

29 September 2023

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Suburban University Study Hubs

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Implementing Suburban University Study Hubs Consultation Paper

The City of Armadale (the City) welcomes the opportunity to review and comment on the *Implementing Suburban University Study Hubs Consultation Paper* and commends the efforts and investment by the Federal Government to introduce Suburban University Study Hubs.

The City looks forward to working with the Department of Education to consider securing a Suburban University Study Hub in Armadale as there is a clear and immediate demand for the provision of higher education within our region, given Armadale's rapid population growth and limited provision of tertiary education opportunities.

Strategically located in the Perth Metropolitan South East corridor, the City of Armadale consistently continues to be one of the fastest growing local government areas in Western Australia and in the country. On average, 8 new residents move into Armadale every day. The City's population is now more than 100,000 residents with a 3.2% increase from the previous year. We are expecting to grow to more than 148,000 residents in the next 20 years.

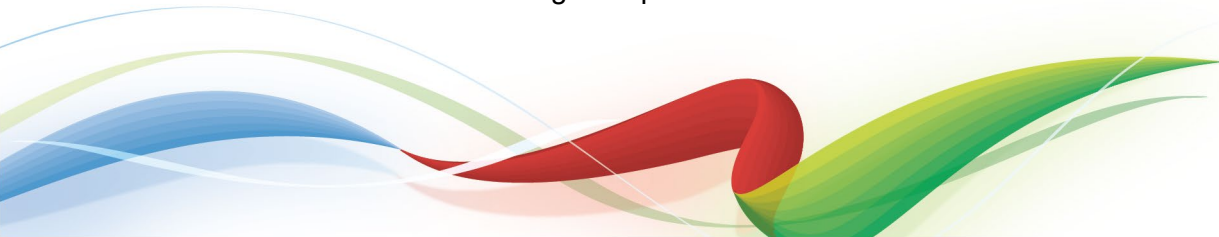
Armadale consists of 20 suburbs with 29 Primary Schools and 14 Secondary Schools with no university presence nearby unlike other metropolitan centres in WA. There are a large number of young adults and families moving into the region requiring access to education and training. The population of residents aged 20 to 24 is expected to increase by 59% by 2041, with those aged 25 to 29 expected to grow by 46%.

One of several reasons why the City of Armadale is interested in advocating to secure a Suburban University Study Hub is to help addressing social disadvantage that continues to challenge some parts of our community. Armadale consistently scores lower than other local government authorities in the Australian Bureau of Statistics' (ABS) Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA). High levels of unemployment and housing stress, domestic violence, substance abuse, youth disengagement and lower levels of education are intergenerational challenges that some parts of our community experience.

With imminent population growth ahead of us, the Cities of Armadale, Canning and Gosnells, and the Town of Victoria Park in WA have formed the South East Corridor Councils Alliance (SECCA) This is a strategic group of Councils with the purpose of advocating for more investment and development for the South East Metropolitan region which forecast population growth across this corridor of more than 500,000 residents in coming years.

State policy estimates that approximately 100,000 more jobs will be needed in the South East corridor to support the predicted population growth. Training, education and workforce development are essential to foster this job growth, however access to tertiary education opportunities is lacking.

Additionally, the City is an active member of the National Growth Areas Alliance (NGAA), the peak body for local governments in Australia's outer metropolitan growth areas which advocates to State and Federal Governments on growth area challenges and opportunities. NGAA will be also submitting a response on behalf of its members to the *Consultation Paper*.



Consultation Questions

1. How can a place-based approach be fostered, as part of the Suburban University Study Hubs program, that ensures the voice of local communities is integrated in their design and operation?

- A place-based approach can be fostered by making evidence-based multi-criteria evaluations and decisions, where local governments, particularly those facing rapid population growth, must be considered as a priority. For this instance, members of the NGAA are those suburban local government areas that are often the most disadvantaged in terms of access to higher education due to limited linkages to transport options. This results in having to travel long distances using an array of transport types, many for the same trip, to access physical education institutions.
- Consideration of the Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA) during decision making would highlight those suburbs with the greatest need for investment. For example, Armadale City Centre and some of the City's older suburbs face far higher levels of disadvantage than other more established inner-city local government areas. The City's newer suburbs also face challenges as there can be a gap between population growth and investment in infrastructure and services.
- A multi-criteria approach can assist in finding those communities with the greatest need. Criteria could consider levels of population growth, forecast population, population demographics, age and local levels of education, distance from-to university campuses, other infrastructure projects taking place e.g. railway line upgrades, access to main transport routes and SEIFA index.
- Direct and consistent engagement with Local Governments is essential to ensure the voice of local communities is integrated in the design and operation of Suburban University Study Hubs.

