



Charles Sturt
University

Joint Standing Committee on Migration

Inquiry into Migration in Regional Australia

Submission – 19 September 2019

Office of the Vice-Chancellor
Charles Sturt University



19 September 2019

Mr Julian Lesser MP
Chair
Joint Standing Committee on Migration
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Mr Lesser

INQUIRY INTO MIGRATION IN REGIONAL AUSTRALIA

On behalf of Charles Sturt University, I am pleased to provide this submission to the Joint Standing Committee on Migration for your Inquiry into Migration in Regional Australia.

Charles Sturt University is Australia's largest regional university, with more than 43,000 students and approximately 2,000 FTE staff. Established in 1989, the University traces its origins to the formation of the Bathurst Experimental Farm and Wagga Wagga Experimental Farm in the 1890s. In one form or another, research, innovation and education have been integral to the University's character and mission for more than a century.

Charles Sturt University is a unique multi-campus institution with campuses at Albury-Wodonga, Bathurst, Canberra, Dubbo, Goulburn, Manly, Orange, Parramatta, Port Macquarie and Wagga Wagga, as well as various study centres located throughout regional and rural south-eastern Australia. The University's commitment to inclusive, sustainable and prosperous development of regional, rural and remote Australia is informed by our unique research focus and the partnerships we have formed with each campuses' local communities, neighbouring industry, and with the broader regions we serve.

Charles Sturt University welcomes the opportunity for the University to continue to contribute to the regional migration public policy debate, including providing analysis, commentary and recommendations for the Committee's consideration. Our submission suggests a number of areas for reform and priority to ensure future regional migration is managed to maximise economic, social and environmental outcomes. As part of an overall population plan, migration to regional areas will underwrite tomorrow's prosperity, ensure inclusive growth and secure environmental sustainability across Australia's regions.

I would be very pleased to provide further information to the Committee and would be available to provide evidence at any proposed hearings that that Committee may undertake in relation to ensuring the success of migration in regional Australia.

Yours sincerely

Professor Andrew Vann
Vice-Chancellor

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Terms of Reference

On Tuesday, 12 August 2019 the Minister for Immigration, Citizenship, Migrant Services and Multicultural Affairs, the Hon David Coleman MP, asked the Joint Standing Committee on Migration to inquire into and report on migration in regional Australia.

The Joint Standing Committee on Migration shall inquire into and report on the breadth of migrant settlement strategies and migration settings– including for skilled and humanitarian migrants – in regional Australia, with reference to:

- National and international best practice strategies to encourage people to settle and stay in regional areas.
- Strategies to develop regional skilled migration.
- Strategies to develop regional humanitarian migration.
- Key local, state and federal initiatives for successful regional settlement outcomes.
- Local volunteers, employers and community organisations and their role in facilitating regional settlement.
- Relevant migration policy, including administration and state specific migration mechanisms.
- Related infrastructure matters.
- Any other related matters.

The Committee shall give particular consideration to how communities and settlement services can best assist migrants to gain successful employment outcomes in regional Australia, including local work experience opportunities, skills certification and training, knowledge of Australian workforce regulations, accommodation and travel to and from the workplace.

For further information, refer

https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Joint/Migration/RegionalMigration/Terms_of_Reference.

1. Recommendations

Charles Sturt University makes the following recommendations for consideration by the Joint Standing Committee on Migration during its Inquiry into Migration in Regional Australia.

1.1 National and international best practice strategies to encourage people to settle and stay in regional areas

Charles Sturt University makes the following recommendations to the Committee to regarding National and international best practice strategies to encourage people to settle and stay in regional areas:

- ***Consider increasing the number of student visas for students who elect to study in a non-metropolitan location.***
- ***Recognising time spent studying in Australia as part of any time threshold in considering eligibility for permanent residency and providing a “premium” for time spent studying in regional Australia as part of any time threshold in considering eligibility for permanent residency.***

1.2 Strategies to develop regional skilled migration

Charles Sturt University makes the following recommendations to the Committee to regarding strategies to develop regional skilled migration:

- ***Consider increasing the number of student visas for students who elect to study in a non-metropolitan location.***
- ***Recognising time spent studying in regional Australia as part of any time threshold in considering eligibility for permanent residency.***

1.3 Strategies to develop regional humanitarian migration

Charles Sturt University makes the following recommendations to the Committee regarding strategies to develop regional humanitarian migration:

- ***Drawing on nationally-proven initiatives, support local communities to develop and implement support services for humanitarian visa holders that have suffered trauma in their home countries.***
- ***Target regional resettlement of humanitarian visa holders who hold professional accreditation in their home countries, for example engineers, doctors, nurses, accountants and IT workers.***
- ***Develop and implement “fast track programs” for humanitarian visa holders who hold professional accreditation from their home countries to Australian equivalents with local education providers, that is, to ensure refugees receive Australian accreditation as soon as possible to practice in regional Australia.***

1.4 Key local, state and federal initiatives for successful regional settlement outcomes

Charles Sturt University makes the following recommendations to the Committee regarding key local, state and federal initiatives for successful regional settlement outcomes:

- ***Financial support from the Commonwealth and State governments for local initiatives that support successful regional settlement outcomes, where they are volunteer-based and delivered by not-for-profit organisations.***
- ***Ensure that Commonwealth and State funding of local initiatives that support successful regional settlement outcomes does not constrain localisation and innovation and is not constrained by bureaucratic systems and reporting (that is focused on outcomes not outputs).***

1.5 Relevant migration policy, including administration and state specific migration mechanisms

Charles Sturt University makes the following recommendations to the Committee regarding relevant migration policy, including administration and state specific migration mechanisms:

- ***All changes to the visa system are announced with adequate time to prepare and educate the market with clarity around the policy settings of changes to the visa system.***
- ***Changes to the visa system reduce processing times and ensure consistency in outcomes.***
- ***Any changes to the visa system are made with recognition of the differing characteristics of applicants in Australia's diverse education system.***
- ***The retention of a class of visa that support post study work opportunities for graduates of Australian universities.***
- ***That the Commonwealth Government should maintain short term visa pathways (such as the current 600, 601, 651 and 400) that allow for overseas academics and specialists to enter Australia for short periods of time to undertake highly specialised activities and attend academic meetings.***
- ***Recognise time spent studying in Australia as part of any time threshold in considering eligibility for permanent residency and recognise time spent studying in regional Australia as part of any time threshold in considering eligibility for permanent residency.***
- ***a period of provisional residence could indeed assist the enhancement of the integrity of the visa system by securing our investment and retaining our best people. This could be achieved by individuals remaining with their sponsoring employer or their nominated occupation for a defined period. However, the implementation of provisional residence as the only pathway for permanent residency could also be a hindrance for the university sector and a flexible approach is necessary in order to:***

