

Organisation: Department of State Growth (Tasmania), Department of Education (Tasmania) and The University of Tasmania

Question 1. How can government, institutions and communities better promote the valuable and unique experience of studying and living in regional Australia?

- Commonwealth to devote more resources and effort to promote smaller jurisdictions and regional areas, especially as we tend not to have many or any overseas staff:
 - o Recruitment of Austrade staff who are explicitly focussed on regional Australia.
 - o More off-shore marketing in second/third tier cities of key markets who may be more inclined to choose a regional destination.
 - o More marketing initiatives between Austrade and Study bodies promoting regional areas - highlighting distinct advantages of studying and living in various regional destination such as its inter-connectivity and safety.
 - o Comprehensive marketing material published on specialised highly ranked courses and key selling points from regional institutions.
 - o Develop an internal communications plan to promote the positive solutions regional areas provide to alleviate overcrowding, capacity, infrastructure and social issues in big cities, and help minimise risks of brand damage to Australia's reputation as a safe and quality education destination. Discourage metropolitan area marketing bodies and institutions from directly or inadvertently "talking down" regional areas and institutions. Equip Team Australia to promote and support students to choose regional Australia.
 - o Funding allocated to Study bodies in regional areas for global digital marketing campaign to promote its regional distinctiveness and UNIQUE Australian Study Experience (Funding to come from Federal Govt. grant via Austrade).
 - o Funding allocated to Austrade to produce "Regional Australia Study Experience Testimonial Videos"
 - o Austrade to host and support a regional Australia Exhibition Roadshow in key destinations (i.e. China and India) at a minimum costs. Universities to support by allocating staff, academics and alumni.
 - o Austrade to provide discounted fees for Study in Australia events for regional institutions and international study bodies.

- Funding granted to regional States and Territory Government for onshore and offshore marketing and outreach activities to promote their regional distinctiveness to reach international students, business and skilled migrants.

- Government, institutions and communities to collaboratively develop and offer more community engagement activities (some of which are already happening) such as volunteering with community and environmental organisations, running buddy programs with Australian students, getting international students to speak to Primary and high school students.

Question 2. What are the barriers to regional destinations and their education institutions hosting more international students?

- The word "regional" often suggest rural, outback, especially from the viewpoint of the international students' and investors sector:

- o Change of terminology from “Regional” to something more attractive (such as Special Growth Zone or Special Growth Area).
- o Change of the terminology can better capture the current efforts to make these areas more attractive, and can create the positive drive for investment and growth.
- Perceived lower ranked institutions, lack of communities from main student source countries (and social support), perceived lack of employment opportunities (during and after study), limited entertainment/recreation options, limited accommodation (in some instances), perceived remoteness and finally simple lack of awareness when making study choices.
- Commonwealth (Austrade and/or DFAT) to carefully manage the messaging and negative perception overseas of Australia being less welcoming of international students and migrants.
- Accessibility, travel costs and time to regional areas. Government intervention to open up more direct and better access to regional areas and/or provide transport concessions from major airports to regional areas (train/bus/flights etc.).
- Limited supply of accommodation (Students’ accommodation and Home Stay options), part-time jobs and community support network to match the increased population of international students.
- Regional areas need to be ready to support the demands of a growing number of international students in terms of social and language support. These may be intensified by both some of the student cohort attracted to regional areas and particularities of living in a smaller community.
- Managing community perception and resistance to growth and change, and the need for ongoing work to promote diversity, acceptance and harmony when growing the population of international students and migrants in regional areas.

Question 3. How can metropolitan and regional education institutions work together to create regional study opportunities for international students in ways that benefit the students, the regional communities and the institutional partners?

