



# The Role of New South Wales Community Education Providers in Regional and Rural Economic Development

25 January 2018

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## About Community Colleges Australia

Community Colleges Australia (CCA) is the peak national body that represents community-owned, not-for-profit education and training providers.

Our vision is for dynamic and vibrant communities, informed and empowered through learning. CCA is committed to assisting its members sustain and grow, enhancing education opportunities through choice for all Australians. CCA promotes learning innovation for all Australians by delivery that engages with and belongs to communities, focussing especially on vulnerable and disadvantaged learners. Our members are long-established community learning organisations located in metropolitan, regional and rural locations. They focus on student welfare and are committed to employment outcomes.

CCA works to increase awareness of the community education sector and its place in the economic and social fabric of our Australia. The majority of CCA members are Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) for vocational education and training (VET).

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## Acknowledgements and Disclaimer

This report was prepared with funding provided by the NSW Department of Industry. The recommendations, views and opinions expressed in this report are those of CCA only, and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of the NSW Department of Industry or any other government agency.

Community Colleges Australia acknowledges the financial assistance of the NSW Department of Industry, as well as the CCA regional and rural New South Wales members that contributed to the research contained in the report. The report was written by Don Perlgut, with the assistance of Evelyn Goodwin and Anne Walter. See Appendix A for details of organisations that were consulted during the research for this report.

## A Note on Terminology

Community education providers – frequently termed “adult and community education” or “ACE” providers – are commonly known in New South Wales as “community colleges”. This report usually uses the generic name “community education”, as it incorporates organisations that do not use the “community college” term.

In NSW, the name “Aboriginal” is frequently used by the State Government to mean both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, or Indigenous people. At times, to prevent confusion or organisational names, this report utilises both “Indigenous” and Aboriginal interchangeably.

## Preferred Citation

Please cite this report as:

Community Colleges Australia (2018), *The Role of New South Wales Community Education Providers in Regional and Rural Economic Development*, 25 January 2018, Sydney: Community Colleges Australia. Available at [www.cca.edu.au](http://www.cca.edu.au).

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## Executive Summary

This report examines the capacity of New South Wales community education providers to contribute to regional and rural economic development. NSW regional and rural community education providers – an active network of 26 not-for-profit organisations – constitute a major economic development resource that has been under-utilised by the NSW State, Commonwealth and local governments, and not incorporated into economic development strategies or planning. This report aims to ensure that the NSW Government can use this community capacity, supporting economic development and providing new program models. The report expands on CCA's February 2017 paper, *The Role of Community Education in Australian Regional and Rural Economic Development*.<sup>1</sup>

Proper economic development in non-metropolitan NSW requires the coordinated and collaborative effort of numerous stakeholders and players, all working closely together. To increase the ability of community education providers to participate in economic development, the most important changes are:

- reductions in barriers to participate in government-funded projects;
- encouragement of multi-sector regional economic development planning activities to include the not-for-profit community education providers; and
- increasing the capacity of community education providers themselves to participate effectively in economic development.

There are powerful reasons for focussing on the contributions of not-for-profit NSW community education providers, because they:

- are heavily over-represented in delivering NSW vocational education and training (VET) outside of metropolitan Sydney;
- are mostly small to medium size businesses, unconstrained by large bureaucracies;
- have mission statements that prioritise community development to meet local community social and economic needs;
- are independent organisations with autonomous governance structures, based in their local communities and working effectively with local stakeholders;
- are linked through a powerful network through their peak organisation, Community Colleges Australia;
- are agile and flexible, able to respond quickly to changing community needs, developing local programs that address local challenges;
- have developed efficient business models, given limited government funding;
- are not-for-profit organisations, unencumbered by the need to produce profit for investors, resulting in a low risk to governments;
- are familiar with reinventing themselves, engaged in an ongoing process of performance improvement – if they do not develop, they do not survive;
- understand how to work collaboratively with the NSW Government in achieving education, training and employment goals; and
- frequently work with other government bodies, state, local and Commonwealth, and with not-for-profit, business, industry and other community stakeholders.

There is already a strong relationship between NSW community education providers and economic development. Traditionally, community colleges foster and promote lifelong learning, innovative and critical thinking, capable workers, good communication, improved

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<sup>1</sup> Available at <http://cca.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/The-Role-of-Community-Education-in-Regional-and-Rural-Economic-Development-7February2017.pdf>.

social and cultural life of their communities and the flexibility to meet challenges and change; all of these align closely with the aims of economic development.

The Australian Parliament's Committee on Regional Development and Decentralisation has concluded that, a "place-based' approach to regional economic development is important because it recognises that regions are different, that one-size-fits-all approaches are often inappropriate, and that local communities must be central to development efforts."<sup>2</sup> Regional and rural NSW community education organisations are well-placed to support place-based regional economic development activities.

Regional and rural NSW community education providers contribute extensively to their communities through their operations as small and medium size businesses: the approximate combined annual income for the 26 providers in 2016/17 was \$70 million, and they employed more than 1,500 staff and many more casual and part-time trainers.

Despite rationalisation of the NSW community college sector in recent years, community, lifelong, professional and further education remain important features of Australia's educational landscape. The Jobs for NSW's *Jobs for the Future* report places adult, community and school education amongst the state's top 20 growth industries.<sup>3</sup> The NSW community education sector is poised to assist the state to take advantage of this growth.

Much of regional and rural Australia does not perform economically as well as capital cities, a perception that is widely shared among people who live there, who feel forgotten by governments, despite record Commonwealth investment. VET is an essential part of Australia's regional economic development. Because of the economic and business structure of most regional and rural areas, VET is usually seen as more relevant to future careers, more actively undertaken (50% higher than in cities) and has a greater economic impact than in metropolitan areas.

The NSW Government funds NSW adult and community (ACE) providers for the Community Service Obligation (CSO) program (\$18 million in 2017/18), part of Smart and Skilled, for disadvantaged learners, regional and remote communities and hard to service communities. A high percentage of ACE CSO-funded students live in regional and rural areas: in 2016, more than 72.4% of government-funded VET to community providers was spent outside of metro Sydney. CCA acknowledges the importance of CSO funding, which has produced outstanding outcomes for NSW in servicing the most disadvantaged residents. It is an excellent initiative; given the superb track record of community providers, CCA strongly believes that a substantial increase in CSO funds is warranted.

The NSW Government's \$1.8 million Tech Savvy for Small Business program (2017/18) has enormous potential to make a real difference in regional and rural economic development, as it draws on the strengths of NSW community providers – their ability to work locally and with small businesses. This program is worth expanding in future years. The NSW Department of Industry supports the governance and professional development needs of NSW community education providers to build both quality and capacity of the providers through ACE Teaching and Leadership program. This program has been extremely valuable, empowering the sector to deliver NSW Government training and skills programs in the best

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<sup>2</sup> Parliament of Australia, Select Committee on Regional Development and Decentralisation, 2017, [https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary\\_Business/Committees/House/Regional\\_Development\\_and\\_Decentralisation/RDD/Issues\\_Paper/section?id=committees%2Freportrep%2F024094%2F24934](https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/House/Regional_Development_and_Decentralisation/RDD/Issues_Paper/section?id=committees%2Freportrep%2F024094%2F24934).

<sup>3</sup> *Jobs for the Future*, p. 32, [https://www.jobsfornsw.com.au/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0020/90740/Jobs-for-the-future-full-report-August-2016.pdf](https://www.jobsfornsw.com.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0020/90740/Jobs-for-the-future-full-report-August-2016.pdf).

possible manner – and is particularly important for regional and rural providers, which have limited access to professional development opportunities.

The NSW Department of Industry is well-positioned to bring together VET and regional economic development activities. CCA encourages stronger organisational linkages between the two functions, which will assist economic development participation.

Community education regional economic development activities fall into six categories:

- business incubators, such as those run by Business Growth Centre and Byron Community College;
- working with Indigenous communities, such as the ACE Community Colleges' award-winning Aboriginal drivers education program;
- workplace and business services, such as VERTO's Australian Apprenticeship Support Network, Western Riverina's English in the Workplace and WHS for Mandarin speakers, and WEA Hunter's RTO expansion;
- employment programs and services, such as Kiama Community College's NextGEN Digital Development Program that simultaneously supports local businesses to enhance their digital presence and accelerates young peoples' job readiness for careers in the digital sector, and Byron Community College's national reputation as a supplier of permaculture and sustainability training that has made it an important attraction for regional employers;
- health and social services, such as the Port Macquarie Community College's formation of the Mid North Coast Human Services Alliance; and
- arts and culture, such Riverina Community College's Disability Art Studio – mentoring people with artistic and craft talent so that they can reach the point where their works are commercially viable, and South Coast College's Certificate III in Tourism group project that resulted in the Milton-Ulladulla Comedy Festival, a sustainable social enterprise.

New regional opportunities for the sector exist in the training of older workers – who are over-represented and under-utilised in many regional locations, working with regional universities, and developing and encouraging social enterprises. CCA also sees a real opportunity to extend economic development approaches to Western Sydney, where nine of its members are active and many are already collaborating. Opportunities also exist to access philanthropic funding, which needs to be viewed as complementary and not replacing government's service role.

Regional and rural NSW community providers have identified barriers that prevent engagement in regional economic development, including:

- institutional and program blocks, such as the Commonwealth's Building Better Regions Fund, which does not allow not-for-profit educational institutions to participate, and an absence of funding sources to develop pilot programs;
- difficulty in attracting, keeping and supporting quality trainers and assessors because of distances to regional and rural centres; and
- resourcing, facilities and infrastructure needs, which prevent organisations from delivering more services and developing new programs and strategic capabilities.

For that reason, the NSW Department of Industry's 2017/18 "thin market" funding – \$100,000 to each of five outer regional and remote community colleges – has been warmly welcomed (Robinson in Broken Hill, Western in Dubbo, Western Riverina in Griffith, Northern Inland in Barraba and New England in Guyra).

## Summary of Recommendations

Community Colleges Australia recommends the following:

### **The NSW Office of Local Government, the NSW Department of Industry and the NSW Local Government Association, in association with Regional Development Australia:**

- Collaborate in developing a consistent policy approach to local government involvement in NSW economic development activities, particularly outside of metropolitan Sydney, taking into account the capacity of community education providers to participate (s. 2).

### **The NSW Office of Local Government and the NSW Department of Industry:**

- Fund a regional and rural economic development summit that explores successful models for local government involvement in regional and rural economic development and the connections to education and training, inviting a diverse range of stakeholders, including regional development organisations; VET organisations such as Community Colleges Australia, TAFE NSW and the Australian Council for Private Education and Training (ACPET); regional NSW universities; and other relevant stakeholders (s. 2).
- Encourage the new regional and rural Joint Organisations of Councils to incorporate workforce training and development as part of their responsibilities, and to undertake stakeholder liaison with their local and regional community education and other VET providers (s. 2).

### **The NSW Department of Industry:**

- Ensure that community colleges are included in the Local Government Skills Strategy pilot activities in Namoi region as well as the Central West, Illawarra and Northern Rivers areas (s. 2).
- Undertake a state inquiry into the delivery of VET in regional and rural NSW (s. 4.4).
- Commit to continuing to fund the ACE CSO program with multi-year contracts (s. 5.1).
- Substantially increase the funding to the ACE CSO program in recognition of its excellent program outcomes for vulnerable and disadvantaged learners (5.1).
- Continue the “thin market” funding program for outer regional and remote community providers in 2018/19, with funding announcements made earlier in the year so that effective program planning can take place (s. 5.1).
- Continue the technology and professional development support program in 2018/19, and analyse how the funds were spent in 2017/18 (s. 5.1).
- Continue the Tech Savvy for Small Business program in 2018/19 (s. 5.1).
- Continue to fund the ACE Teaching and Leadership program, expand the funding base, commit to funding cycles of more than one financial year at a time, and implement a program timetable that enables proper and efficient planning (s. 5.1).
- Create stronger operational and managerial links between Training Services NSW and the Regional Development section of the Department, ensuring that NSW community education providers have access to regional development staff (s. 5.2).

- Continue the process of empowering Training Services NSW regional offices outside of metropolitan Sydney with additional staff and resources (s. 5.2).
- Assist the community education sector in establishing a state-wide memorandum of understanding (MOU) with TAFE that will enable community provider to access TAFE facilities at a reasonable cost (s. 5.4).
- Sponsor a pilot program of community education provider involvement in business incubators (s. 9.3).
- Fund Community Colleges Australia to undertake a similar regional economic development research project in Western Sydney, including a forum with interested stakeholders (s. 9.6).

**The NSW Department of Industry and NSW Department of Education:**

- Examine potential locations for co-locating educational institutions in regional centres and rural towns, including the not-for-profit community providers (s. 3.1).

**The NSW Department of Premier and Cabinet:**

- Prioritise applications from community education providers to the Regional Growth Fund, given their strong community connections and their proven ability to make a difference in their local areas (s. 5.3).
- Encourage or require non-metropolitan local councils that are developing Regional Economic Development Strategies (REDS) to consult and involve their local community education providers (s. 5.3).

**NSW Office of Aboriginal Affairs and the NSW Department of Industry:**

- Co-fund a project with the objective to produce guidelines and models for community education providers to work more closely with NSW Aboriginal communities (s. 9.2).

**The Australian Government Department of Education and Training:**

- Undertake a national inquiry into the delivery of VET in regional and rural Australia by commencing a major inquiry (s. 4.4).
- Work with the states and territories to establish a new national policy on the role of VET in Australian economy and how VET is placed with respect to the secondary and university education sectors (s. 6.3).
- Ensure that the Skilling Australians Fund is developed and operated in such a way that does not exclude not-for-profit community education providers from participation in funding, particularly those operating in regional and rural locations (s. 6.3).
- Take the lead in developing, in conjunction with the states and territories, a national policy statement on the role of community education providers in Australian education and training, updating the 2008 Ministerial Agreement including details of the role of community providers in regional and rural Australia (s. 6.3).
- Recognises the importance of incorporating entrepreneurship more fully into VET courses through its Review of training packages, as outlined in recent NCVET reports (s. 9.4).

**The Australia Government Department of Infrastructure and Regional Development:**

- Re-draw its guidelines to allow not-for-profit regional, rural and remote not-for-profit community education organisations to apply for funding from the Building Better Regions Fund programs (s. 6.4).



- Ensure that its regional economic development programs encourage localised solutions by funding regionally-based organisations (s. 6.4).

#### **The National Centre for Vocational Education and Research:**

- Develop an additional set of yearly reports that track student and provider outcomes in regional, rural and remote areas, by states and territories (s. 6.5).
- Include the regional economic development role of VET to the priorities of its national research program (s. 6.5).
- Ensure that community education VET providers are a priority for research outcomes (s. 6.5).

#### **The Australian Government Department of Industry, Innovation and Science:**

- Alter its Incubator Support eligibility requirements for regional and rural projects to include domestic-focussed economic activities, and not limit it to international commercial applications (s. 9.3).

#### **Philanthropy Australia:**

- Include regional economic development as a theme at its next national conference in Melbourne, 4-6 September 2018 (s. 9.5).

## **About This Report**

This report is divided into nine sections plus five appendices:

- The Introduction (section 1) describes the project, how it fits into the NSW Government Regional Development Framework, and reviews the capabilities of regional and rural community education providers.
- Section 2 discusses the current Australian regional economic development, and the importance of place-based approaches that align with community education provider strengths.
- Section 3 details the geography and operations of regional and rural NSW Community Education Providers, their role in delivering government-funded VET and their economic contributions to the NSW regional and rural economy.
- Section 4 describes the economic challenges facing regional and rural Australia, the performance of the regional economy, and educational access, including regional and rural VET delivery.
- Section 5 analyses NSW Government policies and programs that impact community education providers and regional economic development.
- Section 6 analyses Australian Government policies and programs, and includes a case study of how infrastructure funding in 2009/10 assisted community providers.
- Section 7 details the economic development activities of community providers.
- Section 8 analyses the barriers to regional economic development participation: government, trainers and assessors, and resources/infrastructure.
- Section 9 looks at new opportunities for regional economic development, including engagement of older workers, working with Indigenous communities, business incubators, entrepreneurship and social enterprises, how philanthropic funding can assist economic development, and how the concepts can be extended to Western Sydney.
- Appendix A details the people and organisations consulted for this report.

- Appendix B describes the activities during the Mullumbimby Regional Economic Development Forum in October.
- Appendix C shows the locations and postcodes where regional and rural NSW community education organisations operate.
- Appendix D summarises student cohorts for government-Funded VET in NSW in 2016 by type of provider.
- Appendix E details the economic development activities undertaken by NSW regional and rural community education providers.

# 1. Introduction

This report examines and documents the capacity of New South Wales community education providers to contribute to regional and rural economic development. Regional and rural community education providers constitute a major economic development resource that has been insufficiently utilised by Commonwealth, state and territory governments. This report aims to ensure that the NSW Government can use this “community capacity”, supporting economic development and providing new program models. This report expands on CCA’s paper, *The Role of Community Education in Australian Regional and Rural Economic Development* (February 2017).<sup>4</sup>

Proper economic development in non-metropolitan NSW requires the coordinated and collaborative effort of numerous stakeholders and players, working closely together. To date, the NSW community education sector – including a network of 26 not-for-profit organisations in regional and rural NSW – has not been sufficiently incorporated into regional economic development planning. This is despite the significant and historic role that community education providers play in their respective communities.

The most important changes that need to occur to increase the ability of community education providers to participate in economic development are:

- reductions in barriers to participate in government-funded economic development projects;
- encouragement of multi-sector regional economic development planning activities to include the not-for-profit community education providers; and
- increasing the capacity of community education providers themselves to participate effectively in economic development.

