



Australian Universities Accord: Unpacking the Final Report

WEDNESDAY 13 MARCH 2024 | 3-5PM AEDT

Further Accord Unpacking

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13 March 2024





Further unpacking for sector literacy

- Expectations management
 - Proposals until government response
 - Budget
 - Virtuous patience
 - Hot Takes & Naysayers
- A more equitable & innovative **HE system sector** in a connected, seamless **tertiary system**
 - Big transformative, longterm system(s) change
 - 2050 focus
 - First Nations, Students & equity at heart
 - One of a number of major education sector reviews
- Aspirin recommended



Big longterm vision [proposals] for better, fairer HE [tertiary] sector: 47 recs for change...



Chapter 1. Introduction and Context

Blueprint out to 2050; An 'equitable & innovative HE system'

Chapter 2. Meeting our current and future skills needs

Tertiary attainment for LLL w right skills mix; Future focussed quals

Chapter 3. Expanding opportunity to all

Ambitions targets to meet skills needs thru 'demand driven equity'; Double size of HE

Chapter 4. Delivering for students [at the centre]

Income support, reformed HELP & needs-based funding for quality student L&T and exp

Chapter 5. Producing and using new knowledge

Stronger, better funded research system; [New] *Solving Aust Challenges Strategic Fund*

Chapter 6. A dynamic, collaborative and responsive system that serves the national interest

New leadership & stewardship: an Australian Tertiary Education Commission

First Nations self-determination

Chapter 7. Serving the regions through tertiary education

Improving regional tertiary education

Chapter 8. A new funding model to underpin growth and quality

'Real equity funding'; \$10b HE Future Fund for infrastructure

Chapter 9. [Ensuring a smooth transition and achieving lasting reform]

Implementation Advisory Committee for staged approach



Speech | 27 February 2024

Universities Australia Gala Dinner

<https://ministers.education.gov.au/clare/universities-australia-gala-dinner>

The Hon Jason Clare MP
Minister for Education



‘a blueprint not for one budget but for the next few decades’

2 ‘big barriers’ to break down:

① **Artificial barrier** b/w TAFE & HE

→ VET-HE, RPL/RPEXP & reformed AQF

② **Invisible barrier** stops many equity-bearing Ss going to uni:

- Why **69%** of young pp from wealthy families have uni degrees but only **19%** from very poor families
- Why % of **Fairfield** pop with uni degree is ~half national avg

→ Many Accord recs on this, eg: Outreach; Careers advising; More study hubs; Free uni prep courses; Guaranteed places for equity cohorts & needs-based funding to support them



<https://tinyurl.com/46vs7ppf>



Western Sydney University launches innovative Study Hub, Fairfield Connect, enhancing accessibility to higher education

Jason Clare MP
@JasonClareMP

Today I opened the new Western Sydney University hub in Fairfield. This is so important for our local area. Going to university is a lot easier when it's closer to home. UTS and UNSW are also part of it.



<https://twitter.com/JasonClareMP/status/1761656282329813099>

5:36 PM · Feb 25, 2024 · 8,296 Views

UNIVERSITIES ACCORD

AUSTRALIAN The Universities Accord is a long-term plan for higher education reform over the next 20+ years recognising that transformation is required

- Consultation Nov '22 to Dec '23
- 820 written submissions
- 180 meetings
- Interim report released Jul '23
- Final report Feb '24

"Australia needs a more equitable and innovative higher education system."

Final Report

47 RECOMMENDATIONS / 2050 FOCUS / STARTING NOW

TARGETS

The Accord recognises that to meet the future skills requirement of our workforce, greater levels of tertiary attainment are required

- Tertiary attainment of 80% by 2050 (Current 60%)
- University education attainment 55% (Current 40%)
- 1,800,000 Commonwealth supported places by 2050 (Current 860,000)

EQUITY

To meet these targets, Australian higher education must be more inclusive of historically under-represented cohorts

Lifting participation will be achieved by;

- Needs based funding
- Expanding University Regional Study Hubs program
- Strengthen regional tertiary education

"By 2050, those groups most under-represented in higher education should increase to achieve parity across the Australian population."

