



30 November 2018

Council for International Education  
c/o Department of Education and Training  
GPO Box 9880  
Canberra ACT 2601

Dear Chair

**Re: UNSW submission to the Expert Members of the Council for International Education Consultation Paper on Growing International Education in Regional Australia**

UNSW Sydney is pleased to provide feedback to the Expert Members of the Council for International Education in relation to the Consultation Paper on Growing International Education in Regional Australia (the Consultation Paper).

The Consultation Paper highlights the many benefits that international students bring to the Australian economy and the opportunities that regional Australia presents, as well as the role of the Federal Government in supporting and promoting Australia as a premium education destination for high quality international students.

UNSW suggests that while regional Australia does present significant opportunities for growth, any measures or activities undertaken should not come at the expense of international student market flows in metropolitan and outer metropolitan areas. Any move to grow international student numbers in regional areas that comes at the expense of growth in our major cities will displace export earnings, tax receipts and wider economic activity in cities. This is not sound public policy and will paralyse a major export earner and employer in metropolitan areas.

Growth in regional areas and sustained growth in our cities are not mutually exclusive. Australia should be pursuing sensible public policy to stimulate demand in both market segments to ensure the nation is best placed to capitalise on continued demand for international education across the Indo-Pacific and beyond.

**Key comments**

- UNSW supports measures and activities that promote the entire international student market in Australia.
- Any measures to encourage international students to study in regional areas should be informed by a deep knowledge of regional markets and local issues, and in consultation with regional communities, education institutions, businesses and governments.
- In particular, we recommend Canberra be a recognised area for improving international student numbers, noting that its current international student numbers are well below the national average. Given its role as the national



**UNSW**  
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capital and as a major regional hub, Canberra is an important the regional centre well-placed for growth, and consideration should be given to using Canberra as a test city for any new measures to attract international students to areas outside metropolitan Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane.

- If Australia is to grow sustainable enrolments of international students in regional areas, adequate consideration to developing supporting infrastructure requirements associated with increased international student load such as accommodation, health services, internship placements and transport connections to major centres and metropolitan airports.
- Greater regional/provincial engagement overseas will generate regional engagement in Australia.
- We make a number of suggestions in this submission about ways to improve international student enrolments

## **Background**

UNSW is well-placed to provide feedback on the consultation. UNSW enrolled its first international students in 1952, opened the first Australian university English language centre, has steadily built and expanded international student enrolments and has a rich and diverse alumni cohort around the world who are important partners for Australia.

UNSW is a founding member of the Group of Eight (Go8), and is a member of Universitas 21, a global network of research universities. It is a member of the PLuS Alliance together with Arizona State University and King's College London, which combines the strengths of three leading research universities to solve global challenges around health, social justice, sustainability, technology and innovation. These long-established international activities and partnerships give us a unique understanding of international student markets and the University now attracts students from more than 137 countries.

In addition, UNSW has had a long and sustained relationship with the Australian Capital Territory (ACT) through the UNSW Canberra campus at the Australian Defence Force Academy (ADFA). During this time, UNSW has developed a strong presence in Canberra, employing Canberrans, building links with the defence and business community, and has become known one of Canberra's most respected higher education institutions. UNSW has experience doing business in a regional centre, and more importantly, has developed strong relationships with the community and government to inform our future activities in ACT.

## **International engagement**

UNSW and other Go8 universities in particular, have played an important role in attracting international students to Australia. As globally-ranked institutions, we have the reputation and brand to attract high-quality international students and put significant resources into developing networks and partnerships in target markets overseas, as well as brand building and other marketing activities.

There is a clear role for governments (Federal and State/Territory) to promote Australia as an education destination, but also, to seek opportunities and foster relationships overseas with other governments, recruitment agents and education systems to pave the way for stronger collaboration impacting all areas of international education.

UNSW suggests that Australian agencies explore greater regional engagement overseas, building relationships with regional institutions, governments and trade/investment promotion agencies. This could be achieved by forging new sister city/region agreements, memorandums of understanding to facilitate cooperation between regional education systems and capacity building programs focused on training education leaders from regional areas overseas.

Additional suggestions and recommendations include:

- Stronger international media campaigns promoting Australia as an education destination.
- Coordinated campaigns with Tourism Australia emphasising the value proposition of studying in regional and metropolitan centres and making a stronger link between international education and tourism experiences across Australia.
- Dedicated Austrade Roadshows focused on promoting cities and regional centres.
- Development of a regional international education strategy identifying target regional centres offshore which could emerge as major feeders for Australia's regional universities – the likely growth markets in Asian economies for regional universities will be in rapidly emerging second and third tier provinces/states in countries such as China and India. Provinces such as China's Gansu and states such as India's Madhya Pradesh are more likely to feed Australia's regional centres than highly urbanised hubs such as China's eastern seaboard and India's city belts of the Delhi National Capital Region, Mumbai/Pune and southern centres such as Hyderabad, Bengaluru and Chennai.

### **Regional engagement**

In addition to increased international engagement internationally, UNSW suggests developing a deeper and more coordinated understanding of regional markets within Australia, and local issues and trends that affect student life in those locations in consultation with the local community and government.

