

Organisation: The University of Western Australia

Noting that the paper seeks views on how to encourage international students to explore study destinations outside of Australia's major capital cities of Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane, i.e. a broad definition of 'regional' is used, and that this includes Perth, the University of Western Australia makes the following points.

1. Growing International Education in Regional Australia

Attracting students to consider Perth as a desirable study destination is one of the main challenges universities in Western Australia face in international student recruitment, as many students and their parents' preferences are to study in Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane. The reasons are diverse and include: these cities are well known; there are strong family and community networks there; state governments have invested considerably in the state-based organisations tasked with promoting education opportunities to international students; five of Australia's Group of Eight Universities are located in these cities and there is the perception that larger cities have more job opportunities for students and graduates.

For this reason Perth is the focus of the responses and recommendations outlined below and included in the category of "regional cities" in this paper. The responses are based on research undertaken in recent years which outline the main factors influencing international students when choosing an institution and city in which to study, and successful strategies implemented by countries such as Canada and Japan to attract more international students to study in those countries.

2. Federal Government support that could be provided

2.1 Funding to enhance promotion of regional cities

Allocate funding to universities not located in Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane for the creation of digital resources (including virtual reality) and social campaigns, in priority countries such as China, India, Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia and Vietnam. The content could: feature a series of brief engaging videos showing the vitality of these cities; showcase international students and graduates enthusiasm for the value of their experiences; capture city highlights; show local communities available to support students; illustrate lifestyle advantages including affordability, quality of life, community networks for support, and job and internship opportunities.

As international students drive a significant proportion of international tourists, and vice versa, additional funding could be provided for Tourism Australia to promote Perth and other regional cities and areas as vibrant, culturally diverse, fun and safe places to visit. It is also important to include regional cities such as Perth in brand Australia work and campaigns.

The Commonwealth could match funding provided by regional state governments to promote international education opportunities and advantages. In Western Australia, Study Perth's objectives include coordinating the marketing of the Western Australian brand of international education and implementing initiatives that focus on enhancing the experience of international students studying in Perth.

In addition, significant discounts could be provided to regional universities to participate in Austrade events, including waving the fees charged for running a seminar at these. These events are generally very expensive and return on investment can be limited for institutions in smaller cities, which creates a barrier to participation.

Other incentives could also be provided to encourage producers of overseas television shows, series, and films to be set in regional cities (and their university campuses), and priority given to the types of programs popular in Australia's top five source markets for international students. Guidelines for funding could include that story lines incorporate benefits of studying and living in regional cities. For example, Indian students could be taking part in local cricket competitions, and international student characters could be depicted undertaking interesting internships and being offered employment after graduating and feature local community groups.

2.2 Scholarships

Australia Award Scholarships recipients could be encouraged / incentivised to choose universities in cities other than Sydney, Brisbane and Melbourne, limiting the number of Australia Award places in these cities' universities, and increasing the scholarship allowance for students choosing universities in other cities.

A number of Australian Government prestigious scholarships could be awarded to outstanding international students undertaking university study in priority programs in regional cities. International students completing high school and foundation programs in Sydney, Brisbane and Melbourne could also be eligible as well as graduates of bachelor degrees wanting to undertake postgraduate studies.

2.3 Visa related incentives

These incentives could include: waiving of student visa application fees for working holiday visa holders on condition that the student visa is linked to studying in a regional city, government funding of Health Cover for international students studying in "regional" cities, with a cap of up to \$3000 for the duration of study in that city and the number of capped places granted to the Western Australian government's State Nominated Migration Program could be increased.

2.4 Business Incentives

Provide tax incentives to businesses in regional cities for employing international students in their graduate programs and for providing relevant internships for international students.