86% Share of enrolment growth to achieve parity by 2035

FUTURE FOCUSED QUALIFICATIONS

90% of new jobs will require post-school qualifications by 2035

- The qualification framework needs adapt to meet student demand and Australia's future skills requirements
- Seamless alignment between VET and Higher Education Modular stackable skills that are transferable and encourage true lifelong learning
- Fee-free preparation and foundation courses



- ### Final Report:
- 408 pages
 - 29 Findings
 - 47 recommendations
 - 820 public submissions
 - 180 stakeholder meetings

'Ambitious targets' for future skills needs, incl: By 2050

- **↑Tertiary (VET & HE) attainment** from (now) 60% to at least 80%
 - **↑Uni educated aged 25-34** from (now) 45% to 55%
 - **>Double no of CSPs at unis** from (now) 860,000 to 1.8million
- ### Equity groups to achieve parity (By 2035= 86%↑enrolment share)

STUDENTS at the CENTRE

Perception has fallen In 2023 only **70%** said universities are doing a good job" compared to **78%** in 2008

To lift student participation and attainment the Accord recommends;

- Replace Jobs Ready Graduate package funding approach
- Reduce the burden on low-income earners by basing student contributions on lifetime earnings
- More equitably index HELP loans to wages growth
- Increase student income support
- Improve student part-time job options
- Compulsory placements should be funded
- Improve quality of Learning and Teaching
- Improve student welfare and safety

RESEARCH

Australia's spending on research compared to GDP is low by OECD country comparisons, and falling

"Australia doesn't fully utilise the potential of its research capability."

The Accord recommends;

- Increase targets for research output
- Establish a strategic fund for research
- Fully fund University research
- Better utilise research to address Australia's big socio-economic challenges
- Increase targets for PhD and higher-degree research candidates

FUNDING

\$10B

The Accord recommends;

- Establish an Australian Tertiary Education Commission
- Establish First Nations Council to advise the new Commission
- Gov't and the new Commission to review and resolve issues in Int'l Education
- Needs based funding
- Establish \$10B future fund

"To move quickly towards these ambitions Australia needs greater coordination, planning and investment."

- ### Improve:
- Funding, HELP & income support
 - Quality of L&T
 - Student safety & wellbeing on campus & online

Cutting debt and paid internships: key reforms in the Australian universities blueprint

[Cutting debt and paid internships: key reforms in the Australian universities blueprint | Australian universities | The Guardian](#)

The highly anticipated report has made 47 recommendations, addressing disadvantage and cost of living



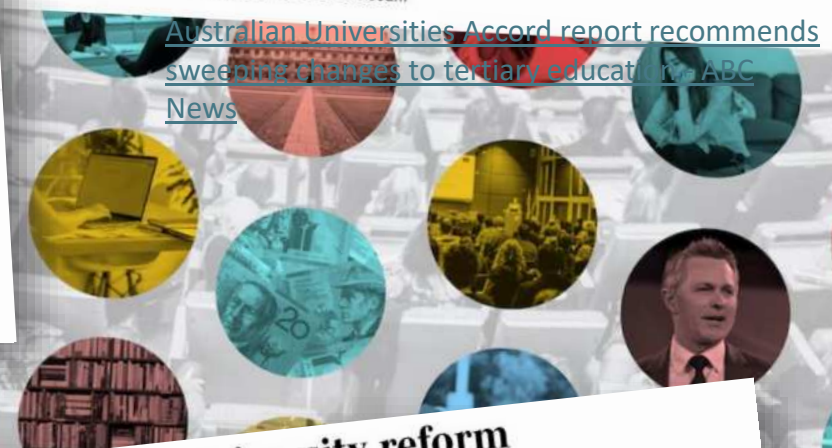
Universities' accord is 'bigger than one budget', says Jason Clare (afr.com)

Australian Universities Accord report recommends sweeping changes to tertiary education



Reporter Claudia Long, national education and parenting reporter Conor Duffy and Shalailah Medhora
5 Feb 2024 at 5:05am, updated Sun 25 Feb 2024 at 9:09am

[Australian Universities Accord report recommends sweeping changes to tertiary education | ABC News](#)



Universities' accord 'blueprint for the next decade': Clare

FINANCIAL REVIEW



Julie Hare
Education editor

Listen to this article
5 min

The printed version of Jason Clare's universities review is as heavy as a brick. Stepping onto a couple stacked on top of the other, the education minister reckons he'd be able to see over the shoulders of giants.



