



Professor Carolyn Evans
Vice Chancellor and President
Griffith University
Queensland 4222 Australia

27 September 2019

Ms Sophie Dunstone
Committee Secretary
Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs Legislation Committee

By email: legcon.sen@aph.gov.au

Dear Ms Dunstone

**Submission to Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs Legislation Committee Inquiry into the:
NEW SKILLED REGIONAL VISAS (CONSEQUENTIAL AMENDMENTS) BILL 2019**

Griffith University acknowledges that the primary purpose of this Bill is to create two new sub-classes of skilled regional visas. It is understood, however, that amendments to the legislation contained within the Bill, propose expanding the definition of Regional Australia to include all areas of Australia except the metropolitan areas of; Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane, Gold Coast and Perth. These changes mean that the only non-capital city excluded from the definition of regional is the Gold Coast.

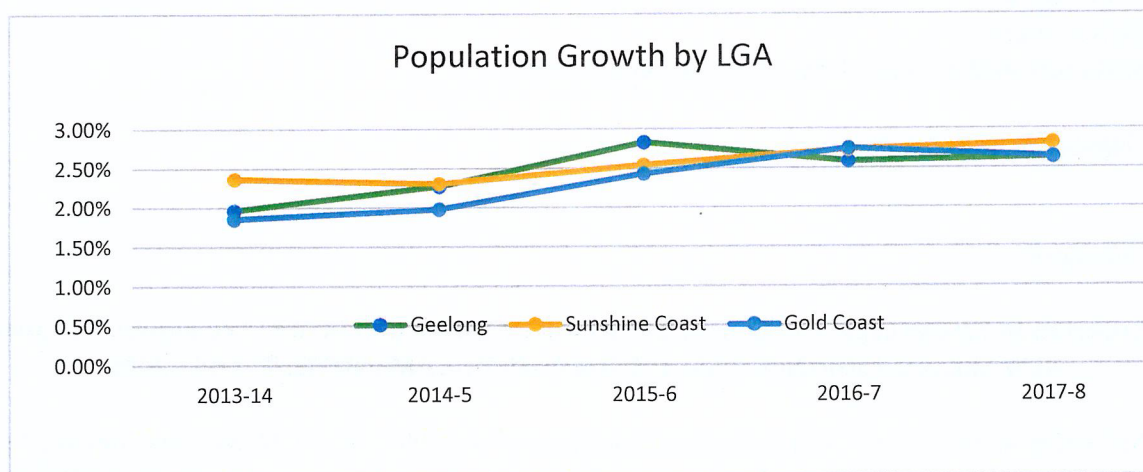
This submission is focused solely on seeking the Committee's consideration and approval to include the Gold Coast in the classification of Regional Australia for the purposes of supporting international students. The Griffith University campus at the Gold Coast is already a place of choice for many international students however it has capacity to take on more. The Gold Coast is growing its reputation as more than just a destination for international tourists, with growing light manufacturing, health and innovation precincts and is now a well-established diverse multicultural community. For these reasons, the extra support Griffith could provide to an increased number of international students that would come from it being re-classified as a regional major city would enable these students to locate to a community that can provide a safe and welcoming environment for their studies within a region that will require advanced skills into the future.

It is highly incongruous that three State Capital Cities, Adelaide, Darwin and Hobart as well as the national capital, Canberra, are considered regional for the purposes of Skilled Regional Visas that include International Students. It is particularly difficult to comprehend why Adelaide, with a population of 1,315,346 more than twice that of the Gold Coast's 663,321 according to 2018 data, is considered Regional over the Gold Coast.

Regardless of population capital cities are the centre of government and consequently attract greater economic, social and cultural activity. By definition these cities are the gateway to economic activity for the rest of the state and house the physical and social infrastructure that services intra and interstate activity.

All capital cities are projected to grow faster than their regions or 'rest of state'. In June 2017, 67% of Australians lived in capital cities. This is expected to grow to 70% by 2027. This trend supports the need for areas such as the Gold Coast to be afforded regional status to address the widening divide between capital cities and 'rest of state'.

It is understood that a common reason for not classifying the Gold Coast as a regional city is that it is considered that its growth rate is too high. The Gold Coast is incorporated into the wider region of South East Queensland in a way that other similarly situated regional cities are not. Brisbane City itself is the fastest growing area within the region and is projected to increase from 49% of Queensland's population to 51% in 2027, becoming the majority part of Queensland's population.



Geelong and the Sunshine Coast share many similar characteristics with the Gold Coast especially in demography, land area and their proximity to the capital city and yet are both classed as regional, unlike the Gold Coast as illustrated by the table below.

LGA	Land Area (HA)	Zoning (Funding)	Zoning (SUA)	CBD Distance from Capital CBD
Gold Coast (Qld)	133,370.3 ha	Urban	Major City	71km
Sunshine Coast (Qld)	225,383.3 ha	Regional	Major City	90km
Geelong (Vic)	124,798.8 ha	Regional	Major City	65km

I look forward to the Committee's consideration of this submission and hope it will reconsider the decision to exclude the Gold Coast from the definition of Regional Australia to achieve mutually beneficial outcomes for international students, the Commonwealth Government, Griffith University and the Gold Coast. I would also encourage the Committee to read the Business Case prepared by Study Gold Coast as the University fully supports the arguments and sentiment expressed very articulately in this document.

Yours sincerely

Professor Carolyn Evans
Vice Chancellor and President