- *not limit the ability of academics to apply for competitive Category 1 funding*
- *provide settlement opportunities (for example, ability to secure mortgages)*
- *ensure the reduction in exposure to additional costs of living, such as state-based fees for public schooling and health care costs.*
- *That the financial support threshold or application fees are not increased against key competitor markets.*
- *No change to existing framework for dependents and other family members extended to student visa holders.*
- *Consider increases to the number of student visas for students who elect to study in a non-metropolitan location.*
- *Any changes to the visa system are made with recognition of the differing characteristics of applicants in Australia's diverse regional settings.*
- *Assessment of visa applications be supported by clear, standardised and objective criteria, that can be readily understood by individual applicants and local communities.*
- *Regional migration be facilitated by administrative processes that increase efficiencies delivering savings in time processing and consistency of outcomes.*

1.6 Related infrastructure matters

Charles Sturt University makes the following recommendations to the Committee regarding relevant infrastructure matters:

- *Infrastructure related matters in regional cities, rural towns and remote communities must be considered in the context of local population growth and planning, as well as local planning requirements.*
- *Migration in and of itself, in regional cities, rural towns and remote communities should not be a driver of infrastructure planning.*

2. Introduction

Charles Sturt University is Australia's largest regional university, with more than 43,000 students and approximately 2,000 FTE staff. Established in 1989, the University traces its origins to the formation of the Bathurst Experimental Farm and Wagga Wagga Experimental Farm in the 1890s. In one form or another, research, innovation and education has been integral to the University's character and mission for more than a century.

The University is a unique multi-campus institution with campuses at Albury-Wodonga, Bathurst, Canberra, Dubbo, Goulburn, Manly, Orange, Parramatta, Port Macquarie and Wagga Wagga, as well as various study centres located throughout regional and rural south-eastern Australia. The University's commitment to the development and sustainability of regional, rural and remote Australia is informed by the unique research focus undertaken, and the partnerships it has formed with each of its campus' local communities, local industry, and with the broader regions we serve.

Charles Sturt University welcomes the opportunity for the University to continue to contribute to the migration public policy debate, including provide analysis, commentary and recommendations for the Committee's consideration relating to migration success in regional Australia.

Our submission suggests a number of areas for reform and priority to ensure future migration in regional Australia is managed to maximise economic, social and environmental outcomes. Population planning, including migration in regional Australia will underwrite tomorrow's prosperity, ensure inclusive growth and secure environmentally sustainability across Australia's regions.

The University's submission to the Joint Standing Committee on Migration's Inquiry into Migration in Regional Australia includes analysis, commentary and recommendations within the following spheres of regional development policy.

- National and international best practice strategies to encourage people to settle and stay in regional areas.
- Strategies to develop regional skilled migration.
- Strategies to develop regional humanitarian migration.
- Key local, state and federal initiatives for successful regional settlement outcomes.
- Local volunteers, employers and community organisations and their role in facilitating regional settlement.
- Relevant migration policy, including administration and state specific migration mechanisms.
- Related infrastructure matters.
- Any other related matters.

3. Charles Sturt University

Charles Sturt University is Australia's largest regional university, with more than 43,000 students and approximately 2,000 FTE staff. Established in 1989, the University traces its origins to the formation of the Bathurst Experimental Farm and Wagga Wagga Experimental Farm in the 1890s. In one form or another, research, innovation and education has been integral to the University's character and mission for more than a century.

Charles Sturt University is a unique multi-campus institution with campuses at Albury-Wodonga, Bathurst, Canberra, Dubbo, Goulburn, Manly, Orange, Parramatta, Port Macquarie and Wagga Wagga, as well as various study centres located throughout regional and rural south-eastern Australia.

The University's commitment to the development and sustainability of rural and regional Australia is informed by the unique research focus undertaken, and the partnerships it has formed with each of its campus' local communities, local industry, and with the broader regions it serves.

CSU offers a comprehensive suite of research and academic training programs that focus on addressing rural and regional labour market needs, growing regional economies, and preparing students for the jobs of the new economy through rural and regional Australia.

Particularly in health and medical related disciplines, Charles Sturt University seeks to address key training and equality of access issues across our rural and regional footprint, ensuring the critical supply of health professionals into local markets.

As one of Australia's largest online and distance education providers Charles Sturt University has been able to leverage its course profile and specialist expertise in education provision for the delivery of nationally available study programs. These programs support labour market skills development regardless of student location.

Our rural and regional focuses, as well as strength in online and distance education, position's Charles Sturt University as a leading institution in providing higher education opportunities to first-in-family applicants, mature-aged students, as well as those from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Increasing participation of Indigenous Australians in higher education has been a key focus area of the University's mission and ethos. Charles Sturt University consistently works in collaboration with Indigenous communities across our footprint to ensure access and develop links into the University. Our position as one of the top Australian universities for Indigenous participation is proof of our strong background in this regard.

The success of the University is demonstrated by its sector-leading performance in work-integrated learning, graduate employment and graduate incomes. Underpinning this success is the close links that the University has forged with industry, both regionally and nationally.

For example, the University is internationally recognised as a leader in work-integrated learning with students spending extended periods in employment with our industry partners as part of their degree learning and applying their knowledge in practice.

Research excellence, with a strong commitment to addressing complex regional needs through innovation, has long been at the centre of Charles Sturt University's mission.

As evidenced by the recent Excellence in Research for Australia results (ERA 2015), Charles Sturt University is recognised internationally for competitive research strengths in agricultural science, horticultural production, food and wine sciences, crop and pasture production, veterinary science, animal production, education, curriculum and pedagogy, environmental science, applied ethics, philosophy, religious studies, criminology, nursing and marketing.

Charles Sturt University has a proud tradition of delivering high-quality research that creates new knowledge, benefits people's lives, enhances the profitability of regional industries and helps communities grow and flourish. Through its Higher Degree by Research programs, Charles Sturt University is training the next generation of researchers and professionals who use critical thinking and seek to influence improved outcomes.

The recently announced AgriSciences Research and Business Park, to be located on the Wagga Wagga campus exemplifies our industry focus. The AgriSciences Research and Business Park will facilitate industry engagement and collaboration, economic growth, wealth creation, employment and skills development. Success will be evidenced by the recognition of Wagga Wagga as a world-standard centre for agricultural innovation, research and development, extension, education and training.

Today, Charles Sturt University continues a 100-year tradition of engagement and leadership with our local communities, of research and innovation in collaboration with industry, expansion in the educational opportunities offered to our diverse student body, and preparing students for employment markets emerging with the evolution of regional and the national economy.

4. Migration in Regional Australia

Charles Sturt University is pleased to provide the following analysis, commentary and recommendations to the Joint Standing Committee on Migration for the Committee's Inquiry into Migration in Regional Australia.

In recent years, Charles Sturt University has contributed significantly to the development of public policy aimed at securing a prosperous, inclusive and sustainable future for Australians living and working in our regional cities, rural towns and remote communities. The full suite of the University's public policy contribution can be accessed at <https://www.csu.edu.au/division/vcoffice/ogcr/government-submissions>.

In particular, Charles Sturt University would like to draw the Committee's attention to the following submissions that the University has provided to a range of parliamentary inquiries and department consultations over the last three years. These submissions, which summarise the University's contribution to the migration policy debate as it impacts on regional Australia, include:

Reforms to Modernise Australia's Visa System, Charles Sturt University Submission to the Department of Immigration and Border Protection, refer https://cdn.csu.edu.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0019/3015271/charles-sturt-university-submission.pdf.

