Inspiring young people to broaden their education horizons
To achieve the ambition that 20 per cent of domestic undergraduate students will be from low socio-economic status backgrounds by 2020 we need to inspire young people to broaden their education horizons.

There is a need for change nationally…

» Our national economy is dependent on the education and skills of our workforce

» Investment and advancement in educational reform will drive the economic outcomes required for the future

» Australian literacy and numeracy levels are falling behind those of other OECD countries

» By 2018 the demand for people with higher education qualifications will outstrip supply to the magnitude of 22,000 people

» Students from low socio-economic backgrounds have the poorest educational outcomes

» There is no difference in university success rates for students from different backgrounds

» Access to highly skilled professions is dominated by medium to high socio-economic status students

» University graduates earn 40 per cent to 45 per cent wage premiums compared to secondary school completers, and 66 per cent to 100 per cent premiums compared to those who do not complete secondary school

» Studies have estimated the extra earnings derived per additional year of study at about 8 per cent, and the increase in earnings from completing a university degree at 45 per cent or higher

» University graduates have lower unemployment and better health, with lower rates of smoking and obesity, hence deliver reduced costs of social welfare

… and in NSW

» Home to over 1.6 million people and adding $85 billion a year to the nation’s GDP, Greater Western Sydney has the potential to provide a large proportion of Australia’s future jobs growth

» While the Sydney Basin accounts for at least 23 per cent of 20-34 year olds it only provides 15.9 per cent of current low socio-economic university students, demonstrating a significant gap to be addressed

» In 2011 the proportion of 25-34 year olds with university qualifications in Greater Western Sydney was only 28.5 per cent compared with 50.6 per cent for the rest of Sydney

» In 2011 Greater Western Sydney had a university participation rate of 4 per cent, compared to 6.1 per cent across the rest of the Sydney area

» If 40 per cent of Australians in the 25 to 34 years age group are to obtain university qualifications by 2025 it will require penetration into different demographic backgrounds across Greater Western Sydney

» Due to the projected population growth, an increase in university students of 12.2 per cent would be required in the Sydney area between 2006 and 2021 to reach the university participation target of 40 per cent

» University participation is already over 50 per cent of 18-20 year olds from high status residential areas in the Sydney area

Bridges to Higher Education is the largest HEPPP funded program in Australia. bridges.nsw.edu.au
Evidence suggests that long-term investment is required to change attendance levels at university due to the need to start early, working in primary schools, and over a longer period of time to influence university participation rates.

How will Bridges to Higher Education address the need for change?

Bridges to Higher Education is a powerful partnership of five universities and 15 other partners all working together to develop and deliver projects based on evidenced best practice to improve academic outcomes and participation rates for communities under-represented in higher education, primarily in Greater Western Sydney.

Bridges’ partners bring together the experience, networks and expertise across the education sector to deliver over 100 projects across NSW to improve the consideration of higher education as an attainable future goal.

Bridges activities aim to reach over 100,000 students, 2,800 teachers and 175,000 parents.

Bridges to Higher Education Partners

The scale, calibre and reach of the partnerships that make up the Bridges to Higher Education initiative represents a tertiary sector first for NSW. The partnership includes:

The University of Western Sydney, the University of Sydney, the University of Technology, Sydney, Macquarie University, and the Australian Catholic University; and 15 other partners including the NSW Department of Education and Communities (DEC), three TAFE Institutes (Western Sydney, South Western Sydney and Sydney) and other community partners (including the AFL and The Smith Family).

How is Bridges to Higher Education funded?

Bridges to Higher Education is a $21.2 million initiative over three years.

Bridges to Higher Education is funded by the Commonwealth Government through the Higher Education Participation and Partnerships Program (HEPPP). HEPPP provides funding to assist universities to undertake activities and implement strategies that improve access to undergraduate courses for people from low socio-economic backgrounds, as well as improving the retention and completion rates of those students.

How it works…

The Bridges to Higher Education initiative and strategy is overseen by the Bridges Management Committee, with representation from each of the university partners and a wider network of senior stakeholders chaired by one of Australia’s leading advocates for youth and social change, Jan Owen AM.

It consists of a diverse portfolio of new and innovative collaborative projects and university-lead programs. The collaborative projects have been developed to address specific gaps in the effort to engage under-represented groups and are lead by project groups that include multiple partner representation.

This is an unprecedented agreement between NSW universities and ensures the Government funding is maximised.
There is a need for ongoing Government investment to ensure the results are lasting.

What will it mean…

**Impact on national economy**
- University graduates pay more taxes to Government, as they are more likely to work and earn more when in work. Figures show university graduates and postgraduates earn on average between $2.9 million and $3.2 million over their lifetime, whereas those who finish Year 12 or less will on average earn $2 million or lower.
- University graduates pay between $300,000 and $540,000 more in taxes over their lifetime. Given funding per student costs the Government between $30,000 and $50,000 per university course, the increased taxes for Government from university graduates are ten-fold higher than the upfront amount invested.

**Closing the gap**
- Low socio-economic status student body increased by 5.4 per cent from 2010 to 2011 and by 5.8 per cent from 2011 to 2012.

**Impact on local communities**
- A population with a high level of education is stronger, both in terms of intellectual and financial capital, as educated people share their knowledge across generations, deriving benefits for the wider community.

**Project activities include:**
- **TV series:** Three television series with complementary school curriculum, lesson plans, activities and other resources (estimated viewership in excess of 4 million viewers nationally). The *Enquiring Minds* series focuses on linking childhood interests with potential future careers (7-12 year old target); *Models of Achievement* focuses on adults and their diverse higher education and career journeys; and *Indigenous Models of Achievement* (working title) will focus on the higher education journeys of a number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.
- **Robotics and virtual learning:** A robotics classroom loan program, enabling schools to have access to resources that they would otherwise not afford. DEC Connected Classroom and other technological facilities will be utilised in the rollout of this and other academic enrichment and professional learning, both for Greater Western Sydney and rural and remote communities.
- **School drama roadshow:** In-school drama performances to provide targeted schools and communities with a bespoke theatre production which communicates key Bridges widening participation messages to year 7 pupils that will be engaging, interactive, motivational and inspiring.
- **Website:** The development of a website, in partnership with the Universities Admission Centre (UAC), to provide a central resource for those interested in finding out more information about higher education; including basic information, common questions, financial assistance, entry schemes and alternate pathway programs.
- **Teacher professional development:** Facilitated professional learning sessions and other resources developed to support teachers and schools.
- **Mentoring and preparatory programs:** Mentoring, tutoring and academic study skill classes aimed at increasing academic achievement.
- **AFL and GWS Giants:** A community engagement program in schools, the community and utilising the club’s new Life Learning Centre (opening in 2013).
- **From primary to mature age:** Programs targeted at students from Year 3 to Year 12 as well as post-school.
- **For students, parents and the community:** Activities delivered on campus and in schools for students, their parents and other community members to demystify university, answer common questions and develop an understanding of university life.

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