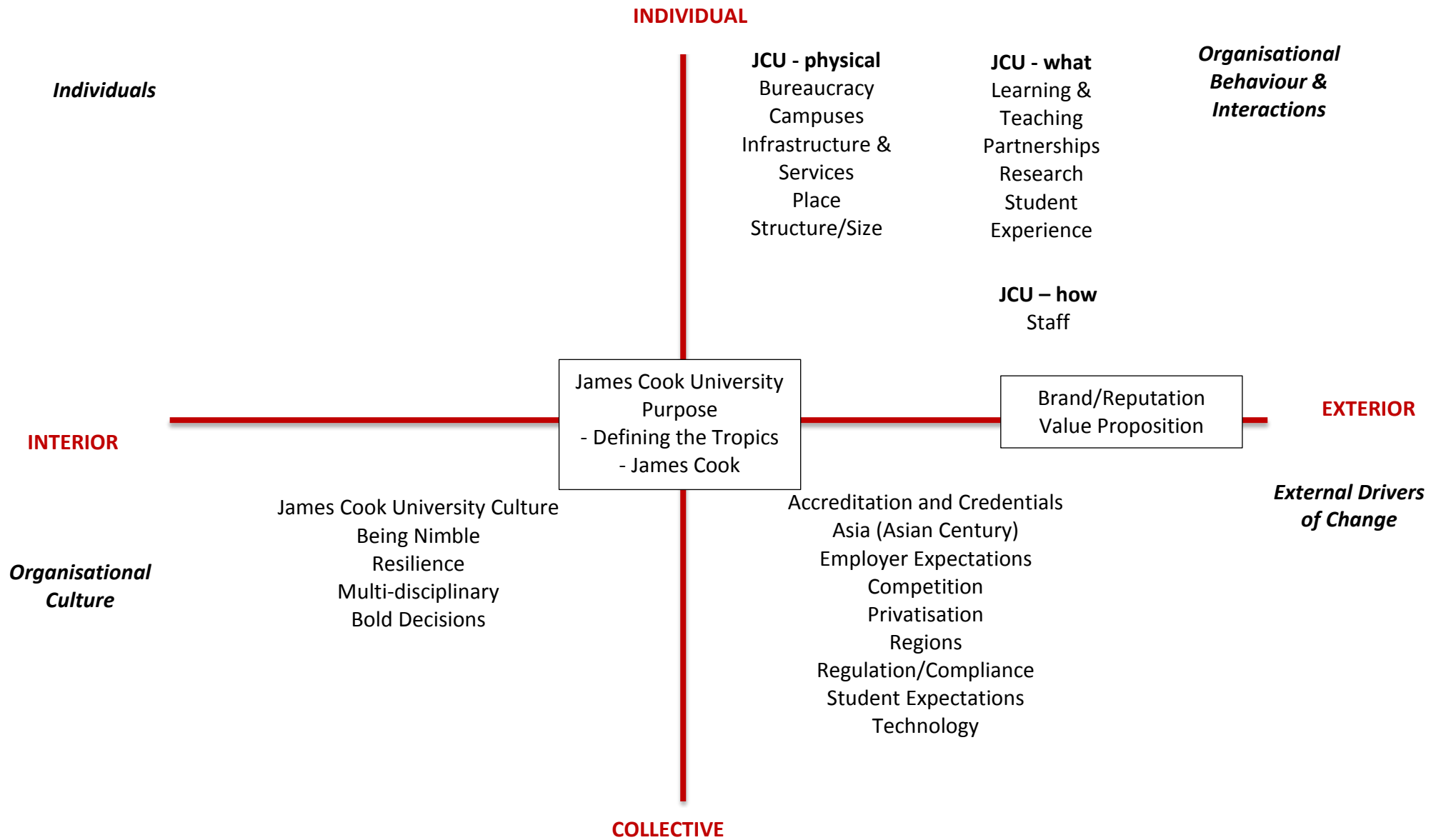
Upper Right: Organisational Behaviour and Interactions

Lower Right: External Drivers of Change

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<sup>19</sup> Ken Wilber’s integral theory is infinitely more complex than the four quadrants. See Wilber, K, 2001, *A Theory of Everything*, Shambhala, Boston.

Figure 6: Change domains



### **Individuals**

This domain relates to how individuals experience change and their hopes and beliefs about the future of the University, so comments generally reflect an individual perspective. In this domain, because these factors are intangible, only staff can decide to share these views; they cannot be assumed.

Even though there was a specific question asked in the focus groups and meetings about how individuals responded to the scenarios, there was very little comment that fits distinctly into this domain. However, it was clear from the discussions at large that staff care deeply about the future of the University. At the same time, it was also clear that some of the assumptions that surfaced will need to be challenged or tested to ensure they are relevant into the future, since untested assumptions can trap thinking in the past. An example was the expressed assumption that ‘James Cook University is for Australians’, which may have been true when the University was established, but is less valid in an increasingly globalised world.

Staff recognise that change is needed, but several comments indicate that they believe this change will be ‘out there’ in the right hand quadrants, rather than requiring them to test deeply held assumptions about how they work, or to change the way they understand what a university is and how it operates.

At the same time, there were comments that:

- *‘the University is not prepared – and it will not be unless and until there is wider buy-in to the need for significant change – and the removal of those people who are totally unwilling or unable to adapt or who do not have the qualifications or skill sets needed for what will be a radically different environment’*,
- *‘the capacity to respond is critical – we need to respond in the best way we can according to our values’*, and;
- *‘we will need to be willing to be flexible – culture and behaviour need to change too – out of our comfort zones’*.

These latter comments suggest that there is an awareness of what is needed to achieve the level of change required in order for us to be sustainable in the future.

### **Organisational Behaviour and Interactions**

This domain is home to the majority of the themes raised in the course of the consultation. Here, the conversation referred to how people come together to design structures, systems and services, and to work together on a daily basis. The themes clustered in this domain are in three parts. The first deals with the University as an organisation (the physical, tangible) and the second refers to what we do (our activities). The third theme points to staff and how we do what we do.

There were many comments which related to ‘bureaucracy’, none of which were complimentary. It was clear that staff are frustrated with what is perceived to be a set of dysfunctional processes, structures or services that hinder rather than support staff in their jobs. There were also many comments about what the University does, with learning and teaching being the most frequently referred to.

This quadrant is the realm of behaviour in the organisational context, and this behaviour is influenced strongly by the left hand quadrants – the beliefs and values of individual staff. The cultural ‘rules of the game’ will shape interactions and decision making here. To change bureaucracy, for example, requires a change in both organisational culture and in demonstrating and rewarding preferred behaviours, such as collaboration and focus on outcomes and not on process.

The values and beliefs written into the Statement of Strategic Intent express attributes of organisational culture that we expect to underpin our actions and which define the ‘rules of the game’ internally.

Another set of principles for organisational behaviour, more tuned towards services and operations, was developed by staff at Victoria University:

- We are in this together
- The focus is on outcomes, rather than the process
- Collaborate always
- I take responsibility – to solve this problem now, and to find out how to solve it if I don’t know
- Complain if there is a problem with a service and work to get the problem resolved – no workarounds
- I will share my knowledge and experiences

These principles are very different to the silo driven interactions that characterise many universities today, and they are indicative of new behaviours that are required for the future.

### **External Drivers of Change**

This domain represents the external environment in which the University operates and the drivers of change that impact upon us. These drivers are well understood within the University, and are part of the rationale for the work of the Taskforce.

The drivers, summarised earlier, relate directly to higher education; there are other drivers of change that are also influencing the University’s future – internally, such as pressures on financial sustainability, and externally, such as the new national emphasis on Asia. It was apparent that many staff appreciate the potential impact of these change drivers on the University.

### **Organisational Culture**

The fourth domain is the space in which the unwritten rules of working within the University are established and maintained – this is the realm of ‘how we do things around here’. The themes clustered here are:

- Culture
- Being Nimble
- Resilience
- Multi-disciplinary
- Making Bold Decisions

There is a strong commitment to the communities we serve and to delivering outcomes for those communities which make a difference. As reported above, staff care deeply about the future of the University. There will need to be a preparedness to change how we work, though, and to help design new cultural ‘rules of the game’ through behaviour, if our culture is to be nimble and resilient.

The need to make bold decisions today to ensure a sustainable future is essential, but it will bring with it winners and losers - for individuals, disciplines and work areas. It is more than likely that this is known intuitively, but the idea that the University cannot be all things to all people is something that will need to be grasped emphatically.

### **Spanning the Quadrants**

Two sets of comments span quadrants rather than fit neatly into one. Identifying our purpose has been placed in the centre of the matrix in Figure 6, as purpose is defined by connecting all four quadrants.

Similarly, Brand/Reputation/Positioning is about conveying how the University ‘fits’ into its external environment and informs day to day operations and so spans the upper right and lower right quadrant boundaries.

The conversations held in the context of the scenarios provided a rich resource from which the Taskforce has drawn in shaping recommendations for the future, both in terms of our ‘core business’ (i.e., learning, research, engagement) and the ‘enablers’. The insights and perspectives are integrated into the commentary and the propositions presented subsequently in this report, and will be carried forward into the further work of the Taskforce.

#### 4.4 Synthesis

Provided below (Table 4) is a keyword analysis of the three primary consultation mechanisms – Word Cloud, focus groups and written submissions. This provides a broad indication of key thematic areas that have emerged during the consultation to date. In the full report on consultation for this phase of the Taskforce’s work, the key themes are considered more fully.