## 1.1 NSW Government Regional Development Framework

The NSW Government’s *Regional Development Framework* provides important guidance for the involvement of community education organisations in regional development. The *Framework*:

recognises the need to be more strategic and better coordinated if it is to make a difference, particularly in addressing some of the serious issues facing regional NSW such as pockets of youth unemployment, social disadvantage, changing economic opportunities and increased competition.<sup>5</sup>

The *Regional Development Framework* is underpinned by the NSW Economic Development Strategy (March 2015), which has five goals, to:

1. Promote key regional sectors and regional competitiveness
2. Drive regional employment and regional business growth
3. Invest in economic infrastructure and connectivity
4. Maximise government efficiency and enhance regional governance

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<sup>4</sup> Available at <http://cca.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/The-Role-of-Community-Education-in-Regional-and-Rural-Economic-Development-7February2017.pdf>.

<sup>5</sup> See <https://www.industry.nsw.gov.au/invest-in-nsw/regional-opportunities/regional-development-framework>.

## 5. Improve information sharing and build the evidence base<sup>6</sup>

Community education providers have the capacity, willingness and resources to help address the issues in the *Regional Development Framework*, and to contribute to all five of the goals of the Economic Development Strategy.

### 1.2 Capabilities of NSW Community Education Providers

There are powerful reasons for focussing on the rural and regional economic development contributions of not-for-profit NSW community education providers. These organisations already have strong capabilities, as they:

- are heavily over-represented in delivering vocational education and training (VET) outside of metropolitan Sydney;
- are mostly small to medium size businesses, unconstrained by large bureaucracies;
- have mission statements that prioritise community development to meet local community social and economic needs;
- are independent organisations with autonomous governance structures, based in their local communities and working effectively with local stakeholders;
- are linked by a powerful network through their peak organisation, Community Colleges Australia;
- are agile and flexible, able to respond quickly to changing community needs, developing local programs that address local challenges;
- have developed efficient business models, given limited government funding;
- are not-for-profit organisations, unencumbered by the need to produce profit for investors, resulting in a low risk of any funding or support benefiting individuals rather than the whole community;
- are familiar with reinventing themselves, engaged in ongoing processes of performance improvement – if they do not develop, they do not survive;
- understand how to work collaboratively with the NSW Government in achieving education, training and employment goals; and
- frequently work with other government bodies, state, local and Commonwealth, as well as with other not-for-profit organisations, business, industry and other community stakeholders.<sup>7</sup>

NSW community education providers already have a strong relationship with economic development. Traditionally, community colleges foster and promote lifelong learning, innovative and critical thinking, capable workers, good communication, improved social and cultural life of their communities, and the flexibility to meet challenges and change. All of these align closely with the aims of economic development.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> See <https://www.industry.nsw.gov.au/invest-in-nsw/invest-news/news/new-economic-development-strategy-for-regional-nsw> and <https://rdafarwestnsw.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/Economic-Development-Strategy-for-Regional-NSW-eb2015.pdf>.

<sup>7</sup> For more details on some these, see Patricia Carroll (2000), “Engaging the Community College in State and Local Economic Development: Maintaining the Balance.”

<sup>8</sup> See Patricia Carroll, “Engaging the Community College in State and Local Economic Development: Maintaining the Balance.”

## 1.3 This Project

### 1.3.1 Project Activities

This research for this report was funded by the NSW Department of Industry. However the recommendations, views and opinions expressed in this report are those of Community Colleges Australia only, and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of the NSW Department of Industry or any other government agency.

This project undertook the following activities:

1. A survey of economic development activities of regional and rural NSW community education providers (see Sections 7, 8 & 9 and Appendix E);
2. Mapping of non-metropolitan (non-Sydney) community education activities in New South Wales (see Figure 3 below and Appendix C);
3. Selected case studies of selected community rural and regional economic development projects that can serve as models for new projects (see sections 7, 8 & 9 and Appendix E);
4. An updated literature review of Australian vocational education and training (VET) and regional economic development relevant to New South Wales, building on the report *The Role of Community Education in Australian Regional and Rural Economic Development* (see sections 2, 3, 4, 6 & 9); and
5. Two regional meetings, one in the Central West and one on the NSW North Coast (see below and Appendices A & B).

In addition to individual stakeholder meetings, CCA held two regional meetings:

- a stakeholder consultation at Western College, Dubbo, on 11 October 2017; and
- a forum held at Byron Community College in Mullumbimby on 25 October 2017.

The Dubbo consultation included staff, Board Directors, NSW Government personnel and other local stakeholders. The Mullumbimby forum included staff and Board Directors from CCA members Byron Community College, WEA Hunter, Central Coast Community College, Port Macquarie Community College, Tamworth Community College, Coffs Coast Community College, North Coast Community College and ACE Colleges, Lismore; Regional Development Australia; TAFE NSW; the University of New England and Southern Cross University; Sourdough Business Pathways; SAE Institute; and two members of Parliament - The Hon Ben Franklin MLC, Parliamentary Secretary for Northern New South Wales (representing the NSW Deputy Premier) and Tamara Smith, Member for Ballina.

Figure 1: Mullumbimby Forum Outcomes, 25 October 2017



CCA staff visited other regional and rural NSW members during the course of this project, including Central Coast Community College (Ourimbah), Business Growth Centre (Lake Macquarie), WEA Hunter (Newcastle), Robinson College (Broken Hill), Nepean Community College (Penrith), Port Macquarie Community College, ACE Colleges (Lismore) and North Coast Community College (Alstonville). See Appendix A for details of attendees at the project events and other meetings.<sup>9</sup>

### 1.3.2 Other Follow Up Activities

In addition to the recommendations listed in this report, Community Colleges Australia will be undertaking a number of activities, which have become apparent as priorities during the course of the project research:

- Convene meetings with key stakeholder groups such as local government (regional economic development officers), Regional Development Australia, regional chambers of commerce, and philanthropic organisations (foundations and trusts) that have an interest in operating in education, training and regional/rural Australia;
- Convene an event that follows up from the Mullumbimby forum, focussing on the role of community providers in social enterprise, entrepreneurship and small business development, especially in regional and rural Australia;

<sup>9</sup> See the CCA news release on the Mullumbimby forum here <https://cca.edu.au/economic-development-forum-highlights-regional-and-rural-nsw-community-college-capabilities/>, and links to the presentations at the forum here <https://cca.edu.au/resources/#economicdevelopment>.

- Encourage CCA members to obtain Deductible Gift Recipient (DGR) status and to develop strategies to engage with Australian foundations and trusts to support economic development and other socially beneficial projects;
- Engage with peak philanthropic organisations to ensure that they are aware of and able to work effectively with adult and community education organisations;
- Convene an “Indigenous Affinity Group” of CCA members to help plan the sector’s strategy and activities in working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and organisations;
- Commence engagement with NSW Aboriginal Land Councils and other peak Indigenous organisations to ensure that community education organisations can collaborate and partner when appropriate;
- Continue to liaise with regional NSW regional universities, especially New England, Southern Cross and Charles Sturt, encouraging collaborations with community education organisations; and
- Liaise with entrepreneurship centres such as the Sydney School of Entrepreneurship, encouraging their involvement with NSW community providers.

## 2. Australian Regional Economic Development – The Importance of Place-Based Approaches

The Australian Parliament’s Select Committee on Regional Development and Decentralisation’s inquiry into best practice approaches to regional development summarises relevant themes, based on work from the Regional Australia Institute, the Productivity Commission and the Australian Business Foundation. The Committee concludes that, a “‘place-based’ approach is important because it recognises that regions are different, that one-size-fits-all approaches are often inappropriate, and that local communities must be central to development efforts.”<sup>10</sup>

The Regional Australia Institute’s states that, “government has diminishing control over the factors that shape Australia’s regions”, including the global economy, technological change, the environment and population. Governments do, however, “continue to have a role in providing the right political and policy settings for fostering regional growth”, and all tiers of government need to collaborate more.<sup>11</sup>

The Productivity Commission notes that successful adaptive and development strategies for Australia’s regions need to be:

- led by local communities;
- aligned with regional strengths;
- supported by targeted investment; and
- guided by clear objectives and measurable performance indicators.<sup>12</sup>

The Australian Business Foundation concludes that successful regional development requires:

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<sup>10</sup> Parliament of Australia, Select Committee on Regional Development and Decentralisation, 2017, [https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary\\_Business/Committees/House/Regional\\_Development\\_and\\_Decentralisation/RDD/Issues\\_Paper/section?id=committees%2Freportrep%2F024094%2F24934](https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/House/Regional_Development_and_Decentralisation/RDD/Issues_Paper/section?id=committees%2Freportrep%2F024094%2F24934).

<sup>11</sup> Regional Australia Institute, *The Future of Regional Australia: Change on Our Terms*, November 2015, <http://www.regionalaustralia.org.au/wp-content/uploads/Change-on-our-terms-FINAL-20151126.pdf>.

<sup>12</sup> Productivity Commission, *Transitioning Regional Economies*, April 2017, <http://www.pc.gov.au/inquiries/current/transitioning-regions/initial/transitioning-regions-initial.pdf>.

- strengthened local and regional institutions able to develop local economic assets more than just “tailoring national policies”;
- active stakeholders; and
- development of human capital and the promotion of innovation.<sup>13</sup>

All three reports align with recent OECD literature and conclude that a local, “place-based” approach is an essential element of best practice regional development.<sup>14</sup> The Select Committee quotes Professor Andrew Beer, who notes that, “Good practice in regional economic development is accepted as focusing upon endogenous growth – that is, growth that takes place because of the assets, abilities and talents of the region and the people within it.”<sup>15</sup> This compares to the “top down” or “centre-directed” approach that many governments take.

These descriptors all apply to regional and rural NSW community education organisations, given their ability to support place-based regional economic development activities. CCA believes that strengthening these local and regional institutions – all of which specialise in the formation of human and social capital – is one of the most cost-effective means that the NSW Government can use to promote regional economic development.

The Independent Review of the Regional Development Australia Programme – also known as “the Smith Report” after its author, the Hon Warwick Smith AM – describes a confused and often uncoordinated national approach to regional economic development activities. His key findings include:

A one size fits all approach is no longer the preferred means of promoting regional development; existing government initiatives are rather generic and are not sufficiently fine-tuned to the needs and demands of Australia’s diverse regions.<sup>16</sup>

The NSW Government continues to invest substantial effort to ensure that the state’s regions are not left behind. The NSW Parliament’s Standing Committee on State Development is currently inquiring into “how Sydney’s growing prominence as a global city [can] enhance regional development in New South Wales”.<sup>17</sup> Although the Standing Committee’s Inquiry discussion paper only briefly touches on the role of VET providers, it does recommend that the government “do more to support innovative models to fund activities in research and knowledge exchange” and asks the question, “What action can the

<sup>13</sup> John Tomaney, *Place-based Approaches to Regional Development: Global Trends and Australian Implications*, November 2010,

[http://alstonvillewollongbar.com.au/members/Library/Documentation/2014/Place\\_based\\_competitiveness\\_australia.pdf](http://alstonvillewollongbar.com.au/members/Library/Documentation/2014/Place_based_competitiveness_australia.pdf).

<sup>14</sup> OECD, *The New Rural Paradigm: Policies and Governance*, June 2006, <http://www.oecd.org/cfe/regional-policy/thenewruralparadigmpoliciesandgovernance.htm>.

<sup>15</sup> Parliament of Australia, Select Committee on Regional Development and Decentralisation, 2017, line 1.13, [https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary\\_Business/Committees/House/Regional\\_Development\\_and\\_Decentralisation/RDD/Issues\\_Paper/section?id=committees%2Freportrep%2F024094%2F24934](https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/House/Regional_Development_and_Decentralisation/RDD/Issues_Paper/section?id=committees%2Freportrep%2F024094%2F24934).

<sup>16</sup> The Hon Warwick Smith, AM, *Independent Review of the Regional Development Australia Programme*, Australian Government Department of Infrastructure and Regional Development, December 2016, p. 4, [http://regional.gov.au/regional/publications/files/Final\\_Report-RDA\\_Independent\\_Review\\_12\\_December\\_2016.pdf](http://regional.gov.au/regional/publications/files/Final_Report-RDA_Independent_Review_12_December_2016.pdf).

<sup>17</sup> See <https://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/committees/inquiries/Pages/inquiry-details.aspx?pk=2435> and the November 2017 Discussion Paper at <https://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/committees/DBAssets/InquiryReport/ReportAcrobat/6123/Discussion%20paper.pdf>.



NSW Government take to work with regional stakeholders to ensure that training and education caters to local workforce demand?"<sup>18</sup>

Community Colleges Australia answers this question by recommending empowering and funding NSW regional and rural community education providers to participate effectively.

The Smith Report's findings have been confirmed by a recent study undertaken by the UTS Centre for Local Government, which also paints a confused view of Australian economic development activities, concluding:

Promoting economic growth is a ubiquitous concern and a priority for all levels of government in Australia and abroad.... This mongrel policy field continues to evade broad stakeholder agreement, serv[ing] as a barrier to meeting economic growth objectives.... The lack of clarity on the role of local government in local and regional economic development is a serious issue.<sup>19</sup>

The NSW Government has recently encouraged all local councils across the state to form voluntary Joint Organisations (JOs), following a new model of collaboration in local government, with improved ability to deliver projects. Following a pilot, the Joint Organisations will commence formally in July 2018.<sup>20</sup> Part of the functions of the JOs is "building strong businesses and creating jobs".<sup>21</sup>

The NSW Department of Industry has instituted a pilot "Local Government Skills Strategy" in four regional locations (Central West, Namoi, Illawarra and Northern Rivers) to provide councils with an expanded skilled workforce. This Strategy works through Joint Organisations of Councils to work together on regional priorities in areas such as jobs and education and provide a means of delivering projects across council boundaries.<sup>22</sup> It is a promising area of expansion that would greatly benefit by the inclusion of NSW community education providers, working in direct collaboration with the councils and JOs. Tamworth Community College is already working with the Namoi Joint Organisation.

**Community Colleges Australia recommends that:**

- *The NSW Office of Local Government, the NSW Department of Industry and the NSW Local Government Association, in association with Regional Development Australia, collaborate in developing a consistent policy approach to local government involvement in NSW economic development activities, particularly outside of*

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<sup>18</sup> See *Regional development and a global Sydney Discussion paper*, <https://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/committees/DBAssets/InquiryReport/ReportAcrobat/6123/Discussion%20paper.pdf>, pp. 50 & 51.

<sup>19</sup> Lee Pugalys & Su Fei Tan, *The Role of Local Government in Local and Regional Economic Development*, 2017, <https://www.uts.edu.au/sites/default/files/2017-09/The%20Role%20of%20Local%20Government%20in%20Local%20and%20Regional%20Economic%20Development.pdf>.

<sup>20</sup> See <https://www.olg.nsw.gov.au/news/joint-organisation-legislation-passes-parliament>.

<sup>21</sup> See <https://www.olg.nsw.gov.au/sites/default/files/Joint%20Organisations%20to%20bolster%20Regional%20Councils.pdf>.

<sup>22</sup> See [https://www.training.nsw.gov.au/programs\\_services/funded\\_other/lgss/index.html](https://www.training.nsw.gov.au/programs_services/funded_other/lgss/index.html).

