

Organisation: Study Cairns

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

- Develop reliable data to promote the economic benefits that stem from international education and that are being realised in regional areas
- Provide opportunities for domestic students to interact with international students, exposing them to different cultures and ways of thinking. This supports the development of more 'global citizens' and can develop lasting relationships and networks with far reaching benefits, including longer term trade and diplomatic relationships.
- Promote the social benefits of International education to regional Australia, including the many ways International students can assist to build the cultural diversity of regional communities and how this can contribute to a more inclusive and culturally rich society.
- Promote the benefits of working with the International education sector to provide a strong platform for leveraging Australia's global reputation, particularly in research and sharing knowledge.

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

- Inability to meet the desire by parents for their child to study at a sandstone institution
- Lack of positive messaging about the benefits of studying in regional areas; safety, reduced living expenses, friendly regional communities; Australian tourism experiences
- Insufficient development and marketing of course offerings that are niche or specific to regional areas, eg: Pilot training
- Lack of capacity including: international airline routes, on-campus or student-built accommodation, insufficient numbers of home host families to meet demand, lack of public transport and/or concessions rates for International Students

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?

- Establish education pathways and articulations to appeal to the student cohort that promote a point of difference to other global destinations: eg, commence ESL Study in a regional area then complete VET in metropolitan city
- Promote pathway options from metropolitan cities/institutions to regions. Study destinations are often chosen by parents and International students influenced by an institutions reputation, particularly relevant to the HE sector. There are regional Universities that offer courses that have high global ranking but they are not marketed well.
- Market to Work and Holiday Visa holders (and their Education agents) in metropolitan cities to take advantage of regional visa extensions. There is significant potential for them to participate in short courses including ELICOS and non-award courses. Regional extensions to be expanded.
- Encourage international students and their visiting friends and parents to travel to regional Australia for leisure purposes or further short term study

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

- Familiarisation visits by Education Agents/Trade Commissioners to experience the regional benefits firsthand
- Testimonials from previous students used in social media and websites
- Live or pre-recorded Webinars for parents/students through education agents or social media sites
- Joint marketing with regional/state tourism organisations
- Combine with Federal, State and Regional Study Clusters and organisations and leverage off each other's websites and social media campaigns to encourage international students to travel to regional areas

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?

- Develop close working relationships between regional study clusters and tourism bodies in regions/state to capitalise on areas that are common to attract visitors
- Identify international student source markets, preferences and travel behaviour that are common or have potential between the two sectors.
- Education and tourism stakeholders are involved at different touch points in the lifecycle of international students, from the considering stage through to advocacy and therefore have an influence on the decisions and perceptions of students
- Promote opportunities in aspirational tourism destinations that demonstrate that studying in these regions will lead to increased opportunities at home or help secure a job
- Promote at times of favourable exchange rates that lead to greater affordability of education and tourism product when pre-booked
- Promote regional tourism destinations providing education offerings that stand out in a competitive environment
- Educate the Tourism sector to understand that travelling while in Australia 'value adds' to the student experience and there are opportunities for the tourism industry to benefit. Eg Cairns 1 in 23 tourism visitors comes for the purposes of education
- Educate the Tourism sector to understand that Queensland regions feature in the top 10 highest regional IET enrolments in Australia
- Promote the regional advantage for young people to apply for a second Work and Holiday Visa (currently available in Northern Australia for selected industries) which also allows them to study for up to four months.
- Deliver joint targeted consumer marketing into key regional international student markets that have tourism and an education focus
- Encourage trade engagement into regional areas to increase consumer awareness and attract more international students and their friends and relatives to regional areas
- Each sector to understand the benefits of working together to build capacity and retain regional international flights connecting Asian hubs to regional areas, building numbers through International students and their Visiting Friends and Relatives (VFR)
- Having family, friends or culturally significant communities in a destination, town or community can be beneficial to attract International Students
- Students seeking to improve their chances of employment through English Language study will find that the opportunities for immersion are greater in regional areas where communities are more welcoming and student engagement is supportive, this should be promoted

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)?

- Change the name of the current Work and Holiday visa to a Work, Holiday and Study Visa to highlight the 'study' option. This visa currently enables young people to holiday and work in Australia for up to a year including study for up to four months and there is a regional advantage for a second visa.
- Encourage Governments at all levels to develop policies to enhance social and economic prospects for international students
- Provide familiarisation visits and/or marketing material to promote the benefits of studying in regional destinations in Australia. Competitive costs of flights, living and education expenses, tuition fees and enhanced levels of support and student engagement in regional areas, particularly for those regions with international connectivity into Asia.
- Recent changes to the occupations on the Australia Skill Shortage lists have led to skills shortages in regional areas and the inability to fill these places. An example is the hospitality and tourism industries in the Cairns region have severe skills shortages due to the recent development of three new hotels in the region. Potential International Students in regional areas invest in short courses, ESL or VET courses to prepare themselves for hospitality and tourism jobs. Changes to policy settings and returning these occupations to the list would reverse the current regional decline in student enrolments in these and other areas. (Regional Designated Area Migration Agreements (DAMA) with the Commonwealth Government deliver better migration pathways and outcome for businesses facing skills shortages in regional areas that cannot be filled by Australian employees.)
- The Federal Government needs to understand the benefits of developing more positive messaging for international students. On one hand it welcomes that International Education is Australia's 3rd largest export, on the other hand Ministers warn International Students through the media that they are not welcome in case they are coming on a student visa pathway to permanent residency

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?

- Students on Student Visas only represent part of the regional picture, it is important to measure the true value of expenditure generated in the regions to account for the large numbers of students on non-Student Visas and understand the real economic benefits of International Education to regions
- Accurate information and data is key to working effectively in the international education sector and serves a wide variety of purposes including achieving sound public policy as well as market and operational efficiency.
- Currently data on non-student visa (NSV) enrolments (including in executive education short courses, school study tours and English languages courses) is not captured effectively in key Australian Government data sources.
- This prevents forming an understanding of the true number of international students and their economic contribution in any location, the ability to have well-informed public policy discussion and adequately respond to demand and challenges in delivery for this "hidden market".
- The international education and training industry has long called on the Australian Government to capture and report on non-student visa enrolments as a key data set for the

sector.

- If the full extent of the non-student visa market were understood, in addition to the contribution these students make to regional economies, regional cities like Cairns would have a full appreciation of their regional market share.
- Regional data would inform local government and potential investors of the true value to the region's economy and identify gaps in capacity, currently a true representation of Student satisfaction and sector engagement and satisfaction is not captured.

Question 8. Any other comments?

On behalf of Study Cairns I would like to acknowledge our appreciation for the opportunity to provide this feedback. We look forward to the findings.