Confusion over Accord's 'demand-driven' widening access plan

Key recommendation in Australian sector review report is substantially different from its historical namesake

February 28, 2024
[Confusion over 'demand-driven' access plan | Times Higher Education \(T\)](#)
John Ross



Education minister Jason Clare described the proposal as "a demand-driven system focusing first on equity students".

"We did that for indigenous students last year. The recommendation here is to expand that to students from poor backgrounds and the regions and expand that over time to more students," he said.

Low bar to entry under university reform



By TIM DODD
HIGHER EDUCATION EDITOR

6:50AM FEBRUARY 26, 2024
521 COMMENTS



The biggest review of tertiary education in 15 years has called on the Albanese government to double the number of university places in the next 25 years.

Students with poor grades in high school will be encouraged to go to university and set on a career path that is wrong for them, experts warn, under sweeping recommendations in the [federal government's higher education review](#) that are coming under fire from vice-chancellors.

Recommendations

National Tertiary Education Objective



1. That to set a clear vision for the tertiary education system – both higher education and vocational education and training – the Australian Government specify that the **objective** of the national tertiary education system is to:
 - a. **underpin** a strong, equitable and resilient democracy
 - b. **drive** national economic and social development and environmental sustainability.

The National Tertiary Education Objective will be achieved through ensuring:

- a **strong, dynamic and efficient** tertiary education system that has the **capacity, capability and infrastructure** it needs
- **affordable and equitable opportunity** for all Australians to access and participate in high-quality, engaging and transformative tertiary education programs
- delivery of graduates with the **creativity and technical skills** to meet future workforce and societal need
- **collaborative and purposeful work** between all governments, tertiary education providers, industry, employers and unions to flexibly align local skills supply with demand
- the creation and diffusion of new knowledge and its innovative application for the **betterment of society.**

Recommendations for the tertiary education system are made within this framework.

Establish an Australian Tertiary Education Commission (Rec 30)

30. That to deliver on the National Tertiary Education Objective and establish a public sector steward for the tertiary education system, the Australian Government establish an Australian Tertiary Education Commission as a statutory, national body reporting to the Minister for Education and the Minister for Skills and Training.

Functions:

- Deliver National Tertiary Edu Objective
- **System stewardship & planning**
- Policy co-ordination & development
- Pricing authority
- Allocate funding & negotiate mission-based compacts

• ...

(Rec 37)

- Address issues of **appropriate diversity** of tertiary edu providers (eg, size, shape, new models of delivery & collaboration)



education with additional priorities aimed at achieving higher levels of tertiary education system alignment, focused on student pathways, credit recognition and the Australian Qualifications Framework. The Australian Government should also negotiate with states and territories to expand the Australian Tertiary Education Commission's role to focus on the whole tertiary education system, with governance arrangements reflecting the ongoing role of all jurisdictions in its future, and with expansion to take effect in the context of the next National Skills Agreement

d. The Australian Tertiary Education Commission should be reviewed every 5 years of operation

ATEC Board

- Chief Commissioner
- **First Nations** Commissioner
- 2 x Deputy Commissioners
- **Regional Edu** Commissioner
- **ARC** Board Chair
- **TEQSA** Chief Commissioner
- **Equity** Commissioner

the ARC Board Chair, a First Nations Commissioner, an Equity Commissioner and a Regional Education Commissioner. Most commissioners would be part-time. The day-to-day administration of the Australian Tertiary Education Commission would be handled by a full-time CEO

- h. The Australian Tertiary Education Commission should seek the views of stakeholders in the tertiary education system, through:
- i. an ongoing Advisory Board, with representatives from tertiary education providers, all Australian governments, students, staff, employers (including industry representatives), unions, alumni and civil society organisations
 - ii. a First Nations Council
 - iii. a Learning and Teaching Council
 - iv. regular engagement with representatives from key stakeholders in tertiary education and teaching, research, equity, regional issues, and private tertiary education
- i. Through the pricing authority function, the Australian Tertiary Education Commission should

Australian tertiary education commission 'could become a monster'

Best way to stop proposed oversight body going rogue is to avoid setting it up in the first place, conference hears

February 28, 2024

John Ross

Twitter: @JohnRoss49

The Australian tertiary education commission (Atec) proposed in the Universities Accord's final report poses a clear and present danger to institutional autonomy, some experts have warned.



