



## RESPONSE TO THE INDEPENDENT REVIEW INTO REGIONAL, RURAL AND REMOTE EDUCATION

6 September 2017

The University of Melbourne welcomes the opportunity to respond to the *Independent Review into Regional, Rural and Remote Education*. The University employs a range of programs to address the challenges and barriers facing regional, rural and remote students choosing to study at Melbourne.

The University of Melbourne's [Equity Access and Participation Plan for 2015-2017](#) targets the priority group of low-SES regional and remote secondary students. The University also runs programs to assist students in their transition once enrolled at our metropolitan or regional campuses.

The University's Access Melbourne Scheme facilitates educational access and equality, and our commitment to this is evident – around one third of domestic undergraduate students enter through Access Melbourne. However, educational hurdles facing regional, rural and remote students remain and therefore requires a coordinated and effective response from all sector participants.

Much of the *Discussion Paper* for this Review relates to the efficacy and impact of schooling across all geographic areas, particularly at secondary school level. We note that strong learning outcomes at secondary school are crucial to broadening access to further education. As such, the University's written response focuses on highlighting good practice at the tertiary level and innovative ideas for enabling more regional, rural and remote students to apply to university and stay on to graduation.

The Australian Government has an important role in encouraging and supporting students to engage in higher education, whether this occurs in metropolitan or regional campuses. For student cohorts that typically have low access and/or high attrition rates, a mix of government-led policy settings, community input and university-led programs will make a difference.

Where students with regional, rural or remote backgrounds choose to study in the city, the University recognises the additional challenges faced by students and works hard to provide the support that can underpin successful completion. Accordingly, our Equity Access and Participation Plan involves collaboration with secondary and primary schools, other universities, TAFEs and communities to foster partnerships and broader pathways to support educationally disadvantaged students.

**The University suggests the following as priority areas for improving the learning outcomes and future educational pathways of regional, rural and remote students at a university level:**

1. Streamlining educational policy oversight and planning by developing a 'joined-up' post-secondary system;
2. Supporting a variety of specialised programs and outreach streams to engage students, raise aspirations and highlight post-school opportunities for learning and employment;

3. Supporting cross-sectoral partnerships and programs to identify and enhance innovative and entrepreneurial ways to deliver education; and
4. Working across levels of government to support key programs (e.g. rural speciality training) and remove barriers (e.g. accommodation challenges).

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### **Summary of Recommendations**

- To address the need to recruit teachers into rural and remote areas, State and Territory Governments, in partnership with universities, should support the expansion of Teacher Candidate placements in regional, rural and remote locations during their training.
- To expand the reach of entrepreneurial education, governments could support 'hub-and-spokes'-style programs/partnerships/networks between leading innovation hubs and regional, region and remote educational providers (school, VET, and university), in order to cost-effectively leverage existing strengths and infrastructure in entrepreneurial education wherever it is located.
- To enable holistic policy setting, a single body should be established (with State and Federal support) to provide independent system oversight of education, along with ongoing review of current effectiveness and advice on future policy directions.
- The Australian Government should work with the sector to develop viable postgraduate specialist training programs in regional, rural and remote areas so doctors can remain in those settings while pursuing the next level of their career.
- To address workforce planning and access to services, Australian governments should maintain policy settings that support rural specialty training pathways in higher education, including in medicine, health, agriculture, veterinary and teaching.
- Recognise, promote and support the extensive range of programs run by schools, vocational and university providers to support regional, rural and remote students.
- The Australian Government should work with State and Local Governments to identify and address regulatory impediments to the efficient establishment of key supports for regional, remote and rural students in higher education, such as barriers/inefficiencies in approval processes for student accommodation.

## Responses to Discussion Paper Themes

### A. Teachers and Teaching

As noted by the Discussion Paper, 'attracting and retaining the best teachers for regional, rural and remote schools continues to be one of the most persistent challenges on the education agenda'. The Discussion Paper also correctly observes that universities are working within their domain to address this challenge. One means of doing so is through providing teacher training with topics and initiatives that explicitly focus on preparing and supporting teachers for living and working in country schools and communities.

**Discussion Paper Question – What key initiatives are helping attract the 'top teachers' to regional, rural and remote schools?**

In the University's view, optional and short-term remote placements can prove to be an effective gateway activity for top teaching students to choose to work in regional or remote areas. The University's Melbourne Graduate School of Education (MGSE) offers an Education Place and Practice subject that gives Master of Teaching students a two-week placement in a rural or remote location, such as Yirrkala (Arnhem Land, NT) and Mildura (Victoria). This program has been running for six years and has given rise to approximately 15 graduates working for longer terms in the Northern Territory.

Another initiative with strong potential is the Rural Placement included by the University as part of the Master of Teaching. Following an expression of interest and selection process, primary and secondary Teacher Candidates are placed in Victorian government schools to do a 22-day (primary) or 30-day (secondary) teaching block, with appropriate academic, professional and financial supports.

#### **Reflections from University of Melbourne Teacher Candidates on their Rural Placement (2015/2016 program)**

*I am hoping to apply for a position in the Wimmera for next year – my dream would be to teach in Dimboola. I feel committed to this place and the opportunities they granted me on placement; I feel I need to repay/honour the community which so generously and openly taught me.* Teacher Candidate placed at Dimboola Memorial Secondary College.

