

Select Committee on Regional Australia

QUESTION ON NOTICE Inquiry into Regional Australia - 14 May 2020

Outcome: Higher Education, Research and International

Department of Education, Skills and Employment Question No. IQ20-000002

Senator Josh Wilson on 14 May 2020, Proof Hansard page 5

2016 Census Data by State and Territory

Question

Mr JOSH WILSON: Your submission notes this startling disparity that in regional and remote areas people are half as likely as their metropolitan counterparts to obtain a bachelor degree or higher by the age of 35. That's from the 2016 census. Has that shown any improvement in recent times? Does the department track that data on a longitudinal basis? And forgive me, because this may well be in the Halsey review. Is there a marked variance between the states and territories? Is it possible for that information to be provided to the committee?

Mr English: Certainly we can deconstruct the 2016 census data by state and territory and get that to the committee. We don't have new census data obviously because of the five-year cycle of the census data, but we do have a continuing feed of data each year from universities about the shape of their enrolments and admissions. I think it'd be fair to say that we're not seeing the issues in regional Australia leap up in marked ways. There's continual progress to attract students, support them through and make sure that the service offerings that we've got respond to their needs rather than expecting students to adjust to the service offerings. So it's a process that will take some time to see improvements, but we are seeing steady gains in the national numbers. We'll pull what we can on a state basis for you.

Answer

The table below provides information on bachelor and above attainment rates by jurisdiction and by location. This shows significant variation both between and within jurisdictions.

Bachelor and above attainment rates (25-34 year old population) by state and territory – 2016 Census

State/Territory	Major cities	Inner regional	Outer regional	Remote*	State total
ACT	49.2%	28.6%	N/A	N/A	49.2 %
Vic	43.2%	22.3%	18.5%	20.2%	39.7%
NSW	42.0%	20.1%	16.2%	17.8%	37.9%
SA	34.7%	17.7%	15.4%	17.3%	30.9%
WA	34.3%	15.9%	16.4%	16.4 %	30.8%
Qld	33.0%	17.5%	19.8%	15.9%	28.3%
TAS	N/A	28%	14.6%	15.2%	24.5%
NT	N/A	N/A	27.2%	15.3%	22.8%
National Total	39.7%	20.5%	18.9 %	16.3%	35.1%

**Refers to both remote and very remote areas combined.*

Further student data collected by the department is available at www.education.gov.au/student-data.

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Department of Education, Skills and Employment Question No. IQ20-000003

Senator Josh Wilson on 14 May 2020, Proof Hansard page 5

Relationship Between Education and Communication Technology

Question

Mr JOSH WILSON: I have one last question, which I'm happy for you to take on notice. It's picking up what the deputy chair was asking about earlier—the relationship between education and communication technology. Does the department receive and collate from both the student side and the TAFE and university side information specifically around speed and data? You can imagine that TAFEs and universities would give some thought as to the kinds of speeds that would be required for certain online components and the quantity of data that would be required and, equally, you'd check that off against the actual experience in a household where a person is trying to undertake a course. Does the department receive and collate that sort of information to see how our emerging and developing broadband system either works well or doesn't work well with the educational requirements?

Mr English: I don't believe we have data in the department about individual or household level experience of broadband speeds. We are using things like the Regional University Centres network to put in place fast broadband access in communities where that is a challenge. But I think I'd have to get communications department data on that. The one thing I would note is that the higher ed sector is reasonably well served by a very fast-speed backbone called AARNet for our internet services, and so, where students do have access to some sort of tertiary facility, they tend to have access to good speeds. But I appreciate that for most students that's not necessarily the case, which is why we are continuing to look at things like whether the Regional University Centres should expand into finding smaller and smaller hubs in more communities where they can lay down that connection as part of a core offering to people who are in areas where that access may be a challenge. But, unless any of my colleagues are aware of data at the individual or granular level, I certainly don't believe we collect that. We'd have to get that from the Communications portfolio.

Answer

The Department of Education, Skills and Employment does not collect data on internet speed and its effect on higher education and VET study.

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Inquiry into Regional Australia - 14 May 2020

Outcome: Higher Education, Research and International

Department of Education, Skills and Employment Question No. IQ20-000004

Senator Josh Wilson on 14 May 2020, Proof Hansard page 8

Napthine Review - Have any of the 33 actions been implemented.

Question

Mr JOSH WILSON: I'll finish with one question. Could the department let us know about the 33 actions in the Napthine review. Could you take on notice and advise us which, if any, of the 33 actions have been implemented.

Answer

The Government has accepted the aims of the recommendations of the National Regional, Rural and Remote Tertiary Education Strategy final report (Napthine Review) and has been considering feedback from stakeholders to prioritise the 33 recommended actions. The Government will provide a response to the Napthine Review in due course.

