



SPERA

Society for the Provision of
Education in Rural Australia

2024

**NATIONAL CONFERENCE FOR REGIONAL
RURAL & REMOTE EDUCATION**

COFFS HARBOUR | GUMBAYNGGIRR COUNTRY

GROWTH THROUGH EQUITY

Full Program

Click on the Session Number to open the Session Summary

Tuesday 13 August 2024

3:00pm Registration opens

5:00pm - 7:00pm Welcome Reception

Wednesday 14 August 2024

from 8:00am Registration and Coffee on arrival

8:30am - 9:00am Conference Opening & Welcome

9:00am - 10:00am Keynote Presentation

Professor John McKendrick
*Professor of Social Justice, Glasgow Caledonian University
Commissioner for Fair Access, Scottish Government*

10:00am - 10:30am Australian Rural Education Awards

10:30am - 11:00am MORNING TEA

Room	Marina Room	Harbour Room	Jetty Room	Beaches Room
Parallel Session 1	1A - Academic Presentation	1B - Academic Presentation	1C - Academic Presentation	
11:00am - 11:30am	<p>Habitus in the Hallways, Skill Shortages in the Streets: Linking Student Aspirations with Vocational Outcomes in Regional Communities.</p> <p><i>Ben Archer</i> <i>James Cook University</i></p>	<p><i>Place Based, Community Led Widening Participation: Insights from the Eastern Australia Regional University Centre Partnership</i></p> <p><i>Erin Wrafter; Chris Ronan; Bethany Ross; Sonal Singh, Dr Kylie Austin</i></p> <p><i>CUC Central; UTS Centre for Social Justice and Inclusion; University of Wollongong</i></p>	<p>On Names and Naming</p> <p><i>Emeritus Professor John Halsey</i> <i>Flinders University</i></p>	
Topic Area	Connections between industry, education and communities	Connections between industry, education and communities	Connections between industry, education and communities	

10 minute change over

Room	Marina Room	Harbour Room	Jetty Room	Beaches Room
Parallel Session 2	2A - Academic Presentation	2B - Academic Presentation	2C - Case Study	2D - Academic Presentation
11:40am - 12:10pm	<p>Roadmap to Success: Decoding the Regional Universities Study Hub</p> <p><i>Danielle Keenan</i></p> <p><i>University of Technology Sydney Australian Centre for Student Equity Success</i></p>	<p>Roads to the regions: creating impact through sustained relationships between regional communities and metropolitan universities</p> <p><i>Jindri De Silva, Jacinta Carruthers, Adeline Pandian, and Solest Montgomery</i></p> <p><i>Macquarie University</i></p>	<p>The 4 Rs - Rural Recruitment, Retention and Recognition</p> <p><i>Ms Kimberley Tempest & Mrs Dianne Ferguson</i></p> <p><i>Cobram Secondary College</i></p>	<p>Seeing teachers, schools, and communities as assets for the retention of rural school staff</p> <p><i>Hernan Cuervo</i></p> <p><i>University of Melbourne</i></p>
Topic Area	Connections between industry, education and communities	Connections between industry, education and communities	Connections between industry, education and communities	Connections between industry, education and communities

10 minute change over

Room	Marina Room	Harbour Room	Jetty Room	Beaches Room
Parallel Session 3	3A - Case Study	3B - Case Study	3C - Case Study	3D - Case Study
12:20pm - 12:50pm	<p>The Power of Exchange</p> <p><i>Ms Linda Adhyana and Ms Natalie Nelmes</i></p> <p><i>Student Life & Community Curtin University and Geraldton Universities Centre</i></p>	<p>TUC EduVenture Project</p> <p><i>Mrs Gemma Death, Mr Evan Weller</i></p> <p><i>Taree Universities Campus</i></p>	<p>Growing our Own' Connecting Schools, Employers, Careers and Study Pathways in Regional South Australia</p> <p><i>Ms Anita Kuss, Ms Cate Wuttke, Ms Hannah Samson</i></p> <p><i>Uni Hub Spencer Gulf</i></p>	<p>Growth through Equity: A case study focusing on empowering communities through a grassroots campaign</p> <p><i>Ms Lisa Carrick, Ms Wendy Mason</i></p> <p><i>Country Education Foundation of Australia</i></p>
Topic Area	Connections between industry, education and communities	Connections between industry, education and communities	Connections between industry, education and communities	Connections between industry, education and communities

12.50PM - 1.50PM

LUNCH

Room	Marina Room	Harbour Room	Jetty Room	Beaches Room
Parallel Session 4	4A - Case Study	4B - Academic Presentation	4C - Academic Presentation	4D - Academic Presentation
1:50pm - 2:20pm	<p>Provide it and they will come: equity of access to professional learning in regional Victoria</p> <p><i>Tyron Paspas, Paul Nolan</i></p> <p><i>Victorian Academy of Teaching and Leadership</i></p>	<p>Impact of Regional Diversity on Higher Education Participation: A Comparison of Two Australian States</p> <p><i>Professor Sharron King; A/Prof Cathy Stone</i></p> <p><i>University of South Australia (King); University of Newcastle (Stone)</i></p>	<p>Staying and studying: rural, regional and remote access to higher education 'in place'</p> <p><i>Dr Matthew Bunn, Dr Matt Lumb</i></p> <p><i>Centre of Excellence for Equity in Higher Education, University of Newcastle</i></p>	<p>Shaping self while being pushed, pulled and shaped at the cultural interface: The post-schooling transitions of Cape York boarding school graduates.</p> <p><i>Dr Katrina Rutherford</i></p> <p><i>Jawun Queens Centre, Central Queensland University</i></p>
Topic Area	Connections between industry, education and communities	Pathways for education	Pathways for education	Pathways for education

10 minute change over

Room	Marina Room	Harbour Room	Jetty Room	Beaches Room
Parallel Session 5	5A - Case Study	5B - Case Study	5C - Academic Presentation	5D - Academic Presentation
2:30pm - 3:00pm	<p>Finding Common Ground - the birth of a hyper-local, provider-agnostic outreach program in Cooma, NSW</p> <p><i>Mx Han Worsley</i></p> <p><i>Country Universities Centre Snowy Monaro, and the University of Canberra</i></p>	<p>Enhancing university preparedness through UniPrep: A strategic pathway program for rural, regional, and remote secondary school students.</p> <p><i>Dr Naomi Ryan</i></p> <p><i>UniSQ College, University of Southern Queensland</i></p>	<p>Partners, Not Predators: Using Dialectical Social Exchange Theory to Reconceptualise the Relationship Between Regional University Study Hubs and Higher Education Institutions</p> <p><i>Mr. Ben Archer</i></p> <p><i>James Cook University</i></p>	<p>Addressing the marginalisation and status of rural educators through Quality Teaching Rounds Digital</p> <p><i>Dr Sally Patfield, Laureate Professor Jenny Gore</i></p> <p><i>Teachers and Teaching Research Centre, School of Education, The University of Newcastle</i></p>
Topic Area	Pathways for education	Pathways for education	Strengthening and networking rural education research	Strengthening and networking rural education research
15 minute change over				
Parallel Session 6	6A - Academic Presentation	6B - Academic Presentation	6C - Academic Presentation	
3:10pm - 3:40pm	<p>Advice-seeking relationships in remote schools: A social network analysis on enhancing educational experiences of Aboriginal students</p> <p><i>Dr Tracy Durksen, Dr Claire Galledge, Dr Keiko Bostwick, Dr Kevin Lowe, Dr Annette Woods, Dr Greg Vass</i></p> <p><i>UNSW; University of Sydney; Queensland University of Technology; Griffith University</i></p>	<p>Rural perspectives: How rural school and district leaders view the present and future of rural education</p> <p><i>Dr. Robert Mitchell, Ms. Kriselda Craven, Ms. Evelyn Adams</i></p> <p><i>University of Colorado Colorado Springs</i></p>	<p>The Perennials and Trends of Rural Education Discourses that Shape Research and Practice</p> <p><i>John Guenther</i></p> <p><i>Batchelor Institute</i></p>	
Topic Area	Student engagement, aspiration and motivation	Strengthening and networking rural education research	Strengthening and networking rural education research	
3:40pm - 4:10pm AFTERNOON TEA				

From 6:30pm

CONFERENCE DINNER
Sponsored by UNE

une
University of
New England

Thursday 15 August 2024

from 8:30am Registration and Coffee on arrival

8:55am - 9:00am Day 2 Welcome

9:00am - 10:00am Keynote Presentation

Access and equity through lifelong music education: NSW's regional conservatoriums

Dr Wendy Brooks, *CEO, Young Regional Conservatorium*

David Francis, *President of the Association of NSW Regional Conservatoriums*

10:00am - 10:30am **MORNING TEA**

Room	Marina Room	Harbour Room	Jetty Room	Beaches Room
Parallel Session 7	7A - Academic Presentation	7B - Academic Presentation	7C - Academic Presentation	
10:30am - 11:00am	<p>The Rural Education Experience: Student Perspectives</p> <p><i>Dr. Robert Mitchell, Mr. Daniel Kirby, Ms. Chianna Smith</i></p> <p><i>University of Colorado Colorado Springs (all)</i></p>	<p>Developing Mathematical Self-Efficacy: some tips and traps for leaders and teachers</p> <p><i>Dr Vincent Connor</i></p> <p><i>Catholic Education Diocese of Bathurst</i></p>	<p>Community impact on student aspirations: Space, place and power hierarchies in rural areas</p> <p><i>Dr Leanne Fray, Dr Sally Patfield, Laureate Prof Jennifer Gore</i></p> <p><i>School of Education, College of Human and Social Futures, University of Newcastle</i></p>	
Topic Area	Student engagement, aspiration and motivation	Student engagement, aspiration and motivation	Student engagement, aspiration and motivation	
10 minute change over				
Parallel Session 8	8A - Case Study	8B - Case Study	8C - Case Study	8D - Case Study
11:10am - 11:40am	<p>Cobram Secondary College - A rural school catering for all kinds of minds</p> <p><i>Kimberley Tempest</i></p> <p><i>Cobram Secondary College</i></p>	<p>The Rural Learning Exchange: connecting teachers and students in rural and remote schools to strengthen educational outcomes</p> <p><i>Kathy Eisenhauer</i></p> <p><i>NSW Department of Education</i></p>	<p>Student Experience Survey 2024 Analysis Report</p> <p><i>Kinne Ring</i></p> <p><i>Country Universities Centre</i></p>	<p>Student engagement strategies in remote communities of East Arnhem Land: What works?</p> <p><i>Mr Moe Pourkarim and Mr Ryan Buckley</i></p> <p><i>The Arnhem Land Progress Aboriginal Corporation (ALPA)</i></p>
Topic Area	Student engagement, aspiration and motivation	Student engagement, aspiration and motivation	Student engagement, aspiration and motivation	Student engagement, aspiration and motivation
10 minute change over				

