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WIDENING REGIONAL AND REMOTE PARTICIPATION: INTERROGATING THE IMPACT OF OUTREACH PROGRAMS ACROSS QUEENSLAND

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Widening Regional and Remote Participation: Interrogating the Impact of Outreach Programs across Queensland

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Executive Summary

Widening Regional and Remote Participation: interrogating the impact of outreach programs across Queensland, is a comparative study which examines whether widening participation programs delivered in urban and regional schools across Queensland had the same impact on application rates to university and seeks to determine the key factors responsible for any difference.

This report builds upon knowledge and insights gained from the landmark *Queensland Widening Tertiary Participation Consortium (the Queensland Consortium)* initiative, launched in 2009 by the seven public universities in Queensland and the Australian Catholic University which operates a campus in Brisbane. The Consortium developed a collaborative state-wide approach to increasing the tertiary participation of students from low socio-economic status (SES), and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander backgrounds. The strategy behind the Consortium approach was that universities would deliver similar programs in different locations, with each university taking responsibility for developing partnerships with a cluster of schools so that all low SES primary and secondary schools across the state had a university partner. Campus proximity was a key factor used to determine each university's cluster.

The study used a mixed methods approach based on two components: a quantitative analysis of Queensland school leavers' university applications; and qualitative analysis of interviews and focus groups at nine case study schools with 117 participants, including 15 school staff, 33 parent and community representatives and 69 school students; in addition, 14 university outreach project managers across the eight partner universities and 46 enrolled university students who attended a school targeted by widening participation activities were also interviewed.

The key high-level finding from this research is that the approach taken by Queensland universities has proved effective where the widening participation program has been fully implemented and sustained at the school level. This outcome was generally achieved in metropolitan areas and some provincial cities where ongoing partnerships with schools have been more easily maintained. Outcomes were less positive where insufficient resourcing and engagement levels led to the program not being maintained at scale and depth in all schools across the entire state, with regional and remote schools most likely not to achieve outcomes comparable with metropolitan counterparts. Where early and ongoing engagement did not occur, students could not readily distinguish between widening participation and marketing messages, were more likely to suffer from message decay, and reported suspicion of university marketing approaches.

Apart from the level and duration of engagement, other prominent factors that played out differently for urban and regional students were: campus proximity, availability of role-models and reliable information, and development of resilience. The added financial and emotional costs associated with having to relocate to study made the decision to attend university a higher stakes one for many regional and remote students. Yet, those who made the move appeared to display greater resilience than their urban counterparts. Widening participation activities, particularly on-campus visits and engagement with university student ambassadors or role models, had similar impacts on participants across urban and regional locations. However, these impacts were less prominent in places that were far from a university campus because of lower levels of exposure.

Building on the evidence presented in this report, the authors make seven recommendations to address these issues:

1. The Australian Government funds development of a regional and remote widening participation strategy that can create and sustain high engagement with schools in

regional and remote locations. The strategy could include: authentic information and experiences for students; responsiveness to school structures and sizes; better strategic integration of programs; and assistance with pathways planning.

2. This strategy, while being inclusive of diverse cohorts, should be complemented by specific engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.
3. The regional and remote strategy include a parental engagement component to inform parents about higher education and address financial and emotional costs associated with relocation to study.
4. Universities develop tailored and packaged supports for students from regional and remote low SES backgrounds that reduce the risks involved in moving to a city to access higher education.
5. Universities seek to improve provision of higher education in regional and remote locations including innovative distance and blended models of delivery.
6. The Queensland Consortium continue collection of relevant data on widening participation program delivery and university applications and explore expanding this data set to include greater duration of engagement data across Queensland.
7. The Australian Government Department of Education and Training consult with equity practitioners on a more comprehensive means of tracking engagement with outreach programs at the school and student level to enable more effective system-wide monitoring and analysis.

1 Introduction

This study interrogated the impact of widening participation activities focused on students in urban and regional schools and explored the factors - both program-related and external - that affect school-leaver interest in pursuing tertiary study. The problem under investigation is the relative lack of change in the regional and remote low socio-economic status (SES) cohort in Queensland in terms of their level of application for university study, compared to their urban low SES counterparts. This divergent pattern has been observed despite a coordinated effort by all public universities in Queensland to deliver similar widening participation activities in low SES schools across the state, including in regional and remote locations.

The study was comparative in that it examined why widening participation programs delivered in urban and regional schools across Queensland appeared to have different impact with regard to the rate of application to tertiary study by Year 12 students, which was lower in regional schools. It also sought to determine any key factors responsible for such variation beyond the widening participation program.

Using the Queensland Widening Tertiary Participation Consortium (the Queensland Consortium) as a case study to interrogate differences in impact across urban and regional settings, this study took advantage of the unique state-wide model of widening participation undertaken in Queensland; the extensive data set available for measuring program impact; and the relatively large low SES and regional populations in the State.

Funding for this project was provided by the Australian Government through the Higher Education Participation and Partnerships Program (HEPPP) National Priority Pool. The project was led by the National Centre for Student Equity in Higher Education (NCSEHE) based at Curtin University in collaboration with universities involved in the Queensland Consortium as well as the Queensland Department of Education.

1.1 Background

Queensland Context

Queensland is Australia's third most populous State and the second largest by land area. Using the ABS 2016 census data (ABS, 2018), in comparison to the rest of Australia, Queensland has a higher proportion of its population in regional areas (37% compared to 29% nationally) as well as a higher proportion of residents located in the lowest SES background postcodes (32% of 15-65 year olds in Queensland compared to 25% nationally). Queensland's regional population is dispersed across a number of large provincial cities as well as more sparsely settled regional and remote areas. In the 2016 census, 4.0% of the population identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander peoples in comparison to 2.8% nationally.

Seven public universities (Table A) have been established in Queensland and the multi-state Australian Catholic University also operates its metropolitan Banyo campus in Brisbane and is included in this analysis as one of the eight Queensland universities. A ninth university established in Queensland is the private (Table B) Bond University and is excluded from discussion in this report as it does not receive funding for equity initiatives from the Australian Government. A list of the eight Queensland universities included in this report and their regional classification is included in Table 1.

Table 1: Queensland public universities and regional classification

| UNIVERSITY | REGIONAL CLASSIFICATION |
|--|---------------------------------------|
| Australian Catholic University: Banyo Campus (ACU) | Metropolitan campus |
| Central Queensland University (CQU) | Regional University |
| Griffith University (Griffith) | Metropolitan University |
| James Cook University (JCU) | Regional University |
| Queensland University of Technology (QUT) | Metropolitan University |
| The University of Queensland (UQ) | Metropolitan Headquartered University |
| University of Southern Queensland (USQ) | Regional University |
| University of the Sunshine Coast (USC) | Regional University |

Queensland's Collaborative Approach to Widening Participation

Faced with Queensland's unique size and demographic challenges, the eight public universities developed a collaborative state-wide approach to widening participation in 2009. This approach sought to stimulate interest in tertiary study and to increase the participation of low SES background and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders in tertiary education. The strategy behind the Consortium approach was that universities would deliver similar programs in different locations, with each university taking responsibility for developing partnerships with a cluster of schools that was proximate to its main campus location. As ACU and QUT had shared responsibility for one cluster, the result was the formation of seven school clusters of unequal size and complexity.

A state-wide funding proposal was developed to compensate university providers for the size, complexity and distance factors associated with the costs of delivery of school outreach in each cluster. The Consortium approach sought to eliminate gaps and duplication in school outreach activities across the state and to maximise benefits to students through a non-competitive, learner-centred model of widening participation.

Implementation of widening participation activities in Queensland occurred in three phases:

- Phase 1 (2010-2011) establishment and piloting of widening participation programs including some scaling up of activities utilising limited institutional HEPPP funding allocated to each university;
- Phase 2 (2012-2014) scaling up and implementation of co-ordinated 'School Outreach' and 'Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Engagement' projects utilising HEPPP competitive partnership grant funding made to the eight university *Queensland Consortium*; and
- Phase 3 (2015-2017): ongoing widening participation activities undertaken by the eight universities utilising institutional HEPPP funding allocated by formula to individual universities.

During Phase 3, funding and institutional changes led to two universities (Central Queensland University and University of Southern Queensland) withdrawing from formal collaborative arrangements with the Consortium. These universities have continued outreach activities in Queensland and have agreed to participate in this research project. Despite this change in membership, the term *Queensland Consortium* will be used to refer to the eight universities involved in delivering widening participation programs in Queensland schools.

The term widening participation (WP) programs is used to refer to school outreach programs including on-campus experiences, school workshops, curriculum enrichment activities and other engagement with schools undertaken to stimulate interest in tertiary study by low SES background students.

Senior School Studies in Queensland

While the Queensland Consortium approach targeted students from Year 6 to Year 12, Queensland's senior schooling system structured the pathways and framed the school experience of student participants in this study. Understanding key features of the current Queensland senior schooling system outlined in Figure 1 is important to understanding elements of this study.

High school students in Queensland are required to map their senior learning pathway prior to the end of Year 10 by completing a Senior Education and Training (SET) plan. Most students choose between an academically oriented Overall Position (OP) program, or a more flexible pathway, which makes them OP ineligible. Over time, the proportion of students on an OP pathway in the total Year 12 cohort has been declining. Between 2012 and 2017 the proportion of Year 12 completers who were OP eligible fell from 56% to 50% (Queensland Curriculum and Assessment Authority, 2018). Analysis of Consortium data shows the OP continues to be the most popular pathway to higher education with over 80% of OP eligible students using their OP rank to apply for university study in 2017.

OP ineligible students may study a mix of academic and applied subjects, vocational qualifications, school based apprenticeships and traineeships, and other approved studies. Depending on their program, OP ineligible students may be able to seek admission to university using a tertiary selection rank. Around 10% of OP ineligible students submit a university application but the use of this alternative pathway to university varies greatly between schools.

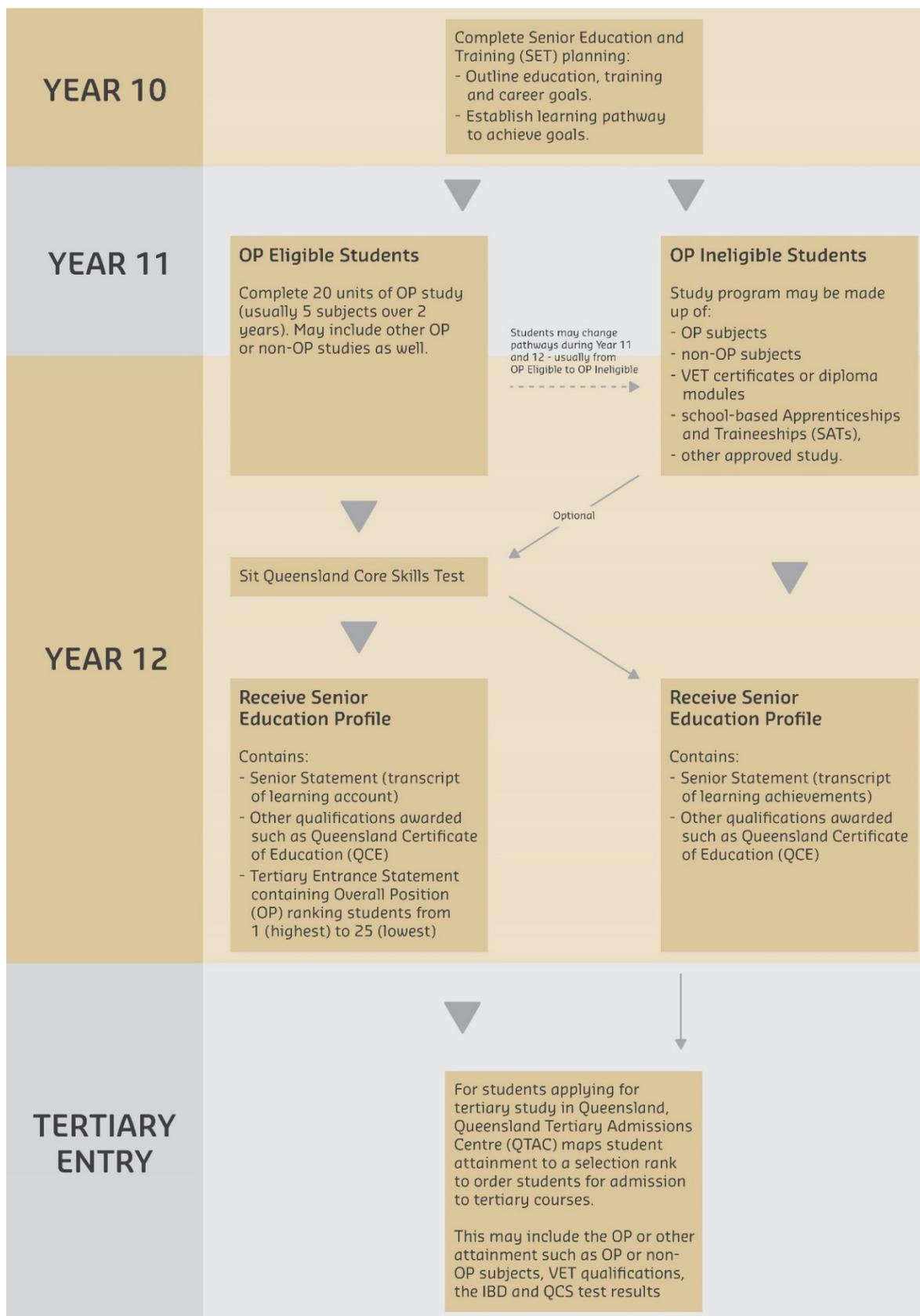
Queensland schools are transitioning to a new senior assessment and tertiary entrance system which will result in the discontinuation of OP ranks and the introduction of the Australian Tertiary Assessment Rank (ATAR). The 2018 cohort of Year 10 students will be the first group of students to complete senior studies under the new system which will be structured quite differently to the current system outlined in Figure 1.

Regional Classification

The Australian Statistical Geography Standard (2011) Remoteness Structure was used to classify schools in the study into five bands: 1. Major cities of Australia; 2. Inner Regional; 3. Outer Regional; 4. Remote; and 5. Very Remote. This study uses the term *urban* to refer to urban and outer urban areas contained in the Major Cities classification, with all other classifications referred to as *regional*. In the quantitative evaluation, analysis has been undertaken separately for regional schools (comprising Inner and Outer Regional classifications) and remote schools (comprising Remote and Very Remote classifications).

1.2 Research Problem

Despite the program design adopted by the Queensland Consortium, which aimed to deliver similar programs and achieve similar outcomes in regional and urban locations, impact tracking undertaken by the Consortium found that school leaver university application rates changed at different rates for urban and regional schools in Queensland. Consortium data showed that between 2011 and 2015 the proportion of Year 12 school leavers from urban schools targeted by widening participation programs who made a university application increased from 30.4% to 32.7% while in regional widening participation schools, application rates remained relatively stable (30.1% to 30.3%).



(Source: Queensland Curriculum and Assessment Authority 2016)

Figure 1: Flow-chart of Queensland senior schooling system followed by students in the study

This trend is reflected in national enrolment data where regional and remote participation rates have remained relatively stable over the same period, despite increased participation for other equity groups such as students from low SES backgrounds, students with a disability and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples (Australian Government Department of Education and Training, 2017).

The problem interrogated here is the sluggish pace of change in the regional and remote low SES cohort in terms of their level of application for university study, compared to their urban low SES counterparts.

1.3 Research Objectives

Based on the problem articulated above, three research objectives (RO1; RO2 and RO3) were established:

1. To explore the impact of HEPPP funded widening participation activities in schools serving low SES background regional and remote students in comparison to their urban counterparts;
2. To better understand the factors—both program-related and external—that affect students' participation in higher education; and
3. To explore which factors led to differential outcomes for the urban and regional school clusters.

1.4 Research Approach

Data were collected from stakeholders using a mixed methods approach organised into two components:

1. Quantitative analysis of Queensland school leaver applications data, sourced at the school level, centring on university demand from students of regional versus urban low SES backgrounds from 2010 to 2016.
2. Qualitative research comprising focus groups and interviews with:
 - a. school principals, school staff, current senior school students, parents and community members in nine case study schools;
 - b. university outreach project managers; and
 - c. currently enrolled university students who attended a school targeted by widening participation interventions.

A third research component undertook development of an aspirations survey to be administered to primary and secondary school students across Queensland. Delays in developing and testing the survey meant this aspect of the research was not able to be completed in the limited school student access timeframe encountered during the research project. However, sufficient data was collected to answer the research questions both through the quantitative analysis and the qualitative focus group components.

2 Background Literature

The literature review aims to contextualise this study in terms of the existing literature and to establish key concepts relevant to the research. This section has been structured to reflect the research objectives of this study. This involves firstly focusing on studies that examine the impact of widening participation programs across urban and regional settings, followed by program design factors and other factors identified in the literature that influence students' decision making processes about post-school options.

2.1 Impact of Widening Participation Programs

There is little in the published literature in Australia that captures a link between widening participation programs and subsequent university application and enrolment behaviour. Most studies focus instead on the short term impact of particular programs on interest or intention to go to university or other post school education or training options. Few studies have attempted to prove a relationship between ongoing widening participation activity and changes to university application rates.

An evaluation of the Bridges to Higher Education project (KPMG, 2015), a large scale widening participation program incorporating 96 projects and engaging up to 314 schools in metropolitan Sydney, was unable to prove a statistically significant impact on application rates for schools targeted by the program. This evaluation did however find a statistically significant increase in the proportion of applicants from Bridges schools receiving a university offer in comparison to other low SES schools. In responding to criticism of the evaluation and limited signs of impact (Hare, 2015) Bridges coordinator, Catherine O'Donnell, pointed to the short time-frame of this evaluation and the need to look at a ten year rather than three year evaluation. The Bridges evaluation also highlighted impacts of the program on student academic preparedness, higher education awareness, confidence and motivation demonstrated through qualitative data.

In their evaluation of the 'Aspire UWA' widening participation program, Skene, Pollard and House (2016) used a variety of sources to examine the efficacy of this program. These included survey and a range of qualitative data to show impact on student motivation, awareness of higher education and value of the program. They also used enrolment data to show an increase in university enrolments from Aspire UWA schools between 2009 and 2013, though this growth was not sustained in 2014 and 2015, explained in part by the change in cohort size affecting student numbers in Western Australia in 2015. Despite targeting 22 capital city schools and 41 regional schools, separate analysis of urban and regional impact was not included in the evaluation. The authors highlight the complexity of delivering and evaluating a program that spans vast geographic distance. They write:

In 2015: Aspire staff members involved in delivering school activities drove more than 17,000kms, flew more than 49,000km through 18 airports in WA, and delivered 215 school and campus visits and 15 residential camps across a geographical area the equivalent of Europe. Evaluating the efficacy of such a complex program is challenging.” (p. 18).

A more recent WA study by Vernon, Watson, and Taggart (2018) used survey data to examine changes in university aspiration over time in schools participating in the Murdoch Aspirations and Pathways for University (MAP4U) project. This study compared results for urban and adjoining regional areas in the state and found that, while both urban and regional students shared an aspiration or “desire” to attend university, only in the urban sample did this build over time into a realistic expectation that attending university was possible and their desire was strengthened. For regional students, who had participated in the same widening participation program, their expectation and desire for university study was not

strengthened in the same way as they progressed through secondary school. The authors concluded that the widening participation intervention was not able to overcome neighbourhood factors including the need to travel or relocate to study and the limited access to a university campus in regional areas (Vernon, Watson & Taggart, 2018, p.99).

Evaluation of the long-running and large-scale Aimhigher widening participation program in the UK by Passy and Morris (2010) also struggled to find a clear association between Aimhigher participation and improvements in aspiration, attainment and progression to higher education. The study did find some evidence of an association between program engagement and improved outcomes for some target groups. Qualitative evidence supported high levels of learner enjoyment of the program and increased interest in higher education. The authors commented on the difficulty of proving a causal relationship in a context where there were multiple simultaneous factors impacting on student outcomes, and also where the number of participants in any one activity may be too small to establish statistical significance. Quantitative data alone was also unable to establish links in, or associations for the way in which particular programs impact on students. Passy and Morris stated:

Much of the evidence provided showed an association between participation in Aimhigher activities and increased attainment and progression but, at the same time, offered little or no discussion of the processes through which Aimhigher might be impacting on participants' outcomes (p.15).

More sophisticated evaluation of widening participation activities in the UK is now being enabled through the Higher Education Access Tracker Service (Heat.ac.uk, 2018), as well as use of their collaborative evaluation data-base to capture individual student engagement in outreach activities and link this to administrative data. A large scale and dedicated service such as this is enabling participating universities to explore the relationship between student participation in outreach programs and subsequent achievement and progression.

2.2 Program Design Factors

The impact of widening participation programs is dependent on the quality of program design and implementation and a number of studies have sought to identify the characteristics of successful interventions. A literature review by Cupitt, Costello, Raciti, and Eagle (2016) summarised best practice approaches to widening participation as follows:

- *having clearly defined, education-positive objectives, and a strong research base;*
 - *recognising the value that different groups can bring to outreach programs and higher education, and building-in ways for their voices to be heard;*
 - *tailoring programs to particular cohorts of students who are at similar stages of educational development, as well as to students, schools and communities who share common barriers, motivations and backgrounds;*
 - *building student confidence, aspiration, engagement, academic achievement, and a sense of belonging;*
 - *working collaboratively via cross-sector programs that begin early in the student journey and are sustained over time;*
 - *working in partnership to build positive educational cultures within schools and communities;*
 - *developing effective transitions and pathways; and*
 - *using the technologies and communication streams relevant to particular cohorts.*
- (Cupitt et al. 2016, p. iv)

Gale et al. (2010), in identifying the importance of long-term interventions, found effective widening participation programs typically start in the middle years of schooling (upper primary and lower secondary). Gore et al. (2017a) also support early intervention, claiming many career development interventions that target Year 10 to Year 12 students are occurring too late. Their research found significant career aspirations forming as early as Year 5. Fleming and Grace (2014), while not discounting the importance of early intervention identified by Gale and others, pointed to the importance of Year 10 as a critical engagement point for widening participation programs. The authors argue that "...Year 10 is an important transition time for students when educational curricula and outcomes change dramatically as students progress to Year 11 and 12. It is also a time when subject choices can impact young people's subsequent study and employment options" (Fleming & Grace, 2014, p. 492). Fleming and Grace's conclusions are based on survey data collected from low SES regional students who had participated in the *Aspire UC* widening participation program.

2.3 Factors Influencing Students' Decision Making Processes about Post-School Options

There are multiple, often inter-related factors that have been identified as influencing students' decision making processes about post-school options and which are being addressed by widening participation programs. Aspirations to attend university have been discussed prominently as a key factor following the release of the Bradley review in 2008 (Commonwealth of Australia, 2008). Educational aspiration has been defined as the desired level of education a student seeks to achieve (Reynolds & Pemberton, 2001). It has been recognised that 'there is no single determinant of education[al] aspirations, but rather a complex interplay between related considerations which operate cumulatively' (Regional Policy Advisory Committee 2013, p.32). Students with high levels of self-efficacy, portrayed as those who believe in their ability to achieve and who attribute their success to hard work rather than luck or fate, tend to have higher aspirations than their peers (Gutman & Akerman, 2008). Educational aspirations have been shown to be important influences impacting decisions to attend university (Marks, Fleming, Long & McMillian, 2000; Johnston, Lee, Shah, Shields, & Spinks, 2014). Also key are parental expectations towards their child's participation in higher education, with differences observed by region, with families living in regional and remote areas recording substantially lower expectations than those in metropolitan areas, but less so by SES (Koshy, Dockery, & Seymour, 2018).

While earlier research found that students from low SES backgrounds had lower aspirations for further education (James et al., 1999; Raco, 2009), more recent studies have suggested that aspirations for tertiary education are high and well established for students irrespective of SES (Prodonovich, Perry & Taggart, 2014; Gore et al., 2015). What seems to be at play instead is the relative inability of young people from low SES or regional and remote backgrounds to maintain high aspirations over time (Gore et al., 2015), to translate aspirations into expectations to attend higher education (Vernon et al., 2018), or to convert aspirations into active participation at university (Hume Regional Development Australia, 2012).

There is an emerging literature which positions students' aspirations for higher education as separate from students' expectations to attend university (Watson, Vernon, Seddon, Andrews, & Wang, 2016; Guo, Parker, Marsh & Morin, 2015). Vernon et al. (2018) and Cooper, Baglin, & Strathdee (2017) found that students from regional areas were less likely to report an intention to study than metropolitan students. These recent studies encourage a change of focus from low aspirations as the determining factor of students' participation in higher education, to those factors which prevent young people in low SES or regional and remote communities from realising their high aspirations.

The relative inability of young people to act on high aspirations is attributed to a range of contextual factors, sometimes referred to as 'neighbourhood' factors (Johnston et al., 2014; Webb, Black, Morton, Plowright, & Roy, 2015). Webb et al. (2015) describe a process of 'pragmatic rationalisation' in which geography, place, opportunities, family tradition and gender circumscribe the educational choices of young people located outside of metropolitan centres. A comprehensive categorisation was provided in a report to Hume Regional Development Australia (2012, p. 11) which outlines four clusters of contextual factors that act as barriers to higher education participation by regional and remote students:

1. Economic barriers – both in terms of lower household income and higher costs of regional students relocating to study.
2. Geographic barriers – not prepared to engage in higher education in metropolitan settings based on personal preference and comfort with regional/rural living.
3. Informational barriers – some participants indicated that they found accessing information about higher education difficult and found navigation of application processes alien and difficult.
4. Class barriers – participants from low-SES backgrounds indicated that a lack of family background or familiarity with higher education was a potential barrier to participation.

The accumulated impact of these barriers is that intention to attend university declines as locality becomes more remote (Cooper et al., 2017). In addition, findings by Tomaszewski et.al. (2017) that young people from low SES and regional and remote backgrounds are more likely than their high SES and urban counterparts to delay university entry also suggests the full impact of widening participation programs will not be evident in the application behaviour of Year 12 students.

It has been well-established that the proximity to a university campus matters in students' decision-making processes about post-school options. Despite increased provision of online learning, many young people in regional and remote locations face the stark choice of needing to relocate for study, or to stay in the local community and forego further education (Drummond, Halsey & Van Breda, 2011). Webb et al. (2015) showed that there are strong pull factors to keep young people in their local community and that moving to the city or a regional centre for study is not the preferred course of action for many. In fact, having university aspirations often turns young people into outsiders or non-conformists in their community (Hume Regional Development Australia, 2012). Webb et al. (2015) talk of 'disruptors', such as early career and work experience, friends, events and programs, which were described as significant turning points in shaping people's capacities to handle difficult situations and build resilience as they imagined a future very different from that of their family, friends and other locals. University-led interventions can be regarded as such 'disruptors'.

Another important factor not directly captured in the above categorisation is the well-documented lower school completion and attainment rates of students in low SES and regional and remote schools (Cooper et al., 2017). These have been identified as a key barrier to higher education participation (Kemp & Norton, 2014; Cardak et al., 2017). A study investigating the relative impact of neighbourhood versus school factors on students' educational outcomes (Johnston et al., 2014) found strong correlations between those factors in that the school community mirrored the neighbourhood. The lower education outcomes of regional and remote students have often been attributed to the inadequacy of school resources (Sullivan, Perry, & McConney, 2013; Perna et al., 2006; Chiu & Khoo, 2005) but also to neighbourhood stability (Johnston et al., 2015) which tends to be lower in low SES and regional and remote communities.