Stakeholder engagement through:

- **Advisory Board**
- **First Nations Council** to advise on self-determined approach to matters relating to First Nations people in tertiary edu sector
- **L&T Council** for ongoing co-ord & collaborative effort needed to update research into best practice L&T approaches, esp re rapid changes in global HE & in technologies





Students at the heart

- New funding model for growth & quality; Scrap JRG
- HELP reform (repayments & [indexation](#))
- Increase income support
 - Reality of PT study & work
- Address [placement poverty](#)
- Increased PhD stipend
- Jobs Broker for PT work/work exp
- Student safety & wellbeing
 - Student Ombudsman
 - Student Charter
- Quality & integrity in internat edu
- Improve quality of L&T
- [Support for Students Policy]

Other: More CSPs for PG quals;
No early (school) offers B4 Sept;
Careers advising; SSAF % to student-
led orgs; Exit pathways; ...



First Nations centred

- First Nations Council
- First Nations Commissioner
- Focus on First Nations leadership & self-determination, partic in provider governance
- [Parity targets](#) for First Nations Ss
- A First Nations-led HE Review
- Focus on First Nations knowledges in research & L&T (incl, in *National Science & Research Priorities*)
- Dedicated First Nations PhD scholarships & post-docs
- Demand driven medical places for all qualified First Nations students
- Tertiary edu Racism Survey
- Focus on cultural safety
- Consider First Nations graduate attribute/ cultural competence



Growth thru equity

- Big growth targets: ‘effectively **“demand driven equity”**’ (Recs 40-41)
 - Double HE enrolments w equity parity centrepiece
 - 2050 Parity: 4 target groups (LSES, R&R, First Nations, students w disability)
 - ‘Equal effort’ approach
 - Completion bonus
- [Needs-based](#) (equity) funding
- **‘demand driven’** [fee-free preparatory courses](#) (fully funded)
- Improve regional HE/tertiary edu
- Dedicated outreach funding
- [New] Equity Commissioner
- [Existing] Regional Commissioner



'The case for additional investment in regional tertiary education is strong' (p 260)



Dedicated regional chapter

- Targets to **↑RRR participation**
- Implement **regional loading component to needs-based funding** to recognise 'diseconomies of scale' & cost of regional delivery
- More regional uni CSP **medical places**
- More **Regional Study Hubs** (rename for HE, VET & schools)
- Adjust **Tertiary Access Payment**
- Regional Edu Commissioner to explore **further opports**, including potential **National Regional Uni**