Increasing international education in regional Australia is more than simply increasing marketing through international channels and platforms. International students are increasingly savvy in navigating international education trends, discerning value for money and choosing the type of education experience they are seeking.

## Case Study – Canberra

UNSW is currently working with the ACT Government to establish a new campus in Canberra. UNSW has undertaken comprehensive market studies of the international student market as it relates to the proposed Canberra City Campus. Research indicates that Sydney and Melbourne have a natural appeal in the market. However, both cities are facing challenges relating to population increases<sup>1</sup>, such as housing availability and affordability and transport issues.

The market studies conducted demonstrated that the proposed campus in Canberra is an attractive alternative to Sydney and Melbourne because:

- Destinations with two top 50 world-ranked universities are appealing to prospective students;
- UNSW and Go8 universities have strong brand appeal; and
- a combination of factors such as cost of living, safety, career options and proximity to the CBD make the location desirable.

While Canberra was the most appealing location tested outside Melbourne and Sydney, it was clear that there will also be a requirement to progressively promote Canberra as an education destination amongst prospective students and agents. UNSW supports additional investment in Study Canberra to help build Canberra's profile internationally.

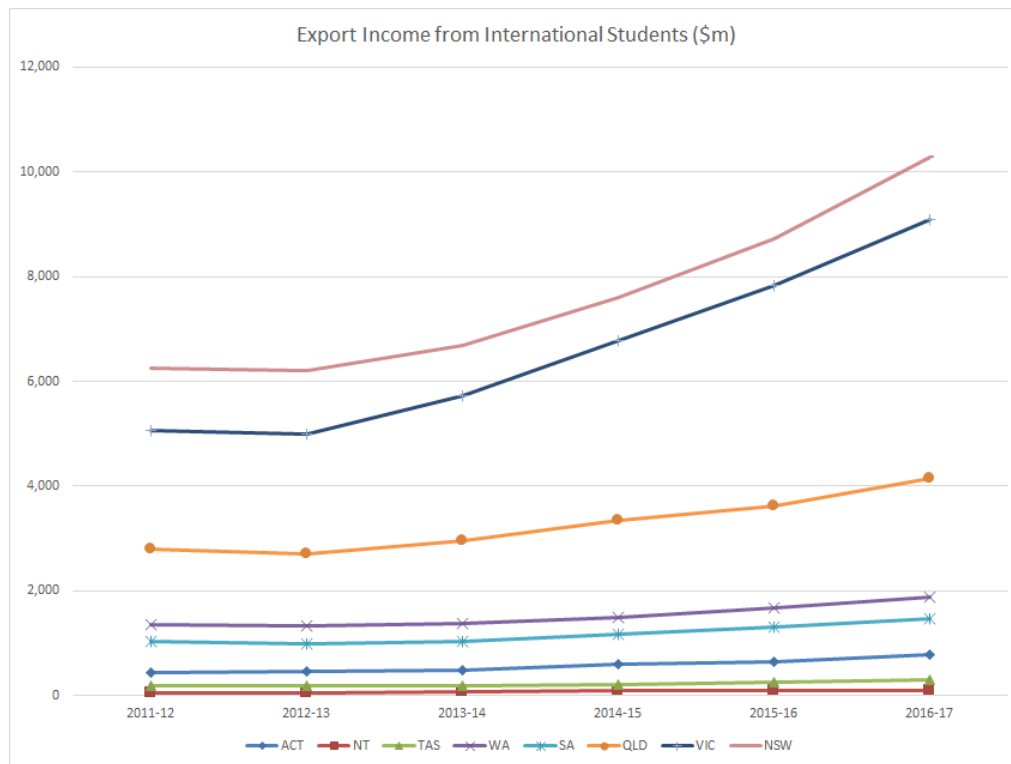
Key findings from the market research to support this observation included:

- Canberra is not on many students' radars;
- perceptions that Canberra is dominated by the government sector; and
- Canberra is not perceived as a city for young people.

The export income graph below highlights the significant growth in international student income in NSW and Victoria, but also demonstrates that Canberra has not fully capitalised on Australia's growth in the international student sector. Benchmark states like South Australia and Western Australia both outperform Canberra. The proposed Canberra City Campus will provide a mechanism to significantly increase Canberra's market share.



**Graph 1: Export Income from International Students by State<sup>2</sup>**



UNSW believes that Canberra is arguably the best placed regional centre for international student growth. There may be a case for using migration incentives to encourage international students to study in Canberra, noting of course, that this must be considered in close collaboration with the ACT Government and other education institutions in Canberra, as well as other organisations and businesses.

It is encouraging to see the Australian Government engaging with the community to find new ways to bring international students to Australia. UNSW will continue work collaboratively with other institutions and with Government, to support this work, and looks forward to further engagement with the Department of Education and other government stakeholders to discuss strategies to promote regional education. This will ensure that Australia continues to benefit from the talent, cultural exchange and investment that international students bring.

Sincerely,

Mr Laurie Pearcey  
Pro-Vice-Chancellor (International)  
UNSW Sydney