It is clear from the available literature that young people from low SES backgrounds, especially those in regional and remote Australia, face greater challenges in accessing and

participating in higher education than their urban counterparts. However, there is little comparative literature on the differences between low SES communities on the urban fringe vis-à-vis regional and remote locations. The qualitative study conducted by Webb et al. (2015) in two regional locations in Victoria and two urban fringe locations in South Australia is the notable exception. However, their final report does not systematically distinguish between the findings in regional and urban fringe locations as they relate to geographic influences. Instead, the authors present two key findings, the psychology of the familiar place and the ameliorating geographies of place, which cut across all locations.

This Queensland Consortium evaluation study aimed to contribute to the comparative evidence and adopted a mixed-methods approach to explore the effect of widening participation programs provided by the Queensland Consortium in low SES schools in urban and regional/remote locations. The program aimed to address and overcome some of the known challenges, to 'disrupt' traditional imaginations about the future, and support young people in their decision-making processes about post-school options. This research will investigate to what extent this has been achieved.

3 Methodology

This section details the quantitative and qualitative methods used to gather and analyse data for this study.

3.1 Quantitative Methodology

Aim and Approach

The aim of the quantitative component was to examine recent trends in Queensland school-level data on university applications from Year 12 students to:

1. Identify any discernible impact of the widening participation program on university application rates in a comparison of participant and non-participant schools; and
2. Ascertain the impact of regional and remote school location on university application rates.

The approach taken examines the impact of widening participation programs in Queensland in terms of the rate of applications to a Queensland Consortium university from schools targeted by widening participation interventions (WP schools) in comparison with other Queensland schools (non-WP schools), while controlling for a number of intervening variables. The study utilises university application data sourced from the Queensland Tertiary Admissions Centre (QTAC) as well as data on Year 12 completions sourced from the Queensland Curriculum and Assessment Authority (QCAA).

Study Period

Analysis was undertaken for school students who completed Year 12 in the period 2010-2016. This period incorporates the initial years of limited HEPPP funding (2010-2011), the years when all Queensland universities utilised competitive HEPPP grant funding to undertake school outreach (2012-2014) and subsequent years (2015-2016) in which outreach has been funded through institutional HEPPP allocations.

The full sample, after removing schools with incomplete records, comprised 2,678 observations across 408 secondary schools in Queensland.

Data Preparation

A small number of schools were removed from the study in order to develop a workable data set. Data cleaning included:

- The removal of 12 non-school centres such as adult learning centres, flexible learning centres, TAFE and trade centres;
- The removal of schools with fewer than 5 applicants;
- The removal of schools with missing ASGS Remoteness data; and
- The removal of ACU WP schools as only one school was listed separately under the ACU cluster.

As a result of these changes, the number of schools included in the analysis was reduced from 440 to 408.

Development of an Empirical Model

The key point of focus, the dependent variable in all analyses, was that of applications to university from a school in a given year (AP). In the modelling we examined applications as a proportion of class size using the count of students with a Senior Education Profile (SEP), a measure of all students who complete Year 12 in a school, which is a proxy for potential

eligibility to apply to a tertiary institution. Hence, we modelled the proportion of students who apply to university from each school's graduating class in a given year: **AP/SEP**.

We explained the dependent variable using a wide range of explanatory variables which were drawn from the reviewed literature. These included:

- **Size of the Academic Pathway (OP+IBD) as a Share of School Class (SEP) (OP+IBD/SEP):** We included (OP+IBD)/SEP as an explanatory variable, principally to control for the level of academic preparedness (OP+IBD) in each school given the size of the Year 12 class (SEP). In the Queensland system, the number of students seeking to access higher education via formal academic pathways is best represented by (OP+IBD), where:
 - OP is the number of students receiving an Overall Position (OP) after completing a course of approved studies and a Queensland Core Skills Test. An OP rank is used to determine eligibility for admission to tertiary courses; and
 - IBD is the number of students receiving an International Baccalaureate Diploma (IBD), this qualification was received by less than 0.01% of Year 12 students in Queensland in 2016.
- **WP Cluster membership (CLUSTER):** where each school was classified according to its involvement in a widening participation program delivered through a specific university cluster (e.g. the Griffith cluster);
- **Level of Engagement (ENGAGE):** a measure of the level of engagement by a given university in relation to a school in a given year;
- **School Socioeconomic Status (SES):** the measure of socioeconomic status for each school, in this case a measure of social disadvantage (ABS, 2017; ACARA, 2015);
- **School type (SCHOOL):** schools were classified as state or non-state schools;
- **Demographic variables (DEMOGRAPHIC):** other demographic measures, such as the percentage of a school applying class who are female or identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander peoples;
- **Economic variables (ECONOMIC):** local area unemployment rates were used as a proxy for labour market and economic activity in an area.
- **Time variable (YEAR):** the relevant year in which the intervention took place; and
- **Regional location (REGION):** the regional location of the school using the ASGS (2011) classifications grouped to urban, regional or remote. DET regions were also used to construct dummies.
- **Distance (DISTANCE):** distance from the nearest main university campus was used as a further measure of isolation for each school.

The empirical model was described as such:

$$AP_{it} = f [(OP+IBD)/SEP_{it}, CLUSTER_{it}, ENGAGE_{it}, SES_{it}, SCHOOL_{it}, DEMOGRAPHIC_{it}, ECONOMIC_{it}, YEAR_{it}, REGION_{it}, DISTANCE_{it}],$$

where *i* represented the number of schools in the study and for each year (*t*) from 2010 (base year) to 2016. Results of the quantitative model are presented in Appendix 1.

3.2 Qualitative Methodology

The aim of the qualitative component of this study was to assess the reported impact of widening participation activities in their context as well as the factors that were seen as enabling or preventing applications to university, and any perceived differential factors between regional and urban areas. To achieve this aim, interviews and focus groups were

conducted with a variety of stakeholder groups to generate first-hand accounts of the staff and students who had been involved in widening participation activities both in schools and universities. The qualitative component comprised case studies of nine schools in regional and urban areas and project managers from the universities which partnered with those schools. In addition, focus groups and interviews were conducted with current university students who previously attended widening participation schools and, thus, would have experienced widening participation activities delivered by one of the Consortium universities. Sample questions for each stakeholder group were developed and are included in Appendix 2.

Participant Recruitment

Ethics approval was granted by the Curtin University Human Research Ethics Committee prior to data collection. Approval from the Queensland Department of Education was also obtained for collection of data in Queensland state schools. In accordance with ethics requirements, all participants were provided with a Participant Information Sheet in advance of the focus groups and interviews that outlined the aim of the research; what the study involved; the benefits of the research; and that participation was voluntary with assured anonymity and confidentiality of data. Participants were also advised that the focus groups and interviews would be audio recorded, were provided with the list of questions, and were required to sign a consent form. Parental consent was also obtained for school student participants.

University Project Managers

University project managers from each of the eight Consortium universities were contacted by researchers and face-to-face interviews were scheduled at their university campus. Project managers were invited to include other key project staff and interviews were made up of one to three participants. Interviews were 30-90 minutes in duration.

School Case Studies

Nine case study schools were selected using the following six criteria to provide a balance of urban and regional schools and representation across university clusters and geographic regions. The following six selection criteria were applied to selection of case study schools:

1. Moderate to high level of engagement and longevity with Widening Participation activities;
2. At least one school included from each university cluster;
3. 4 urban schools, 1 Inner Regional, 2 Outer Regional and 2 Remote or Very Remote schools;
4. Regional schools include both provincial city and rural schools;
5. Across regional and urban schools there are examples of both positive and negative growth in school application rates;
6. School is not subject to current or recent evaluation/research engagement unrelated to this project.

Engagement was based on school engagement data provided by each university and university project managers were consulted on a shortlist of schools to approach from their cluster. Interviews and focus groups were conducted with school staff, school students, parents and community representatives in each of the schools. Participating case study schools and their ICSEA (measure of socioeconomic status, ACARA, 2015) and key geographic characteristics are outlined in Table 2. Details of Year 12 student completions, participation in OP (academic) pathways and university application behaviour are outlined in Table 3.

Table 2: Case study schools, ICSEA and key geographic characteristics

| | SCHOOL CODE NAME | ICSEA (2016) | ASGS CLASSIFICATION | SCHOOL LOCATION | UNIVERSITY CLUSTER | DISTANCE TO MAJOR CAMPUS |
|---|-----------------------|--------------|---------------------|------------------------|--------------------|--------------------------|
| 1 | Metro South | 930 | Major Cities | Outer urban suburb | GRIFFITH | 20-30 km |
| 2 | Metro West | 910 | Major Cities | Outer urban suburb | UQ | 30 km |
| 3 | Metro North | 960 | Major Cities | Outer urban suburb | ACU /QUT | 20-30 km |
| 4 | Metro Outer North | 940 | Major Cities | Outer urban suburb | QUT | 50 km |
| 5 | Provincial City South | 920 | Inner Regional | Provincial city suburb | CQU | < 10 km |
| 6 | Provincial City North | 950 | Outer Regional | Provincial city suburb | JCU | < 10km |
| 7 | Regional Town | 860 | Outer Regional | Rural town | USC | 200 km |
| 8 | Remote North | 890 | Remote | Remote town | JCU | 1,000 km |
| 9 | Remote South | 900 | Remote | Remote town | USQ | 400 km |

Table 3: Case study schools: Year 12 completions, OP pathways and university applications (2012-2016 average)

| | SCHOOL CODE NAME | NUMBER YR 12 COMPLETIONS (2012-16 AVERAGE) | PROPORTION YR 12 ON OP (ACADEMIC) PATHWAY (2012-16 AVERAGE) | PROPORTION YR 12 WITH UNI APPLICATION (2012-16 AVERAGE) | PROPORTION YR 12 COMPLETING UNI ENROLMENT (2012-16 AVERAGE) |
|---|-----------------------|--|---|---|---|
| 1 | Metro South | 296 | 25% | 25% | 17% |
| 2 | Metro West | 116 | 31% | 22% | 14% |
| 3 | Metro North | 138 | 23% | 36% | 22% |
| 4 | Metro Outer North | 161 | 34% | 32% | 20% |
| 5 | Provincial City South | 89 | 30% | 26% | 18% |
| 6 | Provincial City North | 347 | 39% | 36% | 25% |
| 7 | Regional Town | 51 | 38% | 27% | 19% |
| 8 | Remote North | 127 | 28% | 22% | 13% |
| 9 | Remote South | 31 | 25% | 25% | 14% |
| | Queensland | | 54% | 50% | 35% |

Table 2 and 3 show that the urban and regional school groupings differed notably in terms of their variation in ICSEA (ACARA, 2015) and size. The four urban schools in the sample had ICSEA scores between 910 and 960, the five regional schools between 860 and 950. The urban schools ranged in size of their average Year 12 cohort from 116 to 296 whereas the regional school range was between 31 and 347 Year 12 students.

In terms of student outcomes, the regional and urban clusters in this study showed very similar outcomes. Between 22 and 36 per cent of eligible school leavers in both regional and urban schools applied to university. There was a slightly larger spread in terms of actual university enrolments in the regional schools (between 13 and 25 per cent) than the urban ones (between 14 and 22 per cent). Only one urban school had a higher proportion of Year 12 students applying for university entry than were on an OP pathway.

Principals of selected schools were approached and invited to participate in the research study. Each principal approached was provided with a copy of Queensland Department of Education approval to approach letter; Curtin University ethics approval; participant information statements and sample questions for each participant group; principal consent

form; and working with children approval (Queensland Blue Card or Exemption) for researchers involved in the study. Principals who agreed to participate in the research were asked to organize:

- an interview with the principal or other staff members involved with the school – university partnership (40-50 minutes);
- a focus group interview with a group of parents or community representatives (30-40 minutes); and
- a focus group interview with a group of senior (Year 11 and/or Year 12) students (40-50 minutes).

Data collection for the school case studies was conducted during Term 2 and 3, 2017 (May to September) on school premises during school hours with some schools scheduling student focus groups over break times to limit disruption to classroom learning time. Where focus groups occurred at break times, refreshments were provided. Parent focus groups and interviews mostly occurred during school times and consisted of parents and community representatives including Parent and Citizen Association Presidents, Community Liaison Officers and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community Education Councilors. Parent focus groups or interviews were held according to participant availability and were conducted face-to-face, except for one phone interview. At one school, short interviews were conducted with parents attending a senior pathways information evening at the school. Two parent interviews were conducted outside school premises.

Current University Students

University students who completed Year 12 in 2014, 2015 or 2016 were purposively recruited from a list of identified schools provided by the Queensland Consortium Project Manager. The schools were sorted by partner university, remoteness, and socioeconomic status. The identified schools were selected on the basis that their 2014, 2015 and 2016 Year 12 cohorts should have had at least two opportunities to participate in widening participation activities while at school.

University-based outreach program managers were advised that participants did not need to have attended one of their university's cluster schools and, where possible, focus groups should include participants from more than one school. University student participants could be in any year, any degree and could be enrolled either full-time or part-time.

A mix of focus groups and interviews was employed to improve participation. Focus groups were around 60 minutes in duration and conducted at a campus of the partner university. Interviews were predominantly phone-based and were approximately 15-20 minutes in duration. All participants were recruited via email. Focus group and interview participants were provided with a \$25 gift card in recognition of their time.

Sample sizes and characteristics

The total qualitative sample is made up of 177 individual participants including 14 university project managers; 15 school staff members; 69 school students; 33 parent and community representatives; and 46 current university students. A breakdown of the sample by school/university, geographic location and gender for each stakeholder group is outlined below.

University Project Managers

A total of 14 project managers from across eight universities participated in project manager interviews. The sample consisted of 9 female and 5 male participants which is consistent with the overall gender profile of equity practitioners. Project managers came from four

regionally headquartered universities, three Brisbane metropolitan universities and the Brisbane campus of the multi-state ACU. Composition of the project manager sample is included in Table 4.

Table 4: Widening Participation Project Managers sample (n = 14)

| WHERE | FORMAT AND NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS | COMPOSITION |
|----------|-----------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| ACU | Interview = 2 | Gender split: 1 male, 1 female |
| CQU | Interview = 1 | Gender split: 1 female |
| Griffith | Interview = 2 | Gender split: 2 male |
| JCU | Interview = 3 | Gender split: 2 female , 1 male |
| QUT | Interview = 2 | Gender split: 1 female , 1 male |
| UQ | Interview = 2 | Gender split: 3 female |
| USC | Interview = 1 | Gender split: 1 female |
| USQ | Interview = 1 | Gender split: 1 female |

Case Study Schools

School case study participants totalled 117 which included 15 school staff, 33 parent and community representatives and 69 school students. Breakdown of participants by case study school and stakeholder group is contained in Table 5 below. Apart from school staff participants which included 9 male and six female participants both the parent sample and the student sample were dominated by female participants. The parent sample was made up of 27 females and six males while the school student sample consisted of 49 females and 20 males. This female overrepresentation is consistent with female overrepresentation in low SES school application rates though a little heightened in the sample.

Table 5: Sample of school staff, students and parents by case study school (n = 117)

| WHERE | FORMAT AND NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS | COMPOSITION |
|-----------------------|---|---|
| Metro South | Staff Focus Group= 3 Parent Focus Group= 4 Student Focus Group= 9 | School staff: Principal and 2 Guidance Officers (2 male, 1 female) Parents (4 female) School Students: Year 12 (2 male, 7 female) ASGS Classification: Major Cities |
| Metro West | Staff Interview= 1 Parent Interviews= 3 Student Focus Group= 5 | School staff: Senior School Deputy Principal (female) Parents (3 female) School Students: Year 12 (5 female) ASGS Classification: Major Cities |
| Metro North | Staff Focus Group= 3 Parent Interviews= 7 Student Focus Group= 8 | School staff: Head of Department, Guidance Officer, Pathways Officer (1 male, 2 female) Parents (4 male, 3 female) School Students: Year 12 (4 male, 4 female) ASGS Classification: Major Cities |
| Metro Outer North | Staff Interview= 1 Student Focus Group= 9 | School staff: Principal (male) School Students: Year 12 (1 male, 8 female) ASGS Classification: Major Cities |
| Provincial City South | Staff Interview= 1 Parent Interviews= 2 Student Focus Group= 3 | School staff: Principal (male) Parents (1 male, 1 female) School Students: 2xYear 12, 1xYear 11 (3 male) ASGS Classification: Inner Regional |
| Provincial City North | Staff Interview= 2 Parent Interviews= 3 Student Focus Group= 8 | School staff: Principal and Senior School Deputy (1 male, 1 female) Parents (3 female) School Students: Year 11 (1 male, 7 female) ASGS Classification: Outer Regional |
| Regional Town | Staff Interview= 1 Parent Interview= 2 Student Focus Group= 10 | School staff: Principal (male) Parents (1 male, 1 female) School Students: 4xYear 10-12 (female); 6xYear 7-9 (male) |

| WHERE | FORMAT AND NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS | COMPOSITION |
|--------------|--|--|
| | | ASGS Classification: Outer Regional |
| Remote North | Staff Interview= 1 Parent Focus Group= 9 Student Focus Group= 10 | School staff: Senior School Deputy Principal (male) Parents (9 female) School Students: Year 12 (3 male, 7 female) ASGS Classification: Remote |
| Remote South | Staff Interviews= 2 Parent Interviews= 3 Student Focus Group= 7 | School staff: Acting Principal and Guidance Officer (1 male, 1 female) Parents (3 female) School Students: 4xYear 11 and 3xYear 12 (7 female) ASGS Classification: Remote |

Current University Students

Focus groups and interviews were conducted with 46 current university students who completed Year 12 at a Queensland widening participation target school between 2014 and 2016. Sample details are in Table 6.

Table 6: Current university student participants sample (n = 46)

| WHERE | FORMAT AND NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS | COMPOSITION |
|--|-----------------------------------|---|
| ACU | Interviews = 1 | Gender split: 1 female ASGS Classification: Major Cities (1) |
| Griffith | Focus Group = 2 | Gender split: 1 female + 1 male ASGS Classification: Major Cities (2) |
| | Interviews = 1 | Gender split: 1 male ASGS Classification: Major Cities (1) |
| JCU | Focus Group = 5 | Gender split: 2 female + 3 male ASGS Classification: Outer Regional (3), Remote (1), Very Remote (1) |
| QUT | Focus Group = 8 | Gender split: 5 female + 3 male ASGS Classification: Major Cities (8) |
| | Interviews = 10 | Gender split: 6 female + 4 male ASGS Classification: Inner Regional (1), Major Cities (9) |
| UQ | Focus Group = 4 | Gender split: 3 female + 1 male ASGS Classification: Inner Regional (4) |
| USC | Focus Group = 3 | Gender split: 3 female ASGS Classification: Inner Regional (3) |
| | Interviews = 2 | Gender split: 2 male ASGS Classification: Inner Regional (2) |
| USC Fraser Coast* *formerly USQ Fraser Coast until 2016 | Interviews = 10 | Gender split: 9 female + 1 male ASGS Classification: Inner Regional (10) |

Of this sample, 22 (47.8%) participated in focus groups and 24 (52.2%) participated in interviews. There were more female (n = 30, 65.2%) than male (n = 16, 34.8%) participants originating from a variety of schools classified by ASGS as Major Cities (n = 21, 45.7%), Inner Regional (n = 20; 43.5%), Outer Regional (n = 3, 6.5%), Remote (n = 1, 2.2%) and Very Remote (n = 1, 2.2%) respectively.

Overall, 45.6% of participants were from urban schools with the remaining 54.4% from regional schools (Figure 2).



Figure 2: Urban vs. regional participants

Participants gender distribution varied by university locale as shown in Figure 3.

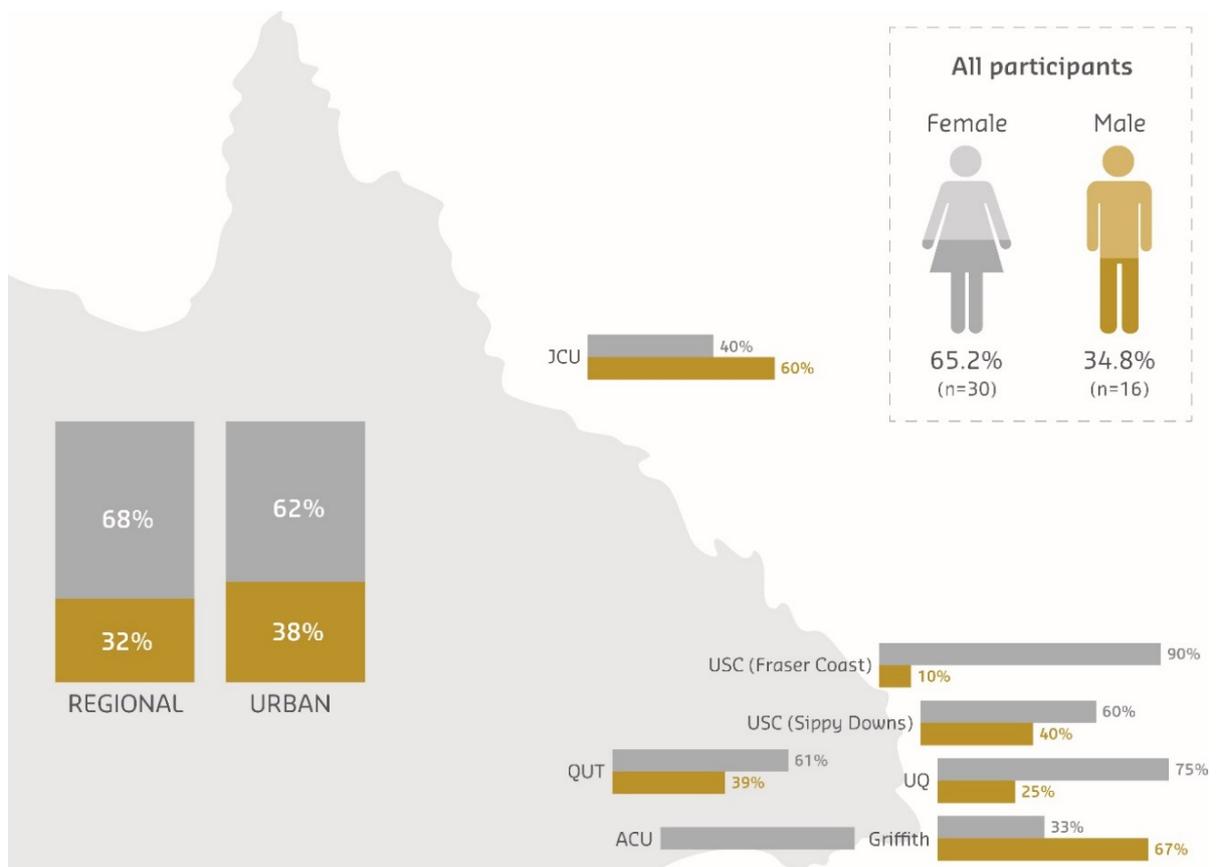


Figure 3: Gender distribution of participants

Participants were enrolled in a wide variety of degrees and double degrees including accounting, arts, biomedicine, business, creative industries, ecological science, education, engineering, exercise sport science, film, law, medicine, nursing, psychology, physiotherapy, science, social psychology and zoology. Figure 4 organises participant degrees into broad categories. The sample was diverse in terms of career paths, with low, medium and high degree entrance requirements represented.

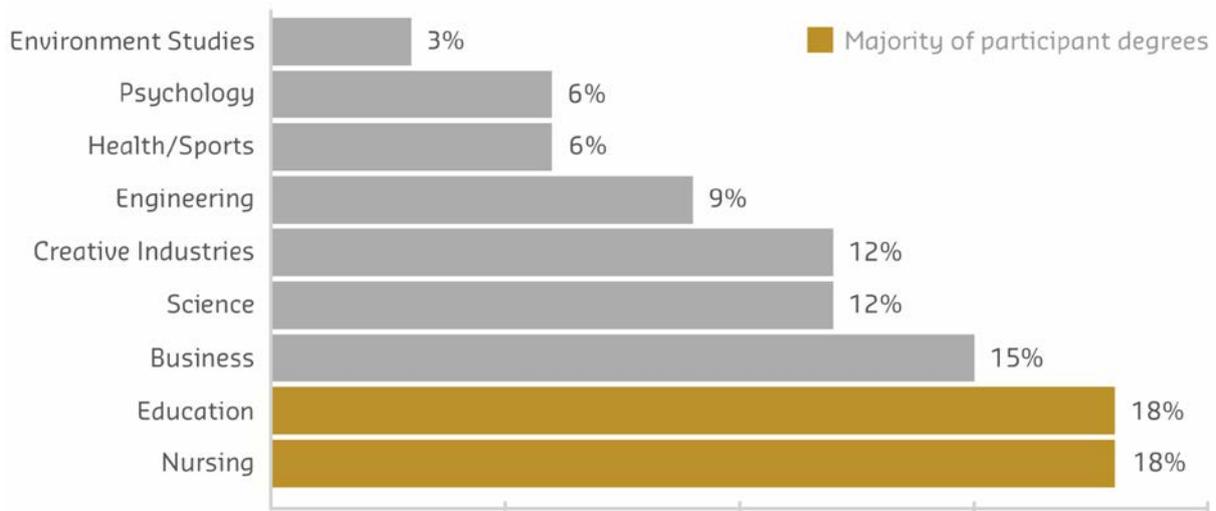


Figure 4: Degree distribution of participants

Participants attending the urban universities were typically from urban schools except for one QUT (city campus) participant and all UQ participants who were from regional locales. Conversely, all regional participants originated from regional schools.

Overall, the sample was representative of the population of interest which comprises more females than males, with participants from seven of the eight partner universities enrolled in a wide variety of degrees. The number of urban and regional participants was relatively balanced, and the sample size of 46 was more than sufficient, falling in the range typical of a doctoral thesis (Perry, 1998). Importantly, saturation was achieved in the focus groups and interviews whereby no new issues were being revealed (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Thus, the data generated from the sample was valid, reliable and suitable for theory building (Eisenhardt, 1989).

Analysis Process

Data Preparation

An online, commercial transcription service was engaged to transcribe the digital audio recordings. Transcriptions were reviewed upon receipt. Focus group transcriptions identified the facilitator from participants as well as the gender and which male/female participant was speaking.

All transcripts were classified according to participant type and location. School case study participants and university project managers were classified as either urban or regional based on school or university location. Current university student participants were classified as either urban or regional based upon the location of the high school they attended.

Aliases were assigned to each current university student participant. Care was taken to ensure that there was no overlap between aliases and the names of any other participants. Each alias reflected the gender of participants and additional descriptors were added to the alias regarding their urban or regional classification and the degree in which they were enrolled to aid analysis and interpretation. For the university project managers and school case studies, institution and personal names and any other identifying information has been deleted from the report.

Preliminary Analysis

The data generated from university project managers and the school case studies were analysed together as their responses represented the two sides of the school-university

partnerships. However, the current university student respondents were analysed separately to preserve the important post-facto perspective they brought to this study.