Room	Marina Room	Harbour Room	Jetty Room	Beaches Room
Parallel Session 9	9A - Case Study	9B - Case Study	9C - Case Study	9D - Case Study
11:50am - 12:20pm	<p>The Skills to Navigate</p> <p><i>Mrs Nicole Gray & Mr Aaron Dewhurst</i></p> <p>Country Universities Centre Clarence Valley</p>	<p>Strengthening students STEM engagement through new access to opportunity</p> <p><i>Amy Boulding, Leah Solyum</i></p> <p>CSIRO Education and Outreach</p>	<p>Holistic Regional and Remote outreach at the University of Sydney</p> <p><i>Tyrone Anderson</i></p> <p>The University of Sydney</p>	<p>Wiradjuri Choir case study</p> <p><i>David Shaw</i></p> <p>Wula Gurray (Voices of Change) Choir Orange Regional Conservatorium</p>
Topic Area	Student engagement, aspiration and motivation	Student engagement, aspiration and motivation	Student engagement, aspiration and motivation	Student engagement, aspiration and motivation

12.20PM - 1.20PM LUNCH

Room	Marina Room	Harbour Room	Jetty Room	Beaches Room
Parallel Session 10	10A - Case Study	10B - Case Study	10C - Case Study	10D - Case Study
1:20pm - 1:50pm	<p>Local Links: Country Universities Centre Southern Shoalhaven and TAFE NSW Ulladulla - Working Together to Build a Fresh Vision for Tertiary Education and Vocational Training in the Southern Shoalhaven</p> <p><i>Adam Gowen, Stuart Bellingham</i></p> <p>CUC Southern Shoalhaven & TAFE NSW Ulladulla</p>	<p>Wuyagiba Bush Uni - 7 years on</p> <p><i>Mr Godfrey Blitner, Ms Annette Daniels, Dr Helen Rogers, Ms Andrea Jaggi, Ms Sue Pinckham and Dr Emilie Ens</i></p> <p>Wuyagiba Bush Hub Aboriginal Corporation, Macquarie University</p>	<p>Community-Led Initiatives in Higher Education: A Case Study of the Country Universities Centre</p> <p><i>Danielle Keenan, Kinne Ring, Erin Wrafter</i></p> <p>Country Universities Centre</p>	<p>From little things big things grow: A thriving Community of Practice</p> <p><i>Dr Stephanie Richey, Dr Merete Schmidt, Mrs Melissa Finnen, Dr Linda Jaffray, Dr Robin Krabbe, Dr Pieter Van Dam, Dr Sarah Prior</i></p> <p>University of Tasmania</p>
Topic Area	Connections between industry, education and communities	Connections between industry, education and communities	Connections between industry, education and communities	Connections between industry, education and communities

1 minute change over

Parallel Session 11	11A - Case Study	11B - Case Study	11C - Case Study	11D - Case Study
2:00pm - 2:30pm	<p>The disadvantage of distance. How regional and rural students are less likely to finish year 12 and why Deakin University is imbedding equity outreach into communities.</p> <p><i>Nicky Suter, Tamiaka McLean</i></p> <p>Deakin University</p>	<p>The CUC Vision for the Future of Regional Higher Education</p> <p><i>Chris Ronan</i></p> <p>Country Universities Centre</p>	<p>University Strategy Outcome for Teacher Education</p> <p><i>James McKechnie</i></p> <p>Office of Engagement and Enterprise</p>	<p>Engaging with industry, community and schools to bring real world STEM to life for young people</p> <p><i>Amy Boulding, Becky Solomons</i></p> <p>CSIRO</p>
Topic Area	Connections between industry, education and communities	Connections between industry, education and communities	Connections between industry, education and communities	Connections between industry, education and communities

10 minute change over

Room	Marina Room	Harbour Room	Jetty Room	Beaches Room
Parallel Session 12	12A - Case Study	12B - Case Study	12C - Case Study	
2:40pm - 3:10pm	<p>Regional Health Care Traineeship Collaboration with Aged Care Industry</p> <p><i>Ms Samantha Avitaia, Mr Stephen Lowe</i></p> <p>Regional Campuses, University of Wollongong</p>	<p>Growing our own - A community-centred approach to building a regional health workforce</p> <p><i>Rhys Millington, Ms Kalie Ashenden</i></p> <p>Uni Hub Spencer Gulf - Health Services Coordinator</p>	<p>Empowering Remote Communities through Education: The Roxby Downs Early Childhood Pilot Project</p> <p><i>Mrs Sue Barry Ms Hannah Samson</i></p> <p>Uni Hub Spencer Gulf</p>	
Topic Area	Connections between industry, education and communities	Connections between industry, education and communities	Connections between industry, education and communities	
10 minute change over				
Parallel Session 13	13A - Case Study	13B - Case Study	13C - Academic Presentation	
3:20pm - 3:50pm	<p>Luminosity Youth Summit</p> <p><i>Kate Wood-Foye</i></p> <p>Luminosity Youth Inc (NFP), Charles Sturt University Office of Engagement & Enterprise</p>	<p>Yadha Muru Foundation City Country Partnership</p> <p><i>Professor Leanne Holt, Sean Gordon, Peter Berkley, Cherie Johnson</i></p> <p>Speaking in Colour</p>	<p>Examining the experiences of regional and rural students in an urban university: the role of place and class in pathways to belonging</p> <p><i>Hernan Cuervo</i></p> <p>University of Melbourne</p>	
Topic Area	Connections between industry, education and communities	Connections between industry, education and communities	Connections between industry, education and communities	
3:50pm - 4:20pm	AFTERNOON TEA			
CONFERENCE CLOSE				

POSTER PROGRAM

POSTER 1

Meeting schools where they're at - place-based aspirations outreach in rural primary schools

Mx Han Worsley

Country Universities Centre Snowy Monaro, the University of Canberra

POSTER 2

My Dreaming Track of Knowledge with Community and Elders

Aunty Ellen Mundy, Bronwyn Luff, Emma Stewart, Samantha Avitaia

Djiringonj Community Resource Project, University of Wollongong

POSTER 3

Empowering Regional Youth: A Mentor's Journey with On Course

Ms Isabella Lesslie, Mrs Cath McNiven, Dr Meg Southwell, Mrs Sarah Stephenson

Country Universities Centre Goulburn

POSTER 4

Exploring how the two-way, on-Country 'Bush Uni' model can benefit remote Australian Indigenous higher education

Andréa Jaggi, Dr Helen Rogers

Faculty of Science and Engineering, Macquarie University, Wuyagiba Bush Hub Aboriginal Corporation

01A Academic Presentation

Regional Outreach Model (ROM) of Initial Teacher Education

*Associate Professor Wendy Goff
Department of Education*

The Gippsland region in Victoria, Australia has a unique geographical footprint. It is recognised in the top five Local Government Areas (LGA's) with the greatest proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people (ABS, 2021); the Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA) data recognises large pockets of socio-economic disadvantage across the region; and the unemployment rate was at 4.8% in September 2022 in comparison to 3.5% Nationally (REMPAN, 2023). In this presentation the Regional Outreach Model (ROM) of Initial Teacher Education is introduced. The ROM has been built on two key premises; 1) all children and families, regardless of geographical location, deserve to have highly skilled and qualified educators working with them (and access to tertiary education should not be a barrier to providing this workforce); and 2) nobody should have to leave their home or their place of work to access tertiary education.

The presentation outlines the conceptualisation of the ROM and highlights the importance of 'local knowledge over time' in developing place-based approaches to supporting the upskilling of regional communities. The key innovations of the ROM are presented, including the place-based partnership approach adopted for conceptualising the model, and how this partnership approach contributed to developing local trust and support throughout the Gippsland region. The presentation concludes by outlining the explicit steps that other Universities embarking on their own ROM's might employ in different geographical locations.

Topic Area: Connections between industry, education and communities

01B Academic Presentation

Habitus in the Hallways, Skill Shortages in the Streets: Linking Student Aspirations with Vocational Outcomes in Regional Communities.

*Mr. Ben Archer
James Cook University*

The presentation explores the narratives in schools in regional areas lacking traditional higher educational institutions. A case study methodology focused on the MidCoast Local Government Area of NSW. It establishes a correlation between qualitative survey data from 349 local high school students and quantitative workforce data, highlighting a skill deficit in professions requiring an undergraduate degree. The presentation suggests a direct link between habitus in secondary educational settings and skill shortages affecting regional, remote, and rural communities.

The distinction between a "reproductive" habitus, which aligns with accepting one's social conditions as limiting future possibilities, and a "transformative" habitus, which sees beyond these constraints (Mills, 2008), is particularly relevant within this presentation. The research demonstrates that students with a reproductive habitus may see their path as predetermined, leading to lower aspirations towards higher education and limiting their perceived workforce opportunities. In this presentation, I argue that a transformative habitus can be established by providing access to higher education within regional communities.

The first step in establishing a transformative habitus is to provide viable access to higher education (Ostini et al., 2020; Stone et al., 2022). This can be supported by a whole community approach to enhancing employment opportunities within local businesses for young people undertaking university degrees (Suleman et al., 2021). This case study provides the starting point for a conversation connecting habitus within school contexts and the workforce planning of communities in regional, remote and rural communities.

Topic Area: Connections between industry, education and communities

01C Academic Presentation

Place Based, Community Led Widening Participation: Insights from the Eastern Australia Regional University Centre Partnership

*Erin Wrafter, Chris Ronan
CUC Central*

*Bethany Ross, Sonal Singh
UTS Centre for Social Justice and Inclusion*

*Dr Kylie Austin
University of Wollongong*

Since 2010, the Higher Education Participation and Partnerships Program (“HEPPP”) has been the dominant paradigm in widening participation. The partnerships component of HEPPP was introduced to increase the total number of undergraduate students from low-socioeconomic backgrounds who access and participate in higher education, through partnerships with key stakeholders, including schools, TAFE, and other universities. Whilst HEPPP has facilitated sustained investment in widening participation practice, uncoordinated and often siloed approaches have led to an overconcentration of outreach in metropolitan schools with ‘cold spots’ of activities in geographically isolated communities (Austin, 2022, p.154).

The Eastern Australia Regional University Centre Partnership (EARUCP) is a partnership of 15 Regional University Study Hubs and 23 Universities. EARUCP is a model of place based, community led widening participation, funded by the Federal Department of Education’s Regional Partnership Project Pool Program (RPPPP), which seeks to build sustainable partnerships between universities and Regional University Study Hubs in regional, rural and remote communities, currently underserved by existing outreach initiatives.

As a coordinated model of collaborative partnerships between universities and Regional University Study Hubs, the EARUCP framework is ostensibly, well placed to deliver on the Accord panels’ calls for ‘collaborative consortia-led or regionally networked approaches’ to outreach and widening participation. But is this an effective and sustainable partnerships model?

The EARUCP evaluation is informed by Student Equity in Higher Education Evaluation Framework (SEHEEF) and the UTS Partnerships Engagement Framework. The evaluation is guided two overarching questions: at the community level, in what ways has the program;

- a. Increased expectations for regional, rural and remote students?
- b. Increased the skills of students and parents to navigate higher education?
- c. Developed a culture of learning to nurture existing aspirations?

At the broader program level, what characterises sustainable partnerships between universities, Regional University Centres and communities in widening participation?

The proposed session will introduce the EARUCP program and evaluation framework including preliminary insights from progress reports, partnership evaluation surveys and focus group data.

