Submission: Regional, Rural and Remote Education Strategy Framing Paper

February 2019

Introduction

The University of Wollongong (UOW) welcomes the opportunity to provide input in response to the Regional Education Expert Advisory Group's Framing Paper and supports the Federal Government's efforts to address issues impacting access and participation of people from regional, rural and remote (RRR) backgrounds in post-secondary education, including the additional $134.8 million in funding to support this important issue as announced in November 2018.

It is noted that UOW also provided input into the Federal Government's Independent Review into Regional, Rural and Remote Education that preceded this Framing Paper in August 2017.

Students should be provided with quality education and given opportunity to achieve equitable learning outcomes regardless of where they live. Despite existing efforts of schools, government and other contributing factors to achieve this equity, research indicates that there remains an ongoing gap in educational achievement between RRR students compared to metropolitan students.

UOW is committed to delivering high quality education through its Regional Campuses across New South Wales (NSW) to strengthen teaching and learning, outreach, community engagement, social inclusion and indigenous education activities. It also undertakes a range of activities and initiatives , in part funded under the Higher education Participation and Pathways (HEPPP) scheme, aimed at working with students in regional and remote parts of NSW and broader Australia aimed at raising the aspirations, awareness and attainment of individuals from underrepresented backgrounds in higher education from UOW's communities. Please see the University of Wollongong's annual HEPPP reports for outcomes associated with this work.

This UOW Submission addresses the key questions identified in the Framing Paper, and aims to provide practical suggestions the Government may take to improve tertiary education access and attainment for people from RRR backgrounds in Australia.

As an overarching issue, it is noted that students from RRR areas have varying needs and challenging life events, often dependent upon the unique characteristics of where they live, their level of remoteness, and their personal background. It is important to note that this group of students face varying degrees of disadvantage that influence the barriers and challenges that impact on their educational outcomes. Therefore, formulating strategies to address the issues faced by these students requires an approach that moves beyond one size fits all.

About the University of Wollongong

UOW is a research-intensive university that has built a strong international reputation for world-class research and exceptional teaching quality, and is ranked amongst the top 250 of universities worldwide. In 2018, UOW had over 35,500 total student enrolments globally and more than 2,800 staff (Full Time Equivalent).

The University offers more than 300 undergraduate/postgraduate courses and research degrees across a wide range of disciplines through the five broad faculties of Business, Engineering and Information Sciences, Law, Humanities and the Arts, Science, Medicine and Health and, Social Sciences.

UOW is an international multi-campus university, with campuses at Wollongong, Shoalhaven, Batemans Bay, Bega, and the Southern Highlands, and three Sydney campuses (at Loftus, Liverpool and Sydney CBD). The University also has campuses in Hong Kong and Dubai.

UOW has developed the Innovation Campus in Wollongong which is an education, research and related business precinct. This state of the art facility provides strong linkages between business and research, and complements the University's leading research and innovation institutes.

Key Points in response to Key Questions outlined in the Framing Paper

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

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

For many RRR people, moving to study is not an option. The UOW uses its multi-campus locations to provide opportunities for RRR people to access university courses while remaining in their communities. This is particularly important for students from low SES backgrounds, students with disabilities and mature students seeking a career change, and Indigenous students, all of whom have competing needs that depend upon access to their social networks.

UOW has already adopted innovative strategies to expand opportunities for RRR people to access and participate in higher education that have encompassed a range of elements including the use of technology, building expertise in local centres, partnering with community services and with other providers. Expansion of such approaches is limited by a number of factors, particularly:

- the number of students interested in studying specific courses in specific centres;
- the increased costs associated with the need to provide specialised teaching spaces and duplicate services across multiple small campuses; and,
- inability to access local expertise in specific fields of education.

Innovative strategies are of value in overcoming such issues and in extending opportunities, and may include:

- blended models of teaching with technology supported experiences supported by face-to-face experiences;
- scaffolded models with students starting in their region and transitioning to a major centre (i.e., Wollongong) in subsequent years; and,
- adopting a multi-layered approach to education in these communities by combining schools (primary, high, central), vocational education and training and universities courses.

