

A MESSAGE FROM THE CHANCELLOR AND VICE-CHANCELLOR

As we turn the page on another extraordinary year of interruptions and challenges for our University and the wider sector, the 2021 Annual Report is an opportunity to reflect on how our organisation came together to achieve many incredible outcomes in the face of continued uncertainty.

COVID-19 presented further challenges for our teaching programs, which meant we needed to pivot in response to Public Health Orders and restrictions to travel. We commend all our teaching staff and students on their resilience and perseverance, especially our many international students who faced significant uncertainties this year.

In addition to mobilising online learning and unwavering dedication to our student experience, our organisation continued to go beyond to support our communities through the pandemic. Amidst the country's third wave, we had a team of nurses travel to the regional NSW town of Walgett to administer COVID-19 vaccinations to the town. Similarly, our University worked with local businesses and our community to provide food boxes and care packs to our students in lockdown after cases in our student accommodation, which truly brought out the best in our community spirit to support those in need.

Our people continued to shine despite the difficulties in 2021, rising to sustain our institutional values of excellence, equity, engagement and sustainability. Together we helped maintain our standing of a top 200 ranked university globally, celebrated a number of key milestones against the Looking Ahead Strategic Plan, welcomed the safe return of our international students in December and accomplished countless other achievements along the way.

We also reaffirmed our continued commitment to First Nations people, which ensured we made significant progress in education, research and cultural capability. As the leading Australian university for Indigenous student enrolments, with 1,463 full time equivalent students in 2021, we maintained our efforts through our Wollotuka Institute to ensure our campuses are culturally inclusive and safe. We're also very proud of the 888 University staff who completed cultural awareness training and an on-country experience this year, and we are very excited by the impending release of our Reconciliation Action Plan early in 2022.


Our University plays a critical role in helping our regions grow and transition to deliver the best outcomes for our students, communities and industry. Through our strong relationships with our business community, we delivered support for the development of a hydrogen economy in the Hunter Region and saw MGA Thermal, a spin-out company of the University, named winner of the inaugural Research Commercialisation award from the 2021 Australian Financial Review (AFR) Higher Education Awards. This year we were also immensely proud to form partnerships with KPMG and the Port of Newcastle that will create more opportunities for our graduates to gain practical skills and knowledge through placements that will create lasting networks and pave the way for successful careers.

Our research and innovation efforts were again driven with community benefit in mind through stand out health and medical advances, as well as studies in technology, the environment and social sciences. Hand in hand with these advances, our pursuit of a sustainable future for our region remains at the forefront of our efforts and it was with gratification that our University was this year named number one in the world for partnering for a more sustainable future in the 2021 Times Higher Education (THE) Impact Rankings.

Coming to university creates lasting connections for our students, who experience a vibrant environment, boundless opportunities for inspiration and growth, as well as memories that last a lifetime. With one eye on our future, we have made considerable progress in our efforts to reimagine our campuses and ensure that our student experience is even better. In 2021, we realised the completion of the sustainably focused Q Building and finalised the design of Alumni House in Newcastle. In Gosford, we cemented our commitment to the Central Coast region with the completion of the University of Newcastle Central Coast Clinical School and Central Coast Research Institute. These new spaces not only provide world class training and research, but also mean that for the first time students on the Central Coast can study their full medical and nursing degrees on the coast. This is an important outcome that over time will significantly boost the health workforce of the region.

This year's Annual Report reflects on another difficult and challenging year for all of us, which continued to place unprecedented stress on Australia's higher education sector. While our University's financial strength helped buffer us somewhat, it was necessary for us to make operational improvements and review some investments to position our University for the 'new normal'.

Together we navigated 2021 with poise, adaptability, and courage to move forward with the delivery of our strategic plan, Looking Ahead. Our many achievements set out in this Report are testament to the effort of our staff and senior leaders and together we remain focused on setting our University up to succeed in 2022 and beyond. We look forward with excitement and a resolve to be a world-leading university for our regions.



P.E. (Paul) Jeans
Chancellor



Professor Alex Zelinsky AO
Vice-Chancellor and President