References

Austin, K. (2022). Standing Side by Side, Looking at the Student': School and university staff perspectives of partnership in the Australian and United Kingdom Widening Participation contexts [Doctoral thesis, University of Wollongong].
<https://ro.uow.edu.au/theses1/1485/>

Topic Area: Connections between industry, education and communities

01D Academic Presentation

Flipping RRR Education using WPR

*Emeritus Professor John Halsey
Flinders University*

Names and naming are crucial, indeed indispensable, to understanding, navigating and negotiating our place and way(s) in the world. At a most fundamental level, the name we are given at or around birth, or the name we choose or have 'gifted' to us by others sometime later, is a profoundly important marker and means of identifying who we are and where and to whom we belong.

Moving from the personal into the realms of public policy and practice, names and naming are also crucial for understanding, navigating and negotiating our place and ways of being in and of the world. As argued by Halsey (2006, p.85) "names are machines which bring certain objects [and issues] into view while displacing or pushing back the prominence of others". Names give things visibility and signal varying levels of priority and purpose. They also signal worth and intent and help to convey what qualifies for serious debate and discussion and by implication, what is of lesser, more marginal or no consequence.

I have worked in education for well over half a century and for most of that time, the challenges, opportunities, policies and practices of Regional, Rural and Remote education (RRRE) have been 'front and centre' during my life as a teacher, principal, senior bureaucrat, academic and consultant. Clearly there have been many changes and some improvements over that period for students, families, teachers and leaders, and others. There are, however, also many ongoing issues and challenges-problems- such as attracting and retaining 'top educators' for/into the most in need RRR schools and communities.

Naming matters. This presentation provides an opportunity to explore the potential impacts for policy and practice of flipping the conventional/traditional way of naming and referencing education in and for regional, rural and remote communities namely, *rural education*, to, *education for and in rural*.

Reference

Halsey, M (2006). *Deleuze and Environmental Damage Violence of the Text*. Ashgate, UK.

Topic Area: Connections between industry, education and communities

02A Academic Presentation

Roadmap to Success: Decoding the Regional Universities Study Hub

Danielle Keenan

University of Technology Sydney

Australian Centre for Student Equity Success

Regional University Study Hubs (RUSHs) are a significant policy initiative that has demonstrably improved access to higher education for equity students in regional, rural and remote Australia. This initiative has notably increased student access, participation, retention, and success in higher education, gaining substantial attention following the recommendation of the Australian Universities Accord Interim Report to expand RUSH nationally. Drawing on preliminary findings from an Equity Fellowship funded by the Australian Centre for Student Equity Success, this presentation examines the key characteristics that contribute to the effectiveness of RUSH in widening participation for equity students.

Topic Area: Connections between industry, education and communities

02B Academic Presentation

Roads to the regions: creating impact through sustained relationships between regional communities and metropolitan universities

*Jindri De Silva, Jacinta Carruthers, Adeline Pandian, and Solest Montgomery
Macquarie University*

The mandate of Australian widening participation (WP) is to address barriers of access and underrepresentation in higher education. These barriers are often amplified for regional schools and students, due in part to geographic distance, and the result of compounding disadvantage from belonging to multiple equity cohorts. The 2021 Reform of Equity Funding identified students from Regional and Remote (RR) Australia as a distinct equity cohort, resulting in many universities adapting their WP strategies. However, this presented unique challenges beyond resourcing for metropolitan universities, including navigating meaningful engagement that centres regional diversity and rejects presumptions of homogeneity across communities.

Framed by Zacharias and Mitchell's (2020) Virtuous Circle of Widening Participation Activities, this paper addresses questions of why and how metropolitan universities can work meaningfully with regional communities, and in doing so, surpass aspiration-raising toward informed decision making. We use a Sydney-based university's RR outreach program as a model to highlight such sustained and strategic engagement, drawing on how school and community partnerships have led to a collaborative, strengths-based model, tailored to regional priorities. Through engaging the same students at various points across their schooling, the temporary, aspiration-raising effects of intermittent activities are augmented to higher education expectation and more considered decision-making. This premise ensures consistent and expected engagement, which builds confidence and trust within the community. We propose that university outreach embedded in community acts as 'disrupters' (Webb et al. 2015) to traditional narratives of regional students' post-school options and enhance conceptualisation and navigational capacity towards a broader variety of possible futures.

References

Webb, S., Black, R., Morton, R., Plowright, S., & Roy, R. 2015. "Geographical and place dimensions of post-school participation in education and work." NCVET. <https://www.ncver.edu.au/research-and-statistics/publications/all-publications/geographical-and-place-dimensions-of-post-school-participation-in-education-and-work>

Zacharias, N., & Mitchell, G. 2020. "The importance of highly engaged school-university partnerships in widening participation outreach." *Student Success* 11(1), 35-45. <https://doi.org/10.5204/ssj.v11i1.1458>

Topic Area: Connections between industry, education and communities

02C Case Study

The 4 Rs - Rural Recruitment, Retention and Recognition

*Ms Kimberley Tempest, Mrs Dianne Ferguson
Cobram Secondary College*

Cobram Secondary College is based on the Murray River. The school itself has grown over 100 students in the last 2 years, recruiting and retaining staff to meet the growth has proved a significant challenge. The general teacher shortage, distance from the city, challenges of housing, childcare and relocating required innovative and creative approaches to ensure that we had staff for the school.

We have created a dedicated role for a person who is responsible for comprehensive induction and mentoring of new and returning staff. This person provides support, classroom observations and runs dedicated and targeted professional development. We also have sourced accommodation that is available to the staff and to preservice teachers.

We have a teacher who is third year out who acts as a 'social director' and looks at introducing the new staff to members of the local community such as sporting clubs and service clubs. We have invested in High Performing Teams to ensure that staff have clarity on organisation and role as well as an opportunity to be active members of the school community. This also involves weekly tracking to enable leadership to ensure that staff are feeling supported and have work life balance. More recently, we have investigated the establishment of in-venue daycare to cater for the childcare needs of our young families.

Thinking outside of the box has enabled us to staff the school in the interim but will continue to work on innovative and creative approaches to attract and retain staff.

Topic Area: Connections between industry, education and communities

02D Academic Presentation

Seeing teachers, schools, and communities as assets for the retention of rural school staff

*Herman Cuervo
University of Melbourne*

Research studies consistently report that rural schools have trouble in recruiting and retaining staff (Department of Education, 2021). Different factors underpin rural staffing shortages, including teachers exiting the profession due to workload pressures and teachers leaving rural posts due to isolation and distance from their family and friends (Australian Government, 2023; Commonwealth of Australia, 2018). This broad range of scholarship on staff shortage can offer a deficit construction of teachers' work by drawing attention to what individuals, schools, and communities lack. This paper shifts the focus of rural teacher retention to why teachers stay. This fresh research perspective offers a change in the deficit narrative of rural schooling by positioning rural schools and communities as assets. Findings point to the myriad and deep connections between individuals, schools and communities and the influence of this relationship on sustaining a quality and committed rural teacher workforce.

Topic Area: Connections between industry, education and communities

03A Case Study

The Power of Exchange

*Ms Linda Adnyana,
Student Life & Community, Curtin University*

*Ms Natalie Nelmes
Geraldton Universities Centre*

Providing equitable access to higher education across rural, regional and remote Western Australia is challenging. WA does not have any regionally headquartered universities (although each WA university has regional presence) but it does now have a network of Regional University Study Hubs (RUSH).

The inaugural WA Regional Higher Education Exchange in March 2024 was designed to address this challenge and potential opportunity, bringing together WA's Universities and the WA network of RUSHs to look at ways to improve access to higher education for regional communities.

Organised by Curtin University, Australian Centre for Student Equity and Success (RUSH Network) and the Geraldton Universities Centre, it provided an opportunity for an exchange of information about the WA RUSH's and their regions as well as the WA Universities and their regional education activities and plans. Workshops developed a shared understanding about opportunities, barriers and solutions for a collaborative approach across aspiration and outreach, pathways, course design and delivery, and meeting WA's workforce demands.

The Exchange was preceded by a deep dive with WA's RUSH's and Curtin University Academic and Professional staff around similar themes. This presentation will explore the power of the Exchange to stimulate interest and ideas with regional stakeholders and the platform created for continued conversations on collaborative projects, fully accessible courses for regional students, research and the resourcing required to lead to better higher education outcomes in WA's RRR communities.

Topic Area: Connections between industry, education and communities

03B Case Study

TUC EduVenture Project

*Mrs Gemma Death, Mr Evan Weller
Taree Universities Campus*

EduVenture is a community-driven project that aims to guide students in making informed decisions about their futures beyond school. This project helps boost students' confidence and fosters growth through equity by listening to community needs and aspirations. This case study explores how EduVenture was established through community collaboration, university partnerships, and navigating the challenges of a socioeconomically disadvantaged area*, all while staying grounded in local opportunities.

EduVenture's foundation is based on a grassroots approach, which aligns the project's goals with the real needs of local students. By partnering with universities, the project has gained credibility and academic insight, resulting in the creation of programs that resonate with students. Student reflection and feedback play a central role in shaping the program's content, ensuring that students' voices and aspirations guide the initiative.

Despite challenges such as overextended career advisors and balancing content, EduVenture's perseverance has led to meaningful partnerships with schools and local industries. These partnerships showcase inspiring stories to build students' aspirations and present them with realistic opportunities.

EduVenture's success demonstrates the power of community-driven change. By listening to the community, collaborating with partners, and persisting through obstacles, the project empowers students to confidently chart their own paths. Mid-project survey results are expected to offer insights into the short-term impact (12 months) of the initiative, reflecting its influence on the local community and its effectiveness in shaping students' futures.

EduVenture's approach is a testament to how communities can come together to light up the future for their youth.

* <https://profile.id.com.au/midcoast/seifa-disadvantage-small-area>

Topic Area: Connections between industry, education and communities

03C Case Study

Growing our Own' Connecting Schools, Employers, Careers and Study Pathways in Regional South Australia

*Ms Anita Kuss, Ms Cate Wuttke, Ms Hannah Samson
Uni Hub Spencer Gulf*

Uni Hub Spencer Gulf's 'Career Partnership' initiative arose from research findings¹, census and employment data and local employer and school engagement, which all reinforced a persistently low level of aspiration and engagement with tertiary education across north and western South Australia which has impacted both skilled workforce and community capacity; and poses an escalating challenge in coming years.

A common set of issues was found to be hampering aspiration and engagement with tertiary education across the region, including:

- a lack of locally relevant career advice, with both schools and businesses lacking time and resources to facilitate useful career activities
- low awareness of the 'hidden careers' available in the region
- increasingly complex and confusing pathways between school-VET-university-work
- irrelevant and uncoordinated marketing and outreach visits by city-based universities

This information formed the basis of Uni Hub's Regional University Study Hubs Partnerships Plan, which will implement the following initiatives:

1. **Annual Career Expos** in each regional centre to showcase the range of careers in the region and the local study options into those careers, with particular focus on areas of workforce shortage in the region and exposing 'hidden' careers.
2. **School and Community Outreach** to small districts across the Eyre Peninsula and Far North to demystify university study and RUC support available.
3. **Industry Immersions and Taster Programs** providing intensive exposure, experiential immersion and skillsets for professional and technical careers in the heavy industry and health/care sectors.

Developing and leveraging partnerships with secondary schools, employers, regional agencies, industry associations and tertiary providers underpins the success of the Partnerships Plan, gaining resource efficiencies and stronger collaboration by stakeholders towards the common goal of 'growing our own' skilled workforce.

