

February 2018

**Consultation on
development of a
National Regional, Rural
and Remote Education
Strategy**

ENQUIRIES

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INTRODUCTION

La Trobe University welcomes the opportunity to respond to the Regional Education Expert Advisory Group's framing paper for a National Regional, Rural and Remote Education Strategy. La Trobe has a strong presence across regional Victoria, and flagship offerings that contribute to the communities it serves. Equity and improved participation by students from all backgrounds are central to La Trobe's mission, enabled by the ethos, 'One university, many communities.'

La Trobe is a multi-campus university covering central and north-eastern Victoria with campuses at Albury Wodonga, Bendigo, Mildura and Shepparton – as well as its central campus in Bundoora, Melbourne, and a new campus in Sydney. The Bendigo campus is the largest of our regional campuses with around 70 per cent of the University's regional enrolments (Table 1).

Table 1: Students by Course Location (La Trobe internal data)

Campus	Domestic students	International students	Total enrolled students*
Bundoora	20,407	6,453	26,860
Albury-Wodonga	584	14	598
Bendigo	4,215	110	4,325
Mildura	421	7	428
Shepparton	664	6	670

* Students may be counted at more than one location if they have confirmed enrolments at multiple locations during the year e.g. Melbourne - Bundoora and Bendigo. Report date 15-Jan-19.

La Trobe is second ranked in the state in serving rural and regional students with close to 9000 students from RRR areas studying at our campuses (Table 2).

Table 2: Regional students by institution (DET 2017 Equity Statistics)

Institution	No. of regional students
Deakin University	9,630
La Trobe University	8,795
Federation University Australia	5,946
Swinburne University of Technology	5,094
The University of Melbourne	4,595
Monash University	4,566
RMIT University	3,311
Victoria University	1,365

*Data includes students studying at all award course levels; All Regional and Remote data are based on a student's permanent home address postcode. Regional and Remote categories are derived from MCEETYA until 2010 and the ASGS from 2011.

Students at our regional campuses study across the disciplines, with a focus on health at Bendigo, our largest non-metropolitan campus. Courses with over 100 students enrolled at our regional campuses are shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Enrolments (>100) by course, La Trobe University regional campuses. Report date 15-Jan-19.

Course Location	Course Full Title	Total
Albury-Wodonga	Bachelor of Nursing	194
Bendigo	Bachelor of Nursing	422
	Bachelor of Health Sciences in Dentistry/Master of Dentistry	263
	Bachelor of Education	244
	Doctor of Philosophy	176
	Bachelor of Healthcare	142
	Bachelor of Pharmacy (Honours)	142
	Bachelor of Applied Science and Master of Physiotherapy Practice	137
	Bachelor of Outdoor Education (Extended)	122
	Bachelor of Business	110
	Bachelor of Human Services and Master of Social Work	110
	Bachelor of Applied Science and Master of Occupational Therapy Practice	107
	Bachelor of Paramedic Practice/Bachelor of Public Health Promotion	102
Mildura	Bachelor of Nursing	107
Shepparton	Bachelor of Nursing	186
	Bachelor of Healthcare	165

EQUITY

Higher education attainment is not only correlated with all other measures of education attainment, but also with socioeconomic and health outcomes, with community quality of life, and with economic activity. The observations made in the position paper about the poorer outcomes early education and school systems in regional Victoria are accurate. Local government, state and federal government entities and business and the community are working hard to have a positive impact on these outcomes. From across the region there are a myriad of government and volunteer programs that seek to support the early learning and school systems, yet where a difference is made it occurs slowly.

Education, at all levels, is central to regional development. Without individuals with the necessary skills, quality of life and economic activity fall. Industry cannot thrive, grow and innovate without access to an appropriate pool of talent. Individuals cannot achieve their full potential. Despite this, education policy is currently divorced from regional development policy.

The capping of CSP funding for domestic university students in 2017 has adversely affected our regions. The proposal to introduce performance based funding for so-called 'growth' over 2017 levels is addressed in a parallel submission to a separate review – suffice to say, this will not be true growth funding. The foreshadowed increase will simply be in line with national population growth, will not be indexed (from what is known so far) and will do little to improve outcomes where extra investment is needed, such as RRR Australia.

The university campuses and clinical schools across our region cannot grow in the present environment, and without growth attainment cannot be increased. Our communities contain a huge pool of potential mature age students who missed out on university upon leaving school. This group cannot study without CSPs.

A simple solution we would like to see the panel recommend to the Minister is uncapping CSPs for those wanting to study at university in our LGAs and those with similar low attainment across Australia. CSPs for Enabling levels of study should be uncapped for all students, for these levels of study support our most disadvantaged and vulnerable people and provide the most reliable pathway to further study. We particularly support study at our local regional campuses because of the economic impact regional study has on our communities, but any study is to be encouraged.

La Trobe is committed to building its vision of one university, many communities through its network of campuses across Victoria. Key issues for Expert Advisory Group include:

- Improvement in senior school attainment rates in regional areas;
- HEPPP-type support for regionally focussed equity programs including partnerships between higher education providers and VET/TAFE;
- A loading for CSPs held by regional students, regardless of location of delivery (our submission to the Performance Based Funding review will consider this in more detail);
- La Trobe believes a return to a demand-driven system is necessary to ensure continued growth in participation by RRR and low SES students. Uncapping of places for rural and regional CSPs (students, campuses and institutions) is a minimum requirement for RRR students in the absence of a fully demand-driven approach to sector-wide funding;
- Growth funding or demand-driven funding for Enabling and sub-bachelor places, particularly in the regions, for this is the most cost-effective level of education for increasing participation including pathways to higher education, in view of the lower levels or senior school attainment in regional, rural and remote areas;
- Similarly, reinstatement of dual enrolment partnerships between TAFE/VET and universities;
- Scholarships and bursaries for regional students who do not choose to relocate to metropolitan institutions and campuses, recognising the higher costs associated with study in the regions, and further to the recently announced Rural and Regional Enterprise Scholarships that are directed to STEM.