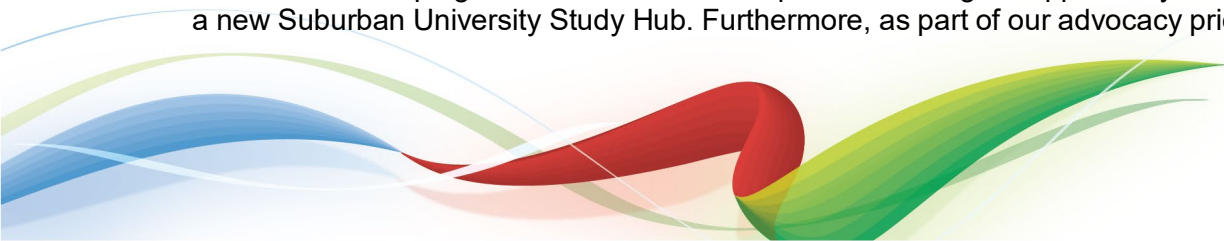
2. How can the Suburban University Study Hubs widen participation and support and extend further study opportunities, adding to existing or planned investments?

The proposed hubs can widen participation if situated in strategic locations such as suburban metropolitan areas, close to public transport within a city centre environment offering easy access and a range of additional services.

Additionally, Suburban University Study Hubs should be placed in areas that service a wider community. For example, Armadale City Centre is strategically located to service the growing population of WA's growing South East corridor which will service more than 500,000 residents in coming years in the outer Perth Metropolitan region, where the closest university campus is more than 22km away with no further university campus further south of the region. As more families and children move into Armadale, the demand for education and training is continuing to increase.

Study Hubs can add to existing and planned investments if they are placed within established strategic metropolitan centres with a pipeline of infrastructure projects. For example, the transformation of our City Centre is underway with a new \$89 Million Courthouse and Police Complex near completion and a new \$39 Million TAFE Campus under construction. The WA Government is also investing more than \$600+ Million in the Byford Rail Extension which includes the elevation of the railway line and the redevelopment of the Armadale Railway Station, providing easy access to the City Centre.

These transformational projects are currently underway with the City of Armadale also working towards redeveloping its Civic Precinct which provides a tangible opportunity to accommodate a new Suburban University Study Hub. Furthermore, as part of our advocacy priority projects,



the City is advocating to secure a new inner-city health and medical precinct in the form of a public and private hospital.

The addition of a Suburban University Study Hub in the Armadale City Centre, apart from addressing the lack of tertiary education opportunities, will also help increase density, diversify land use, increase investment in infrastructure and services, and will help rejuvenate the area.

It is important to know that by 2041, Armadale's school-aged population of 5 to 19 years is expected to increase by 9,714 (46%) with over 15,000 primary and secondary students. Armadale has a number of educational facilities including 29 primary schools and 14 high schools with 8,000 tertiary and independent aged students in the region. There is a strong demand for tertiary education in the Armadale region in addition to commercial opportunities for supporting businesses to the education and training industry.

The Western Australian Government has recognised the lack of opportunities for higher education and training in the region, therefore the WA Department of Training and Workforce Development is currently building a \$39 Million five storey state-of-the art new inner city TAFE campus due for completion in 2025, to coincide with the revitalisation of our City Centre.

3. How can equity be embedded into the design of Suburban University Study Hubs?

Equity can be embedded by incorporating Study Hubs within existing infrastructure and/or redevelopments, with investment taking place in the region instead of designing the hubs in isolation. This would help to provide active and vibrant hubs that fit within an inner-city environment offering easy access to public transport, quality open public spaces and facilities nearby, and access to complementary services.

Local Government Authorities (LGAs) are well placed to assist in identifying suitable locations for the hubs as these possess in-depth knowledge of their area, and the surrounding areas, particularly those that would benefit from having a Study Hub. Whether hubs operate from private commercial property, or a local government facility, these could be designed in a way that benefits students and the broad community.

4. Where multiple communities may co-exist within the same area (for example, ethnic, cultural, industry-based, etc.), how can Suburban University Study Hubs ensure they meet the needs of these different communities?

Direct consultation and engagement with LGAs from the inception to the delivery of these hubs is essential to ensure that facilities meet the needs of different communities. LGAs possess in-depth knowledge of their local communities and where opportunities exist.

5. How can we ensure that Suburban University Study Hubs operate to support students engaging with any provider, while also ensuring strong connections with local providers, campuses and leaders?

The location of Suburban University Study Hubs is critical to ensure operations support students. Hubs should operate from a facility accessible to students either via public transport or main transport routes that are also close to other services and facilities such as a TAFE campus. For example, the WA Government is currently building a new inner-city TAFE in Armadale in recognition of the need to boost the provision of education and training for the growing population within the Perth Metropolitan South East corridor.