¹ 1. King S, Stone C, Ronan C (2022), *Investigating transitions to university from regional South Australian high schools*. University of South Australia, The University of Newcastle, NCSEHE, Curtin University; Country Universities Centre.

Topic Area: Connections between industry, education and communities

03D Case Study

Growth through Equity: A case study focusing on empowering communities through a grassroots campaign (CEF Boot Bash)

*Ms Lisa Carrick, Ms Wendy Mason
Country Education Foundation of Australia*

Country Education Foundation (CEF) has a community-based model, powered by a network of 46 local foundations of dedicated volunteers, who raise funds to support local youth accessing post school education and training.

In this session we will outline our inaugural Boot Bash campaign in our efforts to address education inequity for rural and regional young people. We will share relevant data and insights, our campaign plan to engage local communities at a grassroots level to address the challenge, along with an honest reflection of our learnings and impact.

The Campaign

The Boot Bash was a grassroots campaign held on 15th March. In this session, we will uncover key objectives including:

- Raising the issue of inequity in post-school education participation for rural and regional young people;
- Empowering a community-driven response; and
- Building awareness of the work of CEF and supporting the aspiration of rural and regional youth.

We will step through our data, campaign, engagement tactics to raise the profile of CEF locally and nationally and share the power of harnessing local communities while leveraging national alliances to build awareness and fundraise.

Topic Area: Connections between industry, education and communities

04A Academic Presentation

Half an hour on-line doesn't teach a kid to read!

Dr Karen Peel

University of Southern Queensland

Equitable access to education for students who are geographically isolated and enrolled in distance schooling requires the commitment of the remote education tutor (RET) as the vital link between the student and the teacher. The work of RETs is central to the delivery of distance schooling as they are accountable for the face-to-face supervision and educational support of the students under their care. They act in the government mandated position of a supervisor, yet the research clearly identifies the teaching role of the RET as far more reaching.

The RET needs to be capable and confident to manage the isolated school room, plan and teach follow-up lessons, and effectively communicate with the students and the distance education teachers. Much of the responsibility for the systematic development of basic literacy skills falls on the RET to provide the explicit instruction, modelling and practice. For example, the complex processes involved in teaching reading go beyond what can be provided during the limited time available in the online lessons with the school-based teacher.

To acknowledge this substantive position, it has been recommended that an accredited training pathway be established for home-based education support tutors that formally recognises the RETs' knowledge and skills, provides status and makes the job a more attractive career pathway. In addition, mothers who find themselves in this role would be empowered, through building capacity to better support their children, as they navigate distance schooling. Once credentialing is established for this education sector workforce, possibilities of financial remuneration are strengthened for the families in geographically isolated distance schooling, who already recognise the essential work the RET performs.

Topic Area: Pathways for education

04B Academic Presentation

Impact of Regional Diversity on Higher Education Participation: A Comparison of Two Australian States

*Professor Sharron King;
University of South Australia*

*A/Prof Cathy Stone
University of Newcastle*

This presentation is based on a paper currently under review with AIJRE that compares and contrasts findings from two research studies examining barriers to HE participation in Australia for regional, rural and remote (RRR) secondary school students. It examines the respective findings to analyse the extent to which differences in the states themselves – including their distinctive geography, demography, and educational infrastructure – influence the transition from school to HE for regional students.

It also raises questions about how national HE policy, including funding, is implemented within different regional areas, and the impact of this on the different states and the students within them. The findings reveal interesting and significant differences between NSW and SA in their higher education contexts, in terms of geography, demography and infrastructure. The compounding effects in states such as SA of low incomes, large distances between regional and metropolitan centres, and a scarcity of HE infrastructure outside the capital city, result in different and more pressing challenges than for more populous states such as NSW, with its fewer remote and outer regional areas and the presence of large regional universities with additional local campuses.

We conclude that instead of a ‘one-size-fits-all’ approach, a more nuanced approach to HE policy decisions is needed, one that includes a deeper understanding of opportunities and barriers across states and regions of Australia, with state and federal governments working together to develop targeted, state-focused approaches to widening regional higher education access and participation, including ensuring the availability of necessary infrastructure.

Topic Area: Pathways for education

04D Academic Presentation

Shaping self while being pushed, pulled and shaped at the cultural interface: The post-schooling transitions of Cape York boarding school graduates.

Dr Katrina Rutherford

Jawun Research Centre, Central Queensland University

Year 12 completion is linked to improved job prospects and greater economic, health and wellbeing outcomes (Hart et al., 2017). For remote-dwelling Indigenous youth from Cape York, Queensland, completing secondary school often necessitates leaving Country and kin to attend boarding school. This poses significant challenges and requires compromises with far-reaching implications (O'Bryan & Fogarty, 2020). While the costs and benefits are widely debated (Rogers, 2017), limited research exists into the translation of year 12 completion into outcomes beyond school for these boarding school graduates.

This paper outlines the Grounded Theory component of a broader mixed-methods thesis which explored the process by which graduates navigated their post-schooling transitions and their outcomes beyond completion (Rutherford, 2024). Findings formed a decision-making and enactment model which highlights five conditions that significantly impacted transitions experiences and five strategies graduates utilised to inform transition decisions. This substantive theory challenges mainstream approaches to post-schooling transition planning and support, advocating for reframing of policy and practice to be relevant and inclusive of remote Indigenous students' needs, worldviews and aspirations.

Topic Area: Pathways for education

05A Case Study

Finding Common Ground – the birth of a hyper-local, provider-agnostic outreach program in Cooma, NSW

Mx Han Worsley

Country Universities Centre Snowy Monaro, and the University of Canberra

From bottle-o attendant to barber, flight attendant to HR professional, servo worker to maths teacher. Rural communities across Australia are full of study stories that take more than a few liberties with the classic school to uni narrative. Common Ground is a new program being run by CUC Snowy Monaro in partnership with universities ANU, UC, ACU, and UNE, and RTOs TAFE Cooma and CIT. It aims to change the narrative in Cooma, NSW, to one that sees the true value of higher education by bringing local stories to the fore.

We present this program as an example of how outreach programs can take a hyper-local approach in order to meet the needs of rural communities, who often see tertiary education as irrelevant to their context. As a program targeting adults considering study or supporting others to study, Common Ground stands out against the bulk of widening participation programs targeting school leavers. We suggest that by connecting local stories to study literacy, providers can make impact and connection in a whole-of-community manner, better reflecting the needs of rural Australian communities and the changing HE landscape. This program is part of the Eastern Australia Regional University Centres Partnership (EARUCP) and funded through the Regional Partnerships Project Pool Program (RPPPP); an initiative of the Australian Government Department of Education.

Topic Area: Pathways for education

05B Case Study

Enhancing university preparedness through UniPrep: A strategic pathway program for rural, regional, and remote secondary school students.

Dr Naomi Ryan

UniSQ College, University of Southern Queensland

This presentation outlines a successful partnership between the University of Southern Queensland (USQ) and a rural secondary school. The collaboration focuses on the UniPrep program, an online academic preparation initiative tailored for current secondary students in Years 10-12. UniPrep addresses systemic barriers faced by students from rural, regional, and remote areas, including geographic isolation, socio-economic constraints, and the lack of preparatory courses (Gibson et al., 2022).

The innovative UniPrep program offers a structured pathway through two key courses, each spanning 13 weeks. These courses equip students with essential academic skills and provide a deep understanding of university life. Successful partnerships with rural secondary schools underscore the program's importance. As the guidance officer from the partnership school stated, "UniPrep provides students with peace of mind and the skills needed for success in their chosen tertiary pathways, without these pathway options students in rural and remote areas would find accessing universities more stressful and most likely out of their reach".

Additionally, collaborations exist with Country University Centres (CUCs) whereby local students are studying the UniPrep program and utilising support from the CUC, creating a robust community-university partnership. Through these collaborations, students gain access to academic resources, mentoring, and support networks. This integration reinforces educational pathways and fosters community engagement, crucial for students in dispersed and isolated regions (Stone & O'Shea, 2019).

Topic Area: Pathways for education

05C Academic Presentation

Partners, Not Predators: Using Dialectical Social Exchange Theory to Reconceptualise the Relationship Between Regional University Study Hubs and Higher Education Institutions

*Mr. Ben Archer
James Cook University*

Regional University Study Hubs are community-embedded organisations that support students from regional, remote, and rural communities in accessing a university education in Australia. Each hub is a product of its home community, with local people employed to coordinate the operations of each centre and supported financially by a combination of government grants, corporate sponsorships, and fee-for-service arrangements. Since the Australian Universities Accord, Regional University Study Hubs have become crucial enterprises for enhancing higher education access in regional, remote, and rural areas. However, as universities become more protective over market share, the potential exists that Regional University Study Hubs will become just another complicated stakeholder.

As government funding for public higher education has decreased, competitiveness within the higher education sector has increased. Subsequently, Australian universities are hesitant to collaborate at an institutional level for fear of giving an unintended competitive advantage to a competitor (Hil et al., 2022). The rise to prominence of Regional University Study Hubs presents an opportunity for the higher education sector to gain additional domestic student places from geographically disadvantaged locations. However, the competitive nature of higher education for domestic students means that institutions are more likely to attempt to enter this space on their own if it is cost-effective to do so (Norton, 2019).

This presentation will use Dialectical Social Exchange Theory (Di Domenico et al., 2009) to assist in re-conceptualising the Regional University Study Hub-University partnership. It provides a simple framework through which higher education institutions can collaborate effectively with study hubs and guides how academics can assist in this collaborative arrangement.

Topic Area: Strengthening and networking rural education research

05D Academic Presentation

Addressing the marginalisation and status of rural educators through Quality Teaching Rounds Digital

*Dr Sally Patfield, Laureate Professor Jenny Gore
Teachers and Teaching Research Centre, School of Education
The University of Newcastle*

Progress towards equitable schooling and educational outcomes in Australia has been notoriously slow, with countless reports highlighting stark inequities between rural areas and urban centres. While there has been a plethora of reforms implemented to address such intransigent inequities, many of these position the 'rural' as deficit, deviant or in need of saving, thus normalising disadvantage and erasing the particularities and subjectivities that create different conditions of learning and teaching.

To counter this trend, this paper examines how Quality Teaching Rounds Digital – designed with rather than for rural educators – addresses the misrecognition and marginalisation of rural teaching and learning, grounded in a 'politics of recognition' rather than solely a 'politics of redistribution.' Through two school-based case studies situated in diverse geographical regions of NSW – a remote central school and a small regional primary school – we show how high-quality professional development such as Quality Teaching Rounds Digital can challenge the normative ideals of city life and help to redefine a positive image of rural teachers, their schools and communities.

Topic Area: Strengthening and networking rural education research

06A Academic Presentation

Advice-seeking relationships in rural schools: A social network analysis on enhancing educational experiences of Aboriginal students

Dr Tracy Durksen, Dr Claire Golledge, Dr Keiko Bostwick, Dr Kevin Lowe, Dr Annette Woods, Dr Greg Vass

School of Education, UNSW; School of Education and Social Work, University of Sydney; School of Education, UNSW; School of Education, UNSW; School of Early Childhood and Inclusive Education, Queensland University of Technology; School of Education and Professional Studies, Griffith University

In this study, we explore how social networks in rural schools enable advice-seeking relationships about the learning and school experiences of Aboriginal students. Within Culturally Nourishing Schooling (CNS), a whole-of-school reform project, this study was guided by the research question: What is the nature of the advice-seeking relationships reported by staff at CNS schools? Eight schools were recruited for the broader, mixed-methods CNS project because they have a relatively high population of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander students (M = 30.5%; range = 14% to 50%).

