By engaging more young Queenslanders in education and exposing them to entrepreneurial thinking, the University of Queensland (UQ) contributes directly to the Government’s key objective to create jobs in a strong economy. As well, providing 18.65 economic output for every dollar invested in our research, we continue to tackle head-on some of the major challenges facing the state, and indeed the world.

Thanks
The team at UQ, in 2019, our broad range of achievements—conducting our research, educating our students, improving our sustainability, increasing our world rankings, engaging our staff, and exceeding our philanthropic targets—helped create a healthier, safer and more diverse community.

Our 34th Senate, chaired by Peter Varghese AO, successfully led the way for us to deliver knowledge leadership for a better world. We appreciate the unwavering efforts of our staff and students, and the continued commitment of the government and our partners, directors and supporters who helped us achieve these results.

A multinational Queensland enterprise
The immense value that UQ brings to Queensland and Australia is evidenced by our global reach, global partnerships and stature. As the ‘People’s University’ since 1909, we are now a truly global enterprise, competing with well- resourced institutions and subject to the influences of geopolitical forces.

We were therefore very pleased to improve our performance in several key rankings (see page 20) and to achieve our highest ever position in the Academic Ranking of World Universities. Sitting 54th globally, this is an excellent achievement that must be considered in the context of more than 10,000 universities worldwide.

Such status is important to Queensland and helps boost our state’s reputation globally, bringing with it longer-term benefits and opportunities for UQ.

Economic impact
According to London Economics, the total economic impact associated with UQ’s activities across Australia is estimated at $39.6 billion, $3.13 billion of which comes from our research—which we currently conduct with 450 institutional partners in 56 countries on more than 1,400 projects.

In 2019, UQ’s 20,000 international students contributed $767 million in direct tuition fees alone. The report also shows that for every three overseas students attending UQ, the economic impact for Queensland is $1 million. However, the indirect cultural and social impacts are immeasurable, bringing the profound long-term benefits of trade, tourism and diplomacy to the state, and also to our Australian students, who will be better prepared to succeed in a century where Asian economies will become increasingly dominant.

Corporate investments and philanthropic partnerships
UQ’s international standing as an institution of teaching and research excellence attracted numerous new partners in 2019 and enhanced the impact of engaging our community. The University formalised a partnership worth more than $50 million with the Ramsay Centre for Western Civilisation, which will fund approximately 150 scholarships, 10 academic staff and two professional staff to deliver programs in western civilisation over eight years.

We also entered into a five-year partnership with the Queensland Government to undertake joint research and development projects, and plan to renew the Global Change Institute in 2020 with help from industry.

Alongside well-established collaborations such as those with Boeing, Siemens and the Dow Chemical Company, these partnerships will help ensure Queensland has a workforce skilled to drive the state’s future.

It is exciting that we met the $500 million target of our first comprehensive philanthropic campaign ahead of schedule (see also page 32).

Protecting our environment
With the construction of the new 64 megawatt solar farm at Warwick, we are now on track to become the first major university in the world to produce 100 per cent of our power needs from our own renewable energy asset. The University now has about 252,000 solar panels generating over 70 megawatts of capacity across all sites. The 204,000 new solar panels at Warwick will commence power generation in the first quarter of 2020.

Through our research and infrastructure projects, UQ has established itself as a leader in sustainability and creating solutions in a changing climate. Our win in the 2020 Climate Action category of the 2019 Australasian Campaigns Towards Sustainability Green Grid Awards is testament to this.

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Commercialising our innovation
Fuelled significantly by excellent fundamental, applied and translated research, UQBuild continued to perform as Australia’s leading commercialisation company. Among its 2019 transactions was a $20 million Series A funding plus a licensing agreement for a potential therapy targeting difficult-to-treat immune system disorders such as rheumatoid arthritis.

Since 2002, UQBuild has led 104 spin-out companies have raised more than $710 million to take university technology to market, returning $68 million in commercialisation revenue and saving more than $32 billion in global sales of products based on UQ technology.

Other news
We are pleased to share with you other notable outcomes for 2019. They confirm progress towards UQ’s Strategic Plan objectives and reflect the ways that UQ serves Queensland’s community objectives. We:

- retained our position as the top-ranking Australian institution in the Future Index
- received the Athena SWAN Institutional Bronze Award for our diversity efforts
- broke the Guinness World Record for the Largest Mounted Libra
- increased our market share of first preferences in the QTAC application process
- received Senate approval for a $206.5 million investment for a ‘student- village’ precinct, integrated health and fitness centre, and a new Brisbane CBD hub.

And PhD candidate Rhys Pike became the first Australian to win Young Innovator of the Year at the world’s premier conference for research and innovation, Falling Walls Berlin. Sadly, the University farewelled former Vice-Chancellor Emeritus Professor Brian Wilson AO, who died in September. Our longest- serving leader (1979–1995), Brian helped transform UQ into an institution of international standing, and pioneered the search for alternative funding sources—including the establishment of UniQuest in 1984.

While protests on campuses on a range of topics demonstrated our resolve to uphold the principles of academic freedom, expression and institutional autonomy, I am pleased that, by and large, we managed to disagree well.

Overall, in 2019, through our many teaching, research and knowledge translation outputs, we certainly succeeded in our vision of delivering knowledge leadership for a better world.

Professor Peter Høj, AC
Vice-Chancellor and President

THE UNIVERSITY OF QUEENSLAND ANNUAL REPORT 2019 3