- Guaranteed placements for regional students to complete internships/placement rounds (including in urban areas) as part of their course.
- Funding to be provided for Study bodies in regional areas to implement an Employer portal concept to increase recognition of value and opportunity for employment of international students.
- Pathway opportunities that look to build a bridge between Metropolitan and non-Metropolitan institutions (credit recognition, articulations, 2 + 2).
- Co-contributions from key stakeholders - In some regional areas facing ageing, contracting populations or skills shortages chambers of commerce, councils and employers recognize the economic/demographic benefits of international students and are often willing to invest resources into programs to attract international students.

Question 4. What are the best ways to communicate the benefits of spending time in regional Australia to prospective international students and their parents?

- Better utilisation of alumni, perhaps through DFAT's global alumni program, to promote regional Australia.
- Joint marketing and promotion materials between Austrade and regional study bodies targeted to promote to students and their parents key advantages of studying in regional areas (i.e. lower living costs, safety, and possible employment and migration pathways).

Question 5. Given the strong interplay between tourism and education, particularly in regional settings, how can government, institutions and the community capitalise on the relationship, map its value and promote regional strengths?

- Support international students based in major metropolitan areas to visit regional areas during their stay in Australia - discounted travel or supported visiting/learning programs.
- Provide incentives for international students to bring family members to visit regional areas.
- Greater promotion of courses and jobs relating to the tourism industry, designed to provide international students with options of internship and possibly a career pathway that harness their diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds to help grow our tourism sector.
- Connecting with Regional Tourism Organisations for increased education of tourism business owners around the benefits arising from supporting international students and the skillsets they provide.
- Creating employment incentives or wage subsidies for regional tourism operators to support the uptake of international students within their business.
- The ability to raise awareness in mass media overseas. There would be benefit in looking at assistance in funding Regional Media Familiarisation Tours through regional Australia. Consider inviting key opinion leaders in digital world, press, travel and lifestyle bloggers/networks e.g. national geographic.
- Being able to effectively link students to seasonal work opportunities during the summer break (particularly in the tourism and agriculture sectors) will enhance the regional value proposition and help address seasonal labour shortages. This can be as simple providing information on existing resources - (<https://jobsearch.gov.au/harvest>)

Question 6. What role could fee structures and scholarships, education agent promotions, and changes to government policy settings play to encourage more students to study in regional Australia (e.g. migration incentives)?

- The Australian Government to provide a post-study work rights for international students who study and commit to live in a regional area to be made available and/or extended.
- This may include a new regional occupations list (in addition to the MLTSSL) for the Graduate Work stream that is significantly larger than currently enabling a wider range of students to be eligible and encourage study in these occupations.

- This may also include extension of the existing duration of post-study work rights to University undergraduates, masters degrees, and for Vocational Education and Training (VET) diploma students.
- This extension could be up to four years for undergraduate/masters degrees or up to three years for VET students. The extension of post study work rights would allow students to obtain the necessary work experience to obtain a regional migration pathway, particularly employer sponsored pathways.
- Another option could be an extension of regional study incentives via the General Skilled Migration Points Test. Currently, 5 points is awarded where students meet a two-year regional study requirement. It is proposed that this is retained, but that an alternative 10 points is available for those students that achieve four years of study in a regional location. This serves to encourage students to undertake longer courses, including combination of University and VET courses, in regional areas.
- Education agents be rewarded via Australian incentive competition – administered by Austrade and incorporating kpi's centred around: % increases of business going to regional areas, school engagement e.g number of exhibitions, webinars, information sessions managed by the agent network.
- Subsidies provided to regional institutions to provide ability to cap fees for international students.
- Federal Government Bursaries provided in addition to university bursaries e.g. relocation bursaries for regional international students.

Question 7. Is there a need for greater insights into the motivations and the experience of international students in regional areas relative to metropolitan areas, using instruments such as the International Student Barometer and/or other targeted research?

- Yes, the research designed in consultation with key regional universities and study bodies could help identify (and possibly confirmed our current understanding of) key drivers to grow the population of international students in regional areas.
- This can help regional areas better target our marketing messages and promotional efforts.

Question 8. Any other comments?