Inquiry into Regional Development and Decentralisation, Charles Sturt University Submission to the Select Committee on Regional Development and Decentralisation, refer https://cdn.csu.edu.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0010/2955907/Submission-Regional-Development-and-Decentralisation-Sub-120.pdf.

Inquiry into the Efficacy of Current Regulation of Australian Migration Agents, Charles Sturt University Submission to the Joint Standing Committee on Migration, refer https://www.csu.edu.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0009/3264705/Efficacy-of-current-regulation-of-Australian-migration-agents.pdf

These submissions detailed Charles Sturt University's contribution to the regional migration public policy debate and submissions have been drawn on at length in developing the analysis, commentary and recommendations on regional migration prepared for the Committee's consideration in this submission by the University.

4.1 National and international best practice strategies to encourage people to settle and stay in regional areas

Much has been reported in the electronic media and print press about national and international best practice strategies to encourage people to settle and stay in regional areas.

The following findings, analysis and commentary is modified from *Regional Development and Decentralisation, Charles Sturt University Submission to the Select Committee on Regional Development and Decentralisation*:

Charles Sturt University believes that central to the long-term viability of regional development is a growing population. Several studies have considered the issue of regional demographic change and the possible policy options open to government and communities.

For example, in 2013 Graeme Hugo *et al.* traced these recent trends. While this study highlights a general decrease in regional population numbers, it notes that the decrease is not universal and there exists a significant coastal-inland divide. Whereas all regional areas have experienced a net decrease in young adults, coastal areas have seen net gains due to immigration of young families and retirees.

While the University questions the premises of this research, as the regional cities in which Charles Sturt University operates have grown significantly over the last two decades, particularly Wagga Wagga, Albury-Wodonga, Orange and Dubbo, we do however, support their findings relating to immigration. Hugo *et al.* suggest that any attempts to increase immigration to regional areas must be predicated on the economic potential of these areas to absorb any increase in population.

They also suggest that return migration programmes and national immigration policy may be viable mechanisms to encourage population growth and address skills and labour shortages in regional areas.

Charles Sturt University agrees that migration policy and programs can be used as an effective lever to grow regional populations, for example the experience in Nhill which is detailed in Appendix D of the Issues Paper (refer, https://cdn.csu.edu.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0010/2955907/Submission-Regional-Development-and-Decentralisation-Sub-120.pdf). Charles Sturt University notes that migration was raised as an issue in evidence to the Committee by Jack Archer, Chief Executive Officer, Regional Australia Institute.

In particular, it was noted that little is done to facilitate migration to regional and rural areas across Australia. Australia could develop and implement more focused programs for regional migration that complement national migration policy and visas that actually seek out and fill opportunities in communities. With such opportunities identified and managed by local communities at the regional city and rural town level. Underwriting such need is the University's own experience which demonstrates that many rural communities are actually workforce constrained.

"There are businesses that don't take on extra people, simply because there isn't a community of people to tap into locally or a clear pathway for that. ... our migration system doesn't do a very good job of getting people to regional Australia, and the idea that that's because there isn't any opportunity for them there is, I think, frankly, nonsense."

From - evidence to the Committee by Jack Archer, Chief Executive Officer, Regional Australia Institute.

Charles Sturt University agrees with Mr Archer's commentary. In addition, we believe that the international student visa system could be deployed to significantly grow the population of regional cities in Australia. And, where an international student demonstrate value to community and business during post-study employment, as part of their post-study work right, they could be granted pathways to permanent residence and ultimate citizenship if they remain in regional Australia for lengthy periods of time. Anecdotal observations suggest that this demographic is highly "sticky". As young people they tend to develop community connections, settle with partners, buy houses and have families in the cities in which they originally studied. As an added benefit, such people provide deep and effective networks for regional businesses into their countries of origin.

We are strong supporters of a regional student visa program that would be managed within the reporting requirements of the Education Services for Overseas Students Act 2000 (ESOS Act), Commonwealth Register of Institutions and Courses for Overseas Students (CRICOS) National

Code 2018 and the Provider Registration and International Student Management System (PRISMS) system with little administrative burden.

Such a visa system would fit within the Department of Border Protection and Immigration's existing immigration administration system. Attracting international students to live and work in regional cities like Bathurst, Wagga Wagga, Albury-Wodonga and Orange, provides a direct economic stimulus to the economies of these cities, with significant indirect employment benefits. Programs must be developed and put in place that encourage the best and brightest of these students to stay and work in regional Australia post-study. As mentioned above, these young people, with support are likely to seek residency, start families and businesses and contribute to the internationalisation and globally connectivity of our regional cities.

The Department of Immigration and Border Protection recently reviewed the academic literature on migration and regional development. The Department found that:

“One of the key challenges in utilising the migration program to assist in regional development outcomes has been in ensuring that migrants who do settle in regional areas stay there over the long-term.”

From *Policy Consultation Paper Visa Simplification: Transforming Australia's Visa System*, see <https://immi.homeaffairs.gov.au/immigration-reform-subsite/files/law-council-australia.pdf>.

It is therefore necessary to understand the factors that contribute to regional retention. Charles Sturt University believes that academic literature in the immigration and regional development space is sparse and underdone, as distinct from anecdotal and raw, unanalysed data. Further work is needed in this space before sound conclusions are drawn and public policy is set.

The following findings, analysis and commentary is modified from *Reforms to Modernise Australia's Visa System, Charles Sturt University Submission to the Department of Immigration and Border Protection*:

Charles Sturt University believes that a migrant's eligibility for permanent residence, should be strengthened by time spent in regional Australia, either working and/or studying, or a combination of the two. We also believe that migrants who establish and invest in their own businesses in regional Australia should be recognised for enterprise success, for example number of Australians employed, export earnings and value add to local primary production etc.

Charles Sturt University recognises the benefits of prospective migrants spending a period of time in Australia before becoming eligible for permanent residency. This provides an opportunity for prospective visa applicants to gain cultural and social immersion opportunities. Prospective permanent residence applicants who have completed their studies in a regional location have an awareness of the specific challenges and opportunities that regional Australia provides. Charles Sturt University supports a framework for permanent residency that recognises graduates of Australian universities are well placed to engage in Australian society.

Charles Sturt University supports investing in international graduates who have studied in Australia and can in turn, support regional communities after graduation. There are multiple beneficiaries of international students and researchers engaging in regional and remote Australian communities. The benefits of studying in regional Australia, such as quality of life and lower costs of living combined with accessing a world class education are not well understood or promoted to an international market.

Charles Sturt University graduates who complete their studies in regional centre are aware of the benefits that working and residing in a regional location provides and have skills gained from learning in a regional environment. Prospective permanent residence applicants who have completed their studies in a regional location have an awareness of the specific challenges and opportunities that regional Australia provides.

Charles Sturt University supports a framework for permanent residency that recognises the time that graduates of Australian universities have already spent engaged in the Australian community and are well placed to contribute to Australian society.

