



**NCSEHE**

National Centre for Student  
Equity in Higher Education



**Curtin University**

# ON FOOTPRINTS, THE UNIVERSITY EXPERIENCE & WHY WE NEED TO LISTEN TO REGIONAL STUDENTS

2020 NCSEHE Equity Fellow Janine Delahunty  
#NCSEHE\_Snapshots

**Make tomorrow better.**

**NCSEHE**  
The NCSEHE provides national leadership in student equity, connecting research, policy and practice to improve higher education participation and success for marginalised and disadvantaged people.



**CONNECTING EQUITY POLICY,  
RESEARCH & PRACTICE**

“Targeted  
Fellowships  
address  
**fundamental**  
issues for  
student equity.”

NCSEHE Equity  
Fellows conduct  
high-impact studies  
to advance student  
equity research,  
policy and practice.

The Student Equity Snapshots Forum  
showcases the 2019/20 Fellows’ research.



2019/20 EQUITY FELLOWS  
with Dr Cathy Stone,  
Prof. Sarah O'Shea  
and Prof. Sue Trinidad

2020  
NCSEHE  
EQUITY  
FELLOW

**“My Fellowship explores how regional people navigate into and through higher education and what challenges they face in realising their goals.”**

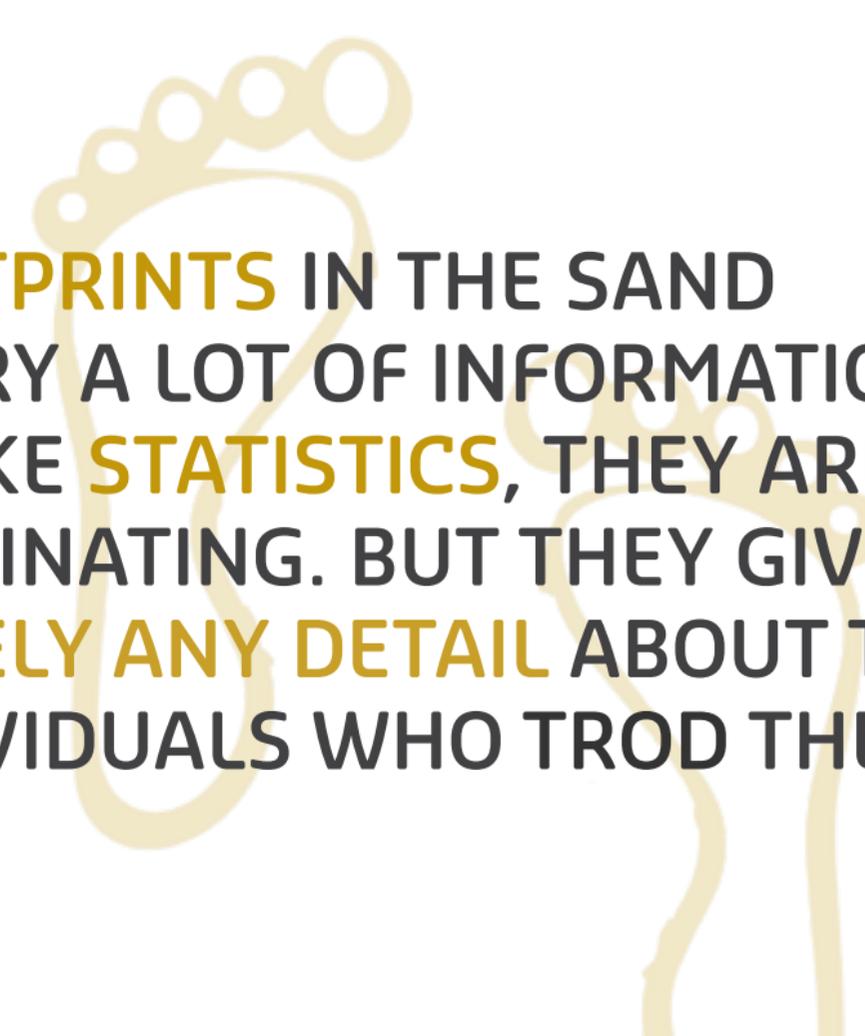
Janine Delahunty is a lecturer in Academic Development and Recognition, and research project manager at the University of Wollongong.

DR JANINE DELAHUNTY





**“My research fills in some of the ‘detail’ about the regional students behind the stats.”**



**FOOTPRINTS** IN THE SAND CARRY A LOT OF INFORMATION — LIKE **STATISTICS**, THEY ARE FASCINATING. BUT THEY GIVE **BARELY ANY DETAIL** ABOUT THE INDIVIDUALS WHO TROD THEM.

