



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

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I agree to have my submission published.*

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

Your details

Title*

Ms

First name*

Susan

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████████████████████

State/Territory*

WA

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

Curtin University

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

1. A number of opportunities exist to expand study options for people in RRR areas. These can be grouped according to delivery models, and partnership opportunities.

The expanse and geography of Western Australia make it a unique and challenging environment. WA is geographically the largest state in Australia and is the fourth largest by population. Approximately 20% of the population live in regional, rural and remote areas of WA, with many communities having very small populations. There are vast distances between towns and many locations are very remote. Air travel within WA is expensive and not always convenient with many flights going via Perth, adding to expense and time. Travel to many locations in northern WA can require chartered light aircraft as driving distances can be prohibitive and dangerous.

Having a number of flexible models in place where students have choice in how and when they engage in further studies is critical, as is the provision of sufficient support along the way.

Preparation through high school studies (ATAR and non-ATAR pathways), TAFE studies and general awareness and aspiration raising remain key in all contexts.

A. Capped places

Curtin would welcome removal of caps and allocation of additional enabling places so that more students from RRR areas can be enrolled. This would need to apply to online degree courses in addition to regional face to face delivery models.

Demand for Curtin's enabling programs exceeds the allocation from the Commonwealth, many students with ATAR levels below cut off scores currently use this pathway as an entry into university. With ATAR attainment levels in RRR areas being much lower than in metropolitan areas it is critical that an increased number of Commonwealth Supported Places be available to allow these students to obtain entry.

B. Partnerships and Pathways

Regional Study Hubs provide a model for supporting students in a single location studying a discrete course. Curtin is participating in the Geraldton Universities Centre from 2019 and is in discussion with the Pilbara Universities Centre.

Curtin has formed an important relationship with the Rural, Regional and Remote Women's Network of Western Australia. Currently delivered at Muresk Institute (90 minutes' drive from Perth), a Regional Leadership Masterclass series has been developed, addressing the needs of regional women in, or aspiring to leadership positions in their communities. Pending success of a funding submission currently with the Federal Government, the Masterclass series will be delivered in all major regional centres in WA. The funding is critical to subsidise the cost of travel and accommodation for participants, ensuring the program is accessible to more women.

Collaboration with TAFE for articulation pathways is critical and is addressed below.

C. Delivery models

With advances in technology, and the introduction of modularised learning including as stackable credentials, education is becoming more easily accessible regardless of location.

Almost 100 full degree programs (UG and PG) are available for students to study without any requirement to attend a Curtin campus. These are largely delivered in partnership with Open Universities Australia, with any face to face or work integrated learning requirements fulfilled in organisations local to the learner. For example, Curtin’s Bachelor of Education is delivered very successfully in this model, educating hundreds of teachers across Australia every year. Students undertake their required placements in regional schools, building the local workforce capacity and community sustainability.

There are several specific opportunities which may increase engagement in online study options:

2. Increasing promotion and awareness of study options available and what contemporary online study involves is critical. This may involve university marketing campaigns, PR stories in local community stories; and ensuring community-based people knowledgeable in the various study options (upskilled school-based career advisors, community librarians and Community Resource Centre staff, for example).
3. Reliable access to a quality internet connection is fundamental to a community’s ability to access online study options. In many rural and remote communities this is the first, and most significant barrier to overcome.

Distributed learning at Curtin involves individuals or classrooms located in different geographical locations to connect via web-conference technology to participate in lectures or collaborative tutorials delivered by an expert located at one of the sites. This helps to address challenges in economies of scale due, by allowing multiple groups of small numbers of students to join in a single learning session. Curtin uses this approach successfully across its global locations, as well as between its Bentley campus in metropolitan Perth and the WA School of Mines Campus in Kalgoorlie.

New approaches to modularised learning or “stackable credentials” supports the upskilling, cross-skilling and re-skilling of the workforce through short, intensive and targeted education programs – enabling life-long learning. It allows learners to dip in and out, improving their education without necessarily needing to commit upfront to a multi-year post graduate degree. Collaborations between universities and industry can identify programs required in particular areas or workforces, thereby addressing specific needs. Courses can be delivered locally in collaboration with local industry, government or community organisations.