Case Study Data

Data analysis for the case studies was undertaken using Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis (CAQDAS) software QSR International NVivo™ (Version 11). The initial analysis of transcripts involved a single coder who commenced with an inductive (emergent) approach to establish nuanced coding of micro factors and sub factor categories. Once interim coding was completed for all transcripts, coding reports were generated and node descriptors (codebook) distributed to two other research team members for review. Ensuing team feedback included the need to collapse a range of sub-sub factors particularly where the analysis was too fine-grained. Advice was also sought from within the field of practice about the macro and micro factor terminology for its relevance and implicit meaning.

Current University Students

Preliminary analysis of the current university students' data was undertaken by a single coder using an inductive (emergent) approach in the first instance. The single coder collected the vast majority of data, taking hand-written field notes during data collection and making post-collection, reflective memos identifying potential themes and patterns. These field notes and reflective memos, in concert with the transcriptions were subject to manual thematic analysis. The manual thematic analysis identified explicit and implicit notions including the co-occurrence of themes among participants from urban versus regional settings.

Analysis Framework

The results of the two preliminary analysis processes were brought together at a meeting of the project team in Perth in October 2017 by comparing the emerging coding frameworks and preliminary findings from the two data sets. To address the three research objectives of the study, an analysis framework was developed based on the following five factors:

1. Institutional factors;
2. Situational factors;
3. Dispositional factors;
4. Impact of Consortium widening participation programs; and
5. Recommendations for optimising widening participation in regional settings.

The triad of institutional, situational and dispositional factors which influence students' decision to apply for university builds on Cross's (1981) model developed in her book *Adults as learners: Increasing participation and facilitating learning*. The model has been adopted by Carroll, Eric and Birch (2009) as well as Jancey and Burns (2013) to explore postgraduate student participation. For this study, the focus is placed on school-leavers instead of adult learners.

With reference to Cross' model, a deductive approach was employed to map the sub-factors identified in the preliminary analysis. Consortium documents, including annual project reports and engagement data, were also used to verify program design, duration and engagement data for institutional factor analysis.

For the purpose of this study, 'Institutional' factors include all program-related factors, namely program design, degree of engagement by schools, funding levels and program implementation. External factors that affect students' participation in higher education but were beyond the immediate control of the widening participation program were separated into 'situational' and 'dispositional' factors. Situational factors related to the local school and wider community, the availability of role models and high quality information as well as financial and other resource pressures. Dispositional factors captured beliefs, values and

attitudes towards higher education study held by students and their key influencers as well as students' school achievement.

The impact factors were developed based on the themes which emerged in the preliminary analysis and by drawing on commonly reported objectives of widening participation programs. Any recommendations made by participants were collated under the fifth factor and integrated with the key findings from this study to develop the set of recommendations presented in the final chapter.

The relationship between mega factors and research objectives (RO1, RO2 and RO3) is also indicated in the framework which is included as Figure 5.

Analysis of Mega Factors and Sub-Factors

For the case study analysis, each mega factor was assigned to one researcher and written up using a common template. Cross-checking by the other researchers confirmed and validated the findings. For the current university student analysis, the analysis was carried out by another researcher and her assistant, using the same template to write up results. Ad hoc discussions of the entire qualitative project team assisted with sense making of the themes and patterns in the data and consistency in interpretation of the various mega factors and sub-factors.

It was anticipated that the factors influencing school-leaver application rates would not necessarily separate neatly into distinct urban and regional sets of sub-factors, but that similar themes might emerge across all clusters, with potentially differential impacts across the locations. Thus, it was determined to measure how often a factor presented in the data (prominence) and how strongly – positive, neutral or negative – it was viewed by participants (sentiment).

Prominence of Sub-Factors

To establish the prominence of each sub-factor within the context of institutional, situational and dispositional factors and program impact, researchers counted the number of sources (individual interviews or focus group discussions) which covered the respective sub-factor. In a second step, researchers divided the total sources by urban and regional locations. The level of prominence of each sub-factor was then judged relative to the other sub-factors in the category. For example, situational factors were the most prominent of the three factors considered in our analysis. If a situational sub-factor was mentioned in less than 5 conversations in either location, it would be regarded as of low prominence. If it was mentioned 5 to 10 times, it would be judged as of moderate prominence. Only if the sub-factor was mentioned in 10 or more conversations in regional, or urban locations, would it be classified as highly prominent.

Sentiment Expressed by Participants with Regard to Sub-Factors

The final step in the analysis was for each researcher to identify significant quotes which illustrated core aspects of a particular sub-factor and to judge the thrust of the quote as positive, neutral or negative based on the choice of words, emphasis and tone of the speaker. The average of the total number of positive, neutral and negative quotes then formed the overall sentiment rating of each sub-factor for regional and urban locations.

ANALYSIS FRAMEWORK:

DIFFERENTIAL FACTORS IN URBAN AND REGIONAL LOCATIONS

RO: Research Objective

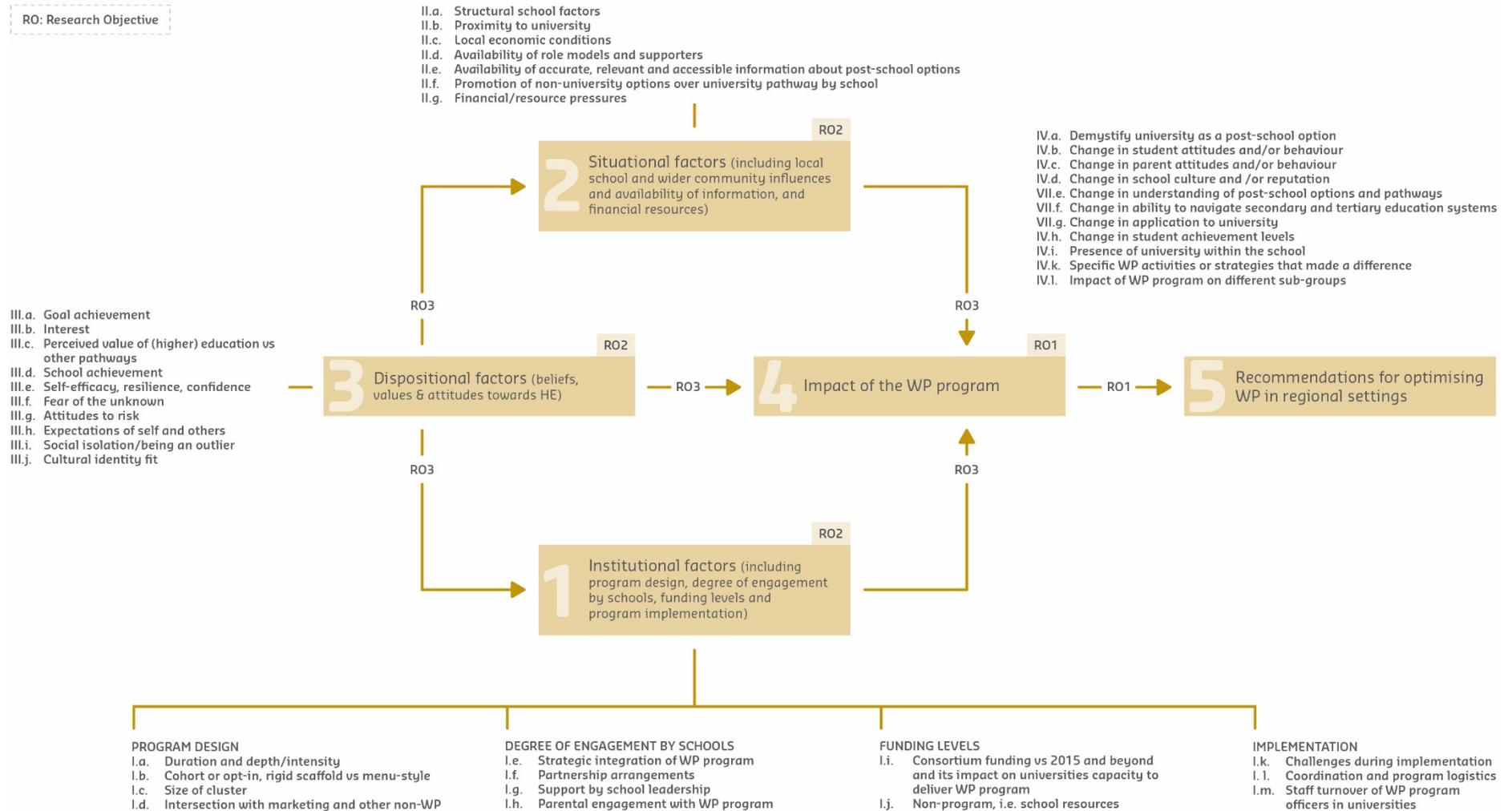


Figure 5: Analysis Framework

Independent Review of Case Study Data

The research team also sought the assistance of a NVivo Certified expert to provide independent advice on the application of the NVivo software including feedback on coding and the node framework as well as approaches to establishing and maintaining rigorous analysis. The independent advisor identified anomalies resulting from duplication of source materials and the need to merge similar sub-nodes within the coding framework. These recommendations were integrated into the project. In addition, the advisor provided guidance on the meaning of numeric values within NVivo, particularly the importance of coding density (number of sources x number of references). This ensures that the output data is based on what is representative (number of sources) and topically relevant (number of references). At the conclusion of coding, the independent advisor checked the coding framework for its analytical logic, namely the 'fit' of thematic coding data and categories within both micro and macro factors.

Data Limitations

Data obtained through qualitative methods provide rich insights into individuals' perceptions, opinions and lived experiences. The main objective of the qualitative analysis was to understand the local context of participants and how this influenced their assessments of the effectiveness of widening participation activities as well as applications of young people to university. However, even a large qualitative study such as this is unable to represent all viewpoints and experiences. Participation in the study was voluntary and self-selection might have led to some biases in the sample, such as greater participation of students who had memorable widening participation experiences or more representation of actively engaged parents rather than a more diverse parent group. A number of strategies were employed to minimise the risk of bias. The school sample was specifically structured to get a diversity of schools with different regional profiles. Moreover, the use of expert proxies, namely university project managers and school leaders, and the alignment of responses from school and university participants as well as with quantitative findings provides an increased level of confidence in the results.

4 Quantitative Findings

4.1 Approach to Quantitative Modelling

The quantitative work was undertaken to explain variations in school-level university application rates using data for the independent variables (explanatory factors) identified in Section 3.2. A listing of these variables and *a priori* expectations of their impact is reported in Table 7 below.

Table 7: Expected impact on applications of each variables

| VARIABLE | ASSESSED IMPACT ON UNIVERSITY APPLICATIONS (+/-/X) |
|--------------------|---|
| (OP+IBD)/SEP | + Schools with larger (OP+IBD)/SEP classes will have higher levels of applications. |
| CLUSTER | X It is expected that the WP cluster programs on average increase the level of applications to university. However, there might be differences in effects across clusters as captured by this variable. |
| ENGAGE | + Higher levels of engagement result in stronger impacts on application numbers; both between clusters and over time. |
| SES (disadvantage) | + Higher levels of social advantage result in higher levels of applications to university. |
| SCHOOL | + It is expected that school type will impact on application rates. |
| DEMOGRAPHIC | X Mixed impacts – on average, it is expected that female students will have higher levels of application to tertiary institutions (+); it is expected that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students will have lower rates of application (-). |
| ECONOMIC | X Mixed impacts – less healthy economic areas have fewer resources and levels of social capital to support students. However, areas with better economic activity have more post-school options. |
| YEAR | + It is expected that applications will rise over time, even after controlling for growth in the number of students completing Year 12 – in other words, the impact of the widening participation programs activities should strengthen over time. |
| REGION | - It is expected that schools in 'regional' areas of Queensland will have lower rates of applications compared with those in urban areas, as observed in recent years in Queensland. |
| DISTANCE | - Schools which are further away from main university campuses are likely to have fewer students applying to attend university. |

The use of ordinary least squares (OLS) regression allowed for the identification of the contribution of an independent variable to changes in the application rate after controlling for the effects of all other variables and across years. This ensures there were as many data points as possible and changes between schools and over the period of examination could be captured, rather than a point to point comparison which the data did not allow for.

4.2 Description of the Data

The Dependent Variable: AP/SEP

The dependent variable in the modelling was the applications variable (AP). This is based on the number of students within a school who submitted an application for study at a Consortium university for semester 1 in the year following school completion. This is expressed as a proportion of the number of students within the same school with a Senior Education Profile (SEP) to yield AP/SEP as the dependent variable.

Independent Variables (Explanatory Factors)

The independent variables used to explain movements in AP/SEP were:

(OP+IBD)/SEP

(OP+IBD)/SEP measures the importance of standard academic pathways in a school relative to class size. *(OP+IBD)/SEP* was constructed as a measure of the academic proportion of the SEP (total class size). It was expected that applications will positively relate to larger numbers of students on academic pathways (*OP+IBD*) as a share of class size.

WP Cluster

Each widening participation target school was assigned to a *WP cluster* run by a university in the Consortium. Membership of a given cluster is denoted in a dummy variable – “1” for membership of a given cluster; “0” for non-membership. Non-WP schools are coded “0” throughout. This variable set enabled us to determine the extent to which there were differences across WP clusters.

Engagement

The level of engagement in a widening participation program was measured and expressed in variable terms in a number of ways. The data on engagement was self-reported by universities, and was unavailable for CQU and USQ for the years 2015 and 2016. These schools were excluded in the 2015-2016 analysis. Several versions of the engagement variable were trialled. The measure of engagement used in this modelling was:

Engage_Yr12_Depth: dummy variables indicating the level of engagement the student received when they were in Year 12. From 2012-2014, these were split into three categories 1 (*low engage*), 2 (*medium engage*) and 3 (*high engage*). From 2015 onwards, the data also includes a 4 (very high) category. To ensure comparability, ‘very high’ was coded to *high engage*.

Engagement effects were estimated in comparison to the default category of “no engagement”, which was the coding for all non-WP schools.

SES

Two measures of socioeconomic status were used – the ICSEA measure from NAPLAN testing (ACARA, 2015) and the IRSAD index measure from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS, 2017) – in separate model specifications. Very similar effects were found for both and only models using the ABS’s IRSAD index variable are reported here. The IRSAD index uses data from the ABS census variable, *Index of Relative Socioeconomic Advantage and Disadvantage* (IRSAD), a general socioeconomic index that summarises a range of information about the economic and social conditions of people and households within an area. It was sourced from the ABS and matched to school postcodes. This series is in continuous form, with a mean across schools in the sample of 997, with the sample split into 4 quartiles. A higher IRSAD score corresponds to lower levels of measured disadvantage.

Unemployment Rate Smoothed

Small area unemployment data was used to proxy for local economic conditions (*ue*). These data was sourced from the *small area labour markets* collection of the Department of Employment (<https://www.employment.gov.au/small-area-labour-markets-publication>). Data were provided in 9-digit SA2 form, quarterly data from Dec-2010 to Mar-2017. In the final data series, each year’s reading is the average over all quarters in the calendar year, except for 2010 where it is just the Dec-2010 reading.

These codes have a many-to-many relationship. That is, each postcode is made up of multiple SA2 codes and each SA2 code can go into more than one postcode. Therefore, to aggregate to get one reading per postcode, the average value over all SA2s that fall into each postcode was used.

Distance Measures

Distance to main campus data was derived from school location in an SA2 area and the correspondence table for proximity to SA2 area developed by the NCSEHE was used to create the distance measure. The postcode to SA2 correspondence was used from the calculation undertaken for the unemployment rate.

4.3 Data Limitations

The quantitative approach was constrained by the fact that it looked at school-level rather than individual-level data – in effect, modelling school university application numbers as a function of school characteristics and location as well as participation in widening participation program activities. In looking at aggregate performance at the school level this analysis did not account for individual variables (i.e., those differences that might be observed between students at the same school) but rather examined ‘between school variables’ such as school size, regional location and the presence and level of engagement of widening participation program outreach providers.

While this limits the extent to which strong claims can be made based on the use of school-level data alone, this work is still useful in the sense that it can still provide evidence on overall school performance and effects flowing from the widening participation programs.

4.4 Model Estimation

The key model results are reported in Table A of Appendix 1. The approach to the modelling was to commence with a relatively simple model (Model I), building to the models with all sets of explanatory variables – Model VI (cluster variables) and Model VII (DET regional variables). Table B reports some sub-sample analysis for Model VI.

An activity and outcomes summary of the modelling is included below:

Model I was the basic model to explain applications (AP) as a proportion of SEP class (AP/SEP). It only included geographical variables (remote and regional), disadvantage variables (as proxied by IRSAD), and engagement variables (no engagement; and *low*, *medium* and *high* dummy variables). This was primarily used to demonstrate the impact of regionality and disadvantage on application rates.

These results provided statistically significant evidence for a strong negative regional effect on application rates (-0.082, or an 8.2 per cent deficit in application rates (AP/SEP) for regional schools, relative to that of urban schools in this model). An even greater negative effect was found for remote schools (-0.203; i.e. compared to urban schools, application rates are 20.3 per cent lower in remote areas).

Similarly, the IRSAD quartile variables showed negative effects across the income scale compared with the highest quartile, with schools in the lowest quartile having effects which were particularly pronounced (-0.125; application rates are 12.5 per cent lower than those of schools in the highest quartile).

While economic variables were included in preliminary work, they were not included in the final model configurations (I to VII) as they capture similar effects to those seen in the IRSAD variables.

Finally, the engagement variables were included. At this stage, because the widening participation program focuses on regional and socioeconomic disadvantage, it was expected that the engagement variables would, in part, capture aspects of such disadvantage. For this reason, the engagement variables were expected to have negative signs given the

comparison group was non-WP schools. The results in Model I confirmed this hypothesis, with substantial negative effects for engagement being observed when other variables were not controlled for. For instance, the estimated effect on the *high engage* variable (-0.226) implied substantially lower application rates among WP schools in this category compared to non-WP schools, even after accounting for regional and socioeconomic disadvantage.

Model II built on Model I though the introduction of a variable for school (*school type*). The inclusion of this variable yielded a statistically significant difference between state and non-state schools (-0.231) which had the impact of reducing the observed effect among WP schools. For instance, the estimated effect of the *high engage* variable in this model was -0.089, down from -0.226 in Model I.

In **Model III**, Model II was further extended to include variables for female (*femapp_ratio_all*) and Indigeneity (*atsiapp_ratio_ati*). A positive effect on application rates from rising female share (0.031) was observed, as was a negative effect from rising Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student share (-0.266), both of which were consistent with *a priori* expectations. The negative effect associated with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student share was quite large, being very similar to that associated with remote status.

Model IV included a dummy variable for each year to control for growth in enrolments over the period under examination. A significant effect over time was observed, as expected, with the years after 2011 showing statistically positive increases in application rates relative to the base year of 2010.

Model V was based on Model IV, but with the inclusion of individual university cluster variables to identify which university program had jurisdiction over a given school. The interpretation of these variables was difficult as they could quite easily be capturing region-specific (as opposed to 'regional location' effects) as well as effects attributable to program design and delivery in each cluster.

The one noteworthy result in this model however, was the emergence of an observed positive effect on the *high engage* variable, albeit a statistically insignificant one. This suggested that cluster/region effects are important controls for assessing the impact of the widening participation program. The effect was observed in both urban and regional areas, but more data is required to identify the extent to which engagement interacts with regional variables to affect application rates. This forms the basis for our chief recommendation which argues for the retention of data collection around university outreach programs across all regions with a view to adding to the evidence base on program delivery and application outcomes.

Model VI expanded on Model V through the introduction of the $(OP+IBD)/SEP$ variable, which had yet to be introduced into the modelling. This is a highly significant variable and one which accounts for a substantial amount of variation in application rates (AP/SEP), with an estimated effect of 0.746, indicating that a 10 per cent reduction in $(OP+IBD)/SEP$ results in a 7.46% reduction in AP/SEP . Importantly, the observed effects on the *high engage* variable remained positive and were statistically significant in Model VI (an estimate of 0.027). However, widening participation programs with other levels of engagement have statistically insignificant effects.

Table B in Appendix 1 reports some results for Model VI using various sub-samples for regional and remote schools only (no engagement effect observed), WP schools only (significant *high engage* effect observed) and regional and remote WP schools only (no engagement effect observed).

Model VII replaced the *regional*, *remote* and *WP cluster* variables with DET regional variables (base variable is Central Queensland). This yielded a similar result to that seen in Model VI, with the *high engage* variable remaining significant.

4.5 Quantitative Summary of Findings

The results from the work are summarised below in Table 8 in view of the a priori expectations above. Full results are reported in Appendix 1.

The modelling supported the general contention that region/regionalicity was important in explaining variations in the application rate between urban and regional schools.

The evidence from the early models (I to IV) shows that the widening participation program variables tended to act as proxies for disadvantage, that is, schools selected for inclusion in the widening participation program tended to be located in disadvantaged and/or regional areas.

However, when more measures of social and economic disadvantage were included, the observed negative effect of the WP variable decreased, and in the case of *high engage* programs, became positive and statistically significant.

The inclusion of a richer series of explanatory variables allowed for an examination of the role of regionality and disadvantage in relation to school-level application rates. To this end, the quantitative work looking at school-level data provided evidence on the two central questions of this study:

- **Disadvantage in the regional and remote areas:** There was a consistently lower level of application to universities from schools in regional and remote Queensland, even after introducing controls for socioeconomic variables in their local areas; and
- **Some evidence for a positive widening participation program impact:** There was some evidence that from 2011 onwards the widening participation program and related cluster variables acted as a proxy for disadvantage in the model. This can be seen in the reduction in the size and significance of the negative effect when the explanatory variables for disadvantage were included. Once control variables for regional and socioeconomic disadvantage were included, as well as a variable representing academic pathways in Year 12, there was evidence to support the contention that *high engage* widening participation programs have had a positive impact on application rates.

In addition, it is found that aside from the benefits of using individual-based data, there was one key constraint in school data set:

- **Pathways are important:** This study was constrained by the lack of data on:
 - direct applications to university;
 - entry via vocational education and training (VET) programs; and
 - students non-application behaviour due to labour market participation and 'gap year' behaviour which does not include an application to university from Year 12 (Tomaszewski et.al., 2017).

To this extent, the findings from this study should be considered to be conservative estimates of the impact of the widening participation activities of the Queensland Consortium.

Table 8: Assessed impact of variable on applications

| VARIABLE | ASSESSED IMPACT ON UNIVERSITY APPLICATIONS (+/-/X) |
|--------------|---|
| (OP+IBD)/SEP | SUPPORTED + Larger (OP+IBD)/SEP shares led to higher levels of applications in most models. |
| CLUSTER | SUPPORTED X There are various observed differences in the impact of university clusters. This is likely to be due to regional and program delivery effects, with programs in regional areas facing resourcing issues compared with those in urban areas and universities delivering programs at various levels of engagement. |

| VARIABLE | ASSESSED IMPACT ON UNIVERSITY APPLICATIONS (+/-/X) |
|--------------------|---|
| ENGAGE | SUPPORTED + Evidence for a positive and statistically significant effect of high engage widening participation programs. |
| SES (disadvantage) | CONFIRMED - Higher levels of social disadvantage resulted in lower levels of applications to university, with measured effects being statistically significant for the large part. |
| SCHOOL | CONFIRMED - school type affected application rates. |
| DEMOGRAPHIC | CONFIRMED - Mixed impacts – on average, female students had higher levels of application to universities; Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students tended to have lower rates of application. |
| ECONOMIC | UNCERTAIN – Excluded from final modelling. In preliminary work, there is some evidence, in the full sample, that the unemployment rate had a significant impact on school application rates, suggesting healthier application rates in areas with more robust labour markets. However, this was insignificant when the sample was restricted to just regional and remote schools, indicating this may be confined to urban areas. |
| YEAR | SUPPORTED + Some support that applications were rising over time. |
| REGION | CONFIRMED - Schools in 'regional' and 'remote' areas of Queensland were consistently shown to have lower rates of applications compared with those in urban areas. |
| DISTANCE | UNCERTAIN –In preliminary work, there was some evidence to show that schools which are further away from main university campuses had fewer students applying to attend university. However, this effect is collinear with our measures of regionality so DISTANCE was excluded from the final modelling. |

5 Qualitative Findings

The findings presented in this section are organised around four of the five factors that comprise the analysis framework – institutional factors; situational factors, dispositional factors; and impact of the widening participation program. As the focus of this study is on uncovering differences between low SES regional and urban cohorts, detailed discussion is provided only for those sub-factors where differential responses were recorded in urban and regional settings.

5.1 Institutional Factors

Institutional factors include 13 sub-factors grouped under the headings: program design; degree of engagement by schools; funding levels; and implementation. For these factors differentials in sentiment, and in one instance with regard to prominence, were found in both the school case studies and the current university student samples. The difference in prominence is related to the strategic integration of widening participation programs among current university students. The consistency in prominence levels between urban and regional participants across the numerous sub-factors is notable.

Program Design

Institutional factors related to program design were both high in prominence and the source of a number of differentials in sentiment. Responses from project managers, and data held by the Queensland Consortium, show differences in the duration, depth and intensity of programs between regional and urban areas. Table 9 shows a massive scale up of activity between 2010 and 2012 and also some large reductions in the number of engaged schools by 2016, particularly in regional locations. In urban areas, widening participation programs tended to have longer duration, greater intensity and reach more year levels than programs delivered in regional locations. Significant changes have occurred to regional programs since 2015 while the largest urban programs have been in place for more than a decade.

Table 9: Number of schools engaged in widening participation activities by each Queensland University 2010, 2012, 2014 and 2016

| | ACU | CQU | Griffith | JCU | QUT | UQ | USQ | USC |
|---|-----|-----|----------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| 2010 secondary school engagement only | n/a | 11 | 16 | 6 | 16 | n/a | n/a | n/a |
| 2012 primary and secondary school engagement | 24 | 154 | 38 | 101 | 33 | 12 | 51 | 39 |
| 2014 primary and secondary school engagement | 29 | 169 | 40 | 115 | 33 | 15 | 105 | 43 |
| 2016 primary and secondary school engagement | 12 | 89 | 42 | 48 | 51 | 11 | 206 | 31 |

Across urban and regional locations, project managers reported utilising a mix of menu and scaffolded program design as well as whole-of-cohort and cohort specific programs. Table 10 lists types of activities provided through Consortium widening participation programs. Current university students from regional locations reported exposure to different activity types, but the variety of formats these students experienced was not as diverse when compared to their urban counterparts.

Table 10: Widening participation activity types offered by Consortium university

| | ACU | CQU | Griffith | JCU | QUT | UQ | USQ | USC |
|---------------------------------------|------------|------------|---------------------------|--------------|---------------------|------------|------------|------------|
| On campus experience | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ |
| Camps | | | | discontinued | √ | | √ | |
| In-school workshops and activities | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ |
| Curriculum Enrichment | √ | | √ | √ | √ | √ | | √ |
| Awards and scholarships | | | | √ | √ | | | |
| Career development | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ |
| Cohort-specific programs | Indigenous | Indigenous | Pasifika Children in care | Indigenous | Indigenous Pasifika | Indigenous | Indigenous | Indigenous |
| University subject offering in school | √ | | | | | | | |
| Early entry program | √ | | | | | | | |

Size of cluster was a significant differential in project manager responses. The Queensland Consortium model was based on universities partnering with a cluster of schools proximate to their campus location. This model has resulted in large differences in the number and geographic spread of schools across clusters. Regional project managers reported difficulty in reaching all schools in their cluster due to the number of schools, their geographic dispersal and the cost of servicing them, especially once the Consortium grant ended in 2014. In contrast, urban project managers had a smaller number of schools to service and all were in relatively close proximity to university campus locations.

