Contributing to the Territory

Flinders University plays a leading role in providing innovative health research, tertiary education and workforce development in the Northern Territory.

The University’s teaching and training initiatives in the NT extend back to the 1990s, and currently more than 100 Flinders staff are based in the Territory, supported by an annual funding commitment from the University of around $14 million.

Under the umbrella of Flinders NT, the University’s major initiatives in the Territory – the NT Medical Program and the NT Remote Clinical School, the Centre for Remote Health and the Poche Centre for Indigenous Health – are the focus for programs of teaching, training and research crucial to the improvement of health services and health outcomes for Territorians.

Collaboration with Charles Darwin University (CDU) is integral to Flinders University’s activities and programs.

The NT Medical Program, based in facilities at CDU and the Royal Darwin Hospital, offers Flinders University’s four-year medical degree and, for the first time, enables students to complete their medical education entirely in the Northern Territory. An undergraduate path (through a dual degree with CDU) and graduate entry paths are available to the course. Encouraging Indigenous enrolment is a priority of the program.

The University’s capacity and engagement in the area of Indigenous health are manifested specifically in the activities of the Centre for Remote Health, a joint venture with CDU, and the Poche Centre for Indigenous Health and Well-Being, both located in Alice Springs.

The University shares with CDU the management of and provision of services for the Palmerston GP Super Clinic in Darwin, supported by the Commonwealth and NT Health.

Teaching medicine and health in the NT

2011 saw the first intake of students into Northern Territory Medical Program (NTMP), which teaches Flinders University’s four-year medical degree. The Program receives funding support from the Territory Government through the Department of Health.

The Program, which can also be undertaken as a six-year dual health sciences/medical degree with CDU, is based in a dedicated building on the CDU campus in Darwin, built with Federal funding. The NTMP also has an administration centre and teaching rooms at the Royal Darwin Hospital, built with the same Federal funding.

Entry to the medical course by Aboriginal students is being encouraged and supported by the Indigenous Transition Pathways (ITP) to Medicine program, which offers both academic and pastoral support.

The Northern Territory Remote Clinical School (NTRCS), with sites in Alice Springs, Katherine and at Nhulunbuy in Arnhem Land, plays a central role in the NT Medical Program.

Begun in 2005 as part of the School of Medicine’s rural and remote placement network, the NTRCS aims to give medical students the opportunity to undertake six months or more training in rural environments as part of their degrees.

Placement opportunities for Flinders students in allied health are also offered through Flinders NT, in courses that include speech pathology and audiology, and nutrition and dietetics.

Particular attention is paid to ensuring that learning reflects the local cultural and environmental context of the different communities, their health and wellness, and health care delivery systems.

The program also offers support to health professionals working in remote teaching locations.

Fast Facts

1. Having operated a remote clinical school in the Northern Territory since 2005, Flinders began teaching the first medical degree offered wholly in the Northern Territory to a cohort of 24 students in 2011.

2. The Northern Territory Remote Clinical School has teaching campuses in Alice Springs, Katherine and Nhulunbuy.

3. Flinders has awarded honorary doctorates to two prominent Territorians, Dr Patricia Miller and Dr Peter Toyne.

4. The NT Medical Program’s building on the Charles Darwin University campus in Darwin received the top honour at the Australian Institute of Architects’ 2012 Northern Territory Architecture Awards.

5. A joint initiative of Flinders and Charles Darwin University, the Centre for Remote Health in Alice Springs offers specialist education from Masters to Graduate Certificate level in remote health practice for allied health professionals and conducts research vital to improving the health of remote communities.

6. Flinders teaches a modern Greek language program at Charles Darwin University.
The Flinders Art Museum’s extensive collection of Indigenous art includes works by Aboriginal artists from Northern Territory communities, among them several early paintings on boards from Papunya Tula. The Museum’s Director, Ms Fiona Salmon, who is a former director of Maningrida Arts and Culture in Arnhem Land, has curated and hosted exhibitions of contemporary art in conjunction with Charles Darwin University’s Gallery.

Flinders teaching outreach to the NT includes the Discipline of Modern Greek, which has offered a full program of Greek language at Charles Darwin University since 2003. Chinese courses, combining language with culture topics, are also offered in conjunction with CDU.

Palaeontologists from Flinders, notably Associate Professor Gavin Prideaux, are engaged with the NT Museum in continuing excavations of fossilised prehistoric fauna at Alcoota, 200 km from Alice Springs.

The Northern Territory Point of Care Testing program services 33 communities in the NT. It is part of a Federally-funded national service established and co-ordinated by Flinders University’s Professor Mark Shephard to provide point-of-care pathology testing for diabetes management.

Dr Patricia Miller, Deputy to the Northern Territory Administrator and CEO of the Central Australian Aboriginal Legal Aid Service, was awarded an honorary doctorate by Flinders in 2012. She has served on the Centre for Remote Health’s board since 2008.

Dr Peter Toyne, a former NT Health minister and current CRH board member, was awarded an honorary doctorate by Flinders in 2013 in recognition of his work as an educator and legislator in developing the Northern Territory.

Flinders contributes to the Cooperative Research Centre for Remote Economic Development in Alice Springs through Associate Professor John Guenther’s leadership of the Remote Education Systems Project, and through postgraduate student supervision by Professor John Halsey, the Sidney Myer Chair of Rural Education and Communities. Dr Sheree Carney is engaged in research for the CRC exploring the interplay between education, employment, health and wellbeing for Indigenous people in remote areas.

The School of Nursing and Midwifery is developing teaching and learning collaborations in the field of disaster health that include a Master of Disaster Health to be offered in collaboration with the National Trauma and Critical Care Response Centre in Darwin, and joint research projects around improved field data collection and point-of-care testing are also under way.

As part of its Strategic Plan, Flinders University is committed to Indigenous education and engagement, with priorities that include closing the gap in Indigenous education and health outcomes, respecting and recognising Indigenous perspectives, facilitating participation rates of Indigenous peoples, and significantly increasing the numbers of Indigenous students and staff at Flinders.

Many aspects of Flinders activities in the NT, including the partnership with Charles Darwin University, are vital aspects of the University's core strategies of building supportive communities and enhancing educational opportunities.