

CREATE
**International Centre for Regional
Policy and Practice**

Discussion Paper

Research Portfolio

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1. Executive Summary

The purpose of this paper is describe the development of an intra faculty applied public policy research organisation devoted to public value creation in our areas of key policy concern. The paper proposes the establishment of *CREATE* – an International Centre for Regional Policy and Practice to conduct interdisciplinary, applied research in public policy and practice to advance knowledge, solve societal problems and improve the quality of life of Regional Australians.

The initiative will transform Charles Sturt University's capacity to engage with governments of all levels and undertake world class applied research on effective public policy and services in Regional Australia.

Although the focus of application will be on the regions, the research findings will have global reach. Hence the suggested working title. Our work will also correlate with the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals to ensure alignment with the University 2030 Research Strategy and global relevance.

The initiative will also be dedicated to promoting outstanding public sector leadership, policy and delivery that works for the benefit of regional communities.

It is envisaged that *CREATE* will make six main contributions to the intellectual life of Charles Sturt and its regional communities:

1. Research capability and infrastructure to win competitive grants and to drive outstanding research output.
2. Policy knowledge translation and rapid response consultancy services to improve engagement with government University-wide.
3. Supportive research communities to engender a world class higher degree research (HDR) experience.
4. Leading edge postgraduate education in applied public policy underpinned by world class applied research.
5. Through its engagement and outreach activities, we will provide the University with a bridge to government.
6. A rigorous research planning, monitoring and management approach will provide fertile conditions for high research performance.

These areas are key to nurturing successful regional policy practices, making *CREATE* a natural development for Charles Sturt University.

Working closely with the Institutes, Faculties and Schools (**Appendix 1**), *CREATE* will integrate existing high quality applied policy researchers into a supportive research community to help nurture regional solutions to global problems (**Appendix 2**).

2. Overview

2.1 Vision

In 2030, *CREATE* is Australia's premier centre for the study and practice of regional wellbeing. Our research and policy partnerships facilitate thriving and inclusive rural and regional communities for global benefit. We use critical inquiry for collective policy action to drive change addressing systemic and structural inequities.

CREATE is the centre of debate on regional policy innovation, with a mission to connect people with policy and policy-makers with people. Our research investigates and informs all stages of the policy process from idea to action. We educate policy leaders of the future. We publish innovative thinking and host thought-provoking events. We make a difference by working with regional communities to create relevant and evidence-based solutions to address the most pressing issues and policies in our regions, distribute policy resources more equally throughout society, and contribute to sustainable development.

2.2 Context

The Albanese Government and the Regions

In various respects Australia has become an increasingly unequal society. There is little doubt that one of the key dimensions of inequality for many years has been the divide between urban Australia and regional and remote Australia. Regional Australia experiences lower levels of educational attainment, lower levels of employment, poorer health outcomes, higher levels of domestic violence, and lower life expectancies than Urban Australia.¹ The ten federal electorates with the lowest average household incomes are all regional electorates, these include Cowper (6th) where Charles Sturt's Port Macquarie Campus is located, and its neighbouring electorates of Lyne (2nd) and Page (8th). The full list is:

1. Hinkler (Qld)
2. Lyne (NSW)
3. Grey (SA)
4. Braddon (Tas)
5. Wide Bay (Qld)
6. Cowper (NSW)
7. Mallee (Vic)
8. Page (NSW)
9. Maranoa (Qld)
10. Gippsland (Vic).²

Before the 2022 election, Anthony Albanese pledged that his Labor Government would support the National Farmers' Federation 2030 Roadmap, which aims to increase agricultural output to \$100 billion by 2030.³ The Prime Minister has also pledged through a \$15 billion National Reconstruction Fund to reinvigorate manufacturing, both in the cities and in the regions.

¹ Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (2022) *Rural and Remote Health*, <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/rural-remote-australians/rural-and-remote-health>

² William Bowe, 'Coming to our Census' *The Poll Bludger*, 30 June 2022, URL: <https://www.pollbludger.net/2022/06/30/coming-to-our-census/>

³ Anthony Albanese, 'Building a Better Future for Rural and Regional Australia' Speech delivered at the National Farmers Federation 2022 National Conference - Sustaining the Nation. Canberra, 5 April 2022.

The new Labor Government's agenda for the regions is clearer in areas of industry, such as agriculture and renewable energy, than it is in areas of social welfare and equity. In reality, many of the social policy priorities of the new Government are national issues, but these issues often play out differently in regional areas, where for example, limited local labour markets means the capacity to employ enough aged care workers is harder to achieve than in metropolitan areas.

One of the biggest effects on the regions will come from both climate change, and the Government's climate policy. Albanese claims that 500,000 new regional jobs will be created in the renewable energy sector (and a further 100,000 in urban areas). Depending on how these jobs are concentrated, the economic challenges this creates could be substantial. Many of these new jobs will require skills not currently in abundance in the areas where they are needed.

Climate change and Labor's climate agenda do provide opportunities for the regions, but also challenges in terms of changing the way various regionally based industries work. Australian regional and rural communities are highly dependent on water intensive primary industries. World Bank projections show a threat to Australia's agricultural industry, with a 2.7% decline in agricultural yield by 2050. As recent years have shown, extreme weather events can cause devastating consequences for agricultural producers. Further, communities dependent on mining for employment face an uncertain future, as policy efforts to limit emissions potentially limit output and employment opportunities.

Climate change and related policies also have potentially uneven effects on regional households. Any efforts to change consumer behaviours in terms of essentials such as electricity and water use, as well as any changes in affordability of common grocery and other essential items can fall disproportionately on those with the least capacity to afford greater expense. These individuals are more likely to reside in regional and remote areas. The effects on communities of climate disaster and of climate policy are not only economic, but also have the potential to cause significant health and mental health challenges as the widespread sense of loss of personal and community identities are difficult to respond to.

