

## **Organisation: ISANA: International Education Association Inc.**

### **Question 1. How can government, institutions and communities better promote the valuable and unique experience of studying and living in regional Australia?**

An effective way of promoting the valuable and unique experience of studying and living in regional Australia is through students (domestic and international) and agent visits where they are hosted by the communities. In addition, employers in the communities speaking of the benefits of international students as employees would also send the right message that work is available and that the students are valued.

### **Question 2. What are the barriers to regional destinations and their education institutions hosting more international students?**

International rankings and centres of excellence need the funding and support of government both State and Federal as well as industry. Currently, universities compete for a reducing pool of funds for teaching and research. The Go8 universities located in the main capital cities have the history, brand, research clout and ensuing prestige to attract most international students. Regional universities such as Charles Sturt, Charles Darwin, University of New England, CQU and SCU and Federation University would have difficulties competing for students when international rankings are a prime factor. Supporting the education institutions in regional destinations to develop themselves as centres of excellence would encourage students to study there.

Regional education institutions also suffer from a lack of destination awareness. Overseas visitor awareness of regional places like Armidale, Rockhampton, Ballarat or Darwin is minimal compared to Melbourne, Sydney, Brisbane and the Gold Coast. It is important that tourism marketing and international education destination marketing collaborate to create awareness.

In countries like China and India, the tourist promotion of regional locations as 'rural and country' can inadvertently create an image of unsophistication, poor infrastructure and a lack of culture. Students have asked whether regional cities have the internet – such is the level of ignorance of regional Australia.

Regional destinations are also handicapped by fewer domestic and international flights. This hampers the movement of international visitors and only reinforces the image of the regionals as lacking infrastructure, facilities and being inconvenient.

Negative 'slogans' from politicians when reported overseas can discourage students from studying in the regions. metropolitan locations are seen as more cosmopolitan, multicultural and open to difference, in addition to providing peer group support. What feedback/ messages are graduates from the regions giving to their peers or future students?

Lack of infrastructure eg. accommodation, health services, schools and public transport capabilities need to be supported by the local community and state and federal governments and services.

### **Question 3. How can metropolitan and regional education institutions work together to create regional study opportunities for international students in ways that benefit the students, the regional communities and the institutional partners?**

Metropolitan and regional education institutions can work together to create unique study experiences for all students. For example, disciplines such as medicine, teaching and nursing

all require a regional placement. International students in metropolitan institutions are anxious about this temporary relocation. Sponsored students often advocate to their diplomatic missions to be excluded from this requirement. The support of communities and regionally-based education institutions would benefit international students, the regional communities and the institutional partners.

Institutions could arrange for 'accommodation' swaps for students on placement to reduce the associated costs.

**Question 4. What are the best ways to communicate the benefits of spending time in regional Australia to prospective international students and their parents?**

Refer to Q1 answer and:

Agents play a key role in promoting institutions. They could be provided with examples of case studies where institutions have worked with local government to integrate students into the local community and gain part-time employment. Word of mouth feedback from past and current students and their families is a powerful tool.

**Question 5. Given the strong interplay between tourism and education, particularly in regional settings, how can government, institutions and the community capitalise on the relationship, map its value and promote regional strengths?**

Overseas markets for international students often have little information about regional cities in Australia. Ease of access to these destinations, language support and development of local attractions are all important. Tourism and international education are inextricably linked. Promoting Australia's regional education institutions and local attractions in metropolitan settings in Australia and overseas would be useful.

It is also important to understand the strengths of regional education institutions. These strengths should be targeted to select cohorts of potential students who are interested in the specialised courses and experiences that the regionals provide. It is not appropriate to promote the generic business degrees in the hope of attracting Chinese students.

**Question 6. What role could fee structures and scholarships, education agent promotions, and changes to government policy settings play to encourage more students to study in regional Australia (e.g. migration incentives)?**

While it is tempting to lower tuition fees at the regionals, there is also a limit to this. In Asia, cheap can sometimes be associated with lower value. Scholarships to facilitate regional settlement would be more valued as would assisted housing, internships and language support for families.

Education agent promotions to the regionals should also be facilitated by State and Federal Governments. Flights and accommodation as well as internal travel are costly and should not be solely borne by the regional institutions.

Review of immigration strategies and allowing more points for regional study would increase the attractiveness of study there, and it will be more likely that those that study in the regions will then chose to use their post-study work rights to work there.

**Question 7. Is there a need for greater insights into the motivations and the experience of international students in regional areas relative to metropolitan areas, using instruments such as the International Student Barometer and/or other targeted research?**

Yes

**Question 8. Any other comments?**