RESPONSES TO THE KEY QUESTIONS

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

Challenge A recognises the comparative paucity of options for those studying in RRR areas and asks what opportunities there may be to expand options for further study. The Challenge Questions ask how universities, vocational training providers and other service providers might work better together in RRR areas, including opportunities for service expansion and improved articulation between VET and higher education.

Rural, regional and remote Australia is comparatively sparsely populated compared to the metropolitan areas surrounding our major cities, creating challenges around distance and in particular around sustaining the critical mass of participants in individual education courses, facilities and campuses necessary to make study offerings viable from an organisational and economic perspective. Three responses to these challenges are commonly put forward: online study that breaks tyrannies of distance, study hub-type facilities that are smaller in scale than campuses and can be distributed more broadly, and travel and relocation programs to support movement of students between home and campus.

- **Online learning.** Online models of learning and teaching can fill an important gap where students are unable to relocate or commute and wish to participate in an area of study that is amenable to distance-mode pedagogies. La Trobe University offers a broad range of courses online, with programs offering subjects in intense short study periods multiple times over the year so that students can tailor their study load around their other commitments. In many ways, online learning is like traditional face-to-face modes of learning: students engage with the online material; participate in interactive classes; complete required readings, note taking and assessments, and undertake group work with other students. Students interact with lecturers and research supervisors via the Learning Management System (LMS). Courses La Trobe University offers online include Bachelors degrees, graduate certificates and Masters degrees in business, marketing and management; information technology; community work and nursing science. Online options need not be a 'lesser option' – indeed La Trobe's Business School is among a select few in the world to offer courses with prestigious accreditation from the European Foundation of Management Development, only awarded to high-quality business and management programs with an international perspective.

This said, online modes of delivery cannot wholly mitigate the challenges of distance faced by RRR students. These forms of teaching and learning are not suited to disciplines that require special equipment and infrastructure or person-to-person practice. There is also a common misunderstanding about the costs of delivering online education. A well-designed course taught by qualified staff who are available to facilitate learning and student interaction is not necessarily more cost efficient to run online than it is in a room, and can, in fact, be higher, particularly when online-specific course design and programming costs are considered.¹

We also suggest that government funded rural and regional programs could be made more sensitive to variations in mode of delivery. For example, in responding to the call for applications for additional Enabling and sub-degree CSPs for rural and regional students last year, La Trobe experienced issues with the requirement for the delivery location of the course to meet the definition of regional, remote or very remote under the SEIFA. La Trobe's Enabling course, the Tertiary Preparation Program (TPP) is offered online with real-time support. This is beneficial to students in areas that are distant from educational institutions and their campuses (many of our students, including a number of Indigenous students, come from towns along the Murray that are far from campuses), yet the online delivery mode may mean these places are not designated 'regional.' This is an example of policy thinking not keeping up with advances in technology and teaching delivery.

¹ McPherson, M. S., & Bacow, L. S. (2015). Online higher education: Beyond the hype cycle. *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 29(4), 135-54.

- Study hubs.** La Trobe notes the interest of the Expert Panel in regional study hubs. La Trobe is supportive of hubs in principle, especially where they are co-located with major TAFE and other VET institutions. Hubs can provide a supportive transition between further and higher education by offering opportunities that are close, or at least closer, to students' homes, in an environment where administrative and support staff can be physically present (unlike online models). However, this convenience can come with a cost. Where hubs are located within the catchments of university campuses they may have the perverse effect of diluting student mass and making university campuses less viable. This is a 'wicked problem.' Facilities that encourage participation in higher education by virtue of proximity to students' home locales, and that may be less intimidating than attending a full-scale campus, are obviously beneficial. However, there are associated negative outcomes when students may be dissuaded from taking part in campus-experience forms of higher education, such as those that are not feasible in a hub due either to infrastructure or specialised teaching requirements (much of the applied sciences, areas of health that require labs, the performing and fine arts, for example).
- Travel and relocation.** While online delivery and study hubs are valuable part of any response to RRR education, maintaining and growing Australia's regional universities and regional campuses must lie at the heart of any meaningful response to RRR education. Only on campuses that have a critical mass of staff and students can a full range of areas of study be delivered and supported. However, as we discuss further below, higher education costs substantially more to deliver, on average, than metropolitan higher education. Costs are also greater for students, who generally have far greater distances to travel to access a regional campus even when they are 'a local', and may face other costs should they take part in block mode delivery that requires accommodation. Responses to these challenges should include **a loading on the CSP amount for regionally delivered units of study** (this is discussed in detail in a further section) and **scholarships and bursaries to support travel and associated costs for students even when they do not relocate to study.**

Finally, perverse policy decisions taken in one area of government operation can act to restrict opportunities in other areas. For example, through La Trobe University's sector-leading dual enrolment (degree-diploma) model delivered in partnership with TAFEs, communities in regional Victoria witnessed a healthy growth in participation at our regional campuses taking part in the program. Significantly, this growth was in areas like nursing and education: in 2018 around half of La Trobe's nursing commencements from the Shepparton campus came through the degree-diploma pathway. Articulation rates to a degree went from 5 per cent to 30 per cent when compared to previous models, bringing a cohort of students into higher education who may not have progressed previously. However, as result of the 2017 MEFO funding freeze, the dual degree program became unviable. The Commonwealth Department of Education and Training has further taken the view that a VET diploma nested within a higher education CSP is not allowable, so that the program could not be offered in any case. **Support for programs of this type, with demonstrable outcomes, needs to be reinstated.**

Challenge B: Relocating RRR students face significant financial, emotional and social challenges

Challenge B addresses the difficulties faced by students who relocate to undertake study. The challenge Questions ask about suitable forms of financial support for relocation as well as other forms of support to assist with transition and retention.