*I loved the feeling of being involved in the community rather than someone who teaches and then goes home to a suburb 10kms away as you can get in the city. I found the environment incredibly supportive and as a first year out would love to be in an environment like that.* Teacher Candidate placed at Mansfield Primary School.

*I am very keen to teach in a rural school later in my career. For next year, I am applying to teach in a remote community in the Northern Territory.* Teacher Candidate placed at Mansfield Primary School.

*Prior to placement I had no idea what it would be like to work in a rural school. Whilst on placement I had a really positive experience and felt well supported and included by the community. As a result, I would definitely consider teaching in a rural school, although probably later on in my teaching career.* Teacher Candidate placed at Horsham College.

A key factor that enables Teacher Candidates to undertake a rural placement has proven to be the availability of funding to assist with the significant costs of travel and accommodation. On behalf of Teacher Candidates placed in the regional clusters, the MGSE received support from the Victorian Government to assist teacher candidates to finance their placement experiences.

Nevertheless, a persistent challenge to expanding the Rural Placement program beyond its current scope is the availability of funding to support a growing number of Teacher Candidates in their placements. In the last five years, the number of Teacher Candidates applying for a rural placement has been far greater than the funding available to support them, and many are disappointed to not be able to take up the opportunity.

Recommendation: To address the need to recruit teachers into rural and remote areas, State and Territory Governments, in partnership with universities, should support the expansion of Teacher Candidate placements in regional, rural and remote locations during their training.

***Discussion Paper Question – What innovative approaches could be taken to support a high-quality teaching workforce for rural, regional and remote school communities?***

An innovative approach to supporting a high-quality teaching workforce may be seen in the University's Master of Teaching (Secondary) Internship program stream within the MSGE. So far three cohorts of interns have completed the three-year program. The program enables talented individuals (from diverse professions and industry seeking a career change, or recent graduates) to study and gain a teaching qualification while they are employed by a participating school. A comprehensive support structure for both metropolitan and regional placements is provided by MGSE and the host school.

This program addresses the challenges facing regional schools in the Government, Catholic and Independent school sectors in attracting teachers with deep discipline expertise to their school community.

Demonstrable benefits to the teacher interns have included increased opportunities for promotion and advancement in regional schools upon graduation. This is a positive factor for improving retention. However, a key challenge facing the program is the number of applicants able to relocate to rural localities to undertake the program. This is particularly difficult for career changers, who typically have family and other responsibilities like a partner established in city-based work, to manage while completing study.

## **B. Leaders and Leadership**

***Discussion Paper Question – What needs to occur so regional, rural and remote principals can devote most of their time and attention to student achievements in and beyond schools?***

School leadership is a crucial factor in raising student learning outcomes and building post-school aspirations. The University has established a 'Network of Schools' model to ensure teaching and leadership practice is informed by evidenced-based research.

The Network of Schools is a collaborative partnership led by the Melbourne Graduate School of Education that enables Victorian schools to learn from each other, the University and experts, about strategies to improve student learning. By gaining access to leading researchers, education theorists

and up-to-date evidence/professional learning through participation in the program, Network schools develop a framework for achieving institutional goals and enhancing teachers' skills and capabilities.

The Network of Schools utilises a structured approach that draws on school datasets and research-informed dashboards. Using these, participating school leaders can evaluate how their school is progressing and demonstrate the impact of initiatives. The program also offers support in building teachers' institutional strategies aligned with agreed Network targets and the individual needs of each school.

Network of Schools members are drawn from across Government, Independent and Catholic schools; rural and metropolitan schools; primary, secondary and P-12 schools; and special-needs schools. Programs such as this make demonstrable and high-impact use of extensive educational expertise within specialist research hubs such as the University of Melbourne. This enables school principals to make strategic decisions and investments towards improving student experience and learning outcomes. Of nearly 100 schools involved in the Network since 2014, 32 schools have been regional or rural (35 per cent).

### C. Entrepreneurship and Schools

***Discussion Paper Question – What other entrepreneurial education opportunities exist for regional, rural and remote schools?***

Entrepreneurial education has the potential to improve opportunities for students and young people in regional, rural and remote communities. Educational providers are well-placed to work in school/industry/community partnerships to build aspirations and develop links between education, training and work.

In many instances, it may be cost-effective and efficient for governments to support and encourage partnerships that leverage and share the entrepreneurial education strengths, expertise and soft/hard infrastructure that is present in existing innovation hubs. A hub-and-spokes model that links regional, rural and remote schools with high-performing innovation hubs is one way of achieving this.

In the University's experience, there are innovative ways to increase VET and university qualification rates through courses and programs that enhance the capacities of graduates to create their own jobs as well as being work-ready for employers.

The University is applying this rationale in our own domain. While some of the following examples relate to university students rather than school students, the model and partnership elements are examples of good practice that may be adjusted and translated to the high school setting:

- Drawing on the strength of the Melbourne Biomedical Precinct the University is expanding a 'school to bench to workplace' vision. This vision is based on a purposeful collision of academic research, education, and commercial research. A key element is the specialist Elizabeth Blackburn School of Sciences, co-located in the Melbourne Biomedical Precinct and operating as a branch of the University High School. This School is designed to optimally engage young people in Year 11 and 12 who have passion and potential for success in the STEM-M fields.
- The Melbourne Accelerator Program (MAP) is the University's highly-regarded entrepreneurship program and start-up accelerator. Australia Post is partnering with MAP to support e-commerce start-ups to participate in the Accelerator.

