

## Regional Strategy 2013 – 2017



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## Context

*Future Ready* makes some specific demands of our regions, and also places upon them a share of overall university targets. In particular, the regions are charged with overall growth in student numbers; contributions to growing international and fee-paying students; contribution to increasing high ATAR enrolments and maintaining the proportion of low SES students as we grow. Contributions to improved research performance and enhanced community engagement are also expected. All these targets flow through to deliver financial outcomes.

This regional strategy seeks to maximise the benefits La Trobe University obtains from its regional presence – it seeks revenue enhancement, combined with greater efficiency, whilst focusing on the objectives outlined in *Future Ready*.

The strategy is built on five pillars, each with a series of projects to guide implementation.

## The five pillars

	Strategic priority	Rationale	Focus	Partnerships
1	Market development	Y12 fulltime market increasingly contested, low growth and a smaller percentage of the market	Research and grow non-Y12 offers CPD and executive education Postgraduate Mature age	Marketing and engagement  Faculties
2	Product development	Standard lecture/tutorial model expensive, low scale, high risk	Deliver common needs to a high quality. Identify unique opportunities. Develop new delivery models to exploit regional network, free up staff, permit focus	Radical learning/CTLC  DVC (A)  Faculties
3	Research engagement	Match between local opportunities and university-wide resources	Engage community networks to identify opportunities for RFAs. Identify regional roles in prospecting and promoting	RFAs  DVC (R)
4	Engagement and partnerships	Regional relationships are strong already.  Resources are in the regions outside La Trobe	Strengthen TAFE partnerships as restructure continues. Benchmark school partnerships. Pursue productive community linkages	Future Students/schools engagement  SDVC, DVC (A)  Faculties, Alumni and advancement
5	Responsive organisation	No common idea of “multi-campus”  Student services are disjointed and inconsistent  Most barriers to innovation are internal	Prevent unintended constraints, ensure multi-campus consideration.  Co-ordinate service provision on campuses across faculty and centre  Align incentives and recognition	Governance, decision processes (PIPU)  Student services, Faculty managers  Finance, workload planning, HR

# 1. Market development

La Trobe's footprint across the state forms a wedge, with Collins Street as the southern apex, running northwest up the Calder corridor and beyond to Mildura, and northeast up the Hume to Wodonga and into New South Wales.

Currently, with few exceptions, all our services to those who live in this wedge are focused on a small segment of the population, the year 12 student who wants to study full time. *Future Ready* has identified this as an issue for the whole university, but it is a particular problem at regional campuses.

The segment is the most contested, with metropolitan universities scouring the area for high achieving and mobile students. The market is also reduced by low participation rates.

La Trobe has always struggled to understand and serve other markets that exist in our territory. However, if we are to grow our regional activity, we need a better return on our regional assets, and target a broader range of markets:

- A. Non-Y12 undergraduate
- B. Postgraduate
- C. Post experience/CPD

**Project** - *In conjunction with Marketing and Engagement, and with the input of the faculties, a market research initiative be undertaken to quantify the market, identify the preferences and understanding the decision making of non-year 12 candidates interested in undergraduate, those interested in postgraduate, and by businesses and individuals seeking further professional development.*

# 2. Product development

## A. Scale and Leanness

Our traditional products, and the means by which we deliver them, do not serve our regional effort well. With smaller cohorts, the traditional lecture/tutorial model becomes expensive due to the decline of scale.

There is less imperative to change our delivery model at Bundoora because scale exists, and the more strongly regional program delivery is linked to Bundoora delivery the more difficult it is to innovate.

Within our programs we need to build scale wherever possible, to maximise the return on staff time. We also need to be lean, and avoid wasted effort. By building scale and removing unproductive costs, we can free staff to engage with the new markets identified above.

**Project** - *In conjunction with DVC (A) & Radical Learning, we shall engage the faculties in a project around program development and redevelopment, designed to use flexibility to deliver scale, scope and innovation, in line with the development principles proposed below.*

## B. Development principles

### i. Common offerings for local markets

By offering the same courses through multiple locations via our campus network, we meet a shared local need and deliver access. Courses in this category lie in health, education, business, and arts. By delivering locally we lower cost of living while studying for students, generate greater access to university for students in the community, and increase the chance of graduates remaining and working locally, enabling the community to build capacity.

In delivering programs across all campuses we are potentially duplicating resources. Hence these programs must

- Serve an identified shared local need – delivering incremental enrolments
- Be equivalent quality across the whole university – protecting our brand from damage
- Contribute an acceptable level of margin

To deliver these outcomes we need to maximise the scale of each program, using opportunities like cross faculty subjects and cross campus subjects, and employing blended and flexible delivery to deliver equivalent quality at lower cost. We also need to maximise the return on our investment in content, through increasing the utilisation of our intellectual property across multiple markets (undergrad, postgrad, CPD) and across multiple campuses.

**Project** - *Program development to ensure quality; generate scale; increase leanness, and share content.*

### ii. Unique offerings for local markets

Attempting to create a unique offering for a particular local market exposes the university to higher risk and lower scale, and therefore potentially lower return on investment.