Intensive block teaching is used by Curtin’s Centre for Aboriginal Studies to enable Indigenous people from RRR areas to travel to Perth to undertake their studies. More recently this is being introduced into Kalgoorlie and is proposed for delivery of programs at the Geraldton Universities Centre.

Regional Study Hubs such as the Geraldton Universities Centre in WA, appear to provide an effective model of supporting higher education in larger regional centres. Broader effectiveness and impact is limited by geographic location, and the number of courses supported.

The concept of Pop-up Campuses is interesting, however management of community expectations regarding the longevity of such a service would be critical. Pop-up in the sense of block delivery as described above is perhaps a more realistic approach, and would take into account the dispersed populations in RRR areas of WA.

4. TAFE plays a critical role in further education, particularly in RRR areas of Western Australia. Curtin actively works with WAs TAFE providers to ensure pathways for regional and remote students. Curtin has established a regional TAFE articulation agreement which applies to all regional WA TAFEs.

Through open and ongoing dialogue, additional pathways will continue to be identified and documented. For example, the WA School of Mines is working closely with the Central Regional TAFE in Kalgoorlie to develop an Associate Degree in Mining. This will provide a pathway for Advanced Diploma students to gain additional qualifications, improving their employment outcomes and addressing workforce shortages in the Kalgoorlie area.

Other opportunities include TAFE delivery of Diplomas which can constitute the first year of a university degree. This currently happens in one of the metropolitan TAFEs in the Commerce area but is not a current arrangement in regional WA.

Navigation of the various pathways available is confusing and challenging. Development of cross-sector digital tools that supports awareness and understanding of the broad range of courses and pathways that are available in a user-friendly and age-appropriate online space is a consideration.

Critical to success is:

- Open and ongoing dialogue between Universities and TAFE
- Clear promotion to students of the pathway opportunities (TAFE websites, career advisors)
- Effective Credit for Recognised Learning management processes within universities.

Challenge B

3. The following should be considered:

- Up front financial payments to cover the significant cost of making a transition to another location;
- Upfront and ongoing financial assistance with costs associated with study and living away from home, particularly for students who have not been able to meet Centrelink requirements for independence.
- University provided scholarships. Curtin University offers many scholarships for which RRR students may be eligible.

Financial support (both upfront, and ongoing) from local industry or community/government organisations may encourage students to return to work in the community after study.

For students who have relocated to Perth and are studying at Curtin's Bentley campus, a range of support is available which all students can access. These have been addressed in questions 3, and 7.

In addition, RRR students may seek:

Flexibility in their course to enable them to return home to undertake seasonal work, or to participate in important cultural events. This may come in the form of flexibility with assessment deadlines or the ability to undertake units online, rather than defer for a semester.

4. Provision of travel bursaries for students or family members to return home if studying at a metro-based campus.

For students studying in their own RRR community, there are particular challenges and the following support may be required, depending on the individual's circumstances:

- Access to appropriate technology such as laptops and printers and training and support in how to use it effectively;
- high quality broadband for participating in live-streamed lectures and collaborative tutorials, downloading library resources, and preparing and uploading completed assignments;
- access to appropriate study space, for example at the local library or Community Resource Centre;
- orientation program tailored to students studying online in RRR areas, including additional information on how to access support services, and advice from students in later years of study;
- tailored peer mentoring program which matches mentors and mentees carefully;
- academic support for assistance with academic writing, referencing, understanding assessment requirements etc;

- peer networking opportunities with students from their own or other universities studying in their town (regardless of the degree studied); connection with industry and employers for work integrated learning opportunities, research projects and/or internships;
- invitations to attend the University's campus for particular events; and
- financial support to travel for attendance at compulsory activities such as clinical placements, or other non-compulsory education-related activities which may enhance their learning (conference, guest lectures etc).

5. Question 4 addresses the various strategies and initiatives in place to make all students regardless of their background feel like they belong at Curtin.

Identification of RRR students as a unique cohort facing unique challenges (e.g. financial restraints, homesickness and culture shock) may further assist in addressing the special needs of these students. Communication needs to be tailored appropriately to the cohort.

