



National Regional, Rural and Remote Education Strategy

Submission form

Welcome to the submission process for the National Regional, Rural and Remote Education Strategy (the Strategy).

The Regional Education Expert Advisory Group invites all interested parties to put forward ideas on the [framing paper](#) released on 20 December 2018.

The Advisory Group is seeking action-orientated responses to the challenges and key questions identified in this paper. The paper outlines the background of the strategy formation, the problem facing regional, rural and remote education and the challenges faced by those communities.

Your responses to the Framing Paper should focus on practical steps the Government could take to improve tertiary education access and attainment for people from regional, rural and remote backgrounds.

The form can be submitted any time before public submissions close at **5:00pm (AEDT) on 1 February 2019**.

Please note that the fields in the form are text only and pictures cannot be included. To return your completed form or if you experience difficulties in completing the form, please contact the Strategy Secretariat at RegionalStrategy@education.gov.au.

Note:

- information provided through the submission process may be published with your permission, including in the documentation relating to the Strategy and on the department's website
- questions marked with a * require an answer to be provided.

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I agree to the Privacy Notice and Terms and Conditions of Submissions included at [Attachment A](#) to this document*

Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

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I agree to have my submission published.*

Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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Your details

Title*

Mr

First name*

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██████████

State/Territory*

Victoria

Would you like to receive updates about the Strategy's process? *

Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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Submission details

I am making this submission as a: *

Educator

parent/carer/guardian

Student / potential student

School

University

Training Provider

Employer

community organisation

government agency

peak body / Think Tank

academic person

Other

Are you submitting on behalf of an organisation (including a business, other body or agency)? *

Yes <input type="checkbox"/>
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Please specify the organisation on whose behalf you are submitting

I confirm that I have the organisation's agreement to make this submission. *

Yes <input type="checkbox"/>
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Note: If you do not have the organisation's agreement, please go to the previous question and select "No" to confirm you are not submitting on behalf of an organisation.

Key Questions from the Framing Paper

The Regional Education Expert Advisory Group is seeking responses to the following key questions. Specifically, we are looking for practical steps to overcome the five challenges facing students from RRR backgrounds.

Challenge A: There are fewer study options available in RRR areas

1. What opportunities exist to expand options for further study in RRR areas?
2. What potential is there for universities, vocational training providers and other service providers to better work together in RRR areas, including opportunities to expand service offerings and better support articulation between VET and higher education?

Challenge B: Relocating RRR students face significant financial, emotional and social challenges

3. What financial supports work best for students from RRR backgrounds, including those who choose to relocate?
4. What forms of support might be useful in helping students from RRR backgrounds to continue with their tertiary study?
5. How can universities assist RRR students to feel like they belong on their campus?

Challenge C: Raising aspirations for tertiary education

6. What actions would help to raise aspirations and support informed career choices for students from RRR backgrounds?

Challenge D: RRR often experience multiple forms of disadvantage

7. What practical steps can be taken to support RRR students who experience multiple forms of disadvantage?
8. How can we better support Indigenous people from RRR areas to access and succeed in tertiary education?

Challenge E: Attracting people and jobs to RRR areas

9. How can tertiary education providers further stimulate economic growth in RRR areas?
10. What actions would further strengthen and increase the attractiveness of regional universities?
11. What policies would attract more metropolitan and international students to study at RRR areas, including regional universities and campuses?

Challenge F: Implementing and monitoring a national strategy

12. Would there be value in establishing a National Regional Education Commissioner to oversee the Strategy and, if so, what should their role be?
13. How should success be measured? What goals and targets, including for tertiary education attainment, should be considered both at a national and individual community level?

Please use the space provided below to respond to the questions above

The table cell will expand to accommodate your response. Please limit your response to 3000 words.

Challenge A: There are fewer study options available in RRR areas

1. What opportunities exist to expand options for further study in RRR areas?

There are many regional university campuses that are not used to their capacity. Government funded facilities on university campuses should be able to be used by other education providers willing to deliver courses not offered by the host university.

2. What potential is there for universities, vocational training providers and other service providers to better work together in RRR areas, including opportunities to expand service offerings and better support articulation between VET and higher education?