All teaching and non-teaching staff at the four participating schools within rural parts of New South Wales Australia were invited to complete one online survey for this study. The average response rate was 66%. Participants were asked: “In thinking about the learning and educational experiences of Aboriginal students in the past 6 months, who have you gone to with your questions or to talk it out?” In total, 97 participants responded to the survey, with 40 providing details on their advice-seeking relationships (e.g., role, relationship, interaction frequency, purpose, primary reason).

Preliminary findings highlight within-school cultural mentors as considerable enablers in enhancing the learning and educational experiences of Aboriginal students. Quantitative and qualitative methods are providing invaluable variable- and person-centred evidence on what supports genuine cultural inclusion in CNS schools. This study contributes key relational evidence from the four rural CNS schools. Future research aims to identify when a ‘critical mass’ of staff are impacted by the professional learning strategies experienced through the CNS project.

Topic Area: Strengthening and networking rural education research

06B Academic Presentation

Theorising rural space

Susan Hopkins

Monash University School of Curriculum Teaching and Inclusive Education

My PhD project concerns the experiences of rural students as writers within senior English, their 'ways with words' (Heath, 1983) and literate identities, and the implications for English teaching in rural contexts. In this presentation I discuss several key theoretical perspectives that are shaping the way my research approaches ruralities, and consider theories of space in order to develop a perspective on rural realities as socially and spatially constructed. Based on the work of spatial theorists Lefebvre, Massey and Halfacree, this discussion provides an ontological grounding for my research with a focus on heterogeneity and multiplicity. My research is positioned in such a way that it looks beyond the 'metronormativity' (Green, 2013, p. 19) that works to bracket out the rural and is subtly influences much of Australia's education policy and research with 'city-based sensibilities' (Roberts, 2016, p. 52).

Green, B. (2013). Literacy, rurality, education: A partial mapping. In B. Green & M. Corbett (Eds.), *Rethinking rural literacies: Transnational perspectives* (pp. 17-34). Palgrave Macmillan.

Heath, S. B. (1983). *Ways with words: Language, life, and work in communities and classrooms*. Cambridge University Press.

Roberts, P. (2016). *Place, rural education and social justice: A study of rural teaching and curriculum politics* [Dissertation submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, Charles Sturt University.]

Topic Area: Strengthening and networking rural education research

06C Academic Presentation

Rural perspectives: How rural school and district leaders view the present and future of rural education

*Dr. Robert Mitchell; Ms. Kriselda Craven; Ms. Evelyn Adams
University of Colorado Colorado Springs*

This study examines the pressing concerns facing rural school leaders regarding teacher and leader preparation, recruitment, and retention within the broader context of global education challenges. With projections signaling substantial needs for educators worldwide by 2030 (UNESCO, 2016), combined with increasing levels of attrition in leadership roles within U.S. schools, understanding the perspectives of rural leaders is essential. Through the use of an innovative survey that encompassed over half of all rural school districts within one given U.S. state, this research offers a comprehensive analysis of the viewpoints of educational leaders. Findings illuminate key concerns including addressing the needs of underprepared students, supporting those in poverty, and managing assessment demands amidst resource constraints. Ultimately, this research serves as a crucial step towards alleviating the burdens faced by rural school leaders, empowering them to better serve their communities and students. Attendees of this session will be drawn into a larger conversation about the future of rural education and how the emerging shortages of school leaders can be both examined and effectively managed.

Topic Area: Strengthening and networking rural education research

06D Academic Presentation

The Perennials and Trends of Rural Education Discourses that Shape Research and Practice

John Guenther
Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education

Melyssa Fuqua, Hernan Cuervo
University of Melbourne

Susan Ledger
University of Newcastle

Serena Davie
Department of Education Western Australia

Laurence Lasselle
University of St Andrews

Natalie Downes
University of Canberra

For over 30 years, the Journal of the Society for Provision of Education in Rural Australia has reported research and practice discourses associated with rural, regional and remote education, with the aim of impacting policy and practices relating to education in rural Australia. The journal, originally named Education in Rural Australia, commenced in 1991 and, with an increasingly international focus, changed to the Australian and International Journal of Rural Education in 2012. This article critically synthesises the content of the Journal, which includes 500 unique contributions. The articles were placed into an NVivo project and coded using themes derived from word frequency counts. The critical analysis identifies nine perennial themes that appear regularly throughout the 33 volumes: aspiration, success and achievement; community and relationships at the centre of rural education; curriculum, pedagogy and assessment; deficit discourses; equity, rights and justice; parents and family; resourcing and funding; rurality and place, and teacher preparation. In addition, the analysis identifies trending issues, which wax and wane over the Journal's life.

This article highlights the Journal's important and sustained contribution to research evidence for rural education. From the perennial and trending issues, it is possible to see the interconnections and influences between themes, but also the absence of discourses in certain areas that calls for future research.

The analysis has policy implications for education stakeholders, particularly given that some of the concerns raised by the articles in the Journal remain largely unanswered more than 30 years on. This article calls for change and challenges policy makers to address issues that we already know exist and have provided possible solutions.

Topic Area: Strengthening and networking rural education research

07A Academic Presentation

The Rural Education Experience: Student Perspectives

*Dr. Robert Mitchell; Mr. Daniel Kirby; Ms. Chianna Smith
University of Colorado, Colorado Springs*

All rural schools seek to effectively prepare students for the “real world” after secondary school – a challenge that provides both opportunities and challenges for remote schools across the United States and the world. While nearly 20% of all students in the United States attend rural schools, very little original research has been completed to determine the quality of these schools – particularly regarding how well these rural schools have prepared its graduates.

This informative session will provide original research that focuses on the perceptions and outcomes as articulated by six years of graduates from a small, remote, rural school. Further, this session looks to provide insight into areas of both strength and development of smaller rural schools and how schools can bolster academically developed areas and address ongoing challenges of secondary school experiences that graduates perceive as insufficient.

Rural educators and leaders attending this session will be drawn into a critical conversation that examines what works and what does not work in rural schools around the world as told by those most impacted – the graduates of these schools themselves.

Topic Area: Student engagement, aspiration and motivation

07B Academic Presentation

Developing Mathematical Self-Efficacy: some tips and traps for leaders and teachers

Dr Vincent Connor

Catholic Education Diocese of Bathurst

Self-efficacy is a major mechanism in building student agency and motivation. Developing student's perceived self-efficacy and agency in mathematics is known to have a strong impact on building achievement. Based on the research from a doctoral thesis that investigated the reasons for students not participating in the advanced study of mathematics through a comparative study between rural and metropolitan based students. The research gathered survey data that described perceived self-efficacy across a range of mathematical strands, levels of difficulty, and sources from 869 Year 7, 9 and 11 in 6 different schools, These data were further informed by the commentary from 16 teachers, the principals, and the website descriptions of this sample's schools through a mixed-methods process.

As self-efficacy is formed through a triadic reciprocal determinism between personal characteristics, behaviour and environment, it was anticipated that self-efficacy and its sources would differ between rural and metropolitan locations and explain the difference in participation and achievement in advanced mathematics.

Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems were used to explore the environmental influences of student survey data. The outcome of this analysis indicated the drivers of the school were not based on the geolocation but the culture of the school's system, the school's organisation and the focus of the teaching and teachers. Good practice drives good schools, not geolocation.

This presentation identifies some key tips and traps in developing mathematical self-efficacy in secondary students

Topic Area: Student engagement, aspiration and motivation

07C Academic Presentation

Community impact on student aspirations: Space, place and power hierarchies in rural areas

*Dr Leanne Fray, Dr Sally Patfield, Laureate Prof Jennifer Gore
School of Education, College of Human and Social Futures, University of Newcastle*

Lower enrolment in higher education by students from regional and remote areas continues to be categorised as an intransigent policy problem. In higher education equity policy, rural communities are typically treated as homogeneous and static, largely dominated by a metrocentric hierarchy that positions the rural as 'Other' (Gore et al., 2020). In this paper, we examine how communities can have multiple meanings (Visser et al., 2015) as they are constructed and enacted by young people and their families.

To achieve this aim, we draw on survey (n = 329) and interview (n = 135) data from two discrete geographic communities within a larger local government area (LGA). Adopting the idea of heterogeneous space (Visser et al., 2015), we highlight the different interpretations of the same space, tied to history, culture, and power hierarchies (Bright, 2011; Webb et al., 2015) which, in turn, influence how young people see their futures. We illuminate how racial divisions between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians contribute to diverse experiences and voices and demonstrate that people who live in the same geographic location can have vastly different experiences of their communities.

Understanding community influence on student aspirations through the lens of heterogeneous space acknowledges that different interpretations of space can lead to different understandings of the same environment (Visser et al., 2015).

Topic Area: Student engagement, aspiration and motivation

07D Academic Presentation

Grounding nursing education in rural reality: a community embedded approach empowering local learners

*Ms Shannon Weiley, Ms Sharon Laver, Ms Rachel Rossiter & Ms Sharon Laver
Taree University Centre and Charles Sturt University*

Rural undergraduate nursing students encounter personal, financial, environmental and academic hurdles that impede degree completion. Identifying and acknowledging these barriers, and in attempting to address rural health workforce recruitment and retention challenge a rural university campus, in partnership with a regional university, implemented an individualised support model for nursing students residing in the Mid Coast local government area.

This project aimed to explore the perspectives and experiences of Bachelor of Nursing students enrolled at a regional university who have utilised support from a university centre. A qualitative descriptive approach enabled participants to describe their experiences during semi-structured interviews. Conversation focused on being located in a rural area and, utilising the nursing support services available through the rural university centre. From the data two overarching themes were evident: Practical supports enables success, and; Personal support aids 'living, studying and working locally.' Extracts from the interviews further support the development of the themes and will be a feature of the presentation.

Supporting existing literature, a key finding from this project is that the rural university centre is intricately tied to the region, its people, and events and institutions. Participants described individualised resources and spaces provided by the centre, and essentially mitigated the isolation often encountered by distance learners. Multifaceted embeddedness within the rural context underpins a holistic approach to supporting students throughout their academic journey. Ultimately this model effectively enabled academic success, and facilitated increased potential for local recruitment of registered nurses upon degree completion.

Topic Area: Student engagement, aspiration and motivation

08A Case Study

Cobram Secondary College – A rural school catering for all kinds of minds

*Kimberley Tempest
Principal, Cobram Secondary College*

Cobram is a town of approx. 6,500 situated on the banks of the Murray River. The school has a population of 450 students who are presenting with increasingly complex and multiple barriers to education.

Being 50 minutes' drive from the nearest regional centre, and with non-existent public transport, the Cobram Community have limited professional services such as psychology or counselling, and no flexible learning or alternate pathways. The school therefore needs to develop programs to cater to all kinds of minds.

In response to increasing complexity and need since COVID19, the school has commenced two programs designed to re-engage students in learning (the Re-Engagement Program REG) and the other to maintain students' engagement in learning (the Applied Learning Program).

