



Centurion
UNIVERSITY

*Shaping Lives...
Empowering Communities...*

CENTURION UNIVERSITY

5th
Convocation
2017

Commencement Address

Prof. Ruth Wallace

Director, Northern Institute, Charles Darwin University, Australia

11 December 2017

CENTURION UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY & MANAGEMENT
PARALAKHEMUNDI, ODISHA.

(Estd. Vide Odisha Act 4 of 2010 & u/s 2(f) of UGC Act, 1956)



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Your Excellency, **Dr. S. C. Jamir, the Hon'ble Governor of Odisha** and the Visitor of Centurion University of Technology and Management;

Chief Guest of the Convocation, Hon'ble Mr. Steven Herbert, former Minister for Vocational Education and International Education, Government of Victoria, Australia

Distinguished Members of the Governing Board,

President, Vice President, Vice Chancellor, Deputy Vice Chancellor,

Members of the Academic Council, Board of Studies, Pro Vice Chancellors, Directors, Deans, Faculty and Staff of the University, Parents, Distinguished Guests, Representatives of Electronic and Print Media and most importantly our Graduating students, Ladies and Gentlemen.

Thank you for your invitation to participate in this important event for the Centurion University community. First, I will honour an Australian tradition and acknowledge the traditional owners of the land on which we meet and the traditional owners of the land on which I live, the Larrakia people and their Elders past and present.

Congratulations to all students graduating today. Your actions can certainly inspire many in Australia and in turn you can find inspiration from many of our Indigenous success stories.

As the Director of the Northern Institute, the social and policy research institute at Charles Darwin University, it is an absolute honour to be with you today and have the opportunity to talk about Charles Darwin University, to learn about Centurion University and start to build a bridge for pathways between our institutions through teaching and research.

We already share a commitment to developing the opportunities for people in the regional areas of our respective countries, a commitment to value and promote opportunities for indigenous people through language and cultural maintenance and opportunities to turn indigenous knowledge practice into strong social and economic futures.

Our conversation here reflects the commitment our governments have demonstrated and is echoed in the stories of people who have visited each other, eaten together, shared their family's stories and developed opportunities to learn together.

It turns out we have quite a lot in common. While the Northern Territory is dominated by relatively small populations located in very large, remote and relatively undeveloped landscapes and extreme climates, we both face the challenges of demography and rapidly changing economies that mean we need to have the labour force ready to lead innovation and change.

The Northern Territory, like the tribal regions here, have relatively high populations of Indigenous people for whom there are great similarities in terms of social and economic disadvantage, as well as desire amongst many to live on their traditional lands and to develop livelihoods that will enable them to maintain their connection to their country.

I will talk a little more about our potential connections later, however, I would like first to provide some context to CDU's history and role in the NT as background to what we currently do, as it is important to how we operate in such a regional and remote setting. We have also grown through commitment to community outcomes and hard work over many years

When CDU's predecessor institution, the Northern Territory University, began operation as the NT's first and only university in 1989, it was located in the buildings of the old Darwin Hospital at Myilly Point.

It was not until 1996 that the university was consolidated on this Casuarina campus as the main base after some significant infrastructure development on what was the location of the Darwin Institute of Technology.

The Northern Territory University (NTU) was formed through a merger of the University College of the Northern Territory - a college of the University of Queensland opened in 1987 - and the Darwin Institute of Technology, and became the first dual sector university in the country. This is a significant similarity between CDU and CUTM that enables logical and sustainable relationships between us.

After ten years the NTU had over 12,000 VET and HE students, the bulk of whom came from the Darwin region, 1,000 staff and over 10,000 graduates. It had also developed substantial research activity, and was recognised as

playing a significant role in the NT in terms of economic and social contribution and provision of local expertise through research.

Charles Darwin University was established in 2003 and is the only university based in the Northern Territory. It was created through the merger of the Northern Territory University, then only 14 years old and Australia's first dual sector university, and several other education institutions in the NT including the renowned Menzies School of Health Research.

CDU was established with the intent of taking advantage of our unique location and demography to benefit the whole NT community through education, research and community service.

The NT has an extremely multicultural population, with more than 100 different nationalities represented and a population that is around 29% Indigenous, compared with the national average of 3% Indigenous people.