6. What dedicated support services should Suburban University Study Hubs provide? Are there gaps in support for under-represented cohorts (for example, First Nations students, students with disability) Suburban University Study Hubs could address?

- Specific support services could be identified during the planning stages which could be in the form of co-design with relevant stakeholder groups, taking a place-based approach as these services will need to be tailored to meet the needs of specific regions.
- Hubs should aim to be inclusive and accessible for everyone.
- Opportunities to provide dedicated support services can be discussed with LGA's, for example, the City of Armadale operates its Champion Centre, a hub dedicated to support our local aboriginal community.

7. How can Suburban University Study Hubs provide a culturally safe environment for all students, that is relevant to them and their local context?

Close consultation with LGAs could assist in providing local context. See Q6.

8. Are there examples (in Australia or internationally) of similar support services (in tertiary education or other sectors) that could inform the design of Suburban University Study Hubs?

The WA Department of Training and Workforce Development (DTWD) represents a sound source of knowledge to help identifying examples of best-practice. This department is currently building a new Armadale TAFE campus to be operational by 2025.

9. Are there existing support mechanisms that could be leveraged and offered through the Suburban University Study Hubs? How could the Hubs provide a useful additional impact and avoid duplication of services?

See Q8. As part of the services TAFE provides in Armadale, a Jobs and Skill Centre helps link job-seekers with employers.

Duplication can be avoided by communicating at all levels of government and directly with the private sector such as major employers and training / jobs organisations.

10. How can Suburban University Study Hubs best communicate the support they provide to local students and support aspiration in their local community?

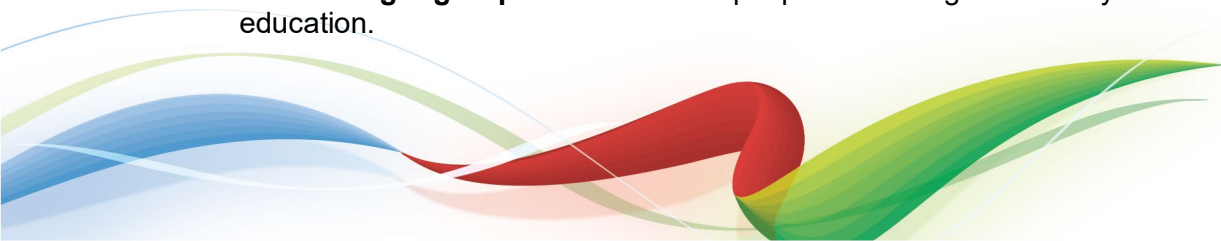
Close collaboration with Local Governments can result in identifying the best communication channels and networks locally. This could include establishing connections through local high schools, VET representatives, community groups, community facilities, clubs and business groups.

11. What role could Suburban University Study Hubs play in supporting enabling/tertiary preparation courses for students from under-represented backgrounds?

An enabling role can be played by offering courses tailored to the local context based on local needs and opportunities. Specific context for each hub can be explored during a co-design process in close consultation with LGAs and relevant stakeholders.

12. What factors should be considered when selecting locations for Suburban University Study Hubs?

- **Population growth** rate to identify rapid growing suburbs.
- **Population estimates** to identify future needs and capacity.
- **Service age groups** which show people attending secondary school and tertiary education.



- Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas (**SEIFA**) which highlights suburbs in need for interventions.
- **Education** levels to identify those with low/high high-school participation rates, **qualifications** by region, **highest level of schooling** and **education institution attending**.
- **Employment, unemployment** and **youth unemployment**.
- **Household income**.
- **Household** with children / without children.
- **Migration** and **ethnicity**.
- Geographical location, ideally close to **main transport corridors** and with easy access to **public transport**.
- Current **level of investment** on other infrastructure projects e.g. city centre revitalisation.
- Existing (or lack of) university campus in the region.
- Broader **catchment** within a region, consider established areas that act as **strategic metropolitan centres**.

13. What other types of social infrastructure should be located in close proximity to Suburban University Study Hubs to maximise their success? (e.g., childcare services)

Social infrastructure such as community services, child care facilities, libraries, and civic buildings are often placed within a city-centre. In WA, the State Government has highlighted a number of suburban Strategic Metropolitan Centres, which Armadale is one of. The intention is to intensify density and co-locate services in suburban metropolitan areas, which are easily accessible to public transport and within major transport corridors.

The City of Armadale is in a privileged position to be able to accommodate a Suburban University Study Hub within our City Centre, as we own a number of commercial office spaces that could suit this purpose with minimal capital works. These spaces are all in close proximity to a range of existing social infrastructure.

Additionally, there are a number of private properties that could easily be retrofitted for this purpose. The City has good knowledge and working relationships with property owners that would welcome having one of these hubs.