SNAPSHOTS OF 80 REGIONAL STUDENTS FROM  
13 AUSTRALIA-WIDE UNIVERSITIES

**73%**  
are over 21  
years old



**91%**  
are female

Students studying  
full-time



Students enrolled  
predominantly in  
online study



Students in first  
or second year of study



The broad discipline areas of the degrees were predominantly sciences and the humanities, arts and social sciences.



**Why is it that regional students are more likely than metropolitan students to withdraw from their university studies?**

REGIONAL ENROLMENTS HAVE INCREASED BY

**50 PER CENT**

(BETWEEN 2008-17)



23% of people in regional areas have a degree qualification



45% of people in major cities have a degree qualification

(ABS, 2018)



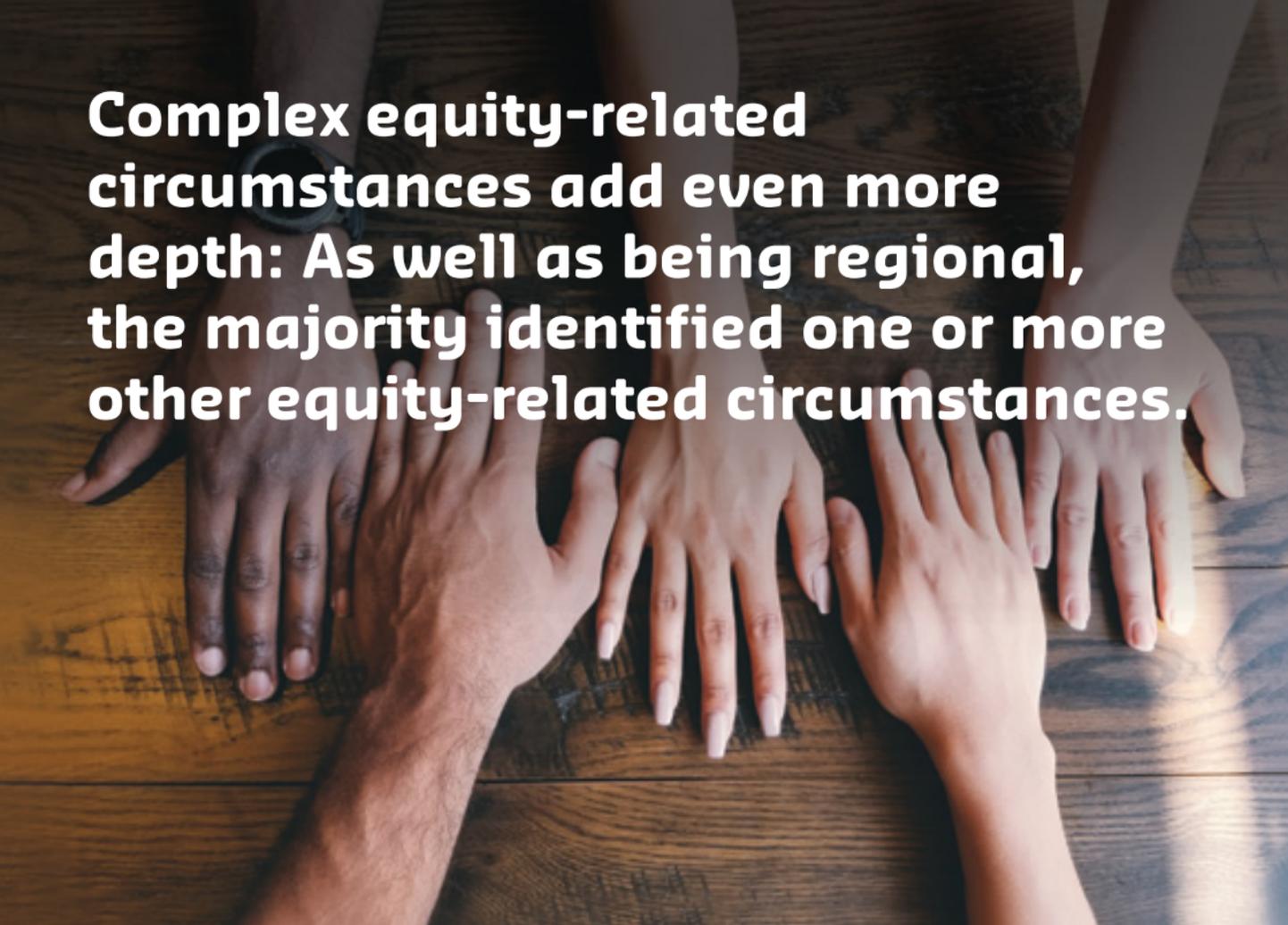
Going to university for **regional people** is often much more **complex** than which degree pathway to take. But how do we know what students are contending with, **unless we ask?**