Increase aspiration raising activities throughout secondary schooling, including funding for students to attend special campus events. By establishing relationships with students from RRR areas while still in high school, social networks of support are created that can continue when students arrive at university.

Inclusion of RRR students as part of a comprehensive first year familiarisation and orientation program, connecting RRR students with student mentors from regional and remote communities, and encouraging participation in campus events, clubs and groups and volunteering are some initiatives to increase student connectedness. Curtin Volunteers! is a program that has been very successful is building social networks among students new to campus. Volunteering experiences also take place in RRR locations throughout Western Australia.

Challenge C

6. Ensuring ongoing financial support for awareness and aspiration raising programs conducted in high school and community settings is critical. Curtin's AHEAD Program¹ is highly successful in the areas it can reach. Funding limitations and the long distances and high travel costs associated with travel within WA limit its reach and impact.

Ensuring secondary schools all have access to a qualified secondary school careers counsellor with up-to-date knowledge around pathways and university courses and provision of on-campus experiences for Y7-12 is critical. Provide support and professional development for teachers in regional schools, who often do not have access to aspiration raising curriculum, or Careers Advisors. The development of digital networks connecting schools with each other, and with Curtin is being explored.

Develop outreach support to RRR schools through: in-class support, workshops and provision of ongoing support (self-directed and team-based learning, mentoring, advising) via digital platforms allowing for scalability, and adaptability through high-quality learning analytics.

Establish parent and carer support networks, and information hubs, to ensure parents are given the most up to date information around tertiary pathways and support, in order to be able to best support their child to make an informed decision.

Financially supported visits to university campuses for high school students, to engage in a range of on-campus experiences, including exploration of disciplines, facilities and student housing options has proven to be very effective. Further funding to expand these opportunities is critical, again, given the expense of, and travel costs associated with RRR WA.

¹ <https://eesj.curtin.edu.au/ahead/about.cfm>

Provide funding to tertiary providers to deliver culturally appropriate educational opportunities on-country through the wisdom of Indigenous teaching and learning methods which also provides a unique opportunity for students to participate in intercultural capability learning. Curtin has established the Nowanup Bush Campus in the Great Southern region of Western Australia in partnership with Indigenous organisations which will provide valuable on-country learning opportunities for Indigenous and non-Indigenous students, staff and the broader community.

Challenge D

7. Curtin University has a very diverse student population with a significant proportion of students from low SES and disadvantaged backgrounds. We demonstrate a sustained record of successful engagement with disadvantaged and under-represented communities dating back to the 1970s. Curtin has been successful in attracting continued high rates of HEPPP funding, an indication of our success in attracting and supporting these students.

We take an intersectional approach which recognises that each individual's lived experience is unique and that a person may identify by using one or more of many equity attributes. At the organisational level, intersectionality promotes effectiveness through avoiding siloed approaches which may work for one aspect of identity but not for others. It also offers improved effectiveness where the same initiative can promote inclusion across many aspects of diversity rather than introducing numerous initiatives addressing the same barrier or issue.

We have a comprehensive suite of support services and initiatives to promote inclusion, support and success for all of our students, including the 16.7% from RRR areas. These including a week-long Orientation festival; mentoring for first year students; social functions for students in on-campus accommodation; *Earn While You Learn* program through which all students can seek paid casual employment; Careers, Employment and Leadership programs, many of which are available online; and access to Counselling Services – face to face, via telephone and online.

A guarantee of accommodation for all first year regional students is in place at Curtin.

8. Many of the same issues discussed above apply to Indigenous RRR students. In addition, consideration should be given to:
 - Ensure government and university policies takes into account Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students' cultural considerations which can impact their time at university, for example moving off-country and needing to return for cultural reasons. For example, flexibility in assessment deadline policies may be appropriate.
 - Ensure that specific support and enrichment programs are provided by university Indigenous Education Units including availability of 'culturally safe spaces' for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and Indigenous specific mentoring programs.
 - Acknowledgement by Government of the additional costs associated with supporting Indigenous RRR students to succeed. This is particularly important for Indigenous RRR students in enabling programs, who often need additional support with literacy (English as a second or third language), academic study skills and western ways of learning, as well as the use of technology.