The Albanese Government has been vocal in its support of the Australian Public Service (APS) as an institution and is keen to reverse the recent trend towards outsourcing previously core public service work to the major private sector consultancies. This change will take time, however. The loss of skilled policy analysis work to consultancies has also led to a de-skilling of the APS in core areas. Opportunities to provide applied policy research to support the APS during this transition will continue to be ample, and opportunities to provide education and training services to help in re-skilling the APS will be expanding.

Both the areas of Labor's policy commitment and the areas of silence create research opportunity. Public policy and governance research is vital in determining the effects on regions of inaction, of various policy interventions already in train, and of various policy interventions that might be considered in the future. It is highly likely that the new Government will have learnt from previous missteps in regional governance, particularly the poor consultation and engagement around the release of the Murray-Darling Basin plan in 2010.⁴ There is a major place for a policy-oriented centre that can respond to the Australian Government's need for greater engagement and implementation capacity, as well as a need for greater policy analysis and evaluation capacity. The task of climate-proofing Australia's regions will not be a quick one, but the opportunity for Charles Sturt to play a leadership role in advising policy and service aspects of the challenge presents itself now.

URL: <https://anthonyalbanese.com.au/media-centre/building-a-better-future-for-rural-and-regional-australia-nff-2022>

⁴ Mark Evans and Lawrence Pratchett (2013) 'The localism gap – the CLEAR failings of official consultation in the Murray Darling Basin' *Policy Studies*, 34 (5-6): 541-558.

Opportunities at the State Level

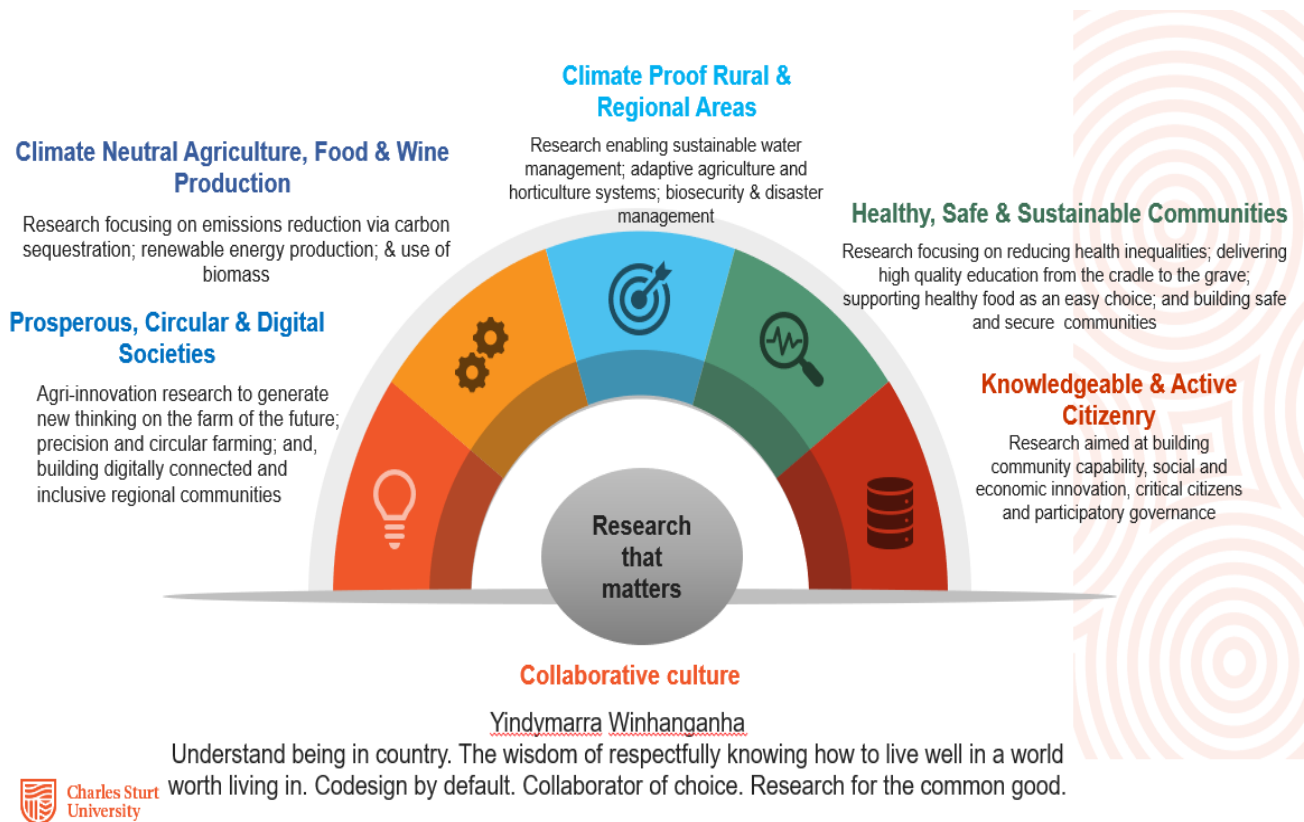
In a recent democratic audit of New South Wales state government the author (Evans, 2022) concluded:

“The evidence presented in this Audit suggests that the NSW Government possesses fully functioning and respected democratic institutions which have proved adaptable to the challenges posed by the bushfire and coronavirus crises.

NSW through its independent Election Commission conducts free and fair elections. The executive is in relative terms accountable, transparent, responsive and effective. The NSW Parliament is a dutiful and innovative custodian of democratic values and holds the executive effectively to account. The NSW system of justice and integrity agencies are robust and fair and the public service discharges its functions with great professionalism and creativity.

However, the composition of the NSW Government and Parliament is not representative of the community it serves either in gender or ethnic terms. It is also evident that a lack of integrity in public office in both the public sector and politics has become culturally embedded and is an issue of significant political salience. *And there is also evidence of the need to serve and connect more effectively with citizens in regional NSW and erosion of public confidence in the capacity of governments to address regional policy concerns.*”

There is clearly then a huge opportunity to align the University’s developing social purpose “Yindymarra Winhanganha”, values and research capability build to meet grand regional and global challenges. We have mapped out these challenges below.