La Trobe supports student-centred approaches to student support. Providing funding that assists students directly to students themselves is simple, logical and effective. Existing Commonwealth schemes to support students with relocations costs, such as the Relocation Scholarship for students eligible for Youth Allowance, Austudy and Abstudy (offering around \$1,138 to \$4,553 per year depending on year of study) are a welcome support, but leave many RRR students short. These scholarships are for RRR students relocating to major cities to study, and city students moving to RRR areas to study, but do not offer support for RRR students studying courses in RRR areas. Yet RRR students studying at regional campuses and institutions are likely to have much higher travel costs than metropolitan students, with few public transport options. Scholarships that are only available to those who move away from RRR areas to study may have the unintended consequence of encouraging students to leave RRR areas, or causing them to decide against studying at a RRR institution, even when studying in a city may not be their preference. La Trobe would welcome the introduction of scholarships to enable RRR students to stay in RRR areas.

Enabling programs provide the most effective means of addressing the needs of educationally disadvantaged and/or underprepared students entering tertiary education. An NCSEHE-led report using a survey of 2,500 Enabling students showed that students from low SES backgrounds have more than twice the rate of representation at the Enabling level than they do at undergraduate level, and that representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Enabling programs is four times their population proportion (6 per cent of Enabling students and 1.5 per cent of population).² Research by La Trobe University's Centre for Higher Education Equity and Diversity Research found that students from refugee backgrounds, mature age students, and those from foster care backgrounds were more likely to enrol in a free Enabling program than any other pathway,³ while a forthcoming study by Stokes discovered that around 30 per cent of students at an Enabling orientation session were from the lowest socio-economic decile.

Enabling CSPs should be uncapped.

An additional, regionally focussed, HEPPP scheme would assist institutions to trial and undertake programs to support the aspiration, transition and retention of RRR students. Ideally, a partnership component such as that which was previously included in HEPPP would support RRR institutions to work together to support students. The HEPPP provides funding for activities that assist students from designated equity groups, including RRR students, to aspire to and achieve at university. However, HEPP funding is stretched, and tends to be targeted toward the equally pressing need to assist low SES students (noting that low SES and rurality are often coincided). An example of La Trobe's work in areas such as this is the Year 11 Pathways to La Trobe (Y11PTLT) program, now in its third year of operation. This program is designed to raise aspirations in our low socio-economic Albury-Wodonga regional schools (and is being extended to Shepparton). Participating students engage in workshops which are designed to increase academic skills to help them learn to recognise and alleviate the stressors that come with Year 12. Students have access to mentors through our Google Classroom or our program email where they receive feedback on any of their work within 48 hours. A place at La Trobe is held for the students that opt into the program. For these student's, course ATAR's are lowered as an acknowledgment of their participation. As long as, they meet this lowered ATAR and the course prerequisites, a place at La Trobe is theirs should they accept it. Our engagement with the participating schools has seen an increase in enrolments to La Trobe University. The most successful and involved school in the pilot stage, James Fallon High School, had an increase from an average of 2 students per year to 13 students in the 2018 enrolment. In the absence of sufficient HEPPP funding, this program is funded through a philanthropic donation.

Challenge C: Raising aspirations for tertiary education

This Challenge asks what actions would help to raise aspiration to post-school education and support informed career choices for students from RRR backgrounds.

We must be careful in the way we consider different aspirations in social groups. In particular, it would be a mistake to characterise aspirations associated with social norms in metropolitan areas as 'high' and those associated with social norms in regional and remote areas as 'low.'

However, there are obvious and well-documented barriers to participation in education experienced by people in RRR communities. Some, such as distance and provision of opportunity are self-evident. More difficult are those that are hidden behind choices based on what seems possible for a given individual.

For example, at La Trobe's Mildura campus, the majority of graduates (around 85 per cent) are female. While this is linked to the subjects that are offered regionally, it points to a deeper problem about males' perception of higher education, particularly in regional, rural and remote Australia. The most visible professions requiring higher education in regional areas are likely to be in teaching and healthcare – areas that predominantly female. More evident to boys and young men are likely to be jobs in trades, and this goes some way to explaining the much higher participation in VETiS for male RRR school students. Further, boys are more likely to take part in the VCAL senior school pathway, which does not lead to an ATAR. Should people with a VCAL qualification wish to undertake higher education later on

² Pitman, T., Trinidad, S., Devlin, M. Harvey, A., Brett, M., & McKay, J. (2016). Pathways to Higher Education: The Efficacy of Enabling and Sub-Bachelor Pathways for Disadvantaged Students. Report for the Australian Government Department of Education and Training. Perth, WA: National Centre for Student Equity in Higher Education, Curtin University.

³ Andrewartha, L., & Harvey, A. (2014). Willing and enabled: the academic outcomes of a tertiary Enabling program in regional Australia. Australian Journal of Adult Learning, 54(1), 50-68.

they will face additional barriers. The preponderance of professional jobs in major cities may also deter young people from taking an academic pathway in senior school, for envisioning a professional role may appear to mean a choice between a planned life in the RRR area or a career in a city after university.

