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**Abstract**

The mass system of higher education in Australia is a product of the publicly financed nation-building strategies of the 1955?1990 period. The nation-building university is now undergoing a three way crisis brought on by the governmental retreat from nation-building and from the funding that sustained it, the stand-off between corporate and academic practices inside universities, and the need for new strategies in a globalising environment, in which national policies are relativised but remain important. The crisis is exacerbated by Australia's location on the American 'periphery', associated with global vulnerability and fluctuating economic and cultural dependence. In response the primary strategy should not be to imitate American universities, a course of action which is likely to deliver modest returns, but to strengthen the academic identity and place-based identity of Australian institutions, enabling them to make a distinctive contribution to global higher education underpinned by a renewed partnership between nation and university. (HRK / Abstract übernommen)