In particular, Charles Sturt University supports investing in international graduates who have studied in regional Australia and wish to support regional communities after graduation, by elevated recognition of time spent in regional communities as part of any time period requirement for permanent residency. Such recognition would assist in drawing talent and skills to regional Australia, from an international community who have skills and attributes specifically gained in regional Australia.

4.1.1 Recommendations – Charles Sturt University

Charles Sturt University makes the following recommendations to the Committee regarding national and international best practice strategies to encourage people to settle and stay in regional areas:

- ***Consider increasing the number of student visas for students who elect to study in a non-metropolitan location.***
- ***Recognising time spent studying in Australia as part of any time threshold in considering eligibility for permanent residency and providing a “premium” for time spent studying in regional Australia as part of any time threshold in considering eligibility for permanent residency.***

Modified from *Reforms to Modernise Australia’s Visa System, Charles Sturt University Submission to the Department of Immigration and Border Protection.*

4.2 Strategies to develop regional skilled migration

Like national and international best practice strategies to encourage people to settle and stay in regional areas, much has been reported in the electronic media and print press about strategies to develop regional skilled migration. The two topics are clearly related, and in considering the findings, analysis and commentary provided below, the Committee should also refer to the detail provided above in Section 4.1 when considering this matter.

A very successful example of a strategy to develop regional skilled migration is from Wagga. The following example is extracted from *Reforms to Modernise Australia’s Visa System, Charles Sturt University Submission to the Department of Immigration and Border Protection*:

Wagga Wagga has been a success story with both refugee and skilled migrant settlement. The Multicultural Council of Wagga Wagga (MCCW) has been central in coordinating the settlement and acting as a resource centre for humanitarian settlement.

Local jobs such as meat processing have been important in keeping the individuals and families here. For the skilled migrants the base hospital and Charles Sturt University have been very important in attracting skilled migrants to Wagga Wagga.

Going forward, the services required to keep these migrants here need to be considered. The MCWW could be reconfigured to be a migrant resource centre supporting both humanitarian and skilled migrants. The Wagga Wagga City Council has been very supportive with regards to both refugee and migrant settlement and is crucial in getting the community behind the settlement programs.

The annual festival FUSION, which celebrates the range of cultures in the region is a testament to the success and support for Wagga Wagga to keep developing as a multicultural city. Other major settlement centres like Griffith and Albury are doing the same ensuring the future in the Riverina is decidedly multicultural.

There are many such examples from around Australia, including in some unexpected places. Much can be learnt from these successes. Should government's wish to grow regional areas, migration investment and support in such local initiatives will be crucial. The key for success will be the Commonwealth maintaining the policies and programs for immigration, that is "strong borders", while delegating support and integration to local communities. Effective local support and integration will require trust on behalf of government agencies to ensure the local initiatives, which are often volunteer-based and not-for-profit organisations, are not constrained by bureaucracy.

4.2.1 Recommendations – Charles Sturt University

Charles Sturt University makes the following recommendations to the Committee regarding strategies to develop regional skilled migration:

Consistent with recommendations made in Section 4.1.1 and modified from *Reforms to Modernise Australia's Visa System, Charles Sturt University Submission to the Department of Immigration and Border Protection*:

- **Consider increasing the number of student visas for students who elect to study in a non-metropolitan location.**
- **Recognising time spent studying in regional Australia as part of any time threshold in considering eligibility for permanent residency.**

4.3 Strategies to develop regional humanitarian migration

Charles Sturt University refers the Committee to the commentary provided in Section 4.2, above and in a more general nature to the commentary provided in Section 4.1, above, regarding strategies to develop regional humanitarian migration. While, immigrants arriving in Australia through the humanitarian visa program or refugee intake have often experienced great trauma and require specialist support and services to settle in their new home, they are frequently highly educated and motivated people. For example the flight of professionals from the Balkans in the 1990s, from Iraq during the Gulf Wars and more recently from Syria. Opportunities exist to "fast-track" accreditation of such professionals in Australia.

Regional universities, including Charles Sturt University could play a crucial role where such refugees are settled in our regional cities and rural towns. The upfront cost of such programs would be expensive, and governments would need to invest in the development of human capital. However the return to taxpayers would be great through the contribution such professionals would make to their communities over many decades, the future taxes they would pay and the value that their new and young families would bring to regional cities and rural towns.

Finally, as detailed in Section 4.2, there are many such examples from around the Australia, including in some unexpected places. Much can be learnt from these successes. Should government's wish to grow regional areas through migration investment, support for local initiatives will be crucial. The key for success will be the Commonwealth maintaining the policies and programs for immigration, that is "strong borders", while delegating support and integration to local communities. Effective local support and integration will require trust on behalf of government agencies to ensure the local initiatives, many of which are volunteer-based and not-for-profit organisations, are not constrained by bureaucracy.

4.3.1 Recommendations – Charles Sturt University

Charles Sturt University makes the following recommendations to the Committee to regarding strategies to develop regional humanitarian migration:

- ***Drawing on nationally-proven initiatives, support local communities to develop and implement support services for humanitarian visa holders that have suffered trauma in their home countries.***
- ***Target regional resettlement of humanitarian visa holders who hold professional accreditation in their home countries, for example engineers, doctors, nurses, accountants and IT workers.***
- ***Develop and implement "fast track programs" for humanitarian visa holders who hold professional accreditation from their home countries to Australian equivalents with local education providers, to ensure refugees receive Australian accreditation as soon as possible to practice in regional Australia.***

4.4 Key local, state and federal initiatives for successful regional settlement outcomes

Building on the findings, analysis and commentary provided in Section 4.1 to 4.3 above, Charles Sturt University provides the following contributions to the Committee's inquiry regarding key local, state and federal initiatives for successful regional settlement outcomes.

Modified from *Reforms to Modernise Australia's Visa System, Charles Sturt University Submission to the Department of Immigration and Border Protection*:

Charles Sturt University is a very strong supporter of the Commonwealth Government's international education policies and programs including National Strategy for Education 2025, see <https://nsie.education.gov.au> and the Commonwealth's roadmap Australian International Education 2025, see <https://www.austrade.gov.au/Australian/Education/Services/Australian-InternationalEducation-2025>.

Most states and territories have complementary international student policies and programs, including investment and export attraction initiatives, again Charles Sturt University is fully supportive of these initiatives. As discussed in Sections 4.1 and 4.2, above, migration pathways for international students in regional, rural and remote Australia provided a "try before you buy" and effective settlement integration methodology for successful regional settlement outcomes.