For school students in RRR areas, these observations about the future are highly rational, but may contribute to choices that leave them ill-prepared for university and less likely to be qualified. Research by the Centre for International Research on Education Systems (CIRES) for the Mitchell Institute⁴ found that senior school students from provincial and remote parts of Australia scored more poorly (often far more poorly) than metropolitan students on a range of indicators associated with a sense of belonging, self-confidence, purpose and perseverance at school. Using Census data as well as data from the LSAY program, the study showed far lower levels of achieving a Year 12 certificate for regional (57.1 per cent) and remote (50.0 per cent) students than for those from metropolitan areas (71.5 per cent), as well as a far lower likelihood of gaining an ATAR (remote, 27.7 per cent; regional 44.0 per cent; metropolitan 62.3 per cent).

To address these barriers such as these, La Trobe has introduced a number of initiatives to increase the likelihood of a student considering further education. For example, La Trobe University's School Partnerships Program (SPP) – funded through HEPPP – works collaboratively with identified schools to raise awareness of higher education and inform career aspiration. Created for students in years 7 to 10, it provides a range of activities closely linked to the school curriculum that are designed to engage students and their school communities to inform aspirations, motivation and learning confidence. Based on our work with thirty-two Victorian schools (including twenty regional schools), we estimate that as a result of such interaction with university, around 10 per cent of students change their mind positively about the likelihood of going to university.

We also note that aspiration to study is not only relevant to young people. Around sixty per cent of our Mildura, Shepparton and Albury Wodonga students are over 21, and forty per cent over 25. Only focusing on aspiration at high school level ignores those who have entered the workforce without higher education and find well after school that they need further education to realise their ambitions.

Again, these scenarios point to **the need for a Regional HEPPP**. La Trobe also submits that more Australia-specific research is required in regional education delivery and outcomes. **Government should invest in a Regional Education Policy Research Centre** that could provide research and data analysis into the challenges of regional, rural and remote education ranging from early childhood through to higher education. La Trobe University's Centre for Higher Education Equity and Diversity Research is a leader in this area and La Trobe would welcome the opportunity to contribute to or lead a Regional Education Policy Research Centre.

Challenge D: RRR people often experience multiple forms of disadvantage

This challenge asks how RRR students who experience multiple forms of disadvantage, and in particular Indigenous Australian students, can best be supported.

We discuss above the differences in senior school outcomes between RRR students and those from metropolitan areas. Lower levels of senior school completion and achievement are the key limiting factor to participation in higher education. Compound disadvantage, where students experience multiple forms of disadvantage, can make it even harder for young people to navigate a path to university.

Low SES people and Indigenous Australians are more likely to live in RRR areas than in metropolitan areas. For example, the most advantaged Local Government Areas (top 20 per cent of LGAs) tend to be in and around capital cities and some coastal areas. The most disadvantaged LGAs (lowest 20 per cent) tend to be in regional and rural areas. Similarly, while Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people comprise 2.8 per cent of the Australian population, they represent 7.8 per cent of the population in small towns.⁵ Low SES and Indigeneity are associated with lower

⁴ Lamb, S, Jackson, J, Walstab, A & Huo, S (2015), Educational opportunity in Australia 2015: Who succeeds and who misses out, Centre for International Research on Education Systems, Victoria University, Melbourne: Mitchell Institute, p. 61.

⁵ ABS Census of Population and Housing, 2016

levels of school completion, lower likelihood of taking an academic (ATAR) pathway and lower ATARs for those who complete and gain an ATAR.

An approach adopted by La Trobe to allow students to demonstrate the potential that lies beyond school grades is our Aspire Early Admissions Program. Through the Aspire Program we recognise and reward future students' leadership skills and community contribution by using a student's leadership and volunteering experience as part of the basis of admission to the University. Successful Aspire applicants are guaranteed access into La Trobe courses, although they must still satisfy a minimum ATAR and course prerequisites. Students who form part of this cohort are supported by an enrichment program designed to transition them to life at La Trobe and advance their leadership skills. The Aspire cohort's academic performance and retention at La Trobe is better compared to their peers.

Challenge E: Attracting people and jobs to RRR areas

How could Australia further strengthen and increase the attractiveness of regional universities, including attracting more metropolitan and International students to RRR areas?

There are clear benefits to living, working and studying in rural and regional Australia, yet net migration within Australia is from the regions to the cities. Without significant improvements in regional education outcomes, there is a risk that the 'brain drain' from the regions will strip our regional and rural communities of the talent they need to actively participate in the transformation to a knowledge economy.

Yet long term prospects for economic prosperity and social cohesion in Australia require a more distributed population, taking pressure off capital cities. Such a move toward a more distributed population must take place without jeopardising the further development of a highly skilled workforce.

To address the present 'brain drain' (or directional flow) of regional, rural and remote students moving to cities for further study, La Trobe recommends a suite of broader policy shifts:

- Regional higher education must offer courses and opportunities that are as innovative and specialised as opportunities in cities.** We support the development of flagship destination courses in regional cities. A recent example of quality and innovation in this areas is the end-to-end Rural medical program, funded by the federal government and offered in partnership between La Trobe University and the University of Melbourne. From 2019 a cohort of La Trobe students, co-selected collaboratively by both universities, will enter La Trobe's new three-year Bachelor of Biomedical Science (Medical) undergraduate degree delivered at La Trobe University's Bendigo and Albury-Wodonga campuses. Those who successfully complete the course will then gain guaranteed entry into the University of Melbourne's new Doctor of Medicine (Rural) postgraduate degree, based in Shepparton. The selection process will target students with rural backgrounds who are seeking a career in the rural health workforce. This program will attract high achieving students into regional campuses (the lowest selection rank after VTAC Round 1 in 2019 was 89.05) and provide the future health workforce for regional Australia.
- Regional universities and campuses must be funded and supported to offer a full suite of disciplines, maintaining expertise across all areas of knowledge in regional areas.** However, maintaining excellence in RRR areas comes at a cost and requires policy and funding stability. The 2017 Access Economics report, 'The Cost of Delivery of Higher Education', found that the cost of delivering teaching and scholarship to RRR students were 17 per cent higher, holding all else constant.⁶ In short, any investment La Trobe makes in regional delivery yields a lower return than it would in Bundoora. Further, risks associated with these cost are compounded by the present unstable policy environment: for example, La Trobe invested \$50M in our Bendigo campus from 2017, authorised when growth was uncapped, that has become a poor return since the 2017 CSP freeze and has reduced capacity to deliver in other areas of RRR activity. Other examples of the presently unstable policy environment include the number of recent funding announcements for regional higher education that have been institution-specific and apparently ad hoc and largely based in Queensland electorates, as well as some large investments in regional education in Victoria (assistance for Federation

⁶ Deloitte Access Economics (2017), 'The Cost of Delivery of Higher Education', p.61.

