



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.

Privacy agreement

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

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

Note: If you do not accept the Privacy Notice and Conditions of Submissions please do not complete or submit this form.

I agree to have my submission published.*

Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
No <input type="checkbox"/>

Your details

Title*

Ms

First name*

Cathy

Last name*

Tischler

E-mail address*

[REDACTED]

State/Territory*

Vic

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

Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
No <input type="checkbox"/>

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"/>
No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Please specify the organisation on whose behalf you are submitting

Personal Submission

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

Yes <input type="checkbox"/>
No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

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.

Background:

I complete this submission as a community member, parent of two children, full time higher education student and educator in the higher education sector in a rural community. I left home as a teenager to undertake higher education studies in Melbourne and returned to my community in my late 20s, with my husband to work and raise a family. I am currently completing a PhD in my local community, which is exploring issues of representation, ideology and equity (aspects of which intersect with the questions being asked by this submission process). I have previously completed research for the Victorian Parliament in 2006, exploring issues associated with the retention of young people in rural communities. I have also spent significant time at the 'coalface' of education, working on improving educational opportunities in my community, through my long-standing volunteer work with Leadership Wimmera, and also in building up local higher education delivery in my community, with the development of a higher education program in the region.

I believe my personal and professional experience provides me with a strong perspective of the opportunities and limitations of education in my community. It should be simple to improve educational outcomes in rural communities like mine, but there is a great diversity in experience, attitudes, ideology and economics which all have a significant impact on the success of higher education.

Personally, I think the key problems which detrimentally influence educational outcomes in our community are:

- Acute workforce qualification shortages, which require immediate solutions which are often addressed by simply getting in a 'fly-in-fly-out' training solution, which is not embedded in the community and does not provide benefit to the community beyond compliance.

Further, when a community is stretched for qualified personnel, it is easy to drop standards in order to support immediate needs. When this is recognised as acceptable, it dis-incentivises employees from making educational investments that would be necessary elsewhere.

- An historic and entrenched distrust of educational outcomes and providers within rural communities to address real needs. This is historic and can be partially attributed to a lack of understanding by higher education providers of the need to build long-term partnerships in rural communities. It is also about a lack of trust between local providers and local 'users' of the services such as schools and professional organisations. This affects the choices made in accessing and providing educational options.
- A lack of coordination or commitment between industries with professional workforce shortages to take responsibility for these needs and work with higher education providers to seek sustainable educational solutions that benefit the local community, and possibly economic and logistical difficulties at provider level in being able to work towards addressing such needs. We have invested in trying to attract urban dwellers to our community, with

limited success. Perhaps, instead of this, we should be doing more to incentivise local people to upskill in the professions we need to fill in our community.

- An ideology exists within some parts of our community that devalues education. We can be a very insular community, and for some sectors of the community, aspiration is low. An enduring need for an unskilled workforce in our community reinforces perceptions that higher education is unnecessary. Students who seek higher education outcomes locally can be challenged by peers, employers and family about their choice. This perception is enduring and intergenerational.
- This is compounded by a general perception of education as boring, stratified and structured, and time consuming by many people who might otherwise engage with higher education. Young people arriving in higher education locally have generally been through VET or TAFE and this is starting to be the default educational setting for many young people without obvious educational aspiration. The opportunity cost of extending upon TAFE training with additional years of higher education can be unattractive and difficult to juggle with financial and other responsibilities at local level.
- Limited commitment to the ongoing support of those who provide educational services. Local teaching work at higher education level is casual and intermittent and ultimately unattractive as a sustainable long-term employment option, without other complimentary opportunities.

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

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

The above issues notwithstanding, a key factor in reduced educational opportunities is straight economics. University providers require a large number of students to provide standard educational packages in rural areas to break even or make a profit from their commitment. There has been limited scope to think more creatively about the provision of education and the value of provision to smaller numbers of students in more flexible ways. This does not necessarily mean a greater focus on on-line learning. I actually think online learning exacerbates the educational divide in rural areas, as only those from within a certain educational and financial demographic are well-placed to access this type of education.

I think we all think far too small when it comes to educational opportunities in rural areas. There is significant opportunity to re-frame our thinking about what the delivery of higher education should look like and explore options to build rural educational centres of excellence that create the potential for bringing students to rural communities for study, whilst simultaneously creating opportunities for local higher education. There are some inroads being made with respect to agricultural education by organisations like Longerenong College, but there are broader opportunities in other sectors beyond agriculture in our community as well, but, this would require a strong long-term vision by both a university provider and a cohesiveness from the community.

A concerted approach to improving the breadth of educational opportunities in rural areas is required where industries and professional organisations work together with specialist higher education providers to build long term partnerships that deliver something close to economic returns for

providing the education service in the region. We all have to take responsibility for this growth, not leave it solely to the education provider to make the choices around this.

Why can't a community like ours become a 'University town'?

It supposedly costs more to deliver in rural areas. I wonder if that's really true. We can never compete with urban providers on economies of scale, but we can provide really specialised face to face personalised education outcomes which I think could act as a counterpoint the dry and isolating shift to online education. We need to create a culture where we explore ideas and question things in order to move forward. Rural communities are also intensely pragmatic and we have great scope here to tie higher education learning to practical needs within our community. There is great scope to make education more meaningful, more inclusive and more community orientated.