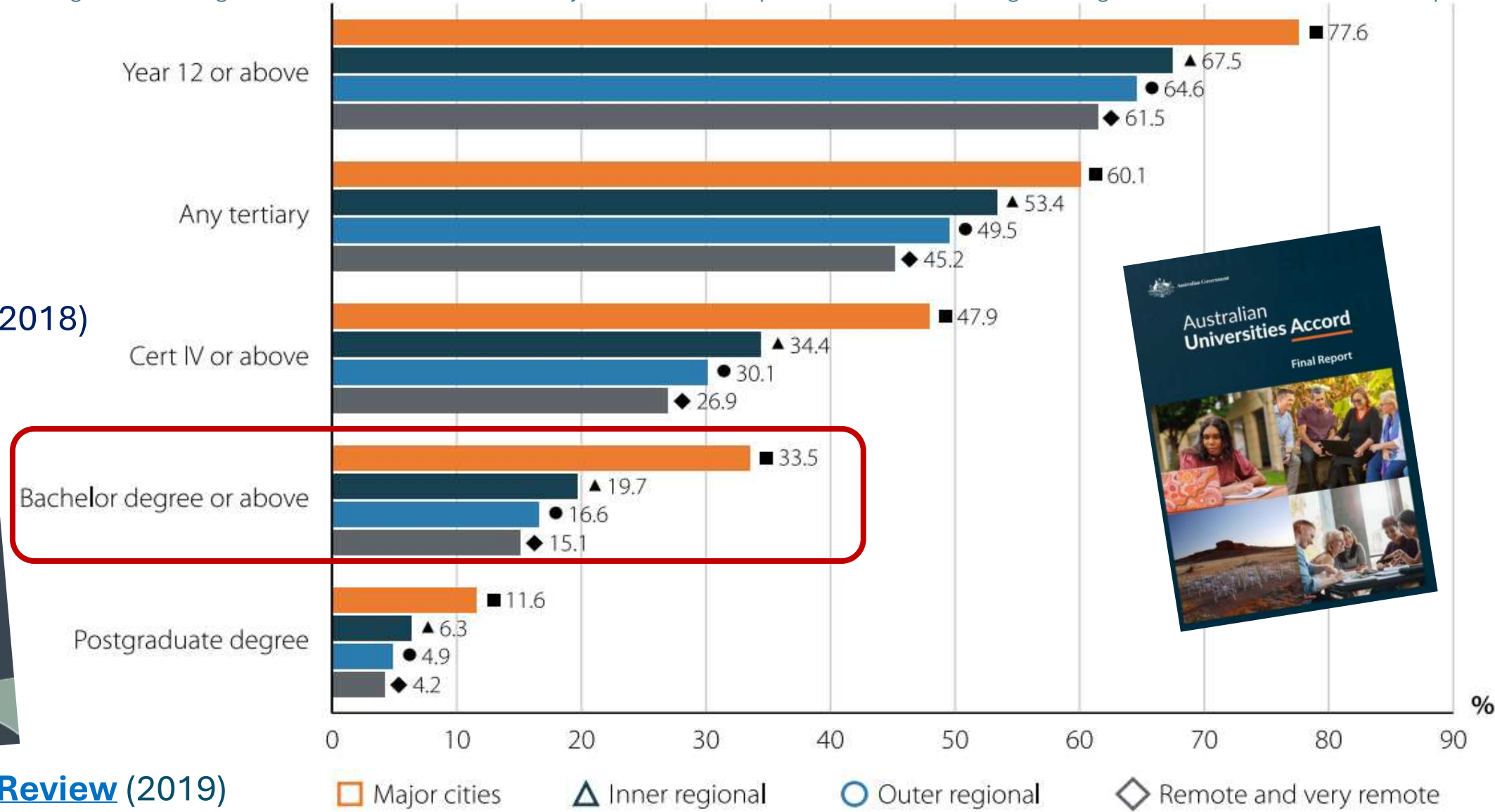
Recommendation: Regional tertiary education and communities

39. That to recognise the benefits of access to tertiary education and the challenges to delivery in regional, rural and remote areas, the Australian Government:
- a. include in its new needs-based funding model a specific element based on the location of higher education delivery in regional and remote Australia – to better recognise the important equity issues involved in course delivery in regional Australia, and the additional costs of that delivery
 - b. significantly increase the number of Commonwealth supported places dedicated and allocated to universities delivering regionally based end-to-end medical schools, to attract and retain medical graduates in regional areas. These places should be additional to currently allocated Commonwealth supported medical places
 - c. consider further expanding the successful Regional University Study Hubs program – following evaluation of its effectiveness in improving regional and remote student participation, retention and completion rates. This expansion could consider:
 - i. increased use of existing tertiary education infrastructure like TAFEs
 - ii. allowing eligibility for existing universities to host a Regional University Study Hub
 - iii. changing the name of the program from *Regional University Study Hubs* to *Regional Study Hubs* to recognise their role across both VET and higher education
 - d. adjust the policy settings for the Tertiary Access Payment to remove the requirement to commence an eligible course within the 12 months following completion of Year 12 (or equivalent) and amend the timing of payments to provide timely assistance with the costs of relocation for tertiary study before moving
 - e. task the Regional Education Commissioner with examining further opportunities to strengthen regional tertiary education, including the potential creation of a National Regional University, and a more integrated tertiary education system in regional communities, reporting to the Minister for Education by June 2025.