There is strong potential and a critical need for universities and other education providers to share taxpayer funded facilities and resources. There are two significant rural towns in our region with university campuses that are closed. The main university campus is located approximately 100 kms and 130 kms away from these towns. The university also has another campus in a small regional city, 200 km away, which is open but underutilised. These facilities were built at substantial cost, paid for by taxpayers and now sit idle. It is a chronic fault of our current education system that these valuable assets are not being utilised by other universities and training providers to offer vocational and higher education courses.

Challenge C: Raising aspirations for tertiary education

6. What actions would help to raise aspirations and support informed career choices for students from RRR backgrounds?

Many families and young people have low aspirations regarding education and low awareness of diverse career pathways. We need to deliver a meaningful career curriculum in the primary school years, so that children are motivated and aspire to achieve. Many RRR students have very little awareness of the wider world. For example, students at a local school were asked where they would go on a holiday if they could go anywhere in the world. One student nominated a town 30 km away and another student wanted to visit a town 65 km away.

If young people have little knowledge of the diversity of career opportunities that exist, their aspirations are critically limited. Without aspiration, many students lack motivation to finish their schooling and do not aim to undertake further education. This is a key factor leading to RRR students having lower Year 12 completion rates and lower university attendance.

Funding for career expos and forums should be made available for rural and remote schools. In the Wimmera region, there is one career expo each year which is attended by students from schools within a 200 km radius. Some students have a four to five hour return trip to attend. The Western Victorian Careers Expo features over 100 exhibitors, 35 'try a trade' demonstrations, tertiary education information sessions and 50 careers and education seminars. More than 20 universities and training providers are represented at the expo. It is an ongoing challenge to raise the funds required to deliver the expo. The expo is funded by schools and sponsors. This is increasingly difficult due to decreasing enrolments (and funding) at most schools and limited funding from sponsors, particularly in drought/low rainfall years.

Career expos are critically important to raise RRR students' awareness of further education options and career pathways. These events provide a unique opportunity to ask questions of tertiary education providers and industry representatives. Many families do not have the capacity to travel multiple times to Melbourne (up to 800km round trip) to enable their children to attend university open days and career events.

There needs to be further investment in career education. Many students go through school without ever speaking to someone about careers, let alone experiencing a work placement or part time job. Around half (52%) of career advisors are part-time and have less than \$3 per student to spend on career education (Clarke 2015). Careers teachers report they do not have enough time to spend with students (77%), employers/industry (68%), other career professionals (64%), or staff (62%) (CICA 2014). There is little professional development and support is often relegated to classroom teachers who have little understanding of skills shortages, experience of modern workplaces, or knowledge about the issues young people face (Pope 2018).

Challenge D: RRR often experience multiple forms of disadvantage

7. What practical steps can be taken to support RRR students who experience multiple forms of disadvantage?

Although the development of the ***National Regional, Rural and Remote Education Strategy*** has a focus on higher education, we need to address the root causes of inequality and low education attainment to improve rural education outcomes. Band-Aid solutions in the secondary years are costly and generally ineffective. To give children the essential academic foundation for success we need to start at the beginning, in the early and primary years. To achieve the goal of increasing the number of RRR young people completing VET and further education it is imperative that the base of prospective candidates is broadened by ensuring all students having the requisite academic skills to complete Year 12. The seeds of low aspirations, lack of achievement and disengagement are sown in the early years.

“By the time a child is three years old, 90% of their brain has been developed – the **quality of relationships and learning environments** for babies and toddlers is critically important. The **impact of early experience has a greater influence on development than heredity**” (Winter- MCEECDYA 2010). We need to educate and support parents to read, speak, sing and count with their kids on a daily basis. This can only happen with a sustained public education campaign on multi-media platforms, with consistent messaging on electronic and social media. A national roll out of the Let's Read and Let's Count programs would be a key element of this strategy. The recurrent cost of Let's

Read resources for every Australian child is less than \$20m per annum. We also need to engage with vulnerable families and connect them with schools and the wider community.

We know that too many children are turning up to school, not ready to learn. Nearly one quarter (22.5%) of Wimmera children are developmentally vulnerable in one or more domains (AEDC 2015). In most cases, the reason is that their parents lack the knowledge, skills and/or motivation to support their children's development before they get to kindergarten and school.

We know that children who start school behind their peers, often do not catch up. They struggle through primary school and ultimately disengage from secondary school in the middle years with low literacy, poor skills and no chance of undertaking further education. Many are destined to a lifetime of welfare dependence.