*metropolitan Sydney, taking into account the capacity of community education providers to participate.*

- *Given the special regional and rural economic challenges detailed in this report, the NSW Office of Local Government and the NSW Department of Industry fund a regional and rural economic development summit that explores successful models for local government involvement in regional and rural economic development and the connections to education and training, inviting a diverse range of stakeholders, including regional development organisations; VET organisations such as Community Colleges Australia, TAFE NSW and the Australian Council for Private Education and Training (ACPET); regional NSW universities; and other relevant stakeholders.*
- *The NSW Office of Local Government and NSW Department of Industry encourage the new regional and rural Joint Organisations of Councils to incorporate workforce training and development as part of their responsibilities, and to undertake stakeholder liaison with their local and regional community education and other VET providers.*
- *The NSW Department of Industry ensure that community colleges are included in the Local Government Skills Strategy pilot activities in Namoi region as well as the Central West, Illawarra and Northern Rivers areas.*

## **3. Regional and Rural NSW Community Education Providers**

### **3.1 Geography and Operations**

Of the 37 established community education providers in New South Wales, 24 providers (65%) operate primarily in regional and rural locations, 11 providers (30%) primarily in metropolitan Sydney and 2 providers (5%) operate in both metropolitan and non-metropolitan areas.<sup>23</sup>

The ARIA classification – the Accessibility/Remoteness Index of Australia – is widely used in and has “become a recognised as a nationally consistent measure of geographic remoteness”. The ARIA classification groups Australian locations into five geographic categories (see Figure 2 below):

- major cities (example - Sydney)
- inner regional (example – Port Macquarie)
- outer regional (example – Guyra, Griffith)
- remote
- very remote<sup>24</sup>

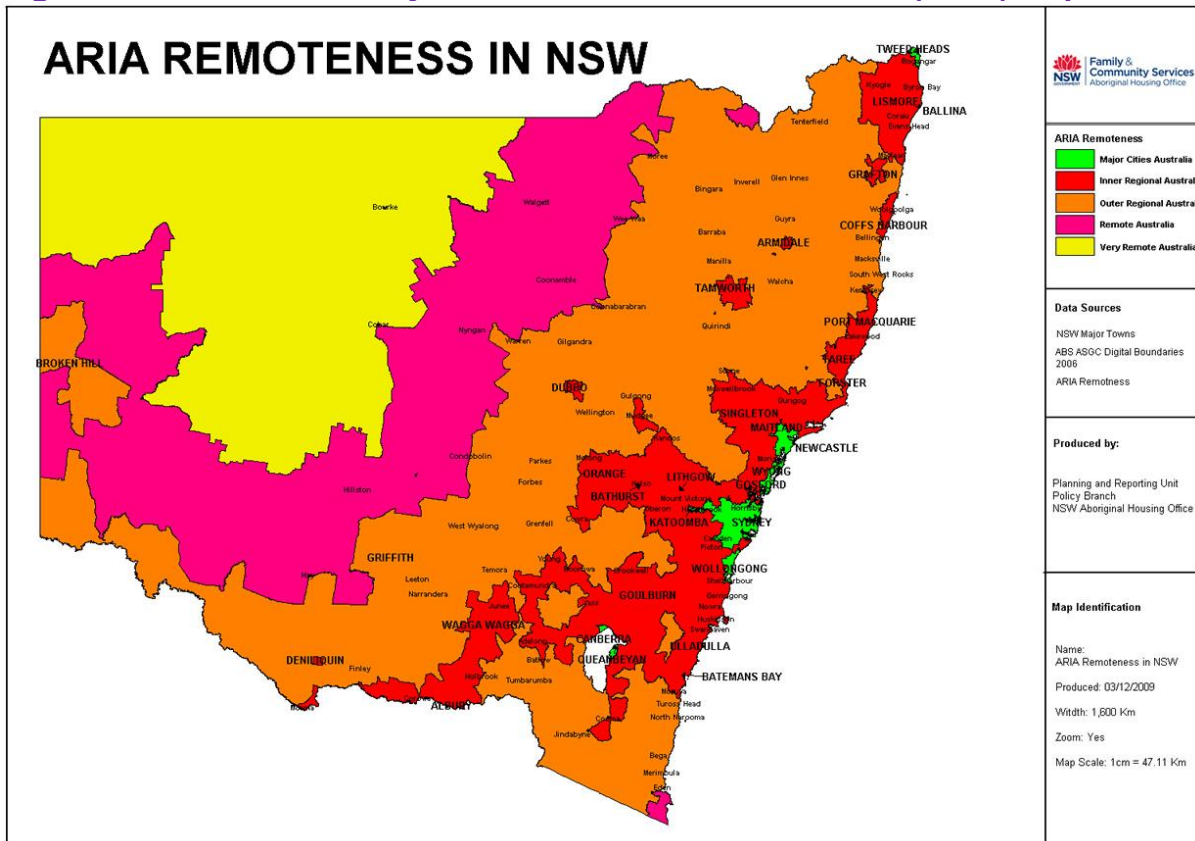
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<sup>23</sup> See <https://cca.edu.au/members/> for head office details.

<sup>24</sup> See <http://www.abs.gov.au/websitedbs/d3310114.nsf/home/remoteness+structure> and <http://www.aihw.gov.au/rural-health-remoteness-classifications/>. A sixth category of “off-shore, migratory and shipping” is “migratory” and not mapped. See <http://www.doctorconnect.gov.au/locator> for a locator of ARIA classification for anywhere in Australia.

Within the NSW context, most of Newcastle and Wollongong are classified as major cities. However, for the purposes of economic development, educational accessibility and community functioning, CCA regards only Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane, Adelaide, Perth and Canberra as the Australian “major cities” or “metropolitan” areas, and places all other Australian locations as “regional”. This definition is used by the New South Wales Department of Industry’s Regional Growth Marketing and Promotion Fund, Australian Government Department of Infrastructure and Regional Development’s Building Better Regions Fund (BBRF) and the Regional Australia Institute.<sup>25</sup> On this basis, regional NSW houses about 40% of the state’s total population.<sup>26</sup>

**Figure 2: NSW Accessibility/Remoteness Index of Australia (ARIA) Map**



Source: <http://www.aho.nsw.gov.au/-ASSETS/Housing-providers/maps/ARIARemotenessInNSW.jpg>

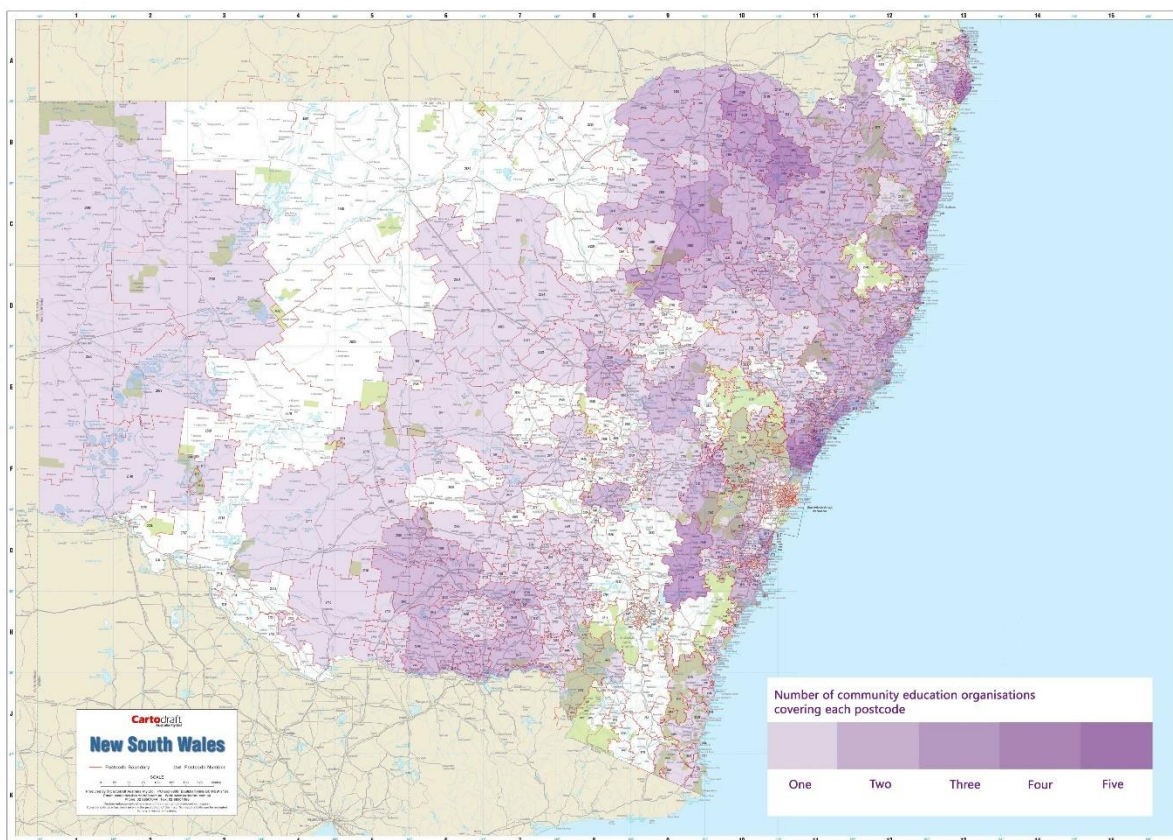
The 26 regional and rural NSW providers deliver services to the overwhelming majority of postcodes outside of metropolitan Sydney: see Figure 3 (below), a map of New South Wales where CCA has mapped where each NSW community college delivers educational or related services. This map has five colour codes, from light to dark purple, with the lightest indicating where one community provider delivers educational services to the darkest which indicates five delivering services. Rather than showing how community colleges compete, the map instead indicates how the colleges can collaborate by delivering different services to

<sup>25</sup> See <https://www.industry.nsw.gov.au/invest-in-nsw/regional-opportunities/regional-growth-marketing-and-promotion-fund>, <https://www.business.gov.au/assistance/building-better-regions-fund> and <http://www.regionalaustralia.org.au/home/what-is-regional-australia/>.

<sup>26</sup> See <https://www.industry.nsw.gov.au/invest-in-nsw/regional-opportunities/regional-development-framework>.

different (or the same) people in the same areas through specialisation. See Appendix C for a list of locations and postcodes serviced by each NSW community education provider.

**Figure 3: NSW Regional and Rural Postcodes Serviced by Community Education Providers**



NSW regional and rural community education providers are located in a number of types of buildings and locations throughout the state. One organisation – Central Coast Community College – is co-located on a campus in Ourimbah with the University of Newcastle’s Central Coast campus, TAFE and other State and Commonwealth agencies, including the NSW Department of Industry and Regional Development Australia.<sup>27</sup> This educational precinct was developed by the NSW Government many years ago, establishing a good model of educational campus co-location, as it allows for some shared services (carparking, at a minimum) and encouragement for other agencies to set up there. The NSW regional universities – Charles Sturt, Southern Cross, New England, Newcastle and Wollongong – are continuing to expand their campus and study centre locations, which may provide additional opportunities for community education providers.<sup>28</sup> NSW Government assistance and encouragement to encourage such co-location (such as provision of land) is an essential element for the success in the development of educational precincts, which can have positive outcomes for inter-sector educational collaboration and branding. Co-location must also include an authoritative government direction to require resource sharing of publicly funded facilities.

<sup>27</sup> See <https://cccc.nsw.edu.au/site/220>.

<sup>28</sup> See <http://www.csu.edu.au/about/locations>, <https://www.scu.edu.au/study-at-scu/why-scu/locations/>, <https://www.newcastle.edu.au/about-uon/our-environments/our-campus-and-locations>, <https://www.uow.edu.au/about/locations/index.html> and <https://www.une.edu.au/study/study-centres/regional>.

### **Community Colleges Australia recommends that:**

- *The NSW Departments of Industry and Education examine potential locations for co-locating educational institutions in regional centres and rural towns, including the not-for-profit community providers.*

## **3.2 Government-Funded VET in Regional and Rural NSW**

On all tracked measures of vulnerability and disadvantage, NSW community education providers over-performed in 2016 with their student “equity” cohorts, compared to other providers – TAFE and private for-profit providers. Although community education providers have fewer students, community providers disproportionately cater for students from the state’s most disadvantaged groups.<sup>29</sup> See the table in Appendix D for more details.

### **3.2.1 Regional, Rural and Remote Students**

Although the map in Figure 3 shows a great breadth of NSW community education providers, it does not fully indicate how important community providers are outside of metropolitan Sydney. Each year the National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER) publishes annual totals for VET student activity for the previous calendar year, including government-funded VET, defined as “all Commonwealth and state/territory government-funded training delivered by TAFE institutes, other government providers (such as universities), community education providers and other registered providers”. In 2016, 1.3 million Australian students participated in government-funded VET, including 454,030 NSW students.<sup>30</sup>

CCA has analysed the NSW 2016 government-funded VET student numbers, which predominantly refers to one of two programs run by the NSW Department of Industry: Smart and Skilled or Community Services Obligation (CSO), a subset of Smart and Skilled only for NSW community colleges and TAFE NSW.<sup>31</sup> CCA has compared the NSW data between community education providers, TAFE and for-profit private providers, finding that *community providers significantly over-perform in reaching regional and rural students, as a percentage of total student numbers:*

- 72.4% of government-funded community education students lived in regional, rural or remote areas, including inner regional (46.7%), outer regional (24.2%) and remote (1.5%), compared to 27% of community education students in major cities.<sup>32</sup>
- 36.4% of TAFE students – inner regional (25.7%), outer regional (9.2%) and remote (1.5%), with 63% in major cities.
- 32.5% of private for-profit students – inner regional (23.9%), outer regional (7.6%) and remote (1.0%), with 65.3% in major cities.

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<sup>29</sup> The information in this section is extracted from *Vulnerable and Disadvantaged Students of NSW Community Education Providers: Analysis of Participants in Government-Funded VET 2016*, Community Colleges Australia, 28 September 2017, available at <https://cca.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/NSW-Community-Colleges-Govt-Funded-VET-2016-Analysis-28September2017-1.pdf>.

<sup>30</sup> National Centre for Vocational Education and Research (NCVER), *Government-funded students and courses, 2016*, 12 July 2017, <https://www.ncver.edu.au/publications/publications/all-publications/government-funded-students-and-courses-2016>.

<sup>31</sup> Not all not-for-profit community education providers receive funding through the CSO program.

<sup>32</sup> These figures count most Newcastle, Central Coast and Wollongong students as living in “central cities”, making the community education rural and regional “reach” even more impressive.

- Across students of all NSW VET providers, 35.7% were regional, including 26.2% inner regional, 9.5% outer regional, 1.4% remote and 61.9% in major cities.

### 3.2.2 Socio-Economic Disadvantage

The Australian Bureau of Statistics has developed “Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas” (SEIFA), which ranks areas in Australia according to relative socio-economic advantage and disadvantage.<sup>33</sup> The NCVET data separates government-funded VET students into 5 “quintiles” (each quintile representing 20% of the NSW total population), and shows:

- *69.1% of community education students* fell into the bottom two (most disadvantaged) quintiles – 35.5% in the bottom quintile and 33.6% in the second to bottom quintile.
- 53.7% of TAFE students fell into the bottom two (most disadvantaged) quintiles – 27.7% in the bottom quintile and 26% in the second to bottom quintile.
- 55.3% of private for-profit provider students fell into the bottom two (most disadvantaged) quintiles – 29.4% in the bottom quintile and 25.9% in the second to bottom quintile.
- Across all NSW VET providers – 54.9% of students fell into the bottom two (most disadvantaged) quintiles – 28.6% in the bottom quintile and 26.3% in the second to bottom quintile.

In other words, community providers did almost one-third better than other NSW providers in enrolling the most socially and economically disadvantaged students.

### 3.2.3 Students with a Disability

- *15.6% of community education students had a disability*
- 11.1% of TAFE students
- 5.3% of private for-profit students
- (9.6% NSW provider average)

In other words, community providers engaged and trained students with a disability one-third better than TAFE and almost three times better than private providers.

## 3.3 Outer Regional and Remote Community Education Providers

Of the 26 NSW regional and rural community providers, 5 serve primarily outer regional and remote parts of the state:

- Community College Northern Inland, headquartered in Barraba, northwestern NSW, with locations in Barraba, Bingara, Gunnedah, Inverell, Moree, Narrabri and Wyallda;
- Guyra Adult Learning Association/New England Community College, headquartered in Guyra, northwestern NSW, with locations in Guyra, Armidale, Walcha and Glen Innes;
- Robinson College, headquartered in Broken Hill, western NSW;
- Western College, headquartered in Dubbo, western NSW; and
- Western Riverina Community College, headquartered in Griffith, southwestern NSW, with locations in Griffith and Leeton.

<sup>33</sup> See <http://www.abs.gov.au/websitedbs/censushome.nsf/home/seifa>.

These five institutions face special challenges because of their outer regional and remote locations, vast distances and low population densities. In June 2017, the NSW Government recognised these challenges, with providing \$100,000 special “thin market” funding for each of them, a program that both CCA and the respective colleges warmly welcomed. These providers are indicative of the unique role that not-for-profit community providers can play in smaller regional and rural communities, where larger and for-profit providers are often unwilling or unable to service. This report discusses that funding program in the section below on NSW Government Programs.<sup>34</sup>

## 3.4 Community Education Provider Contribution to the NSW Regional and Rural Economy

### 3.4.1 Economic Contributions Through Employment

This report primarily focusses on how regional and rural NSW community education providers can participate in economic development activities, including through their teaching and related project activities. It is important to recognise that these organisations contribute extensively to their communities through their operations as small and medium size businesses, and by their employment of regional and rural staff.

The approximate combined annual income for the 26 NSW regional and rural providers in 2016/17 was \$70 million.<sup>35</sup> CCA estimates that the NSW regional and rural providers also employed more than 1,500 staff, as well as a very large number of casual and part-time staff and trainers.<sup>36</sup> For example, Community College Northern Inland (CCNI), headquartered in the small country town of Barraba with a population of 1729, employs 5 full time workers.<sup>37</sup> Each year, CCNI hires 63 sessional trainers from industry, and has an annual turnover of \$2.2 million for its 7 campuses.

Despite rationalisation of the NSW community college sector in recent years, community, lifelong, professional and further education remain important features of Australia’s educational landscape. The Jobs for NSW’s *Jobs for the Future* report (August 2016) places adult, community and school education amongst the state’s top 20 growth industries.<sup>38</sup> The NSW community education sector is poised to assist the state to take advantage of this growth.

### 3.4.2 Operation of Independent Secondary Schools in Regional and Rural NSW

Some regional and rural NSW community colleges operate independent high schools, frequently under the brand name of Alesco. These small schools cater some of the most disadvantaged and vulnerable senior high school students in schools of relatively small size, generally between 30 and 70 students. As of December 2017, the following NSW community providers had such schools: WEA Hunter (multiple campuses), WEA Illawarra, Tuggerah

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<sup>34</sup> See <https://cca.edu.au/community-colleges-australia-welcomes-nsw-government-funding-in-201718/>.

<sup>35</sup> Source: CCA member reporting and Australian Charities and Not-for-Profits Commission “Annual Information Statements” and “Annual Financial Reports”, see [http://www.acnc.gov.au/ACNC/Manage/Reporting/About\\_AIS/ACNC/Report/About\\_AIS.aspx](http://www.acnc.gov.au/ACNC/Manage/Reporting/About_AIS/ACNC/Report/About_AIS.aspx).

<sup>36</sup> The “mix” of ongoing staff and casual/part-time staff varies institution by institution, depending on local conditions and activities.

<sup>37</sup> See <http://profile.id.com.au/tamworth/population?WebID=100>.

<sup>38</sup> See *Jobs for the Future*, August 2016, p. 32, [https://www.jobsforsw.com.au/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0020/90740/Jobs-for-the-future-full-report-August-2016.pdf](https://www.jobsforsw.com.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0020/90740/Jobs-for-the-future-full-report-August-2016.pdf).

Lakes Community College, Port Macquarie Community College, Coffs Coast Community College, Albury Wodonga Community College and Western College (Dubbo). At least two more regional and rural community colleges are expected to open schools by 2019, with two more interested but without specific plans.