Opportunities at the Global-International levels

The United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals provide proxy measures of potential Global-Regional policy challenges. **Table 1** maps these challenges against our areas of existing and emerging policy research strength. We identify strong alignment and significant investment potential.

Table 1. Alignment between SDG and Proposed Policy Themes

Sustainable development goals (SDG)	Thriving & Inclusive	Knowledgeable	Communicating & Informed	Prosperous & Adaptive, Safe & Secure
1. No poverty	x	x	x	x
2. Zero hunger	x	x	x	x
3. Good health and well-being	x	x	x	x
4. Quality education	x	x	x	x
5. Gender equality	x	x	x	x
6. Clean water and sanitation	x			x
7. Affordable and clean energy				x
8. Decent work and economic growth	x	x	x	x
9. Industry, innovation and infrastructure	x	x	x	x
10. Reduced inequalities	x	x	x	x
11. Sustainable cities and communities	x	x	x	x
12. Responsible consumption and production	x	x	x	x
13. Climate action	x	x	x	x
14. Life below water				
15. Life on land	x	x	x	x
16. Peace, justice, and strong institutions	x	x	x	x
17. Partnerships for the goals	x	x	x	x

2.3 Social Purpose

CREATE will conduct interdisciplinary, applied research in public policy to advance knowledge, solve societal problems and improve the quality of life of regional Australians.

The research and other activities conducted by *CREATE* must have genuine public value (economic, social, environmental, political) emanating from organic collaborations with stakeholders and researchers.

CREATE would be established with the following aim and approach: to create and sustain a world class research institution for the study and practice of regional public policy encompassing: public sector governance; policy design and innovation; social inclusion, wellbeing and equity; community resilience; place-based policy; policy modelling and evaluation; and community engagement. This approach would be applied to core regional policy arenas with a focus on improving practice.

2.4 Approach

CREATE will strive for excellence in all spheres of endeavour. This includes a focus on driving above world standard outcomes in policy-oriented Fields of Research (e.g., education, health, policy and administration, public ethics).

Underpinning all activities of the Initiative will be a focus on collaboration. The Initiative must partner strategically with industry, and particularly with government and the community sector to improve outcomes for Australia's regions. It must be outwardly focused and achieve its promise to support policy and governance structures that enable governments to work with communities, rather than to do things to communities.

CREATE offices in Bathurst and Canberra would give it the capacity to act as a bridge between regions and the Commonwealth Government, but it must also be embedded in regional communities, both by utilising Charles Sturt's presence throughout regional NSW, and by growing its links both in NSW and across Australia.

This connection between Canberra and the regions requires:

- a) **Impact on practice** – doing research that matters to people in regional areas and improves practice. *CREATE* must reflect regional perspectives, knowledge and practical experience, and it must further the future prosperity, well-being and resilience of these communities.
- b) **Enablement** – harnessing existing research strengths, and collaborating to provide a public policy and practice perspective to research outputs across disciplines. As a specialist public policy initiative based in Canberra, it will play a crucial knowledge translation role, as a hub providing new opportunities for researchers across the University to partner with government.
- c) **Education** – a focus on meaningful, work-relevant education and training to enhance governance and policy practice for the regions and beyond. *CREATE* will work closely with government agencies to design and deliver units that matter and that provide genuine workplace value.
- d) **Research quality** – an outward-looking focus within academia. *CREATE* will grow the reputation of Charles Sturt University both nationally and internationally through research collaboration and achievement. The Initiative will provide an outstanding visiting scholars programme for Australian and international researchers. It will broaden and deepen Charles Sturt's engagement in international and national conferences, creating new research and education opportunities University-wide.

These foci are inter-related, both in terms of how the work of research, education and translation and enablement reinforce one other, and in terms of how the financial gains in potentially more lucrative education, training and the enabling of rapid consultancy work can be reinvested in the research of the *CREATE*.

2.5 Alignment with Charles Sturt Goals and the University Strategy 2030

The goals of Charles Sturt University (as articulated in the University Strategy 2030) are to:

- Maintain the University's position in the top five Australian universities for graduate outcomes based on employment and salary.
- Embed a culture of excellence across all aspects of the University's operations.
- Grow research, development and innovation income in our chosen areas, delivering high impact outcomes for regional Australia.

These goals will guide the Initiative in all aspects of its planning and operation. More specifically, it will:

- Through academic excellence and stakeholder partnership co-create ground-breaking research, foster strategic partnerships with public sector, private sector, as well as regional communities.
- Support local academic talent across disciplines as well as build new capacity in its unit areas.
- Lead public conversation about global-regional policy challenges.
- Train the next generation of interdisciplinary social scientists and students translating cutting-edge research development into educational materials, tools, and methods, based on the principles of diversity and inclusion.

2.6 Alignment with Research Strategy

The Charles Sturt Research Strategy concentrates on collaborating with partners on research with impact and concentrates on the following four priorities:

- Growing our research in agriculture, water and the environment.
- Developing opportunities for growth in rural health research.
- Developing opportunities for growth in cyber, data and security research.
- Supporting the key research needs of our communities.

CREATE will also support the policy research of the three research institutes and Sturt Schemes (**Appendix 1**) with particular regard to: agritech, and agribusiness, climate mitigation, public health, and social inclusion and will bring leading edge research capability, methods and translation to this work.

2.7 Commitment to First Nations

Charles Sturt University operates on the First Nations' principle of Yindymarra Winhanganha – a Wiradjuri phrase meaning '*the wisdom of respectfully knowing how to live well in a world worth living in*'. The Initiative is committed to Yindymarra Winhanganha and working closely with First Nations communities in our footprint in collaboration with the Yindymarra Project.

3. Focus

3.1 Themes

CREATE will conduct ground-breaking interdisciplinary research, with a focus on the issues of most importance to regional Australia's health, well-being, prosperity, and resilience.