From *Inquiry into Regional Development and Decentralisation, Charles Sturt University Submission to the Select Committee on Regional Development and Decentralisation*:

Examples of regional development projects built on migration to regional Australia:

- Since 2010, over 160 Karen (Myanmar) refugees have been resettled in Nhill in north-west Victoria. Local company, Luv-a-Duck, has directly employed approximately one-third of the refugees. Analysis by Deloitte Access Economics estimates that the resettlement plan has added a total of 70 full-time jobs and \$41.5 million to the local economy.
- Sundrop Farms operating since 2010, has recently expanded its facilities in Port Augusta by 20 hectares under a \$150 million project, creating 200 new jobs for the region. Under the project, Sundrop Farms worked collaboratively with the government of South Australia, receiving \$6 million under the state's Regional Development Fund scheme in the expansion.
- Also under the South Australian Government's Regional Development Fund scheme, Thomas Foods International has received \$2.5 million in funding to contribute to a \$25.4 million upgrade to its capacity, resulting in 200 new jobs in Murray Bridge.
- Australian Paper in Maryvale has received \$5 million support from the Federal and State governments in support of a \$600 million proposal to convert household waste to energy. The project aims to provide the company with an alternative source of power. Australian Paper is the Latrobe Valley's largest private employer, providing more than 1000 jobs for the region. The new project expects to create 800 new jobs during construction and 46 full time positions.
- FKG Group is currently developing the Toowoomba Technology Park, a 29-hectare facility which will be Australia's first regional data centre. The Park will utilise Toowoomba's location as a logistic hub and NBN infrastructure. The Park includes the Pulse Data Centre which has been developed in partnership with the University of Southern Queensland. The Park could eventually generate between 5,000 and 10,000 jobs for the region.

Again, as discussed in Sections 4.2 and 4.3, above, much can be learnt from these successes. However, effective local support and integration will require trust on behalf of government agencies to ensure the local initiatives, supported through Commonwealth and State funding and are not constrained by bureaucracy. Refer Section 4.6, below for a more detailed discussion on the role of Commonwealth and State governments as well as the infrastructure required to ensure successful outcomes from regional migration.

4.4.1 Recommendations – Charles Sturt University

Charles Sturt University makes the following recommendations to the Committee to regarding key local, state and federal initiatives for successful regional settlement outcomes:

- ***Financial support from the Commonwealth and State governments for local initiatives that support successful regional settlement outcomes, where they are volunteer-based and delivered by not-for-profit organisations.***
- ***Ensure that Commonwealth and State funding of local initiatives that support successful regional settlement outcomes does not constrain localisation and innovation and is not constrained by bureaucratic systems and reporting (that is focused on outcomes not outputs).***

4.5 Local volunteers, employers and community organisations and their role in facilitating regional settlement

Building on the findings, analysis and commentary provided in Section 4.1 to 4.4 above, Charles Sturt University provides the following contributions to the Committee's inquiry regarding local volunteers, employers and community organisations and their role in facilitating regional settlement. This section should be read in conjunction with the discussion provided at Section 4.4, above.

Modified from Reforms to Modernise Australia's Visa System, Charles Sturt University Submission to the Department of Immigration and Border Protection:

Charles Sturt University supports the international education policy outcomes and program objectives of:

- strengthening the fundamentals of Australia's education, training and research system and our regulatory, quality assurance and consumer protection arrangements
- transformative partnerships between people, institutions and governments, at home and abroad
- competing globally by responding to global education and skills needs and taking advantage of emerging opportunities
- achieving nearly 1,000,000 international students and approaching \$50 billion in annual export revenues by 2025.

While these outcomes and objectives, and the University's commentary provided below relate to the national international student policy settings and program designs, discussion of these is important in the context of migration in regional Australia. This is because these settings and designs provide the overarching framework which regional cities and rural towns can deploy to capture international students as one element of their migration plans. This is particularly so in regional cities where universities and other large training and education providers have campuses. For example, Charles Sturt University's presence in Bathurst, Port Macquarie, Orange, Dubbo, Wagga Wagga and Albury-Wodonga.

Furthermore, Charles Sturt University believes that, while the current international student visa arrangements have served Australia well, they must be strengthened to ensure Australia's future competitiveness in the international student market is not only maintained but enhanced. This will be essential to meet the Government's policy outcomes and program objectives set out above, including growing Australia's international student cohort to around 1,000,000 with some \$50 billion or so in export revenue per annum.

Ensuring the future competitiveness of Australia's student visa arrangements will be essential to meet the Commonwealth's stated international education and export revenue goals and objectives, particularly given the increasing competition from New Zealand, Canada and the UK. The increased ease of access for foreign nationals to countries like Japan, Germany (Schengen Zone), Malaysia and China, noting that training and education providers in countries like Japan, Germany and China are increasingly delivering courses in English.

The value of international education to the Australian economy has been widely discussed in recent years, with the ABS valuing exports from international education for 2014-15 at \$18.8 billion and Australia's third largest export.

A recent report commissioned by the Australian Government indicates that international education contributes an additional \$935 million in export revenue through education related expenses by those on a non-student visa studying English language courses, tourism expenditure by visiting friends and relatives (VFR) who come to Australia to visit an international student, revenue from offshore campuses, and revenue from international students undertaking study tours at Australian public schools.

Charles Sturt University is committed to supporting our local communities in regional southern New South Wales and northern Victoria and across regional, rural and remote Australia to ensure they are equipped to engage in the global economic context and have real access to knowledge, skills and research to create sustainable and stable futures. In addition to the economic benefits being realised by regional southern New South Wales and northern Victoria, there are a broad range of social and cultural benefits that stem from international education, particularly in non-metropolitan areas of Australia:

- Through interacting with international students, domestic students are exposed to different cultures and ways of thinking. This supports the development of more 'global citizens' and can develop lasting relationships and networks with far reaching benefits, including longer term trade and diplomatic relationships.
- International education builds the cultural diversity of our communities and can contribute to a more inclusive and culturally rich society – this is crucially important in our regional cities to globalize them and make them attractive for people to relocate from metropolitan areas to regional Australia.
- International education provides a strong platform for leveraging Australia's global reputation, particularly in research and sharing knowledge. CSU has developed a global reputation as a leader in research and education in regional, rural and remote industry and community development.

In understanding the contribution that international education makes to the economy and the social fabric of society, it is easy to understand the increased global competition for international students. Being alert to this competition and having strategies to address it at the national, regional and local level in Australia will be crucial to ensure that international student pathways are drawn on to support regional migration and all of the economic, social and environmental benefits that come with increasing workforce and community skills, knowledge, capability and capacity.

In recent years governments and education institutions have been investing heavily to increase international student numbers. Domestically, there has been a strong focus by state/territory and the Australian Government to develop policy frameworks to guide decision making and support growth across the sector. France, Germany, Japan and Canada, who together with the US, UK and Australia comprise more than half the global market, are all actively targeting international education as a means to not only reinvigorate their economies, but to restructure their industrial bases.

Emerging players like China, Malaysia and Chile are investing in the expansion of their international education services, especially in the higher education sector. They are directly targeting existing markets by developing and delivering higher education courses that are taught in English.

As with any maturing industry, competition is increasing at local, national and international levels. These countries are actively pursuing offshore delivery, as are many Australian institutions. In responding to the increased competition globally, maintaining and building Australia's share of the

international education market will require development to maintain a sustainable competitive advantage.