The aim of the independent non-government schools is to provide high-quality individualised secondary education specifically designed for the inclusion of young people who have barriers to completing their education within a traditional setting.<sup>39</sup> Although they do not have economic development priorities as part of their mission statements, they have brought a diversity of educational opportunities to many NSW country towns, as well as increased employment of teachers, teachers' aides and school management – and thus increased economic activity.

Positive student outcomes also contribute local economic development. When each of these schools successfully engages a student in secondary education who might otherwise have “fallen through the cracks”, this improves economic participation and adds to the local skills base. Completion of year 12 is especially challenging in regional Australia. As the Australian Bureau of Statistics states:

Within Australia, Year 12 attainment is regarded as a key factor in the formal development of an individual's skills and knowledge. Those with Year 12 have a greater likelihood of continuing with further study, particularly in higher education, as well as entering into the workforce. Year 12 attainment contributes to the development of a skilled workforce, and in turn, to ongoing economic development and improved living conditions. In 2010, young adults (20-24 years) were more likely to have attained Year 12 if they lived in Major Cities (81%) compared with Inner or Outer Regional Areas (67%) and Remote or Very Remote Areas (64%).<sup>40</sup>

### 3.4.3 Contributions to Regional Social Capital

In addition to training and direct economic contributions to their communities, community education organisations are well-known for their ability to create “social capital”, defined by the OECD as “networks together with shared norms, values and understandings that facilitate co-operation within or among groups.”<sup>41</sup>

The adult and community education sector (often referred to as the “ACE” sector) is a significant builder of social capital, particularly in regional locations where local educational institutions are part of the “glue” that holds communities together.<sup>42</sup> Research conducted by the Centre for Rural and Regional Innovation at the University of Queensland shows how VET, social capital and regional Australia fit together, noting that VET mobilises “social capital, as well as human, environmental, cultural and built (that is, physical) capital in regional Australia. These various types of capital are core requirements for sustainable regional development.”<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> See <https://www.weahunter.edu.au/alesco-senior-college/about>.

<sup>40</sup> See Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2011, <http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/Lookup/4102.0Main+Features40Mar+2011>.

Also see Mitchell Institute, *Senior school years: school completion uneven across Australia*, Educational Opportunity in Australia 2015 – Fact Sheet 4, <http://www.mitchellinstitute.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/Factsheet-4-school-completion.pdf>.

<sup>41</sup> See “What is social capital?”, OECD, <https://www.oecd.org/insights/37966934.pdf>.

<sup>42</sup> See Adult Learning Australia, “Adult Learning and Civic Participation”, <https://ala.asn.au/civic-participation/>.

<sup>43</sup> See [http://library.bsl.org.au/jspui/bitstream/1/749/1/Building\\_learning\\_communities.pdf](http://library.bsl.org.au/jspui/bitstream/1/749/1/Building_learning_communities.pdf), p. 4.



## 4. Economic Challenges Facing Regional and Rural NSW

### 4.1 The Australian Regional Economy

The economy of regional and rural Australia is crucial to the country's future, especially in certain industries. Regional and rural Australia:

- provides the major source of Australia's export earnings, accounting for 67% of the value of Australia's exports; and
- plays a critical role in the Australian tourism industry, making a direct contribution to Australia's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of \$35 billion annually, with some 45% of tourism expenditure occurring in areas outside of Australia's capital cities.<sup>44</sup>

The rural sector and farm-dependent economy includes 12% of total GDP, 14% of exports, 17% of employment, 60% of the land mass, and between half and two-thirds of water use. In addition, mining accounts for 9% of GDP, 35% of exports, and 2.2% of employment.<sup>45</sup>

The Australian Regional Universities Network states that regional Australia:

Holds the keys to a sustainable future for Australia. It is where solutions can be found to key national and global challenges such as: food security, biodiversity, climate change, water solutions, preservation of Indigenous cultures and Indigenous economic development, and social inclusion.<sup>46</sup>

These opportunities are consistent with innovation pioneer Catherine Caruana-McManus' identification of Australian "industries of the future", four of which are primarily rural and regional: agricultural technologies (AgTech), including food security and technology; tourism; new energy sources; and environmental and green technology.<sup>47</sup>

### 4.2 Regional Economic Performance

Most Australian economic performance indicators show that regional and rural areas continue to lag behind the cities in wealth, gross domestic product (GDP) and educational services. During 2016/17, Sydney's GDP per capita of \$81,300 was the highest in the country, compared to regional New South Wales (\$51,100), according to Australian Bureau of Statistics figures analysed by SGS Economics and Planning (SGS). Melbourne's GDP per capita of \$66,800 exceeded that of regional Victoria (\$50,200).<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Source: Regional Universities Network, [http://www.run.edu.au/cb\\_pages/regional\\_australia.php](http://www.run.edu.au/cb_pages/regional_australia.php).

<sup>45</sup> See: <http://www.smartcompany.com.au/business-advice/innovation/38323-why-a-rural-failure-could-ruin-the-australian-economy/>.

<sup>46</sup> Source: [http://www.run.edu.au/cb\\_pages/regional\\_australia.php](http://www.run.edu.au/cb_pages/regional_australia.php).

<sup>47</sup> Source: Presentation by Catherine Caruana-McManus at the ACPET Conference, 25 August 2016, Hobart, Tasmania.

<sup>48</sup> SGS Economics and Planning, *Economic Performance of Australia's Cities and Regions 2016-17*, December 2017, [http://www.sgsep.com.au/application/files/8415/1236/7941/Economic\\_Performance\\_of\\_Australias\\_Cities\\_and\\_Regions\\_2016-17\\_Compressed.pdf](http://www.sgsep.com.au/application/files/8415/1236/7941/Economic_Performance_of_Australias_Cities_and_Regions_2016-17_Compressed.pdf).

Other parts of regional and rural Australia do not perform economically as well as the capital cities, a perception that is widely shared among people who live there. The Hon Warwick Smith AM, in his review of Regional Development Australia, writes:

People, in the true regions of Australia, feel forgotten by governments. This is despite record Commonwealth investment – particularly in regional infrastructure, transport and communications. Government investments are not resonating with regional Australians.<sup>49</sup>

Investing in infrastructure is important but more focus needs to be put into the other pillars of economic growth; human capital – particularly education and skills; information and communications technology; business competitiveness; access to markets; collaborative partnerships; and service delivery; these will drive long-term regional development.<sup>50</sup>

It is the just this formation of “human capital” in which the New South Wales community education sector specialises.

The NSW regional economy has had recent challenges, particularly due to a decline in manufacturing activity.<sup>51</sup> The NSW regional economy contracted in 2013-14 (by minus 0.7%), grew slowly in 2014-15 (by 0.6%), and picked up in 2015-16 (GDP growth of 3.6%) and 2016-17 (growth of 1.5%).<sup>52</sup>

The SGS report also estimates “hypothetical interest rates”, based on economic performance of Australia’s cities and regions. These hypothetical rates highlight the significant divergence between regions, if each region of Australia had its own “central bank” that could set its own interest rate. When the economy grows faster, higher rates are used to slow it down; slowing economies cut rates to stimulate growth. On this basis, the hypothetical 2016/17 interest rates were:

- Sydney 3.5%
- Regional NSW 0.5%
- Melbourne 2.25%
- Regional Victoria 0.5%
- Australia nationally 1.5%<sup>53</sup>

### 4.3 Rural and Regional Educational Access

The geographic remoteness of regional and rural Australia also results in reduced access to services, including doctors, employment services, telecommunication services, Centrelink,

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<sup>49</sup> The Hon Warwick Smith AM, xxxx p. 1.

<sup>50</sup> The Hon Warwick Smith AM, xxxx p. 4.

<sup>51</sup> See Terry Rawnsley (2016), <http://www.sgsep.com.au/publications/gdp-major-capital-city-2015-2016>; and Costa Georgeson & Anthony W. Harrison (2015).

<sup>52</sup> SGS Economics and Planning, December 2017, [http://www.sgsep.com.au/application/files/8415/1236/7941/Economic\\_Performance\\_of\\_Australias\\_Cities\\_and\\_Regions\\_2016-17\\_Compressed.pdf](http://www.sgsep.com.au/application/files/8415/1236/7941/Economic_Performance_of_Australias_Cities_and_Regions_2016-17_Compressed.pdf).

<sup>53</sup> SGS Economics and Planning, December 2017, p. 6, [http://www.sgsep.com.au/application/files/8415/1236/7941/Economic\\_Performance\\_of\\_Australias\\_Cities\\_and\\_Regions\\_2016-17\\_Compressed.pdf](http://www.sgsep.com.au/application/files/8415/1236/7941/Economic_Performance_of_Australias_Cities_and_Regions_2016-17_Compressed.pdf). Other hypothetical interest rates were: Brisbane 0.25%, regional QLD 0.25%, Adelaide 0.25%, regional SA 1.0%, Perth 0.25%, regional WA 0.25%, Tasmania 0.25%, Northern Territory 3.25% and Canberra 2.0%.

banks and other financial institutions, disability services, family assistance offices and Medicare. Although remoteness is not the only factor, distance from a major city has a strong and direct correlation with difficulty in accessing services.<sup>54</sup>

Small regional and rural towns suffer a special disadvantage – much greater than larger regional centres – as reported by the Regional Australia Institute’s “Small Towns” (5,000 people or less) report card:

- The number of preschool teachers in small towns has dropped dramatically, with only 16% having access, compared to 25% three decades ago.
- Small towns are less likely to have a secondary school teacher than a primary school teacher, with numbers dropping in this category from 66% to 62% in 2011.
- Only 11% of remote and very remote towns had access to a social welfare professional in 2011, compared to 24% in 1989.<sup>55</sup>

There are marked rural and regional differences in the ATAR (university entry scores): 62.3% of students in major cities completed an ATAR in 2009, compared to 44% in regional areas and only 27.7% in remote areas. The post-school experiences of rural, regional and remote young people continue to compound the disadvantage, facing greater vulnerability in the transition from school to further study and work. In 2011, six months after leaving school, young people who were still looking for work or in part-time work only were:

- 13.4% in major cities;
- 21.7% in provincial cities;
- 19.8% in provincial centres;
- 23.0% per cent in large towns;
- 18.4% in small towns and rural areas; and
- 19.3% per cent in remote areas.<sup>56</sup>

This underperformance by regional and rural students underscores the important role that community education providers can play.

## 4.4 Regional and Rural VET

Vocational education and training is an essential part of Australia’s regional economic development. Because of the economic and business structure of most regional and rural areas, VET is usually seen as more relevant to future careers and more actively undertaken. NCVET research concludes that, “it is likely that the lower educational and skill base in rural and remote Australia means the marginal impact of vocational education and training programs is greater than in metropolitan areas.”<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> See National Rural Health Alliance, [http://ruralhealth.org.au/documents/publicseminars/2013\\_Sep/Joint-report.pdf](http://ruralhealth.org.au/documents/publicseminars/2013_Sep/Joint-report.pdf), and Australian Institute of Family Studies, *Families in Regional, Rural and Remote Australia*, <https://aifs.gov.au/publications/families-regional-rural-and-remote-australia>.

<sup>55</sup> See [http://www.regionalaustralia.org.au/home/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/RAI\\_Pillars-of-Communities\\_Small-Towns-Report-1.pdf](http://www.regionalaustralia.org.au/home/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/RAI_Pillars-of-Communities_Small-Towns-Report-1.pdf) and [http://www.regionalaustralia.org.au/home/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/RAI\\_Small-Towns\\_Report-Card\\_Access-to-Services.pdf](http://www.regionalaustralia.org.au/home/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/RAI_Small-Towns_Report-Card_Access-to-Services.pdf).

<sup>56</sup> See Lamb *et al*, [https://research.acer.edu.au/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?referer=&httpsredir=1&article=1228&context=research\\_conference](https://research.acer.edu.au/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?referer=&httpsredir=1&article=1228&context=research_conference).

<sup>57</sup> Sue Kilpatrick and Rowena Bell, *Vocational Education and Training in Rural and Remote Australia*, NCVET, 1998, [https://www.ncver.edu.au/\\_data/assets/file/0014/3209/200.pdf](https://www.ncver.edu.au/_data/assets/file/0014/3209/200.pdf).

VET is crucial to Australia's national economic prosperity. The Business Council of Australia states:

The VET sector is the main vehicle for developing workers for some of Australia's biggest employers and industries, and will be the mainstay of preparing workers to adapt to the changing economy. Despite this, the VET sector has been neglected, on both a funding and policy front, by all levels of government.<sup>58</sup>

VET participation runs about 50% higher outside of metropolitan areas, with higher education (university) participation in regional areas at rates half or less. In 2010, Skills Australia reported:

Approximately 45% of VET students are in regional, rural and remote Australia, compared to 20% of higher education students. The qualifications being studied by VET students also suggest the sector plays a role in laying the foundations for an educational pathway in the regions. Lower level qualifications (Certificate III and below) are a feature of the qualification profile of VET students especially in the outer regions and remote areas. Higher level studies of Certificate IV and above are a more marked characteristic of those enrolled in major cities.<sup>59</sup>

The flexibility and practicality of vocational education and training has meant that the sector "has responded particularly well to the broader social issues especially apparent in regional centres, such as an ageing population and the growing number of retirees."<sup>60</sup> Nevertheless, as the Australian Human Rights Commission points out, rural distance and lack of accessibility often means that, "There are still too few opportunities for secondary-aged students to participate in vocational education and training courses of relevance to the industries and businesses in their local areas."<sup>61</sup>

***Given the importance of VET in regional and rural Australia, Community Colleges Australia recommends that:***

- *The Australian Government Department of Education and Training undertake a national inquiry into the delivery of VET in regional and rural Australia.*
- *The NSW Department of Industry undertake a state inquiry into the delivery of VET in regional and rural NSW.*

Both inquiries should include the role of VET in regional economic development, an updated examination of "thin markets", analysis of the non-metropolitan VET "market", the role of not-for-profit community education providers, and the challenges faced by certain vulnerable groups – young people, older workers, Indigenous Australians and people with disabilities.

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<sup>58</sup> Business Council of Australia, *Future Proof: Protecting Australians Through Education and Skills*, October 2017, p. 31, <http://www.bca.com.au/publications/future-proof-protecting-australians-through-education-and-skills>.

<sup>59</sup> See Skills Australia, <http://www.rdasdney.org.au/imagesDB/wysiwyg/discussionpaper-creatingnewdirectionforVET-hr.pdf>, pp. 32-33.

<sup>60</sup> See [http://library.bsl.org.au/jspui/bitstream/1/749/1/Building\\_learning\\_communities.pdf](http://library.bsl.org.au/jspui/bitstream/1/749/1/Building_learning_communities.pdf), p. 6.

<sup>61</sup> See "Recommendations", p. 80, <https://www.humanrights.gov.au/our-work/rights-and-freedoms/projects/rural-and-remote-education-inquiry>.

## 5. NSW Government Policies and Programs

### 5.1 NSW Department of Industry Community College Programs

#### 5.1.1 Community Service Obligation Funding

Each year, the NSW Government provides funds to the NSW community education sector for what is called the ACE (adult and community education) “Community Service Obligation” (CSO) program, with approximately \$18 million allocated in 2017/18. The CSO program is part of the NSW Government’s Smart and Skilled VET funding, particularly oriented for the students from “key equity groups” who need additional support to access training. ACE CSO funding is “provided for training and support that cannot be effectively addressed through Smart and Skilled entitlements”, particularly for “disadvantaged learners, regional and remote communities and hard to service communities.”<sup>62</sup>

Of the 34 community education organisations that are receiving CSO funding in 2017/18, 24 operate primarily in regional and rural NSW, with an additional 2 operating partly in regional locations.<sup>63</sup> As section 3.2.1 of this report (above) details, a very high percentage of ACE CSO-funded students live in regional and rural areas: more than 72.4% of government-funded VET to community providers is spent outside of metropolitan Sydney.

CCA and the NSW community education sector acknowledges the importance of CSO funding, which has produced outstanding outcomes for NSW in servicing many of the most disadvantaged residents. As section 3.2.2 of this report (above) outlines, 69.1% of government-funded 2016 VET community education students fell into the bottom two (most disadvantaged) quintiles – 35.5% in the bottom quintile and 33.6% in the second to bottom quintile.

The ACE CSO program is an excellent initiative of the NSW Government. Given the superb track record of community providers, CCA strongly believes that a substantial increase in CSO funds in 2018/19 and subsequent years is warranted.

#### ***Community Colleges Australia recommends that the NSW Department of Industry:***

- *commit to continuing to fund the ACE CSO program with multi-year contracts; and*
- *substantially increase the funding to the ACE CSO program in recognition of its excellent program outcomes for vulnerable and disadvantaged learners.*

#### 5.1.2 Thin Market Support Funding

As noted earlier in this report, the NSW Department of Industry funded five community education providers – Western Riverina (Griffith), New England, Robinson (Broken Hill), Western (Dubbo) and Northern Inland (Barraba) – for \$100,000 each in “thin market” funding, announced in June 2017 for the 2017/18 financial year. CCA is pleased that the NSW Government has acknowledged the unique challenges faced by community colleges serving outer regional and remote areas, as well as their ability to deliver important training to some of the least accessible parts of the state. The late June announcement did not give the recipient organisations much time to research and plan for expenditure; future allocations of this nature do need to be run on an earlier timetable.

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<sup>62</sup> See [https://www.training.nsw.gov.au/ace/ace\\_csos\\_program.html](https://www.training.nsw.gov.au/ace/ace_csos_program.html).