The Northern Territory's population is also the youngest in Australia, with 23% under the age of 15 and a median age of 31 - six years younger than the national median age. Another similarity with India where around 65% of people are 35 years of age or under.

This demographic and our small, widely dispersed population bring many interesting opportunities and challenges for us as an education and research provider.

The NT population (currently about 245,000) is not large enough to sustain a comprehensive university on its own. It was recognised early on that to be sustainable and to be able to offer the full range of programs expected of the NT's only university, we needed to be able to reach students outside the NT and consequently we were among the first Australian universities to develop significant online learning capability.

Today CDU has around 12,000 Higher Education students from the NT and around Australia, many of whom access our programs through online courses or through our campuses and centres in Darwin, Palmerston, Katherine, Alice Springs, Nhulunbuy, Tennant Creek and Jabiru, or our centres in Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide or Cairns.

Around 80% of CDU's Higher Education students are mature age and around 60% live outside the NT. 70% of our HE students access our

programs online. Roughly 19% are from a low SES background and a high proportion also study part time, so flexibility is important to them and we have put a lot of effort into making our programs flexible and accessible to our particular student demographic in order to help them succeed.

We also have a growing international student cohort, currently around 2,700 students from over 60 different countries.

Each year CDU delivers around 2.7 million hours of VET training to roughly 11,000 Territorians across more than 130 sites in the Northern Territory, including our NT campuses and centres but also in many very remote locations on a drive in drive out basis, where we take the training to the communities, as they need it. Around 30% of our VET students are Indigenous, at parity with the NT's demography.

Our dual sector status is an advantage in enabling students to progress through a range of levels of qualification throughout their lives to suit their developing careers and interests.

As an example, a student could conceivably begin their tertiary education at CDU with a Certificate IV in Mental Health, and finish it with a Master of Public Health or a PhD in Psychology.

Despite being a relatively young university, and the challenges of operating a small university in a remote location, CDU has managed, through our teaching quality and outstanding research achievements to be consistently ranked in the top 2% of world universities. We have been ranked for the fifth consecutive year in a row in the top 200 world universities under 50 years old, this year taking 34th place in the Times Higher Education rankings in this category (equal 12th place among Australian universities), 11th place in the world's top 50 Gen Y universities and 38th place out of 243 universities in the Asia Pacific.

CDU's focus has evolved over time, but our research strengths in indigenous knowledge and governance, environmental science and health in particular, have arisen as a response to the Territory's most pressing needs for knowledge - to understand our environment so that we can develop sustainably and support the livelihoods and aspirations of Territorians; and to find ways to address the significant health issues of prevalence in the NT, issues that affect the disparity in life expectancy and quality of life of many of our Indigenous people compared with the rest of the population, as well as that of some of our Asian neighbours.

Our research in Indigenous and tropical health was rated outstanding and environmental sciences rated above world average by the Excellence in Research for Australia assessment in 2015. We have additional and emerging research strengths in engineering and public policy.

While our strengths to date have been largely focused on public good research, we are also increasingly making advances in research that can benefit industry, such as our research into corrosion in tropical environments for the oil and gas industry.

More recently, CDU has become involved in research around a new type of 3D printer, developed in Darwin, that is faster and cheaper than any existing 3D metal printer and could revolutionise manufacturing in Australia.

The beauty of this invention is that it can be particularly useful in remote areas where, if you need a specialised part for something, it can be made quickly and locally without having to wait weeks or months for items to ship from interstate or overseas.

For example, our new 3D printer was recently used to make a specialist part for an automotive supplier – it took just 20 minutes, compared with 100-200 hours for a conventional 3D printer, and brought the cost down from \$US3,000 to just \$US30.

These areas of endeavour along with our teaching and learning and community engagement activities have meant that our economic and social contribution to the NT have become significant and continue to grow.

Menzies School of Health Research was established in 1984 and became part of CDU in 2003. Its expertise in clinical science, biomedical science, medical microbiology, epidemiology and public health has been and continues to be outstanding, and its success rate for National Health and Medical Research Council grants is around double the national average.

Menzies is the only medical research institute in Australia dedicated to improving Indigenous health and well-being. Its research addresses critical issues such as mental health, nutrition, substance abuse, child health and development, as well as chronic diseases such as cancer, kidney disease and heart disease.