The 2015 Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) data showed over one third of 15-year-old students did not meet national proficiency standards for: reading (37%); maths (42%); and scientific literacy (37%) (ACER 2017). The earlier 2012 survey also found Australian 15-year-olds did not meet national proficiency standards for other transferable skills that will be in demand in the 21C workplace: financial literacy (30%); problem solving (35%); and digital literacy (35%) (Pope & Mutch 2015). Rates are higher for disadvantaged cohorts, including double for Indigenous Australians (Pope & Mutch 2015; ACER 2017).

Regional and rural students (15 y.o) are on average one-two years of schooling behind metropolitan students in reading and scientific literacy (PISA 2012). Most Wimmera schools have 70-80% of their student population drawn from the two lowest SES quartiles. Students (15 years old) from the lowest SES quartile are, on average, 2 ½ years of schooling behind students from the highest SES quartile (PISA 2012).

It is incumbent upon the government and the community to address this educational and socio-economic disadvantage by ensuring that all children have the opportunity for a great education irrespective of their postcode or family income. The schools with the most disadvantaged student cohorts should get the most funding because they do the heaviest lifting.

Schools cannot teach children if they do not attend. Often, the young people who miss the most school are the children who most need to be there and are, frequently, from our most vulnerable families. Unfortunately, many low SES families do not highly value education and don't care if their children attend. At present, there are no consequences for families if their children do not attend school. We are failing these children (and sabotaging their futures), by allowing this to continue.

We need to get literacy right. It is the foundation for the entire curriculum. Poor literacy is associated with lower education, earnings and health outcomes, and high rates of unemployment, welfare dependence and teenage parenting. A 2011 ABS study shows that 44% of Australians, aged 15-74 have literacy levels below level 3. Level 3 is considered as the minimum level to meet the complex demands of life and work in the 21st century (ABS 2012). We need to ensure that all children are proficient in numeracy and literacy. We are failing every young person who exits the school system with low literacy skills.

Secondary school teachers are generally not trained how to teach children to read. They are not well equipped to teach children transitioning to secondary education from primary school with Grade 2-3 (or below) literacy. There are some excellent literacy intervention programs available, but they are often expensive, resource intensive and schools do not know which program to use. It is time our education departments, distilled the best practice key elements of these programs and developed a literacy program for schools to use, at no cost. The program could be part of teacher training to ensure consistent effective delivery of the program to all students who need it. At the moment schools have to choose between a lot of different programs including QuickSmart, MultiLit, Reading Recovery, Intensive reading, CAFÉ reading, Spalding program, Bridging the Gap, Corrective Reading, Making a Difference, THRASS, PEEL, Fountas and Pinnell, etc.

The current situation ensures that we have a lack of common assessment and language, inconsistent delivery and effectiveness ensuring variable teaching and results within, and across schools. No commercial business would survive by approaching a critical problem in such an ad-hoc manner. Educating our kids is the most important business of all.

Rural disadvantage is compounded by a lack of allied health services and support. RRR students who have a disability, have experienced trauma, family dysfunction and/or abuse, or have mental health issues struggle to receive the support they need. In Victoria the Department of Education and Training provide Student Support Services, including speech therapy, psychologists, occupational therapists, counsellors, etc., but there is an ongoing reticence of health professionals to move to rural areas. Some positions have been advertised in our region three times with no applicants. The kids who most need support are missing out. If students do not receive the support they need, their ability to complete their secondary education and transition to VET or further education is critically compromised. There needs to be an incentive scheme implemented to attract health and allied health professionals to rural and remote areas. I acknowledge that some states do have schemes in place, but this needs to be implemented nationally.

Challenge E: Attracting people and jobs to RRR areas

It is time for politicians and governments to lead. Whilst we continue to have a centralised government system in Canberra and our capital cities, how can governments expect tertiary education providers and businesses to set up, or move to, regional areas? Population decline is the most important issue for most rural and remote communities. The three key elements to reverse rural decline and poor education outcomes are:

1. Investment
2. Jobs
3. Greater education support for rural students and families (early years, primary, secondary and post secondary).

Professional families are reticent to move to rural areas if there are not quality education options. If we keep doing what we have been doing, we will get the same results, the trend will continue and our rural communities will continue to wither and die.

