

Executive Summary

I am pleased that the Interim Report of the Australian Universities Accord asks that equity and accessibility, especially for those who are disadvantaged, be prioritised in reforming the higher education sector.

In particular, I point out priority one, in its objective to extend visible, local access to tertiary education via the establishment of tertiary hubs as a crucial step towards making our nation, and our people, ready for the challenges that lie ahead.

In my electorate of Spence, statistically one of the most disadvantaged in the country in this context, a survey was conducted inviting community feedback regarding priority one of the interim report.

It asked residents from our community what the socioeconomic barriers are on the ground, whether a tertiary hub is desirable in trying to bridge them, and what a tertiary hub ought to look like in an outer metropolitan community such as Spence.

According to the survey results, our community faces significant obstacles towards higher education in the form of cost, distance and a lack of local support, there is overwhelming support for the establishment of a tertiary hub to mitigate these issues, and that a tertiary hub would need to be a versatile, supportive study space for all higher education students regardless of individual interests and circumstances.

Overcoming Barriers to Study

A Tertiary Study Hub model conceptualised in the first priority action, based on the data used to support it as well as community engagement in my electorate, can be essential for people wanting to attend University. Potentially, the significant barriers preventing access to tertiary education in disadvantaged communities can be greatly reduced in their significance.

This priority action has the capability to engage potential students from significantly disadvantaged backgrounds, including first nations people, people in low socioeconomic areas and students with a disability.

However, what needs to be addressed in greater detail is the function of the proposed Tertiary Study Hubs in outer metropolitan areas. These Hubs must link effectively with local high schools and TAFE centres to present opportunity and pathways for all students, regardless of their intended or ongoing higher education programs. Each entity should also have a dedicated body charged with this engagement.

With a disproportionately high amount of early school leavers in Spence, a Hub should be desired by local schools to engage with them.

It is my opinion that the Hubs need to be more than just another study space. It needs to be incentivised for universities to provide resources so academic study can be achieved at a level not dissimilar from an institution's main campus. It should have support from both educational and administrative staff to assist its students utilising

the hub. It needs facilities tailored to the specific needs of students in higher education programs to ensure any new form of access is one that is comprehensive.

I recognise that such ambitions require significant investment and partnership with established institutions. However, if we are to meet the needs of Australia's future workforce, and prevent communities like Spence being left behind as our industries and occupations rapidly change, it is essential.

Through a dedicated tertiary hub located where assistance is needed most, barriers such as distance to a university, associated travel costs and the ability for students to financially support themselves while studying can be significantly reduced. In turn, the disadvantages faced in our community can be partially mitigated, and student enrolments will be much more likely to increase within Spence, aligning with the national objectives of the accord.

Community Statistics

Level of highest educational attainment

People aged 15 years and over	Spence	%	South Australia	%	Australia	%
Bachelor Degree level and above	14,108	9.5	335,213	22.7	5,464,631	26.3
Advanced Diploma and Diploma level	10,352	7.0	127,698	8.6	1,946,738	9.4
Certificate level IV	5,933	4.0	52,930	3.6	719,425	3.5
Certificate level III	24,760	16.7	206,490	14.0	2,617,766	12.6
Year 12	24,706	16.7	224,573	15.2	3,104,116	14.9
Year 11	16,002	10.8	128,350	8.7	958,803	4.6
Year 10	18,466	12.5	139,299	9.4	2,086,306	10.0
Certificate level II	191	0.1	1,021	0.1	13,687	0.1
Certificate level I	48	0.0	194	0.0	2,614	0.0
Year 9 or below	14,708	9.9	111,696	7.6	1,490,444	7.2
Inadequately described	3,066	2.1	34,612	2.3	506,259	2.4
No educational attainment	3,538	2.4	12,943	0.9	175,844	0.8
Not stated	12,156	8.2	103,153	7.0	1,694,773	8.2

As can be seen from the 2021 Census data, 9.5% of people in Spence have attained a Bachelor level degree, with a percentage of 26.3% nationally.

Significantly higher percentages of people in Spence have a year 9 educational ceiling compared to the rest of the nation, additionally more than double have not gone past year 11 compared to the national average.

More concerning is that: "It is projected that over the next five years, 90% of new jobs will require post-school qualifications, with over 50% requiring a bachelor degree or higher".

In addition, the current percentage of university or higher education enrolments in Spence is at 10.1%; this compared to a national percentage of 15.4%.

As it stands, Spence will fall further behind should the future findings in the accord come to fruition, demonstrating even greater need for more accessibility towards the sector in our community.

Survey Analysis

A Survey was conducted in the Electorate of Spence to determine community views on Tertiary Education. The following questions were asked:

1. What are some barriers towards attaining a tertiary education living in our community?
2. Would you support a Tertiary Study Hub?
3. What do you think should be included in a Tertiary Study Hub?
4. Are there any other measures you believe the Government should focus on regarding higher education?

An evaluation of responses to **Question 1** demonstrated that largest barriers to tertiary education in our community are: financial concerns, distance and transportation, language and social barriers, and the lack of local facilities and resources.

Responses to **Question 2** found an overwhelming majority supported the Tertiary Study Hub model.

Just some of the responses to **Question 3** include: access to lectures, high speed internet, study spaces, supportive resources, particular courses, access to textbooks, lecturers on site, administrative support and “a bite sized version of what they have at the uni’s in Adelaide”.

Respondents to **Question 4** highlighted concern with 50% pass rate rule and its ability for entrenchment of inert-generational poverty, support for disadvantaged students and the need for financial assistance.

The survey responses are supplied in an additional attachment in full with respondents personal information redacted.