This will include maintaining our reputation for quality institutions, professional tuition and assured personal safety, and building on the characteristics of Australian international education offering that are unique to us including the ability to live and study in regional areas. While there is increased competition for international students both in Australia and from education institutions globally, there are significant opportunities to grow international education in regional Australia. This is particularly true for regional New South Wales and Victoria, which are already leaders in international education within regional Australia. There are also a number of challenges that face government, providers and broader stakeholders in Australia to fully realise these opportunities, such as:

- alignment of immigration policy with international education student recruitment strategies, particularly in emerging markets
- changing perceptions of studying in regional areas as opposed to metropolitan areas
- high costs of developing brand recognition, particularly at an institutional or regional level.

Promoting and leveraging the unique student experience and the strengths of universities in regional areas of Australia are key in overcoming these challenges. Regional universities have considerable research strengths in fields such regional, rural and remote health and education, agriculture and mining sciences. CSU is globally recognised as an education leader in regional, rural and remote community economics, sociology and health and education.

The close-knit communities in regional Australia can provide cultural and social immersion opportunities that are no longer available in larger metropolitan areas for international students. Approximately five per cent of Australian international student enrolments are based in regional areas.

Charles Sturt University is committed to supporting our local communities in regional southern New South Wales and northern Victoria and across regional, rural and remote Australia to ensure they are equipped to engage in the global economic context and have real access to knowledge, skills and research to create sustainable and stable futures. In 2016, over 32,000 of the 43,000 students at Charles Sturt University were studying at a regional campus, however only a small proportion of these students were international students.

The case studies below highlight the attractiveness for international students studying agricultural sustainability that aligns with climate similarities for application for the graduates. Studying in regional Australia offers an opportunity to reduce costs around accommodation and cost of living for international students and reduce the infrastructure burdens in metropolitan areas.

“This course has given me the knowledge and skills to help Cambodia achieve their sustainable development goals. It has also equipped me with the skills and knowledge to assist Cambodian government policy makers to develop policies in relation to using our natural resources in sustainable manner for the long term, and assist Cambodian farmers to improve agricultural productivity without harming environment and ecosystem. What I enjoyed the most about studying at Charles Sturt University was that I learnt to be independent, and think critically and holistically. Charles Sturt University staff were very supportive and try their best to support their students. While in Australia I experienced the Australian landscape and culture, and the Australian agricultural systems, and the Australian political system. I found Australian people are generally open, kind and friendly, and will provide support if you approach them for help.”

Chanthorn Sock, Cambodia: Master of Sustainable Agriculture, Orange Campus.

"I chose Charles Sturt University because they were offering the course I wanted to study and also the weather in NSW was similar to my home country which I thought would be more applicable to my work back in Malawi. Life is good and the people friendly. I was not sure if I would be able to get a part time job as I study but I got one and could manage it with studies. I stayed on campus where I could maximize on the use of the library and other on-campus amenities. I also enjoyed staying in regional Australia - you save on transport costs and utility bills. I miss the local produce of Orange – in particular the wines and lamb chops - they were yummy!!!"

Henry Geoffrey Hunga, Malawi, Master of Sustainable Agriculture in Orange.

"I'm enjoying this course and chose it to help broaden my career opportunities in the outdoor education industry and National Parks. I love the Australian lifestyle and the beaches in Port Macquarie. It helps to be a little adventurous and I like the calmer life of a small city but at the same time, the reward is that you can connect more with nature as there are a lot of outdoor activities to do. I have also found it easy to meet people on campus, and through local activities like running club and hiking." Karina from Peru, Outdoor Recreation and Ecotourism.

Karina Davila, Peru, Bachelor of Applied Science (Outdoor Recreation and Ecotourism) Port Macquarie.

Across the geographic coverage of Charles Sturt University's campus footprint there are many examples of local volunteers, employers and community organisations and their role in facilitating regional settlement. While these examples provided below are education centric, they demonstrate the eagerness with which regional cities, rural towns and remote communities welcome and support migration. Examples include:

- Dubbo Regional Council Scholarship, first year students who has completed the majority of their schooling in the Dubbo local government area.
- The Toni Downes New Horizons Travel Prize, any year studying any undergraduate course on CSU campus. Applicant must reside in or around the Dubbo region and be studying on or through the Dubbo campus.
- Koorringal High School Scholarship, first year students who attended the Koorringal High School in the year previous to study.
- The Wagga Wagga RSL Sub-Branch Scholarship, first year students studying a course on the Wagga Wagga campus. Ex, current and relatives of Defence personnel encouraged to apply.
- Country Women's Association of NSW Scholarship, any year any undergraduate course on Wagga Wagga campus, where they must be a long-term resident of the Riverina Group CWA area.
- CSU Foundation Refugee Scholarship, students studying any course on any campus on a humanitarian visa.
- CSU Foundation Rural Relief Scholarship, any year student studying any undergraduate course whose ability to attend or continue their studies at Charles Sturt University has been impacted by the current drought.

- CSU Refugee & Asylum Seeker Scholarship, applicants studying any undergraduate course in any year on any campus who currently hold a Bridging VISA BVA, Bridging VISA BE or Temporary Protection via subclass 785.
- Moya Crowe Memorial Scholarship, student any year studying any course, first preference of an Indigenous student, or must demonstrate a commitment to the support of Aboriginal communities.
- Murrumbidgee Council Scholarship, any course offered full time on any campus, applications must be long term resident of Murrumbidgee Council local government area.
- Rotary Club of Oberon Prize, long term resident of the Oberon Shire Council area in any year studying any undergraduate degree on any Campus.
- Snowy Valleys Council Scholarship, any year studying any undergraduate course on Charles Sturt University Campus, applicants from within the Snowy Valleys Council local government area.
- Temora Agricultural Innovation Centre Scholarship, full time student studying any agriculturally based undergraduate course on the Wagga Wagga campus, students to be from the Temora local government area.
- Temora Shire Council Izumizaki Scholarship, any student studying any undergraduate course full time on the Wagga Wagga campus, students to be from the Temora local government area.
- Walter and Eliza Hall Trust Opportunity. Disability Scholarship, any year, any student with a physical disability studying any course full time on campus.
- Widgewa School Scholarship, second, third, fourth- or fifth-year students studying any course within the Faculty of Science from Berrigan, Bland, Murrumbidgee, Narrandera or Urana local government areas.
- Berrigan Shire Council Accommodation Scholarship, any year student studying any course on any campus. Applicant must have long standing residential association with the Berrigan Shire local government area.
- Veolia Mulwaree Trust Scholarship, any year, any course to support students from Goulburn Mulwaree, Palerang, Shoalhaven City Council, Oberon Shire, Wingecarribee Shire, Upper Lachlan Shire and Wollondilly Shire local government areas.
- Three Rivers University, Department of Rural Health Placement Award & Accommodations Scholarships, the Three Rivers University Department of Rural Health (UDRH) is a key initiative in the Commonwealth Rural Health Multidisciplinary Training Program. The objective of this program is to improve the recruitment and retention of nursing, midwifery, allied health and dentistry professionals and in rural and remote Australia. Three Rivers UDRH aims to support more health student to live, study and work in regional Australia.
- The Australian Government offers various scholarships for international students to study at Australian Universities, for example the Australia Awards, refer <https://dfat.gov.au/people-to-people/australia-awards/Pages/australia-awards.aspx>.
- Numerous International Student Scholarships from Charles Sturt University for international students, refer <https://study.csu.edu.au/get-support/scholarships>.