The ultimate research goal for the Initiative will be to produce outstanding publicly valued research but it must also be a conduit for driving world class ERA outcomes for the University in policy oriented FoR. The Initiative will aim for a 3 in the next round in each of these FoR codes, and 4/5 in the subsequent reporting round. In part, this will require a hiring strategy that brings in scholars/groups of scholars with excellent publication and grant-winning records using the Distinguished Professors Scheme. But it will rely on a collaborative research approach, that works with and enhances existing and emerging areas of research excellence across the University, as well as working with established national and international researchers in public policy.

At the heart of the issues of central importance to the regions is the challenge of inequality between urban and regional Australia. This challenge plays out in different ways in different policy areas, but can be particularly pronounced when national one-size-fits-all policy approaches are taken. It is crucial that the Initiative's research agenda is not solely focused on policy analysis that charts problems and suggests technical solutions, but also on providing governance mechanisms that allow an effective and genuine regional voice to determine how social, economic, environmental and health outcomes are improved, and to foster solutions to manage that improvement.

At times, regional Australia has suffered from a problem of competing visions, one held by national policymakers, and another held by the people who live and work in regional communities themselves. Increasingly, this situation has been recognised in recent years, leading to a greater focus on place-based approaches to public policy and services, and to greater efforts at partnering with communities.

Our research will focus on a series of grand challenges that particularly affect regional Australia. These could encompass the following themes (Appendix 2):

1. **Thriving and inclusive communities**
2. **Knowledgeable communities**
3. **Communicating and informed communities**
4. **Prosperous and adaptive, safe and secure communities**

With additional cross-cutting themes such as:

- Translational research.
- First Nations ways of knowing, being and doing linked to *Yindymarra*.
- Community engagement, codesign and participation (e.g., Hider and Garner's work on cultural capital).

These are complex challenges, and will require multi-disciplinary approaches to analyse, and importantly to devise innovative potential solutions. In concert with Charles Sturt's other research Institutes richer, more persuasive research can be conducted, both from economic and policy analysis perspectives, and from participatory governance and implementation perspectives.

Each of the grand challenges has the capacity to be part of both the Institute's research strategy and part of its engagement strategy. Each provides opportunities for:

- Category 1 research grants, particularly in the form of ARC Linkage Grants.
- Category 2, 3 and 4 research, including commissioned research for governments at all levels, and international organisations and foundations.
- Public reports, designed to promote the Initiative and other Charles Sturt research institutes. Given the Initiative’s proposed location in Barton ACT, these can form the basis of public events to be held in the Parliamentary Triangle, allowing the Initiative to garner the attention of the Australian Government.

In all of this work, the competitiveness of the *CREATE* in winning grants will be enhanced by its links to other existing Charles Sturt research institutes.

CREATE will embrace methodological pluralism:

- Interdisciplinary, policy relevant applied social science.
- Public policy analysis skills and methods.
- Distinctive capabilities in behavioural insights, spatial and microsimulation modelling, impact assessment, community engagement and capability building.

It will be the go-to place on all things regional policy, services and engagement with an emphasis on what works research.⁵

Alignment with the National Science and Research Priorities

The Australian government has determined nine main Science and Research Priority areas as well as linking these areas with practical research challenges. The current Science and Research Priorities incorporate Food, Soil and Water, Transport, Cybersecurity, Energy, Resources, Advanced Manufacturing, Environmental Change, and Health. The proposed themes are well-aligned with the nine National Science and Research Priorities as each national research priority area overlaps with one or more of them. The overlaps are presented in **Table 2**.

Table 2. Alignment between National Priority Areas and Themes

National Priority Areas	Thriving & inclusive	Knowledgeable	Communicating & informed	Prosperous & adaptive, safe & secure
Food	✓			✓
Soil and Water				✓
Transport				✓
Cybersecurity	✓	✓	✓	✓
Energy				✓
Resources				✓
Advanced Manufacturing				✓
Environmental Change	✓	✓	✓	✓
Health	✓	✓	✓	✓

⁵ See Gerry Stoker and Mark Evans (2016) *Evidence based Policy-making and the Social Sciences – methods that matter*, Bristol, Policy Press, [Evidence-based policy making in the social sciences: Methods that matter on JSTOR](#).

3.2 Education and Professional Development Programmes

CREATE will provide education and professional development programmes that are:

- Career enhancing and work-relevant for participants.
- Innovative and engaging.
- Adaptable to client needs.
- Reputation enhancing for the University.

The best applied research and education programmes operate together in a virtuous circle. Education and professional development work best when underpinned by a combination of the best evidence, and the best lessons drawn from practical experience. And these teaching programmes also lead to further research ideas and opportunities. Crucial to this dual focus on evidence and practice is the core of leading, applied academic researchers, and the appointments of staff, adjuncts and research students with practical experience in regional governance and policy, as well as in other key areas of teaching and research need.

The opportunities for new education programmes that fill needs in and beyond government are myriad. With the new Commonwealth Government and NSW Government determined to reduce reliance on consultancy firms, the public service programmes will be seeking to rapidly reacquire policy analysis skills through short accredited and non-accredited programmes.

The skills need in the fundamentals of policy analysis are matched by the Australian Public Service's (APS) current drive to hire and upskill data analysts at all levels of the service. A huge component of the APS skills focus within its new Workforce Strategy is on developing and enhancing policy, digital and data skills.⁶ Similar skills requirements exist in state and local governments. Few accredited courses exist that provide a public sector-focused approach to data analytics or digital service delivery. The only current exception is University of Canberra's Graduate Certificate in Policy and Data. There is an opportunity to collaborate with Charles Sturt's AI and Cyber Futures Institute to fill this gap.

The approach to all professional education programmes should be co-design of content and delivery where possible. The best professional education programmes are meaningful and work-relevant, and designed to fill needs within workplaces. As a result, it is crucial that the approach of the Centre is to partner with government agencies in ensuring that content is both academically rigorous and of genuine practical value to its audience. For the most part, this will mean winning contracts for services with various agencies in Canberra and elsewhere. There are few committed University competitors in this market, although a new competitor is potentially emerging in UNSW's expansion into Canberra. Established programmes at the University of Canberra are small, while ANU's Crawford School has tended to favour non-accredited education over accredited offerings. Charles Sturt has an opportunity to provide a unique, innovative education programme for those working in governance and policy areas that affect Regional Australia, and has a significant advantage in the potential to utilise Charles Sturt's Barton campus, which is the closest University campus to the parliamentary triangle, and is therefore, located in walking distance from a large number of APS agencies.

