



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*

Mr

First name*

Robert

Last name*

Heather

E-mail address*

[REDACTED]

State/Territory*

NSW

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

No

Please specify the organisation on whose behalf you are submitting

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

Yes

No

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.

I am writing this as a parent of young children who has moved to a regional community within the last 3 years. However I have spent the past twenty five years working in the arts/cultural sector with many years spent in regional communities such as Cairns and Mackay as well as working with communities across Queensland and Victoria. In that time what has become apparent to me is that having an active university within a regional community is an important catalyst that helps each community's economy, society and culture in so many ways. Universities create links to other institutions, countries and regions through their work and expand the opportunities available to residents of regional communities.

Having moved to Armidale I have been impressed with the significant work being done in this field by the University of New England, the first true regional university in Australia (founded in 1938). Its pioneering work in innovative fields such as ag-tech, sustainability and online education is supported by a diverse range of 'traditional' university courses such as Humanities, Business, Science, Medicine/Health and Education. Its long term presence has created the only true 'university town' in Australia where generations of students have studied within the local region for over 80 years, and students from communities across Northern NSW have seen attending UNE as a normal part of their life path.

However UNE has many challenges – aging facilities and infrastructure due to lack of funding support for new buildings, student accommodation that needs refreshment, a moribund local council and the lack of support from the government for new initiatives and upgrades that come from not being in a capital city and not on the radar of Canberra or Sydney based politicians. UNE is also competing with much better resourced central universities for staff, students and funding and yet continues to punch above its weight.

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

It is important for the Commonwealth Government to support the existing regional universities within the communities that they are active within rather than encourage external providers to compete with existing regional universities that are already struggling. Funding for improved facilities, accommodation, online services as well as increasing study and course options available within communities (potentially in partnership with other institutions) are amongst the key strategies that will work to increase the attractiveness and appeal of tertiary study within your region.

The creation of study pathways within regions that encompass schools, VET providers and universities as well as increased support for integrated scholarship programs that help to make courses accessible to all people no matter what their socio-economic situation or location.

Bring together the various public and private/ state and Commonwealth educational providers within a region on a regular basis to create 'regional educational sector' hubs through existing RDA and business/industry networks. Support each hub with funding to develop innovative and creative responses and regional educational strategies to address local issues, develop the 'educational brand'

of their region and promote awareness within their communities of the key role that educational providers play within the local economy.

Seeing each other as competitors for students is also a factor in preventing effective partnerships between regional universities and capital city based ones, this works to the detriment of RRR students who don't want to leave their communities. Creating opportunities and incentives for universities to work together in partnerships to offer courses to students would provide better outcomes for the students and create wider engagement for capital city based universities.

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

The best way to address the issue of the challenges facing RRR students is to educate them within their region. This can be by offering them opportunities to study online or through having campuses physically sited within their communities. The University of New England has been providing distance education since it was officially opened as UNE in 1954 and has pioneered the delivery of distance and now online education through multiple channels.

There are many issues facing RRR students who relocate including the difficulties involved in moving from families, communities and friends to take up full-time study in another location, finding accommodation, part-time employment and new social circles. These can also include leaving the family farm during time of drought or with aging parents, lower educational attainment in regional schools. It needs to be acknowledged that leaving family or community is also especially difficult for indigenous students.

One of the best forms of support for RR students is a cash scholarship that assists with covering the costs of living away from home – assistance with accommodation costs, food costs, transportation and health issues. This could be better integrated and the student support services provided by universities could be directly assisted by the government.

Challenge C: Raising aspirations for tertiary education

Regular travelling career expos and events that showcase the diversity of educational options available to RR students and how they can support the career aspirations of anyone no matter what field they work in. These could be attached to local events like fairs, shows and field days that attract all types of visitors from across regional communities.

Challenge D: RRR often experience multiple forms of disadvantage

The student support services provided by universities could be better supported by the government. These services are essential to providing students from all backgrounds with access to a range of support to assist them with their studying experience.

Indigenous community programming such as the Youth Leadership Programs run by the Oorala Aboriginal Centre at UNE need to be supported in breaking down barriers to young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students taking up studies. Increased support for cultural programs that create awareness within and links between universities and communities make a huge difference.

Challenge E: Attracting people and jobs to RRR areas

Regional communities need regional universities. Universities provide opportunities for young people to stay within their communities and are direct employers of thousands of people across regional Australia including academics, support staff, professional staff and casual / part-time workers. These jobs make a huge difference to the communities where universities have a presence. Universities also contribute to social cohesion and capital within regional communities, providing them with direct access to a range of intellectual, educational, social, cultural, industry and business opportunities to connect with the wider world.