A relatively high level of marketing and faculty-based programs were reported in both urban and regional areas, though lack of access to university visits and open days was commented on by remote students. In urban areas and provincial locations where students had experienced university demystification activities, open days and other non-widening participation university engagements were seen as valuable sources of information that helped with choice of course and university. In contrast, some remote students reported suspicion of university recruitment in the absence of authentic information about university life. Current university students from regional backgrounds reported less exposure to widening participation or other university outreach activities than urban background university students and did not readily distinguish between widening participation and these other forms of university engagement. Low widening participation engagement impacted on the effectiveness of both widening participation and recruitment activities by universities. Message confusion and decay appear to be affecting students who have not had ongoing widening participation engagement.

School Engagement

Degree of engagement was a significant differential factor for both school case study respondents and university students. While universities sought to integrate programs with school needs, in most regional case study schools this was not achieved because of the limited level of school engagement. One provincial city school was the only regional school to report a high level of widening participation integration. University students from regional backgrounds had mostly experienced ad-hoc widening participation programs while at school compared to more comprehensive and integrated experiences reported by students from urban locations.

Across regional and urban locations, formal partnership arrangements between schools and universities were extremely rare, with project managers and school leaders reporting that partnership arrangements were made on a school-by-school basis. These relationships were quite flexible, but required ongoing management by project staff to maintain. In both urban and regional locations, turnover of school personnel was seen as a major risk to these partnerships and to the degree of school engagement. While still affected by school staffing changes, project managers in the two urban universities with well-established programs reported greater program resilience. Support by school leadership was generally strong across regional and urban locations, however, this also suffered where engagement was more limited. In both urban and regional locations, parent respondents, while acknowledging they did not necessarily represent the wider school population, were generally well aware and supportive of widening participation programs and their benefit for their children. School staff and project managers acknowledged challenges in engaging effectively with parents and several project managers identified this as an area for further development. Several school leaders reported leveraging widening participation activities to increase engagement with parents.

Funding Levels

Changes to widening participation funding post-2014 had limited impact on program continuity or design across urban clusters. However, in regional clusters funding changes coincided with, or prompted, institutional changes that have impacted on program continuity and reach. In one region in particular, institutional changes together with a large reduction in funding had significant adverse impacts on program continuity. In that university, the formula-based HEPPP allocation proved inadequate to sustain a comprehensive and costly regional and remote outreach strategy. A further two regional universities chose to expand delivery of outreach activities to schools outside their original cluster, however this was accompanied by reduced program delivery in primary schools and more remote schools.

At the same time, a smaller regional university which used the comparatively smaller funding cut as an opportunity to review and realign the widening participation program with strategic objectives of the institution, reported improved program reach after this review. Generally, program managers were not aware of specific school funding issues that impacted on the uptake of widening participation programs, nor were these raised by school leaders.

Implementation

A number of implementation challenges, such as the servicing of large geographic regions, have been discussed under previous sub-factors. Other challenges were neither high in prominence nor very different across urban and regional locations. Project managers in both urban and regional locations spoke of the challenge to manage school and university expectations when programs grew in popularity but budgets were constrained. Many managers said they could deliver more outreach if budgets were increased. Project managers also reported that, in some schools, additional effort and persistence was required to challenge teacher expectations of low SES and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. School staff were also sometimes reluctant to provide access to whole cohorts of students rather than selected high achievers, however, as experience and trust with widening participation programs grew, greater student access could be achieved. In one regional cluster, ongoing staff changes had impacted on partnership development and program delivery. These implementation challenges highlight the importance of establishing and maintaining long-term partnerships with schools.

Table 11: Institutional factors — school case studies

| THEMES RELEVANT TO SCHOOL CASE STUDIES | URBAN EXPERIENCE | | REGIONAL EXPERIENCE | | DIFFERENTIAL |
|---|------------------|---|---------------------|---|--------------|
| | Prominence | Most Observed Sentiment | Prominence | Most Observed Sentiment | |
| PROGRAM DESIGN | | | | | |
| I.a. Duration and depth/intensity | HIGH |  | HIGH |  | ✓ sentiment |
| I.b. Cohort or opt-in, rigid scaffold vs. menu style | MODERATE |  | MODERATE |  | |
| I.c. Size of Cluster | MODERATE |  | MODERATE |  | ✓ sentiment |
| I.d. Intersection with marketing and other non-WP activities | HIGH |  | HIGH |  | ✓ sentiment |
| DEGREE OF ENGAGEMENT BY SCHOOLS | | | | | |
| I.e. Strategic integration of WP program | HIGH |  | HIGH |  | ✓ sentiment |
| I.f. Partnership arrangements | HIGH |  | HIGH |  | |
| I.g. Support by school leadership | MODERATE |  | MODERATE |  | |
| I.h. Parental engagement with WP programs | MODERATE |  | MODERATE |  | |
| FUNDING LEVELS | | | | | |
| I.i. Consortium vs 2015 and beyond | MODERATE |  | MODERATE |  | ✓ sentiment |
| I.j. Non-program funding | LOW |  | LOW |  | |
| IMPLEMENTATION | | | | | |
| I.k. Challenges during implementation | MODERATE |  | MODERATE |  | |
| I.l. Coordination and program logistics | LOW |  | LOW |  | |
| I.m. Staff turnover of WP program officers | LOW |  | LOW |  | ✓ sentiment |
| Sentiment Key:  Positive  Neutral  Negative | | | | | |

Table 12: Institutional factors — current university students

| THEMES RELEVANT TO UNI STUDENT SAMPLE | URBAN EXPERIENCE | | REGIONAL EXPERIENCE | | DIFFERENTIAL |
|--|------------------|---|---------------------|---|--------------|
| | Prominence | Most Observed Sentiment | Prominence | Most Observed Sentiment | |
| PROGRAM DESIGN | | | | | |
| I.a. Duration and depth/intensity | HIGH |  | HIGH |  | |
| I.b. Cohort or opt-in, rigid scaffold vs. menu style | MODERATE |  | MODERATE |  | ✓ sentiment |

| THEMES RELEVANT TO UNI STUDENT SAMPLE | URBAN EXPERIENCE | | REGIONAL EXPERIENCE | | DIFFERENTIAL |
|--|------------------|---|---------------------|---|--------------|
| | Prominence | Most Observed Sentiment | Prominence | Most Observed Sentiment | |
| I.d. Intersection with marketing and other non-WP activities | HIGH |  | HIGH |  | ✓ sentiment |
| DEGREE OF ENGAGEMENT BY SCHOOLS | | | | | |
| I.e. Strategic integration of WP program | HIGH |  | MODERATE |  | ✓ |

Sentiment Key:  Positive  Neutral  Negative

Program Design

Differential I.a. Duration and Depth/Intensity — School Case Studies

| | Urban | Regional |
|-------------------------|---|---|
| Prominence | HIGH | HIGH |
| Most Observed Sentiment |  |  |

Duration and depth of program delivery showed considerable variation across urban and regional locations and may be important to explaining differences in outcomes. Program managers in regional universities reported shorter program

duration and less continuity in comparison to urban universities. In the two largest urban school clusters, universities were able to build on outreach programs that pre-dated HEPPP funding and have been able to grow and sustain them over time. In contrast, each of the regional universities had to undertake much greater development and scaling up of widening participation programs in the start-up phase of the Consortium project. Regional universities are also more likely to have restructured programs significantly since 2015 due to funding and institutional changes.

Program depth and intensity also varied considerably between universities with programs targeting different year groups and providing differing intensity of experience. While Queensland's Widening Tertiary Participation program was initially conceived as targeting Year 6-12, by 2017, only one regional university had a comprehensive program for primary students, while three urban universities had continued working with this cohort.

I mean [the widening participation program] is based on the myths that we (as part of a research project I did in 2006), where we got students from some of these schools, asked the schools to send us kids who are actively not going to uni, and had expressed that, and asked them why. Then we listened to all the transcriptions endlessly, and framed the myths that we still use. We originally thought that would be useful for a couple of years, but actually they're still useful because they were real.

— Urban University Project Manager, Female

[Primary schools] That's definitely one area that we've struggled to keep engaged. I think that move in 2015 with the Year 7s going into high school just stretched our resources. We were seeing a lot more Year 7 students. So yeah, we kind of have a few connections with local primary schools. Mostly though now, ...with school based initiatives.

— Regional University Project Manager, Female

Consistency has been an issue with this program in particular. For the last three years we don't know what the funding is going to be, what our staff is going to

be, what the elements of the program are going to be left over and offered to schools.

— Regional University Project Manager, Male

Differential I.b. Cohort or Opt-In, Rigid Scaffold vs. Menu Style — Current University Students

| | Urban | Regional |
|-------------------------|---|---|
| Prominence | MODERATE | MODERATE |
| Most Observed Sentiment |  |  |

Participants from urban settings experienced a greater variety of widening participation formats including cohort based and opt-in styles as well as rigid formats and menu-type options. Regional students also experienced cohort based interaction

and opt-in widening participation but at a lesser frequency. Excursions to university campuses were dependent on geographic proximity between the school and the university. Both urban and regional participants felt the campus tours could be more personalised in terms of the programs they were interested in and more personalised interactions with the widening participation hosts.

I remember that they put us out in little groups like if you wanted to do health, or if you wanted to do science. They put us in groups and they'd take us around where all the health people were and all the classrooms and labs and show us all that.

— Teresa, Urban, Nursing

[On campus tours] Yeah and you could choose which ones you wanted to do so I looked at the psychology one and the nursing one, that way I could make up my mind what I wanted to do.

— Fleur, Regional, Nursing

[On outreach] I feel like it was very important. Towards the end of my schooling it was only the better students that were allowed to go.

— Tanya, Urban, Business and Creative Industries

My Grade 12 chemistry class also had a choice to come up here, to come into the chemistry labs and see what they were like and stuff.

— Caspar, Regional, Science

Differential I.c. Size of Cluster — School Case Studies

| | Urban | Regional |
|-------------------------|---|---|
| Prominence | MODERATE | MODERATE |
| Most Observed Sentiment |  |  |

The size of clusters varied significantly between universities. This was a deliberate choice of the Queensland Consortium universities which in 2009-10 decided on a widening participation model where each university would serve a cluster of schools

determined by proximity to major university campuses and that any funding obtained through competitive grants would be distributed according to the size and complexity of each cluster.

As a consequence, most regional university clusters were made up of a large number of schools spread over vast geographic regions. While some provincial city schools enjoyed easy access to their partner university, a large number of regional schools required extensive travel by land or air to reach. Due to limited contact with remote schools, universities were unable to develop effective partnerships or provide structured ongoing contact with school students. Regional project managers cited logistics, resourcing allocation and institutional priorities that mitigated against engagement with more remote schools in their regions.

In contrast, urban university clusters contained more limited numbers of schools located within reasonably close proximity to a university campus. Urban clusters were able to forge closer relationships with schools in their cluster and provide more ongoing contact. They were also much less constrained in facilitating on-campus experiences for school students.

During that period of time [2012-2014] there were some schools I believe who did very well and there were some schools that were quite remote that while we did engage it was on a limited level, and that was unfortunately because of geographical dispersion.

— Regional University Project Manager, Female

One of the issues that I perceive with our cluster is that the schools that probably are of the highest need are also the most expensive to service... It is an extremely long term and costly exercise to build a relationship with those schools. I think that's been quite difficult for us and it is easier for us to service the schools that are closer, which doesn't necessarily mean that the need/service delivery balance is correct at this point.

— Regional University Project Manager, Female

...we're lucky, that a lot of the schools we engage with are not far away. Yeah, like we don't pay for a lot if a school comes on-campus.

— Urban University Project Manager, Male

Differential I.d. Intersection with Marketing and Other Non-Widening Participation Activities — School Case Studies

| | Urban | Regional |
|-------------------------|---|---|
| Prominence | HIGH | HIGH |
| Most Observed Sentiment |  |  |

Interviews with school leaders, parents and students revealed an array of university outreach activities happening in schools outside the Widening Participation partnership activities. These activities included: marketing and recruitment activities, such

as open days and university showcases; curriculum enhancement activities (usually faculty led); university subjects for senior students; and aspiration and outreach provided by non-university organisations. In some universities this engagement, particularly curriculum enrichment activities such as STEM programs, was coordinated through widening participation teams while in other universities it occurred independently. While valued by schools, the non-widening participation programs mentioned in rural and remote school interviews tended to be offered to small numbers of high achieving students rather than whole cohorts.

In urban and provincial city schools where students had participated in activities that demystified university, Year 12 students reported that open days and expos were useful for providing the specific course information they required to plan their post-school pathway. In contrast, in remote schools where limited widening participation had occurred, students reported apprehension about approaching university representatives and concern that they were not getting the sort of authentic information about university life that they needed. In a majority of regional schools, non-widening participation activities were more frequently mentioned than widening participation activities.

[Widening participation program] sits down and talks to them about what it is to be a university student, how this works or how that works. While those other visits don't do that.

— Urban School Staff Focus Group, Female

You know when you go into a car dealership and the guys trying to sell you the car, it kind of feels like that sometimes ... When the defence recruiting guys came that week, they're obviously recruiters, they're trying to just get you to sign the paperwork and sign up. It's just kind of like, are they really telling the whole thing? I don't want to get there [university] and be disappointed with it....[I want to hear] the more real life things like, "Oh, I started off, I wanted to be a private music teacher, I did two years of that, absolutely hated it, now I'm going to be a primary school teacher."

— Regional School Student Focus Group, Male

We also have a career expo thing, where people, it's not necessarily well the TAFE comes out and stuff, but it's just work courses. They have people from the hospital come over and from other. I remember sometimes they do have the university people did come out... But I personally didn't find that very helpful, because you have to approach them yourself to know what to ask and things like that. If you didn't know, they weren't giving a speech or anything, you had to approach them and know what to ask to get the right answers.

— Regional School Student Focus Group, Female

Differential I.d. Intersection with Marketing and Other Non-Widening Participation Activities — Current University Students

| | Urban | Regional |
|-------------------------|---|---|
| Prominence | HIGH | HIGH |
| Most Observed Sentiment |  |  |

Unlike their urban counterparts, students from regional settings could not easily recall widening participation activities and could not easily distinguish between widening participation and marketing and other non-widening participation

activities. While in general, this is not problematic in terms of exposing regional students to universities, in very few instances where there was a low view of university marketing as 'selling degrees', a negative halo effect could result, with widening participation being cast as having the same intention. Regional students experienced less widening participation and less non-widening participation compared to urban students leading to what appears to be a message decay effect reducing the potency and recall of widening participation messages as they are not reinforced regularly.

Griffith is the only university around now in Logan. We had a lot of exposure to Griffith.

— Gary, Urban, Biomedical Science

I feel like I didn't really - well I don't remember anything [widening participation] from actually being told in school [about going to university].

— Julia, Regional, Medicine

UQ and Griffith, they go to every single awards night and give awards or any just assemblies, they would come to it every two or three weeks and just sit there, they'd come up and congratulate students.

— Urban Focus Group, Female

Because a lot of the time, as a student, you just feel like you're trying to be sold to a university, because they want the money ... yeah, a degree shouldn't be a product, it should be a life choice, I think.

— Takumi, Regional, Film

Degree of Engagement by Schools

Differential I.e. Strategic Integration of Widening Participation Programs — School Case Studies

| | Urban | Regional |
|-------------------------|---|---|
| Prominence | HIGH | HIGH |
| Most Observed Sentiment |  |  |

Alignment of widening participation activities with the curriculum and school priorities was seen by project managers as a key to maintaining school engagement across urban and regional locations. Program managers also talked about the need for

program flexibility to meet changing school needs. Program design often sought to complement school programs and fill gaps in their provision. A trend for schools to want students to spend less time out of the classroom was reported by urban and regional project managers.

The neutral sentiment for regions reflects the greater challenges in achieving strategic integration that occurred in regional locations due to distance, funding pressures, program continuity and level of engagement. One regional university project manager reported that reduced funding had meant their programs were now less responsive to the needs of their partner schools. School leaders reported alignment of widening participation and school objectives, but again in some regional schools widening participation was more of an add-on than something that contributed meaningfully to school priorities. The lower engagement in some regional schools meant these students had difficulty recalling specific widening participation programs or their alignment with school programs. The two remote schools visited organised university visits for their senior students but school leaders, students and parents identified the need for earlier engagement to assist students to plan their school and post-school pathways.

Students in most urban universities and in one provincial centre, on the other hand, were able to recall a number of widening participation activities and how these contributed to their understanding about university life and pathways. The messages they received from widening participation activities tended to align well with those they were getting from school.

I think there's the [school coaching program], then all these [widening participation] programs as well. Just exposure, as much exposure as they can, will help them make good decisions as to what's out there.

— Urban Parent Focus Group, Female

We need to be true partners. I just feel like we're working at such a surface level and not a deep level and not consistent. When we engage with schools, what is engagement? If we head there twice a year, is that engagement? And are we getting the same cohort and was that kid away on the second time so really that kid's only been touched once in an entire 12-month period, or five-year period depending on how - if we only go out there in Year 10, they get one touch, one taste.

— Regional University Project Manager, Female

I don't ever remember having anything like that. No, the most we've ever had is something like that career expo, and they just come and you can approach them, and just the stalls and get brochures and books and stuff.

— Regional Student Focus Group, Female

I guess in our ongoing relationship management with them though, we touch base midyear and interview with all of our key school contacts in person, face-to-face, which has kind of prompted our redevelopment of all of our activities this year to try and align with what's going on for their students and their school

curriculum to try and complement that. I think we've always tried to attempt that, but it's just getting to know the schools on a deeper level. Staff changes definitely impact on that really significantly, especially when our biggest advocates leave a school and it definitely...takes a lot of work to sustain that relationship”

— Urban University Project Manager, Female

Differential I.e. Strategic Integration of Widening Participation Programs — Current University Students

| | Urban | Regional |
|-------------------------|---|---|
| Prominence | HIGH | MODERATE |
| Most Observed Sentiment |  |  |

Widening participation in regional settings was typically reported as ad hoc, sporadic, limited in variety of activities, typically only focused on the larger more popular degrees (leaving students uninformed about degrees like fashion, design or music) and poorly planned with many students given little notice of university visits. Conversely, widening participation in urban settings was scheduled, regular, diverse, planned and strategically integrated into school activities.

Yeah, I went to heaps of those because I was in physics and maths and we went on a lot of science excursions and we did the science challenges and also just exploring the university.

— Tanya, Urban, Business and Creative Industries

In general, like, there wasn't someone from a specific university but I think there were a couple of maybe Education Department people who came and said, okay, this is university, this is a HECS debt, what's it all about. It was general; it wasn't tailored to any university.

— Cody, Regional, Business and Arts

But we didn't really have any seminars or they didn't really have anyone coming to talk to us about the universities. We sort of just had to find our own resources if you want to, which didn't really happen because they're children and it's not really taking the initiative at that age. We had a few workshops over the few years, but they weren't well advertised and they weren't major so you didn't really know that they were happening until after they'd happen.

— Julia, Regional, Medicine

Funding Levels

Differential I.i. Consortium Funding vs 2015 and Beyond and its Impact on Universities Capacity to Deliver Widening Participation Programs — School Case Studies

| | Urban | Regional |
|-------------------------|---|---|
| Prominence | MODERATE | MODERATE |
| Most Observed Sentiment |  |  |

During the Consortium grant funded period, HEPPP funds were distributed to Consortium universities based on size and complexity of their cluster. This model meant the size of school outreach grants ranged from \$226,000 per year (2012-2014) for the smallest urban cluster to \$1,444,000 for the largest regional cluster. When grant funding was exhausted, each university decided on the amount of expenditure on partnership activities from their institutional HEPPP allocation. Most universities reported having to institute some program efficiencies as a result of funding changes post-2014. Urban universities reported maintaining core programs and school partnerships hence the positive sentiment.

A neutral sentiment is recorded for regional locations, because while several project managers claimed the funding impact was limited, program changes implemented at this time tended to reduce the number of school partnerships and/or reach to more remote schools. Also, in one large regional cluster, a significant funding reduction occurred alongside other institutional changes that impacted on the number of schools it could engage with and the depth of programs delivered.

Program managers from regional universities also reported that transport and accommodation costs in delivering programs to distant locations, or getting students from these locations to on-campus experiences, was a major factor in lower engagement in more remote locations. In contrast, urban universities continued to bring students on-campus at minimal or no cost to students or schools.

It was really hard to transition from the previous [Consortium] model which had lots of funding, lots of money and lots of staff and resources to back it up to a model that's got quite limited in what we can do.

— Regional University Project Manager, Male

The engagement is deep in some schools. It's probably dropped off in other schools. So the other schools being some of the further to reach schools. A lot of that, I think, just completely my own views, would be the pressure on us to deliver in particular regions. I think that pressure does come from our leadership.

— Regional University Project Manager, Female

Yeah, and we make the whole thing easy for the schools. We just give them a phone number to book a bus, invoices come to us. We do the lot really. We feed them while they're here. They don't have to bring anything, the kids. They don't have to have money. They don't have to bring anything. We look after all that end.

— Urban University Project Manager, Female

Our schools were very - are very engaged and if we had more money we'd have more staff members and we would book out. I think that's a testament to the program's effectiveness.

— Urban University Project Manager, Female

Program Implementation

Differential I.m. Staff Turnover of Widening Participation Program Officers — School Case Studies

| | Urban | Regional |
|-------------------------|---|---|
| Prominence | LOW | LOW |
| Most Observed Sentiment |  |  |

A number of the project managers interviewed had been in their roles for lengthy periods and the issue of staff turnover was rarely raised. However, as discussed above, one regional cluster suffered significant funding cuts which, combined with other

institutional changes, resulted in ongoing turnover of key program staff since 2015. In combination, these factors have had a serious impact on program delivery in a large and complex region. While case study schools in this cluster had experienced university engagement over a number of years, school staff reported uncertainty about the continuity of programs and who was leading them. In one urban cluster, the project manager reported that a prior staff change had resulted in little disruption to their school engagement.

I think we've got a good relationship with [partner uni]. Whilst we may be fairly consistent with our staffing, I think their staffing changes a bit. That has an effect, like the person you were speaking to last year is not the one you are speaking to this year.

— Regional School Staff Interview, Male

We have a bit of a broken year last year in terms of staff, ...But as is I think the nature of this industry or the business, that, because we already had those established relationships, we actually ran more programs than we've run ever before.

— Urban University Project Manager, Male

5.2 Situational Factors

Situational factors beyond the control of the university programs collectively emerged as the most prominent influences on students' decisions to attend university in this study. The analysis identified 7 sub-factors under this heading and there were differences in sentiment and/or prominence on all sub-factors between urban and regional locations. Overall, sentiments were more negative in regional than urban locations.

The most prominent sub-factors in the case study analysis related to the availability of accurate, relevant and accessible information about post-school options as well as the availability of role models and supporters. These two sub-factors were highly interrelated and assessed as very positive in urban locations with a more neutral sentiment observed in regional locations. Notably, the availability of good quality information had low prominence in the interviews with current university students and did not show a difference between students from regional and urban backgrounds.

In the case study data, role models and supporters were often trusted sources of information for students. These included teachers and other school staff, siblings and university representatives. Parents, teachers and siblings could be either a role model or a supporter or both. Student Ambassadors, TV characters and professionals known to students or parents were named as important role models.

Parents were often the first source of information but not always the most trusted. There were some doubts, from students, and honest reflections, from parents and school leaders, about the quality of information and experiences provided by parents and teachers which had limitations in terms of personal biases and lack of currency. Students named university open days, camps and campus visits as well as visits by university representatives as important sources of quality information with the opportunity to ask specific questions of people "who know".

The proximity to university was an important sub-factor in both samples and there were similar themes. Regional students and their parents were concerned about the need to relocate and find accommodation in the place of study while urban participants were concerned about the time and cost involved in commuting or using public transport to get to university.

Proximity to university was highly interrelated with local economic conditions as well as financial/resources pressures which featured prominently in both samples and were assessed more negatively in regional than urban locations. University staff, school principals and parents in both settings provided examples of individual students who had not been able to attend, or remain at, university because of financial barriers. Reports of financial pressures spanned the student lifecycle in that many students could not participate in pre-access activities and have a first-hand experience of university life due to a lack of finances,

could not attend auditions or open days to access their courses or universities of choice, or found it very hard to remain at university in the face of personal or familial challenges which could have been addressed by additional financial resources.

Finally, structural school factors emerged as an important and multi-faceted sub-factor in interviews with school principals and senior staff. Most interviewees referred to their ICSEA score in the opening statement, two used it as the opening sentence to position their school. School size was also often used as a reference point.

The diversity and associated complexity of the schools was identified as the overriding theme in both urban and regional locations. However, significant differences in how school leadership had responded to their diverse populations were observed which cut across urban and regional clusters. There was evidence in both regional and urban schools that the leadership group was successfully leveraging diversity for the benefit of their students and the wider school community and had put structures in place to set young people up for success. However, this approach was not observed in all schools.

Table 13: Situational factors — school case studies

| THEMES RELEVANT TO SCHOOL CASE STUDIES | URBAN EXPERIENCE | | REGIONAL EXPERIENCE | | DIFFERENTIAL |
|---|------------------|---|---------------------|---|--------------|
| | Prominence | Most Observed Sentiment | Prominence | Most Observed Sentiment | |
| II.a. Structural school factors | MODERATE |  | MODERATE |  | ✓ sentiment |
| II.b. Proximity to university | MODERATE |  | MODERATE |  | ✓ sentiment |
| II.c. Local economic conditions | MODERATE |  | HIGH |  | ✓ |
| II.d. Availability of role models and supporters | HIGH |  | MODERATE |  | ✓ |
| II.e. Availability of accurate, relevant and accessible information about post-school options | HIGH |  | HIGH |  | ✓ sentiment |
| II.f. Promotion of non-university options over university pathway by school | LOW |  | LOW |  | ✓ sentiment |
| II.g. Financial/resource pressures | MODERATE |  | MODERATE |  | ✓ sentiment |

Sentiment Key:  Positive  Neutral  Negative

Table 14: Situational factors — current university students

| THEMES RELEVANT TO UNI STUDENT SAMPLE | URBAN EXPERIENCE | | REGIONAL EXPERIENCE | | DIFFERENTIAL |
|---------------------------------------|------------------|---|---------------------|---|--------------|
| | Prominence | Most Observed Sentiment | Prominence | Most Observed Sentiment | |
| II.a. Structural school factors | LOW |  | LOW |  | |
| II.b. Proximity to university | MODERATE |  | HIGH |  | ✓ |

| THEMES RELEVANT TO UNI STUDENT SAMPLE | URBAN EXPERIENCE | | REGIONAL EXPERIENCE | | DIFFERENTIAL |
|---|------------------|---|---------------------|---|--------------|
| | Prominence | Most Observed Sentiment | Prominence | Most Observed Sentiment | |
| II.c. Local economic conditions | MODERATE |  | MODERATE |  | |
| II.d. Availability of role models and supporters | MODERATE |  | HIGH |  | ✓ |
| II.e. Availability of accurate, relevant and accessible information about post-school options | LOW |  | LOW |  | |
| II.f. Promotion of non-university options over university pathway by school | LOW |  | LOW |  | ✓ sentiment |
| II.g. Financial/resource pressures | MODERATE |  | MODERATE |  | ✓ sentiment |

Sentiment Key:  Positive  Neutral  Negative

Differential II.a. Structural School Factors — School Case Studies

| | Urban | Regional |
|-------------------------|--|--|
| Prominence | MODERATE | MODERATE |
| Most Observed Sentiment |  |  |

Structural school factors emerged as an important and multi-faceted sub-factor. Responses came predominantly from the interviews with school principals and senior staff. The diversity and associated complexity of the schools were the

overriding theme in these reports. Differences between the regional and urban locations emerged at the level of sentiment which was more negative in regional locations. Remote schools reported that they experienced frequent turnover of staff and an associated over-representation of graduate teachers who often did not have the experience required to cater for the range of students in the classroom. Moreover, some regional schools reported structural disadvantage brought about by the OP system as well as limited access to facilities, supportive infrastructure and subject choices due to being a smaller school. A high level of leadership turnover was reported in one urban school and cited as a reason for reduced widening participation engagements as well as affecting promotion of tertiary pathways.