<sup>63</sup> See [https://www.training.nsw.gov.au/forms\\_documents/ace/provider\\_contact\\_list.pdf](https://www.training.nsw.gov.au/forms_documents/ace/provider_contact_list.pdf). Not all not-for-profit NSW community education providers receive CSO funds, as the funding is limited.

**Community Colleges Australia recommends that:**

- *The NSW Department of Industry continue the “thin market” funding program in 2018/19, with funding announcements made earlier in the year so that effective program planning can take place.*

### **5.1.3 Professional Development Program Support**

The NSW Department of Industry provided a one-off block funding for technology and professional development to each NSW community college in 2017/18, although the amounts provided to most inner regional (and metropolitan) community colleges was very small. The announcement also came in late June, with little guidance as to how to use the funds.

**Community Colleges Australia recommends that:**

- *The NSW Department of Industry continue the technology and professional development support program in 2018/19, and analyse how the funds were spent in 2017/18.*

### **5.1.4 Tech Savvy for Small Business Program**

In June 2017, the NSW Department of Industry also announced a new “Tech Savvy for Small Business” program, with funding of \$1.8 million to NSW community education providers. This program will “deliver targeted short workshops based on understanding and implementing current technology requirements for small business”. Eligible recipients of the workshops are small businesses that have 20 employees or less, or an annual turnover of less than \$2,000,000.

CCA members report different approaches to how they are utilising the program funds, including:

- Working with local Business Chambers
- MS Office, Excel, Word, Xero and MYOB workshops
- Social media and online marketing workshops
- Financial literacy workshops
- Customer service interaction workshops
- Small business finance training for farmers and graziers
- Drawing from units of competency in the Certificate III in Small Business

The Tech Savvy for Small Business is an outstanding program with enormous potential for expansion and to make a real difference in regional and rural economic development, particularly as it draws on the strengths of NSW community education providers – their ability to work locally, with small businesses and to adapt to local needs and situations. Because the program was announced relatively late (June 2017), there was little opportunity to plan for it, and the result has been that a number of organisations did not start to deliver the program until late 2017 or early 2018. Some CCA members are attempting to connect this program to Regional Development Australia and other economic regional strategies. CCA will work with its members and the Department of Industry to evaluate the program and to build on it for future years.

**Community Colleges Australia recommends that:**

- *The NSW Department of Industry continue the Tech Savvy for Small Business program in 2018/19.*

### 5.1.5 Meeting Governance and Professional Development Needs

For NSW regional and rural community education providers to support regional economic development goals, they must be sustainable, with well-trained staff and strong governance structures. The NSW Department of Industry requires that all Smart and Skilled training providers “must develop and implement a CPD policy that reflects the needs of their business but also includes, as a minimum, key staff and management (including trainers, assessors, administration officer and managers)”.<sup>64</sup>

The NSW Department of Industry has been supporting the governance and professional development needs of NSW community education providers to build both the quality and capacity of the providers. This funding, primarily through the “ACE Teaching and Leadership” funding program, has been extremely valuable in that it empowers the sector to deliver NSW Government training and skills programs in the best possible manner. This funding is particularly important for regional and rural providers and their staff, which have reduced access to both formal and informal professional development opportunities.<sup>65</sup>

CCA’s February 2017 report on regional economic development noted that:

Trainers and assessors working in rural and remote locations require a broader range of skills than those in metropolitan areas in order to cope with flexible delivery and a more diverse teaching load. There is a need for professional development, especially as few adult educators in remote locations hold formal qualifications in adult education.<sup>66</sup>

The value of the Department’s ACE Teaching and Leadership funding program has also been exhibited through the work that CCA has undertaken on corporate governance and CEO mentoring.<sup>67</sup> Governance is an important and ongoing focus of the community education sector, and across not-for-profit organisations generally.<sup>68</sup> While capability across the sector has improved markedly, performance by the voluntary not-for-profit boards of directors is still uneven and inconsistent. CCA has determined that proper governance – and associated management expertise – is second only to funding in relation to the success of NSW community colleges.

In most years, the Department called for proposals and expressions of interest for the Teaching and Leadership program in May for the financial year commencing 1 July

<sup>64</sup> NSW Department of Industry, *Smart and Skilled Teaching and Leadership Policy*, July 2016, p. 3, [https://www.training.nsw.gov.au/forms\\_documents/smartandskilled/contract/teaching\\_leadership.pdf](https://www.training.nsw.gov.au/forms_documents/smartandskilled/contract/teaching_leadership.pdf).

<sup>65</sup> See Kilpatrick and Bell, [https://www.ncver.edu.au/\\_data/assets/file/0014/3209/200.pdf](https://www.ncver.edu.au/_data/assets/file/0014/3209/200.pdf).

<sup>66</sup> Don Perlgut, *The Role of Community Education in Australian Regional and Rural Economic Development*, Community Colleges Australia, 7 February 2017, p. 25.

<sup>67</sup> The Department’s funding has enabled CCA to develop the following current (January 2018) programs:

- Audio podcast series on corporate governance <https://cca.edu.au/resources/#governance>
- Peer-to-peer mentoring program for new CEOs <https://cca.edu.au/member-services/ceo-mentoring/>
- Business acumen for senior managers <https://cca.edu.au/member-services/professional-development/business-acumen/>
- VET Manager Professional Development <https://cca.edu.au/member-services/professional-development/vet-manager-pd-stage-1/>

<sup>68</sup> Australian Institute of Company Directors, *2017 NFP Governance and Performance Study*.

(although frequently the contracts were not finalised until late July). The 2017/18 call for proposals did not occur until October 2017, with funding allocated in late November. These contract delays have made it very difficult for CCA and the rest of the NSW community education sector to plan, develop and deliver professional development programs efficiently and coherently.

Community Colleges Australia will continue to encourage its that member organisations to commit their board of directors to place corporate governance – including board skills development – as a high priority, in order to increase their capacity to deliver services and take on new and expanded community development roles in economic development.

***Community Colleges Australia recommends that the NSW Department of Industry:***

- *Continue to fund the ACE Teaching and Leadership program, expand the funding base, commit to funding cycles of more than one financial year at a time, and implement a program timetable that enables proper and efficient planning.*

## **5.2 Operations and Structure of the NSW Department of Industry**

The NSW Department of Industry plays a major role – indeed the most significant role – in the success of NSW community education organisations. Departmental reorganisations occurred from 2015 to 2017 that resulted in:

- the vocational education and training function, previously lodged within the Department of Education and Communities, moving to the Department of Industry;
- the abolition of the Adult and Community Education (ACE) Unit, which previously held direct responsibility for managing NSW community college activities; and
- devolution of many program management responsibilities from “central office” to Training Services NSW regional offices.

The location of the VET function within a new Department structure has a significant advantage in bringing NSW VET activities administratively and organisationally closer to both regional development and business assistance programs. Nevertheless, although the skills and the economic development functions are located under the same Deputy Secretary, CCA and many of its members have found it difficult to work with the Regional Development function within the Department. CCA realises that this situation results, in part, from a relatively new Departmental structure, however to ensure that NSW VET activities – including those undertaken by community providers – are closely aligned with the NSW State Government’s regional economic development activities, it is important to create stronger organisational linkages between the two.

The regional Training Services NSW offices ideally provide a more accessible and “closer to the ground” resource and management/policy for regional and rural NSW community education organisations. Unfortunately, some CCA members continue to experience that some regional offices are yet not fully equipped with knowledge or capacity to deal with member inquiries in a timely way.

***Community Colleges Australia recommends that the NSW Department of Industry:***

- *Create stronger operational and managerial links between Training Services NSW and the Regional Development section of the Department, ensuring that NSW community education providers have access to regional development staff.*



- *Continue the process of empowering Training Services NSW regional offices outside of metropolitan Sydney with additional staff and resources.*

### 5.3 NSW Government Regional Development Growth Fund

The NSW Government's Regional Growth Fund, operated by the Department of Premier and Cabinet, provides investment in regional infrastructure to support growing regional centres, activate local economies and improve services in communities. Its "Growing Local Economies" sub-fund is intended to "turbocharge new regional economic opportunities and enliven local economies" by "delivering the infrastructure that supports projects of economic significance", with a minimum project size of \$1 million. Educational institutions, incorporated associations and non-government organisations are all eligible, with projects needing to "deliver jobs and economic growth to the regional economy."<sup>69</sup>

The guidelines are written in a manner that includes applications from NSW community education providers, although the minimum project size (\$1 million) and cost-benefit analysis could prove to be a barrier to some. CCA will encourage its member organisations to consider submitting applications to this fund.

The NSW Department of Premier and Cabinet is offering to help local councils develop Regional Economic Development Strategies (REDS) based on the concept of a Functional Economic Region (FER), which usually incorporates more than one local government area.<sup>70</sup> It is important that NSW community education providers be consulted and involved in development of these strategies.

***Community Colleges Australia recommends that the NSW Department of Premier and Cabinet:***

- *Prioritise applications from community education providers to the Regional Growth Fund, given their strong community connections and their proven ability to make a difference in their local areas.*
- *Encourage or require non-metropolitan local councils that are developing Regional Economic Development Strategies (REDS) to consult and involve their local community education providers.*

### 5.4 TAFE NSW

As the largest VET provider in Australia, TAFE NSW has a great capacity – and excellent facilities – that assist the state's economic development. In many regional areas, TAFE NSW has valuable facilities – frequently under-utilised – that could assist NSW community education providers. Examples include commercial kitchens, and automotive and other workshops. NSW community providers consistently find difficulty in accessing these facilities, and at a reasonable cost.

***Community Colleges Australia recommends that:***

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<sup>69</sup> Projects in regional NSW outside Sydney, Newcastle and Wollongong are eligible; see

<https://www.nsw.gov.au/improving-nsw/regional-nsw/regional-growth-fund/growing-local-economies/>.

<sup>70</sup> See

[https://www.dpc.nsw.gov.au/programs\\_and\\_services/centre\\_for\\_economic\\_and\\_regional\\_development/projects](https://www.dpc.nsw.gov.au/programs_and_services/centre_for_economic_and_regional_development/projects).

- *The NSW Department of Industry assist the community education sector in establishing a state-wide memorandum of understanding (MOU) with TAFE that will enable community provider to access TAFE facilities at a reasonable cost.*

TAFE NSW has recently established a state-wide economic development structure called “SkillPoints” to work in close partnership with industry, business and employers.<sup>71</sup> Six of the nine headquarters are located in regional areas. Each location will have a team a team of between eight to 15 team members. Locations are:

- Newcastle – Innovative Manufacturing, Robotics and Science
- Griffith – Agribusiness
- Tamworth – Career Pathways, Aboriginal Languages and Employability Skills in
- Queanbeyan – Health, Wellbeing and Community Services
- Dubbo – Supply Chain and eCommerce
- Coffs Harbour – Tourism and Experience Services

This new structure may be a suitable one for collaboration regional and rural NSW community education providers, a possibility which CCA will investigate in coming months.

## 6. Australian Government Policies and Programs

### 6.1 National Partnerships Agreement on Skills Reform

The now-expired National Partnership Agreement on Skills Reform, which operated for five years from 2012/13 to 2016/17, had as its objective:

A VET system that delivers a productive and highly skilled workforce which contributes to Australia’s economic future, and to enable all working age Australians to develop the skills and qualifications needed to participate effectively in the labour market.

The Agreement included the phrases “Australia’s economic future” and “participate effectively in the labour market”, indicating that the Agreement had, in part, a focus on economic development. The Agreement also specified rural and remote students as a national priority:

States are required to identify two additional targets such as a cumulative increase in government funded Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) qualification commencements, completions or equivalent full-time students in areas of priority such as rural and remote areas, students with disability or from low socio-economic status backgrounds, groups of policy focus (e.g. long-term unemployed, youth, single and teen parents or mature aged workers), or in a skills priority area.<sup>72</sup>

The formal review of the Agreement (published in December 2015)<sup>73</sup> addressed regional and rural issues:

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<sup>71</sup> See <https://www.tafensw.edu.au/industry/skillspoints>.

<sup>72</sup> Council of Australian Governments (COAG), *National Partnership Agreement on Skills Reform*, Australian Government Department of Education and Training, April 2012, <https://docs.education.gov.au/node/42021>.

<sup>73</sup> ACIL Allen Consulting (2015), *Review of the National Partnership Agreement on Skills Reform: Final Report to the Commonwealth and States and Territories*, 21 December 2015, Australian Government Department of Education and Training, <https://docs.education.gov.au/node/40321>.

The NP was designed to explicitly recognise the substantially different starting points across the states and territories in terms of the regional economic and demographic characteristics. (p. viii)

The VET sector is becoming increasingly complex and diverse, serving a number of skills segments—including technical trades, general business related occupations, para-professional and professional licensing, providing foundation skills, achieving access and equity for regional and disadvantaged populations, as well as pathways to employment or further study. As such, the VET sector has multiple purposes and will need to continue to respond, with even greater flexibility, to the skills needs of students and businesses in the face of continued rapid changes in the economy, including in the labour market and in technology. (p. ix)

The review specified important questions for a future Agreement:

- What specific outcomes does and will the Australian economy and community need from the VET sector vis-à-vis the broader education sector?
- How should the VET sector interface and interrelate within the broader policy and programme environment, including the education and workforce development sectors, and over what timeframes?
- What specifically is the role of government, in relation to that of industry, providers and students?
- What are the appropriate stages and goals for future reform of the VET sector? (p. 70)

It is not possible to develop a comprehensive approach to VET and regional economic development – for community education or any other providers – without an accepted national policy approach that specifies the answers to these four questions.

## 6.2 The Skilling Australians Fund

In May 2017, the Commonwealth Government announced that the new Skilling Australians Fund would supersede the National Partnership Agreement on Skills Reform, in part to deliver an extra 300,000 apprentices over the next 4 years. Priority industries include tourism, hospitality, health and ageing, engineering, manufacturing, building and construction, agriculture, and digital technologies, with a focus on careers in sectors of future growth as well as those in regional and rural areas. The program is to meet the skills needs in regional Australia, as well as expand the apprenticeships model of training.<sup>74</sup> “Employers that sponsor migrants under the new temporary skill shortage visa and certain permanent skilled visas will be required to pay a levy which will provide revenue to the Fund.”<sup>75</sup>

The introduction of a new funding program, especially one that places a high priority on the needs of regional and rural Australia, is welcome. Concern about this funding arises from:

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<sup>74</sup> See <https://ministers.education.gov.au/andrews/skilling-australia-fund> and <https://docs.education.gov.au/node/43741>.

<sup>75</sup> See <http://budget.gov.au/2017-18/content/glossies/jobs-growth/html/jobs-growth-08.htm>.

- The apparent major focus on apprenticeships and trainees, which constituted only 336,500 people (out of 4.2 million VET students<sup>76</sup>) in 2016, and only a small proportion of what community education providers deliver in training; and
- The reliance on employer levies relating to overseas migration, which could easily mean a funding short-fall – something which appears to have happened already.<sup>77</sup>

### 6.3 National Policy on the Role of Community Education Providers

The absence of an Australian national policy on community education particularly affects regional and rural community providers. The adult and community sector (known as “ACE”) last had a “Ministerial Statement” issued in December 2008 by the Ministerial Council for Vocation and Technical Education.<sup>78</sup> That statement confirmed the “value of ACE in developing social capital, building community capacity, encouraging social participation and enhancing social cohesion.” The statement also described how the sector can respond to industrial, demographic and technological changes in Australia, including important contributions to skills and workforce development – and thus to productivity.

There is very little in the 2008 Ministerial Statement that does not apply today. But the world of post-school education has changed rapidly in the past ten years, the post-GFC period. Australia needs a national policy statement that articulates the new realities of VET, given our rapidly changing economy in the post-mining boom period. This statement must include the complementary nature of community providers to TAFE and the private for-profit VET sector, as well as the role in educating young people, and providing services to the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) and other programs.

A national policy on community education is required to underpin the important role that community VET providers can play in their communities, an essential element to ensuring their participation in regional economic development activities.

#### **Community Colleges Australia recommends that the Australian Government Department of Education and Training:**

- *Work with the states and territories to establish a new national policy on the role of VET in Australian economy and how VET is placed with respect to the secondary and university education sectors.*
- *Ensure that the Skilling Australians Fund is developed and operated in such a way that does not exclude not-for-profit community education providers from participation in funding, particularly those operating in regional and rural locations.*
- *Take the lead in developing, in conjunction with the states and territories, a national policy statement on the role of community education providers in Australian education and training, updating the 2008 Ministerial Agreement, including details of the role of community providers in regional and rural Australia.*

<sup>76</sup> See NCVET, *Total VET Students and Courses 2016*, [https://www.ncver.edu.au/data/assets/pdf\\_file/0026/796211/Total-VET-students-and-courses-2016.pdf](https://www.ncver.edu.au/data/assets/pdf_file/0026/796211/Total-VET-students-and-courses-2016.pdf)

<sup>77</sup> See John Ross, “Migration slump jeopardises funding for VET sector,” *The Australian*, 24 January 2018, <https://www.theaustralian.com.au/higher-education/migration-slump-jeopardises-funding-for-vet-sector/news-story/e89b544161ee602548d8a107726199a6?csp=9de91f86c8e01db61efd5ab01d4baa53>.

<sup>78</sup> See [http://cca.edu.au/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/Ministerial\\_Declaration\\_on\\_Adult\\_Community\\_Education\\_2008.pdf](http://cca.edu.au/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/Ministerial_Declaration_on_Adult_Community_Education_2008.pdf).

## 6.4 Australian Government Regional Development Funding

Given the regional and rural locations of most of the NSW community education sector, it is important that community-based not-for-profit VET organisations have sufficient flexibility to draw funding from as many sources as possible for economic development projects.