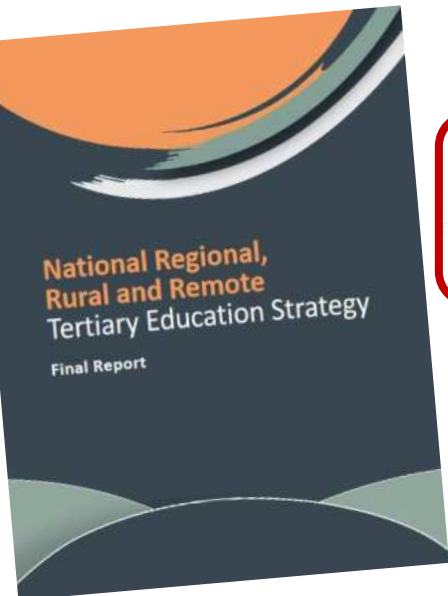
'Long-term and stubborn' disparities in edu attainment (Accord p 260).

Figure 6: Educational attainment by geographical remoteness, 2021.

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, Level of highest educational attainment (HEAP), (Census of Population and Housing: Census Dictionary, 2021), www.abs.gov.au/census/guide-census-data/census-dictionary/2021/variables-topic/education-and-training/level-highest-educational-attainment-heap



Halsey Review (2018)



Napthine Review (2019)

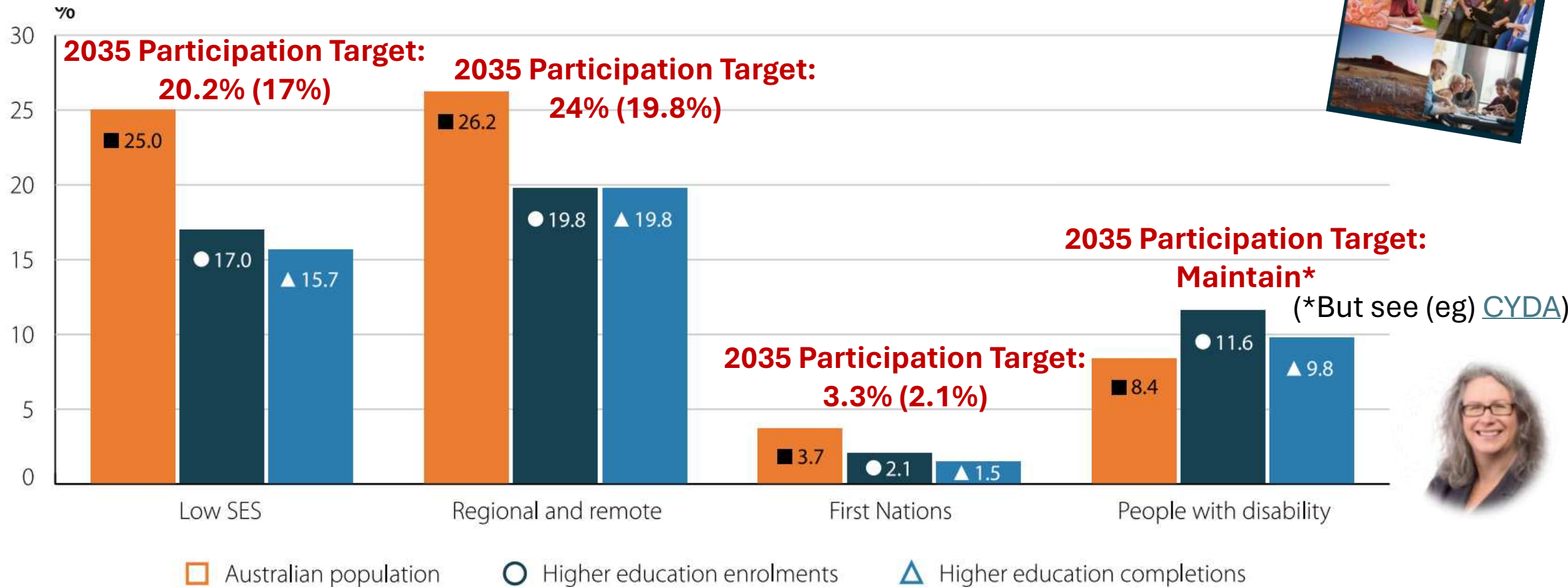


Legend: Major cities (orange square), Inner regional (dark blue triangle), Outer regional (light blue circle), Remote and very remote (grey diamond)

Figure 13: Target cohorts share of Australian population, higher education participation (domestic undergraduate Table A) and higher education completions (domestic undergraduate Table A) (%), 2022.