The REG program is designed to meet the student at their point of need and address the barriers to education. For some parents and students, REG has been a game changer, with a number of students now successfully back in full-time mainstream education or working towards it.

The Applied Learning program has won a local award for community involvement and has enabled students to experience success at school and provided them with skills to make meaningful contributions to the community; not only assisting them but also our local economy and workforce.

Principal Kimberley Tempest won the 2023 Colin Simpson Outstanding Secondary Principal Award for establishing new pathways for improved student learning outcomes.

Join Principal Kimberley Tempest as she explains how both programs work and the impact on students.

Topic Area: Student engagement, aspiration and motivation

08B Case Study

The Rural Learning Exchange: connecting teachers and students in rural and remote schools to strengthen educational outcomes

Kathy Eisenhauer

NSW Department of Education | Educational Standards | Educational Support and Rural Initiatives

Ensuring equitable access to high-quality curriculum and resources for rural and remote students remains a challenge. The Rural Learning Exchange program showcases the positive impact of providing sustained support to early career, out of field and isolated teachers in rural NSW public schools. It celebrates and builds on the inherent strengths of rural and remote education which provide a rich tapestry of locally significant learning experiences, incorporating deep connections to community and country.

The Rural Learning Exchange is not just about access; it's about empowerment. By leveraging virtual platforms, we connect rural and remote teachers with a virtual faculty comprising subject specialists. Teachers actively engage in ongoing, targeted professional learning experiences, facilitating professional dialogue and invigorating their passion for teaching. A recent study conducted by Charles Sturt University reported that the program resulted in increased confidence and reduced stress for many teachers, improving pedagogy and student engagement. Central to our approach is the development of high-quality, collaboratively designed resources for teaching, learning, and assessment. These are tailored to the unique needs and contexts of rural and remote classrooms, ensuring relevance and efficacy.

The impact of the Rural Learning Exchange extends beyond the classroom. Connecting students from diverse rural and remote schools, through a common curriculum and assessment program, provides them with a deeper understanding of their performance within a broader cohort, inspiring them to set goals and strive for improvement.

<https://education.nsw.gov.au/teaching-and-learning/curriculum/rural-and-distance-education/rural-learning-exchange>

Topic Area: Student engagement, aspiration and motivation

08C Case Study

Student Experience Survey 2024 Analysis Report

*Kinne Ring
Country Universities Centre*

The Country Universities Centre (CUC) Network is an affiliated model, funded under the Regional University Study Hubs program, with 22 established and emerging Centres across New South Wales, Queensland and Victoria that broaden access to Higher Education in regional, rural and remote Australia. The Student Experience Survey is an essential touchpoint in gathering comprehensive feedback and mobilising student voice to enable the CUC Network to be reflexive to student needs (Kahn et al 2017). The survey is designed to gather feedback across services, facilities and staff.

This presentation will provide an analysis of the Student Experience Survey 2024 results from a macro perspective at the CUC network level and a micro level at the individual CUC and student level. Firstly, to investigate how CUCs respond to student needs based on 3 key areas, including Cohorts, State and remoteness classification (The Department of Education, 2024). This will ensure that the maturity of the CUC, the implications of different state systems, and access to resources are considered when comparing data across the CUC Network. Additionally, the analysis will include student equity groups, modalities, and level of study. This will attempt to understand student sentiment in the engagement with the CUC and their studies. This analysis will be used to inform practice and make meaningful change to improve services in key phases of the student lifecycle including pre-access, access, retention and participation for regional, rural and remote students (Bennett et al. 2015).

Topic Area: Student engagement, aspiration and motivation

08D Case Study

Student engagement strategies in remote communities of East Arnhem Land: What works?

*Mr Moe Pourkarim, Mr Ryan Buckley
The Arnhem Land Progress Aboriginal Corporation (ALPA)*

In the context of isolated remote communities facing barriers to education and training, effective student engagement becomes critical for the success of initiatives like Regional University Study Hubs. This presentation explores strategies to enhance engagement in such challenging environments, focusing on experiences from the ALPA Study Hubs.

Key factors for success identified in this presentation include deep cultural understanding, relationship building, and adopting a service-oriented mindset. These elements are crucial for establishing trust and meaningful connections with stakeholders and students in remote settings.

The presentation will showcase specific strategies that have proven effective in maximising engagement at our Study Hubs. By sharing experiences and insights, the goal is to provide valuable lessons for practitioners and educators working in similar contexts.

Through this presentation, attendees will gain practical knowledge on how to navigate the complexities of remote community engagement. Emphasis will be placed on actionable steps that prioritise cultural sensitivity, relationship development, and a service-mindset approach.

Overall, this presentation will highlight the importance of tailored strategies in fostering successful engagement in remote educational settings. The lessons learned from experiences in East Arnhem Land can serve as a valuable resource for educators and stakeholders seeking to enhance their impact in similar environments.

Topic Area: Student engagement, aspiration and motivation

09A Case Study

The Skills to Navigate

*Mrs Nicole Gray, Mr Aaron Dewhurst
Country Universities Centre Clarence Valley*

The evolving nature of the higher education sector and the future work paradigm demands a rethink of how we engage regional students to maintain their youthful aspirations, before socio-economic compromise and cultural circumscription take hold during mid-adolescence. The My Future CV program focuses on transferable learning and employability skills. By developing student metacognitive awareness of skills and exposing them to a variety of educational and career pathways, the program aims to equip students with the self-efficacy skills to navigate their own future educational and career pathways.

The My Future CV program aims to elevate the aspirations of Stage 3 students in the Clarence Valley. Over ten hours of sessions, participants learn how to match their interests and skills to career pathways which promote participation in higher education. Complemented by a partnership with the University of Wollongong Medical Student Program and Clarence Valley Regional Training Hub, medical students share their expertise and educational journey. The key outcome for the program is to foster and expand students' thinking about the possibilities for future study and post-school options; simultaneously it aims to support teachers in enabling a growth mindset within students to navigate and to pursue, as aligned with the Stage 3 PDHPE NSW Syllabus. In 2024 My Future CV is being delivered to approximately 20 primary schools across the Clarence Valley.

This session will explore the pilot program which took place in 2023, how it guided the focus of the current skills-based focus, and how the findings of the 2024 implementation.

Topic Area: Student engagement, aspiration and motivation

09B Case Study

Strengthening students STEM engagement through new access to opportunity

*Amy Boulding, Leah Solyum
CSIRO Education and Outreach*

For over 40 years, CSIRO Education & Outreach have been developing and delivering high-quality STEM education programs for Australian teachers, students and the community.

Our programs aim to inspire the pursuit of further STEM education among students and the community, to equip the emerging workforce with tomorrow's skill sets, and to strengthen collaboration between industry and classrooms across Australia.

As Australia's national science agency, we measure and evaluate our impact to learn and share what works.

Strengthening students STEM engagement through new access to opportunity

CSIRO's STEM Together Future Shapers is a recognition program that gives young people in Years 5-10, and their supporters, greater access to STEM opportunities.

We use strengths-based, student-centred approaches, and work in partnership with our Future Shapers to design tailored support and opportunities to strengthen their capability, confidence, and connection with STEM.

Future Shapers prioritises opportunities for young people that identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander; girls; those from schools in regional areas; or from schools in lower opportunity areas.

CSIRO's Virtual Work Experience program supports Year 10 and 11 students to undertake work experience remotely, providing opportunities for those who may face geographic or other barriers to participating in traditional work experience. It also allows students the opportunity to experience contemporary ways of working, from home, and with people across geographic boundaries, just as CSIRO scientists do every day.

Through the virtual work experiences, students undertake collaborative, group science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM) projects, including projects linked to real-world CSIRO research and industry challenges.

Topic Area: Student engagement, aspiration and motivation

09C Case Study

Case study

Tyrone Anderson
The University of Sydney

The University of Sydney, Outreach and Access team have sort to optimise their outreach to regional, rural, and remote students in NSW.

In this case study, we look to show our holistic approach which includes:

- In-school workshops
- Consults
- A community evening event
- Inclusion of regional stakeholders
- Inclusion of other university outreach initiatives
- A pathway to future regional outreach opportunities
- On-campus residentials
- Dedicate Regional and Remote admission scheme

We have implemented a dedicated Regional and Remote admission scheme, this case study will look at its impact in addition to our regional outreach activations.

Our work with regional students seeks to provide them with a robust decision-making process for life after high school and this is reinforced with/supported by our evening community event - Meet the University of Sydney regional.

We look at some of the data surrounding our community event and its support for regional parents/carers/guardians as key stakeholders in the lives of the young people we work with.

The evening event is just one activation in our multi-touch point approach to support regional students and we hope to open discussion on its viability in other contexts/regions, and in conjunction with other outreach initiatives.

Topic Area: Student engagement, aspiration and motivation

09D Case Study

Wiradjuri Choir case study

Topic Area:

10A Case Study

Local Links: Country Universities Centre Southern Shoalhaven and TAFE NSW Ulladulla - Working Together to Build a Fresh Vision for Tertiary Education and Vocational Training in the Southern Shoalhaven

*Adam Gowen,
CUC Southern Shoalhaven*

*Stuart Bellingham
TAFE NSW Ulladulla*

This case study examines the collaborative efforts between the Centre Manager of the Country Universities Centre Southern Shoalhaven and the TAFE Services Coordinator at TAFE NSW Ulladulla that have: expanded aspirations and motivations for young people in the Southern Shoalhaven; enhanced pathways to further learning for local First Nations people; and strengthened the collective reach and impact of teams drawn from locally based organisations.

Three distinct collaborations that have been carried out as programs or activities over 2022 and 2023 will be examined. They include: a careers and education showcase at Ulladulla High School; an Aboriginal language course in the local Aboriginal Dhurga language; and a trial program centred around First Nations young people attending Ulladulla High School aimed at providing inspiration, access and opportunity for future employment in aviation related roles.

This non-conventional community approach in Ulladulla provides an opportunity to explore how similar regional and remote communities might leverage better educational outcomes for people in their own geographical footprint through more open collaborations that are focused on community needs rather than on the requirements of larger organisations which necessarily hold power and resources tightly in their organisational vortices.

Topic Area: Connections between industry, education and communities

10B Case Study

Wuyagiba Bush Uni - 7 years on

*Mr Godfrey Blitner, Ms Annette Daniels, Dr Helen Rogers, Dr Kevin Rogers, Ms Andrea Jaggi, Ms Sue Pinckham and Dr Emilie Ens
Wuyagiba Bush Hub Aboriginal Corporation, Macquarie University*

The Wuyagiba Study Hub known locally as the Bush Uni, is based at the very remote Wuyagiba outstation in southeast Arnhem Land, halfway between the Indigenous communities of Ngukurr and Numbulwar, on the western coast of the Gulf of Carpentaria, NT. Wuyagiba outstation is the traditional homeland of the Warndarrang speaking people of the Mambali tribe. The Bush Uni is run by the Wuyagiba Bush Hub Aboriginal Corporation and partners with Macquarie University, the Ngukurr Language Centre, Art Centre and local Ranger groups to create and deliver unique two-way (cultural and academic), accredited,

University Micro-credentials consisting of 4 first year Uni subjects. The Bush Uni provides Indigenous people from remote communities of Arnhem Land with the opportunity to access unique two-way tertiary education on-Country in a culturally supportive environment. Since 2018, 168 Indigenous students have attended the Bush Uni with 32 going on to enroll in studies at Macquarie University in Sydney. In 2023 the first student supported by the program graduated with a Bachelor of Arts (Education), breaking a 36-year University degree graduation gap for Ngukurr community.