The school has a student population of 210 students; 30 per cent of those are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students that are either in home care, kinship care or with parents. We have a wide-ranging dynamic of students from fairly wealthy families to a very poor family. Education itself does not seem to be valued holistically but there are groups of families that are very academically focused.

— Regional Principal Interview, Male

I think even the school itself making the effort, because I went to [another school] and they didn't really make an effort to show us all these other options outside of school. Then, moving here, even the education is better. The way the teachers teach is better. [...] Having the school put in effort is the main thing.

— Urban Student Focus Group, Female

Our teachers are pretty good at catering for the range. [...] We cater as best we can, and realistically, when we crunch our data, we punch above our weight. [...] As you know, most transfer points go on a three-year cycle. Two years ago we

had about nine brand new staff here, which is roughly about a third of our teaching cohort. Last year was five and this year is two. Hopefully next year won't be significant numbers again, there's some people who are doing a great job. I'm trying to create the environment where they want to stay but we're a long way from anywhere.

— Regional Principal Interview, Male

Differential II.b. Proximity to University — School Case Studies

| | Urban | Regional |
|-------------------------|---|---|
| Prominence | MODERATE | MODERATE |
| Most Observed Sentiment |  |  |

The proximity to a university campus was discussed in both regional and urban locations and cut across all interviewee groups. Participants in urban schools talked about the 'pain' of having to commute long distances multiple times a week by car or public

transport to get to class in a metropolitan university while living at home which was perceived by some as 'easier' and more feasible than moving to the city. Students in particular were critical of the limited range of courses offered at their local campus which was usually a smaller campus of a metropolitan university. Despite multiple constraints, students and parents in urban locations felt that they had a choice in how they arranged transport and accommodation during the university years, leading to the judgement of a more neutral sentiment.

The further out of a major centre interviewees lived, the less they felt there was a choice about moving to a city or regional centre for university study. Parents in remote areas talked, sometimes from bitter experience, about how hard it had been for their children to take the 'leap of faith' and move to the city at a young age. Participants were aware of the financial, social and personal risks these young people, and their families, were taking and the level of commitment required to follow through on the decision to leave the community and attend university. The loss of existing networks and support were cited as barriers to success as was the 'small world syndrome' which parents and teachers interpreted as young people from the regions being less 'street smart' in navigating the city environment than their urban counterparts.

As [another mum] said, they are left to cope by themselves, at 17, 18, pushed out there. Go to uni. My daughter stayed at the campus for one year and then we shifted her into a house and then she's going to juggle driving, managing the house, and now she's got a dog, she's got a part-time job, so it's a whole lot of things at 18 they're trying to do.

— Regional Parent Focus Group, Female

I'd probably stay at home. We've got a university close to us but it's not the right university. It's a university that specialises in all the medical stuff. Even then, living at home, it's a lot easier than having to move away and then start university.

— Urban Student Focus Group, Female

Also giving them opportunity to go away, like that's financial too. Our kids, we aren't travelled, we don't go on holidays to Brisbane, but two of mine ended up there. So to put her on a plane - because I had a job and younger children that I couldn't just take time off and do - I had to say "hope it goes well". [...] So that, you know, that's huge for our kids. [...] Unless they are quite capable of knowing how to look after themselves and be aware - I mean they had to learn how to catch trains, buses, get themselves from here to there without any exposure. I

mean Brisbane is such a big place, so that was a huge thing, just going “oh god, I hope it's going to go okay”. [...] You know, you're thinking “I don't know how it feels. I've never done that”. So you really throw them in the deep end straight up.

— Regional Parent Focus Group, Female

Differential II.b. Proximity to University — Current University Students

| | Urban | Regional |
|-------------------------|---|---|
| Prominence | MODERATE | HIGH |
| Most Observed Sentiment |  |  |

Proximity to university was a highly prominent item of discussion for regional students. More regional participants than urban participants relocated for university with student accommodation of greatest concern for regional students and public transport costs/time a focus for urban students. The neutral sentiment of regional participants reflected that while there were initial challenges in relocation and securing accommodation, they were closer to their university campus and enjoying independent living. For urban participants, the neutral sentiment reflected that while most did not have to leave home, public transport costs/time were an ongoing stressor.

I live one and a half hours away which is a bit of a pest to get here every day.

— Quentin, Urban, Science

I live probably about an hour and a half, two hours away. So yeah, I had to move [to go to university]. So that was interesting but it's all pretty good now.

— Regional Current Students Focus Group, Female

Differential II.c. Local Economic Conditions — School Case Studies

| | Urban | Regional |
|-------------------------|---|---|
| Prominence | MODERATE | HIGH |
| Most Observed Sentiment |  |  |

Local economic conditions featured less prominently in urban locations and had more reported adverse effects in regional ones. Staff in urban schools and universities were confronted by the fact that young people had to contribute significantly to family

income, or even take on a breadwinner role in their family, because they were more employable in the local economy than their parents. On the other hand, urban participants spoke of processes of gentrification and strategic infrastructure developments in the local area that were acting as positive drivers for increased university participation.

People in regional locations, on the other hand, reported consistently negative influences of local economic conditions on young people's decision to attend university. These ranged from the traumatic impact of droughts and floods, to the daily demands of farm life, to the detrimental impact of the mining industry which tempted young men into highly paid, low-skilled jobs and young women into early marriage and motherhood. Participants also talked about the diminishing employment opportunities in traditionally labour-intensive regional industries and the limitations of the low-skilled service jobs that remained in small and/or declining regional towns. Two principals noted the impact of an itinerant workforce on relatively small school populations which resulted in fluctuating student numbers and outcomes.

Especially when you're looking at your minimum wage employers, they want the 17 and 18-year-olds. It's the children that are getting jobs over their parents, because they're paid less. They don't have to pay them as much. They can put them on casually. They can get rid of them whenever business drops off.

— Urban Staff Interview, Female

So we had three years of drought prior. Then we had flooding and it was significant flooding and we had children here who would normally have gone to university, but would not apply. We had some of the lowest QCE rates at that time. It was about the mental health of our kids really and mental health of our staff, because we had some families who had had their houses flooded to the roof twice in two years. [...] The whole town was evacuated.

We had kids - I know there were some kids who were in the [city university] program who didn't go because they could not leave home. We had one girl who was a classic OP pathway, mother a school teacher, she was going to university. No, there was no way she was leaving town. It took her three years to leave town because she was terrified. [...] So for us the drought plays a big impact on whether families can afford to go or not.

— Regional Staff Interview, Female

Differential II.d. Availability of Role Models and Supporters — School Case Studies

| | Urban | Regional |
|-------------------------|---|---|
| Prominence | HIGH | MODERATE |
| Most Observed Sentiment |  |  |

Availability of role models and supporters was the most prominent of all situational factors, especially in urban schools, and the data came predominantly from parent and student focus groups. Student Ambassadors, TV characters and professionals

known to students or parents emerged as important role models. Parents, teachers and siblings could be either a role model or a supporter or both.

There seemed to be relationships between parental educational experiences and the aspirations or expectations they had for their children's educational pathways. The negative impact of not having a parent who had been to university manifested in multiple ways and was more prominent in the regional locations. A diversity of role models seemed to be more difficult to access in the regions though there were many examples of resourceful parents who used or created personal networks to expose their children to a range of occupations.

The neutral sentiment of regional participants reflected that while role models were seen as very important, the limitations of accessing them were recognised. Urban participants were also strongly positive about role models and reported less issues in accessing them, thus displaying a more positive sentiment.

The thing that I would encourage too for parents whose kids are trying to work out what to do is see if you know someone that is in a profession that might interest your children. I found that with our daughter, she was very interested in two areas and we happened to know two people who actually were working in that area.

— Regional Parent Focus Group, Female

It depends on what kind of parents you have, because I know that my mum doesn't want me to go to uni, but my dad does. When I do speak to them, there's a conflict within it. Parents can be helpful, but only really if they've been to uni themselves because if you ask them questions they can't really answer if they don't know. That's why it's good to come to school and be able to ask someone who actually knows what they're talking about.

— Urban Student Focus Group, Female

Differential II.d. Availability of Role Models and Supporters — Current University Students

| | Urban | Regional |
|-------------------------|---|---|
| Prominence | MODERATE | HIGH |
| Most Observed Sentiment |  |  |

When discussing the availability of role models and supporters, a positive sentiment was expressed by both urban and regional participants. Participants shared how significant others in their lives, such as parents and siblings as well as friends who had been

to university, were key influencers. The prominence of this sub-factor was high for regional participants while moderate for urban participants. For regional participants, the encouragement and support of their parents was central to their decision to go to, and stick with, their university studies. Regional participants noted that in instances where their siblings had been to university, they had assisted them with their choice of degree. Unlike their urban counterparts, regional participants noted their teachers were also active supporters.

In Year 10 it would have been; I wasn't the best student; my grades were really low and I just kind of picked up the ball again. All my teachers were so impressed that, by Year 12, I was top of the class and they said, I hope you're furthering your education because you are a smart girl and you can go far. So, I basically took that under my wing.

— Felicity, Inner Regional, Nursing

My brother went to uni and it was something my parents always encouraged. It was just a case of working out what I actually wanted to study. I floated between a few different things - journalism was probably the big one for most of high school and then, quite late on, I switched over to doing film, which I am three years into studying. The decision just came from - yeah, I'd always been encouraged to do it, but I wanted to do something creative because that's what I was passionate about. Even though I knew the job prospects weren't great, I figured that I'd enjoy it and I'd find a way to make it work. Then, yeah, it just came time to actually pick a specific degree in a specific uni and I sat down with the counsellor at school, or the guidance officer, talked about it with my parents, talked about it with my friends who were a bit older and had been at uni for a little while.

— Takumi, Inner Regional, Film

Differential II.e. Availability of Accurate, Relevant and Accessible Information about Post-School Options — School Case Studies

| | Urban | Regional |
|-------------------------|---|---|
| Prominence | HIGH | HIGH |
| Most Observed Sentiment |  |  |

The availability of accurate, relevant and accessible information on post-school options was another much-discussed situational factor in both urban and regional locations. It was related to the availability of role models and supporters who were often trusted

sources of information for students. Students named university open days, camps and campus visits as well as visits by university representatives as important sources of quality information with the opportunity to ask specific questions of people “who know”. These opportunities seemed more accessible in the urban locations. On the other hand, scholarship offers and high-engagement programs acted as effective pathways for regional students into the universities which offered such programs.

The differences between OP and non-OP students and the extent to which they could access information about (alternative) pathways into university emerged as a contested topic in half of the participating schools. There were no clear regional/urban patterns but the

distinction between OP and non-OP students, and its consequences, seemed most pronounced in the most remote school. There, non-OP students felt actively excluded from information and opportunities to find out about university.

The neutral sentiment of regional participants reflected that while information was perceived to be available, it was often held by individuals, who brought their own experiences and biases to the conversation, rather than being delivered in more systematic and ‘objective’ ways. In addition, opportunities to access information from ‘trusted experts’ were harder to come by than in urban locations.

A lot of that stuff you get from the guidance officer and the lovely ladies in our B Block staffroom there. They are all - all got the knowledge there of where everything is and when everything's on. [...] Just knowing where the stuff is - is the fun part. So - like most things, once you know people who know where all the stuff is you're pretty right on the track.

— Regional Student Focus Group, Male

Because you're continuously seeing them [university representatives] saying we can go there, that's an option for us and seeing, getting to witness how people are at university and how they're coping with it and the like whereas when you're in the country you don't really have that privilege.

— Urban Student Focus Group, Female

Differential II.f. Promotion of Non-University Options over University Pathway by School — School Case Studies

| | Urban | Regional |
|-------------------------|---|---|
| Prominence | LOW | LOW |
| Most Observed Sentiment |  |  |

The promotion of non-university options over a university pathway did not emerge as a strong theme in this research. However, there were differences in observed sentiments in urban and regional locations. Most urban students felt positively

encouraged by their school to consider university as their pathway and were continuously reminded of the possibility of going to university by having ‘a lot of universities around us’.

On the other hand, some students in regional and remote locations did not feel encouraged to consider university as their pathway. Instead, there was a perception that apprenticeships or full-time work were the ‘norm’ in the community and the pathway favoured by teachers or family. Those considering university as an option were made to feel like outsiders.

I think that it's because it's [university] not really encouraged as much. When we were coming through, apprenticeships are shoved down [our throat] and they're important, obviously, but they're really encouraged and emphasised. In notices, it's all about “this apprenticeship's available, this apprenticeship's available” but there's never anything about “this open day's happening now”.

— Regional Student Focus Group, Female

So even though in grade 10 they've sort of said “oh, I want to go to uni and that's my pathway”, and we sort of go “okay, we've got all these kids now who want to do this pathway”. By the time we get them to grade 12, most of them have dropped out because they've had other advice or they're just not doing the work really. That's kind of what we're finding is the motivation - yeah, is not there.

— Urban Staff Focus Group, Female

No, I think the default option is just work. [...] Whether that's apprenticeship or Kmart, and all points in between.

— Regional Principal Interview, Male

Differential II.f. Promotion of Non-University Options over University Pathway by School — Current University Students

| | Urban | Regional |
|-------------------------|---|---|
| Prominence | LOW | LOW |
| Most Observed Sentiment |  |  |

Discussion about the promotion of non-university options centred on the attitudes and behaviours of the school that participants attended. The experience of regional participants was that the norm at their schools was for students to pursue

apprenticeships and employment and while they were not dissuaded from going to university, there was in some instances a sense from participants that the school had low expectations of their students and/or were apathetic about students' futures. The neutral sentiment expressed by regional students reflected that there were non-university job opportunities available and the school had a good track record in securing apprenticeships and employment for students. While on the surface the employment track record of the schools seems unrelated, it in actuality presents an 'opportunity cost' dilemma for students as the decision to go to university means forgoing the securing of immediate employment.

Urban students expressed a positive sentiment indicating that their schools more strongly promoted university options and those on the university pathway were viewed in a more positive light. One urban participant expressed the opinion that the focus on going to university was due to the school being concerned with their own reputation.

I don't know. I think no-one really cared what they were doing. I mean the school focussed on everyone getting their QCE. They were like "yeah, this will help you get jobs" but there was never like "you should apply for [university] things" or whatever.

— Joanna, Regional, Zoology and Ecology

My school was very big on finding kids an apprenticeship...because it was like a set-in thing. Uni wasn't as important as going to TAFE or getting an apprenticeship.

— Regional Current Students Focus Group, Female

Differential II.g. Financial/Resource Pressures — School Case Studies

| | Urban | Regional |
|-------------------------|---|---|
| Prominence | MODERATE | MODERATE |
| Most Observed Sentiment |  |  |

Finances were a much-discussed factor in both locations and across all interviewee groups. However, the implications of limited financial resources played out differently in urban and regional areas. School principals and university staff

observed that in urban locations, university aspirations were often the first casualty of tight family finances. It was not only the actual cost of university life that acted as a barrier to participation but also the lost income potential of young people who did not enter the workforce straight away. On the other hand, it was less expensive to overcome distance issues in urban locations and there seemed to be more flexibility in terms of accessing university. The key question for students in urban locations was: "is this university commutable by public transport, car or car-pooling?"

In contrast, the question asked by parents in remote and regional locations was: "can we afford to send this child to university?" The compounded disadvantage of distance and limited finances got more severe the more remote the location. The costs associated with overcoming distance issues became increasingly prohibitive and acted as hard barriers to

university participation. It seemed to be mainly better-off families in the regions who considered university as an option for their children.

Family connections in a city sometimes became the means by which regional young people could access university. This was especially true for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students where financial pressures and family ties interacted in complex ways. Scholarships were another important access mechanism. The ‘gap year’ was described as a common tool in regional locations to access Centrelink payments which enabled university participation. Finally, distance education options were cited by one remote school guidance officer as an increasingly popular approach to accessing higher education in her region. However, no student participants reported an intention or desire to study by distance mode. The only student to mention distance education described it as ‘*frustrating as hell*’.

Financial is always up there with perceived barriers. I know that when we ran the camps we did a feedback survey of the students before and after residential camps. Financial barriers rated high initially and rated higher after the camp, only because it's the whole awareness thing that they know that university is expensive and they know that some students find that hard. [...] But I think as long as they're aware and they have the capacity to negate some of those financial obligations then we're doing our job. Family commitments [is a barrier] as well.

— Regional University Project Manager, Male

As soon as the family are struggling financially, university goes. “I'm sorry, mate, you've just got to go and get a job. That stuff can come later”. Certainly some of our students do go on to university years after they've graduated from high school rather than the direct route. I think when you look at the socioeconomic situation for the urban areas as opposed to your corridor schools out this way, you'd find that, yeah, financial stability is certainly a huge motivating factor or a demotivating factor for these kids, more than anything else.

— Urban Staff Interview, Female

Differential II.g. Financial/Resource Pressures — Current University Students

| | Urban | Regional |
|-------------------------|---|---|
| Prominence | MODERATE | MODERATE |
| Most Observed Sentiment |  |  |

Both urban and rural participants experienced financial/resource pressures. This item was moderately prominent in discussions, noting that a negative sentiment was most observed among the regional students which differed from the neutral

sentiment of urban students. The difference in sentiment reflected that students from regional settings experienced heightened financial/resource pressures that were related to relocation and the presence of financial pressures co-occurring with other pressures such as being first-in-family to attend university. One regional participant mentioned that she accepted an early offer from her university because it meant that she could arrange accommodation, Centrelink benefits and research public transport during Year 12, alleviating end-of-year anxiety her peers experienced. While participants knew about bursaries and scholarships, most did not apply, mainly because they didn’t know when to or how to and some scholarships demanded a lot of documentation (e.g. of parent income) and time to complete which became barriers to application.

I mean, my sort of view on it was QUT really tries to give you as much information with the equity scholarship. They are targeting low socioeconomic communities, so they know a lot of kids are worried and looking at the money side of things.

— Urban Current Students Focus Group, Female

[On being from a low-SES background] For me, it was the same. The whole financial side of it. But also, none of my family had been through university as well. So, I was also the first going through it. So, it was just like having your family understand what's happening as well as trying to figure it out yourself at the same time.

— Regional Current Students Focus Group, Female

I didn't really apply for any sorts of scholarships and things like that. My grades in high school weren't, probably, up to scratch to meet those. I did look into things like Centrelink and that sort of thing, but living at home I wasn't eligible for anything. So, yeah, I've pretty much just relied on my parents being as generous and helpful as they have, to get me through the last two and a half years at university.

— Takumi, Regional, Film

5.3 Dispositional Factors Influencing the Transition to Higher Education

Dispositional (or attitudinal) factors are beliefs, values and attitudes, held individually and/or collectively, that may influence a student's decision to participate in higher education (Carroll et al., 2009; Jancey & Burns, 2013). The analysis explored 10 sub-factors under this heading and there were differences in sentiment and/or prominence on about half of the sub-factors between urban and regional locations. In the case study data, sentiments were more negative in regional locations but they were balanced in the current university student data.

The most prominent sub-factors in the case study analysis related to goal achievement with regard to academic success. This was portrayed in students' aspirations for both high-level degree courses and non-university options, such as trade qualifications, employment in the mining industry and other locally accessible work opportunities. There were a number of goals which drove students' interest in post-school pathways, including a desire to earn money after school; fulfilling a childhood career goal (e.g. Police Officer); pursuing other employment opportunities, building confidence for university entry; or following family role models. It appears that regardless of location there were students with clearly articulated pathways for university and non-university study and employment, as well as a group of students who were indecisive about their future path. For those students who remained undecided about post-school options, employment, sometimes regarded as a gap year, seemed to be the default position.

School students on the OP pathway in both urban and regional locations articulated an interest in a diverse range of degree courses which were motivated by a love and passion for their chosen professional career. There was, however, a small contextual difference influencing the study and career aspirations of regional students who identified career pathways associated with mining, the Australian Defence Force Academy and the Trades much more frequently than their urban counterparts.

While some participants linked post-school decisions for non-university work and study options to a lack of role models and parental exposure to university study, many 'first in family' urban students seemed to be motivated to pursue university study to honour family expectations and obligations. Students on the non-OP pathway from both locations also aspired for university study via Diploma and Certificate qualifications.

There were a number of sub-factors that had low prominence, including school achievement, attitudes to risk, social isolation/being an outlier and cultural identity fit. Ways in which these sub-factors can be collapsed are suggested in the final section of the discussion chapter.

Table 15: Dispositional factors — school case studies

| THEMES RELEVANT TO UNI STUDENT SAMPLE | URBAN EXPERIENCE | | REGIONAL EXPERIENCE | | DIFFERENTIAL |
|---|------------------|---|---------------------|---|--------------|
| | Prominence | Most Observed Sentiment | Prominence | Most Observed Sentiment | |
| III.a. Goal achievement | HIGH |  | HIGH |  | |
| III.b. Interest | MODERATE |  | MODERATE |  | |
| III.c. Perceived value of higher education vs. other pathways | HIGH |  | HIGH |  | ✓ sentiment |
| III.d. School achievement | N/A | | N/A | | |
| III.e. Self-efficacy, resilience, confidence | HIGH |  | HIGH |  | ✓ sentiment |
| III.f. Fear of the unknown | LOW |  | HIGH |  | ✓ |
| III.g. Attitudes to risk | LOW |  | LOW |  | ✓ sentiment |
| III.h. Expectations of self and others | MODERATE |  | MODERATE |  | |
| III.i. Social isolation/being an outlier | N/A | | N/A | | |
| III.j. Cultural identity fit | LOW |  | HIGH |  | ✓ |

Sentiment Key:  Positive  Neutral  Negative

Table 16: Dispositional factors — current university students

| THEMES RELEVANT TO UNI STUDENT SAMPLE | URBAN EXPERIENCE | | REGIONAL EXPERIENCE | | DIFFERENTIAL |
|---|------------------|---|---------------------|---|--------------|
| | Prominence | Most Observed Sentiment | Prominence | Most Observed Sentiment | |
| III.a. Goal achievement | MODERATE |  | MODERATE |  | |
| III.b. Interest | HIGH |  | HIGH |  | |
| III.c. Perceived value of higher education vs. other pathways | MODERATE |  | MODERATE |  | |
| III.d. School achievement | LOW |  | LOW |  | |
| III.e. Self-efficacy, resilience, confidence | LOW |  | MODERATE |  | ✓ |
| III.f. Fear of the unknown | HIGH |  | HIGH |  | |
| III.g. Attitudes to risk | LOW |  | LOW |  | |
| III.h. Expectations of self and others | MODERATE |  | LOW |  | ✓ |
| III.i. Social isolation/being an outlier | N/A | | LOW |  | ✓ |

| THEMES RELEVANT TO UNI STUDENT SAMPLE | URBAN EXPERIENCE | | REGIONAL EXPERIENCE | | DIFFERENTIAL |
|---------------------------------------|------------------|---|---------------------|-------------------------|--------------|
| | Prominence | Most Observed Sentiment | Prominence | Most Observed Sentiment | |
| III.j. Cultural identity fit | LOW |  | N/A | | ✓ |

Sentiment Key:  Positive  Neutral  Negative

Differential III.c. Perceived Value of Higher Education vs. Other Pathways — School Case Studies

| | Urban | Regional |
|-------------------------|---|---|
| Prominence | HIGH | HIGH |
| Most Observed Sentiment |  |  |

Prominent in this sub-factor were discussions around the dynamics influencing participants' perceived value of higher education vs the alternatives on offer.

Parents of high achieving students and students on the OP pathway discussed the high value they placed on attaining a university qualification and therefore the benefits outweighed the costs of participating in higher education. However, some participants from both urban and regional locations expressed concern that higher education may not be a good value proposition as a university qualification does not guarantee a well-paying job.

Parents in both locations reported a mix of aspirational destinations for their children and all pathways were considered viable depending on the fit with children's personalities and attitudes toward higher education and the alternatives. Parents also considered, and were often guided by, their children's aspirational desires.

Parents in urban regions expressed great satisfaction with the current post-school options available to their children, as urban students had access to a diverse range of university and other training options to suit their preferences.

In contrast, regional parents were more realistic about the costs involved with university study and tended to be more positively positioned towards trade occupations, often in the mining industry.

[University study] ... It's a better future ... you get ... in touch with the goings on of the job market ... rather than being stuck as a ground force labour for the rest of your life. Indentured servant... More opportunities I think is basically what we're after ... more successful career ... they'll get a better education... Having a HECS debt that's going to take them absolutely years to pay off... some qualifications, people struggle to actually be employed ... you can be on good money one moment, the next you're absolutely dead weight ...I suppose that's probably the biggest concern ...

— Urban Parent Interview, Male

Having a job is good and sometimes you can get your qualification, but you can't [get] employment opportunities and you have to fall back on something that you can survive and earn an income ... Generally, I'd like to see my children take on a career pathway that makes them happy ... work towards their personal and future goals. At the end of the day, I would like to see her go to university, but if she chooses not to, then I would help her with her, basically, choices as best I could.

— Regional Parent Focus Group, Female

There is a financial reason for families ... it's the living fees... there's a home sickness ... they don't have that contact... we've got a range of incomes and parents literally struggle... For others the financial incentive is not so much leaving, it's staying ... you've got \$80,000 first year out of school ... got kids who I know would have been good at uni, who are doing apprenticeships and look, good on them... I can only think of one kid who has gone and done his electrical apprenticeship and is now doing engineering... Most ... don't... they incentivise kids so much more than living in poverty and studying.

— Regional Principal, Male

Differential III.e. Self-Efficacy, Resilience and Confidence — School Case Studies

| | Urban | Regional |
|-------------------------|---|---|
| Prominence | HIGH | HIGH |
| Most Observed Sentiment |  |  |

Participants from both urban and regional locations linked school students' level of self-efficacy, resilience and confidence to their actions to pursue a university study pathway and other lucrative opportunities.