University for problems with its investment in Berwick (\$43M) and to assure Deakin's continued presence in Warrnambool where it makes a loss (\$15M) that are Band-Aids to more systemic problems.

The Challenge questions also ask how tertiary education providers can further stimulate economic growth in RRR areas. We contend that regional university campuses are already responsible for a very large share of economic growth and activity in the cities and towns that they serve. La Trobe commissioned a study by Cadence Economics in 2017 to better understand the contribution of La Trobe's graduates to the economy in regional Victoria (supplied as a separate attachment with this submission. Among other benefits, the study found:

In 2015, gross regional product (GRP) in regional Victoria is projected to be around \$100 million higher as a result of La Trobe University graduates entering the workforce. The results of the analysis show that in 2015, each La Trobe University graduate entering the regional Victorian workforce increased regional Victorian GRP by \$104,705.

This economic benefit is derived through a number of mechanisms. Directly, La Trobe University graduates increase the productive capacity of the regional Victorian economies in which they are employed, increasing economic activity as measured by GRP. Indirectly, this increased economic activity leads to higher flow on demand for goods and services driven by higher private consumption and improved business performance as a result of a more productive workforce. These indirect effects are incorporated in the estimated increase in GRP.

It also follows that the increase in economic activity generated by graduates entering the workforce improves the employment prospects for other parts of the labour market. This is because, for example, higher levels of economic activity and income increase the demand for retail services and, therefore, demand for employment in this industry including those without degrees. As shown in Table 5, for the 946 La Trobe University graduates entering the regional Victorian workforce, an additional 140 FTE jobs are created for those without university degrees in 2015.⁷

Government investment in education in RRR yields real returns for regional economies and for social and employment outcomes in RRR areas at the broader level. Rather than asking, how can tertiary education providers further stimulate economic growth in RRR areas?, we might well ask what can be done *for* regional providers to support and grow the economic stimulation they bring.

Challenge F: Implementing and monitoring a national strategy

This part asks whether there would be value in establishing a National Regional Education Commissioner to oversee the RRR Strategy once developed and, if so, what should their role should be, as well as how we should measure success of the Strategy.

La Trobe endorses the need for a National Regional Education Commissioner. In particular, we advocate that a Commissioner should have as a primary duty the provision of advice to government on the impact of policies and legislation across portfolios on rural, regional and remote education. Presently, seemingly unconnected policies and funding decisions tend to accumulate in ways that have a negative impact on regional campuses and communities.

For example, planned funding lost under the present freeze on CSPs has undermined investments in our regional campuses, resulting in the need to discontinue our innovative dual degree-diploma. The state decision to offer free TAFE in selected areas of study has put students in a position where they must decide between studying, for example, a diploma of nursing or community services for free, or to accumulate a HECS debt if they choose to take these studies at bachelor level; this impacts particularly on our regional campuses where bachelor-level study is concentrated in areas that fall under the free TAFE priorities and runs down our ability to operate at scale. Similarly, the failure to offer scholarships for regional students who wish to study locally drives these students to city campuses – even where students may in fact have preferred to study nearer to home. On top of these challenges, minimum ATARs for teaching courses set by State government, while intended to ensure quality at the input end of the teaching profession, disproportionately affect low SES and regional students who tend to have ATARs in the lower bands.

⁷ Cadence Economics (July 2017), 'La Trobe University's Regional Economic Contribution: Report for La Trobe University', p. 16.

La Trobe seeks stable, 'joined up' policy for regional Australia that recognises the distinct challenges faced by those in RRR areas who may have had less opportunity to realise their potential than those from major cities. A National Regional Education Commissioner would be helpful in ensuring that this is the case. In terms of measurement of success, we advocate **the creation of a Regional Education Policy Research Centre** that could provide research and data analysis into the challenges of regional, rural and remote education ranging from early childhood through to higher education. In-depth understanding of the drivers of education outcomes in RRR areas, as well as measurement of the performance of initiatives and programs, is central to evidence-driven policy. Overly simple metrics for gauging success can be clumsy and have adverse effects on funding decisions and policy directions. As a large, sparsely populated nation, Australia needs to further develop expertise in understanding and measuring outcomes for rural, regional and remote education, and the present discussion around the creation of a RRR strategy provides a timely opportunity to consider the appropriate funding and location for such a Regional Education Policy Research Centre.