Additionally, MAP and Australia Post are also partnering with regional councils on the 'Regional Pitchfest' program in 2017, which enables young entrepreneurs, artisans and innovators from regional towns to pitch to an expert panel and win support to develop their idea.

- The University has launched a Masters of Entrepreneurship to train students in commercialising products and services and help them to launch their first business or build the strength of future businesses. The Wade Institute of Entrepreneurship at the University's Ormond College delivers the course with the Faculty of Business and Economics, incorporating lectures and mentoring from entrepreneurs and business leaders in co-operation with investment bank Credit Suisse, Australia Post and global law firm Corrs Chambers Westgarth.

Recommendation: To expand the reach of entrepreneurial education, governments could support 'hub-and-spokes'-style programs/partnerships/networks between leading innovation hubs and regional, region and remote educational providers (school, VET, and university), in order to cost-effectively leverage existing strengths and infrastructure in entrepreneurial education wherever it is located.

**Discussion Paper Question – What gaps need to be addressed to help students transition successfully to further study, training or work?**

In July 2017, the University made a submission to the House Standing Committee on Employment, Education and Training's *Inquiry into School to Work Transition*. The University's submission emphasised the importance of expanding opportunities to inform and support students in relation to post-school education and training.<sup>1</sup>

In coming years, people will move periodically between learning and work, sometimes engaging in both simultaneously. This creates new challenges for universities and VET providers to become more nimble, accessible, and adaptable. Competition will come from fresh quarters, including from organisations outside the current VET and higher education provider framework. Pathways and alignment between all types of tertiary education, as well as their quality and distinctiveness, will be important to the success of Australian tertiary education overall.

Siloed and piecemeal policy and funding settings work against seamless post-secondary education pathways. A 'joined up' education system architecture will be necessary to ensure a seamless transition to training, education and work in the future. There are international examples, such as the University Grants Committee in Hong Kong and HEFCE in the United Kingdom, and its establishment would be in line with the independent school resource body agreed in recent school funding legislation.

Recommendation: To enable holistic policy setting, a single body should be established (with State and Federal support) to provide independent system oversight of education, along with ongoing review of current effectiveness and advice on future policy directions.

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<sup>1</sup>[http://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary\\_Business/Committees/House/Employment\\_Education\\_and\\_Training/School\\_to\\_WorkTransition/Submissions](http://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/House/Employment_Education_and_Training/School_to_WorkTransition/Submissions) (submission #59)

## D. Improving Access

### ***Discussion Paper Question – What could be done to expand the opportunities available to regional, rural and remote students?***

The University is committed to attracting regional, rural and remote students. It runs several programs to facilitate this goal. Participation rates of remote and regional students at the University have increased to 15.26% in 2014 up from 12.27% in 2013; while participation rates of indigenous students at the University have increased from 0.51% in 2012 to 0.61% in 2014.

The University's strategic plan *Growing Esteem 2015-2020* particularly emphasises building ties with industry, government and community partners in the Goulburn Valley. The University is working with a range of partners in this region to identify mutual goals. Many of these goals are focused on economic development and improving educational outcomes of young people, therefore increasing employment in the region, particularly among more disadvantaged communities.

The Higher Education Participation and Partnerships Program (HEPPP) is a crucial Australian Government funded initiative for supporting targeted engagement, raising aspirations and supporting students through outreach activities in the Goulburn Valley (as an area of special focus for the University) as well as in other regional, rural and remote areas. As such the University welcomed the announcement in the Federal Budget 2017 (through the *Higher Education Support Legislation Amendment Bill*) reform package to enshrine HEPPP in legislation.

HEPPP is the single most important government-funded mechanism for ensuring universities can reach students in under-represented schools with targeted programs that deliver educational choice and opportunity. Many of the access initiatives covered in the following sections are wholly or partly HEPPP-funded. The impact of the new HEPPP funding formula to be included in the 2017 reforms remains to be seen and the University looks forward to working with the Australian Government on implementation.

Access Melbourne: Access Melbourne is a HEPPP-funded initiative introduced by the University to improve and expand access to education. The scheme offers eligible students, who have experienced disadvantage during their secondary studies, to apply for entry.

Access Melbourne recognises numerous categories of disadvantage, including applicants from: disadvantaged financial background; rural or isolated areas; under-represented schools (discussed in more detail below); difficult circumstances; disability or medical condition; recognition as an Indigenous Australian; and others. To enable students to access higher education, including those from regional, rural and remote backgrounds, the University has guaranteed Australian Tertiary Admission Rank (ATAR) levels for students from regional Australia through the University's Access Melbourne admission scheme. These are typically lower than typical 'Clearly-In ATARs' and have resulted in increased enrolments from regional students.

Access Scholarships: The University awards up to 180 Access Melbourne scholarships each year which provide \$5000 per annum for the duration of an undergraduate program. Each year a significant number of scholarships – awarded on the basis of equity criteria – support students from regional and remote areas.

