



MEDIA RELEASE

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## **Feasibility study outlines prospects for a Pilbara Universities Centre (PUC)**

128 students could be studying in a local Pilbara university centre within 5 years according to a recently completed feasibility study.

Over the last 6 months the Geraldton Universities Centre (GUC) has been exploring whether it may be possible to replicate their model of supported distance university education in the Pilbara and has now completed a feasibility study into a Pilbara Universities Centre (PUC).

"Our feasibility study into a Pilbara Universities Centre has now been completed and has been provided to the Pilbara Development Commission and other key stakeholders. From our investigations and projections, there is some confidence that a PUC, based on the GUC model, could succeed in the Pilbara if adequately supported," said GUC Chair, Steve Douglas.

Under such a model students are enrolled as distance students and are supported administratively, pastorally and academically at the Centre. For fully supported programs, students will typically attend a two hour tutorial run by a local industry professional in each unit they are studying.

"We would like to thank the community for participating in the University in the Pilbara survey. It is with the community's responses and cooperation that we have been able to determine clear support for a GUC like model of supported distance education in the Pilbara."

Some of the key findings of the PUC feasibility study are:

- Karratha is the most feasible location of a supported distance university centre in the Pilbara, with potential for future electronically integrated study hubs in Hedland and Newman
- A PUC could trade under the Geraldton Institute Inc and therefore be party to the university agreements that already allow for supported courses at GUC
- A floor space of around 400sqm in an aspirational building like the CBDs new Karratha Quarter, has been identified as a preferred location

"The PUC project however, is not without considerable risk. Government support, along with Pilbara industry and community buy in, will be absolutely critical for any such Centre to progress," said Mr Douglas.

"The project would need to be underwritten for five years and there may even be a need for smaller scale additional funding after this time to grow the model to financial sustainability."

**Ends** For further information please contact the GUC on 9920 4400