Table 4: Synthesis of the consultation

Topic	Word Cloud	Focus Groups	Written submissions	Total
Research	114	18	18	150
Learning & Teaching	87	35	6	128
Tropics/Place	82	24	12	118
Staff	54	22	10	86
Community/Region/local	45	31	6	82
Engagement/Collaboration/Partnerships	52	13	17	82
Students	28	35	4	67
Sustainability	60		3	63
Environment	47		4	51
International	24	24	2	50
Innovation	47		2	49
Indigenous/Reconciliation	40		5	45
Technology	27	13	4	44
Excellence	36		4	40
Bureaucracy		21	13	34
Supporting	28			28
Equity	24			24
Facilities and infrastructure	6	8	8	22
Honesty	22			22

Table 5 indicates the strong alignment of keywords identified in the consultation process with the Strategic Intent and University Plan. The exception is the word “supporting” which emerged through the Word Cloud, making it difficult to establish whether it relates to student support and/or was intended to reflect a need for a more supportive staff environment. The only value listed in the

Strategic Intent and not appearing in the list below is “mutual respect”, but the word “respectful” was entered 17 times into the Word Cloud.

Table 5: Alignment of consultation keywords with the Strategic Intent and University Plan

<b>Keywords from consultation</b>	<b>James Cook University Planning Documents</b>
<b>Research</b>	Core Business – University Plan, Discovery – value in Strategic Intent
<b>Learning &amp; Teaching</b>	Core Business – University Plan
<b>Tropics/Place</b>	Core element of Strategic Intent, People and Place – University Plan
<b>Staff</b>	Enabler – University Plan
<b>Community/Region/local</b>	Connecting Globally, Locally – University Plan
<b>Students</b>	Students at heart of University – core element of Strategic Intent
<b>Sustainability</b>	Priority – University Plan, Value – Strategic Intent
<b>Environment</b>	Priority – University Plan
<b>International</b>	Connecting Globally, Locally, Priority– University Plan
<b>Innovation</b>	Value – Strategic Intent
<b>Indigenous/Reconciliation</b>	People and Place, Priority – University Plan, Reconciliation – core element of Strategic Intent
<b>Engagement/Collaboration/Partnerships</b>	Core Business – University Plan
<b>Technology</b>	Enabler – University Plan
<b>Excellence</b>	Value – Strategic Intent
<b>Bureaucracy</b>	Organisational Effectiveness, Enabler– University Plan
<b>Supporting</b>	
<b>Equity</b>	Diversity – core element of Strategic Intent with Reconciliation
<b>Facilities and infrastructure</b>	Enabler - Physical and Virtual Infrastructure
<b>Honesty</b>	Authenticity and Integrity – value in Strategic Intent

## 5 Core Business

The University Plan defines our core business to include learning and teaching, research and engagement. The Taskforce was given the mandate to develop strategies to strengthen the distinctiveness of the University in order that it might thrive in the future.

The Taskforce has identified key attributes and principles to underpin the our learning and teaching, research and engagement. In combination these attributes and principles define a “James Cook University Model”, thereby responding to the Terms of Reference for the Project that refer specifically to the core business, viz:

- Develop a distinctive ‘JCU Model’ for learning and teaching, building upon the outcomes of Curriculum Refresh Project and giving account to both content and delivery (ToR 2)
- Review and refresh the priorities and strategies in the James Cook University Research Plan as the basis for the further development and growth of James Cook University’s research and innovation portfolio (ToR 3)
- Strengthen the framework for engagement and partnerships regionally, nationally and internationally (ToR 4)

The ambition is to demonstrate a University that is unique in the Australian higher education setting, in terms of its focus, the student experience, and its engagement. To this end, substantial changes in learning delivery, organisational culture and structure, and staff work practices will be required.

The proposed James Cook University Model will be:

- Focused on the tropics
- Research rich
- Student focused
- Connected to community
- Internationally engaged
- Culturally informed

And, the model will be underpinned by the following principles:

- We will fulfil the aims, ambitions and expectations expressed through the *James Cook University Act 1997*.
- The James Cook University Model will give effect to the Statement of Strategic Intent, including our values and beliefs.
- The three elements of our core business – learning and teaching, research and engagement – will be closely integrated.
- The special opportunities presented by our three tropical campus locations will project our University’s distinctiveness, individually and collectively.
- The University will be sustainable financially, and in terms of its social and environmental performance.

An overview of the attributes is provided below, including recommendations to support the implementation of the James Cook University Model.



## 5.1 Focused on the Tropics

### University Priorities – A University for the tropics worldwide; Development, More Sustainably

Staff indicated strong support for the focus on the tropics during the consultation process, emphasising the distinctiveness of the tropics agenda and potential opportunities presented by campus locations and research field stations. For example: “James Cook University has a unique place as a centre of education in northern Australia – its non-metropolitan location should be a benchmark for being different in its approach to education.”

Consistent with the Strategic Intent, specific and detailed work was undertaken through the Curriculum Refresh project to encourage stronger alignment with the four themes that underpin our learning and teaching and research. Over the life of that project, the level of engagement with the Strategic Intent and the four themes has been broad ranging, and often discipline specific. This was anticipated and foreshadowed as early as the original funding application for the Curriculum Refresh project, which noted that some disciplines readily align with the focus on the tropics while for others the task is more difficult. The extent of course and subject alignment with the tropics has varied from the embedding of examples and case studies to provide a tropics context at one end to the shaping of the entire curriculum around the tropics at the other. Accordingly it has become clear that there is a real need to provide academic staff with support and guidance in conceptualising the tropics from the perspective of their respective disciplines.

In terms of research, the strategic commitment to a tropical agenda has generally served us well over a long period of time by providing a distinctive institutional narrative. Accordingly, the four themes have, more recently, provided a useful basis on which to increasingly focus the research effort, though there has been an appetite for greater specificity within the four themes. This has been achieved to some extent through the establishment of research institutes and centres.

We have also demonstrated our leadership in tropics related issues through the hosting of Torrid Zone Symposiums in 2010 and 2011 and leadership of the State of the Tropics initiative. The State of the Tropics project seeks to change the way political leaders and policy makers view the world, to encourage a more lateral perception of the world and consider the tropics as a geopolitical region facing some of the most critical challenges of our time. The inaugural State of the Tropics Report, anticipated to be released mid-2013, will track progress in terms of a set of indicators to answer the question, ‘Is life in the tropics getting better?’ The intent is for the report to be released every five years, with interim reports and symposiums in the intervening years.

The adoption of the James Cook University Model will require more deliberate and explicit connections to issues and innovations relevant to the tropics through our course offerings, research and engagement. The Taskforce proposes the adoption of a ‘grand challenges’ narrative as an elaboration of the conceptual framework for our core business. In doing so, we will not lose sight of our role in providing the professional workforce for northern Australia and Singapore and will look again to ensure our curriculum, research and engagement align with the Strategic Intent, to deliver long-term financial sustainability for the institution.

### Recommendation 1

A grand challenges framework should be developed, as a means to elaborate on the four themes embedded in the University’s Strategic Intent.

Figure 7 is a representation of how this might be approached. In the left hand column are the four themes articulated in the Strategic Intent. Across the top row is a representation of the ‘grand challenges’. Four are identified:

**Ecological resilience** – mitigating and adapting to human induced change, conservation of the environment, biodiversity protection.

**Human wellbeing** – good health, social equity, economic opportunity.

**Resource security** – access to water and sanitation, sustainable energy resources, food security.

**Good governance** – political representation, freedom of speech, absence of corruption, effective governments, transparency of process.

In the matrix, fields of scholarship represented in green are those areas in which we are presently demonstrably strong and which should be maintained/grown. Represented in orange are areas that are consistent with the Strategic Intent and aligned to one or more of the four themes, but which require further development if they are to be recognised as genuine strengths. These are areas that should be developed. In blue are areas of inquiry not presently represented, but which we should consider developing.

Figure 7: Grand Challenges and the James Cook University Model

	Sustainable Futures for the Global Tropics			
	Ecological resilience	Human wellbeing	Resource security	Good governance
Ecosystems & Environment	Coral reefs Climate change Biodiversity	Environmental change and human health Natural disasters	Water resources	Environmental policy
Industries & Economies	Corporate sustainability	Urban design & architecture Economic development Tourism	Food security Energy Fisheries Aquaculture Econ geology	
People & Societies	Sustainability education	Indigenous futures Language & culture Anthropology Archaeology Psychology		Governance in the tropics Law & legal systems
Health, Medicine & Biosecurity		Public health Infectious diseases Genetics		

The implementation of a grand challenges framework will usefully complement the four tropical themes. The Taskforce suggests that the framework will:

- Be a catalyst for marshalling and synthesising resources and know-how across disciplines, schools, faculties and campuses;
- Encourage collaboration across disciplines;
- Provide a basis for developing strong, distinctive platforms to engage with stakeholders including policy makers, industry, non-Government organisations (NGOs) and communities;
- Provide a focus for impact and translational activities;
- Provide a framework to articulate thematic research programs with short, medium and long-term objectives and strategies for partnerships and collaborations internally and globally;
- Give shape and context to teaching and learning programs; and
- Provide distinctive narratives that will speak to and attract students and staff.

The development of courses that respond to the grand challenges could become flagship or signature programs for which James Cook University becomes renowned. The Knowledge Partnership set out a strategic and structured approach to the development of programs like this in their report for the Curriculum Refresh project and the Taskforce endorses this approach.