The WBHAC employs over 50 Indigenous people from Wuyagiba and surrounding communities in teaching, management, administration and operational roles. Now in its 7th year, the program continues to grow both as an educational institution and a successful business that supports Indigenous people and community development in remote Australia. This model has attracted the interest of other communities and is now being replicated through the Laynhapuy Homelands Aboriginal Corporation run Garrthalala Bush Uni.

Topic Area: Connections between industry, education and communities

10C Case Study

Community-Led Initiatives in Higher Education: A Case Study of the Country Universities Centre

*Danielle Keenan, Kinne Ring, Erin Wrafter
Country Universities Centre*

The Country Universities Centre (CUC), a network of centres funded under the Regional University Study Hub program, has developed a comprehensive equity and inclusion framework to address the unique challenges of operating across diverse populations.

This framework, characterised by its adaptability and focus on place-based, community-led engagement, has the potential to be applied across a wide range of socio-cultural and demographic communities. It not only addresses immediate educational needs but also contributes to broader social change by empowering communities to enhance higher education outcomes.

This presentation will delve into the structure of the framework, its core tenets, and its implementation through case study examples. The principles of the framework intertwine theories of self-determination, student engagement, and transition pedagogy, while the enablers are linked to the CUC's place-based and community-led ethos.

The expected impact of this framework extends beyond the CUC network. It has the potential to serve as a blueprint for other Regional University Study Hubs, enhancing educational outcomes for students and underscoring the idea that communities are best positioned to initiate initiatives that increase access and participation in higher education.

Topic Area: Connections between industry, education and communities

10D Case Study

From little things big things grow: A thriving Community of Practice

*Dr Stephanie Richey, Dr Merete Schmidt, Mrs Melissa Finnen, Dr Linda Jaffray,
Dr Robin Krabbe, Dr Pieter Van Dam, Dr Sarah Prior
University of Tasmania*

Working at a regional university campus has unique challenges, including distance from decision making, resources, and colleagues. These are typically more concentrated in urban centres. However, these factors can also drive innovative models of collaboration and greater community engagement.

From siloed beginnings to seven years strong, the Cradle Coast Academic Community of Practice (CCACoP) is a powerful example of how creative, cross-disciplinary collaboration can support innovation in regional context. Our story began with a need to foster connection among dispersed staff from different disciplines. The CCACoP has grown to be a vibrant, collaborative group that drives innovation in teaching, learning, and research in our region. Comprised of a dedicated group of staff, community members, and local business representatives, we share an enduring commitment to improving the educational experience and outcomes for regional students, educators, and the community.

In this aim, we have embraced a 'team of teams' approach to undertake an empowering program of work, including the provision of research and education seminars, community workshops, and two successful national conferences, which have celebrated regional learning, teaching, research, and community engagement. In a response to the Australian Universities Accord final report, we are developing a symposium to bring together key stakeholders for a community discussion about how we can imagine the future for our region.

In sharing our story, we offer a glimpse into how we have created and sustained a thriving community of practice, overcome the challenges of limited time and resources, and achieved meaningful impact in a regional context.

Topic Area: Connections between industry, education and communities

11A Case Study

The disadvantage of distance. How regional and rural students are less likely to finish year 12 and why Deakin University is imbedding equity outreach into communities.

*Nicky Suter, Tamiaka McLean
Deakin University*

The likelihood of finishing Year 12 and going to university decreases as the distance from a capital city in Australia increases. In 2019 the Deakin University Engagement and Access Program (DEAP) began delivering school outreach activities in regional & rural south-west Victoria, including the Glenelg Shire where only 36% of people have completed Year 12 or equivalent.

The Year 9 FutureME program has been a key initiative where students are connected with industries in their community, explore the future world of work, begin to envisage their career, study pathways, and develop employability skills. In 2023 the successful pilot program of a Health Discovery Day was delivered.

This case study will explore the student, teacher, and industry partner evaluations from the last six years of the FutureME program delivery in the Glenelg Shire, focusing on the impact of connecting young people with industry and their communities, and their aspiration to finish Year 12. Previous research outlines the importance of Year 12 attainment, not only for academic aspirations, but also for health and fiscal reasons (Lamb & Huo, 2017).

The case study will also explore the recommended next stages of the program, to further connect and embed education and industry outreach with a vision to support students' higher education and career aspirations within a regional landscape. In 2024 the Health Discovery Day program will expand with more industry and community partners to deliver key place-based activities, ensuring more regional and rural students can access these key initiatives.

Topic Area: Connections between industry, education and communities

11B Case Study

The CUC Vision for the Future of Regional Higher Education

*Chris Ronan, CEO
Country Universities Centre*

Since establishment in 2013, the CUC has generated transformative community-led change in regional higher education with over 5000 students being supported through 21 Centres across Queensland, NSW and Victoria. The CUC, and Regional University Study Hubs, are a legitimate part of the education system and a critical part of ensuring that regional communities are not left behind. Drawing on the history of the CUC and current Universities Accord policy moment, this session will illustrate the CUC Vision for the future of higher education in regional Australia. It will outline how communities need to lead their own development and how collaboration can nudge the practices of universities across the country for better educational outcomes for everyone in regional, rural and remote Australia.

Topic Area: Connections between industry, education and communities

11C Case Study

University Strategy Outcome for Teacher Education

James McKechnie
Office of Engagement and Enterprise

In 2021 Charles Sturt University undertook the development of its' University Strategy 2030. To formulate the Community driven components of the Strategy several regional stakeholder sessions were undertaken within the University's Campus footprints by the Engagement and Enterprise Office. A stakeholder session was held at the Dubbo Campus and was facilitated by the Campus's Director of External Engagement.

An undercurrent of the session was the idea or concept of a "traineeship or apprenticeship" in Primary and Secondary Teacher Education. The complexities of this concept were evident and the discussion ever evolving during this first discussion, however the seed was directly sown that somehow the University needed to do more investigation in this area, particularly as a leading regional online higher education institution.

It was decided that a small group of stakeholders (local School Principals) would continue to meet in Dubbo with the University whilst the University looked at its capability and course profile in Teacher Education. During these on-going discussions a common thread kept emerging :- Teacher Aides are a nursery of future teachers, and has enough been done to date to give these people opportunity and support to become Teachers.

The outcome of this Community engagement is the University's Collaborative Teaching Aide Pathway (CTAP). This Teaching Pathway that has resulted in 600 plus enrolments over the first two years of operation. The enrolments have also been achieved hand in hand with several Government Grant Programs not the least being the NSW Education "Grow your Own" Program. CTAP is growing and evolving each month as it is adapted to continue to increase the number of the University's Teaching Graduates.

Topic Area: Connections between industry, education and communities

11D Case Study

Engaging with industry, community and schools to bring real world STEM to life for young people

Amy Boulding, Becky Solomons
CSIRO

For over 40 years, CSIRO Education & Outreach have been developing and delivering high-quality STEM education programs for Australian teachers, students and the community.

Our programs aim to inspire the pursuit of further STEM education among students and the community, to equip the emerging workforce with tomorrow's skill sets, and to strengthen collaboration between industry and classrooms across Australia.

Working in partnership with schools and teachers, industry, community, and young people, our programs support the development of a more diverse and inclusive STEM talent pipeline. As Australia's national science agency, we measure and evaluate our impact to learn and share what works.

Engaging with industry, community and schools to bring real world STEM to life for young people

CSIRO's STEM Professionals in Schools facilitates flexible, ongoing partnerships between science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) professionals and teachers in schools across Australia.

We individually match teachers and STEM professionals so they can work together to increase teachers' and students' STEM skills, knowledge and confidence through a range of activities. Each partnership is unique as the partners determine what works best for them based on their combined expertise, the curriculum or student needs, and their availability.

Outside of schools, CSIRO's STEM Together facilitates Local Connection Pilots, aimed at connecting and strengthening local industry and community group's ability to support the growth of young people's capability, confidence, and connection in STEM. This is achieved through providing education and mentorship to support local design and delivery of impactful STEM engagement opportunities.

Topic Area: Connections between industry, education and communities

12A Case Study

Regional Health Care Traineeship Collaboration with Aged Care Industry

*Ms Samantha Avitaia, Mr Stephen Lowe
Regional Campuses, University of Wollongong*

The University of Wollongong (UOW) regional campuses in Bega Valley and Southern Highlands NSW have forged connections with local industry, co-designing a program to address the rural staffing crisis.

The Health Care Traineeship Program launched in Bega in 2022 as a collaboration with Sapphire Coast Community Aged Care (SSCAC) providing paid trainee places and staff mentorship. UOW College developed a cohort-based Certificate IV in Ageing Support with flexible delivery combining on-campus study with on-the-job skills training.

Seven students completed the one-year pilot and were retained by SCCAC as employees. With subsequent intakes, the program in Bega has enrolled 23 students (30% Indigenous) with 17 already graduated.

Following the success of the pilot, UOW reached out to the aged care industry in the Southern Highlands, launching a local version of the program in 2023. So far 19 (16% Indigenous) students have enrolled, with 10 completed and remain working with partners Harbison and Warrigal.

The program provides guaranteed admission into the UOW Bachelor of Nursing, enabling students to gain further qualifications while remaining employed. Connection with industry has been strengthened through provision of short training courses to upskill current staff.

The Traineeship is offered fee-free under the NSW Government Smart and Skilled funding, and the students earn an income through a minimum of 21 hours' employment with an industry partner. Feedback from industry across both regions is that this, together with the program design incorporating on-site skill development and mentorship, has been very successful in bringing in, and retaining, new employees into the aged care sector.

Topic Area: Connections between industry, education and communities

12B Case Study

Growing our own - A community-centred approach to building a regional health workforce

Ms Kalie Ashenden

Uni Hub Spencer Gulf - Health Services Coordinator

In regional and remote South Australia, the Spencer Gulf, Yorke and Eyre Peninsulas, and Roxby Downs communities recognise industry-relevant tertiary education is critical to regional workforce. Current and projected ongoing shortage of healthcare staff in the region is identified as a critical priority.

Uni Hub Spencer Gulf initiatives are designed to meet the workforce needs of the region, and are informed by community, industry, and health services feedback. Since Uni Hub opened in 2019, 16 local social work and nursing students have graduated and commenced work in regional health services. Over 100 local students supported by Uni Hub are currently enrolled in health-related degrees, Trends indicate an additional 10 mental health professionals, and 60 registered nurses will join the local health workforce by 2027. Workforce summits co-hosted by Uni Hub have highlighted regional growth, and the impact of these demands on local healthcare.

This presentation will discuss the strategies Uni Hub engages to support growth in the local health workforce, and detail dedicated support provided to students. Collaboration with schools and health providers increases community awareness of local study options, for either upskilling or new entry into regional health.

Lessons learned will be shared, including the impact of responsive partnerships with health services, ongoing communication and advocacy, and a flexible approach to pathways into the health workforce. Insights can inform programs aiming to ensure a sustainable pipeline of local, qualified, healthcare staff.

