



## 2025-2026 Mission-Based Compact Between the Commonwealth of Australia and Charles Sturt University

### Purpose

This compact is an agreement between the Commonwealth and the University. Entering into a Compact is one of the quality and accountability requirements which a higher education provider must meet under the *Higher Education Support Act 2003* (HESA) as a condition of receiving a grant. Specifically, subsection 19-110(1) of HESA requires that Table A and Table B providers must, in respect of each year for which a grant is paid to the provider under HESA, enter into a Mission -Based Compact with the Commonwealth for a period that includes that year.

All strategies should provide qualitative and/or quantitative measures of assessment.

### Mission and Strategic Planning

Charles Sturt University's [Strategic Plan 2025-2027](#) focuses activity on enhancing our core operations, building emerging strengths, and planning for the future. A refreshed plan for 2026-2028 is underway, maintaining the focus on our four strategic pillars - Students, Research, People, Social Responsibility - in pursuit of our [2030 Vision and Strategic Goals](#). Progress is tracked through [KPIs](#).

#### Key Performance Indicators (Level 1)

	2024 Target	2024 Actual	2025 Target	2030 Target
Commencing Student Progress	88%	86.5%	88.2%	89.1%
QILT Overall Satisfaction	76.4%	79.1%	76.9%	79.6%
Cost Effective Teaching Delivery*	12.9%/21.3%	under review	under review	21.1%/25.7%
HERD Income	\$51m	\$44m	\$58.9m	\$100m
Research Quality	5 of 9 FoE =>Level 3	4 of 9 FoE =>Level 3	4 of 8 FoE =>Level 3	5 of 9 =>Level 3
Staff Net Promoter Score	0	-2	>0	>10
Lost Work Days	<2.6 (LTIFR**)	9.3 (LTIFR**)	492	<Education Industry Standard
Net Operating Margin	-2.4%	-10.4%	-8.5%	3-5% goal
Stakeholder Net Promoter Score	>30	48	>40	>35

\* Cost effectiveness of teaching is calculated as the Weighted Net Margin (Student Revenue minus Teaching Costs) divided by Student Revenue. Figures are for UG and PG respectively \*\* The indicator in 2024 was Lost Time Injury Frequency Rate. For 2025 onwards this was changed to Lost Work Days to better capture severity of injuries not just incidence.

We continue to manage cost pressures from operating multiple regional campuses and high-cost courses. International student revenue from metro campuses helps offset these challenges, allowing us to invest in regional workforce development. However, regional funding disparities

require us to reduce our operating budget by \$35 million by 2027, putting our capacity to deliver education and innovation in our communities at risk.

**Workforce and skill need:** 82% of Charles Sturt graduates from the regions go on to live and work in regional Australia, making us the leading university supplying the teachers, nurses, doctors, vets, dentists and allied health professionals our communities rely on. Our course profile reflects this focus, and a forward-looking labour market analysis (refer to the Future Market Scan initiative in the Students Strategy) informs how we adapt to emerging labour demands and broader workforce needs.

**Ensuring student and staff safety:** We prioritise the safety and wellbeing of our staff and students through strong security measures, emergency protocols and ongoing training. Our inclusive, secure campuses support mental health and accessibility, guided by our Accessibility Action Plan. A student-led Accessibility Reference Group is being piloted at our Albury campus and will expand university-wide in 2026. We've developed a co-designed 3-year safety roadmap (2023–2025) for both staff and students, integrating health, safety, and wellbeing into our operations. Additionally, we are developing a university-wide Gender-Based Violence Prevention and Response Action Plan, aligned with the National Code, to be implemented in 2026.

**Countering foreign interference:** We take a pro-active, whole of university approach - securing supply chains, vetting partnerships, and educating staff and students about risks. Clear policies ensure transparency and compliance, while ongoing collaboration with and security agencies fosters collaboration and strengthens our security and resilience.

**Cyber and data security:** We invest in robust cybersecurity measures to protect sensitive information and support a secure digital environment. Oversight is provided by the Audit and Risk Committee, with regular reviews to ensure best practice. We follow industry standards and promote a security-aware culture through ongoing training.

**Upholding freedom of speech and academic freedom:** Our [Statement of Academic Freedom and Freedom of Speech](#) affirms the rights of students, staff and visitors of lawful free speech and academic freedom. In the [2023-2025 Enterprise Agreement](#) the Intellectual Freedom provisions were expanded to also cover Academic Freedom.

## Strategies for Improving Equality of Opportunity in Higher Education

We are committed to inclusive education that reflects the diversity of our communities.

78.0% of Charles Sturt's domestic student cohort come from under-represented backgrounds, including First Nations, regional, remote, low SES, disability, women in non-traditional study areas, first in family and non-English speaking backgrounds. The [University Strategy 2030](#) and associated [Students Strategy](#) and [First Nations Strategy](#) outline our priorities to support students from under-represented backgrounds to access, participate, and succeed in their studies.