## Recommendation 2

That the further development of signature programs, responding to grand challenges facing the tropics, be considered.

There are also opportunities for the further development of specialist postgraduate coursework or short courses that address grand challenges facing the tropics. The unique locations of our campuses and field stations were identified through the consultation process as providing opportunities for master classes and other programs. The development of a small number of niche programs at postgraduate level was supported in market research conducted for the Curriculum Refresh Project.

In developing signature programs the following questions ought to be considered: What are the challenges and problems that need resolution? How can these challenges or problems be conceptualised using the Strategic Intent as the context? Are the challenges or problems disciplinary, multidisciplinary or interdisciplinary and can they form the foundation for a course of study? What course structure, campus, mode of delivery, learning and teaching approaches and partnerships are most appropriate for the development and implementation of the course concept?

Other considerations important to the development of signature programs are: course identity, stewardship and team construction, an appropriate Resource Allocation Model, and a narrative that addresses why the course is distinctive and what career or community outcomes might ensue.

The current Resource Allocation Model has been reported to be an impediment to the delivery of interdisciplinary offerings. Course ownership is vested in faculties and EFTSL funding is allocated to schools/disciplines responsible for delivery of subjects. This model does not properly recognise the fixed cost (sometimes significant) burden associated with the design and delivery of a new course. Accordingly, if this avenue for curriculum innovation is to be pursued, attention will need to be given to how costs and revenues are allocated, such that budgetary issues do not impose an unnecessary constraint.

### Recommendation 3

That the Resource Allocation Model be reviewed in terms of its suitability to facilitate the development and delivery of interdisciplinary learning programs.

The *James Cook University Act 1997* requires that the University “provides courses of study or instruction (at the levels of achievement the Council considers appropriate) to meet the needs of the community” and over the last four decades the University has strived to be comprehensive in the range and scope of courses delivered. This has been seen as an advantage and our marketing material promotes the hundreds of courses available. However, changes within the higher education sector and financial drivers will make it difficult to sustain this model into the future. Certainly, it would seem that there is still a ‘cottage industry’ approach evident in subject and course supply, which in many instances is not matched to student demand nor aligned with the Strategic Intent. Accordingly, there is a need to diligently evaluate cases for the continuance of subjects, courses, and programs across the entire University. While we are committed to providing a breadth of learning opportunities, it is quite simply not sustainable to deliver all that is on offer now, if for no other reason than an absence of sufficient demand.

It is acknowledged that we play a crucial role in preparing the professional workforce for northern Queensland and training graduates to work in rural and under-served communities. The adoption of a global challenges framework provides an opportunity to review discipline offerings, considering alignment to the tropical agenda, student demand, research capacity and future directions. There is also an opportunity to consider areas where existing capacity could be grown and new areas pursued.

By taking the decision to build capacity in some areas, there will be others where capacity will be reduced and which we will cease to support. The following questions are central to the discussion:

- What do we do now that is excellent and must be maintained/extended?
- What do we do now that is less strong, but which we are committed to developing?
- What new fields might we develop, which would be likely to work at the intersection of the four strategic themes or fall into the category of a grand challenge?
- What courses and subjects will we withdraw from?

The ensuing decisions in regard to curriculum offerings must have consideration also for campus offerings. The Taskforce considers there is advantage in further concentration of our learning and teaching programs at the three tropical campuses. For example, the Singapore campus could sensibly become the University’s base for the teaching of business. Townsville already has a reputation in marine science, while Cairns is strongly developing a complementary strength in terrestrial environmental sciences. The consequences of any strategic repositioning of this kind for services, infrastructure and staff will require thorough consideration. There is also the matter of whether we should expand our offerings elsewhere. For example, while some courses are well established in Mackay, particularly in health, the question is still open as to whether other courses of study should be offered there.

## Recommendation 4

That subject and course offerings be assessed in regard to their alignment with the Strategic Intent, student demand, community interests, and link to quality research with a view that:

- a) Courses and programs that are not adequately aligned will be disestablished;
- b) The policy in respect of low enrolment subjects will be strengthened and enforced;
- c) Areas where existing learning opportunities might be expanded will be considered; and
- d) Course offerings in terms of their spread across campuses will be considered.

From a research perspective the implementation of a grand challenges framework will be a catalyst for further marshalling resources across the University and it could potentially assist in the recruitment of staff and students. It will provide a basis for developing strong, distinctive platforms to engage with research users and provide a focus for impact and translational activities. It will also provide a framework to articulate thematic research programs with short, medium and long-term objectives and strategies for partnerships and collaborations internally and globally. The framework will guide the University in the further development of the portfolio of research centres and institutes.

Under the model we will develop long-term institutional-level partnerships with universities and organisations with similar interests and which complement the University's expertise and capacity in addressing the grand challenges. The grand challenges might also provide a focus for students and staff to engage in social innovation projects, fieldwork, volunteer opportunities and exchanges in tropical locations to observe issues first hand.

## 5.2 Research Rich

### University Priorities - A University for the tropics worldwide; People and Place; Development, More Sustainably

Research excellence is a significant contributor to global university rankings, reputation, brand recognition and media profile. Over the next decade, it's anticipated that impact, engagement and translational activity will also be critical to institutional reputation, success and the capacity to attract research income and partners.

The commitment of staff to JCU remaining a research university was demonstrated through the consultation process, with 'research' being the word most frequently submitted to the Word Cloud, and in focus groups and written submissions.

Comments received through the consultation process pointed to the long-term investment required in research and the need to concentrate on areas of strength. The following comments are representative:

“Momentum in research is critically dependent on reputation which is built over substantial intervals of time – decades rather than years... research-conducive organisational structures and selective investment in research personnel and infrastructure will be required ... the bottom line is focused support across a limited range of research endeavours. “

“We must strive to foster and advance our disciplines of best performance as these are the platform on which the future will be built. “

The Four Futures scenarios all anticipated research moving increasingly to a multi-disciplinary approach. There was support for this from staff, with comments reflecting that many contemporary issues demand an interdisciplinary or multi-disciplinary approach.

Our research performance is mixed. There are areas of world-leading research, as recognised through the Excellence in Research for Australia (ERA) initiative and global research rankings, but the quality is unevenly distributed across faculties and fields of research. A significant number of academic staff are not research active. Furthermore, our research reputation is vulnerable as the exceptional work is built on the performance of quite a small cadre of researchers, some of whom are well advanced in their careers. A significant challenge for the University is the relatively small pool of staff who are presently competitive in prestigious research grant programs (especially the Australian Research Council (ARC) and National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC)) and whose work influences the performance indices used in global research rankings and ERA (e.g., papers in *Nature* and *Science* and citations in high impact journals).

Improving our research performance is a priority. It can be achieved through strategic recruitment, supporting our up and coming staff, adopting long-term horizons for the development of critical mass in areas of research strength and ensuring internal resource allocations support research priorities.

Through the James Cook University Model a research-rich environment will be fostered, with the focus on conducting research that is excellent, impactful and relevant to the communities we serve and the tropics more broadly. The adoption of a grand challenges framework will encourage more research across boundaries, while also raising awareness of students and the wider community of the importance of research in solving real-life problems. This approach will also facilitate closer linkages between research and teaching, to create a distinctive teaching-research nexus (see below), enhancing the student experience and potentially encouraging more students to pursue higher degrees.

To achieve this there must be a commitment to ‘patient capital’ - building and maintaining critical mass, capacity and performance in focus areas over long-term horizons. To focus and articulate the intersection of grand challenges and the tropical themes, we will not be starting from a blank piece of paper as there is a well-established bedrock of expertise, critical mass and excellence particularly, but not exclusively, in the Fields of Research rated 4 and 5 in ERA. We need to invest strategically in both staff and infrastructure and establish partnerships in these and other niche areas to develop a platform for the future. Partnerships, domestically and with overseas organisations, present a vital opportunity to increase our ‘critical mass’ in areas of strategic importance, and simultaneously lend support to our objective to increase engagement.

Real or perceived boundaries along faculty and school lines are evident in some areas and this reduces opportunities for research collaboration. A change in mindset and resource allocation strategy is required to encourage staff and HDR students to participate in research that cuts across schools and disciplinary boundaries without being financially disadvantaged. The elimination of these barriers will enable more collaboration, help to achieve critical mass, and create an effective strategy for mentoring.

Recruitment and retention of world class, competitive academic staff (including Heads of School and other line managers skilled in performance management of researchers) is the single most important factor in driving research performance. This demands a commitment to excellence in recruitment of new staff.

More weight must be given to how new academic recruits will supplement existing and emerging areas of strategically aligned research strength. This should entail a consideration of how potential opportunities to leverage existing institutional strengths and/or develop synergies with research

programs in centres and schools can be achieved through recruitment. Furthermore, there needs to be a more proactive approach to succession planning, particularly in our established and developing areas of strength.

### Recommendation 5

That a culture of research excellence be strengthened and given effect through the following strategies:

- a) Long-term investment in staff and infrastructure to support the research agenda;
- b) Remove structural and financial barriers that hinder inter-disciplinary, multi-disciplinary or trans-disciplinary research;
- c) Introduce more explicit and ambitious performance expectations in respect of research;
- d) Assist staff in the ‘translation’ of their research, including the commercialisation of research outcomes;
- e) Identify areas of existing or potential research strength and develop and recruit staff to further build capacity in these areas;
- f) Discontinue investments in research areas which do not align with the Strategic Intent and where existing research is below world standard;
- g) Adopt a default standard that staff appointed at Level B and above have completed their PhD at time of appointment; and
- h) Revise workload models to encourage staff participation in research.

