

A MESSAGE FROM THE CHANCELLOR AND VICE-CHANCELLOR

Our 2023 Annual Report is an opportunity for us to reflect on our University's performance over the year and to acknowledge the many initiatives and achievements that helped to create new opportunities for our students, strengthen our relationships within our region and reiterate our ongoing commitment to our First Nations people.



Throughout 2023 we were guided by our *Looking Ahead Strategic Plan*, and we thank our dedicated staff who continue to make ours a world-leading university. Our values of equity, excellence, sustainability and engagement have helped us to strengthen our reputation as a university making an impact within our own regions, in Australia and across the globe. We were proud to see our international rankings improve again and we now rank equal 173 in the world in the QS World University Rankings.

This recognition is particularly rewarding given the ongoing economic challenges we face. In a sector-wide trend, domestic student income remained flat in 2023, but with prudent management of our finances we were pleased to achieve further improvement in our results. Overall, the University and its controlled entities reported a small deficit of \$0.3M in 2023. While minimising our losses is important, a return to surplus is critical to allow us to invest in our University's future.

An absolute highlight of 2023 was beginning the year by welcoming our largest-ever cohort of international students. Our international students add vibrancy, diversity and new perspectives to our region and our University and we welcome them with open arms.

As a University, we continue to prioritise providing an exceptional experience for our students to ensure they gain the skills that make them highly employable and successful graduates. This year, the University introduced a new Career-Ready Placement program, where every new undergraduate student undertakes a practical work placement during their degree. It helps students to develop their skills and enhance their learning and also strengthens our connections with industry.

Our strong industry partnerships are part of our commitment to being a University of and for our regions. The Hunter is the largest regional economy in Australia and our region is moving from strength to strength as new and emerging industries transform the region. We have worked hard to create strong industry and community partnerships that not only benefit research, our students and staff, but also ensure we are instrumental in our region's growth and prosperity.

We have remained committed to the Central Coast for more than 30 years and in December we broke ground on construction of the \$63.8m Central Coast campus in Mann Street, Gosford in partnership with the NSW and Federal Governments. The new Campus is set to open in 2025 and will provide a new place for people to study and build their skills, preparing work-ready graduates to help meet the changing needs of the Central Coast. It will also generate new jobs, help to bolster the region's workforce, and attract more significant investment to the community.

Throughout the year we launched many collective initiatives with industry including the ResTech living lab, the Australian Public Service Academy Campus and a new Tourism, Hospitality and Events degree. Each of these initiatives will see students and industry working together to benefit our region.

2023 marked the 40th anniversary of the Wollotuka Institute. We are proud of our unwavering efforts of the Wollotuka Institute over the past 40 years which has driven our success in Indigenous higher education. The anniversary was an opportunity for us to acknowledge and celebrate the thousands of First Nations students, graduates, staff and community members who have been part of the Wollotuka Institute. We are committed to providing more pathways for success and will build on our past achievements to create better partnerships with Indigenous peoples.

This year marked a change in leadership with our 7th Chancellor, Mr Paul Jeans, retiring after more than a decade leading our University. During this time, Paul has been particularly passionate about community and participation, ensuring that everyone has an equal opportunity to receive an education - a legacy that will benefit many for years to come. We are excited to welcome our new Chancellor, the Hon. Patricia Forsythe AM, who will commence her role in 2024.

Thank you to our staff, our Council colleagues for their continuing strong governance of the University's activities, and to all our community supporters and donors who engaged with us throughout the year.

P.E. (Paul) Jeans
Chancellor

Professor Alex Zelinsky AO
Vice-Chancellor and President

Pictured above: Chancellor Paul Jeans (L) and Vice-Chancellor and President Professor Alex Zelinsky AO (R)