All of these strategies require differing amounts of the following support mechanisms:

- effective regional and rural internet services and support for universities to adopt cutting edge technologies to enable technology enriched learning;
- effective partnerships that transcend educational territories of schools, VET sector and universities for RRR people;
- innovative partnerships with local services such as libraries, community health (for mental health and wellbeing);
- scholarships/grants to enhance technology access for RRR students, especially those from low SES backgrounds;

- additional sholarships/grants to assist RRR students with accommodation and travel, at regional campuses if remote, and at major centres for all RRR students in a scaffolded course;

- additional scholarships/grants to support students cover additional travel costs associated with their higher education;

- scholarships/grants to assist with workplace learning requirements where these require travel from home; and,

- additional funding per student to support universities to run courses for RRR students on small campuses in rural and regional centres.

Face-to-face interaction with tutors and support services is highly valued and considered an important factor in attracting and retaining students at these regional campuses, particularly in their early years of higher education study. More could be done to enable existing regional higher education sites to offer localised face-to-face support to students, including students studying by distance at other Universities but located in the vicintity of one of our campuses.

Our regional campuses, along side *Country University Centres* and *Regional Study Hubs* provide a valuable physical space for students from RRR areas to access higher education and a community of higher education learners, (including: infrastructure such as study spaces, video conferencing, computing facilities and internet access). Arrangements should be made to enable existing regional campuses and facilities such as libraries and regional study hubs to provide technical and general academic skills, literacy and numeracy support to distance students of any university. Establishing a connected network of regional university campuses, such as those provided by UOW, with Country University Centres and Regional Study Hubs would help expand the opportunity for RRR students to access higher education.

Additional funding may be directed to regional university campuses to allow them to increase degree offerings, such as courses which meet the specific employment needs of the regions, such as social work, teaching and allied health. Small regional population numbers typically involve reduced economies of scale and more financial risks with operating regional campuses. It is important that Government recognise the benefits these regional campuses provide to students and the broader economies in RRR areas and provide appropriate support to allow them to continue to operate.

As well, the requirements associated with the Closure of Course Regulations within Funding Agreements between higher education providers and the Federal Government act as a disincentive to launch new, or specialised courses needed by regional economy. If a program or major, proves to be unsuccessful with low enrolment numbers, institutions face significant hurdles to cancel or suspend the offering. This reduces the capacity to be agile in response to changes in regional workforce needs.

Opportunities do exist to increase the transparency of articulation arrangements of higher education providers and, to improve communication that promotes awareness of the portability of degrees, so that potential RRR students are aware of this option.

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?*

It is noted that some elements of this question are already outlined in response to Question 1 above.

In addition, RRR populations have a concentration of people from equity backgrounds in vocational education and training (VET) in the lower level certificate qualifications, such as Certificate II and III (James, et. al., 2004). Work can be undertaken within the VET sector to enable students to achieve higher level qualifications (such as Certificate IV and Diploma) that enable university entry. This could include interventions such as embedded careers advice, working with vocational providers to map the benefits of attaining qualification levels that link to specific careers, and also have universities working collaboratively within TAFE to transition students to higher education. Exploring concepts such as stacked degrees with TAFE, would also allow students to have a clear pathway to degree completion, on commencement of their TAFE qualification.

UOW utilises its HEPPP funding to work with VET providers to offer free briding programs for vocational students. Such an approach could be mandated by government more widely, or there could be specific funding offered for rural programs that evidence partnership between higher education providers. There could also be HECS funding for students enrolled in co-delivered programs or pathway programs such as 1st year TAFE, 2nd year university course packages.

There is also opporuntity for strengthened connections between schools and higher education. For example, there is opportunity for universities to partner with schools to offer online masterclass courses which may help students to become familiar with university study, as well as providing a stepping stone towards and a smoother transition to 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?*

RRR students face financial challenges at various points of their engagement with higher education. One of the greatest challenges for students from regional and remote areas is the cost of relocating. These are in addition to other financial barriers to higher education that include the cost of living and meeting educational needs throughout the course of their study. A tiered approach to equity scholarships is required to take into consideration students' personal circumstances across the lifecycle of participation in higher education with scholarship funding awarded appropriately.