The Australian Government Department of Infrastructure and Regional Development operates the \$481.6 million Building Better Regions Fund (BBRF), which supports the “Government’s commitment to create jobs, drive economic growth and build stronger regional communities into the future.”<sup>79</sup> The program funds projects in regional Australia – defined as outside of Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane, Perth, Adelaide and Canberra – under two streams: infrastructure and community investments, delivered by local government or not-for-profit organisations.

**The Infrastructure Projects Stream** supports the construction of new infrastructure, or the upgrade or extension of existing infrastructure that provide economic and social benefits to regional and remote areas. Round One of this funding program (Round Two closed on 19 December 2017) funded 110 projects (of 545 applications).<sup>80</sup> While most of these were local councils, a number of not-for-profit organisations received funds.<sup>81</sup>

**The Community Investments Stream** funds new or expanded local events, strategic regional plans, and leadership and capability strengthening activities which deliver economic and social benefits to regional and remote communities. Round One of this program (Round Two also closed on 19 December 2017) funded 147 projects (of 392 applications).<sup>82</sup> Again, most of the recipients were local councils, but some not-for-profit organisations received funds, many of them for skills audits, marketing and strategic plans.<sup>83</sup>

The guidelines of both program streams *specifically exclude* universities, technical colleges, schools and hospitals. The Community program guidelines include “leadership courses, participation and community building measures for young people, and participation in activities to improve local business and industry leadership capability” – all items at which community education sector organisations excel. Curiously, however, the guidelines exclude “vocational education and training (VET), apprenticeships, higher education qualifications, and funding education and training providers.”

In summary, despite the great value that community education organisations can bring to regional economic development, the Department of Infrastructure and Regional Development’s key regional development programs exclude them.

As noted earlier in this report, the most successful regional economic development approaches are those that draw on local institutions, capabilities and knowledge: “place-based” solutions. Most government funding activities prefer to provide funding to larger organisations, for ease of contract management. Yet many of these larger organisations

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<sup>79</sup> See <https://www.business.gov.au/assistance/building-better-regions-fund>.

<sup>80</sup> See <https://www.business.gov.au/Assistance/Building-Better-Regions-Fund/Building-Better-Regions-Fund-Infrastructure-Projects>.

<sup>81</sup> See <https://www.business.gov.au/Assistance/Building-Better-Regions-Fund/Building-Better-Regions-Fund-Infrastructure-Projects/funding-offers>.

<sup>82</sup> See <https://www.business.gov.au/assistance/building-better-regions-fund/building-better-regions-fund-community-investments>.

<sup>83</sup> See <https://www.business.gov.au/Assistance/Building-Better-Regions-Fund/Building-Better-Regions-Fund-Community-Investments/CI-funding-offers>.

often cannot deliver customised local solutions. It is important that regional economic development project funding be able to react to local needs.

**Community Colleges Australia recommends that the Australia Government Department of Infrastructure and Regional Development:**

- *Re-draw its guidelines to allow not-for-profit regional, rural and remote not-for-profit community education organisations to apply for funding from the Building Better Regions Fund programs.*
- *Ensure that its regional economic development programs encourage localised solutions by funding regionally-based organisations.*

## 6.5 National Collection and Data Reporting

The National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER) is Australia's national professional body responsible for collecting, managing, analysing and communicating research and statistics on the Australian vocational education and training (VET) sector. Community Colleges Australia heavily relies on NCVER data for an understanding of how the community education sector performs, and applauds the NCVER for the quality, consistency and professionalism of its work.

While the experience of regional and rural VET is different from the metropolitan areas, it is hard to obtain data that examines student outcomes and provider types and sizes by geographical area. While the NCVER has this data, publishing and tracking it annually will assist policy-makers and the VET sector generally to monitor the performance of VET by geographic classification, on a national as well as state and territory basis. Using accepted regional classifications will ensure that this data can be aligned with other data sources in the development of policies.

**Community Colleges Australia recommends that the NCVER:**

- *Develop an additional set of yearly reports that track student and provider outcomes in regional, rural and remote areas, by states and territories.*
- *Include the economic development role of VET in the priorities of its national research program.*
- *Ensure that community education VET providers are a priority for research outcomes.*

## 6.6 Provider Infrastructure Funding Case Study

One of the greatest challenges facing community education providers is how to maintain existing and construct new buildings and facilities, including telecommunications, computers and training facilities. CCA's February 2017 report discussed the challenges of providing proper infrastructure. The report noted that in regional areas, "resource allocation and performance indicators for vocational education and training do not fully recognise the infrastructure and development cost of flexible delivery."<sup>84</sup> CCA also quoted an NCVER

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<sup>84</sup> Don Perlgut, *The Role of Community Education in Australian Regional and Rural Economic Development*, Community Colleges Australia, 7 February 2017, p. 21.

report that concluded, “small ... providers in rural and remote areas can be deterred by the high infrastructure costs imposed by accreditation and competitive tendering.”<sup>85</sup>

### 6.6.1 Investing in Community Education and Training (ICET) Program

The “capital-building” potential of community education providers was acknowledged by the Australian Government in May 2009, when the Government set up a \$100 million “Investing in Community Education and Training (ICET) program”, as the third element of a \$500 million Teaching and Learning Capital Fund for Vocational Education and Training. The fund offered not-for-profit community education and training providers small capital grants (\$50,000 to \$250,000) to assist with minor construction, refurbishment and the purchase of equipment; and larger grants (\$250,000 to \$1.5 million) for major capital infrastructure developments or upgrades.<sup>86</sup> The initiative was set up to:

Stimulate the economy by supporting jobs, whilst also investing in skilling Australia for a productive future. The initiative recognises the unique value of community education and training and its role in providing thousands of Australians with pathways into further education and training or employment. This is the first time the Australian Government has made a major capital investment directly into the community education sector.<sup>87</sup>

The objective of ICET element was to provide infrastructure funding for capital works and the provision of equipment necessary to:

1. maximise their accredited VET delivery to re-skill and up-skill adult Australians;
2. facilitate their expansion into accredited VET delivery to re-skill and up-skill adult Australians;
3. facilitate pathways into accredited VET for learners; and/or
4. develop employability skills for learners that will lead to employment outcomes.

With funds from this program, community education organisations made important facilities investments in about 200 locations, the majority in regional and rural areas. The investments from that time have continued to pay significant community benefits to the communities. This experience shows that community education organisations have the capacity to become true regional investment vehicles. CCA believes that it is time to reconstitute a similar program for community providers.

### 6.6.2 The 2017 CCA-Per Capita Infrastructure Funding Survey

In 2017, CCA partnered with Per Capita, a not-for-profit Australian think tank, to research the value of infrastructure investment in adult and community education (ACE) organisations which had received ICET funds – some seven years after the funding. CCA and Per Capita will soon complete a full report on this survey, however relevant findings are summarised below.

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<sup>85</sup> Kilpatrick and Bell, quoted in *The Role of Community Education in Australian Regional and Rural Economic Development, Community Colleges Australia*, p. 23.

<sup>86</sup> See Julia Gillard MP, Minister for Education press release, “Investing in community education and training for tomorrow,” Australian Government Department of Employment, Education and Workplace Relations, 20 May 2009, <https://ala.asn.au/images/document/Infrastructure%20Funding%20release.pdf>.

<sup>87</sup> See Julia Gillard, “Investing in community education and training for tomorrow.” A copy of the program guidelines is available at <http://cca.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/Commonwealth-Infrastructure-Funding-2009-10-ICET-Guidelines.pdf>.

Of the 25 survey respondents:

- 19 of the 25 were located in regional or rural areas, primarily NSW; and
- 7 received funding from the small capital grants category (average \$129,000), and the other 18 received a larger grant (average \$972,723).

Outcomes resulting from the ICET funding included:

- three-quarters of recipients were able to offer new courses as a direct result the funding;
- of these new courses, around two-thirds were vocational, providing new skills and pathways into employment;
- all but two of the respondents provided training to more students, and all but one improved existing courses;
- four-fifths improved accessibility to their educational facilities for staff and students living with disabilities;
- one-fifth hired new staff, and almost two-thirds improved staff skills; and
- more than 100,000 new students undertook training in community education institutions over the last seven years as a direct result of ICET funding.<sup>88</sup>

Organisations reported improved staff morale; development of innovative practices; better marketing and branding; night-time accessibility; additional professional and practical facilities used by businesses, other training and not-for-profit organisations; preservation of historic building facades; and community meetings. Typical survey comments were:

“The community and business perception of the college has changed to that of a *bona fide* training organisation delivering a high standard of vocational training in a modern, fully equipped training venue.”

“Morale with trainers and staff improved due to working in nicer premises and having access to better facilities.”

“Student retention improved as they felt better serviced; outcomes therefore improved.”

“Having modern, high quality training facilities which has attracted more students and allowed us to retain high quality trainers, which has resulted in improved learning outcomes and increased employment opportunities.”

When respondents were asked what they would do if they were to receive a similar amount of funding within the next 12 months, they consistently answered:

- Refurbishment of additional training centres to increase the range of courses offered to the community.
- Upgrading IT network and purchasing additional computers, smart boards, projectors, and buses.
- Expansion and renovation of facilities to include new training such as retail, beauty salons and increase employability.
- Purchase or construction of additional learning spaces to provide work placement opportunities, not just training and to upgrade our life skill and technology capabilities
- Improving accessibility for those with disabilities.

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<sup>88</sup> Emma Dawson, “Investing in Community Education and Training Outcomes for organisations and students”, presentation at the Community Colleges Australia national conference, 26 July 2017, [https://cca.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/Per-Capita-CCA-conference-presentation\\_final.pdf](https://cca.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/Per-Capita-CCA-conference-presentation_final.pdf).



## 7. NSW Community Education Providers Economic Development Activities

### 7.1 Impact of Community Education Provider Training

As part of this project, CCA surveyed every community education provider in regional and rural New South Wales (see Appendix E). The overwhelming contribution that community providers make to regional economic development is through their VET and related activities, providing education and training to individuals, local industries, businesses, other not-for-profit organisations, local councils, state government departments and local communities. As detailed in section 3 and Appendix D of this report, community providers have an exceptional ability to reach and engage with the most vulnerable and disadvantaged individuals and groups. This skilling of the NSW regional and rural workforce helps to create the fabric of more resilient, engaged workers and potential workers, increasing local and regional capacity for economic growth.

CCA has not attempted to quantify the total economic contribution of the regional and rural NSW community VET activities. Nevertheless, recent (2016) NCVET research notes that:

There are numerous ways to measure the costs and benefits of training, resulting in varied estimates of the return on investment.... Evidence suggest[s] that VET does deliver a substantial return on investment.... attributed to VET generating an increase in employability and, to some degree, increasing the productivity of workers.<sup>89</sup>

The economic impact of VET in regional and rural NSW will be proportionately greater than in metropolitan areas, based on the factors outlined in Section 4.4 of this report.

Working with individuals – and their communities – is the most positive and obvious impact that community providers make to regional economic development. Thus any programs, policies or new institutional arrangements that enable community providers to deliver more services to more groups will have a positive economic benefit, one that can often be felt quickly. International literature supports this conclusion:

VET is regarded as a particularly suitable means of promoting economic growth. The purpose of VET is to provide individuals with skills that are more or less directly applicable in the workplace and it is argued that these are likely to have direct and immediate effects on productivity and consequently upon economic growth.<sup>90</sup>

### 7.2 Other Community Education Provider Economic Development Activities

Community education provider activities that assist regional and rural economic development fall into six broad categories:

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<sup>89</sup> See NCVET, <https://www.ncver.edu.au/publications/publications/all-publications/costs-and-benefits-of-education-and-training-for-the-economy,-business-and-individuals>, 27 July 2016.

<sup>90</sup> Anders Nilsson, "Vocational education and training – an engine for economic growth and a vehicle for social inclusion?", *International Journal of Training and Development*, 14: 251–272, 21 November 2010, <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1468-2419.2010.00357.x/full>.

- Indigenous activities: section 9.2 of this report details the unique ways that regional and rural NSW community providers engage with local Indigenous communities. Particularly notable is the ACE Community Colleges (Lismore) Aboriginal Drivers Education program.
- Regional business incubators: section 9.3.3 of this report outlines how community providers have become involved in regional business incubators, including Business Growth Centre, Byron Community College and Coffs Coast Community College.
- Workplace and business services (section 7.2.1 below).
- Employment programs and services (section 7.2.2 below).
- Health and social services (section 7.2.3 below).
- Arts and culture (section 7.2.4 below).

### 7.2.1 Workplace and Business Services

**Business Growth Centre** complements its business incubator activities by running non-accredited business-related workshops and facilitation of business plans; providing a business advisory service for business intenders, start-ups and established businesses (up to 80 clients per year); business networking, running the Lake Macquarie Business Network and Lake Macquarie Women in Business Network; and running the annual Lake Macquarie Business Excellence Awards.

**VERTO** runs the Australian Apprenticeship Support Network (AASN) in New South Wales. In 2016-17, the Network facilitated more than 9,500 apprenticeship commencements and more than 9,200 completions, as well as assisting more than 2,100 apprentices identified as being at risk of not completing their apprenticeship to stay on track.

**Western Riverina Community College** (Griffith) has implemented targeted workplace programs, including Functional English for the Workplace (NESB targeted training) work health and safety (WHS) induction to Mandarin speakers to facilitate installation of high tech processing equipment.

**New England Community College** is partnering with Jobs Australia and Costas Tomato Exchange to run a pre-employment course with long term unemployed people to upskill them so that they are guaranteed a job interview at the tomato farm. Funding comes from Jobs Australia.

**WEA Hunter** has recently expanded its RTO activities to Cessnock, offering complete accredited full qualifications, accredited skill sets and lifestyle courses including RSA and RCG in the new centre.

### 7.2.2 Employment Programs and Strategies

**Kiama Community College's** (KCC) NextGEN Digital Development Program, originally created and trialled with Kiama Municipal Council and Kiama High School, supports local businesses to enhance their digital presence, while simultaneously accelerating young peoples' job readiness for careers in the thriving digital sector. NextGEN Digital targets young people (age 15 to 24) at risk of becoming long term unemployed. As well as providing "cutting edge" digital skills, the program immerses participants in learning experiences, including real employment that develops skills such as communicating with clients, entrepreneurship, managing client expectations and working collaboratively. The current two-year project is funded by Australian Government Department of Jobs and Small Business as part of the Empowering YOUTH Initiatives. KCC has "spun off" the social enterprise aspect of the project to Digital Business Hub, which is running the employment

phase of the program.<sup>91</sup> Other partners in the activity to date have included Southern Youth & Family Services, Essential Personnel and Australian Community Support Organisation (ACSO). More than 100 participants have successfully gone through the program.

**Byron Community College's** (BCC) national expertise and reputation as a supplier of permaculture and environmental sustainability training has made it an important attraction for regional employers. BCC has also developed a new youth employment initiative with Byron Shire Council, Regional Development Australia, AusIndustry, Jobs NSW and Southern Cross University.

**Tamworth Community College** (TCC) works closely with the NSW Department of Premier & Cabinet's regional office, which has taken the lead in New England regional youth employment, bringing together a wide-ranging group of industry, community, government and educational leaders. TCC is also participating in the Namoi region NSW Local Government Skills Strategy.

**Community College Northern Inland** (CCNI) works with the NSW Department of Primary Industry; local councils including Gunnedah, Gwydir and Tamworth; a number of employment organisations, including Aboriginal Employment Strategy – Moree Branch, Best Employment, Jobs Australia, Joblink Plus and Gunnedah Community Roundtable; and regional employers including Bindaree Beef (the largest employer in Inverell), AGT Foods, Boggabri Coal, Nolans & Keys plumbing, Cargill Oil Seed Processing, Myall cotton vale research, Moree Solar Farm and Gunnedah Leather.

**Central Coast Community College** (CCCC) partnered with other members of the Regional Economic Development & Employment Strategy (REDES) Future Skills taskforce, which includes Regional Development Australia (RDA) Central Coast, University of Newcastle, TAFE – all three of which are co-located on the Ourimbah campus with CCCC.

**WEA Illawarra** runs the Youth Path Program and Nowra Job Ready program, both focussing on the re-engagement of young people to create “work ready” skills.

### 7.2.3 Health and Social Services

**Riverina Community College** runs a Disability Art Studio that mentors people with artistic and craft talent so that they can reach the point where their works are commercially viable. The aim is to exhibit and sell their works and aid them in setting up small businesses.

**Port Macquarie Community College** (PMCC) has led the formation (in 2014) of the Mid North Coast Human Services Alliance (MNCHSA), a network of NGOs in integrated health and human services (IHHS) that has led to partnerships for better business and increased efficiency in the sector, bringing more jobs to the region. In 2016, the MNCHSA hosted the Local Drug Action Team for Port Macquarie Hastings, initiating new Alcohol and Other Drugs programs in the area. It also started the Cooperative Research Centre project for Regional Health Solutions, a \$40 million/10-year project applying for funding to the Commonwealth CRC Committee in July 2018. The MNCHSA is forming partnerships to commercialise Asia-Pacific exportable product & service development in IHHS for regional and remote communities and emergency situations; this will become a substantial economic development activity for the mid North Coast region.

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<sup>91</sup> See <https://www.digitalbusinesshub.com.au/>.

**ACE Colleges** in Lismore has a relationship with the BUPA centres on the Gold Coast and northern NSW, whereby ACE delivers the whole individual support qualifications at the BUPA facility and the students do all of their work placement at the facility. This relationship has been in place now for more than three years and has delivered many jobs for students.

#### 7.2.4 Arts and Culture

**South Coast College** took 27 people through Certificate III in Tourism in 2014, resulting in the creation of the Milton-Ulladulla Comedy Festival, a sustainable “social enterprise” under the name “ULLADULLiRiOUS”, This bi-annual event also that addresses “off-season” economic issues and has received multiple awards.<sup>92</sup>

**Riverina Community College’s** runs an art therapy for disengaged remote communities, returning alienated and disengaged wives and female partners in farming communities to economic and community participation.