CDU has a strong focus on Indigenous leadership and in acknowledging and valuing Indigenous knowledges and perspectives.

This approach is embedded in our University Strategic Plan Connect Discover Grow, and is reflected through many of our programs, such as in health services education where, if we are to be effective and make progress in Indigenous health, we need to be informed by and utilise traditional and cultural knowledge and to encourage and support Indigenous people to themselves become health practitioners.

CDU has a number of Indigenous Research Fellows and a Larrakia Academic in Residence to help inform our education programs and research in relation to cultural relevance, appropriateness and incorporation of Indigenous Knowledges.

At CDU we see ourselves intimately linked to and embedded in the Northern Territory and its future, in a way that few other universities in other jurisdictions could claim.

The Northern Institute was established in partnership with the Northern Territory government to undertake research to address issues of regional development and social policy in our region. With the Indigenous knowledges school, undergraduate study in Indigenous languages, advocacy and employment readiness, we offer postgraduate study in public policy, using case studies from our region, research degrees through the PhD program and masters. Researchers and students examine issues of demography, Indigenous knowledge and governance, workforce and economic development as well as policy evaluation. We work closely with the NT Government on its needs and aspirations for the development of the north. We work with Aboriginal communities to deliver on CDU commitment that the programs and models offered are Indigenous – led and follow best practice approaches to how Indigenous students learn.

As I think the overview I have given demonstrates, CDU provides much of the knowledge and human capital that together form the foundation for the prosperous and sustainable development of this remote and unique part of Australia, as well as contributing to the prosperity and well-being of our Asia Pacific neighbours.

We welcome the opportunity to partner with the students, staff and community of Centurion University. Being in such a remote location means

that CDU also needs to reach out and make connections with those people and places around the world with whom we can find mutual interest, and develop productive collaborations and exchanges that can benefit us all. Charles Darwin University looks north to develop our partnerships as we understand our region together, have shared histories and, for example Darwin is closer to many major Asian cities than it is to other cities in Australia.

While CDU can learn from the social enterprise model, we can support CUTM in research, especially research aimed at the welfare of marginalised and remote populations.

The International Labour Organisation forecasts 20 million new 'green jobs' globally to service the doubling of global markets for environmental products and services between 2008 and 2020. There needs to be a realignment of skills to adapt to the new sustainable growth economy, CDU and Centurion are well placed to play a role. Recently a group of Aboriginal people returned from Centurion University and shared the impact of seeing your work here. They are keen to share their experience and encourage others to build links.

I look forward to learning more about the Centurion and your role in regional development and identify opportunities to share our expertise and knowledge and to provide a service to those who can benefit from what we do best.

I wish you the best for today and the future and hope to be able to host some of you in Darwin one day, not too far away.

Thank you.

PROF. RUTH WALLACE

Biography

Professor Ruth Wallace is the Director of the Northern Institute at Charles Darwin University. Her research interests relate to the links between identity, marginalised learners and the development of effective learning and workforce development pathways. This work is situated in regional and remote areas of Northern Australia and Indonesia, with a specific focus in research approaches to improve service delivery and adaptation, undertaken with Aboriginal people in remote and regional areas.

Ruth currently leads the Regional, Economic & Workforce Development research team which focuses on collaborative approaches to workforce development and engagement with community, governments and industry that are sustainable and scalable. Ruth is the social science technical advisor for the Plant Biosecurity Cooperative Research Centre, with a focus on building resilience through community engagement and collaborative knowledge and management systems for biosecurity surveillance.

Ruth won the NT Leader/Manager of the Year category at the 2016 Australian Institute of Management's Leadership Excellence Awards in October 2016 for creating a culture of excellence at the Northern Institute and was recognised for her ability to exercise strong leadership in a complex and multi-disciplinary setting, and for building the Institute's profile among key stakeholders including government agencies, industry organisations, Indigenous communities and in the wider non-government sector.

Also in 2016 Ruth became the first female Australian researcher to be awarded a Fulbright Distinguished Chair in Agriculture and Life Sciences (Sponsored by Kansas State University). Ruth travelled and lived in the United States, for her scholarship, January to July 2017 building on her research engaging remote communities in biosecurity surveillance based at Kansas State University.