Specific initiatives that can assist provide financial support for students from RRR backgrounds include:
- recognise and support the cost of travel for open days and associated events for student from RRR areas to help them consider their options for higher education, perhaps in the form of a 'get ready' scholarship;
- promote low-cost, semester-based accommodation and offer accommodation scholarships for RRR students - these scholarships should be available to RRR throughout the course of their study;
- equity scholarships, including the provision of cash to support RRR students cover not only accommodation, but also other expenses incurred including living, travel and education materials; and
- flexibility in timetabling that allows students to maintain some paid employment—including awareness that excessive internships or compulsory placements as part of a program can preclude students from earning in their usual casual jobs. In this instance consideration of offering equity-based stipend or similar for students would be valuable.
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Research funded by the National Centre for Student Equity in Higher Education (NCSEHE) into the relationships between equity scholarships and the retention and success of recipients confirms that equity scholarships are an effective tool in retaining disadvantaged university students. Scholarships can help recipients to buy time to study, taking time off work to focus on their academic goals. Examples of best

practice are outlined on the National Centre for Student Equity in Higher Education website: https://www.ncsehe.edu.au/effective-scholarships-equity-students/.

It is important to note that given low levels of youth employment in regional areas, there is limited capacity for RRR students who are studying on a regional campus to pick up work to support themselves while studying.

In addition, the rules regarding Youth Allowance and Austudy drive behaviour that can lead to disengagement with pursuing higher education. For example, a critical factor driving regional students' engagement in gap years relates to their need to meet Federal requirements for Youth Allowance. The recent increases to parental cut-off by $10,000 https://ministers.education.gov.au/tehan/over-2300-regional-and-remote-students-benefit-youth-allowance-change provide a small lift that does not negate the issues regional students face in proving they are eligible:

- earned 75% or more of Wage Level A of the National Training Wage Schedule (http://guides.dss.gov.au/guide-social-security-law/1/1/n/12) included in a modern award; and
- worked at least 15 hours a week for at least 2 years.

Students also need to build resources to fund university as the majority experience poverty when studying that increases stress on equity group students particularly. Such issues are highlighted in the following article: *One in seven uni students often forced to go without food*, Sydney Morning Herald, 13 August 2018[1].

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

Financial and social factors can play a major role in supporting students from RRR continuing with their tertiary studies. Initiatives that provide effective support RRR students both in preparation of and during their studies run by UOW include:

- Outreach programs funded through HEPPP run in schools and community groups that aim to increase awareness, attainment and access to higher education - these programs are of high value to school students, particularly those from equity groups, including students from rural and remote areas;
- HEPPP funding supports for students within university to successfully complete their chosen area of study and make successful transitions into the workforce;
- UOW Outreach and Pathways activities work closely with targeted VET providers and sponsored schools in the Batemans Bay, Bega, Illawarra, Shoalhaven and Southern Highlands regions to deliver a range of programs to students in these regions - programs are delivered to students and individuals from Year 1 to Year 12 and post-school, in targeted schools and communities to build their awareness of higher education, and to help provide participants with the motivation, knowledge and skills to get there;
- Outreach programs are refined to meet the diverse needs of learners with varying levels of awareness and aspirations towards higher education such as the Rural In2Uni Project originally piloted under a a National Priority Pool HEPPP grant.
- Targeted mentoring and success stories from other RRR students with whom RRR students can best relate;
- Employment and job seeking support for students who are relocating to study; and

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[1] *One in seven uni students often forced to go without food*, Sydney Morning Herald, 13 August 2018, https://www.smh.com.au/national/one-in-seven-uni-students-often-forced-to-go-without-food-new-study-20180812-p4zx27.html

- Assistance with visitor accommodation, phone credit or return trips to protect bonds with family and community—students who feel isolated or homesick are more likely to not complete studies.

Financial assistance for students is critical and may include:

- Programs that assist students with transitioning out of University accommodation;
- Scholarships, accommodation and travel bursaries that are available beyond the first year of study;
- Scholarships to assist with workplace learning engagement;
- Scholarships and bursaries to enable students to have appropriate technology including internet services at home; and
- Modifications to Youth Allowance and Austudy rules to reduce the need for a gap year, and programs to facilitate strong re-engagement of students who have to delay their studies for personal or financial reasons.

UOW emphasises the ongoing need for HEPPP funding to ensure the ongoing delivery of the various programs supported by these programs.

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

There are multiple ways that universities can assist RRR students to gain a sense of belonging on campus.

UOW has a significant program of Outreach activities involving all campuses that start in primary school and build up to year 12 Master classes. Events include hosting RRR students in year 12 who stay overnight in a residence, providing them with a sense of connectedness to UOW and the campus. These are critical to local students developing a sense of belonging to a University.