The education work of the Centre can provide both funding to support research, and prestige that enhances the reputation of the University. The Centre, over time, should be prepared to deliver non-award courses and masterclasses, micro-credentialed short courses and graduate certificate programmes that could be designed to build towards a Master of Public Policy (see **Table 3**). This will allow the Centre to create courses that mesh with offerings from across the University, particularly where those offerings align with potential, or actual, APS professions, such as the policy,

⁶ *Australian Government*, Delivering for Tomorrow: APS Workforce Strategy 2025. Commonwealth of Australia 2021, https://www.apsc.gov.au/sites/default/files/2021-03/APS_Workforce_strategy.pdf

data and digital professions. A course structure could also include specialisation in a range of public service professions/policy programme areas and other areas of expertise where opportunities and expertise exist across the University.

Table 3. Centre education and professional development programmes

Master in Public Policy (with specialisations)	
Masters	Dissertation
Applied Pathways	Specialist pathway in policy programme area or APS profession
12 cp Graduate Certificate in Public Policy⁷	Units in Public Policy, Policy Analysis, Policy Design, Public Ethics and Leadership
Short courses and micro-credentials	Linked to units and modules within units

This ambitious approach would again demonstrate the *CREATE*'s collaborative, University-wide focus, and would allow it to provide career-long education services.

Research Training

CREATE will provide a high-quality research community for fostering graduate education with the aim of nurturing a new generation of PhD educated academics particularly in regionally focused public governance and public policy to meet the national and international skills deficit in this area. Its PhD students will be:

- Central in the activities of the community and in setting the research agenda.
- Embedded within vibrant research programs which possess a critical mass of scholars who share ideas, challenge each other, and push forward the frontiers of knowledge.
- Supported by a research unit which provides them with methodological choices to build their capacity not just to complete a thesis but to pursue a career in academia or other research led careers.
- Taught the rudiments of good academic and professional practice, including ethical practices in research.
- Provided with regular opportunities to communicate their ideas and debate other key disciplinary concerns.
- Work in an environment where problems with academic progress are shared and debated in a reflexive, professional manner.

3.3 Engagement and Enabling Services

As well as being a major contributor to Charles Sturt's vision to be Australia's leading regional university, the Centre will be a key enabler for research impact, prestige, and consultancy research income. This arm of the Centre could be branded as a Charles Sturt-wide policy engagement body. The Centre's location in Barton would provide a logical home for Charles Sturt's policy engagement,

⁷ This will be available free to members of the Charles Sturt research institutes and faculties. This will upskill Charles Sturt staff to translate their research into policy.

but the brand should not be too “regional policy” specific to ensure people looking for a non-regionally focused policy or governance related service are not discouraged from seeking to utilise Charles Sturt’s expertise.

Policy translation

One of the key services the *CREATE* must provide is in the translation of Charles Sturt research from multiple disciplines to government. Charles Sturt researchers are aware of the need to ensure that their research is impactful, but often the skills of research and the skills of policy translation to government are separate to the skills of communicating with policymakers. *CREATE* can provide expertise and avenues to Commonwealth and State public services to ensure that the research from Australia’s leading regional University is able to be utilised by to improve the prosperity and wellbeing of the regions through actionable policy.

A range of expertise is needed here, but the *CREATE* will need to recruit specifically for the translation purpose, and will also need to ensure that a strong network of adjunct practitioners from current and former senior public servants is recruited, and ready, willing and able to assist in this mission.

Rapid response consultancy

Another key enhancement *CREATE* can provide is assistance in identifying consultancy opportunities, as well as responding rapidly to research and education and training tenders across the University. The capacity to respond rapidly, and the expertise to respond in a way that collapses the barriers of understanding between research academics in diverse disciplines and public servants at all levels of government is a key value-add that the *CREATE* can provide for both its own work and the work of others across the University.

CREATE can assist other parts of Charles Sturt in two ways. One is that it can act as a hub for any consultancy queries in research or education that come in. Frequently, organisations, including public service agencies, that want to engage a university are unclear on who to contact and stumble at the hurdle of navigating complex university structures to find the right person. A one-stop-shop that can provide access to resources across the University provides a major advantage. The second advantage is in sharpening the pitch to government that a range of university research and education bodies can provide by helping them to tailor tenders in ways that improve their accessibility to governments.

Engagement events

A public engagement strategy is crucial for the *CREATE*’s own development and growth, as well as for providing a platform for other research University-wide. Public events should be research-driven, providing platforms for publicly accessible research projects on key issues, such as reports on the major challenges above, among many others. This research can be driven entirely by the *CREATE* or performed collaboratively with other researchers across the University and can be designed to highlight to government the outstanding work of the University.

4. Benchmarking and Market Analysis

4.1 Australian Regional Policy Research Landscape

The regional policy and governance university research landscape is relatively patchy, leaving clear space for a new, committed centre in this area.

The independent thinktank, the Regional Australia Institute (RAI), describes itself as the only independent research institute dedicated to rural and regional policy research. It collaborates with RMIT (Bruce Wilson and Peter Fairbrother), UniSA, and Charles Darwin University. The research regional research focus in these universities is relatively limited.

Much academic research with a regional focus is conducted by policy area experts (e.g., in public health, education, housing etc) rather than regional policy experts as such.