Higher Degree Research Students are the engine of a research university and completions and load are significant performance indices in the research block grants. In addition, the alignment between research training and our areas of established research strength is seen as one index of research training quality.

Completions and load have been in decline for some time and on the present trajectory, we will not have the HDR profile of a research university without significant additional investment in HDR stipend scholarships. As a proportion of total load, HDR load is presently below the average for Australian universities and is projected, on a ‘no change’ basis, to decline.

In addition, our commencing and total loads of HDR students for 2012 were below target, yet well-qualified applicants were turned away because of a lack of stipend scholarships. Hence, an increase in the number of stipend scholarships would appear to be a relatively easy way to increase HDR load. One option is to implement a Tropical Scholarship initiative with a significant increase in James Cook University Postgraduate Research Scholarships, targeting students from tropical regions who wish to undertake research higher degrees in areas of established and emerging research strength. Such an initiative will complement the existing Graduate School Network in Tropical Research which involves students from eight Australian universities undertaking projects related to the tropics for their PhD.

Research training standards are currently being developed by the Department of Industry, Innovation, Science, Research and Tertiary Education (DIISRTE) in response to the Research Workforce Strategy<sup>20</sup> and it is possible that ERA results could be factored into future funding formulas and the development of research training standards by TEQSA. Several universities have already taken steps to formalise critical aspects of research training as well as to guarantee quality research student supervision. We

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<http://www.innovation.gov.au/Research/ResearchWorkforceIssues/Documents/ResearchWorkforceStrategyConsultationPaper.pdf>

need to ensure the quality of our PhDs. Coursework should be included in the doctorate, to provide generic skills training and discipline-specific training in research methods and/or subject content.

A revised James Cook University PhD could feature diverse pathways into doctoral study including credit for prior learning, a structured framework with clear progress milestones to assist timely completion and appropriate exit options for students not able to complete the program. Pathways into a PhD are also being discussed in the higher education sector with Macquarie University and the ANU developing alternative options to the traditional honours year. We need to consider these and other programs to ensure we remain nationally and internationally competitive in attracting HDR students.

### Recommendation 6

That additional resources be allocated to increase the amount of HDR stipend scholarships available to students who wish to pursue a PhD on a topic aligned to the Strategic Intent.

### Recommendation 7

That our doctoral education program be redesigned to strengthen graduate skill sets, improve completion rates and times, and establish exit pathways for underachieving HDR candidates. Consideration should also be given to potential changes to entry pathways to a PhD.

In common with other research-intensive universities, we maintain a commitment to the nexus between teaching and research. In disciplines that are research-rich, the potential for students to benefit from direct exposure to the development of knowledge at the leading edge is most obvious. While we know this intuitively, there is value to be gained in documenting best practice, as a means to substantiate claims in support of the nexus and as a basis for improving praxis more widely across the University. Case studies are one prospective means of achieving this.

At the same time, there is the potential to do more in terms of developing the teaching/research nexus. In a useful review of how learning and research can be linked, Jenkins and Healey refer to the following typology<sup>21</sup>:

- Learning about others' research
- Learning to do research – research methods
- Learning in research mode – inquiry-based
- Pedagogic research – enquiring and reflecting on learning

This typology was adopted and modified by Healey<sup>22</sup> to illustrate the possibilities - Figure 8. One axis of the figure represents a range from research context to research processes, while the other refers to student-focussed versus teacher-focussed approaches.

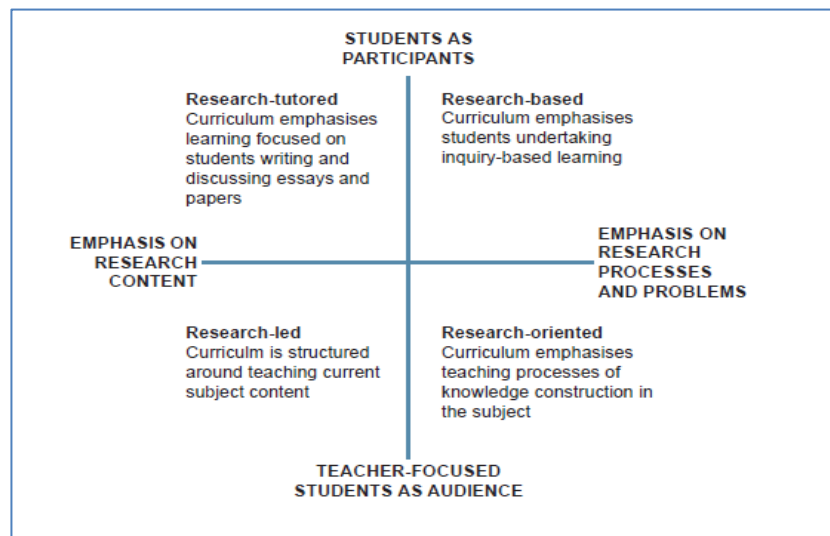
Jenkins and Healey (2005), drawing on this and other work on the research-teaching nexus, propose institutional strategies to strengthen the links (Table 6).

<sup>21</sup> Jenkins, A. and Healey, M, 2005, *Institutional Strategies to Link Teaching and Research*, The Higher Education Academy, York, UK.

<sup>22</sup> Healey, M, 2005, Linking research and teaching: disciplinary spaces. In R. Barnett (ed) *Reshaping the University: New Relationships Between Research, Scholarship and Teaching*. McGraw-Hill/OUP, Maidenhead, pp 30-42.



Figure 8: Curriculum design and the research-teaching nexus



Source: Healey, 2005.

Table 6: Institutional strategies to link teaching and research

<b>Developing institutional awareness and institutional mission</b>	
Strategy 1:	State that linking teaching and research is central to the institutional mission and formulate strategies and plans to support the nexus
Strategy 2:	Make it the mission and deliver it
Strategy 3:	Organise events, research studies and publications to raise institutional awareness
Strategy 4:	Develop institutional conceptions and strategies to effect teaching-research links
Strategy 5:	Explain and involve students and parents in your institutional conception of teaching-research relations
<b>Developing pedagogy and curricula to support the nexus</b>	
Strategy 6:	Develop and audit teaching policies and practices and implement strategies to strengthen the teaching-research nexus
Strategy 7:	Use strategic and operational planning and institutional audit to strengthen the nexus
Strategy 8:	Develop curriculum requirements
Strategy 9:	Review the timetable
Strategy 10:	Develop special programmes and structures
<b>Developing research policies and strategies to support the nexus</b>	
Strategy 11:	Develop and audit research policies and implement strategies to strengthen the teaching-research nexus
Strategy 12:	Ensure links between research centres and the curriculum and between student learning and staff scholarship
<b>Developing staff and university structures to support the nexus</b>	
Strategy 13:	Ensure the nexus is central to policies on inducting and developing new staff and to strategies to support the professional development of established staff
Strategy 14:	Ensure teaching-research links are central to policies on promotion and reward
Strategy 15:	Ensure effective synergies between units, committees and structures for teaching and research
Strategy 16:	Link with related university strategies
Strategy 17:	Participate in national programmes
Strategy 18:	Support implementation at department level

Source: Jenkins and Healey, 2005

In practical terms there are prospects for student participation through involvement in engagement activities with external stakeholders in research. In addition, students admitted to an Honours College (see below) might have direct access to active researchers, including participation in projects. There is the prospect too, of opening up additional opportunities for students to have access to research-focused operations, including major research programmes/groups and research facilities (e.g., the Advanced Analytical Centre, field centres). The completion of The Science Place will deliver a facility through which this sort of interaction is explicitly enabled.

Immersive master classes based in the locations surrounding our campuses in northern Queensland and Asia will add profile to our areas of research excellence. By further developing and marketing the special qualities of each of our three tropical campuses, including the distinctive research supported at each, there is the prospect of drawing a stronger connection between learning and research.

The Taskforce proposes also that renewed attention should be given to the development of common undergraduate subjects, particularly ‘capstone subjects’ in the senior years, as a means of communicating James Cook University’s distinctive focus on the tropics. The participation of research leaders in such subjects will also strengthen the teaching/research nexus.

### Recommendation 8

That specific proposals be developed to strengthen research-informed learning and to increase the exposure of students to our active research.

## 5.3 Student Focused

### University Priorities – Connecting, locally and globally; People and Place

A commitment to being student focused is featured in strategic documents and the marketing material of most universities. However due to our distinctiveness we have an opportunity to make the student experience and student focus a differentiating feature of JCU.

