



Submission from the Regional Universities Network on Consultation Paper on the Reallocation of Commonwealth Supported Places for Enabling, Sub-bachelor and Post-graduate courses

The Regional Universities Network (RUN) is providing a general response to some of the questions in the consultation paper on the reallocation of Commonwealth Supported Places (CSPs) for enabling, sub-bachelor and post-graduate courses.

Our member universities will provide more specific and detailed responses.

Consultation questions

Q. 1 Should geographic representation be a consideration in distribution of places?

Geographic representation should be a consideration in the distribution of places as a mechanism is required to ensure that there is an equitable distribution of CSPs in regional Australia to meet regional and national needs.

The regions need more highly skilled, university-trained professionals to drive the innovative industries of the future. The inequity in representation by Indigenous, regional and remote Australians at university must be addressed in the national interest via targeted policy. A relatively higher proportion of enabling and sub-bachelor places are required in the regions in view of the relative socio-economic disadvantage of many regional students, the relatively low Year 12 completion rates in regional Australia, and the fact that many regional students aren't well prepared to go directly into bachelor degree programs.

Regional universities provide the only realistic option for many regional students to attend university. These students are tied to their communities for reasons of personal, family and work commitments, and financial circumstance. If regional universities are not adequately supported, many students will be disenfranchised.

Despite recent additional places, the limited funding for enabling and sub-bachelor places is a major impediment to allowing regional universities to respond to the needs of our students and demand in our communities by providing adequate pathways to bachelor degrees.

With respect to the allocation of CSP postgraduate places in regional Australia, allocation should be prioritised in areas of skills shortage and student demand to encourage professional training in the

regions. Courses which are required for entry to the professions, and areas where graduate salaries are comparatively low, should be targeted.

A study recently completed by the Nous Group and the Centre for Policy Studies for RUN indicates the significant impact of regional universities on regional employment¹. The study found that 7 out of 10 RUN graduates will go on to work in the regions compared to 2 out of 10 of other Australian graduates. This demonstrates the significant role regional universities play in supplying skilled employees to regional Australia, hence boosting the economic, social and cultural capital of the regions.

DET should liaise with the Expert Group looking at the National Regional, Rural and Remote Education strategy to align the distribution of CSP enabling, sub-bachelor, and post-graduate places to support any relevant committee recommendations.

Q.4 What are stakeholder views on the allocation criteria suggested above? Are there other criteria which should be considered?

Enabling courses

RUN particularly supports the use of the profile of commencing students, the utilisation of places, and student progression to further study at tertiary level in the allocation of enabling places.

Geographic or regional criteria should also be an important element in driving the allocation of enabling places.

While innovative teaching models are important, they should not be amongst the most highly weighted criteria in the allocation of places.

Sub-bachelor courses

RUN supports demonstrated demand, demonstrated need, completions, transition to further study at a tertiary institution, courses that address industry needs, and existing utilisation of places as important criteria in the allocation of sub-bachelor CSPs.

Postgraduate places

As well the criteria proposed in the paper for which courses are subsidised, and the other criteria - the existing utilisation of places, student satisfaction, graduate employment outcomes, and representation of equity groups - RUN would also support targeting postgraduate CSPs for areas/disciplines where graduate salaries may be comparatively low, in areas of skills shortage and those courses required for entry to the professions. Public good should be a relevant consideration.

¹ Nous and Centre for Policy Studies report for RUN, 2018, Jobs and Productivity Effects of the Regional Universities Network, http://www.run.edu.au/cb_pages/publications.php