Accord Rec: Set participation targets for 2035 with aim of parity by 2050.

Individual uni **target for completion** dependent on starting point, uni-context & state/territory



*'...evidence to suggest **other cohorts**, such as **care leavers, refugees, and some language groups from non-English speaking backgrounds**, experience significantly lower higher education participation and attainment outcomes' (p 117).*

Recommendations

Fee-free preparatory courses

1



12. That to help more students who aspire to university to qualify for entry, the Australian Government significantly increase the availability of fee-free places, meeting the need for high-quality preparatory courses by ensuring:
- the number of Commonwealth supported places is expanded to meet demand from students
 - preparatory courses are free for any student in a Commonwealth supported place and this is enshrined in legislation
 - funding for preparatory places reflects the cost of delivery
 - recognition of and investment in high-quality models that deliver successful student outcomes
 - preparatory programs in fields such as mathematics, which are needed for specialist tertiary education entry, are delivered online to improve access
 - a systematic approach to recognising preparatory and other preparatory-type programs across tertiary education providers through the National Skills Passport.



It's time for demand driven [free*] Enabling programs...

*Free: Currently flat loading of \$3,392 *in lieu of student contribution* (all units, all FoEs)

NAEEA: 'Uncapped places for Enabling programs would contribute significantly to closing the attainment gap and addressing decades of disadvantage experienced by educationally disadvantaged students within Australia.'

NAEEA NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF
ENABLING EDUCATORS
OF AUSTRALIA

Effective on cost

Enabling programs: 'an effective investment, both **for the individual as a low-risk test** of their ability at university, and **for Government as this relatively low-cost intervention** can work to **break cycles of intergenerational poverty and welfare dependence**, ultimately reducing cost' ([Harvey](#) 2017, p. 12).

[Pitman et al](#) (2016): two-thirds of 2,500 students surveyed said **free or low-cost nature strongly influenced decision to enrol**

Attractive to equity-bearing Ss

- LSES double enrolment in Enabling (~31%) vs UG
 - **30% lowest socio-economic decile** ([Stokes](#), 2018)
- Indigenous: 6% Enabling; 1.5% UG
- Mature age (86.3% vs 44.7%)
- FiF (80% vs 52.1%)
- NESB (14.7% vs 2.3%)
- Refugee (10.3% vs 0.5%)
- Regional & remote (35.84% in 2014)
- Also more mature age & foster care students

[Harvey](#) (2017, 11); [Pitman et al](#) (2016, 32);
[Andrewartha & Harvey](#) (2014).



How to embed best practice L&T for under-represented student groups, including the use of remote learning?

[Equity Practitioners in Higher Education Australasia \(EPHEA\) - Department of Education, Australian Government](#)

2

Importance of inclusive, intentional curriculum & learning design

HEPPP [equity funding] has driven programs & initiatives to enroll students

“...*however* these initiatives are often ‘band aiding’ underpinning issues with **how institutions deliver [T&L] – equity needs to be embedded in all institutional practices to enable every student to succeed ...**

Universal Design for Learning, transition pedagogy, and the enablers of these approaches such as **digital and physical accessibility**, can assist in achieving this.”

Recommendation 14

Universal Design for Learning and Transition Pedagogy, be specifically identified in the Higher Education Standards Framework to ensure that students can fully participate and are supported over the course of their studies.