Under-represented schools: Through programs like Access Melbourne, the University seeks to expand enrolments from under-represented schools, which includes rural, regional and remote schools. Each

year the University reviews enrolment data from Victorian schools with the aim of increasing the diversity of enrolments and encouraging students from schools which are traditionally under-represented at the University. The criteria for a school to be deemed under-represented is based on a three-year average of enrolments.

In the most recent assessment, there were 380 Victorian schools deemed under-represented out of a total of 532. In Semester 1 2017, the University's commencing undergraduate students from Australian secondary schools included 15 per cent from under-represented schools and 9 per cent from rural or isolated schools. The University's access and equity programs seek to continue improvement on diversity of enrolment.

Recruitment of students: The University's Onshore Recruitment staff promote the Access Melbourne pathway through events, programs for future students and communications to school communities throughout the year. With HEPPP support, University staff attend careers adviser meetings and/or provide remote support to the following Victorian rural networks:

*Wimmera and Southern Mallee Careers Association, Warrnambool and District Career Teachers Association, Albury Wodonga Careers Association, Shepparton and District Careers Advisers, Sunraysia Careers Group, Bendigo Region Careers Association, Geelong Barwon Careers Group, Ballarat Careers Network. Central Gippsland Careers Group, Wellington Careers Group, Campaspe Careers Group, East Gippsland Careers Teachers Network.*

To ensure active links and information flow between educational leaders, Victorian regional principals are invited to attend the Vice-Chancellor's Principals' Dinner each year. Additionally, a webinar about Access Melbourne is promoted to all rural Victorian and border region students.

Strengthening achievement: A further example of successful HEPPP-funded university access programs is the Strengthening Engagement and Achievement in Mathematics and Science (SEAMS) initiative. SEAMS was jointly established by the University of Melbourne and Monash University with the support of the John Monash Science School and the Elizabeth Blackburn School of Sciences.

The program grew from a shared commitment to increasing participation and attainment of low SES and Indigenous students in maths and science-related disciplines in higher education. Under SEAMS the universities collaborate to deliver a series of in-person and online activities to improve students' engagement with maths and science and help them explore study and career options.

Students from under-represented Secondary Schools across Victoria are invited to attend biannual residential study camps at both universities. The camps prepare students for high achievement in their VCE subjects with academic sessions taught by leading teachers and academic university staff. Throughout the year students have access to resources, activities and networking opportunities through an online learning platform.

Alternative Pathways to Learning: Through HEPPP and other sources, the University offers 'pathway to degree' programs as bridging courses for regional, rural and remote students. For example, students may undertake a Diploma in General Studies (DIGS), which allows students to develop their skills at a diploma level before committing to a full degree program at the University. The DIGS is aimed at both school leavers and mature age students and is delivered at the University's Dookie campus near Shepparton.

The University also offers two extended Bachelor level degree programs open to Indigenous students. Eligible students have access to four-year (rather than three-year) degree programs in either Arts or Science. The additional year of study is designed to assist students develop the necessary academic

skills required to succeed at University. A distinguishing feature of the extended degree program is that students participating in the pathway program live on campus in residential colleges. In this way, students can benefit from the provision of additional support services, including through Murrup Barak (Melbourne's Institute for Indigenous Development), that increase access and participation of Indigenous students.

Alongside HEPPP-funded access programs, the University is proud to have embarked on innovative and grassroots-generated projects that provide alternative pathways to learning and achievement, either in higher education or other levels of training. For instance, the University established the Academy of Sport Health and Education (ASHE) in partnership with the Rumbalara Football Netball Club and Goulburn Ovens TAFE in Shepparton.

ASHE aims to provide an alternative pathway to further education and employment for Indigenous youth who have disengaged from secondary school. ASHE uses participation in sport to undertake education and training within a trusted, culturally appropriate environment for Indigenous students. Since its inception in 2004, almost 100 ASHE students from across the Goulburn Valley have completed Certificate-level qualifications.

Kwong Lee Dow Young Scholars Program (KLD): Through philanthropic and institutional investment the University runs a flagship academic enrichment program designed to support high-achieving Victorian and select New South Wales and South Australian border high school students. All Victorian and border schools are invited to nominate a student to participate in the two-year KLD program for students in Years 11 and 12. Annually, this results in a cohort of 700+ students in each of Years 11 and year 12.

Since launching in 2007, the KLD Program has attracted over 8,500 students from more than 500 participating schools. On average, 40 per cent of KLD scholars have been rural students. This strong representation has been achieved by enabling rural schools to nominate two, rather than one, KLD scholars for annual participation.

Program benefits for KLD scholars include access to VCE revision lectures, borrowing rights at the University's library, an overnight stay in a residential college for rural students, and opportunity to interact with other KLD scholars virtually and face-to-face over a two-year period. Special benefits for rural KLD scholars who subsequently enrol at the University include a \$2500 relocation allowance and \$2500 to support an approved period of study overseas during their undergraduate degree.

