

## IRU factsheet

### Higher education in regional and remote Australia

IRU universities are the lifeblood of the communities where they are based, providing a full university experience in regional towns and thousands of jobs for local workers.



Over 32,000 undergraduate students were taught from regional IRU campuses in 2016, representing one in five higher education enrolments in regional Australia.

IRU campuses are predominantly based in outer metropolitan and regional areas of Australia, providing a big economic and social benefit to the communities where they are based.

Access to higher education is particularly important for people living in regional Australia, where educational attainment tends to be lower. A person living in country NSW, South Australia, Victoria or Western Australia is only half as likely to have a university degree as a resident of their state capital city, for example.<sup>i</sup>

Regional university campuses are also often the lifeblood of the local community, directly and indirectly supporting hundreds of jobs across the local area.

It is vitally important, therefore, for those institutions to be given sufficient resources and support.



See the full map of IRU campuses at:  
[iru.edu.au/our-universities](http://iru.edu.au/our-universities)

## What the Government can do

### 1. Invest in regional students

- The number of students enrolled at university campuses in regional Australia has grown by around 30,000 in six years (2012-2018) – but further growth will be hard because there is no funding for additional students.
- The Government has targeted significant new investment at some regional campuses, provided on a case-by-case basis. However, it must also put in place a longer-term strategy to support all of Australia’s existing regional campuses.

### 2. Create a better spread of research infrastructure

- Research infrastructure is mostly concentrated among metropolitan universities, with fewer than one fifth of all NCRIS<sup>ii</sup> projects located in regional cities or remote locations.
- The Government should use the next wave of research infrastructure investment to intentionally host new infrastructure outside city centres, distributing the positive effects of research infrastructure more widely across Australia.

### 3. Incentivise more regionally based research

- To even up the opportunity for research from universities’ regional bases, a research element should be added to regional loading funding.
- The Government should also use targeted incentives to reward regional research and innovation.

### 4. Develop regional capability

- Community and education services should be of a comparable standard across Australia, regardless of postcode.
- Governments and agencies should roll out some new services in regional areas first, creating better incentives for students, workers and businesses to be there and also challenging the perception of regional Australia as always being last.

## IRU’s regional and remote presence in numbers

- 30,000 undergraduate students from regional Australian communities (19% of all such students)
- Around 1,800 students from remote Australian communities (30% of all such students)
- 52,000 students being taught from IRU campuses in regional and remote areas (17% of all such students)
- 8% of the Australia’s health students taught from IRU regional campuses
- 20% of Australia’s regionally based research takes place at IRU universities

Note: ‘Regional’ is normally categorised in Australia as areas outside of Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane, Adelaide, Perth and Canberra.

---

<sup>i</sup> Census 2016 People with HE degrees.

<sup>ii</sup> National Collaborative Research Infrastructure Strategy (NCRIS)