The University’s strategic documents articulate a commitment to students and the student experience through the following statements:

*Students are at the heart of our University and we inspire them to make a difference in their fields of endeavour and in their communities (Strategic Intent).*

*Our aim is to position James Cook University as...a university of choice for students, by building an environment which facilitates and rewards excellence, performance and productivity, values equity and diversity, and fosters community spirit and personal well-being...We support the total student experience by understanding that learning does not only take place in the classroom, and that students’ time at the University is about a broad range of experiences and engagement with the University community, that fosters student success. (People and Place priority, University Plan).*

Student issues were at the forefront during the consultation processes, with staff very aware of the importance of the student experience and the need to ensure that we are responsive to student needs. The recognition that students are not a homogenous group, with requirements and expectations that differ according to their individual circumstances (for example Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander,

school leaver, mature-aged student, international) and mode of study (on campus or off campus, full or part time) was a consistent theme. The comments included:

*“We need to focus more on the student experience – need to be robust and nimble in responding to students.”*

*“...the nature of participation by students in Australia has changed – uni is no longer a student’s life, students now work PT and we have to balance this.”*

*“...the younger generation has different expectations in regard to technology and learning.”*

*“Future students will be highly discerning and highly mobile – will cherry pick institutions with specialisations that they want.”*

*“An inevitable trend is towards where, when and how students want their learning; we need to identify what is possible online and what is not – some activity will need a campus.”*

*“Students expect flexible/blended delivery. What will they expect in the future – the students in 2025 are 4 years old today.”*

Unfortunately, the timing of the consultation phase for this report of the Taskforce made it difficult to engage fulsomely with the student body. However, the proposed James Cook University Model will be useful basis for further and prospectively more effective consultation with students.

Students currently provide feedback on their university experience through the Student Feedback Survey, Course Experience Questionnaire and Student Barometer. In the main, feedback from students through these mechanisms is positive and comparable to results at other Australian universities. Recommendations were made by the Australian Universities Quality Audit in regard to retention and student experience, which are being considered by the University.

There is no doubt that predicted increases to the student financial contributions, combined with the demand driven model, has the potential to elevate student expectations regarding their university experience. It has to be expected that students will be more assertive in their requests for improved access, support and resources.

The Enterprising Revolutionary scenario described a future where the “worlds of work and learning have become more intertwined, for both students and universities”. This might entail offering shorter courses on a continuing basis, packaged to enable students to move into the workforce sooner than is presently possible.

The Immersed in Asia scenario suggested a future “where students can take a James Cook University course from anywhere, and can also attend the University in person to participate in the tropical learning circuit – immersive learning experiences on each campus designed to build capacity to work in an Asian world.” Are these circumstances possible? Certainly, there is an increasing focus on student mobility and our three campuses offer us an advantage. The new Bachelor of Business points the way in making stronger provision for student participation at both the Australian and Singapore campuses.

The James Cook University Model will deliver a student-focussed learning experience featuring: each campus having distinctive characteristics, which may influence student choice; a comparable student experience across the three tropical campuses in terms of quality; enhanced opportunity and support

for student mobility across the three tropical campuses; a more customised learning experience through which students who need assistance can access it and those who want to be challenged are provided with advanced study opportunities; programs that can be fast tracked or studied part time to accommodate personal circumstances; and in which content is accessible through a variety of mediums.

What becomes evident, even from a cursory view of changes in the sector, is that learning opportunities, course structures and course design must respond to the ‘disruptive’, technology-rich world that currently exists and that is changing at a rapid pace. There are opportunities here to personalise and contextualise student learning and to move learners from being consumers to creators of content.

It may not be financially viable to customise degree programs for each individual student but a submission to the Taskforce suggested a concept of mass customisation. Mass customisation in its most basic sense means that something is mass-produced to a certain point and then customised to meet individual needs at the end of the supply chain. In a university setting this could mean having a common first year or a basic core of subjects across broad areas of disciplinary focus and then allowing students to pick and choose how they wanted to specialise through more advanced subjects, work integrated learning opportunities and/or extra-curricular activities.

Despite the work undertaken through the Curriculum Refresh project, for the most part, course models and structures have remained predominantly traditional, with degree offerings that are 3-6 years in duration, with two semesters each year (and a trimester system operating in Singapore and Brisbane), with some subjects being offered more flexibly through, for example, limited or block mode. There is a general assumption, through these traditional models, that learning is linear and sequenced. Further consideration should be given to modular delivery of subjects or cognate groups of subjects to provide coherence and flexibility to students as they progress through their course.

Structural adjustments in terms of curriculum also need to be considered. For example, there is not yet any University-wide consensus on the number and level of subjects that constitute a major. A standard definition of a major is required to provide students with options to customise their programs and transfer between programs easily. A standard definition may also increase the appetite of students for joint degrees, which at the current time are under-subscribed at the University. More work is required to understand why joint degrees are not popular with anecdotal information suggesting that these programs lack cohort identification, with students feeling they don’t belong in either degree program; difficulty with timetables; and dissatisfaction with a testamur listing a joint degree as opposed to separate testamurs for each degree.

In a similar vein, we need to consider the prospects for improving the harmonisation of teaching periods across campuses. In particular, the costs and benefits of moving to a trimester system across the three tropical campuses must be assessed as a matter of priority. Such a move will ensure greater opportunity for student mobility between Australia and Singapore.

Managing the balance between supporting students who need greater academic support and challenging more advanced students is an issue facing all faculties. There is undoubtedly a need to continue programs for students who are less well prepared for university study, for example, by providing appropriate learning pathways. However, there may be value in consolidating the preparatory programs available to students to build clear and seamless pathways into the University for those who don’t meet standard entry requirements. The current discussions in regard to JCU Pathways and related issues need to address this.

The ways in which we cater to and provide for high performing students also warrants attention. Putting aside the high profile professional programs, there is little that is offered specifically for

students of superior academic ability; the Bachelor of Science (Advanced) and the Bachelor of Marine Science (Advanced) are two examples. There is a view that more should be done in this respect, including the suggestion that an ‘Honours College’ might be established.

### Recommendation 9

That we strengthen our focus on students through the following initiatives:

- a) review traditional course structures and sequencing of subjects;
- b) assess the net benefits of moving to trimesters;
- c) explore opportunities for more customisation of degree programs;
- d) establish a standard definition of a major;
- e) simplify course structures for all degree programs and joint degree programs;
- f) consolidate preparatory programs and learning support available to students; and
- g) develop programs to cater to high performing students, including specifically the establishment of an Honours College.

In terms of flexible delivery, there is an emphasis currently on external and block modes of delivery, using a range of online learning tools, podcasts and LearnJCU, and the offering of classes outside of traditional time periods.

The development of effective, flexible, online and blended learning models will be essential to the future success of any university, including ours. As always, responses will need to be focused on the strategic convergence of pedagogy with technology, while issues of technical infrastructure and staff and student capability all need to be anticipated and managed. Having said this, the prospects for enhanced student experience and learning outcomes utilising technology, are considerable and exciting, whether those learning activities use:

- mobile devices (such as smart phones and iPads) as powerful tools for learning and teaching inputs and outputs;
- ePortfolios for assessment and credentialing;
- MOOCs for brand extension and/or strategic incorporation in the institutional e-Learning strategy;
- the Cloud for feedback and sharing (for example, establishing a YouTube channel for classes);
- learning analytics for monitoring and pushing just-in-time learner support; and
- James Cook University’s next generation learning spaces.

Consistent with the arguments made in relation to the enhancement of the focus on the tropics within the curriculum, it is suggested that the James Cook University Model will need to be sufficiently flexible and responsive to a variety of circumstances and that it be an approach that provides a complementary, ‘best fit’ for the course concept, rather than a ‘one-size-fits-all’ model.

### Recommendation 10

That we consider technology-based approaches to enhance course delivery, improve flexibility for students and assist academic staff with the delivery of course content.

It is also important to be purposeful about the student experience. Ensuring a sense of belonging and the development of a student life-course (focusing on transitions into, through and out of the University) that is responsive to ‘our place’ will be critical in the development of any structural model. We must continue to promote a university-wide, coordinated approach to systematically research and

monitor the first year student experience, and to coordinate and strengthen the range of first year activities currently available.

In late 2012 the Office of the Senior Deputy Vice Chancellor commenced an inventory of initiatives within the University that target Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. The objectives are to obtain an institution-wide picture of the range and scope of activities, to identify funding sources being utilised presently and to develop an understanding of gaps and overlaps in the initiatives offered currently.

To date the project has identified that there are some outstanding initiatives in place that could be extended to other parts of the University. Staff have expressed a clear need for a more coordinated approach to maximise outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and to achieve value for money in program delivery. The recommendations of the *Behrendt Review into Higher Education Outcomes and Access for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders* will also be considered within the development of a University strategy.

### Recommendation 11

That a University-wide strategy be developed to provide a coordinated approach to supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students from recruitment and transition, through their course of study and on to graduation and alumni relations.

The Taskforce is of the view that face-to-face and on-campus delivery will remain an important aspect of the James Cook University Model, including the promotion of the place-based learning at our campuses and field locations. A high quality on-campus learning experience will be enhanced by improvements in the use of digital technology and we should continue to extend our geographic reach by increasing access to learning resources online. We must continue to invest in the development of services, facilities and IT connectivity that provide opportunities for social interaction on our three tropical campuses. Improvements to the built environment, amenities and services on campus are an integral element of this blended learning strategy. The allocation of 25 per cent of the Student Services and Amenities Fee will begin to allow for new investment in this area but the challenge is great and additional funds will be required, as will rationalisation of existing infrastructure, including better utilisation of facilities.

The Discovery Rise project expresses a vision for the transformation of the Townsville Campus in a way that is consistent with the commitment to a quality campus-based experience. Discovery Rise will create a blended community of interests encompassing practitioners, researchers, learners and commercial interests, energised by a neighbouring residential community. Importantly, Discovery Rise will create a point of difference in a globally competitive market for students, staff and capital. Responding to the fact that capital is increasingly scarce, the project will gain leverage from the University's land assets by enabling investment which adds to productive capacity and creating ongoing revenue streams, thereby decreasing our reliance on public funding.