**Port Macquarie Community College (PMCC)** has established the Makerspace, a venue for microenterprise development in a hands-on, practical workshop and display area, to provide small business incubation support and aim to help individuals and groups to initiate new enterprises. PMCC plans to extend this to both Taree and Kempsey.

## 8. Barriers to Participation in Regional and Rural Economic Development

CCA surveyed NSW regional and rural members regarding barriers they faced to participating in regional economic development (some of these were detailed in CCA’s February 2017 report).<sup>93</sup> A consistent theme from the answers is that governments – Commonwealth, NSW State and local – do not fully understand the community education providers nor appreciate their capabilities and needs.

### 8.1 Government Funding, Government Policies and Institutional Issues

The most passionate and detailed responses to CCA’s question on barriers preventing engagement were about government funding, policies and the institutional blocks. Many mentioned the difficulty in obtaining funding to develop innovative pilot projects. Examples of survey responses include:

“The failure of State and Federal Government policy boxes to differentiate community colleges from other education providers means that we get excluded from regional development funding, as if we are major mainstream public funding beneficiaries when we are not.”

“What would assist us most is a more discretionary determination approach to funding by governments, to take our advice about local conditions and stop hindering us with rigid policies and program boxes.”

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<sup>92</sup> See <http://eaec.edu.au/workforce-development-milton-ulladulla-region/> and <http://ulladullirious.com.au/>.

<sup>93</sup> See CCA 2017, <https://cca.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/The-Role-of-Community-Education-in-Regional-and-Rural-Economic-Development-7February2017.pdf>, section 13, pp. 22-26.

“The persistent access to funding is a problem. There is an overall lack of understanding at both state and federal level of what it takes to re-engage the disenfranchised. It’s far more time-consuming and needs far greater financial resources than current estimates recognise.”

“It is apparent that a lot of the activities and opportunities available in rural NSW are not widely known and the perception is that you need to leave country NSW to get ahead.”

“The impetus for regional economic development has been lost, with no further evolution or vision for how a workable structure could work effectively. Rethinking or reimagining a new approach would be helpful.”

“As we work across two states, we have encountered difficulties due to cross border organisation – one state unwilling to fund activities that could spill over into another.”

“We have difficulty dealing with economic development government agencies – established networks with government agencies does exist, but needs more effort on the part of the agencies themselves to make them easier to engage with.”

“Application and approval models of funding limit responsiveness to identified needs, although we are pleased by the Tech Savvy Small Business program, which removes this barrier.”

“You are traveling extensive distances to meet with community leaders which means the funding timeframes can be exhausted before we are able to start a program. This is particularly evident with the local Indigenous communities and long term unemployed. In these outer regional and remote areas, timeframes to exhaust funding need to be twice the length of a metropolitan areas.”

“Employer willingness to participate/support in traineeship programs for their employees is a challenge. This requires our strong attention to networking with local business to promote traineeships (where it is often the case the local businesses may not have sufficient awareness/support for this). Continued/further State Government promotion of the value to employers/regional economic development of investing in employee traineeships will generate stronger/broader awareness and support.”

“There is limited access to support services and specialist advisory services to support economic development in our region, while a number of federal and state government agencies have made this a priority, there is still limited support in our region.”

“Without a history of regional economic development support for organisations like ours, it is difficult to engage local partners, staff or Board members.”

“Older funding models take a long time to change. Leadership from government is essential.”

## 8.2 Quality and Training of Trainers and Assessors

Almost all survey respondents mentioned the difficulty in attracting, keeping and supporting quality trainers and assessors in regional and rural locations. Responses include:

“We have difficulty in recruiting experienced trainers and holding onto them when we can’t guarantee large amounts of work in regional areas. This is a barrier for all regional providers. Multi-year contracts would assist us greatly in providing certainty for our staff and trainers.”

“Our main barrier is an extreme lack of experienced VET trainers available. So a PD program is required.”

“Professional development of trainers and staff to meet compliance and to reach our student cohort is essential.”

“The biggest barrier to providing training is the lack of trainers to deliver the courses we would like to offer. There are people out there who may have good experience and good industry currency but unless they have Cert IV TAE we cannot utilise them to deliver accredited courses. It is required to travel to gain this qualification and this may be problematic due to the distance to travel on a regular basis.”

“Lack of trainers (and our limited scope of training packages) limits our ability to deliver skill sets and full qualifications to meet the job market in agriculture. Our area is among the largest shires in terms of agricultural production and has a high dependence on agriculture.”

### 8.3 Resourcing and Infrastructure

Aside from government funding, most respondents mentioned limitations place by their facilities. These responses support the findings of the CCA-Per Capita infrastructure survey summarised in Section 6.6 above. Examples include:

“A lack of available quality training facilities is our second biggest issue (to trainer availability).”

“We are hampered by the historical brand identification as an organisation that teaches pottery rather than as business training organisation.”

“Travel costs and time in the large area that we service. Blending students from all backgrounds to make up viable class sizes (“thin market” challenges) makes for some high-level facilitation skills and programs.”

“Buildings and equipment! – we rent premises that in many cases are not suitable.”

“We do not have the capacity or ability of staff to devote time to regional economic development activities on any meaningful level. Colleges that wish to explore innovative or collaborative programs must do so as an additional activity on top of existing responsibilities within the constraints of existing staff levels. This is particularly worrying as initiating change through positive economic development activities will help disrupt the cycle of disinterest and low participation in education.”

“Current venue limits our ability to expand and offer more courses onsite. We have been trying to secure alternative premises but were blocked by the council from applying for state government funding.”

“Barriers include the affordability of training costs to employers and employees, limited farming business growth initiatives and limited support to upskill people in the agricultural sector of the region.”

“The lack of infrastructure hampers the development of our organisation’s capability, for instance, funds to build a school.”

## 9. New Opportunities for Regional Economic Development

Community education organisations have numerous ideas as to how they can develop innovative regional economic development approaches and projects. These include finding new ways to engage older workers (Section 9.1 below), work with Indigenous communities (Section 9.2), extend the incubator concept (Section 9.3), and develop and encourage social enterprises (Section 9.4). Philanthropic funding (Section 9.5) is an as-yet not fully realised useful source of pilot funding. CCA also sees a real opportunity to extend these approaches to Western Sydney, detailed in Section 9.6.

Ideas currently under consideration and in initial planning (not mentioned elsewhere in this report) include developing stronger links with the NSW regional universities, especially New England, Southern Cross and Charles Sturt – in part to ensure that students can study locally without moving away; collaborating with wind farms and other innovative ventures; developing “blended learning” solutions that utilise online learning components; employment hub collaborations with local councils; joint ventures with medical centres; and establishing new sites for RTO activities.

### 9.1 Older Workers

Community education providers in regional and rural NSW have strong potential to play a key role in ensuring that older workers participate more effectively in regional economies, leading directly to increased economic activity and economic development. A recent report by the Regional Australia Institute, entitled *Ageing and work in regional Australia: Pathways for accelerating economic growth*, makes the case to “shift the conversation about older workers from costs and dependence”, thereby accessing the “economic muscle of the ‘silver economy’... with new policy approaches that lift the workforce participation of 55-64 year olds.”<sup>94</sup>

NSW regional and rural community VET providers know how to engage with older Australians – unlike many other VET providers.<sup>95</sup> They know how to deliver to older workers and those returning to work: in 2016, 35% of students of NSW community education providers receiving government-funded VET courses were aged 45 or over. This compares to 21% of NSW TAFE and only 15% of NSW private for-profit provider students receiving government funding.

The Regional Australia Institute report includes a number of recommendations for older and mature workers engaging in study, two of which CCA strongly supports:

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<sup>94</sup> Houghton and Vonthehoff, *Ageing and work in regional Australia: Pathways for accelerating economic growth*, The Regional Australia Institute, 2017, [http://www.regionalaustralia.org.au/home/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/RAI\\_Ageing-and-work-in-regional-Australia\\_report-1.pdf](http://www.regionalaustralia.org.au/home/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/RAI_Ageing-and-work-in-regional-Australia_report-1.pdf).

<sup>95</sup> See <https://cca.edu.au/older-workers-the-opportunity-for-community-vet-providers/>.

1. Increase access to Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) accreditation for workers who have already gained skills, experience and knowledge through previous courses or work experience to expedite completion of new qualifications/accreditation.
2. Create dedicated programs for mature workers for training and skills development, including job matching services to meet local industry demand.

The report notes that:

An increase in employment means people have more money in their pocket to spend on goods and services, in turn growing local businesses who can employ more people. This virtuous cycle is key to economic growth.... As the incomes of older residents become more significant, increasing their participation in the labour market becomes critical for a regional economy.

On the Central Coast of New South Wales, a 3 per cent increase in 55-64 year olds in the participation rate could increase total local consumption power by \$33 million per annum (p. 3).

Raising workforce engagement among older workers is an effective measure to offset many of the potentially negative economic impacts of an ageing population - it reduces the dependency on those still active in the labour force and mitigates the fiscal costs of longer life expectancy (pp. xiii-xiv).

Community education providers should also be able to participate in the Australian Government's pilot Career Transition Assistance Program, which was announced in 2017 for a 1 July 2018 start.<sup>96</sup> Aimed at workers 50 and older, this program will deliver a short, intensive course consisting of skills assessments, exploration of suitable occupations, research of local labour markets and learning resilience strategies. The five trial regions are Ballarat (VIC), Somerset (QLD), Central West (NSW), Adelaide South (SA) and Perth North (WA), with national roll-out is planned for 2020.

The Regional Australia Institute report also highlights the following key facts drawn from the 2016 Census:

- Australia's growing older population is a distinctly regional issue. Ageing is accelerating in many regions but stable in the cities. Since 2011, the median age for both Sydney and Melbourne didn't budge from 36 while rising in NSW and Victoria from 41 to 43.
- The Age Pension is already the largest expenditure item in the Federal Budget at \$45 billion annually. If nothing changes, it is forecast to blow out to an unsustainable \$51 billion by 2020.
- Certain Australian regions, including Victor Harbor (SA), Port-Macquarie-Hastings (NSW), and East Gippsland (VIC), already have 20% or more of the population reliant on the Age Pension.

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<sup>96</sup> See <https://www.employment.gov.au/career-transition-assistance-program>.



## 9.2 Indigenous Economic Development

### 9.2.1 NSW Indigenous Population and Location

The official 2016 census results show that 216,176 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (Indigenous) people resided in NSW, representing 2.9% of the total NSW population and 33.3% of the Indigenous population in Australia. Subsequent ABS estimates show an “undercount” of about 17.5%, meaning that these figures are likely to be revised upwards.<sup>97</sup> Indigenous Australians are proportionately over-represented in regional and rural NSW, in comparison to the general population: 44.6% Indigenous people live in NSW major cities, 33.7% in inner regional areas, 17.2% in outer regional areas, 2.9% in remote areas and 1.6% in very remote areas.<sup>98</sup>

Australia’s Indigenous population significantly lags behind the non-Indigenous population in wealth, income and educational achievements. This is reflected in NSW through the following statistics:

- 63% of Aboriginal people in NSW aged 20-24 years had completed Year 12 or higher, compared with 87% of the non-Aboriginal population (2014-15);
- 39% of Aboriginal people and 61% of non-Aboriginal people aged 20-64 had a post school qualification (2011);
- 53% of Aboriginal people aged 15-64 years in NSW were employed, compared with 71% of non-Aboriginal people (2014/15);
- the unemployment rate in NSW for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people aged 15-64 years was 15% and 5.7% respectively (2014/15); for people aged 18-24, it was 26% and 11.4% respectively (2011);
- 42% of Aboriginal households in NSW owned or were purchasing their home, compared with 65% of non-Aboriginal households (2016);
- median weekly household income for Aboriginal households in NSW was \$550, compared with \$850 for non-Aboriginal households (2014/15);
- Aboriginal people in NSW were 11.3 times more likely than non-Aboriginal people to be imprisoned; and 74% of Aboriginal people in prison in NSW had experienced prior imprisonment, compared with 49% of non-Aboriginal people; Aboriginal young people were detained at 15 times the rate of non-Aboriginal young people in NSW (2014/15).<sup>99</sup>

### 9.2.2 VET and Indigenous Australians

Indigenous Australians participate in VET at much higher rates than non-Indigenous people – nationally at a rate of 18.7%, double the rate of non-Indigenous Australians – although VET completion rates sometimes lag. By contrast, Indigenous participation in higher education (3.6%) is half that of rate of non-Indigenous Australians. In common with non-Indigenous students, VET student percentages are much higher in regional, rural and

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<sup>97</sup> See <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2017-06-28/concerns-over-undercount-of-indigenous-population-in-census/8660972> and <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/2940.0>.

<sup>98</sup> See <http://www.aboriginalaffairs.nsw.gov.au/pdfs/research-and-evaluation/KEY-DATA-ABORIGINAL-PEOPLE-JULY-2017.pdf>. This document notes, “The term ‘Aboriginal’ is used to describe the many nations, language groups and clans in NSW including those from the Torres Strait. The preference for the term ‘Aboriginal’ to ‘Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander’ in NSW recognises that Aboriginal people are the original inhabitants of NSW.

<sup>99</sup> See <http://www.aboriginalaffairs.nsw.gov.au/pdfs/research-and-evaluation/KEY-DATA-ABORIGINAL-PEOPLE-JULY-2017.pdf>.

remote locations. While TAFE remains the dominant VET provider to NSW Indigenous students (59%), the NCVET notes that community (4.1%) and for-profit private providers (27%) have increased their Indigenous students over the past 10 years.<sup>100</sup>

The NSW community education sector over-performs with relation to the number of Indigenous students served through government-funded VET. While 12% of NSW community education students funded by government programs were Indigenous, this compared to 8.4% of TAFE students, 6.3% of private for-profit provider students and a NSW provider average of 8%.<sup>101</sup>

The NSW Government has invested a great deal of effort into addressing Indigenous disadvantage. A key part of this is the Aboriginal Affairs strategy called “OCHRE”, which stands for Opportunity, Choice, Healing, Responsibility and Empowerment.<sup>102</sup> Major research projects have examined the economic development of Aboriginal communities. In 2011, the Allen Consulting Group report concluded:

There is no lack of programs or funding initiatives to improve Aboriginal economic participation. Indeed, a large number of education, employment and economic development programs are delivered or available in NSW, some jointly funded by the NSW and Commonwealth Governments. However, despite all these efforts and investments, no significant progress has been made in closing the gap in economic outcomes between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people.<sup>103</sup>

A 2016 NSW Legislative Council inquiry into economic development noted that “education is the cornerstone of economic and community development,” and that the challenge was to integrate education with economic opportunities such as business development and land development.<sup>104</sup> The report’s 39 recommendations have been widely discussed, and the NSW Government is in the process of implementing a number of them.<sup>105</sup> The final report,

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<sup>100</sup> See <https://www.ncver.edu.au/data/data/infographics/indigenous-vet-participation-completion-and-employment-outcomes-infographic> and <https://www.ncver.edu.au/publications/publications/all-publications/indigenous-vet-participation-completion-and-outcomes-change-over-the-past-decade>.

<sup>101</sup> In 2016, Indigenous Australians made up 2.9% of the NSW population; see <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Lookup/by%20Subject/2071.0~2016~Main%20Features~Aboriginal%20and%20Torres%20Strait%20Islander%20Population%20Data%20Summary~10>. Indigenous Australians participate in VET at a much higher rate than non-Indigenous Australians – approximately double; see <https://www.ncver.edu.au/publications/publications/all-publications/indigenous-vet-participation-completion-and-outcomes-change-over-the-past-decade>.

<sup>102</sup> See <http://www.aboriginalaffairs.nsw.gov.au/nsw-government-aboriginal-affairs-strategy> and [http://www.aboriginalaffairs.nsw.gov.au/pdfs/OCHRE/AA\\_OCHRE\\_final.pdf](http://www.aboriginalaffairs.nsw.gov.au/pdfs/OCHRE/AA_OCHRE_final.pdf).

<sup>103</sup> The Allen Consulting Group, *NSW Government Employment and Economic Development Programs for Aboriginal People: Review of programs and broader considerations*, Report to the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, The Hon. Victor Dominello, MP, December 2011, [http://www.acilallen.com.au/cms\\_files/acgaboriginalemplmentnsw2011.pdf](http://www.acilallen.com.au/cms_files/acgaboriginalemplmentnsw2011.pdf).

<sup>104</sup> See NSW Parliament, *Economic Development in Aboriginal Communities*, Legislative Council Standing Committee on State Development, 2016, <https://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/committees/DBAssets/InquiryReport/ReportAcrobat/6076/Final%20report%20-%2030%20September%202016.pdf>

<sup>105</sup> See <https://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/committees/DBAssets/InquiryReport/GovernmentResponse/6076/Government%20response%20-%20received%201%20May%202017.pdf>.

and the preceding discussion paper, both emphasised the importance of VET in Aboriginal community development.<sup>106</sup>

The NSW Ombudsman report, entitled *Addressing Aboriginal disadvantage: The need to do things differently* (2011), includes a chapter on “Building economic capacity in Aboriginal communities”, which emphasises the importance of VET and the “specific challenges associated with enhancing economic capacity and employment opportunities in disadvantaged and/or rural and remote locations.” The report notes that the “NSW Aboriginal Land Council (NSWALC) is the largest self-funded Aboriginal representative organisation in Australia, and ... has a key role to play in creating economic opportunities for Aboriginal people in NSW.”