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QUESTION ON NOTICE Inquiry into Regional Australia - 14 May 2020

Outcome: Higher Education, Research and International

Department of Education, Skills and Employment Question No. IQ20-000022

Senator Damian Drum on 14 May 2020, Proof Hansard page 3

Disparity between our metropolitan students and our regional students exist across the world

Question

Mr DRUM: If you've got this international experience, have you had an opportunity to look at other countries like Australia such as Canada, the UK and the US? Does this disparity between our metropolitan students and our regional students exist across the world, or is it something that is more profound here in Australia than it is in other well-developed countries?

Ms Sandercock: It is an area that we look at. I don't have direct data to point you to on this, but I would say that other countries generally share the Australian experience. It reflects, of course, that international students are typically within a certain age range. They are attracted to bigger centres where there may be not only opportunities for study but also diaspora, part-time work opportunities and the like. We're not aware of any other country that is looking at how it can ensure international students do have a regional experience, but it's been a focus for us because we know that, when international students study in regional Australia, they actually report higher levels of satisfaction both in—

Mr DRUM: Sorry; I think the question has been misunderstood. I'm not talking about international students here in Australia. I'm asking if we've had the opportunity to study other countries to see whether they are doing it better than we are or whether the Australian experience is about the same as what other First World countries are experiencing in rural and remote other parts of the world.

CHAIR: I think the question is: does the rural-city disadvantage paradigm exist in other jurisdictions?

Ms Sandercock: It's a fairly common model for international education; yes, that's right. We're the only country that has a direct focus on how we can encourage international students into the regions—

CHAIR: Again the question has been misunderstood. Mr Drum's question is: does the relative city versus country disadvantage in terms of tertiary outcomes exist in other countries?

Answer

Yes, many countries see lower rates of tertiary attainment for rural and regional students relative to urban students. See for example:

OECD data (Tertiary attainment rate by region): <https://data.oecd.org/eduatt/population-with-tertiary-education.htm>.

USA data: <https://www.ers.usda.gov/webdocs/publications/83078/eib-171.pdf?v=9325>.

UK data:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/604393/Higher_education_understanding_participation_gaps.pdf.

Select Committee on Regional Australia

QUESTION ON NOTICE Inquiry into Regional Australia – 7 May 2020

Outcome: Skills and Training

Department of Education, Skills and Employment Question No. IQ20-000021

Tony Pasin MP provided in writing.

Skills Shortages

Question

Can you outline the steps the Government is taking to address skills short-ages in regional areas (sub 64, p. 8)?

Answer

The Government has a range of programs and policies that are working to address skills shortages in regional Australia.

Australian Apprenticeships

The Australian Government is providing \$1.3 billion to support the jobs of around 117,000 apprentices and trainees nationally, as part of its Economic Response to the Coronavirus. As of 28 May 2020 the Supporting Apprentices and Trainees wage subsidy has supported over 17,392 apprentices across more than 10,351 employers, in regional Australia.

Through the Australian Apprentice Wage Subsidy, the Government is supporting up to 3,260 employers of Australian Apprentices in rural and regional Australia in areas of skills need, including employers of 240 indigenous apprentices.

The Additional Identified Skills Shortage Payment is supporting over 6,300 apprentices in Rural and Regional locations in top skills shortage areas, including in trades such as Carpentry, Plumbing, Refrigeration Mechanics and Hairdressing.

Industry Training Hubs

The Government is trialling Industry Training Hubs in ten regions across Australia. Training Hubs are aimed at supporting young people in regions with high youth unemployment to build skills and choose occupations in demand in their region. The Burnie (Tasmania) Training Hub was launched on 16 March 2020.

Energising Tasmania

The Government has allocated \$16.2 million for the Energising Tasmania initiative over four years from 2019–20, to train a skilled workforce in current and future priority areas to support the renewable energy and related sectors and the Battery of the Nation initiative across Tasmanian regions.

The Commonwealth Scholarships Program for Young Australians

At least 400 scholarships will support young Australians to participate in vocational education and training with strong pathways to jobs in areas of skills needs. Scholarships will target occupations identified in projected growth industries and occupations identified as in demand in ten regional locations, including: Burnie (Tas) Grafton, Gosford (NSW), Maryborough, Townsville (Qld), Alice Springs (NT), Port Pirie (SA), Shepparton (Vic), and Armadale and Wanneroo (WA).

jobactive

jobactive, the Australian Government's mainstream employment service, is the primary employment program available for job seekers in regional Australia. jobactive providers are able to access a range of assistance to help place job seekers into work, including wage subsidies, assistance from the Employment Fund (to assist with training, mentoring and post placement support) and work experience opportunities. Over the period 1 July 2015 to 30 April 2020, jobactive providers achieved over 561,000 job placements in regional Australia. Industries strongly represented among jobactive placements in regional Australia include agriculture, forestry and fishing, mining, and accommodation and food services.