

Organisation: Vygo - University Tutoring and Mentoring Programs

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

From Vygo's experience creating peer tutoring and mentoring communities within Australian universities, the company has gained a valuable perspective on the needs of international students. Vygo's platform allows students to obtain tutoring and mentoring with excelled peers from their university. Connected students share similar degrees, backgrounds and languages. Vygo currently holds contracts at QUT, Monash University and Griffith University. Vygo has Field Tests scheduled at FedUni, JCU and UNSW.

As echoed in the Consultation Paper, one of the key challenges for regional institutions are negative perceptions towards the quality of education and community engagement opportunities. To address these concerns Vygo would encourage the Department of Education and Training (DET) to guarantee all international students in regional locations quality and consistent academic tutoring, language tutoring and mentoring support. Tutors and mentors would be sourced from the student's institution and trained by Vygo. Students would receive credit from DET inside the Vygo platform to be used to book tutoring and mentoring sessions. All interactions and activities would be tracked through the mobile application. Unused credit would be returned to DET and students who exceed their level of credit would have the option to self-fund further sessions.

International students who excel in their degrees would have the opportunity to become tutors and mentors through the program. In doing so, the program would provide income for regional international students and opportunities to build their employability skills.

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

As echoed in the Consultation Paper, Vygo's experience leads it to believe that the key challenges for regional institutions are negative perceptions of the quality of education and opportunities for community engagement.

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?

No comment.

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

As per Question 1, Vygo's suggestion is to guarantee an extra level of international student support and community engagement opportunities that will be consistent across all regional institutions.

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?

No comment.

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)?

As discussed in Question 1, a guaranteed tutoring and mentoring scholarship for regional international students would assist in mitigating negative perceptions around the quality of education and community engagement.

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, there is always a need for more insights. The use of the Vygo mobile platform would provide DET with the ability to survey all participating international students digitally and conveniently.

Question 8. Any other comments?

Vygo would love the opportunity to meet with the Department of Education and Training to discuss the above.