“

*There's all sorts of emotional ties you have to your home town ... you're also trying to move into a big world and be successful. So, there are a lot of conflicting emotions and ideas.*

Keiran

”



**Complex equity-related circumstances add even more depth: As well as being regional, the majority identified one or more other equity-related circumstances.**

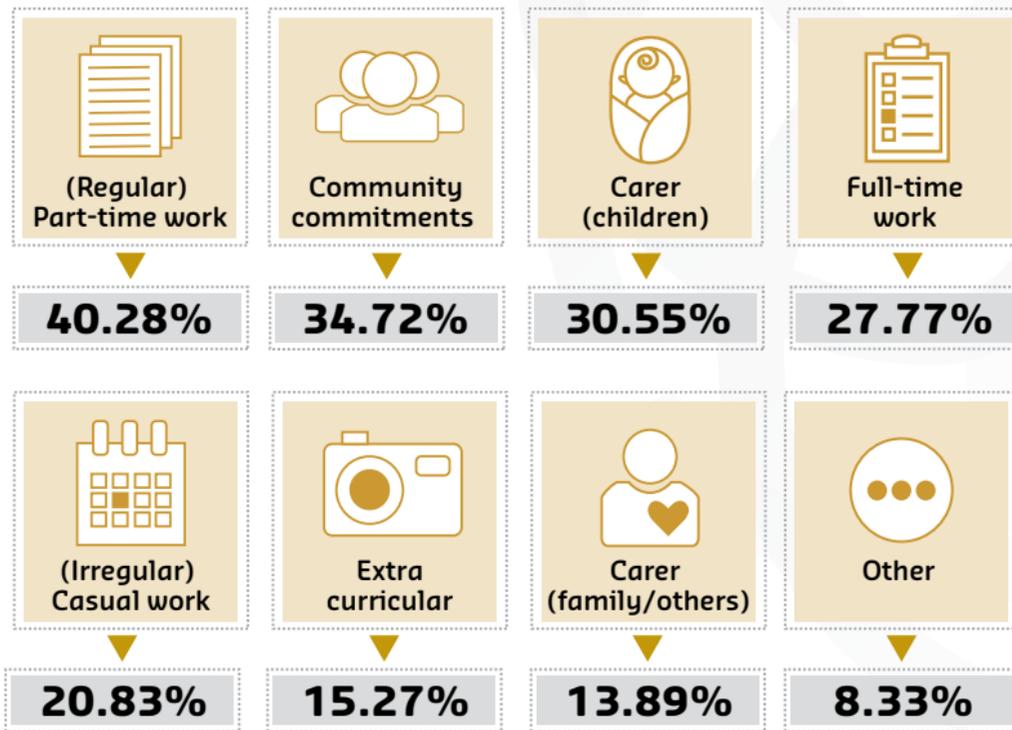
**RESPONSES FROM 80 STUDENTS**

|                                    |   |                             |
|------------------------------------|---|-----------------------------|
| <b>1 INTERNATIONAL</b>             | <b>4 ABORIGINAL AND/OR TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER</b> | <b>35 MATURE-AGE</b>        |
| <b>11 DISABILITY</b>               | <b>40 WORKING CLASS BACKGROUND</b>                | <b>37 FIRST-IN-FAMILY</b>   |
| <b>16 LOW SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS</b> | <b>1 REFUGEE</b>                                  | <b>15 ISOLATED LOCATION</b> |
| <b>80 REGIONAL</b>                 | <b>3 NON-ENGLISH SPEAKING BACKGROUND</b>          |                             |

**Institutions must recognise the complexities of regional students' lived realities, or risk putting time and resources into developing support based on assumptions.**



## OTHER RESPONSIBILITIES RESPONSES FROM 72 STUDENTS





**Regional people are often noted for being resilient and determined; but also juggling many things.**

“

*We know that to have this opportunity is very lucky. We don't take it for granted so we want to give it a red hot crack.*

(#37)

”



“

*The lack of opportunities for work or study, almost everyone you grew up with moves away — it's hard to leave without a skill or job prospects.*

(#74)

”



**Shutting up to listen  
will help us respond  
to what regional people  
are telling us, and will  
help make university  
more equitable for  
regional students.**

“

*Before you can offer any solutions  
to why many regional students  
start but don't complete their  
university studies you have to find  
out the things that get  
in the way.*

(Brown, 2010)

”

**“During complex and changing times, the NCSEHE Equity Fellows have exceeded all expectations to produce impactful and quality research for the equity field.”**

**NCSEHE DIRECTOR  
PROFESSOR SARAH O'SHEA**



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