### Recommendation 12

That there is an ongoing investment in the delivery of a high quality on-campus experience, that is flexible and technology enabled.

Drawing the various recommendations together, the Taskforce envisages a student-centred learning environment with the following features:

**Engaged** (looking inward and looking outward)

- Student-centred and mediated over the student life-course
- Responsive to our student demographics and supportive of students according to their varied needs and interests
- Embodying the teaching-research nexus
- Distinguished by the opportunities for WIL and other partnerships – ‘community-engaged scholarship’, delivering outstanding graduate outcomes.

**Flexible** (providing greater choice in terms of what, when, where and how learning takes place)

- Committed to innovative and flexible approaches
- Offering students guided choice (as appropriate, depending on context, cohort and other requirements) regarding a mixture of learning styles, timing, pace, place, content, assessment and collaboration
- Giving particular consideration to eLearning opportunities, block mode, and the institutional harmonisation of semesters.

**Enabled by technology** (careful harnessing and bundling of technological enablers)

- Personalised and contextualised learning
- A strategic convergence of pedagogy with technology
- Providing the necessary infrastructure and staff and student support for this engagement.
- Giving particular attention to integrating open access content and resources, mobile devices, ePortfolios, Cloud opportunities, learning analytics, and next generation learning spaces.

## 5.4 Connected to Community

### University Priorities – A University for the tropics worldwide; Connecting, locally and globally; People and Place

James Cook University was established more than forty years ago with a remit to serve north Queensland communities. At the time the focus was on delivering a professional workforce for the region and conducting research to the benefit of the region’s industries.

Throughout the University’s history there has been a sustained commitment to the north Queensland region. More recently our immediate communities of interest have expanded to include northern Australia more widely and Singapore. Mechanisms to connect with the community have also changed, with more involvement of local professionals and business people on course advisory boards, work-integrated learning programs and more attention to the establishment of alumni networks. The provision of clinical and other professional placements for students has also been an important aspect of connecting with the community.

Our community engagement has been recognised through commendations in the audit conducted by the Australian Universities Quality Agency in 2011 and last year through the award of the People’s Association and Community Spirit Awards to James Cook University Singapore.

The Taskforce consultation process identified that a connection to communities is strongly embraced by staff, many expressing a commitment to responding to the educational and research needs of northern Australia and with a particular emphasis on providing access to those living in rural and remote areas and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

For many staff the level of local connectedness proposed in the Greater Good scenario was the preferred option for the future, even if there was an acceptance that this model may not be viable in the longer term.

Through the James Cook University Model, engagement will incorporate both community activities and initiatives that link our learning, teaching and research with community aspirations. We will continue to build on our reputation for being socially responsive and we will embrace and pay respect to the Indigenous peoples of Australia and the first peoples of the tropics more broadly.

Our community of interest will be defined as the tropics, with particular emphasis on northern Australia, Singapore and an ‘arc of engagement’ extending from Papua New Guinea and the island states of the Western Pacific to Malaysia, which will be the predominant focus of our international engagement over the medium term. The ‘arc’ will centre our activity at the intersection of the two great axes of global economic growth: the Asian axis and the Tropical axis. Australia is positioned to reap the opportunity of growth and demand across both axes and our University is uniquely well placed to be a part of this. The grand challenges framework will provide opportunities for staff and students to become involved in projects that provide tangible benefits to tropical communities.

Engagement in its broadest sense refers to the relationships that universities have with their stakeholders, including industry, government, community, professions, staff, students and alumni. However, contemporary usage of the term in the higher education sector has a more specific focus, referring to how universities interact with their stakeholder communities in the exchange of knowledge for mutual benefit.

The Strategic Intent clearly positions the University as being focused on particular geographic stakeholder communities. The University Plan further highlights the need for deliberative engagement with the identification of engagement as one of the three elements of our core business. However, there is a need to scaffold this strategic vision of an engaged university into an overarching strategy that acknowledges current engagement activities, builds on the fact that engagement takes place at all levels within the institution (individual through to the University in a corporate sense), and supports specific strategic initiatives, particularly at school, faculty and whole-of-institution levels.

The University’s planning documents focus on certain stakeholders due, for example, to geographic location, educational strengths and community need. However, further definition is required, including some prioritisation of stakeholder groups, and this should be aligned with our teaching and research agendas. There are benefits for the University as a whole in answering such issues; attention to engagement can lead to stronger institutional intent, and, consequently, more specific and focused agendas for research and teaching<sup>23</sup> (Holland, 2005: 7).

There are excellent examples of engagement activities currently in place within individual faculties and schools as well as divisions and within local campus communities, although the effectiveness of these may be limited by the lack of University-wide coordination and perhaps an inability to leverage other opportunities. Through the development of a University-wide engagement strategy we will move toward a future described in the Enterprising Revolutionary scenario, wherein staff knowledge and know how is brought together to “enable collaboration and an outward facing stance to University activities.”

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<sup>23</sup> See Holland, B, 1997, Analysing institutional commitment to service: a model of key organizational factors, *Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning*, Fall, pp 30-41.



With the establishment of engagement as one of the three areas of core business there is a corresponding need to consider the governance arrangements that will foster and advocate the engagement strategy of the University.

### Recommendation 13

That a University-wide engagement strategy be developed to provide a framework for engagement across our core business.

As a precursor to this, we will need to affirm how engagement will be defined and recognised at JCU. There are tools that can assist with the institutionalisation of engagement in higher education institutions (including the Holland Matrix, Furco’s tool, the Carnegie Classification and the North Central Association-Higher Learning Commission), upon which we might draw to assist in the development of the engagement strategy.

Through the Curriculum Refresh project significant work has been undertaken to develop curriculum that provides opportunities for work-integrated learning, service-learning, place-based learning and capstone experiences, prospectively to the benefit of local and international communities. The James Cook University Professional College facilitates and recognises student participation in co-curricular activities reflecting the objectives of three modules: leadership, community engagement and cultural competency. The College offers opportunities for students to develop professional and personal skills in co-curricular activities with a focus on life in the tropics – building on skills and supporting lifelong development. This work now needs to be consolidated and extended.

There are several models within Australia and overseas that are worthy of consideration. As well as enriching the learning experience for students, these models encourage the development of meaningful and purposeful partnerships with community, industry, employers and other partners. They will also allow us to emphasise partnerships and opportunities that are consistent with identified grand challenges.

Examples of such initiatives include:

- The Community University Partnership Program offered at Brighton University. This program seeks to *‘to tackle disadvantage and promote sustainable development through partnership working. We share a strong belief in the potential for communities and universities to work together. Their combined resources have been seen to make a tangible difference to the effectiveness of the community sectors, the quality of university education and research and the lives of local people.’*<sup>24</sup> The strength in this model is that it allows for a seamless interface between community, industry, employers and all facets of University activity.
- The Campus Engage Project at the National University of Galway Ireland<sup>25</sup> has a distinctive focus on community and volunteering.
- The Green Steps Project at Monash University<sup>26</sup> combines work-integrated learning and sustainability.

The implementation of a program similar to those listed above is supported by market research conducted by the Knowledge Partnership for the Curriculum Refresh Project, which indicated that students and prospective students supported the integration of issues relevant to the tropics through

<sup>24</sup> <http://www.brighton.ac.uk/cupp/about-cupp.html>

<sup>25</sup> <http://www.nuigalway.ie/community-engagement/about-community/>

<sup>26</sup> <http://www.monash.edu.au/research/sustainability-institute/green-steps/>

fieldwork and practical applications. The potential to offer a joined-up program across our three tropical campuses should be investigated.

### Recommendation 14

That work-integrated and practice-based learning opportunities for students be consolidated and extended.

The recognition by researchers that so many complex research problems are deeply embedded in socio-economic contexts, along with Government scepticism with adequacy of the return on investment and public concerns in regard to the integrity of science, is driving imperatives for researchers and research organisations to engage with the community (including general public, interest groups, governments, stakeholders and media) in more dynamic and open ways. Increased engagement with industry and end users will also improve opportunities for industry funded and collaborative research. We should also consider opportunities to develop closer partnerships between industry and university-based researchers, including the Industrial Transformation Research Program administered by the ARC<sup>27</sup>.

A move to iterative processes where end-users have a stronger role in framing research questions is increasingly accepted by researchers – particularly younger researchers – with a shift in view towards institutions as intrinsic to practice and not as an external constraint on practice. It is possible that a program could be developed whereby our stakeholders, including the local community, are invited to suggest possible research questions/projects so as to build both University engagement and demand-side capabilities. Plymouth University offers a program of this kind<sup>28</sup>.

### Recommendation 15

That research which is impactful, relevant and translatable be fostered through engagement with industry, professions, community end-users and policy makers.

Engagement and translational activity is not a substitute for excellent, fit-for-purpose research, but an extension of it. Over the long term, translational work without an excellent base will lack credibility and influence.

We will need to ensure that:

- Research centres and other research groupings in areas of designated research strength and priority develop case studies with robust validating evidence that demonstrate impact;
- Greater emphasis is put on professional development activities that enable researchers and HDR students to acquire skills and confidence to understand and communicate effectively with media, policy makers, research users and communities; and
- Clear and strong recognition is given to impact and engagement in academic and cognate professional staff promotions.

