Recipient Details

Name of organisation or individual: [O] Swinburne University of Technology

Reference Type: University

State or territory: Vic

Serial Identification Number: 479786

Responses

Curriculum and assessment
Rating: 0

Teachers and teaching
Rating: 0

Leaders and leadership
Rating: 0

School and Community
Rating: 0

Information and Communication Technology
Rating: 0

Entrepreneurship and schools
Rating:

Improving access – enrolments, clusters, distance education and boarding
Rating for enrolments: 0

Rating for clusters: 0

Rating for distance education: 0

Rating for boarding: 0

Diversity
Rating: 0

Transitioning beyond school
Rating: 0

Additional Comments
Swinburne University firmly believes that online delivery is an increasingly useful tool in addressing the tyranny of distance experienced by regional, rural and remote learners.

Through Swinburne Online, our joint venture with SEEK, Swinburne has been able to increase our offering to regional and rural students. 27% of our online students access our courses from a rural or regional setting, compared to roughly 10.4% of our on-campus students who join us from the country. We believe this access is vital, and the popularity of and satisfaction with this delivery is a

testament to the fact that these are quality, accredited courses with content developed and approved by Swinburne's Academic Senate.

In an increasingly digital world, the importance of online education will only grow, and Swinburne is delighted that through our status as Australia's largest university provider of online education, we are creating opportunities which previously did not exist and are overcoming barriers which in part have led to the lower participation rates of rural and regional students that are seen at all levels of education.

In addition to our online opportunities, Swinburne offers Access First Year Undergraduate Scholarships for rural and regional students commencing university studies. These awards are designed to assist with study-related costs and are based on social disadvantage and financial need.

Rural and regional students are much less likely to attend university than their city counterparts, mainly due to financial obstacles. Those who do are also more likely to defer for one or more years after school in order to work and save money to fund their living expenses when they leave home. In addition to our scholarships, Swinburne offers a range of grant programs for rural and regional students which assist with transport, accommodation, course fees and unexpected hardships.

While it is certainly clear that much has been done by both Federal and State Governments to improve access to information technology in rural locations, a continuing challenge that must be met in order to fully capitalise upon the revolution in online learning that is taking place is improvement in affordability for users. Swinburne believes that equitable access to quality content in online delivery is essential, and Government has a further role to play in ensuring the provision and maintenance of community ICT infrastructure.

An approach that blends online delivery with face-to-face interaction with tutors is, in Swinburne's considered experience, one which is likely to yield the greatest success. While distance and population size may preclude some learners from face-to-face methods, wherever possible an in-person component of study should be encouraged and facilitated.

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the Independent Review into Regional, Rural and Remote Education discussion paper. I would be pleased to discuss our response further at any time.

Yours sincerely

Professor Duncan Bentley

Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic)

Swinburne University of Technology