4.2 Income Streams

CREATE will initially be reliant on centrally allocated Charles Sturt funding, but will attract income from multiple streams – primarily research and postgraduate and executive education. It is envisaged that income for the Centre will be generated through six main sources:

1. Research Infrastructure Levey (RIL), from research projects charged at 20% above the research activities. The Centre receives half (10%) of the income. The revenue will be generated from grant funding in the following four categories:
 - Category 1 income: grant income from programmes listed on the Australian Competitive Grants Register (i.e., competitive grant funding from Australian government).
 - Category 2 income: other competitive public sector research income inclusive of state and local governments and partly government-owned or funded bodies.
 - Category 3 income: funding from the private sector, philanthropic and international sources, including: Research grants or contract research with Australian or international industry or non-Australian Government agencies. Funding through donations, bequests, and foundations (both Australian and international).
2. Consultancy Income generated outside of Category 1-3 research projects, specifically, Outside Professional Activities (OPA) as Centre academics will engage with private sector partners. The surplus from the consultancy is distributed: (a) 50% to the researcher; (b) 25% to Charles Sturt central funds; and (c) 25% to *CREATE*.
3. Higher Degree by Research (HDR) students enrolled in the Centre have a fee distribution from the Commonwealth, out of Charles Sturt central funds of \$13k per HDR student.
4. Micro-credential executive courses will be offered from 2025. *CREATE* will receive 67% of the income.
5. Postgraduate offering (Graduate Certificate, Master's level courses or equivalent) will be offered from 2025 and will be hosted by the appropriate Faculty/School. The income generated from full fee-paying students will follow Unit convenorship.
6. Surplus research funds on completion of a project (if permitted by the funding body), distributed as follows: (a) 50% to the researcher; (b) 25% to Charles Sturt central funds; and (c) 25% to *CREATE*.
7. Additionally, *CREATE* will explore commercialisation opportunities where appropriate and desirable.

5. Governance and Management

5.1 Management Plan

CREATE will be led by an Executive Research Director and an Education Director, supported by a Professional Team and a Research Team. This model reflects the fact that social science research institutes require diverse sources of funding, and education work will be required to support a sustainable research and engagement programme.

CREATE will have a Business Manager, with core Institute responsibilities for responding to research and education opportunities, in concert with the Office of Engagement and Enterprise. *CREATE* will also draw on the expertise of the DVCRE Business Operations Manager for coordinating engagement activities. Each will be supported by an appropriate number of junior professional staff, as coordination workloads expand.

Executive Team

- Executive Director at 100% FTE will lead *CREATE*.
- Education Director at 100% FTE to coordinate the design and delivery of the education programme.
- Unit Directors/Convenors with 0.2 additional loading.

Professional Team

- Business Manager (L8) at 100% FTE will support research development and contracting activity.
- EA to Support Executive Director at 100% FTE.
- EA to Support Education Director at 50% FTE.

Research Unit Teams

Each research unit will be allocated a budget to support a combination of:

- Unit Directors/Convenors.
- Core Fellows.
- Faculty Fellows through an internal buy-out scheme.
- Visiting Fellows.
- Adjunct Fellows.
- PhD scholarships.
- Honours scholarships.

Project Co-Investment

- Support for research project pilot studies: \$50,000 per year.

5.2 Membership

CREATE membership will include:

- External academics recruited to *CREATE* as Core Fellows.

- Faculty Members: Charles Sturt University Academics, who may be a member of one or more of the *CREATE* programmes.
- Faculty Fellows: Charles Sturt University Academics, who are Members of *CREATE* and for a period are specifically funded to work in *CREATE* on a full- or part-time basis.
- Visiting Fellows: international scholars, who will visit *CREATE*.
- Adjunct Fellows: external scholars or practitioners active in the delivery of *CREATE* research.

All funded positions will be filled on a competitive basis, subject to robust performance criteria with recruitment decisions taken by a high-quality recruitment committee drawn from the academy and practice.

5.3 Governance Plan

CREATE will work under the mandate of the Research Portfolio, reporting to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research), through to the Vice Chancellor. The activities of *CREATE* will draw on the advice of an Advisory Group, which will include strong Faculty-School representation, public and private sector practitioners, as well as academics.

6. Key Partners

6.1 Partners Identified as Key to Success

Charles Sturt has been approved as a partner in the James Martin Policy Institute with a focus on contributing high class applied scholarship with particular regard to: AI and cyber security; child wellbeing; democratic governance; food and water safety; climate mitigation and agri-tech innovation. It is proposed that *CREATE* coordinates this work. This will provide pilot project funding and additional capability to *CREATE*.

“The James Martin Institute for Public Policy (JMI) is an independent, non-partisan policy institute. Our mission is to bring government, academic and other experts together to develop practical solutions that address societal challenges and improve lives. JMI was launched in 2021, following a generous grant from the NSW Government with matched funding from a group of NSW universities. Our university partners now include the University of Sydney, Western Sydney University, the University of Technology Sydney, the University of New South Wales and Charles Sturt University.” <https://jmi.org.au/>.

In addition, the following collaborative partnerships will be key:

- Southern NSW Joint Organisation of Local Governments (Local Government Policy Lab).
- Democratic Audit of the UK/Australia.
- Trust.gov.net.
- Commonwealth Strengthening Democracy Taskforce.
- Commonwealth Departments of Health and Ageing, Industry, Infrastructure, and Social Services.
- NSW Departments of Communities, Education, Health, Primary Industries, Regional NSW.

Appendix 1. Research Institutes, Faculties and Sturt Schemes

For the University's 2030 Research Strategy see: <https://staff.csu.edu.au/university-strategy/strategic-focus-areas/research>

At Charles Sturt, we are committed to creating new knowledge that can be applied for the betterment of our communities - both global and local.

Charles Sturt University has emerging Research Institutes and three Faculties. They are designed to bring together staff around a coherent theme.

Research Institutes

Gulbali Institute

CREATE's impactful integrated agriculture, water and environment research, grounded in Charles Sturt's footprint across the Murray-Darling Basin, but with impact across Australia and globally.

(The Graham Centre; National Wine and Grape Industry Centre; and Institute of Land Water and Society have transitioned into the Gulbali Institute.)