<sup>27</sup> [http://www.arc.gov.au/hcgp/itrp/itrp\\_default.htm](http://www.arc.gov.au/hcgp/itrp/itrp_default.htm)

<sup>28</sup> <http://www1.plymouth.ac.uk/research/cra/Pages/default.aspx>

Support for these strategies through the development of appropriate infrastructure is important. Discovery Rise will better connect the University and business by creating a viable setting for investment and commerce and it will close the distance between researchers and business. Discovery Rise will foster innovation through the creation of interpretative and knowledge brokerage spaces such as incubators, supported by sites for social interaction such as cafes, restaurants and bars. The new Clinical Practice Building is an emerging example of what can be achieved.

## 5.5 Internationally Engaged

### University Priorities – A University for the tropics world-wide; One University, Two countries, Three tropical campuses

As a tri-city university with campuses across two countries, we have the opportunity to become a truly international university. This ambition is articulated in the University Plan which states that “Through our three tropical campuses – Cairns, Townsville and Singapore – James Cook University will become a tri-city university at which internationalisation is an integral dimension of our intent and our make-up.”

The Paper Tiger and Immersed in Asia scenarios describe possible paths for the University in the international space, with the former suggesting a concentration of activities on an arc extending from Papua New Guinea to Malaysia and the latter moving the University’s leadership to Singapore, defining ours as an “Asian University”.

During the consultation process staff expressed a view that linkages with overseas institutions were important, suggesting that Indonesia, Papua New Guinea, Asia, Africa and South America offered the most potential. It was also pointed out that a contingency plan for our engagement with Asia was required in the event that the Singapore campus does not achieve formal Singapore Government recognition as a branch campus.

Through the James Cook University Model internationalisation will be more strongly integrated across our learning and teaching, research and engagement activities. We will establish ‘deep partnerships’ with a small number of institutions with shared interests, predominantly in the region extending from Papua New Guinea and the western Pacific to Malaysia, providing opportunities for international collaboration across a breadth of University business. Staff and students will have the opportunity to move between campuses and our overseas partner institutions. We will maintain relationships with our students and graduates through international alumni networks.

At the present time internationalisation is not embedded well enough within our core business, with the main focus being on activities relating to student recruitment, exchange and support. There are extensive arrangements in place throughout the University at individual staff member level, both formal and informal, relating to research and/or the delivery of programs. However, as with community engagement, there is a need for an overarching strategy that pulls the threads together and provides strategic direction.

Internationalisation of the curriculum has been a longstanding agenda item for the higher education sector and for us. In response to the question: *How is the course curriculum internationalised? (Noting the special emphasis on James Cook University’s place as Australia’s national university for the tropics. Specifically how is internationalisation embedded in the curriculum and what opportunities are there for student mobility?)*, the 2012 Course Performance reporting demonstrates a variety of activities, including a tri-city emphasis in some programs, use of international content, case studies, and readings, promotion of courses to students from tropical locations, international subject offerings and the

offering of courses in overseas locations. There are examples of student mobility, including exchanges with the Norwegian School of Creative Arts, with Thailand and India.

The adoption of the grand challenges framework will provide additional opportunities for the curriculum to be internationalised and it is envisaged that the establishment of deep partnerships with international universities with shared interests will assist.

Research has always been intrinsically international, but internationalisation is changing in intensity and focus driven, in part, by:

- the recognition that nearly all of the major challenges confronting humanity are global – e.g., climate change, energy, food security, biosecurity, emerging diseases – and require global and local solutions;
- recognition of the benefits of internationalisation including collaboration, staff and student mobility, more efficient use of infrastructure and productivity dividends including citation rates;
- institutional reputation and status expressed through global rankings of universities which rely wholly or predominantly on research performance metrics; and
- an increasingly multipolar research landscape through the rise of China and India and to a lesser degree other non-OECD countries.

Our research is strongly internationalised, with 42 per cent of publications having at least one international co-author; the third highest rate of Australian Universities according to SCImago. This is best characterised as being primarily a researcher or research centre driven model of internationalisation.

Notwithstanding recent developments in relations between Papua New Guinea and the Cairns Institute, the major lacuna in our approach to internationalisation is development of significant institutional relations that integrate student exchanges, collaborative research programs and staff mobility. The recommendation to establish long-term partnerships with a small number of institutions seeks to address this issue in part.

### Recommendation 16

That an internationalisation strategy be developed that carefully integrates internationalisation across all aspects of our core business.

### Recommendation 17

That a more deliberative approach to international engagement be adopted that acknowledges existing relationships and looks to establish ‘deep partnerships’ with a select number of institutions with shared interests in the tropics.

A student mobility office was established in 2008 under the umbrella of James Cook International. The office reports that the number of students going overseas as part of their education is growing each year. In 2012, 70 students went on exchange, four on short-term programs and 266 on clinical placement or other field-based experience. Students from the Singapore campus also utilise the student mobility office with two students from that campus going on exchange to Sweden last year.

Achieving seamless opportunities for mobility between the Singapore and Australian campuses has proven challenging but work is currently underway to put the framework in place to make this easier. An information statement for staff on secondment opportunities at the Singapore campus was recently developed. The proposed adoption of a common trimester model across the three tropical campuses would also substantially increase the ease of mobility between Australia and Singapore.

More students will have the opportunity to study overseas as a result of the Asia Bound Scholarships and changes to student loan schemes announced by the Government in response to the Asian Century White Paper. The Singapore Campus and the establishment of relationships with partners in Asia should provide James Cook University with a competitive advantage in this market, but it is essential that we implement practices that make this a simple process for students who want to take up the opportunity.

### Recommendation 18

That exchange and mobility opportunities for staff and students between our Australian and Singapore campuses and other partner institutions be encouraged and supported.

## 5.6 Culturally Informed

### University Priorities – People and Place; Connecting, locally and globally

James Cook University has a strong tradition of support for, and understanding of, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures. This will remain as an essential feature of our core business, but as a university with campuses in Australia and Asia and a focus on the tropics more broadly, we must ensure that staff and students have an understanding of cultural practices across a broader geographical area.

The Paper Tiger Scenario proposed that the Singapore Campus would be “James Cook University’s gateway to Asia and positioned the University well to graduate students who are not only ready to work in the Asian world but who also hold a deep understanding and valuing of Asian society and culture.”

The establishment of partnerships with other institutions in the Asia Pacific region will position James Cook University to respond to the *Australia in the Asian Century White Paper* which states – “As a nation we also need to broaden and deepen our understanding of Asian cultures and languages, to become more Asia literate. These capabilities are needed to build stronger connections and partnerships across the region.”

Our Statement of Strategic Intent and Reconciliation Statement make clear our commitment to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and the For the Greater Good scenario suggested a galvanising of the University’s commitment to achieving sustainable reconciliation. This resonated with staff during the consultation process and it is clear that this must be an essential feature of the James Cook University Model.

Through the James Cook University Model staff and students will have a knowledge and understanding of the importance of culture to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and those living in the tropics more broadly. Our presence in Asia through the Singapore campus and partnerships with Asian institutions will enhance insights into cultures in that region. Graduates will have the awareness and skills to communicate across cultures.

The National Best Practice Framework for Indigenous Cultural Competency was released in October 2011. This framework<sup>29</sup> was developed by Universities Australia in co-operation with the Indigenous Higher Education Advisory Council with funding support from the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations. The Framework consists of five guiding principles:

- Indigenous people should be actively involved in university governance and management;
- All graduates of Australian universities will have the knowledge and skills necessary to interact in a culturally competent way with Indigenous communities;
- University research will be conducted in a culturally competent way in partnership with Indigenous participants;
- Indigenous staffing will be increased at all appointment levels and, for academic staff, across a wider variety of academic fields;
- Universities will operate in partnership with their Indigenous communities and will help disseminate culturally competent practices to the wider community.

An acquittal of our activities against this Framework in 2012 revealed that, while the awareness of this framework was not widespread, the University had a number of initiatives in place under each principle. However, there is a need to pull the threads together to achieve a coordinated approach.

### Recommendation 19

That the National Best Practice Framework for Indigenous Cultural Competency in Australian Universities be embedded.

An institution-wide Indigenous cultural competency strategy will address:

- the embedding of Indigenous perspectives and knowledge within the curriculum of courses;
- the development of a cultural competency framework and action plan including a curriculum node and support and training for staff and students in cultural competency;
- the further recruitment of Indigenous staff;
- pathways for Indigenous students;
- retention of Indigenous students;
- leadership of, and support frameworks for, Faculty/School based Indigenous Student Support Officers.

Charles Sturt University's Indigenous Education Strategy<sup>30</sup> offers one possible model for consideration.

The School of Indigenous Australian Studies offers Cultural Awareness programs for staff and students who want to learn more about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture. The Taskforce suggests this program should form part of the staff induction program.

The James Cook University Professional College currently offers a Cultural Competency module that focuses on "Developing cultural competence results in an ability to understand, communicate with, and effectively interact with people across cultures." This is a 10-hour program with students provided with a number of options by which they can complete the module. This program could be enhanced and made available to a greater number of students.

<sup>29</sup> <http://www.universitiesaustralia.edu.au/lightbox/1312>

<sup>30</sup> [http://www.csu.edu.au/\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0018/144414/csu-indigenous-education-strategy.pdf](http://www.csu.edu.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0018/144414/csu-indigenous-education-strategy.pdf)

## Recommendation 20

That more programs to develop cultural competence be established and made accessible to staff and students.

