



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 have my submission published.*

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

Your details

Title*

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First name*

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State/Territory*

Vic

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

Please specify the organisation on whose behalf you are submitting

Wimmera Southern Mallee Regional Partnership

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

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

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

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

- **Better utilisation of existing education facilities**

Enable any education service provider free access to state owned TAFE assets to run courses in RRR locations. Access to customised classrooms and learning centres is key for productive student learning. Often these assets are 'locked up ' by one provider who believes they have the geographic advantage/monopoly and as a result fail to respond to community need and expectations.

If no such facility exist, co-location of training services could be provided within in designated location within school precincts, especially use of schools after hours by providers, with strong MOUs, child safety protocols and agreements in place.

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?

- **Training Needs Assessments and Pathway Planning**

Undertake a cooperative approach to designing a training service provision map for VET and vocational training & higher ed, instead of a competitive model. In small RRR markets many essential courses don't run because providers chase the same small and profitable courses, leaving large gaps in local provision and very patchy pathways that complicate student's efforts to seek ongoing & ideally locally delivered training.

*The Country Education Partnership (CEP) Report- a Case for Action 2018 refers to this approach as **Collaborative Autonomy**, where education organizations work together with common aims under a common banner while retaining their uniqueness. For this to work effectively, it requires clear regulation, government incentives and support.*

The WSM Regional Partnership recognises it is unrealistic to expect every course can be offered to every student in an RRR context, but for high demand courses with clear local pathways for employment, a more cooperative, community and provider co-designed approach could result in clearer offerings and articulation between VET & Higher education and ideally delivered locally.

This last point is crucial, many small regional areas are challenged by population decline. It is recognised that if people leave the area for educational purposes, it is very difficult to get them back. Providing education opportunities locally, linked to real employment outcomes in regional areas, is one of the cornerstones to strengthen local autonomy and economies.

The VET & Higher education offerings in RRR communities are often delivered by one or two providers, with occasional 'fly by the night' private providers, attempting to carve out a niche in already thin markets. Rather than taking a competitive approach to delivery, which can result in no courses running because providers cannibalize each other, and the market is too small to sustain two or more competitors.

- **Build on the strengths of the 'Jobs & Skills Centres'**

The Collaborative Autonomy model could be well served through the introduction of additional Skills and Job Centres in key rural locations. The role of the Skills & Job Centre coordinators, (as currently operating in Victoria), could be expanded to broker access and provide advice to localised training options, coordinate and map course pathways for students and collate and respond to localised

industry training needs for current & future skill development. This resource is an important and potentially strategic tool if not aligned to any one provider, in that they can group demand and solve training needs and requests by having an overall understanding of the training supply system offered locally.

The advice provided through the Skills and Job centres should be 'service provider agnostic' and provide the very best advice tailored to the needs of the student, business or organisation who is making the inquiry. This resource would work actively and closely with VET in school coordinators.

This approach is relevant to locations with small and dispersed populations, and not regional centres where competition for provision works well.

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?

This response is in relation to post-secondary students relocating to the regional centres of the city to undertake further study....

The cost impost on rural families is significant when young adults chose to relocate for study. Living and studying from home, with familial and financial support is not an option for many rural students who relocate to pursue further study. Many rural students are dealing with multiple social and financial changes as they transition to the post-secondary study environment, including managing the additional cost of rent, establishing oneself in a new location and often seeking work to support oneself.

Rental subsidies, travel allowance, tax incentives for parents/guardians to support students, especially in the first year of transition, may provide significant relief for students and their families.

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

Rental subsidy, travel allowance, tax incentives for parents/guardians to support students, especially in the first year of transition may provide significant relief for students and their families, and potentially see greater numbers of rural students undertake higher degree courses with better retention rates.

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

- *Rural student induction days at the start of the academic year and follow up 'social sessions' through the course of the first year of study, to check in, support and mitigate potential barriers or issues.*
- *Establishing buddies and mentor arrangements between first year rural students and 2nd and 3rd year rural students who have navigated the system and can provide advice, direction and support.*
- *Increase the number of Scholarships for rural students that may reduce the financial burden.*

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?

