

OFF TO UNI'S BIG PLANS



If 2016 was all about vision and construction for the University of Tasmania, then this year is all about helping Tasmanians realise their potential, says Education Reporter LORETTA LOHBERGER

THIS year is shaping up to be another busy year for the University of Tasmania.

"We are undertaking a big curriculum redesign," UTAS vice chancellor Peter Rathjen has told the *Mercury*.

Part of this is the introduction of associate degrees, which will be offered by UTAS's University College from next month.

Agriculture and business will be the focus of the initial offerings and the new degrees are aimed at young Tasmanians who aren't choosing bachelor degrees, and older Tasmanians in traditional industries wanting a career change.

UTAS aims to have 10,000 students complete an associate degree within 10 years.

Prof Rathjen said the university wanted to offer more workplace experience and experiential learning.

The university is talking to TasTAFE about how the two institutions can work together.

"We don't want to be the same organisation as TAFE but we want to find the really good points of intersection so that we get the best efficiencies and the best education for our students," Prof Rathjen said.

He said there were opportunities for UTAS and TasTAFE to share facilities and teachers but discussions were in the early stages.

The university's proposed

2016 ACHIEVEMENTS

- Astronomer and inventor David Warren's \$2.6 million gift enabled the university to set up a \$5 million endowed chair – the university's first – in the field of astrophysics.
- UTAS ranked, for the first time, in the top 300 in the Academic Ranking of World Universities.
- The university celebrated its first two laureate fellowships, the premier funding for individuals.
- UTAS was the first university in Australia outside the "group of eight" to receive more than \$100 million in research grants in a single year.
- The university's massive open online course in dementia was named the world's number one health MOOC.
- For the first time student numbers reached 20,000 fulltime equivalent students.
- \$300 million secured for the university's relocation plans in Launceston and Burnie, with public consultation expected to get under way this month.
- Student accommodation in the centre of Launceston and the centre of Burnie opened, and the university's new apartments in Hobart's CBD are expected to open next month.
- Work began on the \$90 million creative industries and performing arts development in Hobart.



Peter Rathjen

\$400 million science, technology, engineering and mathematics centre for Hobart's CBD is also a major focus for the year. Prof Rathjen hopes the project proceeds as "quickly as possible".

"We have submitted a final proposal to Infrastructure Australia. We are hoping to get support from them within the next month or so," he said.

"It's a complete and utter game-changer for Hobart, the 4500 people that we would be putting onto that site."

Prof Rathjen said with the new student accommodation on Melville St, TasTAFE, the

nursing school on the Domain, the performing arts building under construction next to the Theatre Royal and some of Hobart's cultural buildings on Macquarie and Davey streets, the STEM building would add to a "lovely cultural and intellectual precinct" that's starting to emerge in Hobart.

"The world's great cities look just like that with students running around going to those sorts of things: evening lectures, evening concerts, restaurants starting to crop up," he said.

"That's where we're headed ... Hobart is really just starting

to feel like a university city."

The university's relocation into the centre of Launceston is progressing with the Federal Government formally allocating funds in its midyear budget update and a round of community consultation expected to begin this month.

Prof Rathjen said plans for the Newnham campus were also being considered.

"There's a whole lot of good ideas that are being considered," he said.

"We're really keen to play off the Australian Maritime College by putting in place a defence research and

commercialisation plan around it, so develop technologies, ICT tech all sorts of things that of the defence spend.

Prof Rathjen said also room for other developments.

"It's the last good flat land left in Launceston we reckon there'll eventually further accommodate housing built there and looking at old-age type housing accommodate those sorts of things," he said.

Another priority for the university this year is increasing its international student intake.

"We have a lot more to do on ... making us attractive to international students," Prof Rathjen said.

"But [last] year our international student up 20 per cent."

The university continues to welcome students from around the world but it is also hoping to attract more students from the Middle East — where it has a physical presence — and South America.

There's no denying it will be another busy year for the university and the vice-chancellor can sum up the university's focus in a sentence:

"We will be looking very hard with the State Government to continue to position the university as the heart of the state," he said.