A KLD mentoring program connects former rural KLD Scholars now enrolled at the University with current KLD Scholars from the same region. Mentees from the 11 regions in Victoria are assigned to a University undergraduate mentor to interact online throughout the year. Additionally, regional families are invited to the KLD Lounge on Open Day. Each year approximately 40 per cent of all 1000+ visitors to the lounge are from rural Victoria. These positive metrics demonstrate the value – for students and their families/supporters – of programs like KLD Young Scholars for building leadership and aspirations in regional, rural and remote communities.

### **Fast Facts: Examples of university outreach activities aimed at attracting regional, remote and rural students**

- **Meet Melbourne**

University of Melbourne Information Evenings are held in regional locations each year at Bendigo, Sale, Warragul, Geelong, Ballarat, Albury, Shepparton, Mildura\*, Warrnambool\*, and Hamilton\* (\*alternate years).

The University also visits every state and territory in Australia including Tasmania and Northern Territory (both designated as rural for Access Melbourne).

- **Tertiary Information Service (TIS)**

The University visits every region of Victoria over 45 days, with other Victorian tertiary institutions. The sessions provide information about the VTAC application process and courses at the University. Fifty-seven per cent of TIS time (19 days) are spent in rural Victoria.

- **UniExperience Camp**

This camp gives Year 11 students from Victoria's rural and border regions, first in the family; or Indigenous students; the opportunity to stay overnight in a college and visit the Melbourne campus to experience university life first-hand.

A similar overnight program offers Year 9 students from Shepparton the chance to discover what it is like to go to university.

- **Making it personal**

Profiles of rural students are used in course publications, Electronic Direct Mail, and on the University's website to promote access, familiarity and confidence about the University for rural students.

## **E. Diversity**

### ***Discussion Paper Question – How can we create and sustain vibrant, high-quality learning environments in regional, rural and remote schools?***

Indigenous access, engagement and outreach initiatives: The University's Reconciliation Action Plan and Indigenous Student Plan are the University's indigenous policy drivers, aimed at attracting and supporting undergraduate students. Both plans are implemented and executed by Murrup Barak, the Melbourne Institute for Indigenous Development based at the University.

Murrup Barak has relationships with secondary schools and Departments of Education across Australia that enable it to connect the University with Indigenous students and staff in schools across all educational sectors. Indigenous students are encouraged to participate in a range of enrichment opportunities, including visits to the University and participation in on-the-ground programs in schools.

Additionally, the Murrup Barak Experience Camp is a residential program offered to Indigenous students in Years 11 and 12. The five-day camp gives students from across Australia an opportunity to

experience university first-hand by staying in a residential college in Parkville, participating in lectures and engaging with other Indigenous students who aspire to go to university.

The University's Goulburn Valley focus links with Indigenous engagement; it is home to Victoria's largest Indigenous population. To build shared goals with the Indigenous community in the Goulburn Valley, the University has entered a partnership with the Kaiela Institute and the Algabonyah Community Cabinet (a platform for Indigenous self-determination).

In August 2016, the University and the Kaiela Institute brought together educational leaders, local businesses and community partners in a forum to discuss ways in which to reduce barriers for young Indigenous people to develop work readiness, secure sustainable employment and follow their career aims. The Forum sought to ensure that young Indigenous people have access to opportunities to follow their pathway through education, work experience and post-secondary training, study and employment. Delegates at the Forum recognised that they all had a role in ensuring continuity of career pathways. It reinforced the need for brokerage programs that help young Indigenous people to navigate through these formative professional and educational stages.

Through building community-based relationships the University has developed a number of programs and activities to engage Indigenous students and assist them to discover pathways to further study and participation. One key pathway is through high performance sport.

For instance, the Raise the Bar Academy is a joint initiative between Athletics Australia and Melbourne University Sport. This program enables 35 students to spend a week in January on the University campus, where they receive professional coaching, academic mentoring and positive psychology training from professionals including elite athletes and staff members. Launched in 2015, in its first year the program received close to 150 applications from rural and regional Indigenous teenagers, often from disadvantaged communities.

Celebrating the achievements of students is a crucial component of successful engagement programs. For instance, at the end of the Raise the Bar week a celebratory dinner is held to honour their completion. Inspirational guests of honour in previous years have included Olympians Nova Peris, Kitty Chiller and Steve Hooker.

***Discussion Paper Question – What can be done to address the directional flow of regional, rural and remote students towards cities?***

Health and medical training in regional, remote and rural locations: Universities can make a significant impact in addressing the flow of students towards cities by providing high-quality educational training and services in regional, rural or remote areas. The University's Department of Rural Health is a leading example of this approach. At the University, 25 per cent of students selected into the Doctor of Medicine program are of rural origin and 25 per cent spend at least one year at our Rural Clinical School, with half of those completing all three years in a rural environment.

The Department of Rural Health based in Shepparton provides professional health education and research training in a rural context across medicine, nursing, allied health and dental. It also has major nodes at Ballarat and Wangaratta, and associations with nearly 40 smaller towns in rural Victoria. The Rural Health Multidisciplinary Training (RHMT) Program has specified targets for rural origin enrolments.