Introducing such programs requires a systematic approach to risk management. Risk is reduced when we have local partnerships to help address local needs, enabling us to obtain funding, political support, and student numbers. Risk management also means careful testing of our activities, through scaling up small experiments into larger programs.

**Project** - Program development to identify potential innovative experiments, to manage risk, and identify supporting partnerships.

iii. Unique offerings for national markets

Programs such as dentistry and pharmacy, although they serve local students, compete in the national and international market. For La Trobe, the need to maximise student numbers means we should locate such drawcard offerings where their benefit to the university as a whole is greatest, and seek to offer a multi-campus variation if possible.

The regional campuses have a particular advantage in some subject areas through location. The context of our regional campuses generates unique opportunities that may have national appeal. The political appeal of regional investment also generates partnerships and opportunities that might not be available in Bundoora. As above, such offers require risk management in their development, and thoughtful marketing to ensure their maximum impact.

**Project** - Program development to identify international marketing opportunities, and subject designs to facilitate this.

## 3. Research engagement

### A. Engaging for research

Regional communities have expressed strong interest in a number of the RFAs already. Regional Advisory Boards have spontaneously, and directly, engaged with the RFA leadership. This has led to site visits to the regions by RFA leaders to examine research opportunities, potential partnerships etc.

- Invite RFA leaders to engage with regional campus communities - RABs
- Communication with regional communities about RFAs and other important academic achievements
- Regional leadership to identify unique local resources for teaching and research relating to RFAs

**Project** - In conjunction with the DVC(R), RFAs and the faculties, we shall develop a program of activities designed to identify relevant community resources – knowledge, funding, issues, settings – that can be utilised by RFAs and discipline research groups.

## 4. Engagement and partnerships

Regional campuses are unique resources in their local community. More partnership opportunities exist in our regional communities than at Bundoora. The advantage of partnerships is that they offer us resources we do not have to build ourselves, so reduce cost and risk. They are also a source of opportunity for new products and engagement.

### A. TAFE

Partnering more closely with co-located TAFE institutes enables La Trobe to assist in increasing participation in regional post-secondary education. A successful partnership can grow both TAFE and university enrolments, innovate to meet industry and market demand without duplication, contribute to regional development and shape the future of regional education. At a more operational level, correctly managed TAFE partnerships have the potential to enhance financial sustainability, maintain community and stakeholder support and ensure government support.

#### i. Multilateral models

Currently, future TAFE arrangements are uncertain, with little or no clue as to the likely number of bodies that will be operating in future. To accommodate this, La Trobe can work towards a multilateral model – Regional Partnership Model. If multiple partnerships are established a common “partnership council” can be implemented to ensure consistency of quality and cross-institutional learning. The more substantial commitment of regional partners will be reflected in shared capacity building programs and recognition of key partner personnel in La Trobe structures/positions.

Key elements of a partnership might be; institutional governance; partner recognition through joint appointments; shared services model; capacity building through LTU provided program; shared teaching model – focused on innovation and new program development; shared teaching model – existing programs.

#### ii. Bilateral models

Not all TAFEs are likely to seek the same relationship with LTU. Accordingly, the TAFE partnership model is flexible and dependant on individual TAFE needs - the model can be scaled down accordingly by incorporating different components as a “Bilateral Partnership”. More limited partnerships will be managed as bilateral arrangements regardless of whether a broader partnership council exists.

**Project** - *In conjunction with the SDVC, PVCP and the Faculties, we shall strength partnerships with TAFEs. Focusing on new offerings, we will seek to develop broad suites of integrated offers across*

*both institutions, with appropriate co-investment and articulation. We shall focus our efforts on building partnerships based on a long term relationship, rather than transactional activities.*

## **B. Schools**

### **i. Partnerships**

La Trobe is in a unique position with respect to schools and the teaching profession in the regions. Shepparton, Mildura and Bendigo have graduated the majority of teachers currently working in the surrounding community. In Wodonga we have less market share but very close relationships. These relationships give us opportunities to pilot initiatives e.g. with Bendigo Senior Secondary College (BSSC) or McGuire College Shepparton.

Our relationship with BSSC includes opportunities for far more than education students, and using our relationship with BSSC as a model, there is potential regionally to integrate marketing and engagement and curriculum / education activities to use our students as ambassadors, role models etc. The engagement of our staff with principals and senior staff enables us to build these relationships.

### **ii. Early offers**

Potential partnerships in the region can develop principal's recommendations and direct entry strategies where appropriate. Early offers allow us to lock in load and better manage ATARs in our regional programs.

**Project** - *In conjunction with the Future Students and the DVC (A) we shall develop a range of competitive early offers that draw on strengths across our network, exploiting the variation in our offer and the ability to service regional students who want to either relocate or study locally.*

## **C. Industry and community**

Regional communities present opportunities for La Trobe through the presence of cultural infrastructure and events (galleries, museums, festivals etc.). La Trobe needs to explore tighter relationships with cultural venues (pioneered by and modelled on the Art Institute) for teaching, research and engagement, and events opportunities.