UOW also have a range of additional strategies used to enhance a sense of belonging such as:
- in UOW residences, all students have access to a wide variety of support programs that assist them to settle in and feel welcome in their community;
- ongoing support programs in residences include wellbeing, academic, social, cultural and skills based programs such as learning how to cook;
- practical information is also provided to help residential students to get to know the area, where to shop and, how to navigate the transport system;
- pre-commencement information and opportunities to connect with students are useful in assisting students in developing contacts and friendships prior to arriving on campus, or commencing online study;
- targeted pre-commencement programs for specific students such as First-in-Family and people with complex disabilities; and
- Trained student leaders in residences are recruited from RRR backgrounds to help students to feel connected.

UOW is also designing and implementing additional targeted transition programs across the student lifecycle, and have a strong embedded approach to careers and employability

UOW understands that RRR students often have complex and specific needs, and target messaging accordingly. Initiatives such as welcome events for this cohort of students assist to create friendship groups with peers from similar backgrounds, and to help them to transition to higher education.

It is important that students at regional study hubs are made comfortable and desirable places for students to attend. Ways in which this could be achieved include:

- Build a connected campus life;
- Fund on-campus events for RRR students who have relocated;
- Train staff in interprofessional skills to best assist students; and,
- Establish peer-to peer networks to facilitate students' sense of belonging

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?*

The focus needs to be less on aspirations and more on awareness and informed choice. This is an important point, as this is an outdated term. There is significant evidence that RRR people aspire to engage in higher education. However, they face barriers associated with financial constraints, and awareness of options or pathways to achieve their aspirations. The focus should be on "enabling aspiration" (Spohrer, 2011; Sellar & Gale, 2011; Bowden & Doughney 2010; Gale et al, 2013; Parker et al, 2013; Fleming & Grace, 2017). Initiatives to achieve this could include:
- Embedded national curriculum on careers that is contextualised for students from regional and remote areas;
- Adequately resourced effective and independent careers advice embedded into regional and remote schools;
- National collaboration across Universities to ensure coverage in regional and remote Australia to delivering widening participation programs; and,
- Increased access to full suite of HSC subjects to enable choice at Year 12 completion and expanded options.

UOW has a range of strategies to raise awareness of UOW led opportunities and to facilitate informed career choices for RRR people. Many outreach programs are funded through HEPPP and are run in schools and community groups. These programs are of high value to RRR people, to help increase awareness of their post-school options and to realise their aspirations towards higher education. Programs include:

- Outreach activities that bring students onto campus prior to enrolment (e.g., Bega's Rural In2Uni program;
- Educational support programs that encourage students to complete secondary schooling;
- UOW Shoalhaven Careers Expo; and,
- Short courses and Continuing Professional Development that bring community onto campus and demystify higher education.

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?*

UOW provides a range of effective measures to help support students, including RRR students, from a range of equity backgrounds. However, opportunity exists to more effectively support RRR students who may experience multiple forms of disadvantage, including:
- Regional campuses offer the full suite of services such as counselling, career advice, academic and personal support. However, small campus numbers limit the amount of support that we can effectively fund. Startegies to address this require innovative use of technology and partnerships to overcome financial restraints.

- A tiered approach to equity scholarships is required that take into consideration a student's level of personal circumstance (such as disability or low socio-economic status) alongside their regional or remote status with scholarship funding awarded appropriately (i.e. students from regional areas who are experiencing other forms of disadvantage are being awarded the highest amount of funding); Examples of best practice is outlined on the National Centre for Student Equity in Higher Education (NCSEHE) website here: https://www.ncsehe.edu.au/effective-scholarships-equity-students/;

- Review and reframe of government financial support, such as Centrelink, to ensure that this is catering to the needs of RRR students. Issues outlined in the following reports into student finances and housing should be considered as part of this issue:

    o Student Housing Survey 2017, Anglicare Australia and the a National Union of Students[2];

    o 2017 Universities Australia Student Finances Survey Report, Universities Australia[3]

- Develop a better understanding of the diversity within the student cohort and communicate it effectively across the university (Pollard, 2018);

- Be responsive in the design of learning and teaching strategies and student experience programs, recognising complexities within the remote student cohort (Pollard, 2018).