All education providers need to be actively engaged within their region. Developing partnerships with all levels of government, business, community groups and industry are an integral part of ensuring that the region in which they live and work is thriving. In the age of social media it is very difficult to attract students to come and live and study in a dying or moribund community. Young people want to move to regions and communities that are thriving – economically, socially and culturally. Educational institutions which see supporting and engaging with their local community as outside their core business will have difficulty in attracting students and eventually staff to make a move to a regional area that is unattractive or unappealing.

Regional universities are competing with city based universities for staff, students and funding. We live in a 'lifestyle age' and in order to attract staff to universities they need to be in communities that offer comparable facilities and services to capital cities - these can range from health and educational facilities through to cultural infrastructure (regional galleries, libraries, theatres, museums etc), sporting infrastructure (gymnasiums, sportfields etc) as well as services such as internet access, power etc. Where the local community doesn't offer these facilities and services then the university sometimes needs to make up the shortfall – requiring access to other funding programs to build joint community and educational facilities. Removing the criteria that prevents universities from applying to various Commonwealth Government capital funding programs such as the Building Better Regions program will enable universities to take a more active role in developing the facilities and infrastructure that regional and remote communities require in order to thrive. The UNE Boilerhouse project is a great example of a planned facility that will fill a community need, create opportunities to educate young people across regional NSW in STEAM and create a new visitor destination in the city of Armidale.

Regional universities need to be more active in contributing to the activation of regional cities. Many stand alone regional university campuses in Australia were built in the 1960s and 70s when the trend was to establish campuses on greenfield sites well outside the town/city centre. This makes it difficult for the universities to take an active role in revitalizing declining city centres without massive investment in built infrastructure – which then needs to be funded from somewhere. The Commonwealth and State Governments could partner with universities and transfer unused government buildings in the centre of regional cities that could be repurposed as educational hubs, business incubators or cultural facilities. The recent construction of major university facilities in the centre of Newcastle is a great example of how a university helped to stimulate the local economy and rejuvenate a dying city centre. The proposed new campus of UNE in Tamworth is another example of an innovative opportunity to work with all levels of government. Bringing staff and students into the centre of cities makes a huge difference to the dynamic in aging regional towns and cities.

Today's universities are also building their future through philanthropy. Sydney University recently announcing that they have raised over \$1 billion dollars through their recent 10 year fundraising campaign – these funds will be directed to everything from student scholarships, special research

programs, modern facilities and special programs. Regional communities are well known for their financial generosity in supporting educational and other community activities, but it is often on a much smaller scale than these large scale fundraising campaigns. Regional universities have difficulty in competing in the philanthropic arena due to lack of staff resources and expertise, connections to 'big business' and much smaller alumni bases. Incentives to donors, sponsors and industry partners supporting regional university philanthropic programs such as dollar-for-dollar matched funding or seed funding, extra tax breaks or incentives for research programs, facilities or scholarships would help the small Advancement teams in regional universities to target donors and supporters for much larger contributions.

Specialisation and the ability offer boutique learning experiences could also provide a way forward. Regional American universities market themselves on the basis of their attributes and unique course offerings and specialisations. Australian regional universities appear to have difficulties allocating the resources to specialise in specific fields. This can include increased support for study bursaries, exchanges with international universities and other opportunities.

Attracting students to study in regions is a combination of the courses on offer and the attributes of the region where the university campus is located. Regional universities have the opportunity to offer international students a uniquely 'Australian' experience where they can connect with local communities, environment and culture in a direct way, especially as Australian cities become more crowded and the same as each other. This should be one of the key platforms for any marketing campaign aimed at attracting international students to study in regional Australia.

However international students often expect the same level of facilities and services as they would receive in capital cities, which can be an issue for some RRR communities. Support for regional universities should include funding for improved accommodation, cultural and sporting facilities as well as student support services, language programs and community engagement activities to create a positive experience for international students.

The international students who attend Australian universities will potentially be the future business, government and cultural leaders of their countries. Ensuring that they have a positive experience while in Australia is an important 'soft diplomacy' tool which will assist Australia well into the future.

Challenge F: Implementing and monitoring a national strategy

The proposed National Educational Commissioner would need to have the funding programs that specifically support regional educational providers, the ability to develop whole of government priorities and strategies that create opportunities for the education sector and recognise its importance in all aspects of regional development, with attached funding opportunities, would make an enormous difference.

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.

The best way to address the issue of the challenges facing RRR students is to educate them within their region.

Supporting, expanding upon and recognising the work done by existing regional education providers is the most effective strategy for responding to issues facing RRR students.

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.

Publishing submissions

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.

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

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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](#).

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