## 6 The Nature of Work

Implicit in much of what is contemplated in this report are quite profound changes in the nature of work, which will extend throughout the organisation. The nature of some jobs will change, new positions are likely to be created and some existing ones will no longer be required. The expectations of staff are likely to be expressed more precisely and the ongoing shift towards a stronger performance culture will be reinforced.

Until such time as proposals for change are developed more fully, it is not possible to be precise about the scope and nature of changes in work. However, it is possible to anticipate aspects of what may come.

1. **Recruitment.** A recurrent theme throughout much of the consultation thus far is that we must invest greater effort in the recruitment of staff – academic and professional. The appointment of staff is our single greatest investment and the consequences of appointing staff who are not sufficiently adept can be long-lasting. The appointment of academic staff who are inadequately prepared and not qualified to undertake quality research is a specific example. There is a perception also that all too often staff are appointed to meet short term needs, with inadequate thought to longer-term strategy. We have discussed the need to adopt a Strategic Workforce Planning approach and this will be critical to secure the long-term workforce to support our future aspirations.
2. **Staff development.** Historically, universities have not been particularly good at scaling up the abilities of their staff through further training and development, and this is true in our case. Induction processes are currently only in place at a macro level without specific programs adequately tailored to roles and responsibilities. The establishment of the Learning and Teaching Academy and the Early Career Researcher programs are exemplars of the sorts of strategies that are required, and there is considerable opportunity for more to be done. Targeted induction strategies that recognise the diverse nature of roles, the differing nature of the campus communities, the experience of new appointees, and the expectations of professions need to be developed. As we move more decisively towards technology-assisted learning, there will be an associated need for staff training and development.
3. **Evolving positions.** It once made sense to demarcate between academic and professional roles within a university but this is much less so now. For example, there is widespread reference to ‘blended roles’ – staff who perform a range of duties that extend across the academic and the professional. In the health sciences, there is increasing reliance on professionals from outside the University, particularly clinicians, to contribute to learning and teaching, as an extension to the more traditional clinical roles within universities. The evolving nature of work and employment within the university – what Stephen Parker referred to as the emergence of ‘parademics’ – offers some fantastic opportunities, but it will also challenge the existing HR architecture in interesting ways.

4. **Workloads and the division of labour.** The assignment of workloads ('workload models'), especially in the academic domain, is a controversial activity within the University. There are concerns, for example, over the lack of consistency among workload models that operate across the faculties. In respect of the detail of the models, questions are raised about the treatment of specific types of work (for example, HDR supervision). Consideration also must be given to changing regulatory expectations. For example, there are indications that TEQSA may develop a view in respect of what is adequate in terms of provision for research within institutional workload models. Bound up with these various issues is the question as to whether a division of academic staff labour between teaching and research might be more formally instituted – including the designation of teaching-focused ('teaching scholars') and research-focused positions, which has become increasingly commonplace within Australian universities. The development of a common academic workload model for the University needs to be an immediate priority, supported with greater workload flexibility in the Enterprise Agreement.
5. **Flexible working arrangements.** It makes little sense to think of universities as '9 to 5' operations. Working hours well beyond those for which staff are nominally remunerated is commonplace. For many academic staff, the only time available for conducting research is outside 'normal' semester working hours – evenings and weekends, for example, or in the non-teaching periods of the year. As access to learning content improves through online delivery the demands of students for 24/7 support (professional and academic) are likely to amplify. At the same time, there is the prospect of an increase in block mode teaching, field-based teaching, and work experience outside the University. All of these will modify work, as patterns of demand for learning support shift.
6. **Performance expectations.** Within the University there has been an increasing focus on a culture of performance. Intensified investment in the performance management process, the introduction of performance indicators and performance-based employment agreements are indicative of this. At the same time, there has been an increased effort in providing information on outcomes, through which staff can better understand the results of their efforts. The relatively new Research Activity Model is one example. To better position for the future, we will inevitably need to further intensify the focus on performance measurement and management. Staff can reasonably expect that the expectations of them will be more precisely specified, that their performance in meeting these expectations is acquitted, and that performance is more closely managed through the performance management process.
7. **Career structures and progression.** In the academic domain, the existing career structure has several features that are of questionable merit. There are 5 levels (Lecturer A through Professor), though appointments at Lecturer A are far less common these days. At most levels, there are many steps (8 in Level A and 6 in each of Levels B & C), which suggests slow progression through the career levels. Promotion from one level to another is a significant undertaking, but once promotion has been achieved there are relatively blunt instruments to ensure there is ongoing performance that accords with career level. For example, once a member of staff is appointed to a Level E (Professorial) position, there is little to ensure ongoing performance at this level; and there are Professorial staff who have not achieved or maintained a standard of performance that would have them appointed at this level by today's standards. Some universities have sought to address these and other issues through revisions to career structures and progression. The University of Canberra is notable, having effectively reduced the number of levels in the academic career structure to 3 (Assistant Professor, Associate Professor, Professor – in accord with the North American model), and the number of steps in the Assistant Professor classification is only 7 (compared with the 20 at James Cook University, if Level A is included). Staff commencing at the university as Assistant Professors are appointed initially on a fixed term contract, which will be extended upon promotion to Associate Professor subject to satisfactory performance. There are



two mid-term performance reviews within the Assistant Professor scale, as well as annual performance reviews.

Moving into the next phase the Taskforce will consider further on these important dimensions of work, with a view to developing specific proposals for change.

## **7 Processes, Structure and Resource Considerations**

In the same way as there will be implications for work within the University, the program of change that will be initiated in the subsequent phases of JCU – The Future will inevitably have implications for processes, the policy environment, the organisation and deployment of professional services, the estate, internal organisational structures and resource allocation. As indicated earlier in this report, the review with which Ernst & Young is assisting us will specifically address service provision, leading to recommendations that will allow for enhancements in operations and improvements in the efficiency and effectiveness of services. It is also anticipated that a review of the University Resource Allocation Model will follow.

In the domains of core business, it is also inevitable that processes, policies and structures will change. For example, the adoption of a grand challenges framework will lead to the development of new academic programs and in some instances these might be established through new organisational units. At the same time, the review of existing programs could well lead to the disestablishment of existing entities. The pursuit of stronger collaboration within the University has been a priority for some years now. It could well be that the necessary step-change is best achieved through the amalgamation and reorganisation of schools and/or faculties.

The review of services and changes in the delivery of our core business are also likely to occasion some reorganisation of the divisions and the associated senior executive portfolios.

The internal policy environment needs significant attention also (in terms of clarity, coverage and consistency) and if for no other reason, the increased expectations that come with the advent of TEQSA, combined with the changes anticipated in this report, will occasion the need for a thorough overhaul. The necessary work on the policy environment is relatively urgent, in the context of the new (TEQSA) regulatory environment.

## **8 Summary**

The primary purpose of this report was to describe a framework – a model – that will define the key features of the way in which we deliver our core business in the future. The task was to ‘crystallise our purpose’: It was not a matter of defining new strategic direction and intent, but one of building upon the successful effort that has been invested over the past 5 years to clarify our intent and purpose.

The work has been informed by broad scans of trends and perspectives, including those that are affecting the higher education sector particularly. It is not an option to simply stand by as these quite profound changes wash over us. Our very sustainability is at stake. A failure to understand and adapt to the evolving context in which we operate will almost certainly relegate us to mediocrity, if not challenge our very survival.

The work of the Taskforce has benefitted greatly from the thoughtful contributions of staff and students through correspondence, comments posted to the web and their participation in meetings and focus groups. The consultation, though, has in some senses just begun. As the Taskforce moves

from the more general scoping that is presented in this report towards more specific plans and initiatives, the further involvement of staff, students and other stakeholders is essential.

Through this report the Taskforce proposes a ‘James Cook University Model’ – a set of attributes that, collectively, define the essential character of our core business. An overriding concern for the Taskforce in crafting this model has been to achieve a stronger integration of the elements of our core business. Accordingly, we sought to avoid the compartmentalisation of learning and teaching, research and engagement.

The James Cook University Model has 6 elements:

- Focused on the tropics
- Research rich
- Student focussed
- Connected to community
- Internationally engaged
- Culturally informed

In order to give expression to this model, the Taskforce has delivered a set of recommendations that extend across the three elements of our core business – learning and teaching, research, engagement. While individual recommendations often refer to one of the elements of core business, the intent is that collectively they achieve a stronger integration across the elements.

The pursuit of the agenda for change that is suggested here will have far reaching effects within the University. There will be explicit impacts on individuals and the nature of their work, there will be structural change within the organisation, and the ways in which we organise and deploy resources will change.

In the consultation that has informed the work of the Taskforce to this point many staff have expressed an understanding and acceptance of this need for change. As JCU – The Future progresses, there will be widespread calls for staff – and other stakeholders – to lend their support to what has to be done.

It is commonplace in the context of projects such as this to uncover many interesting proposals for innovation and investment, and that has certainly been the experience already with JCU – The Future. The rich portfolio of ideas suggests some exciting possibilities for us. At the same time, we must be mindful of the fact that the financial sustainability of the institution is one of the essential considerations. Accordingly, prospective innovation and investments must be considered in terms of their cost effectiveness and affordability – will they increase revenues and/or reduce costs; if not, what will we withdraw from in order to release the necessary funds to support them?

We have the potential to achieve ‘greatness’, defined not just in one dimension but indeed in many. There are exciting opportunities in all domains of our activity to do better. Of necessity, though, there will have to be changes in the way we do things and close vigilance in terms of the sustainability of our plans and actions.