OUR RECOMMENDATIONS

1. A loading of 17 per cent on the CSP amount for regionally delivered units of study in line with the 2017 Access Economics report, 'The Cost of Delivery of Higher Education', supporting regional institutions and campuses to offer the full suite of disciplines, maintaining expertise across all areas of knowledge in regional areas.
2. A return to a demand-driven system, ensuring continued growth in participation by RRR and low SES students. Uncapping of places for rural and regional CSPs (students, campuses and institutions) is a minimum requirement for RRR students in the absence of a fully demand-driven approach to sector-wide funding.
3. Similarly, demand-driven funding must be put in place for Enabling and sub-bachelor places to increase participation by educationally disadvantaged Australians.
4. Support for scholarships and bursaries to support travel and associated costs for RRR students and those studying at RRR institutions and campuses, even when they do not relocate to study.
5. Support for programs like La Trobe's innovative dual degree (degree-diploma), that have demonstrable outcomes.
6. An additional, regionally focussed, HEPPP scheme including a partnership component.
7. Support for the establishment of a regionally located Regional Education Policy Research Centre.
8. Support for flagship courses and research centres that can offer study and research opportunities that are as innovative and specialised as opportunities in cities.
9. A stable policy environment that allows institutions to plan and invest in the regions with confidence.

OUR CAMPUSES AND COURSES

An overview of the courses we offer across our campuses, and a description of the contributions of the campuses themselves is provided below.

Our online courses

These courses are available to students anywhere, delivered online with realtime support.

- Bachelor of Applied Business
- Bachelor of Applied Business (Marketing)
- Bachelor of Applied Business (Management)
- Bachelor of Applied Information Technology
- Bachelor of Applied Cloud Technology
- Bachelor of Food and Nutrition
- Graduate Certificate in Occupational Health, Safety and Ergonomics
- Graduate Certificate in Disability Practice
- Graduate Diploma in Disability Practice
- Master of Disability Practice
- Master of Ergonomics, Safety and Health
- Master of Health Administration
- Master of Nursing Science
- Master of Management (Entrepreneurship and Innovation)
- Master of Management
- Master of Management (Human Resource Management)
- Master of Management (Project Management)
- Master of Business Administration
- Master of Cybersecurity

Our multi-campus courses

Degrees that are offered at all La Trobe campuses, usually those in high demand areas such as Business, Education, Nursing and Human Services.

- Business: Majors in Marketing, Management, Accounting, Agribusiness, Event marketing and management, (TAFE articulation entry)
- Master of Business Administration
- Education (undergraduate and postgraduate entry): Primary, Secondary, Early Childhood (TAFE articulation entry), Education Studies, Technical Education, Special Education
- Nursing: Y12, Enrolled, Graduate (TAFE articulation entry)
- Social work/community services (TAFE articulation entry)
- Arts: majors in English, History, Human Geography, Indonesian, and Sociology.

What we deliver in Bendigo

La Trobe University and the City of Greater Bendigo aspire to create Australia's leading regional University City; a place of first choice for students, teachers and researchers, and for industry and government partners.

La Trobe Bendigo is a comprehensive university campus providing a diverse suite of programs that meet professional workforce needs and contribute to the further development of the community. The University inherits over 145 years of higher education presence, building on legacy institutions focused in engineering, nursing, education, business and general education.

As one of the fastest growing regional cities in Victoria, Bendigo is a major centre for government services, has vibrant local industries, excellent sporting facilities and an outstanding arts and cultural sector. This growth requires more skills in the work force, and provides more opportunities for individuals.

La Trobe University will continue to work with schools, TAFEs and our community partners to raise the educational aspirations and achievement of young people in our region. With fewer than 25 per cent of people aged between 25-34 in the Loddon Campaspe region having a higher education degree, compared to over 53 per cent in inner metropolitan Melbourne, we are well placed to close the gap between metropolitan and regional higher education attainment through a focus on access pathways and support.

La Trobe Bendigo is also about excellence. There are facilities, courses and operations in Bendigo that can compete with the best in the world for the impact and value of their work.

Bendigo is the headquarters of La Trobe Rural Health School (LRHS), which is the largest rural health school in Australia. From 2019 the LRHS will have University Department of Rural Health (UDRH) status and La Trobe will provide a medical pathway in Bendigo to train doctors in regional Victoria. Our partnerships with regional health providers will expand, opening up more opportunities for our students, staff and researchers to take a lead in developing and delivering the staff and technological health solutions of the future.

La Trobe Art Institute, located in the arts precinct of Bendigo and across the road from Bendigo Art Gallery, will also be recognised as a national leader in the arts, and the Australian university of choice for local, regional, national and international arts and cultural industry partnerships.

The \$50 million invested by La Trobe in the Bendigo Campus Transformation Project is a clear signal of commitment to Bendigo, and our intention to build on the legacy of prior institutions dating back 145 years. A new engineering building includes the new Bendigo Tech School. Transformation of our library, study spaces, social infrastructure, arrivals concourse and sports facilities are included in this project.

Partnerships

The Bendigo Futures project, undertaken between business, community and the university, establishes a roadmap to guide our cooperation. By clearly articulating and incorporating community aspiration, we can advocate for and deliver our shared goals, and further develop the City, and its surrounding areas. Working closely with the community we can coordinate to effectively develop the intellectual, cultural, technical and social capital of a leading regional University City.

Bendigo Health has recently completed the largest regional hospital development in Victoria. This world-class hospital incorporates the latest design and technology. Building on our existing and extensive relationship with Bendigo Health, we will take a lead in developing and delivering the digital health solutions of the future.

Bendigo enjoys a rich cultural life, exemplified by Bendigo Art Gallery, which as has built a reputation for presenting innovative international exhibitions alongside a dynamic and varied suite of public programs and events. The University has a strong and long-standing partnership with the Gallery as its Higher Education Partner, which provides unique opportunities for research and programs

With the City of Greater Bendigo, we will investigate the feasibility of multi-user accommodation in the city centre to support education and tourism. Such accommodation can facilitate short term stays in Bendigo to attend, place-based and block mode subjects, short courses or micro-credential workshops.