The Department of Rural Health's Rural Clinical School program has demonstrated that medical training can be successfully undertaken in rural areas including Ballarat, Bendigo, Shepparton,

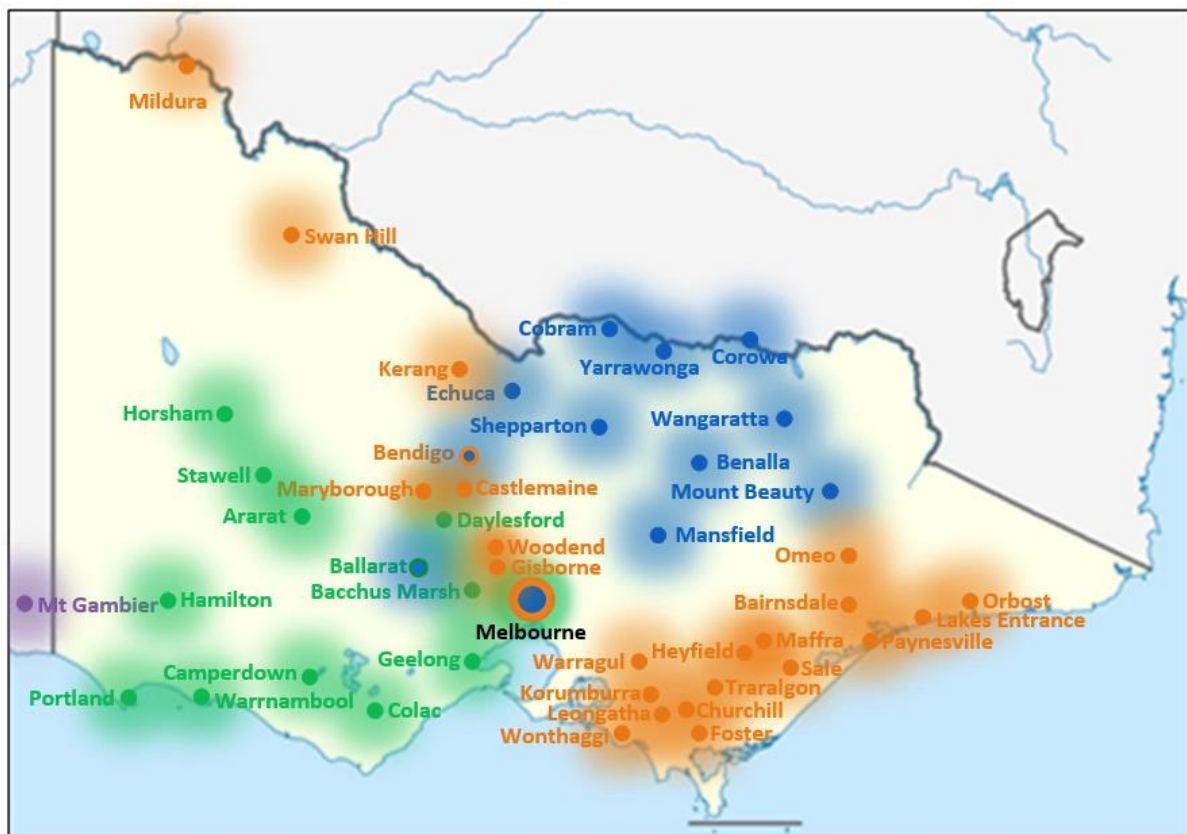
Wangaratta and others. The program has led to an increasing number of medical graduates practicing rurally. The Rural Clinical School aims to ensure its medical students – numbering 141 in 2016 – are supported to enjoy their rural experience and achieve good assessment results. Rural Clinical School students continue to perform very well academically compared to their metropolitan clinical school peers.

The University of Melbourne also participates in the Murray to the Mountains (M2M) Intern Training Program. The M2M Program aims to increase the number and capability of rural doctors by providing a comprehensive training program in the rural context, including large and small rural hospital exposure, delivering specialist services from small rural hospitals and working as a general practitioner in rural communities. All towns involved in community placement rotations have hosted various education and social events for interns, general practitioners, medical students, nurses, ambulance officers and allied health professionals.

In mid-2016, ten Rural Clinical School students secured M2M intern posts for 2017. This outcome demonstrated the value of growing pathways for students enrolled with metropolitan universities to train and work in rural areas including after graduation.

The University's Melbourne Poche Centre for Indigenous Health and the Department of Rural Health have also partnered with the Kaiela Institute in Shepparton to support four indigenous health and medical PhD students. The Melbourne Poche Centre for Indigenous Health works to develop the next generation of Indigenous leaders in health and to build enduring partnerships to transform health outcomes for Indigenous Australians.

The map below shows the Rural Clinical School and site coverage of Victoria (showing University of Melbourne, Monash University, Deakin University and Flinders University sites):



The recently announced Rural Health Multidisciplinary Training program is a welcome development.<sup>2</sup> Health and medical students will have greater opportunities to live, study and work in rural and regional Australia. The announcement included: (i) 26 rural medical training hubs, which will work with local health services to help move medical students through the pipeline, enabling students to continue rural training through university into postgraduate medical training, and then working within rural Australia; and (ii) new University Departments of Rural Health, bringing the total to 15 nationally. Ultimately, this approach should address rural health workforce shortages and increase access to quality health services.

However, these initiatives are potentially undermined by the the current need for graduates to return to metropolitan health services to pursue post-graduate training. To further develop the medical workforce in rural areas the current arrangements for pre-vocational and vocational training need to be transformed.