Improve the quality of learning & teaching



p 84

2.2.2.2 Increasing absorptive capacity with innovative curricula and pedagogy informed by leading-edge knowledge

Revised curricula and teaching methods are needed to meet the future skills needs of a knowledge economy. And advances in pedagogy are required to fulfill the potential of high-quality online and hybrid learning modes, as well as deliver teaching which supports more diverse student cohorts.

p 168

As the student cohort continues to diversify and more students look to study through online or hybrid models, universities need to explore innovative ways to facilitate student belonging. Universities could be supported in this work through improved data on students' sense of belonging, including through the Student Experience Survey.

p 173

4.3.2 World-class learning and teaching

In addition to student safety and wellbeing, high-quality learning experiences and environments are central to delivering an improved higher education system for all students.

If student enrolments are to grow, this growth will be dominated by new entrants from non-traditional or less well-prepared backgrounds. It follows that:

- modes of learning need to accommodate diversity and growth
- the university workforce will need to be bigger and better equipped to help different student cohorts learn well.

Australia should aspire to be a world leader in delivering innovative, best practice learning and teaching – not only maintaining but improving higher education student experience and outcomes as the system grows. This means pursuing excellence in learning and teaching at a system-wide level and moving beyond the current threshold standard approach to quality.



Recommendation: Quality learning and teaching

21. That to improve student learning outcomes and prepare the higher education sector for growth in student numbers (particularly of students from under-represented backgrounds who need additional support) the higher education sector, in partnership with the Australian Government, improve the quality of learning and teaching through:

- a. using proven innovative learning approaches which embrace online and hybrid teaching modalities
- b. sharing and encouraging the uptake of best practice teaching methodologies and curriculum
- c. improving the evidence-base for the quality of higher education learning and teaching by:
 - i. developing a comprehensive Australian Higher Education Teaching Quality Framework, with regular reporting against the Framework, to improve transparency of provider performance across multiple dimensions of student outcomes and teaching practice
 - ii. developing new metrics and improving existing metrics for measuring learning and teaching quality in higher education
 - iii. encouraging the more systematic use of peer review of teaching to assist educators to improve their practice.

Recommendation: Improving workforce capability and capacity

31. That to improve capability and capacity of the workforce, higher education providers with Australian Government support:

- a. develop professional learning and teaching standards for academics
- b. encourage minimum teaching qualifications for higher education teaching roles
- c. improve professional development for all staff
- d. provide opportunities for higher education staff to access training in research and research training, management, and learning and teaching.



Also:

- Enhanced ATEC data capability & produce annual State of Tertiary edu System Report
- Centre of Excellence in HE & Research

3 'A more flexible and responsive skills system': 'Skills through equity'

'A more seamless tertiary education system'

- Grow **skilled workforce** w right mix of skills via connected **tertiary** (VET-HE) system
- Access to high quality **WIL** (+ placement poverty)
- Prioritise reform recs of **Australian Qualifications Framework Review** w industry, unions & govts
- **New qualifications & better pathways**
 - Accredited (CSP) microcreds for modular, stackable skills
 - Degree apprenticeships + other learn-&-earn opports
 - Consistent nat approach to **RPL/RPEXP** to improve student mobility re entry, exit & return to tertiary edu
- **National Skills Passport**
- Cooperative partnerships b/w HEPs, TAFEs, VET & industry
 - *[Up to 20] TAFE Centres of Excellence*
 - Work with accreditation bodies
- **Jobs & Skills Australia**: linking HE curr to Australian Skills Classification/ National Skills Taxonomy
- **CSPs & self-accrediting** status for **TAFE** (AQF Level 5 & above)



AQF: Enabling a learner-centric, connected, cohesive, harmonised tertiary system

Noonan AQF Review: a critical policy enabler in support of national aspirations to:

- Meet Australian (knowledge and) skills needs now and for the future through innovative, responsive qualification design (higher/degree apprenticeships; microcreds; more...)
- Establish parity of esteem between VET & HE
- Enable multidirectional & non-linear learning pathways
- Make lifelong learning a practical reality for *all* citizens
- Increase industry-VET-HE collaboration in qualification design
- Underpin & enable RPL & RPExp
- Include preparatory/ Enabling as a qual type (for portability & RPL/credit)
- Develop a strengthened tertiary system.

(Kift & Lilly, 2023; Kift, 2024)





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WEDNESDAY 13 MARCH 2024 | 3-5PM AEDT

Further Accord Unpacking

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13 March 2024