Topic Area: Connections between industry, education and communities

12C Case Study

Empowering Remote Communities through Education: The Roxby Downs Early Childhood Pilot Project

*Mrs Sue Barry Ms Hannah Samson
Uni Hub Spencer Gulf*

Summary: Roxby Downs, a remote mining town in South Australia, experienced a critical shortage of qualified Early Childhood Educators significantly impacting access to early intervention programs for children, community stability and broader economic growth. The Roxby Downs Early Childhood Pilot Project, initiated by Uni Hub Spencer Gulf in collaboration with BHP, Roxby Downs Children's Centre, and Central Queensland University was implemented to address workforce shortages, improve access to training for regional, remote and rural communities. Together these partnerships have addressed the challenges through accessible online learning, wrap-around support, and on-the-job training, providing a point of connection to higher education pathways and workforce opportunities.

This initiative specifically designed to immediately address workforce shortages at the Children's centre, has a long-term goal to connect the broader community with education and career pathways. By providing connection to qualifications in Early Childhood Education and Care, a workplace to put theory to practice and holistic support to succeed, the project has enabled community members to diversify their skill sets, support community growth and provide inspiration for those looking to change their pathway.

Key outcomes include enrolment of ten participants into Certificate III in Early Childhood Education & Care, with six securing full-time employment, significantly reducing staffing shortages, childcare wait times, enabling broader community workforce participation and economic growth.

The Roxby Downs Early Childhood Pilot Project exemplifies how targeted educational initiatives can transform remote communities by enhancing local capacity serving as a replicable model for similar regions seeking sustainable workforce solutions.

Topic Area: Connections between industry, education and communities

13A Case Study

Luminosity Youth Summit I

*Kate Wood-Foye
Charles Sturt University*

Luminosity Youth Summit is a dynamic national two day forum uplifting young people to explore dangerous ideas for success. The event ignites creativity, excellence and entrepreneurship and fosters purpose and well-being amongst young people aged 15 - 25.

Luminosity continues to communicate that anything is possible, that there are many paths and opportunities for success. With the help of community, industry and service organisations across the last 11 years this nationally recognised, volunteer powered, Not-for-Profit summit has pursued growth through equity and inspired over 4000 young people- particularly those from regional and remote Australia, giving them the equal access to a unique forum to engage, motivate and inspire confidence to become leaders of tomorrow.

Delegates are from a diverse group of young people from regional and rural areas from a wide variety of social, economic and cultural backgrounds. Through the inspiring stories and experiences shared, they are encouraged to create action plans for success to move into adulthood, life and careers with passion, social conscience, innovation and enterprising ideas. High profile presenters and local business leaders come together from across Australia and the world to engage young attendees in keynotes, workshops, presentations, masterclasses and interactive sessions.

At the core of the Luminosity mission is provide regional youth equal access to national and international high profile speakers, hands on workshops, experts and thought leaders to facilitate to change in the hearts and minds of young regional delegates. Speakers, panels and facilitators clearly communicate that your academic ability, postcode, financial background or ethnicity do not determine your trajectory for success. Significant in kind and financial contributions from industry, community and service organisations enable the delivery of this unique and high quality forum to rival that of metropolitan centres.

This high energy life changing program has now become a right of passage for many regional young people and continues to lead the way, being single minded in the pursuit of equity and access, achieving growth through equity through the creation of a unique platform to engage, inspire, challenge and encourage young people in regional and remote communities to excel in their chosen journey.

The summit was designed to remove the roadblocks experienced by regional and remote youth who are not able to access the same opportunities to attend youth development experiences such as their metro peers.

The dynamic and exciting two day format consists of over 25 speaker and facilitator delivering main stage magic via keynotes, hands on masterclasses, panels, social events and youth expo. The event directly links regional and remote youth with thought leaders from every walk of life, as they shared their stories, skills and strategies to achieve success.

Our key focus is to provide regional youth equal access to global thought leaders to facilitate to change in the hearts and minds of young regional delegates. The unique collaboration of community, industry and education enables a platform inspires and uplift young regional leaders to go forward with courage and curiosity to identify their passion and take steps to create a lasting and meaningful impact in their own lives, careers and our community.

Topic Area: Student engagement, aspiration and motivation

13B Academic Presentation

Yadha Muru Foundation City Country Partnership

*Professor Leanne Holt, Sean Gordon, Peter Berkley, and Cherie Johnson
Speaking in Colour*

This presentation addresses the aspirations for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children to have the same opportunities and choices as other Australians. The goal is for these children to achieve educational success, economic prosperity, and long, healthy lives while retaining their distinct cultures, languages, and identities. We posit that education is the key mechanism through which Indigenous leaders can gain the skills, capabilities, and confidence to navigate both their cultural heritage and mainstream society. We explore the role of education in empowering Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, emphasising the importance of high-quality education in fostering development and growth for students.

The focus is on the City Country Partnership program, managed by YMF over the past twelve months. We will share insights and the impact of these innovative educational models, highlighting their contribution to realising the full potential of Indigenous children and promoting their thriving and fulfilling lives.

Reference

Empowered Communities (2015). *Empowered Peoples Design Report*. National Indigenous Australians Agency.

https://www.niaa.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/publications/empowered_communities_report.pdf

Topic Area: Student engagement, aspiration and motivation

13C Academic Presentation

Examining the experiences of regional and rural students in an urban university: the role of place and class in pathways to belonging

Hernan Cuervo

University of Melbourne

The aim of this paper is to examine the experiences of youth from regional and rural areas in an urban university. We are interested of how their experience is shaped by the institution, as well as how students' rural subjectivity and identity fits, adapts or is challenged in this environment. Drawing on 23 semi-structure interviews with undergraduate students, we examine the identity work that students, some of them also from a low socio-economic status background, have to do to negotiate new institutional values, norms and discourses, and relationships. We found that social class and place play a distinctive role in regional and rural students' construction of belonging in a new and alien space. Our findings point out that students from a regional and rural background have to often recalibrate their sense of place and identity, including overcoming social class barriers that often "differentiate" them from the broader cohort of students.

Topic Area: Student engagement, aspiration and motivation

P01 Poster Presentation

Meeting schools where they're at – place-based aspirations outreach in rural primary schools

Mx Han Worsley

Country Universities Centre Snowy Monaro, the University of Canberra

CUC Snowy Monaro presents this poster summarising the results of an "Illustrator Competition" run with local primary schools. After hour-long aspiration sessions, students illustrated their career aspirations, some of which were published in a children's book available online and in local libraries.

Despite prior lack of engagement and teacher shortages, the program was highly successful, and is now being utilised as a program blueprint in other university and CUC settings. Insights generated through the 450 participating children are also guiding the work done in these local schools to support existing aspirations and encourage family and community involvement in the student journey. This place-based approach is markedly different to that which is often delivered solely by external providers, and moves away from the deficit view of "Raising aspirations" that has long been theoretically eschewed, but continues to permeate the widening participation space in Australia.

This program will be the basis of a research project conducted in 2024-25 by the University of Canberra and the CUC Snowy Monaro. It exemplifies the importance of universities fostering connections with schools and communities, leading to the exchange of ideas and resources.

Topic Area: Student engagement, aspiration and motivation

P02 Poster Presentation

My Dreaming Track of Knowledge with Community and Elders

*Aunty Ellen Mundy, Bronwyn Luff, Emma Stewart, Samantha Avitaia
University of Wollongong*

Djiringanj Community Resource project

Our poster reflects a collaborative community project with local Djiringanj Elders, Aboriginal community members and UOW staff envisioned to create a culturally safe space from the entrance of the UOW Bega Valley campus in rural NSW. Initially the project's objective was to engage a local Aboriginal Djiringanj Artist to create an artwork that would be used as a door decal for the front door of the campus. After consulting, listening and learning from Aunty Ellen Mundy, Local Elder, and artist Bronwyn Luff about the sacred cultural significance of the Bega region we collectively decided to create a larger scale project which developed over 18 months.

The entire UOW Bega front window entrance now displays an original Djiringanj artwork depicting the cultural significance of the Bega Valley, with sunlight filtering through the artwork similar to a ledlight window more than 4.5metres in width and 2.5metres high. A large display panel was also installed at the entrance that shares the story of the artwork, 11 local Djiringanj language words and QR link to a UOW website with language recordings.

Our poster depicts the artwork, cultural symbols, language resource and also maps the project journey undertaken by the collaborators.

Topic Area: Connections between industry, education and communities

P03 Poster Presentation

Empowering Regional Youth: A Mentor's Journey with On Course

*Ms Isabella Lesslie, Mrs Cath McNiven, Dr Meg Southwell,
Mrs Sarah Stephenson
Country Universities Centre Goulburn*

On Course is an outreach program facilitated by university mentors, targeted to Year 10 students in the Goulburn Mulwaree and Upper Lachlan regions. The program will build local community capacity to mentor young people, grow aspirations for higher education, validate the choice to study at university while remaining regional, and highlight the unique strengths that regional young people can bring to higher education. This initiative is led by the Country Universities Centre (CUC) Goulburn in collaboration with the University of Wollongong, the University of Canberra, and the Australian National University, as part of the Eastern Australian and Regional Universities Centres partnership with funding from the federal government.

This poster delves into the firsthand experience of a university mentor tasked with delivering the On Course program to Year 10 students across four local high schools. Throughout their journey, the mentor navigates challenges, celebrates successes, and witnesses firsthand the transformative impact of mentorship on young minds. The mentor's narrative sheds light on the multifaceted nature of the program and its ripple effects within the community. Through reflective insights and anecdotes, the poster illuminates the mentor's role within the program, inspiring students to embrace their potential and pursue higher education pathways. Moreover, it underscores the program's commitment to empowering mentors in their own pathways, and in contributing to the future of their own communities.

Topic Area: Pathways for education

P04 Poster Presentation

Exploring how the two-way, on-Country 'Bush Uni' model can benefit remote Australian Indigenous higher education.

Andréa Jaggi

Faculty of Science and Engineering, Macquarie University;

Dr Helen Rogers

Wuyagiba Bush Hub Aboriginal Corporation

In 2024, the Australian Universities Accord made a commitment of achieve 'participation parity' of historically underrepresented cohorts in the tertiary sector by 2050. This has prompted a refocus towards regional strength-based, collaborative programs that privilege local voices. Such programs, rely on endogenous, 'bottom-up' approaches that empower Indigenous communities to utilise strengths, and respond to identified needs and aspirations.

The success of the Wuyagiba Bush Uni in remote south east Arnhem Land, as a two-way, on-Country higher education program, has gained the attention of those looking to provide equitable, community driven, remote higher education opportunities for Australian Indigenous people. Earlier in 2024, funding of a second Bush Uni, the Garrthalala Bush University Study Hub in remote north east Arnhem Land, was announced by the Australian Government Regional University Study Hubs program, increasing opportunities for students to remain connected to Country and culture while gaining useful Western skills.

Here, we present a collaborative research project between Macquarie University and the Wuyagiba Bush Hub Aboriginal Corporation, exploring how the 'Bush Uni' model can benefit remote Australian Indigenous higher education. We aim to communicate the importance of collaborative methodologies and how this has informed the development of the research project. The culturally-grounded research will provide valuable insight into how the 'Bush Uni' model can be strengthened and utilised by other communities to improve higher education access and success for remote living Australian Indigenous students.

Topic Area: Pathways for education