Seek to fund the 'Rural Inspire Initiative', (identified in the Halsey Report as best practice to inspire young people in rural & remote Victoria to achieve their desired career pathways) and include:

- *an interactive online portal providing a range of information and resources specifically*

focused on inspiring young people within rural and remote communities to access information about future possibilities and aligning the portal to the Skills & Jobs centres;

- *Collating & publishing local “successful” case studies of rural people undertaking further skills development and training- articulating how they did it and what the benefits were and making these available on the portal;*
- *Development of an upper primary school ‘hands on’ leadership program, with representation and engagement in civic and community initiatives that positively reinforce the value and role of building skills & building confidence and future leadership aspirations;*
- *Ongoing operation of the Rural Youth Ambassador program;*
- *A specific rural and remote post school strategy to support young people in their transition from school to further education and/or employment.*
- *The development of a specific and targeted rural and remote Careers Advice and Support service.*

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?

Increase the connectivity capacity within all rural and remote education communities to support the provision of high -quality multi-modal blended learning and virtual learning delivery.

Continue to provide incentives to Educational providers to provide direct training into smaller communities through programs such as the Regional & Specialist Training Fund (RSTF) [Regional and Specialist Training Fund](#) which helps set up training for specific skills in regional and specialist areas that are not being met by the current providers.

Develop a specific rural and remote approach to early years provision, to ensure that areas of disadvantage have access to a universal program locally, including early intervention strategies and provision of support services.

Specific resources be provided for rural and remote Early Childhood Education setting to incentivize innovative approaches such as mobile pre-school units, partnerships between early years services, pre schools and schools, and inclusion within locally developed education partnerships.

8. How can we better support Indigenous people from RRR areas to access and succeed in tertiary education?

As above, Indigenous and remote students face similar disadvantage.

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?

Overall comments regarding attracting people & jobs to RRR areas:

Overseeing and further expanding the ‘rural and remote placement scholarship scheme’ that supports pre-service professional teachers, and apply this to health & allied health professionals, if not already in place.

Encourage universities with affiliation to regional centres, to develop creative/flexible programs that

involve final year pre-service professionals to apply their training within a rural and remote context, through a structured internship program, that sees them employed as “paraprofessionals” while undertaking the final year of their studies.

Facilitate a quality promotion campaign to attract graduates and skilled experienced staff to rural and remote communities.

Develop and implement a Rural and Remote New Graduate Induction and Support Program/ Resource, that could be applied by a business, organization, Council or across a whole region. Encouraging consistent and low-cost support initiatives that make the transition into a new rural workplace more supported, more-friendly and encouraging the development of social bonds outside of the workplace to encourage connection and association to place.

Develop a range of incentives that support professionals in taking up roles within rural and remote communities. For example, six weeks sabbatical leave after six years of continuous service, reimbursement of HECS debts, financial and accommodation incentives, etc.

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?

Yes, a role is needed to drive innovation and directions that are develop through the strategy, to monitor progress and to ensure investment in initiatives are making a difference.

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?

- *Increased year 12 attainment*
- *RRR students completing their higher education and returning to RRR areas.*
- *Lifting of the mean average income for RRR areas.*
- *Decline in poor AEDC results for RRR students compared to their metro counter parts*
- *Improved overall results in NAPLAN as compared to metro & regional counterparts*
- *Reduction in the ‘bleed’ of talent from public schools into private school system*

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 response from the Wimmera Southern Mallee Regional Partnership (WSM RP) reflects and reinforces efforts undertaken by the WSM RP to address one of its key priorities- reducing disadvantage for children 0-18.

The WSM RP are particularly invested in improving the life chances of children in the critical early years (0-8 years), but also recognize the complimentary efforts required to ensure equitable learning is achieved for the 50,000 young people currently attending rural and remote schools and learning institutions across the state of Victoria (A Case for Action- Country Education Partnership CEP), p 2, 2018.

This response reinforces the research and findings published by the Country Education Partnership response to the Halsey Report in late 2018.

It implores all levels of governments and all relevant authorities to consider the policy, funding and implementation imperatives to improve opportunities for RRR students and their families.

Unlocking all young peoples' capacity through access to quality education is one of the greatest levers a country has at its disposal and within its control... at present we are squandering this precious future resource and seeing deep divide and disadvantage becoming entrenched between children born in cities and those born in the regions.

End Note:

Regional Development Australia (RDA) Grampians is supportive of this submission. RDA Grampians acknowledges the impacts that a declining population has on workforce availability, resulting in workforce shortages and impacting economic development across the Wimmera Southern Mallee region. This decline is partly caused by a lack of education opportunities for our community. RDA Grampians supports the better utilization of state-owned TAFE assets in regional areas, where new providers could use facilities currently vacant to provide a broader offering of course content.

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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.

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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 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.

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