Courses

<p>Degrees offered only at our Bendigo and Bundoora campuses, drawing on specific large scale investments, and on strong community relationships</p>	<p>Engineering (Civil) Psychology (also at Albury-Wodonga) ICT Science: majors in Molecular Biology, Physics, Mathematics Allied Health: Speech pathology, Physiotherapy, Occupational Therapy (full program) Law Criminology Creative Arts (Writing)</p>
<p>Degrees offered only at Bendigo campus, drawing on unique resources of Bendigo campus</p>	<p>Dentistry Engineering (Industrial) Oral Health Pharmacy Outdoor & Recreational Education, Physical, Health & Outdoor Education Exercise Science and physiology Business: Sports Development and management Urban and Rural Planning Paramedicine (full program)</p>
<p>Degrees offered only at Bendigo and one or more regional campus, such as Agribusiness, tailored to the workforce needs of our regional communities.</p>	<p>Business: Agribusiness – at all regional campuses Biomedical science – also at Albury Wodonga Biomedical science (medicine) – also at Albury Wodonga Science: Pharmaceutical Chemistry majors – also at Albury Wodonga Creative Arts (Visual arts) – also at Mildura Paramedicine – first year at all regional campuses Allied Health: Speech pathology, Physiotherapy, Occupational Therapy – first year at all regional campuses</p>
<p>Place-based subjects offered at specific campuses that appeal to students from across the La Trobe campus network, such as those offered as part of cultural festivals and exhibitions.</p>	<p>Writers in Action – in partnership with Bendigo Writers Festival Exhibiting Culture – in partnership with Bendigo Art Gallery CityStudio – in partnership with the City of Greater Bendigo Connecting Landscapes – in partnership with Parks Victoria Agrifinance & Risk Management – in partnership with Bendigo Finance community</p>

What we deliver in Mildura

La Trobe University Mildura campus was established in 1996. It has grown to play a vital economic, educational, social and cultural role in its community. The campus, co-located with Sunraysia TAFE, is a key piece of educational and community infrastructure for the region. In addition to the education of La Trobe students, the campus provides an event facility to host workshops, seminars, public lectures and educational programs.

In Sunraysia, participation in post-school education has historically been low. Currently, fewer than 17.5 per cent of 25-34 year olds in the Mallee region have a higher education degree compared to over 53 per cent in inner metropolitan Melbourne (2016 Census). Over 400 students are enrolled at the Mildura campus and about 65 graduate each year – over 86 per cent of graduates stay in regional Victoria to work.

The Mildura campus works in partnership with SuniTAFE, local schools and community, and is proud to be part of the Koorie Education Advisory Group. Through this connection La Trobe Mildura works with with the STARS Foundation and Clontarf to raise education aspiration levels in the local indigenous community. La Trobe Mildura also provides an opportunity for those who have missed out on higher education previously to return to study to improve their skills and employability.

Partnerships

Mildura campus has well developed, strong partnerships with the traditional owners, governments, industry, alumni, the arts and community. These partnerships offer great opportunities for our students, researchers and the community. Our close relationship with Mallee Family Care, Mildura Base Hospital, Sunraysia Community Health and the Mildura Private Hospital provides opportunities for our health and social work students, staff and researchers to develop and deliver the technological health solutions of the future.

La Trobe Mildura has a long and shared history with SuniTAFE. Together we have developed innovative models for student enrolment to improve the rate of participation in higher education. We will continue to innovate through our partnership with SuniTAFE to provide unique education programs that meet the needs of under-served communities. Through our location, partnerships and programs we offer access to higher education to students who may never have considered this possible.

Courses

Degrees offered only at Mildura and one or more regional campus, such as Agribusiness, tailored to the workforce needs of our regional communities.	Business: Agribusiness – at all regional campuses Paramedicine: first year at all regional campuses Allied Health: Speech pathology, Physiotherapy, Occupational Therapy – first year at all regional campuses Arts: Creative Arts (also in Bendigo)
Place-based subjects offered at specific campuses that appeal to students from across the La Trobe campus network, such as those offered as part of cultural festivals and exhibitions.	Agribusiness Management – in partnership with local industry Writers in Action – in partnership with the Mildura Writers Festival Creative arts @ Mungo – in partnership with the Australian Print Triennial
Pathway programs offered in partnership with SuniTAFE, particularly in areas of workforce shortage.	Nursing – diploma pathway Social work/Human services – community services pathway Early Learning – early childhood education and care pathway Business and accounting – pathways from human resource management, accounting, hospitality, travel of tourism

What we deliver in Shepparton

La Trobe University Shepparton campus has been established since 1994 and plays a vital economic, educational, social and cultural role in its community. Over the last 10 years, La Trobe Shepparton has attracted a 160 per cent increase in student numbers and further rapid growth is expected. We have almost 800 students at our Shepparton campus, including about 140 graduates each year – 80 per cent of whom stay in regional Victoria to work.

La Trobe's Shepparton campus is a key part of Shepparton's education precinct, alongside Goulburn Ovens TAFE and close to the planned location of the new superschool. The campus is a key piece of educational and community infrastructure for the region. In addition to the education of La Trobe students, the campus provides an event facility to host workshops, seminars, public lectures and educational programs in the heart of the CBD.

In the Goulburn Valley, participation in post-school education has historically been low. Currently fewer than 19 per cent of 25-34 year olds in the Goulburn region have a higher education degree compared to over 53 per cent in inner metropolitan Melbourne. The Shepparton campus seeks to play a significant role changing that, and since it was established higher education aspiration, participation and attainment have been rising. The campus works in partnership with GO TAFE, community partners and local schools, and is proud to be part of the Shepparton Education Plan. The campus also seeks to provide opportunity for those who have missed out on higher education previously to return to study to improve their skills and employability.