**In 2025-2026, our key priorities are:**

**To widen participation through aspiration raising, alternative entry pathways and enabling courses.** The University has a focus on building aspiration for university study through a high school engagement program and other initiatives for school children of all ages. Channels for prospective students from under-represented backgrounds to secure a place at Charles Sturt include our Charles Sturt Advantage early offer program, special consideration access schemes, enabling courses, First Nations Direct Entry Program, and a Science, Technology and Health Direct Entry Program. Our [Pathways Framework](#) supports the transition of First Nations and TAFE students.

**Investment in increasing First Nations peoples' success in higher education.** The University has a strong commitment to learn from and work with Australia's First Nations staff, students and stakeholders and to provide meaningful opportunities in higher education to First Nations peoples. We have consistently maintained one of the highest First Nations student loads among Australia's universities and are proud to be a university of choice for First Nations students. The University has a range of specific programs and [support in place for First Nations students](#), including culturally safe options for students to access support, connect with other First Nations students, and First Nations Student Centres available on seven campuses, as well as online support.

**Financial Support for students from identified equity groups.** Charles Sturt understands that the costs of higher education are a significant barrier for students. The University provides more than \$10 million in scholarships and financial support annually, with 89% of that funding going to students who fall into one or more equity groups. [Scholarships and financial support](#) provided by the University includes accommodation and living costs, professional placement and workplace learning costs, emergency funding to help those most in need to maintain their enrolment. Our HECG Equity Grant is being used to provide scholarships for equity students in their first year of the Doctor of Medicine. In 2025 we implemented the Commonwealth Prac Payments (CPP) and continue to advocate for an expansion to additional courses. In 2025 we are also working with the Vincent Fairfax Family Foundation to extend work placement grants to Paramedicine students (mirroring the government criteria for consistency).

**Specialist Support for Students.** The University provides a wide range of specialist services designed to support the success and retention of students. These services include learning and study skills support, careers support, safety and wellbeing – including counselling and Accessibility and Inclusion support – and other services including financial advice, LGBTIQ+ Ally program, special consideration, technical support, review and appeals, advocacy, and student representation. Our success is demonstrated by continued high levels of enrolments from students from equity groups; improved student retention; maintained levels of high student satisfaction; high levels of student completion; and maintaining sector-leading graduate employment rates.

## Strategies for Improving Teaching and Learning

Charles Sturt's key teaching and learning performance strategies for 2025-2026 include embedding the [Education Strategy Vision](#), *Educating for modern regional Australia*.

### Our key priorities are:

**High-quality learning and teaching:** In 2024 we increased the workload allocation to academic staff for scholarly activity, with 5% of teaching allocation dedicated to scholarly activity for Teaching/ Research, Teaching/ Professional, and Scholarly Teaching Fellows; and 10% of teaching allocation dedicated to scholarly activity for Teaching focused and Research focused staff. These provisions are included in the [2023-2025 Enterprise Agreement](#).

We have prioritised professional educational development for teaching via our investment in the [Charles Sturt Teaching Academy](#), launched in 2023. In 2025 we have supported teaching quality and scholarly uplift through the provision of an annual program of professional development for teaching staff including, among others, events and initiatives focusing on generative artificial intelligence. There has been a high level of take-up of these opportunities, and our teaching staff are being recognised at a national and international level – with 13 staff awarded international teaching fellowships via Advance HE in 2025. Overall, our efforts are resulting in higher levels of student satisfaction in the [2024 QILT Student Experience Survey](#) (to #5 among public universities) and more students succeeding in their studies – with commencing academic progress increasing to 89% in Session 1, 2025 (from 86.5% in 2024).

**Gen AI & Academic Integrity:** We are addressing academic integrity challenges posed by generative AI through assessment reform, including supervised and programmatic approaches aligned with TEQSA's [Enacting Assessment Reform in a Time of Artificial Intelligence](#) guidelines.

**Retention strategies:** Our student retention framework is focused on identifying whole-of-university approaches to improving student retention and success and embeds best practice transition pedagogy, including embedded support, into key first-year subjects. A Student Journey Map has identified key areas of focus and informed the development of the [Support for Students Policy](#) and procedures for both [Academic Progress](#) and [Early Intervention](#) – which outlines the University's early interventions to assist students to remain successful and engaged in their studies. Our programs have proven to be supportive for all students, however, are most impactful for students from equity backgrounds and VET pathways. Our [Support Services Directory](#) lists the range of support available to students who study with us. This includes support available to [international students](#) who can now access face-to-face support on all of our internationally focused campuses (Bathurst, Dubbo, Port Macquarie, Albury, Wagga Wagga).

**Micro-credentials development and delivery:** To support our ranking as number one in Australia for undergraduate full-time employment ([The Good University Guide](#)), we offer a suite of [microcredentials and short courses](#) to align with industry requirements, and we pursue partnerships with business and government to deliver these courses in areas of workforce need. For example, we recently announced a partnership with Queensland Health to deliver a short course *Ageing and Health: Professional Care with Impact*, to nurses and allied health professionals across their metro-south network.

