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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)