4.5.1 Recommendations – Charles Sturt University

The recommendations made in Section 4.4.1, above, by Charles Sturt University to the Committee regarding key local, state and federal initiatives for successful regional settlement outcomes, would also support local volunteers, employers and community organisations and their role in facilitating regional settlement.

4.6 Relevant migration policy, including administration and state specific migration mechanisms

Charles Sturt University provides the following commentary regarding relevant migration policy, including administration and state specific migration initiatives. Again, this section should be read in conjunction with Sections 4.1 and 4.2, above.

Modified from and added to, *Reforms to Modernise Australia's Visa System, Charles Sturt University Submission to the Department of Immigration and Border Protection:*

In the *Policy Consultation Paper - Visa Simplification: Transforming Australia's Visa System*, refer <https://immi.homeaffairs.gov.au/immigration-reform-subsite/files/law-council-australia.pdf> the Commonwealth proposed scope for reduction in the number of visas from 99 at present, to approximately ten visas. In principle, Charles Sturt University supports streamlining the immigration system as long as:

- all changes to the visa system are announced with adequate time to prepare and educate the market with clarity around the policy settings of changes to the visa system
- changes to the visa system reduce processing times and ensure consistency in outcomes
- any changes to the visa system are made with recognition of the differing characteristics of applicants in Australia's diverse education system
- there is retention of a class of visa that support post study work opportunities for graduates of Australian universities
- the government should maintain short term visa pathways (such as the current 600, 601, 651 and 400) that allow for overseas academics and specialists to enter Australia for short periods of time to undertake highly specialised activities and attend academic meetings.

Further, the Commonwealth proposed delineation between temporary entry and long-term or permanent residence. Charles Sturt University would support the retention of a class of visa that support post study work opportunities for graduates of Australian universities.

Charles Sturt University believes that periods of provisional residence could play in enhancing the integrity of the visa system and easing the burden on taxpayers, for example:

- retention of a class of visa that support post study work opportunities for graduates of Australian universities
- recognising time spent studying in Australia as part of any time threshold in considering eligibility for permanent residency
- a period of provisional residence could assist the enhancement of the integrity of the visa system by securing our investment and retaining our best people. This could be achieved

by individuals remaining with their sponsoring employer or in their nominated occupation for a defined period. However, the implementation of provisional residence as the only pathway for permanent residency could also be a hindrance for the university sector and a flexible approach is necessary in order to:

- not limit the ability of academics to apply for competitive Category 1 funding
- provide settlement opportunities (for example, ability to secure mortgages)
- ensure the reduction in exposure to additional costs of living, such as state-based fees for public schooling and health care costs.

In addition, Charles Sturt University believes that to ensure our visa system supports Australia as a competitive and attractive destination for temporary and longer-term entrants several considerations must be taken into account:

- that all changes to the visa system are announced with adequate time to prepare and educate the market with clarity around the policy settings of changes to the visa system
- that changes to the visa system reduce processing times and ensure consistency in outcomes
- that the financial support threshold or application fees are not increased against key competitor markets
- the retention of a class of visa that support post study work opportunities for graduates of Australian Universities
- no change to existing framework for dependents and other family members extended to student visa holders
- consideration of increases to the number of student visas for students who elect to study in a non-metropolitan location.

As mentioned above, Charles Sturt University supports simplifying Australia's visa arrangements, provided that reforms take into account:

What could a system with approximately 10 visas look like?

- Any changes to the visa system are made with recognition of the differing characteristics of applicants in Australia's diverse education system.
- All changes to the visa system are announced with adequate time to prepare and educate the market with clarity around the policy settings of changes to the visa system.
- Changes to the visa system reduce processing times and ensure consistency in outcomes.
- The financial support threshold or application fees are not increased against key competitor markets.

Charles Sturt University believes that following factors should also be considered when simplifying the visa system:

- Assessing visa applications are supported by clear, standardised and objective criteria.
- Consideration be given to administrative processes that increase efficiencies delivering savings in time processing and consistency of outcomes.

Charles Sturt University believes that that key characteristics of a simplified and flexible visa system to encourage and effect regional migration would:

- Ensure assessment visa applications are supported by clear, standardised and objective criteria.
- Be facilitated by administrative processes that increase efficiencies delivering savings in time processing and consistency of outcomes.

Charles Sturt University suggests that temporary and permanent residence be reformed to:

- The retention of a class of visa that support post study work opportunities for graduates of Australian universities.
- Consider increasing the number of student visas for students who elect to study in a non-metropolitan location.
- Recognise time spent studying in regional Australia as part of any time threshold in considering eligibility for permanent residency.

Further, Charles Sturt University proposes the following considerations be taken into account regarding requirements that should underpin a migrant's eligibility for permanent residence:

- Recognise time spent studying in regional Australia as part of any time threshold in considering eligibility for permanent residency.
- Provide consideration to the provision of an extended post-study work rights should employment be gained in regional Australia.

Charles Sturt University supports modernising Australia's visa arrangements to ensure that the visa system plays an important role in ensuring Australia remains attractive to the best and brightest temporary and permanent migrants, including actions that attract such migrants to regional Australia, including that:

- all changes to the visa system are announced with adequate time to prepare and educate the market with clarity around the policy settings of changes to the visa system;
- consideration be given to administrative processes that increase efficiencies delivering savings in time processing and consistency in outcomes;
- changes to the visa system are made with reference to the settings imposed by key international education competitor markets; and,
- the retention of a class of visa that support post study work opportunities for graduates of Australian Universities.

4.6.1 Recommendations – Charles Sturt University

Mirroring the findings, analysis and commentary above, Charles Sturt University makes the following recommendations to the Committee regarding relevant migration policy, including administration and state specific migration mechanisms:

- ***All changes to the visa system are announced with adequate time to prepare and educate the market with clarity around the policy settings of changes to the visa system.***
- ***Changes to the visa system reduce processing times and ensure consistency in outcomes.***
- ***Any changes to the visa system are made with recognition of the differing characteristics of applicants in Australia’s diverse education system.***
- ***The retention of a class of visa that support post study work opportunities for graduates of Australian universities.***
- ***That the Commonwealth Government should maintain short term visa pathways (such as the current 600, 601, 651 and 400) that allow for overseas academics and specialists to enter Australia for short periods of time to undertake highly specialised activities and attend academic meetings.***
- ***Recognise time spent studying in Australia as part of any time threshold in considering eligibility for permanent residency and recognise time spent studying in regional Australia as part of any time threshold in considering eligibility for permanent residency.***
- ***a period of provisional residence could indeed assist the enhancement of the integrity of the visa system by securing our investment and retaining our best people. This could be achieved by individuals remaining with their sponsoring employer or their nominated occupation for a defined period. However, the implementation of provisional residence as the only pathway for permanent residency could also be a hindrance for the university sector and a flexible approach is necessary in order to:***
 - ***not limit the ability of academics to apply for competitive Category 1 funding;***
 - ***provide settlement opportunities (for example, ability to secure mortgages); and,***
 - ***ensure the reduction in exposure to additional costs of living, such as; state-based fees for public schooling and health care costs.***
- ***That the financial support threshold or application fees are not increased against key competitor markets.***
- ***No change to existing framework for dependents and other family members extended to student visa holders.***
- ***Consider increases to the number of student visas for students who elect to study in a non-metropolitan location.***