- Giving students from RRR backgrounds the opportunity to be connected with others from the same background who have succeeded in undertaking higher education has proven to be a great enabler in terms of connecting and motivating these students. Increased support for the provision of mentorships may help provide invaluable assistance to RRR students.

- Develop opportunities for students to enrol in low-cost, single interest subjects, rather than committing to full degree immediately, which is a significant and daunting commitment.

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

It is noted that Indigenous people from RRR areas often have a strong need to feel a sense of belonging and connection with the community/campus they are a part of. Higher education providers should be aware of this and ensure that appropriate support is provided to this student cohort.

In addition to suggestions provided in Q7 above, the presence of Indigenous knowledge's and cultures across the student experience should be enhanced, drawing on Indigenous leadership, research and best practice program design when developing and implementing programs that support remote student success (Pollard, 2018).

Longevity of the relationship between Universities and Indigenous school students and their communities is critical to build trust and a sense of belonging. This has to start from primary school. Other factors which should be addressed to support this cohort of students within tertiary education include:
- Strong and effective Indigenous Student Centres within universities, providing a dedicated space and support for Indigenous students;

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[2] Student Housing Survey 2017, Anglicare Australia and the a National Union of Students, http://www.anglicare.asn.au/docs/default-source/default-document-library/anglicare-nus-report.pdf?sfvrsn=0
[3] 2017 Universities Australia Student Finances Survey Report, Universities Australia, http://files-au.clickdimensions.com/universitiesaustraliaeduau-akspr/files/1807132017uastudentfinancesurveyreport.pdf?1533887975656&_cldee=bHNld2VsbEBpbGxhd2FycmFtZXJjdXJ5LmNvbS5hdQ%3d%3d&recipientid=contact-fa25cff9a523e61180e2c4346bb508dc-ae9bcad34c924825bbf054808011b1ae&esid=64cfc8e7-4d9c-e811-815d-e0071b66a691

- A comprehensive review of strategies is provided in Gore et al, 2017 https://link.springer.com/content/pdf/10.1007%2Fs13384-017-0236-9.pdf , these include:
  - enhancing the capacity for communities and families to support Indigenous students
  - effective independent career advice and post school options
  - strategies that overcome dislocation if relocation is required
  - strategies to provide access to education that do not require separation from community;
  - engagement with Indigenous communities to enhance a sense of connection to community for students who have to leave their own community; and,
  - enhancing peer connections and involvement with Indigenous alumni.

Other mechansisms to support Indigenous students to access and succeed in tertiary education include:
- improved transport options;
- better dissemination of information regarding Indigenous scholarships and making these easier to apply for;
- offering funded rural Indigenous pathways and academic literacy programs in regional areas;
- the UOW Shoalhaven Campus runs the Aboriginal Summer School initiative, which involves bringing Stage 5 students on to campus to familiarise them with the Campus and incorporates both Indigenous and academic ways of learning; and
- dedicated careers programs, such as UOW Bega's Indigenous Careers Program. This Program is an example of a program co-delivered by VET, Uni and Community to support Indigenous student progression.

Challenge E: Attracting people and jobs to RRR areas

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

Higher education providers can play an important role in helping to stimulate economic growth in RRR areas. To achieve this, Government and providers must work more closely together to frame the employment and economic development needs of their specific region and respond with appropriate courses, and other initiatives such as matching traineeships.

The UOW Bega Valley Innovation Hub (https://begavalleyinnovationhub.com.au/) is an example of an innovative way in which tertiary providers can help to stimate ecomonic growth and create new economics in RRR areas. The new Hub is part of UOW's iAccelerate Innovation Netwrok. It has been funded in 2019/2020 piloting entrepreneurship education and support in a small regional area with goal of supporting local entrepreneurs and creating ecinimic growth. If successful this initiave could be adapted to suit other RRR areas.

In Batemans Bay, the Department of Premier and Cabinet together with the Department of Education led a regional project to identify the job opportunities within the region and map the educational opportunities on offer in the region to those potential job outcomes. A gap analysis was also undertaken to see how the local University and TAFE could respond to growing workforce demand by introducing new courses in the region. The establishment of regional working groups that comprise of industry, regional development Australia and education providers in the region to map the opportunities within that region could be a potential solution.