La Trobe University is a world class research university, with particular expertise in agriculture, biochemistry and cell biology. We seek to bring this expertise to Shepparton and relay the best ideas from Shepparton to the world. We are a source of ideas, debate and cultural enrichment. Shepparton campus has well developed, strong partnerships with the traditional owners, governments, industry, alumni, the arts and community. These partnerships offer great opportunities for our students, researchers and the community alike.

Partnerships

La Trobe recognises its role as one of the key institutions in Shepparton, and we will continue to work with the Greater Shepparton City Council, Committee for Greater Shepparton and other key partners to align our strategic initiatives for the good of the region.

Shepparton is the home of our unique Wurreker Award-winning subject Encountering Aboriginal Victoria, which offers students the chance to learn about the knowledge and culture of Australian Indigenous people on their traditional land. We will further engage with our Indigenous community, increase interest and scholarly exploration of the historical and contemporary cultures, issues and stories of the Indigenous people on whose land our campuses are located, and support the community's ambitions and plans.

Our Memorandum of Understanding with Goulburn Valley Health cements our partnership and further opens up opportunities for our health students, staff and researchers and means, together with GV Health, we will take a lead in developing and delivering the staff and technological health solutions of the future. As we extend our campus, we will offer our partners the opportunity to co-locate on campus; ensuring chances for collaboration, research and students enrichment are ever possible.

La Trobe Shepparton has a long and shared history with GOTAFE. Together we have developed innovative models for student enrolment to improve the rate of participation in higher education. We will continue to innovate through our partnership with GOTAFE to provide unique education programs that meet the needs of under-served communities. Through our location, partnerships and programs we will offer access to higher education to people who may never have considered this possible.

Courses

Degrees offered only at Shepparton and one or more regional campus, such as Agribusiness, tailored to the workforce needs of our regional communities.	Business: Agribusiness – at all regional campuses Paramedicine – first year at all regional campuses Allied Health: Speech pathology, Physiotherapy, Occupational Therapy – first year at all regional campuses
Place-based subjects offered at specific campuses that appeal to students from across the La Trobe campus network, such as those offered as part of cultural festivals and exhibitions.	Encountering Aboriginal Victoria – in partnership with the Traditional Owners Agribusiness Management – in partnership with local industry Writing the Festival – in partnership with the Shepparton Festival
Pathway programs offered in partnership with GOTafe, particularly in areas of workforce shortage.	Nursing – diploma pathway Social work/Human services – community services pathway Early Learning – early childhood education and care pathway Business and accounting – pathways from human resource management, accounting, hospitality, travel of tourism

What we deliver in Albury Wodonga

La Trobe University has the largest rural health school in Australia, and from 2019 will provide a medical pathway to train doctors in regional Victoria. Our partnerships with regional health providers open up opportunities for our students, staff and researchers to take a lead in developing and delivering the staff and technological health solutions of the future. Albury-Wodonga campus is the home to two research centres: John Richards Centre for Rural Aging Research and the Centre for Freshwater Ecosystems. These world-class research centres attract top researchers and draw regional, metropolitan and international and students to Albury-Wodonga. In 2017, John Richards Centre generated \$2.5 M in research income.

La Trobe works hard to close the gap between metropolitan and regional higher education attainment. Currently fewer than 22 per cent of 25-34 year olds in the Ovens Murray region have a higher education degree compared to over 53 per cent in inner metropolitan Melbourne. We work with schools, TAFEs and our community partners to raise the educational aspirations of all people in our region.

We celebrate the successes of our graduates and alumni, so young people can envisage a future for themselves in this region. Each year La Trobe Albury-Wodonga graduates contribute \$10M to the local GRP. The University and its staff and students, too, make a significant economic contribution.

We will create a vibrant campus heart, which puts people first. We will achieve this by building and providing regionally significant research; improving transport connections; creating networked city partnerships; forming a vibrant education cluster; building a distinctive knowledge village; and having shared facilities for the local community in a physically connected neighbourhood.

La Trobe Albury-Wodonga will be a place of first choice for students, teachers and researchers, and for industry and government partners. We will bring the world's finest scientific and scholarly ideas to Albury-Wodonga and relay the best ideas from Albury-Wodonga to the world.

Partnerships

La Trobe works closely with local Government in both Wodonga and Albury, seeking to deliver benefits for the entire region.

In Albury-Wodonga we have pioneered a unique pathway program for year 11 students, which is driving up aspiration for and participation in Higher Education. We work closely with four schools on both sides of the border to support over 100 students.

We are collocated and work closely with Wodonga Institute of TAFE. Our work together includes innovative product development and co-ordination of student services.

Our research, particularly in rural ageing, is strongly supported by health and community service providers, by State and Federal governments and by noted philanthropist John Richards OAM.

Courses

Degrees offered only at Albury-Wodonga and one or more regional campus, such as Agribusiness, tailored to the workforce needs of our regional communities.	Business: Sports Management Biomedical science – also at Bendigo Biomedical science (medicine) – also at Bendigo Science: Pharmaceutical Chemistry majors – also at Bendigo Paramedicine – first year at all regional campuses Psychological Science/Honours – also at Bendigo Allied Health: Speech pathology, Physiotherapy, Occupational Therapy – first year at all regional campuses Wildlife and Conservation Biology, Animal and Veterinary Biosciences, - first year in Albury-Wodonga
Place-based subjects offered at specific campuses that appeal to students from across the La Trobe campus network, such as those offered as part of cultural festivals and exhibitions.	Exhibiting Culture – in partnership with MAMA Gone Bush – in partnership with The Man From Snowy River Festival Alpine Ecology
Pathway programs offered in partnership with Wodonga TAFE, particularly in areas of workforce shortage.	Nursing – diploma pathway Social work/Human services – community services pathway Early Learning – early childhood education and care pathway Business and accounting – pathways from human resource management, accounting, hospitality, travel of tourism