The Gulbali-AgriPark will be the premier regional collaboration and commercialisation hub supporting the growth of Australian agriculture to \$100bn by 2030. We are committed, through Gulbali values, to building a circular and digital Wagga Wagga Valley with our industry and government partners. The Gulbali-AgriPark will provide a living and virtual dashboard of what works in agri-innovation, a meeting place for researchers, governments and communities to solve intractable problems and a beacon of best practice emulated across the world.

See: <https://staff.csu.edu.au/university-strategy/strategic-focus-areas/research/world-class-institutes/implementationgulgali-agriparkecosystem-strategic-plan-2023-2027>

AI and Cyber Futures Institute

The purpose of the AI and Cyber Futures Institute (AICF) is to create a world class research centre of excellence in data science, artificial intelligence, and cyber security, to pursue the agenda of regional discovery, showing how AI developed 'off the beaten track' and 'in the wild' can better serve not only rural and regional communities, but society as a whole, creating a new competitive advantage for Australia internationally. See: <https://staff.csu.edu.au/university-strategy/strategic-focus-areas/research/world-class-institutes/ai-and-cyber-futures-institute-aicf-strategic-plan-2023-2027>

Rural Health Research Institute

The purpose of the RHRI is to transform health outcomes in Regional Australia and beyond. The objectives of the RHRI are predicated on the terms established through the seed funding provided by the Commonwealth Government under a 5-year grant funding instrument ("the Grant"). Specifically, the Grant cites the following objectives for the conduct of the research:

- Addresses Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health inequity and contributing to Close the Gap aspirations.
- Improve the experience of Ageing and Aged Care in Rural Communities.
- Improve Child Development Health Outcomes.
- Improve health and medical service delivery in regional cities, rural towns and remote community.

It is also explicit in setting objectives relating to capability and capacity building, as follows:

- Boost rural, consumer-driven health and medical research capability and capacity.
- Enhance clinical research capacity.

See: <https://staff.csu.edu.au/university-strategy/strategic-focus-areas/research/world-class-institutes/rural-health-research-institute-rhri-strategic-plan-2023-2027>

Faculties

Charles Sturt University has three Faculties (Arts and Education, Business, Justice & Behavioural Sciences, and Science and Health) and comprise a number of Schools and centres for specific areas of study and research.

Faculties operate across campuses and are responsible for developing and delivering courses, while schools are generally based on a single campus and carry responsibility for teaching subjects.

Faculty of Arts and Education (FOAE)

Our specialities are performing and visual arts, art history, communications, human services, library and information studies, theology, sociology, literature, philosophy, history, Indigenous Australian studies, education, teacher education, Islamic studies and civilisation.

Faculty of Business, Justice and Behavioural Sciences (FOBJBS)

Our specialities are in policing, law, criminology, security, emergency management, customs and excise studies, border management, psychology, accounting, engineering, human resources, marketing, business management, computing and information technology.

Faculty of Science and Health (FOSH)

Our disciplines include: Agricultural and Wine, Animal and Veterinary, Environmental and Outdoor Recreation, Allied Health and Paramedicine, Exercise and Sport, Medical and Dentistry, Nursing, Midwifery and Indigenous Health.

Sturt Scheme Research Groups

<https://research.csu.edu.au/our-profile/current-research/sturt-scheme-research-groups>

The Sturt Scheme was introduced to support areas of research that will not be covered by the three focussed research areas as approved by Council (Ag, Water and Environment; Rural Health; Cyber and Data).

Ageing Well in Rural and Regional Australia | Associate Professor Melissa Nott, Three Rivers University Department of Rural Health

This new research group formalises the activity of the Ageing Well Research Group into a cohesive network that brings a regional focus to communities and partnerships that address the broader social and cultural determinants of health outcomes that are person-centred rather than disease specific. In executing our research, the vision is to shape the ageing agenda through collaboration with older adults and their caregivers, health professionals, service providers, and policy makers to jointly find solutions, strategies and pathways towards healthy ageing in regional and rural communities

Contemporary Threats to Australian Society (CTAS) | Professor Seumas Miller & Professor Mark Nolan

The group will consider Contemporary Right-Wing Extremism in Australia –seen as the most significant terrorist threat to Australia’s domestic security yet largely ignored by Australia’s

terrorism researchers; and Trade-Based Money Laundering (TBML) – TBML is the largest and most pervasive money laundering methodology in the world and a significant, but entirely under-researched threat to Australia's economic security.

Curriculum and Pedagogy | A/Professor Amy MacDonald; Dr Jenny Munday; Dr James Deehan, Associate Professor Lena Danaia

The Curriculum and Pedagogy Program presents a transformative educational research program. This program builds on the existing strength of education research at the University.

Early Childhood Interdisciplinary Research (ECIR) | Professor Sharynne McLeod; Professor Julian Grant; A/Professor Sarah Verdon, Dr Libbey Murray, Dr Suzanne Hopf
(<https://earlychildhoodresearch.csu.domains/>)

The Early Childhood Interdisciplinary Research Group (ECIR) presents a transformative research program promoting social justice for children, families and practitioners within early childhood across two themes: Interdisciplinary Practice in the Early Years and Children's Communication in the Early Years

Future of the Professions Research Group | A/Professor Steve Clarke

What are professional obligations? How do these change over time? There is a foundational debate in applied ethics on the nature of professional obligation. In what ways can community engagement and curriculum co-creation enhance education for the professions? Through partnerships with industry, priority community issues can be explored and strategies developed to enhance professionals' capacity to respond to urgent challenges spelled out in the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

Policy & Security Science (PaSS) | A/Professor Patrick Walsh

PaSS will provide a new and contemporary focus in Policing and Security Science research at Charles Sturt University (Charles Sturt) through the delivery of cutting edge multi-disciplinary research in police wellness & welfare and health security.

Regional Work and Organisational Resilience | A/Professor Larissa Bamberly and A/ Professor Gene Hodgins

Regional Work and Organisational Resilience research group will focus on the physical, mental, and emotional health and wellbeing of the workforce (with a particular focus in regional areas), and its effective management to increase organisational resilience for societal good.