Students in both locations were credited with high levels of self-efficacy, resilience and confidence to pursue their chosen pathways. At the same time, some participants raised that many students seemed to suffer from indecision due to the daunting range of study and career pathway options on offer. Parents felt it was their role to help students make decisions about post-school pathways to get to the best fit for their ability and interest.

Self-efficacy was also raised as an issue for regional students as more social support is required to assist them in living independently away from family and community when relocation is required for university study. In contrast, an urban parent associated a lack of confidence to individual personality differences. While all of her three children experienced diverse educational and career journeys, it was the youngest with the adventurist spirit who relocated for study and overseas travel.

Our eldest ... even with us being the good parents as such, but her confidence was never great. She never had that belief in herself, that she could do something, until now. She's managed stores ... but she would have never done it [Uni]. Even with all of our support, it still would have been very difficult.

— Urban Parent Interview, Female

Especially for our youngest who, like I said, took herself off to Canada and did Au Pairing. She's just very, very different. Like I said, she knew what she wanted... the middle one just still had to have support ... three girls, you would think they're all the same, but no ... Three completely different...ones and different journeys.

— Urban Parent Interview, Female

One of the key things that affects whether the students will come into the university is their ability to cope with change... through the work I've done ... the city kids, the urban kids are much more comfortable with change. Country kids tend to be a little more resistant to change in comfort zones et cetera. That certainly differentiates in a lot of ways between the two groups and their willingness to move. That's why we need to invest more in those that are not as comfortable with change.

— Regional Program Manager, Male

Differential III.e. Self-Efficacy, Resilience and Confidence — Current University Students

| | Urban | Regional |
|-------------------------|---|---|
| Prominence | LOW | MODERATE |
| Most Observed Sentiment |  |  |

Participants from regional settings discussed with greater frequency and emphasis a determination to overcome challenges in the transition into university. Higher levels of self-efficacy, resilience and, perhaps as a result, personal confidence, emerged in the deliberations of regional students than was apparent among urban students. The data suggested that regional participants were risk takers in that they persisted and trusted in the process even when it was unclear what lay ahead. They demonstrated tenacity and a willfulness to work through confusion, doubts and uncertainty. A neutral sentiment prevailed for both urban and regional participants with regards to this theme, reflecting the balance between experiencing challenges and accomplishment in overcoming them.

[About enrolment] Obviously very exhausting because my parents had no idea how to help me with the application process or any form of help with university, so it was very overwhelming.

— Tabitha, Urban, Education

It was very stressful the first couple of months after, like, moving out. So, like, when I enrolled in my course, there was, like, a while before I didn't know what I was going to do for, like, accommodation or how I was going to pay for it.

— Caspar, Regional, Science

Differential III.f. Fear of the Unknown — School Case Studies

| | Urban | Regional |
|-------------------------|---|---|
| Prominence | LOW | HIGH |
| Most Observed Sentiment |  |  |

A concern raised by participants from both urban and regional locations is that many parents lacked first-hand experience with university study and this made students uncertain that they were making the right decision.

However, a fear of change associated with relocation and navigating an unfamiliar city environment without family support nearby was a prominently discussed issue for the regions, resulting in the negative sentiment.

On the big open days in particular - that is quite a daunting experience ... for some of them in particular, very daunting.

— Urban Parent Interview, Female

In the middle ... concerns about what will it be like to live in the city? What will it be like to move away from home? What will it be like to lose connection with my community? ... One of the greatest fears with change is the unknown... make the unknown known then the change is not as much of a problem.

— Regional Program Manager, Male

Whether they view university as an accessible option for them or not I think is big... we sort of work on is pushing them out of that comfort zone and out of their bubble ... they don't travel to Brisbane ... there is this train station at the ...front of their school... we've had quite a number of times when it's their first trip to Brisbane ... when it's really not that far away... [a school] used that as an opportunity to break that barrier down for their students... I think it's knowing what's outside their bubble.

— Urban Program Manager, Male

Differential III.g. Attitudes to Risk — School Case Studies

| | Urban | Regional |
|-------------------------|---|---|
| Prominence | LOW | LOW |
| Most Observed Sentiment |  |  |

There appears to be a mix of responses concerning attitudes toward the risks involved with pursuing university study.

The attitudes toward social and financial risks appear more positive in urban areas where parents were highly supportive of their children's university goals despite the financial costs. While some students displayed risk aversion, many 'first in family' students embraced the risks inherent in university study to honour their family members and fulfil their obligation as role models to younger siblings and the wider community.

Although discussions in the regions were quite negative about the social and financial risks involved with university study, particularly with the need for relocation, most parents were nevertheless highly supportive of their children's goals and supported their children wherever possible.

It's probably a bit easier for them to be able to stay at home. Most of the students that we deal with ... a lot want to get out... they can study at Caboolture ... Gardens Point, so they ... have an excuse to get out of home. it's probably not as big a step ... I can still study from home, but the ones that are coming from (towns removed)... got to move three or four hours away ... It's a massive risk and a commitment...".

— Urban Program Manager, Male

It's huge ... there's a social risk in doing that... I think I'm better than all of this ... what you've offered ... I don't need any of that. I'm going to go and do something else. So, then the pressure you put on yourself to come down here if you fail because as we know it's really hard in your first year. Then ... all of the adjustment without any network, it's no surprise to me ... it's much harder for rural kids because the barriers are real.

— Urban Program Manager, Female

We see the Year 12s that finish here... Samoan kids and Tongan kids ... they're definitely at home encouraged to do well... I think university is a big thing too ... the money factor's probably a big question mark for a lot of parents... how they will afford to get their kids through university if they're a New Zealand citizen ... they're doing whatever it takes to get kids through university ... taking out big personal loans ... to make that happen.

— Urban Parent Focus Group, Female

Differential III.h. Expectations of Self and Others — Current University Students

| | Urban | Regional |
|-------------------------|---|---|
| Prominence | MODERATE | LOW |
| Most Observed Sentiment |  |  |

The influence of the expectations of self and others on the decision to go to university was more prominent among urban students than regional students, with both groups expressing a neutral sentiment about this item. While both urban and

regional participants mentioned that there was pressure from their parents to enrol in university, this was more prevalent among urban participants. Unlike urban participants, regional participants reflected both parental pressure to go to university and parental pressure not to go to university.

I think with me growing up in a Samoan family there was a lot of taxi drivers, a lot of warehouse workers and I didn't want to be one of those. I didn't want to grow up and live my life making money off that because I didn't find it fun.

— Graham, Urban, Law and Psychology

[On others who did not go to university] Yeah, and their parents have a lot to do with it as well. Like, their parents were like, "we didn't study so therefore, you don't have to study to get a job".

— Fiona, Regional, Education

You put a lot of pressure on yourself in Year 12, as a student. Especially if you are a little bit more academically minded, you tend to put a lot of pressure on your grades, because it's hard not to view them as a reflection of your intelligence and your self-worth, at that age. There's the parents, as well. My parents were pretty understanding and supportive, but they did, obviously, want me to do well and succeed. Yeah, I mean, just outside of the academic ways, there's a lot of societal pressures, as well. Just - you're dealing with friendships and relationships at that age. A lot of people are trying to find work and trying to learn how to drive or they've just gotten their licence. You really do have a lot going on and then you kind of have to make a decision that might impact the rest of your life. It gets pretty overwhelming.

— Takumi, Regional, Film

Differential III.i. Social Isolation/Being an Outlier — Current University Students

| | Urban | Regional |
|-------------------------|-------|---|
| Prominence | N/A | LOW |
| Most Observed Sentiment | |  |

Participants, particularly those from more remote settings, described the situation whereby their decision to go to university led them to become self-described outliers or non-conformists in the school community and the beyond. Regional participants

talked of being among a minority of students on the 'OP-track' and not fitting in or viewed as peculiar because of their academic and career aspirations. Regional participants viewed some of their Year 12 peers who did not go on to university as apathetic and ignorant of the career and life possibilities a university degree could offer. Regional participants expressed a sense of defiance of social norms and a sustained conviction to their decision to go to university.

My family's [an] anomaly just with...that we are academic and it's not really expected.

— Julia, Regional, Medicine

[On Year 12 peers who did not go to university] They don't really know any different ... I guess just from my school, it's not really expected that people go to uni or anything. We're the only State school in the town so all the dregs who get kicked out of the other schools come to our school. No-one's inclined to even do the non-OP subjects, like even hand in their assignments for that.

— Joanna, Regional, Zoology and Ecology

Differential III.j. Cultural Identity Fit — School Case Studies

| | Urban | Regional |
|-------------------------|---|---|
| Prominence | LOW | HIGH |
| Most Observed Sentiment |  |  |

School students on the OP pathways from both regional locations discussed the positive cultural identity-fit they felt with their peers. A shared sense of belonging reportedly inspired them to work hard

towards their university aspirations. For all students, university was an unfamiliar place. While some students were inspired by the campus environment, others seemed overwhelmed by higher education institutions due to the physical environment and cultural unfamiliarity.

Regional informants, particularly Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parents, discussed the importance of their children feeling culturally safe at university and how university visits and camps had shown them they could fit there. Nevertheless, discussions do highlight the social and economic issues and the cultural bonds to family and community that may negatively affect university aspirations.

An urban principal argued that flexible pathways to university (e.g. Diploma/Tertiary Preparation Programs) were more conducive, when students face a multiplicity of family and socioeconomic barriers. Hence, a non-OP pathway might be more appropriate for students overcoming complex family hardships.

Most of the people I'm surrounded by in my classrooms are people who are also really motivated to go to university ... they've all done the outreach programs ... so they'd have very similar views.

— Urban Student Focus Group, Female

We should be talking about occupations ... way before Grade 10 ... they've got to start getting ideas ... I feel for those kids who have no idea what a university is. Their families have never been there ... kids who have never stepped foot on a university and it freaks (them)... you know it's not familiar so therefore I won't even consider it.

— Regional Parent Focus Group, Female

Particularly with the regional remote students because it's all about kinship and belonging to country and family units... A lot of the students that are going and staying in another place ... universities champion participation ... they have an area and a space in those universities to feel safe culturally ... At the end of the camp they still were very wary about moving away from family and away from home... It's the fear factor as well... in a way.

— Regional Project Manager, Male

I think the stigma attached to going on an university pathway, of that it's for rich people or that it's a snobby thing to do, and that's from our young people who are from families that they might be first-in-family who might be looking at that pathway and it might not be an opportunity that they think it's realistic and doable in their future. Particularly I think the biggest thing here at the moment is [local university] coming out to this area; that seems to be where a lot of our pathways are going.

— Urban Parent Interview, Female

Differential III.j. Cultural Identify Fit — Current University Students

| | Urban | Regional |
|-------------------------|---|----------|
| Prominence | LOW | N/A |
| Most Observed Sentiment |  | |

Cultural identify fit was discussed by participants from urban settings who were from migrant families or culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds. No regional participants discussed cultural identity fit. Hence it was reported as not

applicable. In discussing this item, those who were not yet Australian citizens highlighted the additional financial burdens they experienced; while others discussed the challenges with language and pathways into university.

I also wasn't an Australian citizen so that was obviously a major implication because I couldn't afford to pay uni up front as an international student.

— Tabitha, Urban, Education

So, I had to write a letter and stuff because English is my second language. So, I think that helped me get into uni as well.

— Grace, Urban, Business

5.4 Reported Impact of Widening Participation Programs

The reported impact of widening participation programs was analysed across 12 sub-factors resulting in low to moderate prominence in most sub-factors. For school case study respondents, impact was generally positive in both urban and regional locations, but often prominence was lower in regional areas where there was more limited exposure to widening participation programs. Some regional school students reported participation in non-widening participation programs, such as faculty or mining-led camps and university experiences, which had similar impacts to the widening participation programs in demystifying university and improving students' understanding and knowledge of higher education. The more negative sentiments expressed by current university students regarding university demystification impacts may reflect still significant gaps in understanding about university life experienced by these students on their enrolment.

For the school case studies, differentials in prominence were observed for the following sub-factors:

- impact on demystifying university as a post-school option;
- changes in student attitudes and/or behaviours;
- changes in understanding of post-school options and pathways;
- presence of the university within the school;
- specific widening participation activities or strategies that made a difference; and
- impact of widening participation program on different sub-groups.

Changes in understanding of post-school options and pathways was the only sub-factor in the school case studies to also have a difference in sentiment. This was a result of the lower exposure to widening participation activities experienced in the remote schools visited. For current university students, differentials in sentiment were observed for changes in student attitudes and/or behaviour. In both samples, changes in student achievement levels was positive but of low prominence in regional samples, and was not mentioned in either urban sample.

Taken together, these results suggest that while widening participation programs had an impact across a number of sub-factors, the discussion of impact was less prominent in regional areas due to lower frequency of engagement with the program, rather than ineffectiveness of individual initiatives for regional students.

Table 17: Impact of widening participation program — school case studies

| THEMES RELEVANT TO SCHOOL CASE STUDIES | URBAN EXPERIENCE | | REGIONAL EXPERIENCE | | DIFFERENTIAL |
|--|------------------|---|---------------------|---|--------------|
| | Prominence | Most Observed Sentiment | Prominence | Most Observed Sentiment | |
| IV.a. Demystify university as a post-school option | HIGH |  | MODERATE |  | ✓ |

| THEMES RELEVANT TO SCHOOL CASE STUDIES | URBAN EXPERIENCE | | REGIONAL EXPERIENCE | | DIFFERENTIAL |
|---|------------------|---|---------------------|---|--------------|
| | Prominence | Most Observed Sentiment | Prominence | Most Observed Sentiment | |
| IV.b. Changes in student attitudes and/or behaviour | MODERATE |  | LOW |  | ✓ |
| IV.c. Changes in parent attitudes and/or behaviour | LOW |  | LOW |  | |
| IV.d. Changes in school culture and/or reputation | LOW |  | LOW |  | |
| IV.e. Changes in understanding of post-school options and pathways | HIGH |  | MODERATE |  | ✓ |
| IV.f. Changes in ability to navigate secondary and tertiary education systems | LOW |  | LOW |  | |
| IV.g. Changes in applications to university | LOW |  | LOW |  | |
| IV.h. Changes in student achievement levels | N/A | | LOW |  | ✓ |
| IV.i. Presence of university within the school | MODERATE |  | LOW |  | ✓ |
| IV.j. Improved transition to university | LOW |  | LOW |  | |
| IV.k. Specific WP activities or strategies that made a difference | HIGH |  | MODERATE |  | ✓ |
| IV.l. Impact of WP program on different sub-groups | LOW |  | MODERATE |  | ✓ |

Sentiment Key:  Positive  Neutral  Negative

Table 18: Impact of the widening participation program — current university students

| THEMES RELEVANT TO UNI STUDENT SAMPLE | URBAN EXPERIENCE | | REGIONAL EXPERIENCE | | DIFFERENTIAL |
|---|------------------|---|---------------------|---|--------------|
| | Prominence | Most Observed Sentiment | Prominence | Most Observed Sentiment | |
| IV.a. Demystify university as a post-school option | MODERATE |  | MODERATE |  | |
| IV.b. Changes in student attitudes and/or behaviour | MODERATE |  | LOW |  | ✓ |
| IV.e. Changes in understanding of post-school options and pathways | MODERATE |  | MODERATE |  | |
| IV.f. Changes in ability to navigate secondary and tertiary education systems | MODERATE |  | MODERATE |  | |
| IV.h. Changes in student achievement levels | N/A | | LOW |  | ✓ |
| IV.i. Presence of university within the school | LOW |  | LOW |  | |
| IV.j. Improved transition to university | MODERATE |  | MODERATE |  | |

| THEMES RELEVANT TO UNI STUDENT SAMPLE | URBAN EXPERIENCE | | REGIONAL EXPERIENCE | | DIFFERENTIAL |
|---|------------------|---|---------------------|---|--------------|
| | Prominence | Most Observed Sentiment | Prominence | Most Observed Sentiment | |
| IV.k. Specific WP activities or strategies that made a difference | HIGH |  | HIGH |  | |
| IV.l. Impact of WP program on different sub-groups | LOW |  | LOW |  | |

Sentiment Key:  Positive  Neutral  Negative

Differential IV.a. Demystify University as a Post-School Option — School Case Studies

| | Urban | Regional |
|-------------------------|---|---|
| Prominence | HIGH | MODERATE |
| Most Observed Sentiment |  |  |

Both urban and regional respondents in school case studies were very positive about the impact of widening participation activities and particularly on-campus exposure in demystifying university. Such experiences were described as raising awareness,

eye-opening, providing a first hand or inside view, building familiarity, and dispelling fears. Students learned from such experiences that university was different to school; university was not just all hard work; there were opportunities to explore new areas and interests; there were flexible ways to work and study; and that learning support was available. Such viewpoints were shared by program managers, school staff, parents and school students. A very small number of students reported that their university experience was overwhelming and this deterred them from further study.

Lower prominence, particularly from remote schools, reflects lower exposure to widening participation in these locations and more limited exposure to on-campus experiences.

So it's really about them seeing and doing things, looking at university settings and going hey I feel comfortable here, I could see myself studying here.

— Regional Principal Interview, Male

I guess it's just a bit of - like a set up way to get into it - just nursing your way into university...

— Regional School Student Focus Group, Male

When I started learning about university I thought it was just kind of like school or you just sit down in chairs, you learn and going to an actual university and seeing things like the lab rooms, the libraries and stuff it's actually huge and they have so many different resources and all kinds of different ways of learning.

— Urban School Student Focus Group, Female

Differential IV.b. Changes in Student Attitudes and/or Behaviour — School Case Studies

| | Urban | Regional |
|-------------------------|---|---|
| Prominence | MODERATE | LOW |
| Most Observed Sentiment |  |  |

Students at both urban and regional schools reported that university experiences had increased their interest in a field of study and led to further research and discussion with parents or peers. There was also some impact reported on motivation

to study. Several parents reported that their children had been excited by university visits and discussed them at home.

Students from urban schools were more likely to talk about participation in widening participation activities leading to changes in attitude and confidence than regional students. Urban students reported they felt more confident after visiting campuses and talking to university students and had an increased determination to achieve their goals. While regional students expressed somewhat similar sentiments, the prominence was lower, particularly as a number of the experiences regional students discussed were non-widening participation activities such as studying a university subject at school or attending a national program such as a STEM camp. One remote principal felt there had not been any change to a prevailing culture that many students and their families held that university was not for them. However, widening participation exposure in this community had been limited.

Yeah, When you're interested in something I guess you always think about it or talk about it or want to know more about it. It definitely sparks well curiosity in what it is, so yeah ever since then I've started watching heaps of documentaries on it, watching TV shows, researching. It's fun when you're curious of it.

— Regional School Student Focus Group, Female

I reckon [widening participation program] helped me a lot. Just sitting down and talking to the kids that go to uni there, and just hearing what their experiences are from past years, or right now, that really helped me as well.

— Urban School Student Focus Group, Female

Yeah, she does come home and tell, we looked at this, and she got excited about accessing different areas to where they had been before, being part of the nursing side of things, she was really quite excited about having a chat and having a look in there. ...Yeah, being able to engage with other actual active students at the uni was a good thing for her as well. She was talking about different conversations she'd had with them.

— Urban Parent Interview, Female

Differential IV.b. Changes in Student Attitudes and/or Behaviour — Current University Students

| | Urban | Regional |
|-------------------------|---|---|
| Prominence | MODERATE | LOW |
| Most Observed Sentiment |  |  |

Students from urban settings were very positive in their comments about how widening participation activities had changed their behaviour and/or attitude and discussed this more than regional participants. The data suggests that the more

frequent exposure to a wider variety of widening participation activity was more impactful in terms of urban students' self-belief that they could go to university and in building instrumental skills, such as how to complete QTAC applications. Regional students talked less about widening participation inspired changes in attitudes or behaviour noting that they had gaps in their knowledge about what university life would be like. This lower prominence is a likely reflection of lesser widening participation exposure.

... I knew exactly how to do QTAC and I knew my options. So, I think that, yeah, it [widening participation] definitely increased my knowledge and my confidence.

— Tabitha, Urban, Education

Yeah, I had no idea about, like, all the clubs on-campus and stuff until I got here. So maybe [widening participation activities] about that and a bit more involvement in the uni and stuff [would be advantageous].

— Regional Focus Group, Female

I thought it was quite interesting because hearing her [the Student Ambassador] talk about what uni life was like and how she was enjoying it, I suppose made an impact that I definitely did want to go to uni.

— Felicia, Regional, Education

Differential IV.e. Changes in Understanding of Post-School Options and Pathways, i.e. More Informed Decision Making — School Case Studies

| | Urban | Regional |
|-------------------------|---|---|
| Prominence | HIGH | MODERATE |
| Most Observed Sentiment |  |  |

Both urban and regional respondents were definitive about the impact of widening participation activities on course choices and pathways. Students and their parents noted the value of on-campus visits where students got to experience a particular subject area

of interest. These experiences often led to confirmation or rejection of an initial subject choice, or discovery of a totally new field of interest. Students also reported that they gained new information about alternate pathways and some had pathways mapped for them by widening participation careers councillors or other university staff.

While similar sentiments were expressed by most urban and regional students, there was a lower prominence of comments on this sub-factor from regional students reflecting lower exposure to widening participation activities in some regional schools.

A neutral sentiment has been recorded for regional locations because of the reported impact of lack of widening participation engagement in remote schools. Several remote school students reported feeling on their own in researching university pathways, and what they perceived as a lack of reliable information sources left them feeling vulnerable to making poor decisions about potential universities and courses.

Yeah they pretty much decided what they wanted to do then after receiving information on the courses. They found it [the campus visit] very helpful.

— Urban Parent Interview, Male

... yeah, convenient so everything's kind of based around the mines. So if you want to do uni stuff you've got to find out yourself.

— Regional School Student Focus Group, Male

Well, we went to talk to a careers counsellor [provided through widening participation program] and he just showed me all the different pathways. Even if I don't get the OP that I need to get into it, there's always a different way to get in.

— Urban School Student Focus Group, Female

Differential IV.h. Changes in Student Achievement Levels — School Case Studies

| | Urban | Regional |
|-------------------------|-------|---|
| Prominence | N/A | LOW |
| Most Observed Sentiment | |  |

There was little comment on this factor. One regional school in close proximity to a university had longstanding and rich relationships with local university academics and these were credited with engaging and motivating teachers and students in

these disciplines. This school had a proactive leadership group which strategically aligned university activities with the school's vision. Faculty based programs, particularly STEM activities, were sometimes integrated with outreach to widening participation partner schools but sometimes quite independent of them.

Particularly in the science fields [and] with maths. In science we've had long standing partnerships predating scientists in schools that still exist today with really fantastic cutting edge academic staff who come into school and engage

our students and also work with our teachers at a curriculum level to improve programs and modernise them. So those have been long running. We've got a number of those. ... I actually think those sorts of things [matter] because kids actually are doing something that you do at university and it's worthwhile and if I look at the numbers of students in the school who choose the high level sciences, that is quite high. It's higher than humanities in most cases.

— Regional School Staff Focus Group, Female

Differential IV.h. Changes in Student Achievement Levels — Current University Students

| | Urban | Regional |
|-------------------------|-------|---|
| Prominence | N/A | LOW |
| Most Observed Sentiment | |  |

The impact of widening participation on regional student's academic achievement levels was apparent for students in a regional setting in that for some students it was a catalyst to improve their grades and aspire to university. None of the urban

participants mentioned widening participation inspired changes hence was reported as 'not applicable'. This finding was influenced in part by a bias in the sample. Participants were self-selecting, with many indicating they were moderate-to-high achievers in school.

In Year 10 it would have been...I wasn't the best student; my grades were really low and I just kind of picked up the ball again.

— Felicity, Regional, Nursing

Differential IV.i. Presence of University within the School — School Case Studies

| | Urban | Regional |
|-------------------------|---|---|
| Prominence | MODERATE | LOW |
| Most Observed Sentiment |  |  |

Urban and regional program managers reported on the value of building ongoing presence in schools and how this was appreciated by school staff. Students also spoke of the value of ongoing relationships that allowed them to update their

knowledge; get exposure to different people and ideas; ask questions as they arose; and address their changing information needs. While a small number of regional respondents had experience of an ongoing university presence, this was not the case in remote schools where there was little comment on this factor.

It's really good that they revisit, so then you know what prerequisites you need, if it is achievable to actually study this. Having the unis revisit is really beneficial if you are someone that's still unsure of what you want to study.

— Urban School Student Focus Group, Female

Also every time we go most of the time we'll have different people with us from the university so you get to meet all kinds of different people. You can get more than one opinion on the course that you're looking at. Also because I don't know any family members or friends that do university so I wouldn't have a personal [connection].

— Urban School Student Focus Group, Female

I think it's imperative, the uni itself is still engaging with the local communities and the pathways through from the school. I know it's something they've been working on for a long time. But it's not a one off thing, it needs to be an integrated long-term thing.

— Regional Parent Interview, Male

Differential IV.k. Specific Widening Participation Activities or Strategies that Made a Difference, including Ambassadors, Scholarship Information — School Case Studies

| | Urban | Regional |
|-------------------------|---|---|
| Prominence | HIGH | MODERATE |
| Most Observed Sentiment |  |  |

On-campus activities were most frequently raised as the standout activity that impacted on students' beliefs and knowledge about higher education. These activities provided familiarity with university campus; exposure to learning experiences and fields of study; and a sense of connection with university as a potential learning place. Often in association with on-campus activities, students also got to interact with enrolled students or ambassadors and getting this first hand perspective on university was highly valued, especially when student ambassadors were from the same school or background. While these strategies had great impact and were memorable, some respondents noted the importance of ongoing relationships and multi-pronged approaches to widening participation.

Scholarship information and access was most likely to be raised by parents, particularly regional parents. While an urban parent described the scholarship her daughter had gained as being a great bonus, regional respondents were more likely to talk about scholarships as being the make or break element in whether a child could leave home to study.

Just hearing their personal stuff is interesting, rather than all the formal stuff that you just sit and hear.

— Urban School Student Focus Group, Female

Schools that I talk to ...they still talk about those [Year 10] camps as something that had a critical impact on the students and a lifelong impact.

— Regional University Project Manager, Male

.... So the parents of the children who get into the [scholarship] programs I know that they really value them and that they do really put the pressure on their kids to not lose them, the ones that I can think of who've gone through. For some parents it's the difference of whether they could or couldn't afford to send their child away.

— Regional School Staff Focus Group, Female

Differential IV.l. Impact of Widening Participation Program on Different Sub-Groups, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Students, At-Risk Students — School Case Studies

| | Urban | Regional |
|-------------------------|---|---|
| Prominence | LOW | MODERATE |
| Most Observed Sentiment |  |  |

This is the one factor for the school case studies where prominence was higher for regional respondents compared to their urban counterpart. There was also a difference in the sub-groups identified. In regional locations, Aboriginal and

Torres Strait Islander specific programs were more frequently discussed and were seen as having an impact on students' connection with the university, their own cultural identity and their community. Respondents reported that these programs contributed to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students feeling welcome in a university environment and that their culture was valued there.