**Project** - *In conjunction with the Faculties and we shall develop and test market a range of professional development and engagement programs that draw on our regional relationships to create an offer that is strongly differentiated by our unique locational advantages.*

## 5. Responsive organisation

Forging effective partnerships requires us to make, and keep, commitments to external parties. It requires those who represent La Trobe University to be able to predict, with some confidence, the actions of colleagues.

In the past, this has been problematic. La Trobe is often accused of not following through on its promises. Good intentions are often undone by the unintended consequence of an ill-considered change. Delivering regional strategy is a challenge for the whole university, and a number of projects are proposed to enhance co-ordination.

### A. Being a multi-campus university

#### i. Service delivery and experience

The quality and characteristics of the student service we deliver, and the model by which we deliver it, varies between campuses and across faculties. The same is also true of many central services and activities, where faculties, divisions and campuses all employ staff with similar responsibilities but very diverse reporting arrangements.

Delivering a consistently high standard of service, and avoiding duplication of effort, is a key step in delivering the consistent quality sought from the La Trobe brand.

**Project -** *In partnership with the Executive Director of Student Services, and the Faculty General Managers, a consistent model for service provision will be developed, and tested with the campus staff and leadership. Once developed, this approach can be rolled out for other areas.*

#### ii. Explicit recognition

The university does not have a shared understanding of what being “multi-campus” actually means. It has been interpreted as offering a centralised product at multiple locations, or delivering a local offer that is identical to that delivered elsewhere. To ensure we get the best out of our multiple locations, we need to develop a shared understanding.

We also need to consider the cross campus impact of decisions. Just as we require consideration of sustainability impact, library impact and ICT impact in program decisions, we also should consider multi-campus impact, and alert campuses to the potential impact of intended changes.

#### iii. Implicit symbols and signals

The perceived lack of acknowledgement of regional campuses is a source of frustration for staff located regionally. When the university fails to deliver an appropriate level of support or participation to regional staff, this should be acknowledged and corrected.

**Project -** *In partnership with the VP (Operations) and Academic Board, a statement of multi-campus policy will be developed. A multi-campus impact statement will be developed for approval of program changes, and major changes to operational/professional activities. Identify key situations when participation by all campuses is essential to demonstrate our multi-campus credentials, and mandate this.*

## **B. Incentives and recognition**

### **i. Margins**

La Trobe operates on a required margin basis for each of its faculties. Each faculty has a required margin across all its operations. These margins vary based on acknowledgement of the faculty's contribution in non-financial ways.

All faculties find margin easier to obtain at Bundoora because they have greater scale. Also, in faculties where there are significant higher revenues from international students, the lower proportion of international students at regional campuses reduces the margin.

Regional contributions by faculties generate more than just financial outcomes, but the non-financial value of those contributions are not reflected in lower margins at different locations. Executive Deans should have explicit KPIs for these non-financial objectives

**Project -** *In partnership with the VP (Finance) and the faculties, identify appropriate target margins for each faculty on each campus to ensure that investments are made in light of both the financial and non-financial benefits accruing to the university from that activity.*

### **ii. Reporting**

Campus leadership requires an understanding of the resources available at any particular time. HoC will be copied on all leave approvals for staff located on their campus, and will have visibility over local staff through the university systems.

### **iii. For individuals**

In order to facilitate engagement, staff on regional campuses will have a workload allocation for campus engagement activities, which can be utilised by the Head of Campus acting through the schools.

HoC to contribute a brief report to HoD for inclusion in annual reviews where there is a campus engagement responsibility, and to provide a similar report for promotion.

As the range of activities undertaken on each campus increases through market and product development, these activities need to be calibrated into the workload management system and promotion system.

**Project** - *In partnership with the HR and faculties, identify appropriate trade-offs between conventional teaching and delivery and alternative models based on different teaching, preparation and assessment models.*

### C. Reporting and oversight

#### i. Funding

Fifteen per cent of the regional loading was allocated to the Regional Office in 2013, to be used on strategic projects. We propose this arrangement continue, with the retained regional loading being used as seed funding to contribute to the projects outlined in the document.

#### ii. Maintaining a “whole of University” perspective

The matrix structure of our university means that there are inevitably co-ordination issues between faculties and campuses. Decisions made by faculties without campus input can adversely affect local delivery, and decisions made by campuses without faculty input can lead to commitments that are not priorities. The university needs a forum where the potentially conflicting requirements of faculties, division and campuses can be discussed and resolved with the overall interests of the university in mind.

A rethink of university governance and committee structures has been flagged by the Vice-Chancellor in his presentation on Funding Future Ready. Given the likelihood of existing structures changing, no particular solution is proposed at the stage, but a project is proposed as a placeholder.

**Project** - *In partnership with the PRC and Governance, identify or design a forum to oversee implementation and co-ordination of regional strategy with a whole of university perspective. The forum is to provide a venue where the alternative perspectives of faculties, divisions and campuses can be presented and resolved in the best interests of the university as a whole. Such discussions require leadership at senior executive level.*