Country communities regularly lose their best and brightest young people as they move to metropolitan and major regional centres for tertiary education. Once they have gained their qualifications there are often no job opportunities in their profession in their home town. Even when there are professional job vacancies, rural communities are challenged by a lack of qualified candidates wanting to move from the city.

Unless governments get fair dinkum and significantly decentralise the public sector, this situation will continue and ensure that rural communities continue to decline. Federal and state governments are the biggest businesses in Australia and could deliver significant increases in education provision, investment and jobs in rural areas. Over the coming decades, technology will automate around 40% of all jobs in Australia, including 60% in regional areas, and 70% of entry level jobs (FYA 2015). With connectivity and technology, people in RRR communities can perform many jobs currently located in the city or across the world. Investment in education and jobs in rural and remote Australia would stimulate local economies and private sector investment, creating more demand for further education and jobs. Once population decline is reversed, the outlook for rural youth and rural towns would be much brighter. Why do most of our government departments remain situated in the CBDs of our capital cities? Melbourne is growing at nearly 100,000 people per year and this growth is clearly undesirable and unsustainable.

Our challenge is to ensure that our children and families get the support and skills to ensure that all rural youth succeed in their education and become productive members of our communities. If we are to reverse rural decline, we must ensure that all rural youth achieve a Year 12 qualification, as a minimum. Our future prosperity is dependent on having a skilled and literate workforce servicing vibrant rural communities.

Please provide a short summary of the key points in your submission

Please limit your response to 300 words— **note:** any text above 300 words will be excluded from your submission. The table cell will expand to accommodate your response.

There is strong potential and a critical need for universities and other education providers to share taxpayer funded facilities and resources. Regional university campuses should be available to be used by other education providers willing to deliver courses not offered by the host university.

Funding for career expos and forums should be made available for RRR schools. Career expos are critically important to raise students' awareness of further education options and career pathways.

Increase investment in career education and start earlier. Around half (52%) of career advisors are part-time and have less than \$3 per student to spend on career education.

Address the root causes of inequality and low education attainment to improve rural education outcomes. To give children the essential academic foundation for success we need to start at the beginning, in the early and primary years.

At present, there are no consequences for families if their children do not attend school. We are failing these children (and sabotaging their futures) by allowing this to continue.

We need to get literacy right. It is the foundation for the entire curriculum. Poor literacy is associated with lower education, earnings and health outcomes, high rates of unemployment and welfare dependence. We are failing every young person who exits the school system with low literacy skills.

Implement the Let's Read and Let's Count programs nationally. The recurrent cost of Let's Read resources is less than \$20m per annum.

Distil the key elements of the multitude of expensive literacy support programs and develop a best practice literacy program for schools to use, at no cost.

Implement a national incentive scheme to attract health and allied health professionals to RRR areas to support students.

Decentralise public service jobs to RRR areas to stimulate local economies and to provide jobs for RRR graduates.

Privacy Notice and Terms and Conditions for Submissions

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The Australian Government Department of Education and Training (the department) invites you to make a submission in relation to the development of the National Regional, Rural and Remote Education Strategy (the Strategy).

Through the submission process, the department will be collecting certain information, including personal information. The information collected may include your name, your email address, the organisation you represent (if applicable) and any other information that is included in your submission.

The department may use and disclose this information for the purposes of informing or contributing to the Strategy, policy development related to the subject of the Strategy, publishing submissions (including by making submissions publicly available), and providing feedback to the department's Minister about the Strategy and submission process.

The department may also contact you to provide updates on the progress of the Strategy, if you have indicated in your submission response that you would like to receive such updates.

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Before publication, your email address, if provided with your submission, will be removed. **However, your name will be published with your submission.**

Note, any information about individuals contained in your submission will be published. Note also that the name and address of any organisation you represent, if included in your submission, will also be published.

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If you are making a submission on behalf of an organisation, or represent that you are, you must ensure that you have that organisation's agreement prior to making the submission. By making a submission, you represent to the department that you have such agreement.

If there is information in your submission referencing an individual, which is not otherwise publicly available, you must ensure that you have the consent of the individual to whom the information relates to include it in the submission. By making a submission, you represent to the department that you have such consent.

By making a submission, you further represent to the department that your submission does not contain any confidential information about any individual or organisation.

Privacy policy and contact

For further information about the department's privacy policy and how it deals with information, including how you can access or correct your personal information, please see the department's [privacy policy](#).

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