

## Recipient Details

Name of organisation or individual: [O] National Tertiary Education Union (NTEU)

Reference Type: Trade Union

State or territory: Vic

Serial Identification Number: 477981

## Responses

Curriculum and assessment

No comment

Rating: 0

Teachers and teaching

No Comment

Rating: 0

Leaders and leadership

No comment

Rating: 0

School and Community

No comment

Rating: 0

Information and Communication Technology

No comment

Rating: 0

Entrepreneurship and schools

No comment

Rating:

Improving access – enrolments, clusters, distance education and boarding

No comment

Rating for enrolments: 7

Rating for clusters: 5

Rating for distance education: 0

Rating for boarding: 0

Diversity

No comment

Rating: 7

### Transitioning beyond school

The NTEU's response is specifically aimed at addressing:

- 1) issues faced by students participating in higher education, especially where those students are required to leave school to attend university,
- 2) difficulties faced by regionally based universities in providing high quality education and research to the communities they serve (covered in further comments section)

The latest higher education student data shows that while there has been an overall increase in the participation in higher education for all Australians and most equity groups, this is not the case for students from regional and remote Australia. The data shows that the proportion of students from regional and remote Australia is continuing to decline.

The NTEU agrees with the discussion paper when it highlights the fact that such students, especially where they are required to leave home to study face both soft (social) and hard (financial/economic) impediments.

In terms of social (soft) impediments it is critical that the government continue to support not only outreach initiatives aimed at lifting student aspirations, through programs like HEPPP but also to ensure that universities are adequately resourced to provide students with the appropriate level of academic and pastoral support. This is especially important for remote and regional students.

There is strong body of research which shows that the most disadvantaged school students (lower socio-economic background students who lived some distance from university campuses) are far more likely to believe that cost might stop them attending university. The same research also found that these students (where a significantly higher proportion are from regional and rural areas) believed their families probably could not afford the costs of supporting them while studying at university.

There is no doubt that financial/economic considerations provide a major impediment for students from regional and rural Australia, especially here they are required to leave home to study, from participating in higher education. The NTEU is advocating for the following measures:

- changing the definition of independence for genuine regional and rural students to 12 months (from current 14 months)
- changing the parental income means test for dependent students by doubling the income thresholds.

Rating: 7

### Additional Comments

NTEU represents the professional and industrial interests of academic and general/professional staff members at every Australian university including all regional universities and campuses as well professional, administrative and technical staff employed in the vocational and educational sector in Victoria.

The NTEU has long been concerned not only about the opportunity for all Australians to participate in post secondary education, including students from regional and remote Australia, but also how government policies have impacted universities and TAFEs including those located in regional

regional Australia. Indeed the Union has made comprehensive submissions to a number of important inquiries into these aspects of post secondary education over recent years including:

- 2017 Senate Education and Employment Legislation Committee Inquiry into the Higher Education Reforms;
- 2016 Senate Education and Employment Committee Inquiry into the VET Student Loans (Consequential Amendments and Transitional Provisions) Bill 2016 and the VET Student Loans (Charges) Bill 2016;
- 2015 House of Representatives Standing Committee on Education and Employment Inquiry into the Role of the Technical and Further Education System and its Operation;
- 2011 Review of Student Income Support Reforms; and
- 2009 Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Committee Inquiry into Rural and Regional Access to Secondary and Tertiary Education Opportunities.

In these submissions the NTEU has consistently argued for not only the importance of regional universities providing opportunities for students to participate in higher education, but also because of the economic and social benefits they deliver to the communities they serve. In addition to the facilities and services provided to local communities and businesses, graduates are not only more attuned to needs of regional Australia but are also more likely to continue to live regionally .

Regional universities, especially if they continue offering a comprehensive range of student offerings, face higher costs than their metropolitan counterparts. Some of these costs are a direct function of location while other relate to scale and the composition of their student cohorts. Regional campuses are generally smaller (in terms of student numbers) than their metropolitan counterparts. They have larger geographical but smaller population catchment areas. They also have more diverse student cohorts with larger proportions of not only regional and rural students but also low socio-economic status, first-in-family, mature aged and Indigenous students. Regional universities also tend to be more heavily involved in distance and mixed modes of education.

The NTEU is strongly opposed to the governments higher education reforms because they not only involve a 7.5% increase in the real cost of going to university but also that the proposed efficiency dividends are unsustainable, especially for universities with a strong regional presence. According to Universities Australia regional universities (including CDU and the University of Tasmania) will lose over \$300m in funding over a four year period.

The NTEU is also concerned that proposed changes to enabling programs where student will be expected to pay fees and places will be open to competitive tender will also impact disproportionately on regional students and regional universities.