

Media Release

Chiefs of Staff, News Directors

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Partners sign on to devise internationally competitive University hub on Cradle Coast

A vision to boost higher education opportunities in Tasmania's North-West is a step closer to being realised through a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed today.

The MoU signatories - the University of Tasmania, State Government, TasTAFE, Burnie City Council and the Cradle Coast Authority – have committed to a series of discussions about further development of the West Park precinct to create an internationally competitive higher educational hub.

New development will complement existing University operations on the site including those in the Makers' Workshop, the Collab Lab and NRAS student apartments.

The MoU reinforces a desire by each party to increase the University of Tasmania presence on the North-West in a campus closer to the city, providing a better student experience, economic revitalisation to the city centre and to create better education outcomes in the region.

University Vice-Chancellor Professor Peter Rathjen said redeveloping the West Park site would allow the University to expand and enrich course offerings, including the introduction of a new Associate Degree program, and this would be a key focus in discussions.

“The signing of this MoU is an important step forward. This is paving the way for increased access to higher education for people in this region, as well as a greater diversity of internationally competitive courses which we anticipate would attract up to 2000 additional students,” he said.

“The University of Tasmania recognises this region has lower school retention rates, and we will address that with courses delivered more intensively and with strengthened industry focus and links, producing job-ready graduates in areas of regional demand.

“Growing industries and businesses of the future on the North-West will require a workforce more equipped in the so-called STEM disciplines of Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics.”

The MoU contains several further discussion points including how a larger Cradle Coast campus would complement existing curriculums in local primary schools, high schools, and also TasTAFE.

Pro-Vice Chancellor Professor Janelle Allison (Community, Partnerships and Regional Development) said the flow on effects of the redevelopment process would be far-reaching for both the region and its residents.

“This is an exciting time for the University of Tasmania, but also more importantly for the communities in this region. Widening the education system on the North-West would mean even more residents could choose to stay here, rather than moving away if deciding to pursue further studies, and for those already working in the region access to opportunities to up skill,” Professor Allison said.

“The redevelopment would also build upon the reputation the University already has as a leading educator with state-of-the-art facilities. An increased presence particularly at West Park would allow the Cradle Coast campus to become even more niche, offering world class higher education courses amidst spectacular coastal scenery.”

The MoU follows a Heads of Agreement signed between the University and the Burnie City Council in 2013, which began negotiations for the transfer of land at the West Park precinct, from Council to the University.

The University of Tasmania will now work closely with key groups across business, industry, and the local community to ensure further development of the site aligns with public perceptions, and achieves the best outcomes for the region.

A community information session about the MoU and related processes will be held on Monday, February 22, at the School of Domestic Arts, West Park, Burnie.

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