14. How can Suburban University Study Hubs complement, rather than replace, the innovative solutions being implemented by education providers to support students in outer metropolitan and peri-urban areas?

Early engagement and communication with local stakeholders to identify existing solutions, programs or facilities to avoid duplication of services.

During a co-design process with representatives from education-related industries, including State Government, TAFE and other stakeholders, opportunities to complement existing education and training services can be explored. These opportunities will vary across locations depending on the level of services available at these outer metropolitan and peri-urban areas.

The City of Armadale recently worked closely with the Federal Government funded Industry Training Hub over the last 2 years,, which assisted in bringing together representatives from across the education sector in the region including Local Government, TAFE, Jobs & Skills Centre, VET representatives, and job providers.

As part of the structure of Suburban University Study Hubs, local steering committees will help inform not only during design and planning stages, but during the operation of these hubs.



15. What skills, services and attributes should an organisation be able to demonstrate as evidence of their ability to establish and operate a Suburban University Study Hub?

- Intimate knowledge, understanding and experience in the education system nationally, state-wide but most importantly locally.
- Broad knowledge of the local context, the region and key stakeholders such as local high-schools, major employers and local governments.
- Sound financial capacity to avoid the reliance on government grants and subsidies.
- Exceptional stakeholder engagement with proven experience of collaboration with a range of stakeholders.

16. What governance mechanisms should be in place to ensure each Suburban University Study Hub is operating effectively and meeting the needs of the local community?

A Board of Directors could be in place who would be responsible for guiding and ensuring targets and outcomes are met. Also steering committees are a good tool for accountability. See Q17 & Q18. Quarterly and annual reporting with regular engagement channels to report on progress or opportunities encouraging transparency and accountability may be considered

17. Should a single organisation be eligible to operate multiple hubs? If so, how could local community drive and engagement be built into the Suburban University Study Hub operating model?

Finding a suitable organisation to operate a hub is seen as one of the key elements of success, but will also be a challenge. If a suitable organisation is successful at operating a hub, there should be scope to allow to operate multiple hubs as long as performance is well measured and outcomes are being delivered.

Community can drive and build engagement by having a structure, or operating model, which allows for sub-groups or steering committees to be formed. This would help link key stakeholders such as representatives from local and state government, local high schools, local businesses acting as job providers, and other organisations that could add value.

18. How could the Suburban University Study Hubs encourage collaboration between hubs and education providers (including universities and VET)?

Collaboration can be achieved by forming local steering committees with representatives from Council, State Government to avoid duplication of programs, universities and local VETs.

In 2021, the Federal Government funded an Industry Training Hub in Armadale. This organisation helped bring together stakeholders from the education and training industries. The Industry Training Hub formed a local steering committee which met regularly to exchange information and to encourage collaboration between schools, businesses and government agencies.

19. How can Suburban University Study Hubs encourage and support partnerships that benefit students? What incentives would be most effective to promote partnership development?

By having a connection or presence of universities and its representatives in the form of Suburban University Study Hubs, could unlock opportunities for collaboration and partnerships. Local Governments are typically keen to build partnerships at a local level to harness the benefits for its community. In the past, the City of Armadale has worked with a



number of universities to roll out programs for the local community and some for local businesses.

Incentives could be in the form of dedicated grants for the roll out of programs done in partnership with Suburban University Study Hubs and local stakeholders.

20. What learnings are there from existing initiatives, and/or are there new ideas that could support the design and development of the Suburban University Study Hubs, noting that they are intended to be different from institution specific study centres/hubs.

In 2020, the City worked with major universities in WA to attract a university presence into our City Centre. The response from WA universities highlighted the reluctance and inability to build more or new brick-and-mortar campuses.

The concept of building a University Study Hub in Armadale, similar to those regional hubs at that time was welcomed and suggested as possible way forward given the strategic location of the Armadale City Centre, easy access to public transport and major transport corridor networks, and the evident need to provide access to higher education.

Also, advocating to secure a new inner-city TAFE campus for the last 13 years has informed the City on the real need of further education opportunities to help address unemployment and social disadvantage by giving residents the opportunity to learn new skills and to gain employment.

Lastly, based on population growth figures, the Armadale City Centre will need to grow significantly and provide more employment and educations opportunities, residential capacity and diversity of land uses to fulfil its function as a strategic metropolitan centre. This includes some 18,000 jobs estimated to be required to sustain the local economy over the next 20 years. Additional inner-city residential and commercial spaces are fundamental to support the City's ambition to stimulate the local economy.

To truly maximise the economic development of our City Centre to become a destination of choice with a thriving local economy, the City is working towards the transformation of its inner-city by stimulating private and public investment.

