A critical policy analysis of the Crossroads Review:

Implications for higher education in regional

Western Australia

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Declaration

I declare that the work presented in this dissertation is the result of my own research. The material has been prepared expressly for this dissertation and has not been presented to any other university or institution for any other degree or award.

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Abstract

This work is a critical policy analysis of the Crossroads Review, especially those aspects of it that are most likely to have a significant impact on higher education in regional Western Australia. It aims to understand the place of higher education in regional Western Australia historically with a view to critiquing current policy directions and the potential consequences of Crossroads. The thesis argues that the ideologies of marketisation and corporatisation are driving current higher education policy and this may significantly damage the long-term viability of regional campuses and learning centres as well as public and private funding allocations. The implications for the dismantling of the social contract (or social democratic settlement) in the knowledge economy is an important issue for regional populations for their continued growth, health, education and welfare.

The issues examined here are relevant to regional higher education in this State. The purpose of this thesis is to examine the potential policy effects with regard to accessibility of higher education in regional Western Australia. The thesis analyses the advantages and disadvantages of studying in regional WA in the current policy environment where there has been a dramatic shift in ideology from the welfare state to economic rationalism. Factors that impact on higher education in regional Western Australia include the provision of telecommunications services for access to and participation in the knowledge economy.

The thesis considers the evolution of higher education in Australia in general and more particularly in Western Australia, as it has evolved since its foundations in the mid-nineteenth century to the beginning of the twenty-first century. In this time there have been radical changes in higher education in Australia in line with changes to our society and its place in an increasingly globalised environment.

The thesis concludes by considering some possible options for the future such as the development of learning communities and branch campuses. In discussing such possible alternative forms of delivery of higher education to regional Western Australia, this thesis seeks to raise awareness in relevant government bodies and in rural and remote communities of their particular higher education needs. It is hoped also to encourage regional communities to become more confident and pro-active in their own endeavours to gain greater access and equity in higher education.
Table of contents

**Chapter one – introduction**
- Research question ........................................... 3
- From welfarist to corporate settlement in higher education 8
- Globalisation and the knowledge economy .................. 9
- Changing world – changing student bodies .................. 14
- Turning point or *Crossroads* ................................ 17
- Regional Australians and access to higher education ....... 19
- Why learning communities? ................................... 21
- Delivering higher education in regional Australia ......... 22
- Research methodology ....................................... 24
- The limitations of this study ................................. 27
- Structure of this study ....................................... 35

**Chapter two – higher education in Australia – historical and political influences**
- Introduction .................................................. 40
- From colonial times to 1945 ................................... 45
- 1945 to 1971 .................................................... 51
- The Whitlam era and its radical social changes ........... 56
- Dawkins and the ‘clever country’ ............................. 57
- Australian universities then and now ....................... 60
- Who pays the ferryman? ...................................... 61
- Governance, autonomy and academic freedom .......... 66
- Should Australian universities be ranked on a world scale? 71
- Internationalising higher education – the new focus? .... 73
- Where to from here? .......................................... 74

**Chapter three – higher education at the Crossroads**
- Dismantling the social contract ................................ 80
- Creating the ‘enterprise’ university ........................... 86
- The international and export perspective in *Crossroads* 88
- Rhetoric, reality, social justice and the latest review ...... 90
- Public investment in the future, not public expenditure ... 94
- The responses to the papers – the main criticisms and concerns 97
- Residualising regional provision ............................. 99
- Summary and conclusions .................................... 100

**Chapter four – higher education and its impact on regional development**
- Why regional education? .................................... 106
- Neoliberalism, viability of the regional university and its community 107
- The national perspective at the expense of the regional .... 116
- Collegiality, community and regional students .......... 118
- Student mobility .............................................. 119
- That first year on campus for regional students ........... 122
- Establishing needs .......................................... 124
- Engaging regions, universities and participation ......... 125
Summary, conclusions and the future

**Chapter five — the argument for learning regions and learning centres**
- Concepts and praxis – learning regions, learning centres and telecentres
- Learning regions
- Why small learning centre alternatives?
- Facilitated learning centres
- Telecentres in Western Australia
- Communities of place, identities and practice
- Minimising isolation
- Distance education then and now
- Information and communications technologies (ICTs) in regional Australia
- *ICTs*
- *Telecommunications*
- *The virtual university*
- *Learning styles and electronic media*
- Summary and conclusions

**Chapter six – higher education – then, now and in the future**
- Politics, critique, and a ‘world view’
- Size matters, Western Australia and its special conditions
- Then
- Now
- Marketplace or social contract – are they mutually exclusive?
- The future in a borderless world
- Globalisation, free trade and the regions
- The re-emergence of the local
- Academia, society and change
- Time is running out
- The case for regional higher education in Western Australia

**Appendix**
- Albany
- Broome
- Bunbury
- Kalgoorlie/Esperance
- Rockingham and (Peel) Mandurah

**Glossary**

**Bibliography and references**