Currently a substantial number of medical students undertake most of their clinical training in a rural area but when they graduate there are fewer opportunities for them to remain in that area and pursue a rural medical career. They consequently compete for places in specialty training programs at metropolitan hospitals and enter programs not targeting rural practice. After spending up to eight years in speciality training at a metropolitan hospital – which often coincides with pivotal times in their personal lives (for example, becoming partnered or married, starting a family, purchasing a house) – it is then very difficult to return to rural practice.

Australia trains a sufficient number of doctors. The challenge is attracting the medical workforce to live and work in rural areas. The Commonwealth and State Governments have over many years implemented programs to affect the distribution of the health workforce. The effectiveness of these programs has varied but the selection of rural origin medical students and the implementation of rural clinical schools have been the most effective contributions to the entry to practice component of this strategy. Current policy requires that 50 per cent of GP vocational training (registrar) positions are located in rural or remote areas – this should be continued.

However, training rural students in rural settings is not sufficient to retain doctors in those areas. Students return to metropolitan areas to specialise. The further development of pre-vocational and vocational programs with the same aims has commenced but requires increased support and development.

Recommendation: The Australian Government should work with the sector to develop viable postgraduate specialist training programs in regional, rural and remote areas so doctors can remain in those settings while pursuing the next level of their career.

Agricultural and veterinary training in the regional, rural and remote context: The University's Dookie campus is an agricultural/veterinary training facility set south of Dookie, between Shepparton and Benalla in regional Victoria. The campus is managed by the University's Faculty of Veterinary and Agricultural Sciences (FVAS).

The campus continues the strong history of agricultural education on the site through developing its capability as a contemporary agricultural education farm for the region and nationally. The new

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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.health.gov.au/internet/ministers/publishing.nsf/Content/health-mediarel-yr2017-gillespie020.htm>

Bachelor of Agriculture, developed in consultation with industry, utilises Dookie's 2,440 hectares as an active farm in the teaching of soil, plant and animal science.

Educational activities focused on animal health conducted at Dookie include animal nutrition trials and research/training looking at the health effects of heat stress and environmental changes on livestock. Students in the FVAS are either based at Dookie or attend regularly for intensive training.

In 2016, the University had its first intake into the new Bachelor of Agriculture, in which students are encouraged to spend a semester living at Dookie for a rural immersion educational experience. Field trips to Dookie are also part of the curriculum. The University is making further investment in the Dookie site in order that we might realise its greater potential by addressing the changing nature of agricultural education, the demands of future industry and the educational needs of the local community.

The University continues to consult with local agribusinesses, other employers, community and industry to ensure our offering is meeting the changing needs of the local community. We are aware, for example, of community support for a more diverse engagement and educational provision via the Dookie campus. However, we require the Victorian Government to amend the *University of Melbourne Act 2009* (Vic) permitting a wider range of educational uses for the site in order for the University to proceed with confidence.

The University's veterinary hospital provides leading veterinary training and accommodation for students. The Melbourne Veterinary School provides training and research consistent with the One Health emphasis, which shows that animal and pet health directly impacts on human health and mental health. The School conducts clinical research using pets that has a direct translational element on human and family health.

The Melbourne Veterinary School has also embedded graduate veterinary students in six dairy practices – four in regional Victoria and two in regional Tasmania. In this program, graduate students are rotated through Timboon, Allansford, Warrnambool, Maffra, and Rochester (Victoria) and Smithton (Tasmania).

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| Recommendation: To address workforce planning and access to services, Australian governments should maintain policy settings that support rural specialty training pathways in higher education, including in medicine, health, agriculture, veterinary and teaching. |
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#### **A snapshot of success (2016-2017)**

- In Semester 1 2017, 33 per cent of domestic undergraduate commencing enrolments were admitted to the University via Access Melbourne eligibility. 18 per cent of these came from under-represented rural schools.
- In 2016, the University undertook 201 off-campus visits.
- In 2016, the University hosted 127 schools on campus, including 50 rural schools.
- In 2016, 41 per cent of participants in the Kwong Lee Dow Young Scholars Program were from regional Victoria with 55 per cent from under-represented schools.
- In 2016, the Melbourne Connect Program linked Melbourne ambassadors with 3,341 prospective students from 70 low SES schools.
- In 2017, the Murrup Barak Outreach Team visited a total of 139 schools across Australia.

#### **F. Transitioning Beyond School**

The University recognises that students need to be supported in their transition from school to training and work. Increased technological change, evolving workplaces and rapidly changing cities are just some of the challenges facing today's students. This has considerable flow-on impacts on the structure of jobs, work and education. While there appears to be an expansion of opportunities for student learning, students experiencing disadvantage continue to sit at the margin and are less likely to access higher education or work opportunities.

Feeling comfortable and equipped at university is a key element of staying on to completion. The University offers students, including regional, rural and remote students, key supports in this regard.

Student Success: In partnership with students, academic divisions, alumni, other areas of Academic Services, and external organisations, the University delivers services, opportunities and activities relevant to specific cohorts, at a time that is appropriate to the stage of the students' educational journey. Student Success aims to ensure that all students, regardless of their cultural, linguistic or prior educational experiences, have the skills, knowledge and strategies to set and achieve their academic and professional goals.