Appendix 2. Alignment of Themes and Current Research

DRAFT NOTES FROM BATHURST WORKSHOP

Communicating and Informed Communities

CAPABILITY AND TRACK RECORD

Libraries research group

- Sturt Scheme – Future of the Professions – Libraries
- ARC Linkage – Co design of public library spaces - regional and metropolitan (3 case studies)
- DECRA – coded public policy – Libraries for people who are homeless
- Prison librarianship
- Partner with state library – Linkage -inclusion

Media, communication and culture

- Historical track record
- Public personality systems
- Digital communication/culture

Children's communication

- Sturt Scheme – Early Childhood Interdisciplinary Research Group (ECIR)
- ARC Discovery, Linkage, Future Fellowship
- NSW Health Translational Research Grant

PROGRAMS FOR FUTURE

ALL VOICES ARE HEARD (disparate voices) – EVERYONE IS INFORMED

Future – is so different from the past – newspapers, books,

Libraries research group

- Public libraries in every town
- Evaluation of the value of public libraries (cf. Scandinavia) – elements, services
- UNESCO Public Libraries agenda – mapped to individual public library mission statements – investigate gaps

Media, communication and culture

- Zoom/Teams and institutional communication/transformation – assumptions – anonymise sharing relationship with corporations
- Emotion in digital culture
- Influencer culture

Children's communication

- Communication for all and the Sustainable Development Goals
- Communicating success stories – hope for the future
- Children's voices informing policy and imagining their futures
- Multilingual capacity –children, communities and the global workforce
- Fragmented early communication policy and practice

METHODS

- Codesign
- Case studies
- Mixed methods

Media, communication and culture

- Interviews
- Surveys
- Analysis of digital data
- Storytelling around research – Mark Evans + Virginia

Children's communication

- Large-scale longitudinal data – big data analysis
- Qualitative
- Quantitative
- First nations methodologies
- Children's voices/drawings

Knowledgeable Communities

CAPABILITY AND TRACK RECORD

- Curriculum and Pedagogy Sturt Scheme
- Critical Transdisciplinary Indigenous Studies Research Group.
- Association of independent schools
- Partnerships with schools, partnerships with government for training
- Partnerships with First Nations
- ARC
- Relationship with Regional Education Commissioner

PROGRAMS FOR FUTURE

- Regional education and workforce, health STEM, ageing population, young First Nations population, cultural safety
- Regional media and information literacy
- Regional First Nations voice
- Clive Hamilton's comment about educating non-indigenous peoples on indigenous issues

METHODS

- First Nations building, language
- Mixed – methods, collaborative, participatory action research, benchmarking, case studies, First Nations methodologies

Prosperous, Adaptive, Safe and Secure Communities

CAPABILITY AND TRACK RECORD/PROGRAMS FOR FUTURE

Which specific topics of research best cluster around your policy domain area?

Workplace wellbeing

- Valuing difference/diversity
- Mental and emotional wellbeing
- Decolonisation of 'inclusive' and 'diversity' phrasing

- Multiculturalism
- Codesign

Future workforce planning in a regional context

- social workers, intelligence, farmers, public service, psychologists, teachers, police, ambulance, professions, trades and other current and emerging regional priority roles
- skills development (articulating and integrating from VET to uni awards), adaptable leadership
- research supporting the education of future leaders
- not only the individuals, also the organisations and professions (values, ethics)
- Note: Social work placements on campus for distance students

Safe and secure

- Stable? world, safe communities (health security, terrorism, financial crime, border security- linked to criminology, political science and public admin FORS)
- Cultural safety and wellbeing

Ethics

Thriving and Inclusive Communities

CAPABILITY AND TRACK RECORD/PROGRAMS FOR FUTURE

Early Childhood Interdisciplinary Research (ECIR) Sturt Scheme

- A transformative research program promoting **social justice** for children, families and practitioners within early childhood
- We build capacity for engaging in transformative research within teams and with other researchers
- Interdisciplinary Practice in the Early Years
- Children's Communication in the Early Years
- ARC grants; NSW Health Grants, Q1 journals

Aging Well in Regional Australia Sturt Scheme

- Capacity building
- Understanding unique needs of older adults in Regional Australia – rapidly aging population
- Workforce development
- MANNA – (manna gum) regional universities 7 RUN
- Rural mental health
- DECRA
- Social infrastructure and disadvantage and underserved communities – public libraries
- Gender network gendered subject and gender identity – social structures culture and identity – and what gendered heteronormativity – radio show and podcasts
- + feminist matters
- Social work practice and theory and human services in rural and remote communities
- Social work education and curriculum clinical practice
- Curriculum and pedagogy
- Professional practice
- Early childhood – higher ed = workforce and professional practice research group
- Aging, welfare and education – 3 areas that Church has a huge input into - policy

METHODS

- Qualitative methods
- Quantitative methods
- Creative approaches
- Dialogic approaches
- Feminist methodologies

- Survey research
- Needs analysis
- Sentiment analysis (qual)
- Social media listening (qual)
- Focus groups/ in-depth (qual)
- Experiential / in the moment (qual)
- Experimentation (quant)
- Structural Equation Modelling SEM (quant)
- Interviews
- Discourse analysis
- Case study
- Surveys (qual and quant)
- Systematic scoping reviews
- Theory of practice architectures complexity
- Phenomenology
- Humanist approaches
- Critical cultural theory
- Ethnography
- Co-design
- Action research
- First Nations methodologies (e.g., yarning)
- Participant-led methodologies
- Pictorial measures with children
- Children's drawings analysis
- Questionnaires
- Large national data set analysis
- Online surveys

**need to ALIGN WITH FOE and FOR and SDGs and democratic rights and values and advocacy – and explain how we enact this

What would be our headlines:

Policy related to social justice, health equity, workforce, gender, intersections of health, welfare and education across social infrastructures, addressing disadvantage and underserved regional Peoples and communities

Additional key words

- Regional Australia
- Workforce and workforce capacity
- Interdisciplinarity
- Cross- disciplinary
- Rural mental health
- Social infrastructure
- Disadvantage, poverty, underserved communities
- Gender
- Identity