15. 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 great potential. But, the practical difficulties of this are immense. A focus on competition between providers, competition for students, competition for staff, and competition for financial resources is not doing any favours in our community in terms of achieving this aim. We need to re-frame our thinking from a competitive process for government funding, service delivery and students.

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

16. What financial supports work best for students from RRR backgrounds, including those who choose to relocate?

I think a better consideration of the need for financial independence for higher education students is warranted. Incentives which support travel and accommodation costs are valuable supports.

17. What forms of support might be useful in helping students from RRR backgrounds to continue with their tertiary study?

Some students in rural areas (or from rural areas) seek to undertake higher education which is in conflict with the values of their parents (who do not see a value in further education). Economic supports for many students, both living at home, or moving away to study are still strongly tied to parental income and resources. I have known students unable to undertake further study because they are not in a position to access sufficient resources to support their intent.

18. How can universities assist RRR students to feel like they belong on their campus?

Small university campuses tend to overlook the need for student socialisation, having moved strongly towards an expectation that students are here to study, achieve a degree and leave. The social aspect of sharing experiences through socialisation has declined sharply with a fee for service model of education. Small student numbers add to this issue. Again, I believe with a little resourcing and some good-will, regional university campuses have great potential to build a real community experience which is important for connecting with students and achieving results.

Challenge C: Raising aspirations for tertiary education

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

I believe the lack of educational aspiration in our community is a significant concern. It impacts on our ability to see beyond 'what is' and challenge ourselves to find 'what could be' in our community. This lack of aspiration is found at all levels of the community, from parents and students themselves to people in leadership positions. I feel that this 'distrust' of education, and higher education in particular is endemic in our community and we need to work to improve this situation.

I teach a number of 'first generation' university attendees, and they face significant personal challenges and in some cases stigmatisation for pursuing higher education from friends and family.

The great irony in our community is that we juxtapose this 'distrust' of education with hosting world leading agricultural research institutions. If we are to genuinely embed these research institutions and draw them in to our community, we need to reconsider the narratives we use to describe education.

I think we need to start by acknowledging the existence of opportunities for educated people in our community and better articulate the range of opportunities that exist for our young people. We need to start telling stories about what people can achieve through education, and explore the idea of mentoring.

Challenge D: RRR often experience multiple forms of disadvantage

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

People need to first believe that they are capable of further education. Many have significant gaps in their education and need some support to transcend what they have been told about their own skills and abilities. We also need scaffolded learning which supports students to engage in learning in a meaningful and practical way.

Challenge E: Attracting people and jobs to RRR areas

21. How can tertiary education providers further stimulate economic growth in RRR areas?

We need to provide a range of tertiary education outcomes and commit to their delivery in a stable way, which needs to include long term commitments to delivery. We need to have some conversations about what sustainable delivery looks like for our declining population.

22. What actions would further strengthen and increase the attractiveness of regional universities?

We need to know that study options are available, from year to year and provide pathways to employment.

23. What policies would attract more metropolitan and international students to study at RRR areas, including regional universities and campuses?

I think we really need to look at what it would cost a student to study away from home in a rural area, as opposed to Melbourne and build a case that rural universities offer a bespoke educational experience.

Challenge F: Implementing and monitoring a national strategy

24. Would there be value in establishing a National Regional Education Commissioner to oversee the Strategy and, if so, what should their role be?

This sounds like additional bureaucracy – and I am not sure it would add value. Perhaps an arbiter to work to address some of the challenging disconnect between universities and communities over needs and values would be helpful.

25. 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?

Historically, in the field of higher education success is measured by retention and completion. It is also measured by demand. I think success could be measured in terms of cultural change with regard to the value of education in our community as well as the certainty and durability of higher education offerings that are valued and supported by universities, industry and the broader community.

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.

We need to reframe our thinking around delivery of higher education in regional areas, and challenge accepted notions that competition achieves the best results for education.

There is great potential to develop bespoke opportunities for education in rural communities that may prove attractive to the broader community – and provide a counterpoint to the push to online learning around isolation but this will require strong leadership and significant cultural change. Existing structures, systems and institutions are not committed to deliver this.

Privacy Notice and Terms and Conditions for Submissions

Purpose for collection of information relating to submissions, and the use and disclosure of that information

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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The department reserves the right to publish any submissions, including only a sample of submissions, made in relation to the Strategy. This includes by making those submissions publicly available on the department's website, or through any report/s arising from the Strategy.

You may elect **not** to have your submission published. If you do not want to have your submission published, **do not check** the relevant box on this document.

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.

The department reserves the right to amend or redact prior to publication, or to not publish, any submission if it considers the submission to be defamatory or derogatory in any way, or if it includes information relating to individuals.

The department also reserves the right to modify or adapt submissions for the purposes of web accessibility and any publishing formatting requirements.

For more information, please also visit the department's [Copyright](#) page.

Third party information, including of individuals, in submissions

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](#).

For any queries relating to this Privacy Notice and Terms and Conditions for Submissions, the Strategy or your submission please contact the Regional Education Strategy Taskforce via email on: RegionalStrategy@education.gov.au