Student Success facilitates a collaborative whole-of-university approach to ensure a positive and successful transition for all students across the student lifecycle.

##### **(1) Examples of activities to support transition to university for first year university students include:**

- Phone calls to check-in on their experience in their first year of undergraduate study, or first year at Melbourne having transferred from another institution;

- 'First Year At Melbourne' program: 4-person group mentoring by student peers for new first year undergraduate students. Advisors work with specific degree-based cohorts to connect students to each other, address common transition issues, provide first year course planning and advice, and ensure that students are enrolled, engaged and prepared for their classes;
- Assistance with understanding the connection between subject/course selection, and academic/professional goals;
- Inductions to campus and opportunities to connect with peers through student clubs, societies and other extra-curricular activities at an early stage, including through online and on-campus events during the three-week Orientation period.
- Daily 'Unimelb Essentials' sessions to clarify student responsibility and institutional expectations; independent learning at both graduate and undergraduate level; common self-help tools; the Melbourne Milestones; and opportunities for experiential and developmental engagement.

## **(2) Examples of activities to support the transition through university study:**

- Student Connect: An outreach, strengths-based coaching program committed to building individual student responsibility and capacity to self-manage, engage and experience fully their university education with a view to developing personal skills for future employment.
- Academic Success: Developmental support, advice and resources for students to develop their English language, communication, academic and professional skills to enable them to realise their full academic potential and achieve excellence.
- Students at Risk: Appointments supporting and advising students who are identified as academically at risk in compliance with the Academic Board Progress Policy and the Academic Progress Review Procedure.
- Other ongoing opportunities such as alumni mentoring, community leadership awards, and student peer leadership networks.

## **(3) Examples of activities to support transition out of university:**

- Student employability development: A tiered service for students which includes online resources, information sessions, staged practical workshops and specialised services for target cohorts.
- Career and future study services that include assistance in planning to transition to further study, scholarship assistance, and career advice aimed at developing workforce pathways and constructing relevant personal narratives for job interviews and career pitches.

Complementary Support Programs: Support or transition initiatives include a range of programs with the aim of ameliorating the challenges faced by disadvantaged students. These programs are targeted toward issues such as retention, progress, employment and overall transition from school to university to work.

One such program that specifically targets regional university students is the Active Campuses Program. Utilising funding through the Student Service and Amenities Fee Grant Program, the Active Campuses program supports the participation of 3,500 regional campus students in sporting and recreational opportunities.

The program is based at the University's regional campuses including Burnley, Creswick, Dookie, Shepparton and Werribee. It offers students the opportunity to engage with each other in a casual, friendly sporting and recreational environment via activities creating a positive 'campus experience', drawing also on local community clubs, facilities and programs.

The University's 2015 Student Wellbeing survey reported that 80% of all students stated it was important or very important that the University provide sporting programs and facilities. In direct response to this, the Active Campuses Program was developed to address the problem that regional and satellite campuses do not receive the same benefit of convenient access to programs or facilities as their city-based counterparts.

Recommendation: Recognise, promote and support the extensive range of programs run by schools, vocational and university providers to support regional, rural and remote students.

#### Accommodation:

#### ***Discussion Paper Question – Are there innovative models of accommodation delivery that could benefit regional, rural and remote young people?***

The Discussion Paper correctly observes that key challenges facing regional, rural and remote students in higher education are the high rental prices, lack of choice and lack of availability of on-campus accommodation.

The University shares the concern that affordable, accessible and quality accommodation is a persistent and significant issue for students, particularly those who relocate away from home to pursue further study and training. Safe, secure, and supportive accommodation for students is vital to student wellbeing and a successful transition to University life.

The University works closely with industry partners and government at all levels, particularly local councils and State Government, to identify opportunities for new and appropriate student accommodation and bring it to market efficiently.

The *Melbourne Student Accommodation Program* commits the University of Melbourne to increasing the availability and affordability of University student accommodation, by providing students with more choice in accommodation with these options able to cater to the needs of individual students. It also recognises that variety in accommodation is key to supporting a diverse student cohort, and that accommodation must include catered and non-catered options suited to a range of undergraduate and graduate student needs.

The University of Melbourne has a target of delivering 6000 affiliated and associated quality accommodation places by 2020. These places will be dedicated to supporting the implementation of the University's accommodation offer for students 'new to the City of Melbourne' (i.e. those who must relocate from outside metropolitan Melbourne to take up their university place) and the growth will be largely in non-catered accommodation options. Initially, this offer will be targeted to undergraduate students with the option of expanding the offer to postgraduate students in the future.

Again, regulatory impediments can slow the University's ability to bring accommodation online. For example, a current project, partnering with an industry leader in student accommodation to create a 596-bed facility, is awaiting Ministerial approval. This is because the University is required to seek such approvals before it can divest an unoccupied land holding (purchased for investment) in order to

structure the project and bring it to market. Removing these approval requirements would allow the University to respond more quickly and flexibly to meet student needs and to more efficiently manage its assets.

Recommendation: The Australian Government should work with State and Local Governments to identify and address regulatory impediments to the efficient establishment of key supports for regional, remote and rural students in higher education, such as barriers/inefficiencies in approval processes for student accommodation.