In urban schools, there was little discussion of impacts on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and this may have been reflective of differing demographics in the sample, including prominence of other sub-groups, but may be a matter for further investigation. Urban schools visited had lower Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander enrolment rates than regional schools and several urban clusters had high Pasifika populations (one school was estimated to have 60-70% Pasifika enrolments). Respondents in the urban sample reported

that widening participation activities for the Pasifika community attracted high levels of community support and were effective in helping students negotiate barriers to access including cultural acceptance, financing study and balancing university and cultural obligation.

I think with the [Pasifika] kids in particular having some of them as ambassadors was a huge thing because some of them didn't have the self-confidence or there was too many blockers financially as well to say this is just way out of my league and I could never go there.

— Urban School Principal Interview, Male

I take the kids down every year to that [on-campus experience for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students]. Well, we've got three out of that that went last year that have gone on to uni this year.

— Regional Parent Interview, Female

Well, it's like introducing them to something that's foreign to them. It's like the stepping stone from kindy, preschool; you lead them into it. They're young adults going into something very foreign, and I think by having this program, but also linking the support staff, it's like getting to know them - because when the Aboriginal/Islander children are at the high school, they have support teams and community education councillors. ... yes it may be taking them by the hand, but it's our way of meeting the next people that are going to take you on your educational journey. I think it's important that that connection is in place, and it's also about the family getting connected, not just the children; the students. Our way is family involvement; we don't just let our kids go, we still like to be there as a family.

— Regional Parent Interview, Female

In summary, the qualitative results reported in this chapter illustrated the breadth and complexity of factors influencing young people in making decisions about post-school options. Differences between urban and regional qualitative data were identified across institutional, situational and differential factors and in terms of impact of the widening participation program. Of the 41 sub-factors identified in the analysis framework, only 28 proved to be differential in terms of prominence or sentiment. A synthesis of quantitative and qualitative results is presented in the discussion chapter in the context of prior studies.

6 Discussion

This study explored the lower rate of application to university by school leavers in regional and remote low SES communities in Queensland, compared to their low SES urban counterparts, in the context of the unique state-wide approach to widening participation in Queensland. This chapter brings together the key findings of the study as they relate to our research objectives and discusses them in light of the existing literature.

6.1 The Impact of HEPPP-Funded Widening Participation Activities in Schools Serving Low SES Background Regional and Remote Students in Comparison to their Urban Counterparts

The core finding of this study is that the widening participation program developed and implemented by the Queensland Consortium from 2011 had a positive impact on students' applications to higher education institutions. However, the widening participation program could not overcome the systematic disadvantage experienced by students from low SES backgrounds in regional and remote areas.

The quantitative analysis found a positive and statistically significant impact on application rates from schools that were highly engaged in the widening participation partnerships with universities. The analysis proves that a comprehensive widening participation program which addresses most of the best-practice approaches identified by Cupitt et al. (2016) and spans primary and secondary years (Fleming & Grace, 2015; Gore et al., 2015), can significantly influence the post-school choices of students from low SES backgrounds in favour of going to university. Our study suggests that the school is an appropriate unit of analysis in widening participation research because most interventions are targeted at the school level. At the same time, the school-level analysis imposes additional complexities in terms of sample size. In this study, the number of highly-engaged regional schools was too small to prove a significant effect at the regional level. However, a positive effect was found for widening participation programs in highly engaged regional schools which may emerge as significant in a larger sample.

The qualitative data provide an opportunity to unpack the high level findings and assess the reported impact of widening participation activities on student participants, both current and past. A number of the impact factors developed for this research were highly prominent, including:

- the program's positive influence in demystifying university as a post-school option;
- generating change in the understanding of post-school options and pathways; and
- the ability of specific widening participation activities or strategies to make a difference.

However, the prominence of impact factors was consistently lower in regional areas than urban ones across both samples considered for the qualitative analysis. We argue that the observed lower prominence of reported impact, particularly from remote schools, stems from the consistently lower exposure to widening participation activities in these locations, especially to on-campus experiences. The analysis from the urban interviews and focus groups suggests that the sustained exposure to university as a desirable post-school option as well as first-hand experiences of university life through widening participation activities, especially on-campus visits and interactions with university ambassadors and staff, started a virtuous circle which led to more informed and confident decision making to pursue a specific course or pathway and, ultimately, higher enrolments at universities from these students. This is in line with the findings by Vernon et al. (2018, p.1) that students in regional areas

need “concrete opportunities to support and develop their aspirations” over time so that student aspirations turn into an expectation to attend university after school. The steps in the virtuous circle are outlined in Figure 6 below.

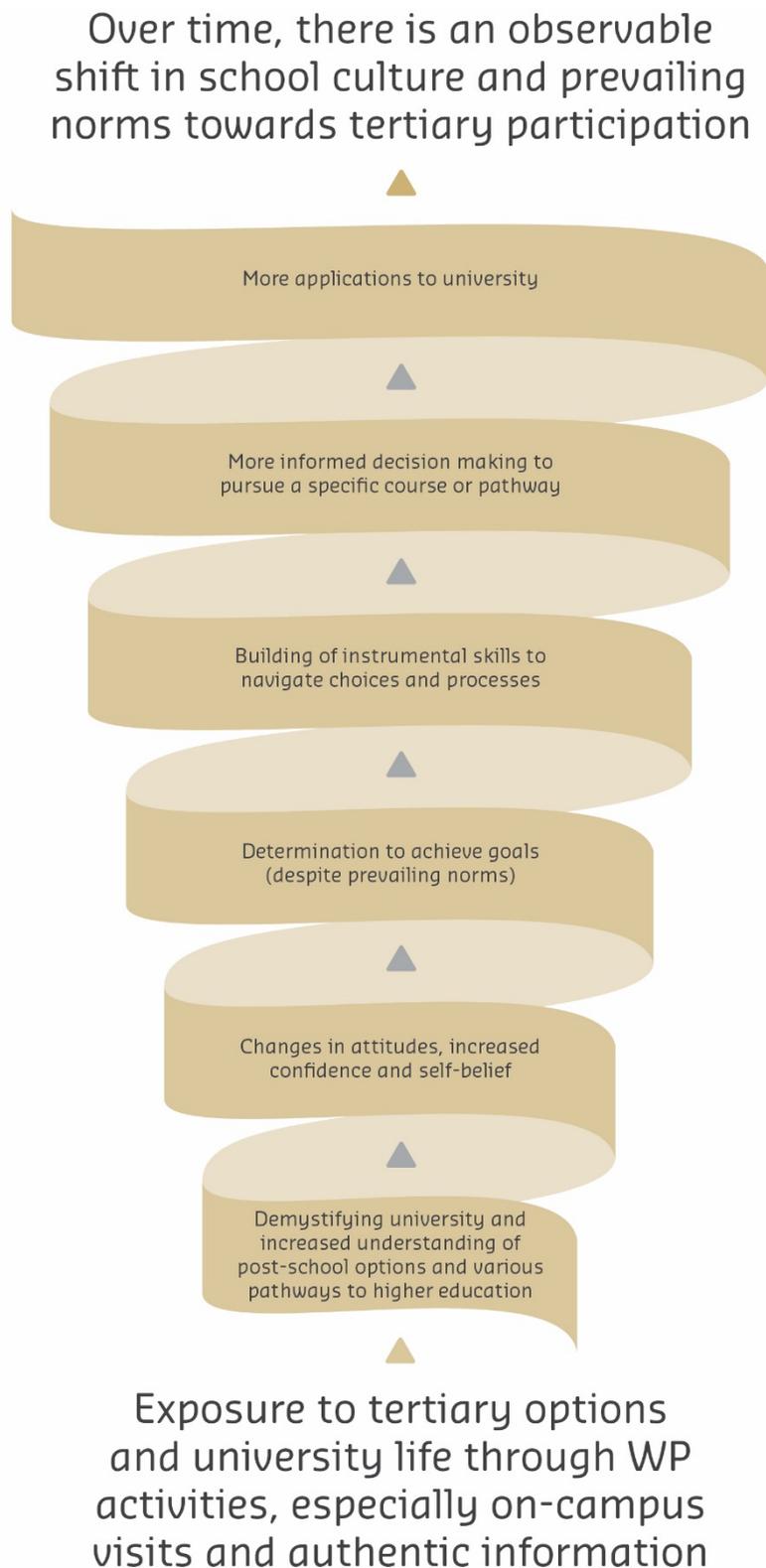


Figure 6: Virtuous circle of sustained widening participation activity in highly engaged schools

Due to the lower levels of engagement with the widening participation program, the virtuous circle was not as strongly established in the regional locations included in this study and the impact of widening participation activities was more muted. The current university students interviewed for this study reported that widening participation in regional settings was typically ad hoc, sporadic, limited in variety of activities, typically only focused on the larger more popular courses and often students were given little notice of university visits. Conversely, widening participation activities in urban settings were described as scheduled, regular, diverse, planned and strategically integrated into school activities.

While regional participants in the case study schools expressed similar sentiments with regard to the benefits of widening participation activities to their urban counterparts, they had less opportunity to participate in those activities which led to less positive and more temporary effects throughout the circle and, ultimately, contributed to little change to rates of application for university places by students from regional and remote locations. This is congruent with the findings by Vernon et al. (2018) that the expectation to go to university declines with increasing distance from a major city. It seems that in the more distant locations, widening participation programs could not overcome the neighbourhood factors which acted as a barrier to university participation or, put differently, function as 'disrupters' (Webb et al., 2015) of traditional imaginations about the future.

The only sub-factor where prominence was higher in regional areas was for programs which targeted sub-groups, especially Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. Participants in the case studies reported the success of targeted programs and the ongoing need for such programs. This is confirmed by recent findings from a large aspirations study which found that high-achieving students from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander backgrounds were less likely to attend university because they did not see higher education as a desirable option (Gore et al., 2017b).

In addition, this study provides further evidence that widening participation in higher education is a long-term endeavour (Atherton, Kendall, Naughton, & Webster, 2018; Gore et al., 2015; Fleming & Grace, 2015; KPMG, 2015). For current university students, the more negative sentiments expressed regarding university demystification impacts may reflect still significant gaps in understanding about university life experienced by these students on their enrolment. These students are likely to have had a shorter period of, and less intensive exposure to, widening participation activities than the school students interviewed for this study.

In order to gain a better understanding as to why widening participation programs can become a more effective tool to increase participation in regional areas, and what other interventions can be implemented to overcome systemic barriers, the next section explores the interplay between institutional, situational and dispositional factors which emerged prominently in this study.

6.2 Understanding the Factors—both Program-Related and External—that Affect Students' Participation in Higher Education

Program-related factors, which covered program design, degree of engagement by schools, funding levels and program implementation, were classified as 'institutional' factors for the purpose of the qualitative analysis. Factors external to the widening participation programs that affect students' participation in higher education were separated into 'situational' and 'dispositional' factors. Situational factors related to the local school and wider community, the availability of role models and high quality information as well as financial and other resource pressures. Dispositional factors captured beliefs, values and attitudes towards higher education study held by students and their key influencers.

As can be expected, there was a high degree of interplay between the various factors. We will argue that there were three sets of factors which provide some explanation for the lower application rates of students in regional and remote low SES communities compared to those in urban ones. The first set of factors sheds more light on the finding from the quantitative analysis that highly engaged schools were more often in urban areas. The second set explores the interplay between location and access to quality information in the decision making process about post-school choices. The final set of factors demonstrates on two concrete examples that while the situational challenges faced by students in their decision making process about post-school choices may be the same, they play out very differently in regional and urban low SES areas.

A Matter of Engagement, Cluster Size and Funding

As outlined above, the quantitative analysis found that the degree of engagement between schools and universities mattered in students' decisions to apply for a university place. Although the Queensland widening participation program was designed so that regional schools and students would get the same exposure to, and quality of, widening participation activities as their urban counterparts, this study suggests that this ambition was not fully realised and that it was a lot more difficult to achieve high levels of school engagement in regional and remote areas than urban ones. The analysis of institutional factors in particular provides some insight as to why this might be the case.

Institutional factors related to program design and implementation were both high in prominence and the source of a number of differentials in sentiment. Responses from project managers, and data held by the Queensland Consortium, show differences in the duration, depth and intensity of programs between regional and urban areas. In urban areas, widening participation programs tended to have longer duration, greater intensity and reach, and were less affected by funding changes post-2014 than programs delivered in regional locations. In the two largest urban school clusters, universities were able to build on outreach programs that pre-dated HEPPP funding and had been able to grow and sustain them over time. In contrast, each of the regional universities had to undertake much greater development and scaling up of widening participation programs in the start-up phase of the Consortium project and some had to manage significant reductions in funding post-2014.

In addition, the cluster approach of the Queensland Consortium model might have contributed to lower levels of engagement with regional schools as it resulted in large differences in the number and geographic spread of schools across different clusters. While the grant phase provided funding based on the costs of provision, in the post-grant period, cluster sizes were not adjusted, and universities relied on their base HEPPP grant, which being enrolment-driven, bore no relation to the costs of provision. The response across all clusters was to de-scale activities, and this occurred more in the regional than in the urban clusters. Regional project managers reported difficulty in reaching all schools in their cluster due to the number of schools, their geographic dispersal and the cost of servicing them. Most regional university clusters were made up of a large number of schools spread over vast geographic regions. While some provincial city schools enjoyed easy access to their partner university, a large number of regional schools required extensive travel by land or air to reach. School leaders reported alignment of widening participation and school objectives, but again in some regional schools widening participation was more of an add-on than something that contributed meaningfully to school priorities. Only one provincial city school reported a high level of widening participation integration.

Due to limited contact with remote schools, universities were unable to develop effective partnerships, provide structured ongoing contact with school students or fully integrate programs with school needs. Regional project managers cited logistics, resourcing allocations and institutional priorities that mitigated against engagement with more remote schools in their regions. Program managers also reported that transport and accommodation

costs in delivering programs to distant locations, or getting students from these locations to on-campus experiences, was a major factor in lower engagement in more remote locations. This finding stresses the complexity and cost of delivering effective widening participation programs across a vast geographic region which has previously been highlighted by Skene et al. (2016) in the Western Australian context.

In contrast, urban project managers had a smaller number of schools to service and all were in relatively close proximity to university campus locations. Urban universities were able to forge closer relationships with schools in their cluster and provide more ongoing contact. They were also much less constrained in facilitating on-campus experiences for school students and were usually able to provide these at no cost to the student participants.

University students from regional backgrounds had mostly reported ad hoc widening participation programs while at school compared to more comprehensive and integrated experiences reported by students from urban locations. There were similar differences in the school student sample, though this sample also included students from regional cities who had experienced more comprehensive widening participation programs. Support by school leadership was generally strong across regional and urban locations, however, this also suffered where engagement was more limited.

Across regional and urban locations, formal partnership arrangements between schools and universities were extremely rare, with project managers and school leaders reporting that partnership arrangements were made on a school by school basis. These relationships were quite flexible, but required ongoing management by project staff to maintain. This was more labour-intensive for the regional universities due to the number of schools in their clusters. In addition, turnover of school personnel was seen as a major risk to these partnerships and to the degree of school engagement in both urban and regional locations. While still affected by school staffing changes, project managers in the two urban universities with well-established programs reported greater program resilience.

Access to Quality Information and Assistance with Decision Making was more Readily Available in Urban Locations

The virtuous circle of sustained widening participation activity observed in highly engaged schools starts with the provision of high quality information which is first-hand, authentic and experiential to assist students in their decision making processes. The qualitative analysis found that this kind of information was less accessible in regional and remote locations which seemed to have direct consequences for students' decisions for or against university study. Information barriers have previously been identified as a key contextual factor which negatively influenced the decision making capacity of people in regional and remote locations (Hume Regional Development Australia, 2012).

Discussions about the availability of accurate, relevant and accessible information about post-school options were highly prominent in the case study schools and closely related to the availability of role models and supporters. Students named university open days, camps and campus visits as well as visits by university representatives as important sources of quality information with the opportunity to ask specific questions of people "who know".

These opportunities seemed more accessible in the urban locations where students had repeatedly experienced university demystification activities, open days and other non-widening participation university visits. These were seen as valuable sources of information that helped with choice of course and university.

In contrast, some remote students reported suspicion of university recruitment in the absence of authentic information about university life. Current university students from regional backgrounds reported less exposure to widening participation or other university outreach activities than urban background university students and did not readily distinguish between widening participation and these other forms of university engagement. Low

widening participation engagement impacted on the effectiveness of both widening participation and recruitment activities by universities as there appeared to be reasonably fast message decay. This finding again stresses the issue that positive messages about university were not strong enough to create reciprocal patterns between desires and expectations to attend university post school previously identified by Vernon et al. (2018) or that those messages were strong enough to act as ‘disrupters’ of anticipated futures (Webb et al., 2015).

Because regional students had less access to high quality sources of information provided by widening participation activities, they had to rely more on parents, teachers, school support staff and siblings for information. The interviews with current university students showed that, for regional participants, the encouragement and support of their parents was central to their decision to go to, and stick with, their university studies. Unlike their urban counterparts, they also noted their teachers were active supporters.

However, the reliance on parents and teachers was perceived as a disadvantage in the case studies because of the biases and lack of currency in the information provided by those individuals. Moreover, the higher incidence of parents who had not been to university in regional and remote areas exacerbated the challenges associated with limited access to high quality information and made some students uncertain that they were making the right decision. In addition, a diversity of role models seemed to be more difficult to access in the regions. However, there were many examples of resourceful parents who used or created personal networks to expose their children to a range of occupations. Urban participants were also strongly positive about role models and reported less issues in accessing them.

Finally, the differences between OP and non-OP students and the extent to which they could access information about (alternative) pathways into university emerged as a contested topic in half of the participating schools. There were no clear regional/urban patterns but the distinction between OP and non-OP students, and its consequences, seemed most pronounced in the most remote school. There, non-OP students felt actively excluded from information and opportunities to find out about university and the structure of senior schooling in Queensland seemed to act as a systemic barrier to participation. However, Queensland has commenced the phasing out of the OP system which will be replaced by an ATAR system for students completing Year 12 in 2020. The current transition period provides an opportunity for widening participation programs in Queensland to seek wider engagement with schools and communities on tertiary pathways, especially in regional and remote locations.

Notably, the availability of good quality information had low prominence in the interviews with current university students and did not show a difference between students from regional and urban backgrounds. This finding could not be explained by our analysis framework and could be further explored in future studies.

High Stakes in the Regions and Less Choice about how to Access Higher Education

The quantitative analysis found the existence of systemic disadvantage in regional and remote areas, as expressed by consistently lower levels of applications to universities by school students, even after controlling for socioeconomic variables in the local area. This finding was mirrored in the qualitative data. The reality and implications of distance, of “being far away from anywhere” (Regional Principal interview) versus having “a lot of universities around us” (Urban Student Focus Group), shaped all aspects of students’ decision making process, including their self-belief and the ability to overcome financial barriers associated with university study. These interplays between situational and dispositional factors are explored in the following two examples.

Self-Efficacy of Current Students is Shaped by their Proximity to a University Campus

The qualitative data highlighted that young people in regional and remote areas, and their families, had to take substantial financial, social and personal risks to access higher education. The interviews with current university students demonstrated that those young people who decided to move for university study appeared to be more resilient and confident than their urban peers. However, principals and parents in remote schools in particular reported that many students could not take the required 'leap of faith' and did not start university study immediately after finishing school. Webb et al. (2015) found that moving away from home was often not the preferred post-school option for young people and that there were strong pull factors to keep school-leavers in their local community.

Participants in urban schools did not have to face these same high-stakes decisions. The discussion about attitudes to risk was of low prominence and positive in sentiment in urban locations, but highly prominent and negative in the regions. Also, a fear of change associated with relocation and navigating an unfamiliar city environment without family support nearby was a prominently discussed issue in the regions but not in urban areas.

The further out of a major centre interviewees lived, the less they felt there was a choice about moving to a city or regional centre for university study. Participants were aware of the risks and the level of commitment required to follow through on the decision to leave the community and attend university. More regional than urban participants in the current student interviews had relocated for university with student accommodation of greatest concern for regional students. Students and parents in urban locations felt that they had a choice in how they arranged transport and accommodation during the university years and less need to move. Drummond et al. (2011) argued that young people in the regions faced 'stark choices' with regard to pursuing post-school study which is confirmed by our findings.

The loss of existing networks and support were cited as barriers for regional students as was the 'small world syndrome' which parents and teachers interpreted as young people from the regions being less 'street smart' in navigating the city environment than their urban counterparts. Yet, the current students' interviews suggest that once the initial challenges of relocation and securing accommodation were overcome, students from regional backgrounds were closer to their university campus and enjoyed independent living. For urban participants, while most did not have to leave home, public transport costs/time were an ongoing stressor during their university years.

Current university students from regional settings discussed with greater frequency and emphasis a determination to overcome challenges in the transition into university. Higher levels of self-efficacy, resilience and, perhaps as a result, personal confidence, emerged in the deliberations of regional students than was apparent among urban students. The data suggested that regional participants were risk takers in that they persisted and trusted in the process even when it was unclear what lay ahead. They demonstrated tenacity and a willingness to work through confusion, doubts and uncertainty.

They might have honed these skills during their school days. Current university students, particularly those from more remote settings, described themselves as outliers or non-conformists in the school community and beyond which has also been observed in previous studies (Hume Regional Development Australia, 2012). Regional participants talked of being among a minority of students on the 'OP-track' and not fitting in or viewed as peculiar because of their academic and career aspirations. These students also expressed a sense of defiance of social norms and a sustained conviction to their decision to go to university.

Limited Finances Play Out Differently in Regional and Urban Low SES Areas: More Flexibility in Urban Areas

Finances were a much-discussed factor in both locations and across all interviewee groups. Financial pressures were also highly interrelated with the proximity to university as well as local economic conditions which featured prominently in the case study data and were assessed more negatively in regional than urban locations. Limited finances remain real obstacles to university participation for some students and financial pressures span the student lifecycle. However, the implications of limited financial resources played out differently in urban and regional areas.

School principals and university staff observed that in urban locations, university aspirations were often the first casualty of tight family finances. It was not only the actual cost of university life that acted as a barrier to participation but also the lost income potential of young people who did not enter the workforce straight away. Interviewees were confronted by the fact that young people had to contribute significantly to family income, or even take on a breadwinner role in their family, because they were more employable in the local economy than their parents. The quantitative analysis of economic variables showed that the unemployment rate had a significant impact on application rates to university only in the urban areas. There were examples from urban schools of students delaying study until the need to contribute to family finances had become less urgent. This finding goes some way to explain the delayed entry to higher education by young people from low SES communities observed in previous research (e.g. Tomaszewski et al., 2017). At the same time and as illustrated in the earlier example, it was less expensive to overcome distance issues in urban locations and there seemed to be more flexibility in terms of accessing university. The key question for students in urban locations was: “is this university commutable by public transport, car or car-pooling?” Webb et al. (2015) pointed to the importance of a 1-hour commuting radius which acted as an invisible barrier to students’ considerations about learning and employment options.

In contrast, the question asked by parents in remote and regional locations was: “can we afford to send this child to university?” The compound disadvantage of distance and limited finances got more severe the more remote the location. The costs associated with overcoming distance issues became increasingly prohibitive and acted as hard barriers to university participation. It seemed to be mainly better-off families in the regions who considered university as an option for their children.

There were also practical barriers brought about by the combination of limited finances and regional location which influenced young people’s decision making. These related to relocation and the presence of financial pressures co-occurring with other pressures, such as being first-in-family to attend university. One regional participant mentioned that she accepted an early offer from her university because it meant that she could arrange accommodation, Centrelink benefits and research public transport during Year 12, alleviating the end-of-year anxiety her peers experienced. Other participants revealed that family connections in a city became the means by which regional young people could access university. This was especially true for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students where financial pressures and family ties interacted in complex ways.

Scholarships emerged as an important access mechanism, especially when they were coupled with intensive engagement activities, often from elite universities. The current university students interviewed for the study reported that while they knew about bursaries and scholarships, most did not apply, mainly because they did not know when to or how to and some scholarships demanded a lot of documentation (e.g. of parent income) and time to complete which became barriers to application. In addition, the ‘gap year’ was described as a common tool in regional locations to access Centrelink payments which enabled university participation.

Our study suggests that situational factors, especially geography, interact with situational factors, especially fear of the unknown, self-efficacy and resilience, in complex ways to shape students' decision making about post-school options. It has also illustrated the important role of parents to financially enable, or actively constrain, young people's decision to enrol at university.

6.3 Factors Which Led to Differential Outcomes for Urban and Regional School Clusters

The analysis framework developed for this study provided an effective tool for analysing the differential outcomes for students in urban and regional locations with regard to post-school decision making. Figure 7 provides the revised framework which only includes those sub-factors which were found to be differential in either prominence or sentiment between regional and urban locations. Comparing the original and updated framework shows that most analytical dimensions developed for the study were validated.

In the revised framework, sub-factors have been colour-coded red for current university students and purple for project managers and school case studies. Where the differential was in sentiment only the sub-factor is also italicised. Sub-factors that had high prominence in either urban or rural samples are also identified in this framework, indicated by the letter H.

The sub-factors which emerged as both differential and highly-prominent were:

- Institutional
 - Duration and depth/intensity of widening participation program
 - Intersection with marketing and other non-widening participation programs
 - Strategic integration of widening participation program
- Situational
 - Proximity to university
 - Local economic conditions
 - Availability of role models and supporters
 - Availability of accurate, relevant and accessible information about post-school options
- Dispositional
 - Self-efficacy, resilience, confidence
 - Fear of the unknown
 - Cultural identity fit
- Impact
 - Demystify university as a post-school option;
 - Change in the understanding of post-school options and pathways; and
 - Specific widening participation activities or strategies that make a difference.

Any widening participation program or policy initiative that seeks to improve the participation of regional and remote students from low SES backgrounds should be cognisant of these factors.

To improve the utility of the analysis framework for future studies, we have already collapsed the four dimensions of the institutional factors into one set of sub-factors. There is further scope to collapse a number of sub-factors for future analyses. In the situational factors, there was a high degree of overlap between proximity to university, local economic conditions and financial/resource pressures. Moreover, the availability of accurate, relevant and accessible information about post-school options and the availability of role models and supporters were highly interrelated. In the dispositional factors, concepts of self-efficacy, resilience and confidence were closely related to discussions about the fear of the unknown and attitudes

to risk. Similarly, social isolation/being an outlier and cultural identity fit seemed to be different aspects of the same problem which split on ethnic lines. Social isolation/being an outlier was used by students of Anglo-Celtic or European background whereas cultural identity fit was used with reference to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and those with migrant backgrounds.

