How Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences Help Communities Prosper

David Battersby
Federation University Australia
• Federation University Australia
• The legislative mandate to help communities prosper
• A case study of how we are making a difference in the humanities, arts and social sciences
Federation University Australia

- is the third oldest site of higher learning in Australia,
- is Australia's only regional multi-sector university,
- offers secondary schooling, TAFE, higher education, and research opportunities.

Formerly called the *University of Ballarat*
Ballarat
Ballarat is located 110 km north-west of Melbourne, at the junction of the Western and the Midlands highways.
> Adelaide via Western Hwy – 620 km
> Geelong via Midland Hwy – 90 km

Stawell
Stawell is located 235 km north-west of Melbourne, on the Western Highway.
> Adelaide via Western Hwy – 495 km
> Ballarat via Western Hwy – 125 km
The legislative mandate is to ...

... provide a range of innovative education, vocational, professional, cultural and research opportunities to the communities of regional Victoria ...

... ensure that regional and rural perspectives remain an essential part of Australian educational dialogue ...

... offer agile, relevant and work-ready technical, academic and research programs across the full breadth of the Australian Qualifications Framework ...
The objects of the University are to:

... enrich cultural and community life, elevate public awareness, promote critical and free inquiry, informed intellectual discourse and public debate and provide programs and services in a way that reflects principles of equity and social justice ...

Difficult to see how this could be done without a robust commitment to the humanities, arts and social sciences
This is done through:

- Undergraduate and postgraduate degree program offerings in humanities, arts and social sciences
- Research centres e.g., The Collaborative Research Centre in Australian History
- Public Lectures
- Student engagement – e.g., WIL, volunteering
- Vibrant visual and performing arts – 3 galleries, public performances
- Innovative activities
BA@ Community Program

Reality in many of our regions:
- Year 12 completion rates – 34%
- 15-24 age group huge displacement
- “not engaged in education or employment”
- Gippsland region + Grampians region = 7,800
BA@ Community Program Principles

• Higher education should be open – desire to learn rather than conforming to social or education models

• Delivery is in community and school settings where students live and have a level of comfort

• Academic staff involved work as members of a team to support students

• It’s not about educating the poor in the humanities, arts and social sciences or delivering the BA in a different location

• Application of unique strategies at each site
• BA@Phoenix – Ballarat Koorie Hub, P-12 Community College in Ballarat
• BA@BawBaw – West Gippsland (LLEN)
• BA@Wyndham – Western Suburbs of Melbourne (Community Education Centre)
• BA@East Gippsland – East Gippsland (Secondary College)
• BA@Kurnai (Gippsland) – Young mothers
• BA@the Wimmera - Horsham Western Victoria (Secondary College)
First Year of the BA Program

• Units in, for example:
  • Narrative and Text
  • Introduction to Social Inquiry
  • Modern World Events and Issues
  • Ideologies in the Modern World
  • Western Civilisation in World History
  • Literature and its Contexts

• Two full days a week required + half day session on support
Support

• Academic support – half a day a week of programmed academic support – study skills, etc.

• Transitional support – through a community worker to help navigate the world of university study

• Mentoring – involving current University students to assist in transition and academic support
• Currently 70-80 students
• Progress on to the second year of the BA in a less structured way; use it as a learning badge for other pathways
• Through this humanities, arts and social sciences initiative we “enrich cultural and community life, elevate public awareness, promote critical and free inquiry, informed intellectual discourse and public debate and provide programs and services in a way that reflects principles of equity and social justice …”