Higher education providers should be encouraged to develop close relationship with local government and

business sector. An example of where this has been done is UOW's Shoalhaven Campus working with Shoalhaven City and local businesses to develop 'Proudly Shoalhaven' campaign, which aims to showcase the Shoalhaven as a place to relocate and do business.

Encouraging retraining of community members, with a focus on mature age students in these communities.

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

Efforts can be made to communicate that regional universities offer the same standard of high quality education as many metropolitan universities. In doing this, the emphasis of an institution should not be on whether it is in a metropolitan or regional location, but rather on it's education programs.

It is also important to note that each region and each regional university in Australia has its own unique and distinguishing features. Regional universities should not be lumped together as a single group, but promoted individually on the merits of what each offers, such as its programs, its links to specific industry and, possible employment outcomes.

In addition, regional campuses should not be positioned merely as teaching locations but sites of research. Universities already have many regional campuses, but they traditionally have a strong teaching focus. More could be done by the NSW Government to incentivise research to be produced in these regions supported by these regional universities.

Other ways in which the attractiveness of regional universities may be increased include:
- funding specific courses in specific regions based on employment demand;
- the provision of scholarships for regional university campuses;
- better transport and accommodation options would allow regional campuses to host visiting academics, conferences and so on, which would be good for economic development and intellectual life of our communities;
- funding specific courses in specific regions based on employment demand;
- offer key courses only at regional universities; and
- offer continuing professional development programs for local professionals.

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

Given the economic and social value that international education stands to offer regional economies and communities, it is important that more be done to attract international students to study at regional universities. It is noted that, in November 2018, UOW submitted a Submission in response to the Department of Education and Training's Consultation questions which sought input about government efforts to encourage international students to have a study experience outside of Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane. As part of the Submsssion, UOW outlined a number of possible incentives which could be introduced to help attract international students to study in RRR areas.

Data from the International Student Survey 2016 shows that overall satisfaction scores for international students enrolled at a regional institution were 1.6% higher than for their metropolitan counterparts. Communicating such positive feedback may assist to promote the uptake of study at regional institutions

by international students. It is noted that increasing the number of internationals students studing at regional centres should not come at the expense of students choosing to study in metropolitan location.

Additional factors which should be considered to help encourage an increase in both metropolitan and international students to study at RRR areas include:

- capital work investments to establish regional on-campus accommodation;
- scholarships for regional campus univeristy places;
- regional semester exchange plus practicum packaged experiences;
- serviceable transport links (inlcuding airports) and accommodation options; and
- post-University job guarantees or scholarships.

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?

The introduction of a National Regional Education Commissioner to oversee the Regional, Rural and Remote Education *Strategy* should be carefully considered.

Such a role should not serve as a means of reducing the funding to regional students, nor adding further beauracracy and regulation for education providers. It is important that money allocated to RRR support is spent on RRR programs, scholarships and support.

If a Commissioner is established, coherence (but contextualisation) needs to be factored in with existing Federal Government equity programs (such as HEPPP and the Indigenous Student Success Program) to ensure that we have a consistent approach, as many students from these cohorts overlap. Improved engagement with State and Territory governments is also required to better align National with State programs and local communities to achieve success.

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?

There is a need to reduce the existing gap between University completion rates of regional Australians and the national average. A suitable target that narrows that gap should be established. Other goals and targets which should be considered are outlined below.

- Increase in the % of RRR students accessing and <u>successfully completing</u> higher education;

- Increase in the % of RRR students with disability accessing and <u>successfully completing</u> higher education;

- Increase in the % of RRR Indigenous students without disability accessing and <u>successfully completing</u> higher education; and,

- Increase in the % people who re-engage in undergraduate studies after a gap year or a leave of absence from study.

In the long term, the following additional goals and targets should be considered to help measure success:

- Employment outcomes for RRR people;

- Access, participation and success of RRR people in Post graduate study;

- Evidence of a whole of life-cycle approach; and,

- Evidence of partnerships involving communities, with collaborative goals established;

It is also noted that, for many RRR students, success is not necessarily measured by students completing higher education, but the positive changes and increased confidence that is gained from their experiences in participating in higher education.

Further Information

The University would welcome further opportunities to elaborate upon, or further clarify, the matters raised within this submission. To do so, please do not hesitate to contact the UOW Director, Government Relations (Mr Canio Fierravanti) on 42215931 or via canio_fierravanti@uow.edu.au.

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