REVISED ANALYSIS FRAMEWORK:

DIFFERENTIAL FACTORS IN URBAN AND REGIONAL LOCATIONS

Purple: Case studies
 Red: Current university students
 Italics: Sentiment only
 H: High prominence
 RO: Research Objective

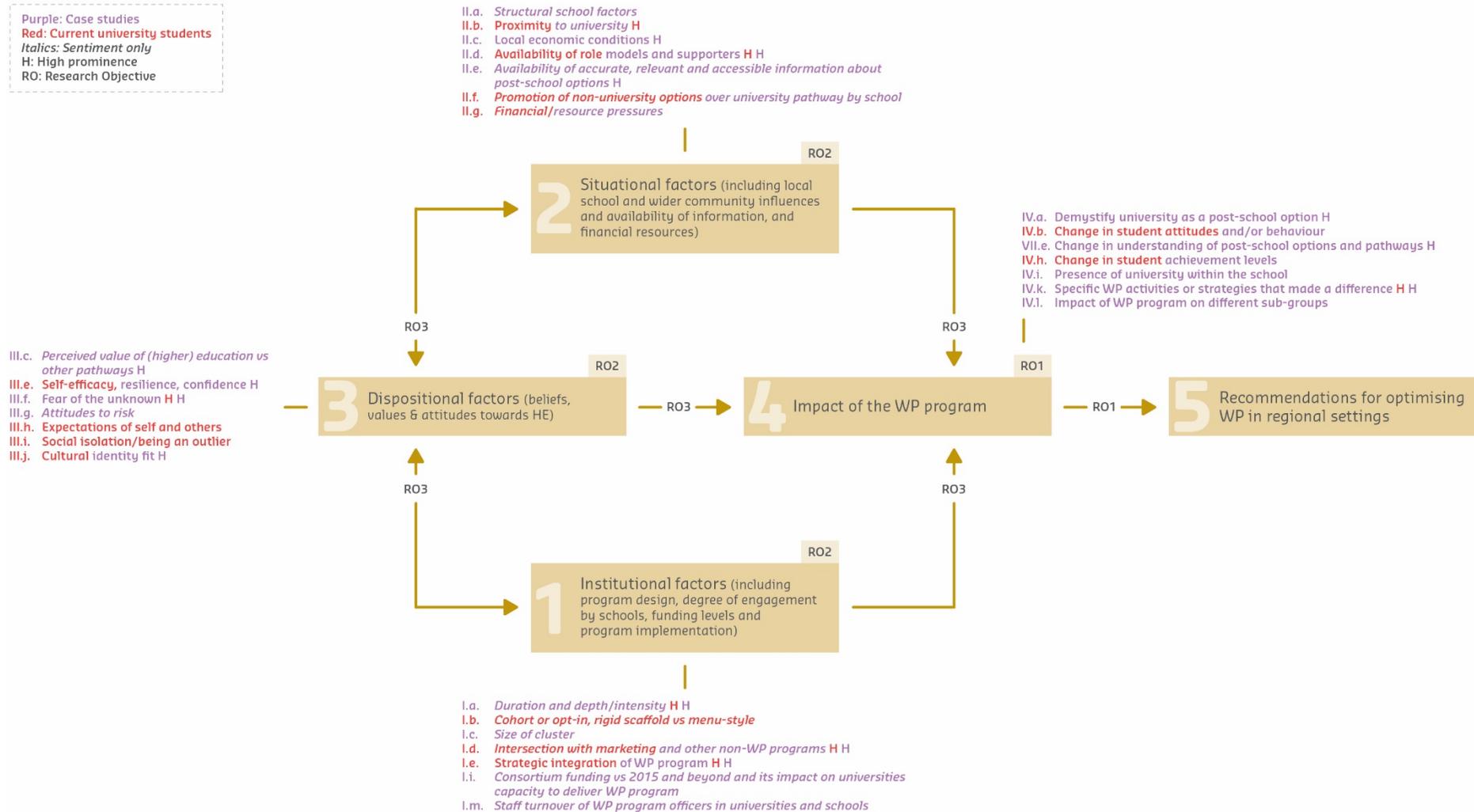


Figure 7: Revised Analysis Framework

7 Conclusion and Recommendations

The approach taken by Queensland universities has proven to be an effective one where the program has been fully implemented and sustained. Quantitative analysis has found that in schools that had experienced high levels of engagement with widening participation programs, university application rates have increased. This has principally been in urban areas and in some provincial cities where ongoing partnerships with schools have been more easily maintained. However, qualitative analysis has found that scale, resourcing and institutional demands has meant that the program has not been able to be maintained at scale and depth across the entire state of Queensland with rural and remote schools most likely not to have achieved full program reach over a sufficient time-period. Urban and regional students were found to share similar ambitions and fears related to tertiary study, however the social, emotional and financial costs associated with leaving home to study exacerbated the risks for students who were a long way from a university campus. Well designed and sustained interventions appear the best way to prepare young people for these difficult decisions and help them transition to positive post school outcomes.

The set of recommendations draws on the key findings of the study as well as input from study respondents and addresses actions to be taken by the Australian Government Department of Education and Training, the Queensland Consortium and Australian universities more broadly.

Recommendations

1. That the Australian Government incentivise, through dedicated HEPPP funding, the creation of a multi-university consortium (or several consortia) to develop a regional and remote widening participation strategy that can create and sustain high engagement with schools in regional and remote locations.

This strategy would ensure regional and remote students have the opportunity to participate in scaffolded tertiary awareness and preparation activities that are early, ongoing and experiential. Program design should include:

- Exposure to university options and university life including early on-campus experiences (prior to end of Year 10) and authentic sources of information (such as student ambassadors).
- Early whole cohort engagement that is interactive and memorable for young learners.
- Career awareness and development activities including exposure to a wide variety of disciplines and career options.
- Interventions timed to support critical decision making points including assisting students plan their educational pathway through school and post-school years, and which build awareness of alternate tertiary pathways.
- Flexibility to respond to different school structures in regional and remote locations, including multi-aged classes and P-10 and P-12 schools, and integrates seamlessly with regional school curriculum and processes.
- Activities which build self-efficacy and confidence as attributes underpinning resilience.

Such a strategy must be adequately funded so that it has a long-term focus, is commensurate with the costs of delivery into regional and remote areas, and does not burden individual universities or regional and remote families with higher costs. Current formula based HEPPP allocations are insufficient and provide little incentive for universities to undertake the complex and expensive task of providing an adequate level of tertiary awareness and preparation for students in many regional and remote areas.

2. That the regional and remote widening participation strategy, while being inclusive of diverse cohorts, is complemented by specific engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Respondents, including those identifying as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islanders, endorsed programs which built connections between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and universities and addressed issues of cultural identity fit and inclusion for prospective students and their communities.

3. That the regional and remote strategy includes a parental engagement component to inform parents about higher education and address financial and emotional costs associated with relocation to study.

Development and implementation of strategies to engage and inform parents is an important ongoing challenge for schools and universities in both urban and regional locations. However in rural and remote locations, this need is particularly acute due to the lack of available role models in these communities, limited access to university open days and experiences in the community, and parental information needs regarding financial and emotional costs associated with relocation to study. Face-to-face interactions, print material and electronic media should be used to engage with parents recognising the differing preferences expressed by parent respondents in regional and remote locations.

4. That universities develop tailored and packaged supports for students from regional and remote low SES backgrounds that reduce the risks involved in moving to a city to access higher education.

Support for students should include consideration of accommodation and living costs as well as support in finding employment, building new support networks and navigating city life. Scholarship offers when coupled with intensive engagement programs act as effective pathways for regional students because they overcome barriers associated with complex application processes as well as the fear of the unknown through establishing close relationships between school students and university students and staff.

5. That universities seek to improve provision of higher education in regional and remote locations including innovative distance and blended models of delivery.

While for some regional students moving away from the limitations of their community and gaining experience in larger, more diverse centres was an important part of their life journey, others were unable or unprepared to take this path. Increased flexibility of higher education delivery including supported distance education models may assist young people remain in their community and gain higher education qualifications. JCU's Remote Area Teacher Education Program (RATEP) community-based Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander teacher education program was cited by several respondents as a model for effective tertiary education delivery in remote locations. Another respondent suggested improved linkage between higher education study and local employers could assist students who wanted to maintain connection with their community. This may involve internship or opportunities to return to the community to meet professional practice requirements or gain employment on graduation. Proposed Australian Government funding for regional hubs is one initiative that may contribute to increasing higher education opportunities in some regional areas.

6. That the Queensland Consortium continue collection of relevant data on widening participation program delivery, school engagement and university

applications and explore expanding this data set to include greater depth and duration of engagement data for all Queensland universities.

An expanded data set would increase the number of highly engaged regional schools in the data collection and enable more conclusive testing of the impact of high engagement with widening participation programs across regional locations.

7. That the Australian Government Department of Education and Training consult with equity practitioners on a more comprehensive means of tracking engagement with outreach programs at the school and student level to enable more effective system-wide monitoring and analysis.

Consistent data collection on program activities is necessary for analysing the effectiveness of HEPPP outreach programs and the extent to which low SES students, irrespective of location, are receiving the level of engagement needed to impact on tertiary participation. The work undertaken by the Queensland Consortium in monitoring engagement of low SES schools across the state and tracking school application rates provides a useful model for further development and extension.

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Appendix 1: Results of the Quantitative Work

Table A: Model Estimations

| | Model I | Model II | Model III | Model IV | Model V | Model VI | Model VII |
|--|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|----------------------------|
| Variable | Full sample | Full sample DET regions |
| (op+ibd)/sep | - | - | - | - | - | 0.746*** | 0.736*** |
| | - | - | - | - | - | (61.685) | (60.288) |
| Region (Base = Metro) | | | | | | | |
| Regional | -0.082*** | -0.064*** | -0.062*** | -0.063*** | -0.073*** | -0.064*** | - |
| | (-9.562) | (-9.284) | (-9.053) | (-9.153) | (-9.966) | (-13.578) | - |
| Remote | -0.203*** | -0.115*** | -0.081*** | -0.079*** | -0.101*** | -0.053*** | - |
| | (-10.000) | (-7.023) | (-4.690) | (-4.593) | (-5.810) | (-4.729) | - |
| IRSAD quartile (Base = highest) | | | | | | | |
| 4 th quartile (lowest) | -0.125*** | -0.126*** | -0.121*** | -0.119*** | -0.089*** | -0.035*** | -0.055*** |
| | (-10.730) | (-13.621) | (-13.094) | (-12.887) | (-9.198) | (-5.667) | (-9.260) |
| 3 rd quartile | -0.092*** | -0.094*** | -0.092*** | -0.091*** | -0.075*** | -0.047*** | -0.056*** |
| | (-8.135) | (-10.399) | (-10.249) | (-10.177) | (-8.464) | (-8.192) | (-9.500) |
| 2 nd quartile | -0.096*** | -0.086*** | -0.084*** | -0.084*** | -0.079*** | -0.045*** | -0.043*** |
| School | | | | | | | |
| School type | - | -0.231*** | -0.232*** | -0.229*** | -0.202*** | -0.039*** | -0.050*** |
| | - | (-39.045) | (-39.333) | (-38.911) | (-30.568) | (-7.911) | (-10.401) |
| Demographic | | | | | | | |
| femapp_ratio_all | - | - | 0.031** | 0.032** | 0.040*** | 0.046*** | 0.041*** |
| | - | - | (2.370) | (2.426) | (3.101) | (5.573) | (4.982) |
| atsiapp_ratio_atssi | - | - | -0.266*** | -0.280*** | -0.285*** | 0.053* | 0.043 |
| | - | - | (-6.324) | (-6.633) | (-6.725) | (1.927) | (1.603) |
| Year (Base = 2010) | | | | | | | |
| year=2011 | - | - | - | 0.007 | 0.006 | 0.007 | 0.007 |
| | - | - | - | (0.643) | (0.565) | (1.123) | (1.124) |
| year=2012 | - | - | - | 0.026** | 0.020** | 0.025*** | 0.027*** |
| | - | - | - | (2.566) | (2.030) | (3.916) | (4.158) |
| year=2013 | - | - | - | 0.028*** | 0.017* | 0.032*** | 0.034*** |
| | - | - | - | (2.735) | (1.715) | (4.995) | (5.204) |
| year=2014 | - | - | - | 0.035*** | 0.022** | 0.042*** | 0.044*** |
| | - | - | - | (3.369) | (2.212) | (6.530) | (6.733) |
| year=2015 | - | - | - | 0.029*** | 0.020** | 0.052*** | 0.051*** |
| | - | - | - | (2.843) | (2.034) | (8.082) | (8.003) |
| year=2016 | - | - | - | 0.031*** | 0.021** | 0.057*** | 0.057*** |
| | - | - | - | (3.062) | (2.114) | (8.866) | (8.829) |
| wp_uni (Base = No Uni) | | | | | | | |
| CQU | - | - | - | - | -0.080*** | -0.013 | - |
| | - | - | - | - | (-5.378) | (-1.333) | - |
| GU | - | - | - | - | -0.160*** | -0.021* | - |
| | - | - | - | - | (-9.736) | (-1.932) | - |
| JCU | - | - | - | - | -0.038*** | 0.006 | - |
| | - | - | - | - | (-3.132) | (0.768) | - |
| QUT | - | - | - | - | -0.120*** | -0.037*** | - |

| | Model I | Model II | Model III | Model IV | Model V | Model VI | Model VII |
|--|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|----------------------------|
| Variable | Full sample | Full sample DET regions |
| | - | - | - | - | (-6.163) | (-2.925) | - |
| QUT/ACU | - | - | - | - | -0.072*** | -0.022 | - |
| | - | - | - | - | (-3.230) | (-1.515) | - |
| UQ | - | - | - | - | -0.113*** | -0.039*** | - |
| | - | - | - | - | (-7.148) | (-3.784) | - |
| USC | - | - | - | - | -0.051*** | -0.029*** | - |
| | - | - | - | - | (-2.982) | (-2.727) | - |
| USQ | - | - | - | - | -0.042*** | -0.020** | - |
| | - | - | - | - | (-2.740) | (-2.075) | - |
| New Engage Yr12 | | | | | | | |
| Depth (Base = no engage) | | | | | | | |
| low engage | -0.154*** | -0.051*** | -0.049*** | -0.054*** | -0.025* | -0.007 | -0.022*** |
| | (-10.950) | (-4.385) | (-4.312) | (-4.649) | (-1.955) | (-0.837) | (-2.909) |
| medium engage | -0.191*** | -0.072*** | -0.066*** | -0.073*** | -0.006 | 0.006 | 0.003 |
| | (-14.946) | (-6.757) | (-6.183) | (-6.685) | (-0.489) | (0.703) | (0.444) |
| high engage | -0.226*** | -0.089*** | -0.083*** | -0.092*** | 0.015 | 0.027* | 0.029** |
| DET Regions (Base = Central Queensland) | | | | | | | |
| Darling Downs South West | - | - | - | - | - | - | 0.007 |
| | - | - | - | - | - | - | (0.896) |
| Far North Queensland | - | - | - | - | - | - | 0.038*** |
| | - | - | - | - | - | - | (4.231) |
| Metropolitan | - | - | - | - | - | - | 0.079*** |
| | - | - | - | - | - | - | (11.293) |
| North Coast | - | - | - | - | - | - | 0.038*** |
| | - | - | - | - | - | - | (5.461) |
| North Queensland | - | - | - | - | - | - | 0.036*** |
| | - | - | - | - | - | - | (4.240) |
| South East | - | - | - | - | - | - | 0.047*** |
| | - | - | - | - | - | - | (6.689) |
| Constant | 0.647*** | 0.733*** | 0.718*** | 0.695*** | 0.694*** | 0.101*** | 0.044*** |
| | (94.876) | (124.871) | (74.484) | (58.925) | (59.703) | (8.277) | (3.306) |
| N | 2,678 | 2,678 | 2,678 | 2,678 | 2,678 | 2,662 | 2,662 |
| | | | | | | | |
| r2 | 0.30 | 0.56 | 0.56 | 0.57 | 0.59 | 0.83 | 0.83 |

Note: Parameter estimates, with t-values in parentheses. ***, ** and * denote the statistical significance at one, five and ten percent levels, respectively.

Table B: Sub-Sample Analysis of Model VI

| | Model VI | Model VI | Model VI | Model VI | Model VI WP Schools | Model VI WP Schools |
|--|------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|------------------------|------------------------|
| Variable | All | Urban | Reg & Remote | WP Schools | Urban | Reg & Remote |
| (OP+IBD)/SEP | 0.746*** (61.685) | 0.762*** (44.752) | 0.697*** (40.383) | 0.601*** (27.097) | 0.417*** (9.543) | 0.685*** (26.030) |
| Region (Base = Metro) | | | | | | |
| Regional | -0.064*** (-13.578) | - | - | -0.036*** (-3.990) | - | - |
| Remote | -0.053*** (-4.729) | - | 0.001 (0.154) | -0.017 (-1.225) | - | 0.022** (2.216) |
| IRSAD quartile (Base = highest) | | | | | | |
| 4 th quartile (lowest) | -0.035*** (-5.667) | -0.005 (-0.563) | -0.006 (-0.338) | -0.062*** (-5.811) | -0.076*** (-5.925) | -0.013 (-1.395) |
| 3 rd quartile | -0.047*** (-8.192) | -0.056*** (-6.821) | 0.000 (0.029) | -0.064*** (-5.873) | -0.067*** (-4.676) | -0.020** (-1.998) |
| 2 nd quartile | -0.045*** (-8.856) | -0.048*** (-7.750) | 0.005 (0.303) | -0.057*** (-5.079) | -0.058*** (-4.550) | - |
| School | | | | | | |
| School type | -0.039*** (-7.911) | -0.035*** (-5.041) | -0.045*** (-6.689) | -0.070*** (-8.686) | -0.108*** (-5.545) | -0.049*** (-5.555) |
| Demographic | | | | | | |
| femapp_ratio_all | 0.046*** (5.573) | 0.048*** (4.249) | 0.048*** (4.105) | -0.017 (-0.938) | -0.026 (-0.628) | -0.015 (-0.782) |
| atsiapp_ratio_atsti | 0.053* (1.927) | -0.405*** (-3.861) | 0.085*** (3.449) | 0.020 (0.841) | -0.204* (-1.697) | 0.063*** (2.655) |
| Year (Base = 2010) | | | | | | |
| year=2011 | 0.007 (1.123) | 0.013 (1.374) | 0.003 (0.408) | 0.005 (0.620) | 0.018 (1.306) | 0.000 (0.027) |
| year=2012 | 0.025*** (3.916) | 0.028*** (2.916) | 0.025*** (3.154) | 0.030*** (3.735) | 0.040*** (2.762) | 0.024** (2.487) |
| year=2013 | 0.032*** (4.995) | 0.044*** (4.647) | 0.020** (2.450) | 0.028*** (3.348) | 0.045*** (2.941) | 0.018* (1.785) |
| year=2014 | 0.042*** (6.530) | 0.056*** (5.834) | 0.029*** (3.570) | 0.037*** (4.332) | 0.055*** (3.498) | 0.027*** (2.646) |
| year=2015 | 0.052*** (8.082) | 0.062*** (6.347) | 0.040*** (5.097) | 0.041*** (4.982) | 0.046** (2.482) | 0.034*** (3.729) |
| year=2016 | 0.057*** (8.866) | 0.066*** (6.710) | 0.048*** (6.025) | 0.052*** (6.168) | 0.052*** (2.667) | 0.051*** (5.330) |
| wp_uni (Base = No Uni) | | | | | | |
| CQU | -0.013 (-1.333) | - | -0.015 (-1.573) | Base - | - | Base - |
| GU | -0.021* (-1.932) | -0.029* (-1.885) | -0.033 (-1.177) | -0.001 (-0.076) | Base - | -0.005 (-0.213) |
| JCU | 0.006 (0.768) | - | 0.006 (0.764) | 0.019** (2.492) | - | 0.017** (2.327) |
| QUT | -0.037*** (-2.925) | -0.043** (-2.459) | -0.022 (-0.712) | -0.004 (-0.337) | 0.015 (1.264) | -0.010 (-0.402) |
| QUT/ACU | -0.022 (-1.515) | -0.031 (-1.603) | 0.021 (0.726) | 0.013 (0.911) | 0.030** (2.159) | 0.034 (1.407) |

| | Model VI | Model VI | Model VI | Model VI | Model VI WP Schools | Model VI WP Schools |
|---|-----------------------|-----------------------|----------------------|---------------------|------------------------|------------------------|
| Variable | All | Urban | Reg & Remote | WP Schools | Urban | Reg & Remote |
| UQ | -0.039*** (-3.784) | -0.054*** (-3.341) | -0.026** (-2.098) | -0.010 (-1.049) | 0.007 (0.485) | -0.009 (-0.836) |
| USC | -0.029*** (-2.727) | -0.016 (-0.579) | -0.024** (-2.194) | 0.000 (0.021) | 0.066*** (2.615) | -0.010 (-1.103) |
| USQ | -0.020** (-2.075) | - - | -0.021** (-2.263) | 0.000 (-0.027) | - - | -0.004 (-0.531) |
| New Engage Yr12 Depth (Base = no engage) | | | | | | |
| Low engage | -0.007 (-0.837) | 0.003 (0.135) | -0.009 (-1.139) | -0.012* (-1.819) | -0.007 (-0.511) | -0.009 (-1.222) |
| Medium engage | 0.006 (0.703) | 0.021 (1.420) | -0.006 (-0.597) | 0.004 (0.605) | 0.019 (1.520) | -0.005 (-0.535) |
| High engage | 0.027* (1.825) | 0.046** (2.272) | 0.034 (0.834) | 0.027** (2.312) | 0.045** (2.134) | 0.028 (0.811) |
| Constant | 0.101*** (8.277) | 0.088*** (5.071) | 0.031 (1.528) | 0.212*** (9.332) | 0.299*** (7.721) | 0.080*** (3.336) |
| N | 2,662 | 1,446 | 1,216 | 928 | 308 | 620 |
| r2 | 0.83 | 0.82 | 0.81 | 0.63 | 0.50 | 0.70 |

Note: Parameter estimates, with t-values in parentheses. ***, ** and * denote the statistical significance at one, five and ten percent levels, respectively.

Appendix 2: Qualitative Interview and Focus Group Questions

University Program Managers: Interview Questions

1. Can you tell me about the main school outreach programs offered by your university?
2. During 2012-2015 your university agreed to offer outreach programs to a cluster of schools in Queensland. Can you tell me about this cluster and how well schools in the cluster engaged with your programs?
3. How well do your program objectives align with the objectives of the schools you work with?
4. HEPPP Partnership grant funding provided to your university between 2012 and 2014 was calculated to enable your university to deliver an adequate level of outreach to all schools in your cluster. Did this prove to be so? If not, what factors impacted on fulfilling this task? Did your university provide additional outreach funding?
5. From 2015, HEPPP Partnership money has gone directly to each university by formula. Have you been able to sustain outreach activities across your cluster and has the breadth or intensity of engagement changed under this new funding arrangement?
6. What is your school partnership model? Explain how most schools interact with your university in terms of program offerings, bookings, maintaining the relationship. Have changes to school funding impacted on your partnerships?
7. What have you observed to be the impact of the program on participating school students?
8. Have you observed any impact on school staff and school culture?
9. Have you observed any program impact on parent and community attitudes and knowledge?
10. What do you think are the main factors that affect students' decisions to undertake post-school study?
11. Between 2012 and 2014 applications to university from low SES schools declined slightly in regional areas and increased slightly in urban areas. Can you identify any place based factors that may have contributed to this outcome in your region?
12. As part of this study we are conducting a small number of school case studies. Can you tell me about your partnership with (name) school in your cluster? In what ways is this school similar or different from other schools in your cluster?

Current University Students (Past Widening Participation Program Participants): Focus Group/Interview Questions

1. How did you decide that you would come to uni?
2. Do you remember when you decided you wanted to go to uni?
3. What course are you studying and how did you decide to do that course?
4. What were the main factors that affected your decision to come to university? Were there specific barriers you had to overcome to get to uni?
5. Think about your Year 12 classmates who chose not go to uni. Did any of them tell you why they decided not to go to uni and can you share what they said?
6. Tell me about any university-led outreach activities (eg. workshops, awards or visits to university campuses) you remember participating in while at school. How often did you participate in this type of activity?
7. Was there a particular type of activity, approach or message that had a strong impact on you? What do you remember most about it?
8. What was your reaction to these activities at the time? (eg Did they provide you with new or useful information or ideas? Did they prompt discussions about post-school options with your friends, teachers, family?)
9. How important was it to you that you got to participate in more than one university outreach activity? Do you think the university engagement you had was too little, too much, or about right? Is there anything else that could have been done by universities or the school?
10. In what way did participation in school outreach activities increase your aspirations, interest and/or confidence towards tertiary study?
11. Did participation in school outreach activities help your transition to university life? If so, how?
12. In recent years, applications to university increased slightly in urban schools but fell slightly in regional schools. Thinking about the school or region you came from, what do you think are the reasons for this?

Case Study Schools: Principal Interview Questions

1. Can you tell me a bit about your school and your student population (size, structure of school; relevant leadership, governance and funding issues; socioeconomic profile; cultural background of students)?
2. Tell me about your school-university partnership? (eg when it started; how it has evolved; how it is maintained; how it fits with your overall school plan or strategy?)
3. Under this partnership, what activities have been delivered and what year levels have been involved? How do you select students to participate?
4. In what ways have your students' knowledge and beliefs about post-school study changed since becoming involved in the program?
5. Have you noticed any changes in parent and community attitudes or understanding since being involved in the program?
6. Has involvement in the program changed your attitude or understanding, or that of other school staff, about post-school options for your students? Has this impacted on school operations? (eg, delivery of career advice or changed curriculum offerings).
7. What factors do you think affect students' decisions to continue studies after school?
8. Between 2012 and 2014 applications to university from low SES schools declined slightly in regional areas and increased slightly in urban areas. Can you identify any place based factors that may have contributed to this outcome in your region?
9. Are there changes or enhancements to your partnership with the university that you believe would improve program delivery and outcomes?

Case Study Schools: Parent/Community Member Focus Group Questions

1. What would you like to see your child doing once they finish school? What role does vocational education or university study play in this?
2. Does your child talk to you about what they want to do after they finish school? If yes, what is your child currently thinking about doing once they finish school?
3. Imagine your child decided to go to university, what do you think would be good about that? What would worry you about that?
4. How confident do you feel in helping your child decide what to do after school?
5. Are you aware of activities such as university workshops, awards or visits to university campuses that your child/ children have been involved in?
6. If yes, in what ways do you think university outreach programs have made a difference to your child's thinking about what they do after finishing school?
7. Have you been invited to any of these activities? Did you attend? If so, was it useful for you as a parent?
8. In recent years, applications to university increased slightly in urban schools but fell slightly in regional schools. In your school or region, what do you think are the reasons for this?

Case Study Schools: Student Focus Group Questions

1. What do you want to do after you finish school? Why?
2. Where do you get information, advice and support about post-school options?
3. What are the main things that influence whether you undertake further study after school or not?
4. Tell me about any university outreach activities (eg university workshops, awards, visits to a university campus) you remember participating in. How often have you participated in activities like this?
5. Was there a particular type of activity, approach or message that had a strong impact on you? What do you remember most about it?
6. What was your reaction to these activities? (eg Did they provide you with new or useful information or ideas? Did you talk to friends, teachers, family about what you might do after school?)
7. How important was it to you that you got to participate in more than one outreach activity?
8. Do you think the engagement you had was too little, too much, or about right? Is there anything else that could be done by universities or the school?
9. In what way has participation in university outreach programs increased your aspirations, interest and/or confidence towards tertiary study?
10. In recent years, applications to university increased slightly in urban schools but fell slightly in regional schools. In your school or region, what do you think are the reasons for this?