Challenge E

9. Uncapping places for RRR students may provide access to higher education for more students in RRR areas, although any growth would be limited given small population sizes.

There are also a number of other ways that universities stimulate economic growth, including:

- Undertaking collaborative research projects which address issues identified by local industry;
- Hosting visiting guest lectures by visiting researchers;
- Offering life-long learning opportunities as described in Question 1, in collaboration with local community organisations.

- Students in many disciplines undertaking volunteering, work integrated learning projects and fieldwork placements in RRR communities. Funding for students to undertake extended placements in regional areas would support the long-established principle in the health workforce that students who train in regional areas, return to practice in regional areas. This is an issue Curtin’s School of Education is seeking to improve, with support from the WA State Government.
- Establishing mutually beneficial collaborative partnerships with community organisations in research and/or education.

Curtin has many examples which illustrate the points above. Many hundreds of students undertake volunteering or WIL placements in RRR WA each year, contributing to valuable community development and sustainability. A highly valued relationship has been established with Noongar Elders in the Great Southern of WA (approx. 5 hour drive from Perth) to establish the Nowanup Bush Campus. This will provide valuable on country learning opportunities for Curtin staff and students and the broader community, whilst supporting economic and Indigenous community sustainability.

10. A critical issue is the provision of additional Government funding support for regional campus infrastructure including buildings and technology, as well as student accommodation. In addition, a regional loading model which acknowledges the geographic challenges associated with the unique state of WA.

11. The following issues would need to be considered:

- Provision of financial incentives and assistance for students.
- Access to appropriate quality accommodation
- Access to casual employment opportunities.
- Community engagement and support for visiting students.
- Development of a marketing strategy which showcases the uniqueness of the regional/remote Australian cultural experience.

The approach taken by the Rural Clinical School of WA is a model that should be considered. Fully funded through the Federal Department of Health’s Rural Health Multidisciplinary Training program, the RCSWA supports medical students in their penultimate year to undertake a 12-month placement in regional WA. Travel costs are fully funded, full accommodation is provided at no cost, all placements are well organised for the period, and students are embraced and actively supported by local government and community organisations. A similar model funded and applied to other health and education disciplines should be considered.

12 and 13

It is difficult to answer these questions without the Panel providing further information on the anticipated role of the Commissioner and why one is needed, what powers would the Commissioner have and to whom they would report. A clear and definitive description of the role is needed before we can make further comment.

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.

As detailed in the submission, key points include:

- Having a number of flexible models where students have choice in how and when they engage in further studies is critical, as is the provision of sufficient support.
- Removal of caps and allocation of additional enabling places including to online degree programs.
- Pursue advances in technology and modularised learning so that education becomes more easily accessible regardless of location.
- TAFE plays a critical role, particularly in RRR areas of Western Australia.
- Financial support should include payments to cover costs associated with living away from home.
- For students studying in their own RRR community, challenges to be addressed include access to technology, mentoring, and financial support.
- Identification of RRR students as a unique cohort facing unique challenges.
- Ensuring ongoing financial support for awareness and aspiration raising programs conducted in high school and community settings is critical.
- Provide funding to tertiary providers to deliver culturally appropriate educational opportunities on-country through the wisdom of Indigenous teaching and learning methods.
- Acknowledgement by Government of the additional costs associated with supporting Indigenous RRR students to succeed. This is particularly important for Indigenous RRR students in enabling programs, who often need additional support with literacy (English as a second or third language), academic study skills and western ways of learning, as well as the use of technology.
- Offering life-long learning opportunities in collaboration with local community organisations.
- Provision of additional Government funding support for regional campus infrastructure including buildings and technology, as well as student accommodation. In addition, a regional loading model which acknowledges the geographic challenges associated with the unique state of WA.
- Development of a marketing strategy which showcases the uniqueness of the regional/remote Australian cultural experience.
- A clear and definitive description of the role of the Commissioner is needed before we can make further comment.

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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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.

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