## Strategies for Improving Research, Research Training, and Innovation

Charles Sturt has a documented [Research Strategy](#) which sets out a plan for producing quality research, supporting researchers through training, fostering innovation, and commercialising research outcomes. Our focus is on research with impact in our regions such as food security and sustainable agriculture, drought resilience and climate adaptation, digital and smart farming technologies, biosecurity, regional and rural health, and the priorities of First Nations communities. Key performance indicators (KPIs) have been set to measure achievement in these areas, all of which have strong alignment with the established National Science and Research Priorities, as well as those emerging from the Strategic Examination of R&D and the new National Health and Medical Research Strategy.

In terms of undertaking quality research, a key pillar in Charles Sturt's Research Strategy is the investment in Research Institutes and Centres in key focus areas: [Gulbali Institute for Agriculture Water and Environment](#), [Rural Health Research Institute](#), [Artificial Intelligence and Cyber Futures Institute](#), and the [Children's Voices Centre](#). Our investment in the Research Strategy is already producing strong results in terms of grant capture and research outputs and citations. Outside of Research Institutes and Centres, Charles Sturt is building on other areas of strength in areas such as regional education, and regional policy and practice.

In terms of measuring success in producing quality research, Charles Sturt monitors and sets annual targets for a range of KPIs, including:

- Field-Weighted Citation Impact, overall and in focus subject areas through SciVal.
- Publications by Journal Quartile (Q1 and Q2), overall and by Subject Area through SciVal.
- Scholarly Output, overall and by Subject Area through SciVal.
- World University Rankings and focus subject and impact rankings through Times Higher Education (THE) and Quacquarelli Symonds (QS).
- Higher Education Research Data Collection (HERDC) income through the Department of Education.
- Higher Degree by Research completions which forms part of HERDC reporting.
- An in-house measure of research activity known as the Research Productivity Index, which is used in performance management and determining eligibility for research supervision.

With increasing numbers of HDRs and HDR completions, Charles Sturt provides an extensive program of research training for both qualified and student researchers. This includes induction and introductory modules, academic writing, ethics and research compliance, research methods, researcher wellbeing, supervision, publishing, applying for grants, etc. Detailed information is available through the [Research Training Calendar](#).

In terms of innovation and commercialisation, Charles Sturt, through the Agri-Sciences Business Park ([AgriPark](#)), aims to be the premier regional collaboration and commercialisation hub supporting the growth of the Australian agriculture industry. The AgriPark is host to a community of researchers and demonstration facilities, education faculties and schools, and government and industry partners dedicated to generating high-quality research, education and commercial products and services for the market. The AgriPark provides the commercial infrastructure and coordination to enable the seamless and efficient functioning of the innovation ecosystem and the commercialisation of collaborative research.

## Strategies for Engaging with Industry

A key priority of our 2030 strategy involves identifying broader societal challenges and actively working with colleagues across sectors and industries on solutions – whether that solution relates to filling workforce shortages, advances in research and development, or via place-based precinct and service delivery.

During 2023, Charles Sturt led more than 735 business and industry discussions in regional NSW and facilitated 62 thought leadership and industry engagement events. Our community and industry stakeholder Net Promoter Score is 53, with feedback on the frequency and strength of our connections notably strong. More than 20 service delivery contracts are under management, with significantly higher numbers of MoUs in place for the purposes of co-design, sector advocacy and regional development.

Charles Sturt will continue to invest in partnerships with industry, government and community including local employers; national and international firms, including IBM, Transgrid, Telstra, Amazon Web Services and Marathon Health (to name a few); and with government agencies, including the CSIRO, NSW Department of Education and the Commonwealth Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries.

Partnership collaboration includes [co-location](#) at our regional university campuses, the co-design of short courses and micro-credentials that fill workforce shortages; and skills and training industry events and activities delivered in partnership with [Business NSW](#). We work with a broad range of industry and government networks at local, state and commonwealth levels – as there is such strong connection between our goals and those of our partners, particularly as it relates to regional prosperity and sustainability.

The University's broader industry engagement and partnerships support the transfer of new knowledge and techniques in a wide range of contexts, including education, through regional GPs, hospitals and other health facilities; aged care, through partnerships with public and private healthcare providers; agricultural producers and processors through the [Gulabli Institute](#), the [Agripark](#) and the [Southern NSW Drought Hub](#); front-line border security through the [Australian Graduate School of Police and Security's](#) partnerships with the AFP and state and Asia-Pacific forces, and through Australian Government funded [Biosecurity Training Centres](#), among others.

SIGNED for and on behalf of  
THE COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA  
by

**Jessica Mohr**

Full name (please print)

**First Assistant Secretary**

Position  
of the Department of Education

Signature

01/12/2025

Date

SIGNED for and on behalf of  
Charles Sturt University on 12 November  
2025

by

**Professor Renée Leon**

Full name (please print)

**Vice-Chancellor**

Position

Signature

In the presence of:

**Rachel Searl**

Witness (please print)

**Executive Officer**

Position or profession of witness (please print)

Signature

In the presence of:

**Jade Latu**

Witness (please print)

**Executive Officer**

Position or profession of witness (please print)

Signature