- ***Any changes to the visa system are made with recognition of the differing characteristics of applicants in Australia's diverse regional settings.***
- ***Assessment of visa applications be supported by clear, standardised and objective criteria, that can be readily understood by individual applicants and local communities.***
- ***Regional migration be facilitated by administrative processes that increase efficiencies delivering savings in time processing and consistency of outcomes.***

4.7 Related infrastructure matters

Other than noting that infrastructure matters relating to migration in regional Australia, should be considered and managed within the context of regional city, rural town and remote community population growth and planning, as well as local planning requirements, Charles Sturt University provides no further findings, analysis and commentary regarding infrastructure matters relating to the regional migration.

4.7.1 Recommendations – Charles Sturt University

Charles Sturt University makes the following recommendations regarding infrastructure related matters and migration in regional Australia:

- ***Infrastructure related matters in regional cities, rural towns and remote communities must be considered in the context of local population growth and planning, as well as local planning requirements.***
- ***Migration in and of itself, in regional cities, rural towns and remote communities should not be a driver of infrastructure planning.***

4.8 Other related matters

Charles Sturt University does not provide any further findings, analysis and commentary regarding migration in regional Australia, and therefore, does not make any other recommendations to the Committee.

5. Conclusion

Charles Sturt University is Australia's largest regional university, with more than 43,000 students and approximately 2,000 FTE staff. Established in 1989, the University traces its origins to the formation of the Bathurst Experimental Farm and Wagga Wagga Experimental Farm in the 1890s. In one form or another, research, innovation and education has been integral to the University's character and mission for more than a century.

Charles Sturt University is a unique multi-campus institution with campuses at Albury-Wodonga, Bathurst, Canberra, Dubbo, Goulburn, Manly, Orange, Parramatta, Port Macquarie and Wagga Wagga, as well as various study centres located throughout regional and rural south-eastern Australia. The University's commitment to the development and sustainability of regional, rural and remote Australia is informed by the unique research focus undertaken, and the partnerships it has formed with each of its campus' local communities, local industry, and with the broader regions we serve.

Charles Sturt University welcomes the opportunity for the University to continue to contribute to the regional development public policy debate, including providing analysis, commentary and recommendations on regional migration for the Committee's consideration.

The University's submission suggests a number of areas for reform and priority to ensure future regional migration boost prosperity, ensure inclusiveness and drives sustainability. Successful regional migration will underwrite tomorrow's prosperity, ensure inclusive growth and secure environmental sustainability across Australia's regions.

Charles Sturt University makes the following recommendations to the Committee regarding National and international best practice strategies to encourage people to settle and stay in regional areas:

- Consider increasing the number of student visas for students who elect to study in a non-metropolitan location.
- Recognise time spent studying in Australia as part of any time threshold in considering eligibility for permanent residency and providing a "premium" for time spent studying in regional Australia as part of any time threshold in considering eligibility for permanent residency.

Charles Sturt University makes the following recommendations to the Committee regarding strategies to develop regional skilled migration:

- Consider increasing the number of student visas for students who elect to study in a non-metropolitan location.
- Recognise time spent studying in regional Australia as part of any time threshold in considering eligibility for permanent residency.

Charles Sturt University makes the following recommendations to the Committee regarding strategies to develop regional humanitarian migration:

- Drawing on nationally-proven initiatives, support local communities to develop and implement support services for humanitarian visa holders that have suffered trauma in their home countries.
- Target regional resettlement of humanitarian visa holders who hold professional accreditation in their home countries, for example engineers, doctors, nurses, accountants and IT workers.
- Develop and implement “fast track programs” for humanitarian visa holders who hold professional accreditation from their home countries to Australian equivalents with local education providers, that is, to ensure refugees receive Australian accreditation as soon as possible to practice in regional Australia.

Charles Sturt University makes the following recommendations to the Committee regarding key local, state and federal initiatives for successful regional settlement outcomes:

- Financial support from the Commonwealth and State governments for local initiatives that support successful regional settlement outcomes, where they are volunteer-based and delivered by not-for-profit organisations.
- Ensure that Commonwealth and State funding of local initiatives that support successful regional settlement outcomes does not constrain localisation and innovation and is not constrained by bureaucratic systems and reporting (that is focused on outcomes not outputs).

Charles Sturt University makes the following recommendations to the Committee regarding relevant migration policy, including administration and state specific migration mechanisms:

- All changes to the visa system are announced with adequate time to prepare and educate the market with clarity around the policy settings of changes to the visa system.
- Changes to the visa system reduce processing times and ensure consistency in outcomes.
- Any changes to the visa system are made with recognition of the differing characteristics of applicants in Australia’s diverse education system.
- The retention of a class of visa that support post study work opportunities for graduates of Australian universities.
- That the Commonwealth Government should maintain short term visa pathways (such as the current 600, 601, 651 and 400) that allow for overseas academics and specialists to enter Australia for short periods of time to undertake highly specialised activities and attend academic meetings.
- Recognise time spent studying in Australia as part of any time threshold in considering eligibility for permanent residency and recognise time spent studying in regional Australia as part of any time threshold in considering eligibility for permanent residency.
- A period of provisional residence could indeed assist the enhancement of the integrity of the visa system by securing our investment and retaining our best people. This could be achieved by individuals remaining with their sponsoring employer or their nominated occupation for a defined period. However, the implementation of provisional residence as

the only pathway for permanent residency could also be a hindrance for the university sector and a flexible approach is necessary in order to:

- not limit the ability of academics to apply for competitive Category 1 funding;
 - provide settlement opportunities (for example, ability to secure mortgages); and,
 - ensure the reduction in exposure to additional costs of living, such as; state-based fees for public schooling and health care costs.
- That the financial support threshold or application fees are not increased against key competitor markets.
 - No change to existing framework for dependents and other family members extended to student visa holders.
 - Consider increases to the number of student visas for students who elect to study in a non-metropolitan location.
 - Any changes to the visa system are made with recognition of the differing characteristics of applicants in Australia's diverse regional settings.
 - Assessment of visa applications be supported by clear, standardised and objective criteria, that can be readily understood by individual applicants and local communities.
 - Regional migration be facilitated by administrative processes that increase efficiencies delivering savings in time processing and consistency of outcomes.

Charles Sturt University makes the following recommendations to the Committee regarding relevant infrastructure matters:

- Infrastructure related matters in regional cities, rural towns and remote communities must be considered in the context of local population growth and planning, as well as local planning requirements.
- Migration in and of itself, in regional cities, rural towns and remote communities should not be a driver of infrastructure planning.