The network of 121 Local Aboriginal Land Councils (LALCs) provides an immediate set of stakeholders for NSW community education organisations to work with. Such collaboration can be challenging because of the many challenges that the LALCs face. Community Colleges Australia recognises the important role that Aboriginal Land Councils play in regional and rural NSW, has begun to engage with the Councils to create the connections.

### 9.2.3 Indigenous Economic Development

Appendix E of this report details the regional economic development activities undertaken by NSW community education providers. While all regional and rural providers work with their local Aboriginal communities in some way, a number have created unique and unusual approaches.

**ACE Community Colleges** in Lismore has developed an award-winning Aboriginal driver education program is funded by NSW Roads and Maritime Services and ACE CSO program funds.<sup>107</sup> Partnering with Aboriginal Land Councils, local police and magistrates, justice representatives, jobactive and DES organisations, the college subcontracts the driving instruction to local community-endorsed driving schools. The college has undertaken extensive work with Aboriginal offenders, supporting state government services to maximise Aboriginal economic participation. ACE is currently working with a local Aboriginal organisation to fulfil their aim to have all Aboriginal staff in their day care centres.

**VERTO** has engaged two Orange schools in the Aboriginal Youth Leadership Program, with funding from the Commonwealth’s Indigenous Advancement Strategy. VERTO also runs “New Careers for Aboriginal People (NCAP) Program in the Mid-Western region, which placed 66 people into employment and more than 80 into training in 2016/17.

**Western College** in Dubbo has recently begun to engage with Aboriginal community radio stations in northwest NSW. Working with Murdi Paaki Regional Enterprise Corporation (MPREC) – an Indigenous-owned and managed not-for-profit organisation – the college is delivering foundation skills and digital technology training to the staff of Aboriginal community radio stations, thereby supporting regional Indigenous employment strategies.

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<sup>106</sup> New South Wales Parliament, *Economic Development in Aboriginal Communities: Discussion Paper*, Legislative Council Standing Committee on State Development, 2016, <https://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/committees/DBAssets/InquiryOther/Transcript/10068/070716%20Discussion%20paper.pdf>.

<sup>107</sup> See <https://www.acecolleges.edu.au/community/aboriginal-driver-education-program/>, <https://www.northernstar.com.au/news/community-college-aces-caltex-road-safety-awards/2968675/> and <https://cca.edu.au/ace-community-colleges-wins-award-for-indigenous-driver-education-program/>.

**Robinson College** in Broken Hill has developed expertise in engaging many of the most disadvantaged Indigenous residents to build learner confidence and develop “work-ready” skills for participation in regional economic development programs, and works with partners including the Maari Ma Health Aboriginal Corporation.

**Community College Northern Inland** works with the Moree Aboriginal Employment Strategy.

These approaches show that the NSW community education sector is well-placed to expand its role in working with regional and rural Aboriginal communities. Community providers, as “for purpose” organisations with a local and regional focus, a community development orientation and an ability to personalise services, have a unique capacity to expand its work with Aboriginal communities and organisations. Aside from the NSW Department of Industry’s Smart and Skilled program and Community Services Obligation program – neither of which are focussed solely on Aboriginal students – there are few established governmental opportunities for community providers to build on their activities with Aboriginal communities.

There is a need to develop a resource kit for community education organisations so that they can engage effectively with Aboriginal groups. The NSW Department of Industry and Training Services NSW have created an Aboriginal Services Unit to manage programs that focus on improving access to employment and creating business opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.<sup>108</sup> TAFE NSW enrolls substantial numbers of Aboriginal students and provides additional services, both to the students as well as those working with them, including Eora College at Sydney Institute.<sup>109</sup> The NSW Department of Education has extensive dedicated resources for Aboriginal engagement and learning.<sup>110</sup> Recently, the NSW Local Government Association worked with the NSW Office of Local Government to develop the “Collaborate NSW” website, “to support the inclusion of Aboriginal communities in council decision-making, service development and delivery.”<sup>111</sup>

These are all good models of Indigenous resources and engagement that can be extended to assist the NSW community education sector to undertake greater Indigenous engagement to further both Indigenous training activities as well as Indigenous regional and rural economic development. CCA has commenced liaising with Aboriginal land councils, and will continue that process in part through its new “Indigenous Affinity Network” of members that will commence operation in the first months of 2018.

**Community Colleges Australia recommends that:**

- *NSW Office of Aboriginal Affairs and the NSW Department of Industry co-fund a project with the objective to produce guidelines and models for community education providers to work more closely with NSW Aboriginal communities.*

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<sup>108</sup> See [https://www.training.nsw.gov.au/programs\\_services/funded\\_other/acp/index.html](https://www.training.nsw.gov.au/programs_services/funded_other/acp/index.html).

<sup>109</sup> See <https://www.tafensw.edu.au/courses/aboriginal-pathways>,  
<https://www.tafensw.edu.au/digital/getting-started/aboriginal-students>,  
<https://www.tafensw.edu.au/digital/aboriginal-education> and <http://sydneytafe.edu.au/current-students/eora-college/eora>.

<sup>110</sup> See <https://education.nsw.gov.au/teaching-and-learning/aec/aboriginal-education-in-nsw-public-schools>.

<sup>111</sup> See <http://collaboratensw.org/>.

## 9.3 Incubators and Start-Up Businesses

### 9.3.1 The Business Incubator Concept

The concept of “business incubators” has developed quickly in recent years, aimed both at “start-ups” and established small businesses.<sup>112</sup> Incubators traditionally are set up to foster self-employment, assist business development, accelerate business growth, reduce the failure rate of start-up businesses, assist businesses to operate, and increase employment opportunities and community wealth.

For instance, Blue Chilli – founded in Sydney in 2012 – has evolved its model “six times and employed over 50 people to meet the emerging and changing needs of entrepreneurs around the world.”<sup>113</sup> Sydney start-up Slingshot claims that “83% of start-ups that have participated in a Slingshot Accelerator Program are still in business today” and has recently launched in Newcastle.<sup>114</sup> The not-for-profit Fishburners recently expanded to Brisbane and Shanghai.<sup>115</sup>

The typical “focus of most accelerators is on technologies that can be rapidly commercialised ... attract[ing] younger, predominately male technology enthusiasts.”<sup>116</sup> There is no formally accepted definition of the term “accelerator”, and they share some elements with incubators. A recent UNSW Business School report for the Australian Government Department of Industry, Innovation and Science notes that:

Historically, business incubators started off as physical facilities that shelter new firms until they can become self-sustainable and survive outside the incubator. ... More recently, incubation has shifted from providing low-cost offices, to a model where the landlords offer more (access to) value-added services ... include[ing] referrals to professional service firms (accounting, law, etc.) who offered discounted rates. ... The basic operating model for incubators has remained largely the same: maximizing occupancy of the shared office by offering discounted rent and professional services.<sup>117</sup>

Accelerators have less applicability for the not-for-profit community education providers, whose greatest expertise lies not in technology support, but in community development, including working with small businesses. Incubators normally provide a range of resources to start-ups and early-stage businesses. These can range from office space to events and access to angel networks. The goal of a business incubator is to help start-up and early-stage companies grow and succeed.<sup>118</sup>

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<sup>112</sup> See <https://www.smartcompany.com.au/startupsmart/news-analysis/australias-24-most-active-accelerators-incubators/>.

<sup>113</sup> See <https://www.bluechilli.com/team/about-us/>.

<sup>114</sup> See <http://www.slingshotters.com/academy/> and <http://www.slingshotters.com/news/ash-maurya-talks-teaching-entrepreneurship/>.

<sup>115</sup> See <https://fishburners.org/#about>.

<sup>116</sup> See Tim Mazarol, “Business incubators and start-up accelerators: Valuable assets or a waste of time and money?”, <https://theconversation.com/business-incubators-and-start-up-accelerators-valuable-assets-or-a-waste-of-time-and-money-45551>.

<sup>117</sup> Bliemel *et al*, *The role and performance of accelerators in the Australian startup ecosystem*, Final report for the Department of Industry, Innovation & Science, 1 February, 2016, p. 10.

<sup>118</sup> See <https://www.syndicatoroom.com/learn/glossary/b/business-incubator>.

The incubator concept continues to evolve, with different business models – both not-for-profit and privately run commercial organisations – that include classic/traditional incubation, university incubation, accelerators (with or without seed funds), mentorship capital, sector specific incubation, virtual incubation, online matching platforms, makerspaces and hubs.<sup>119</sup>

While the NSW start-up culture is particularly known for its inner city Sydney style – typified by a Surry Hills or Ultimo location – a number of regional initiatives have begun. These non-metropolitan activities work especially well in locations which have a local culture and population that supports small entrepreneurial activity and supportive institutions such as regional university campuses and local councils.

### 9.3.2 NSW Government Business Incubator Programs

The NSW Government supports business incubators through its Boosting Business Innovation Program, delivering through all 11 NSW universities and the CSIRO, aimed at creating new innovation spaces and activities for business communities, including a focus on the regional start-up sector.<sup>120</sup>

Regional NSW universities involved in the program include University of New England<sup>121</sup>, Charles Sturt University<sup>122</sup>, University of Newcastle<sup>123</sup>, Southern Cross University<sup>124</sup> and University of Wollongong<sup>125</sup>. Regional activities sponsored by the NSW Innovation Program include a Lake Macquarie Hackathon.<sup>126</sup> Other regional NSW incubators include Upstairs, part of Gunthers Lane in Bathurst, the first of its kind in Central West NSW, originally sponsored by Reliance Bank<sup>127</sup>; and the Hunter Founders Forum<sup>128</sup>.

Demographer Bernard Salt notes that regional Australia hosts a thriving entrepreneurial private sector, usually in fast-growing locations such as the Gold Coast and the Sunshine Coast. He also writes admiringly of the Australian rural heartland's entrepreneurial spirit:

Forget the collaborative start-up hubs in the hipster heard of Sydney and Melbourne because the real entrepreneurial spirit of Australia can be found in our agricultural and lifestyle heartland towns. Yes, Colac, Murray Bridge and Mount Gambier are

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<sup>119</sup> See <http://businessincubation.com.au/incubation/>, <http://anz.businesschief.com/leadership/1522/These-Are-the-10-Best-Startup-Accelerators-Incubators-in-Sydney> and <https://blog.thefetch.com/startup-incubators-and-accelerators-in-australia/>.

<sup>120</sup> See <https://www.industry.nsw.gov.au/business-and-industry-in-nsw/innovation-and-research/boosting-business-innovation-program>.

<sup>121</sup> See <http://www.une.edu.au/about-une/academic-schools/unebs/centre-for-agribusiness/smartincubator>.

<sup>122</sup> See <https://innovate.csu.edu.au/incubators/cenwest> and <https://innovate.csu.edu.au/incubators/indigenouppopup>.

<sup>123</sup> See <https://www.newcastle.edu.au/current-staff/working-here/our-work-environment/current-projects/innovation-hub> and <https://www.newcastle.edu.au/research-and-innovation/innovation/three76hub>.

<sup>124</sup> See [https://www.industry.nsw.gov.au/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0008/116099/berejiklian-barilaro-med-rel-southern-cross-enterprise-lab.pdf](https://www.industry.nsw.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0008/116099/berejiklian-barilaro-med-rel-southern-cross-enterprise-lab.pdf).

<sup>125</sup> See <http://www.advantagewollongong.com.au/key-assets/innovation-campus/> and <https://www.uow.edu.au/advantage-sme/index.html>.

<sup>126</sup> See <http://www.lakemachack.com/>.

<sup>127</sup> See <https://www.upstairsincubator.com.au/>, <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2017-07-04/bathurst-to-lead-start-ups-boom-with-first-incubator-for-region/8677584> and <https://www.guntherslane.com.au/upstairs-start-incubator/>.

<sup>128</sup> See <http://www.hunterfoundersforum.com.au/regional-incubator-program>.

entrepreneurial communities, but perhaps because of their isolation they have had to develop a culture of independence.<sup>129</sup>

Until December 2017, the not-for-profit organisation Nortec ran three incubators in the Byron region: Byron Creative in Byron Bay, established 1999; LINC Goonellabah, Lismore, established 2012; and CLIC Business Village in Mullumbimby (established 2004), co-located with Byron Community College, which has now taken over the Mullumbimby incubator's operations.<sup>130</sup> In May 2017, the Australian Government announced funding of \$474,535 to Slingshot, in collaboration with the University of Newcastle, to establish the Integrated Innovation Network (I2N) Regional Accelerator to identify, invest in and support up to 16 Hunter region start-ups.<sup>131</sup>

The Australian Government has a \$23 million program supporting incubators and innovative start-ups, to “assist Australian start-ups to develop the capabilities required to achieve commercial success in international markets and realise their economic potential faster than they otherwise would.” In 2017, new provisions were included to assist regional incubators, including an increased grant percentage of up to 65% where at least 80% of project activities are being undertaken in a regional area (defined as ARIA locations Inner Regional, Outer Regional, Remote and Very Remote); the introduction of four Regional Incubator Facilitators to assist regional applicants to engage with the initiative; and the expansion and increase of the Expert in Residence grants component to allow for outgoing experts to visit host incubators.<sup>132</sup> Unlike many regional development grants, the program guidelines include eligibility of incorporated not-for-profit organisations.

### 9.3.3 Business Incubators – the Potential for NSW Community Education Providers

The not-for-profit regional incubator model has a strong potential resonance for NSW community education providers, particularly if undertaken in collaboration with a university. Professor Tim Winthrop notes that, “For governments, universities or other publicly funded institutions the accelerator model may be less desirable than the more conventional not-for-profit incubator.”<sup>133</sup>

While the extra attention and encouragement for regional incubators is laudable, the restriction of achieving “commercial success in international markets” is a significant barrier. Why would the Australian Government wish to limit such a valuable program solely to export markets, particularly given the importance of building up the “service economy” – the overwhelming majority of it “domestic” – in regional areas?

A great deal of research has now been undertaken – much of it in the USA – on the success factors relating to incubators.<sup>134</sup> Studies have identified key principles: (1) keep businesses

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<sup>129</sup> Bernard Salt, “Public-Private Divide Looks to Work,” *The Weekend Australian*, 13-14 January 2018, p. 16.

<sup>130</sup> See <https://www.nortec.org.au/small-business-solutions/>.

<sup>131</sup> See <https://www.newcastle.edu.au/newsroom/featured-news/slingshot-and-uon-to-bring-new-accelerator-to-hunter-region>.

<sup>132</sup> See <https://www.business.gov.au/Assistance/Entrepreneurs-Programme/Incubator-Support-New-and-Existing-Incubators> and <https://www.innovation.gov.au/page/incubator-support-programme>.

<sup>133</sup> Tim Mazarol, “Business incubators and start-up accelerators: Valuable assets or a waste of time and money?,” *The Conversation*, 1 August 2015, <https://theconversation.com/business-incubators-and-start-up-accelerators-valuable-assets-or-a-waste-of-time-and-money-45551>.

<sup>134</sup> Tim Mazarol, “Business incubators and start-up accelerators: Valuable assets or a waste of time and money?,” *The Conversation*, 1 August 2015.

insulated from market forces to allow them time to develop and build up their capabilities – what an incubator is for; (2) consider the regional context, selecting appropriate participants; (3) ensure access to a strong network of coaches, mentors and supporting services; (4) avoid a “real estate” model if a virtual incubator can be just as effective; (5) ensure there is proper community support and resources; (6) supply entrepreneurial education including onsite learning, networks and professional support; (7) create clear program milestones; and (8) leverage ties to a university.<sup>135</sup>

Three NSW regional community education providers are involved in business incubators, all within the conventional not-for-profit incubator model (rather than the commercial “accelerator” model):

**Byron Community College’s** (BCC) main campus in Mullumbimby is co-located with the CLIC Business Village, which is now run by the college. BCC’s national expertise as a supplier of permaculture and environmental sustainability training has made it an important attraction for regional employers.<sup>136</sup> The college is also a partner in Sourdough Business Pathways, a not-for-profit joint initiative that provides “a strong future for the next generation in the Northern Rivers region by building strong businesses that generate prosperity and jobs” – a “virtual” business incubator.<sup>137</sup>

**Business Growth Centre** in Lake Macquarie area runs a business incubator, with 10 offices and 12 light industrial units for start-up and growth phase businesses, with an average stay of about 4 years, a 91% occupancy rate, with rent increasing every year to encourage sustainability. More than 140 businesses have been in the Centre in the past 17 years, and an estimated 340 jobs have been created. The Centre also runs accredited and not-accredited business qualifications and workshops, as well as a business advisory service for business intenders, start-ups and established businesses, and the Lake Macquarie Business Network.

**Coffs Coast Community College** collaborated with Coffs Harbour Council in establishing “6 degrees”, a space where people can come to work, share, collaborate and receive inspiration from other like-minded people. This resulted in a community of local entrepreneurs, freelancers and collaborators, and digital spaces for established businesses. Coffs Coast CC hosted the Coffs Harbour CBD “six degrees” location until mid-2017.<sup>138</sup>

Other NSW community education providers have expressed keen interest in helping to sponsor, run, collaborate or participate in regional business incubators. They have been hampered by:

- funding programs that do not encourage community education organisations from involvement;
- a general lack of consideration of the importance of VET skills in incubators;
- a lack of sufficient expertise in teaching entrepreneurial skills (see next section); and

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<sup>135</sup> Ernesto Tavoletti, “Business Incubators: Effective Infrastructures or Waste of Public Money? Looking for a Theoretical Framework, Guidelines and Criteria”; and Joel Wiggins and David W. Gibson, “Overview of US incubators and the case of the Austin Technology Incubator,” 2003.

<sup>136</sup> See <https://www.byroncollege.org.au/Sustainability>.

<sup>137</sup> See <https://sbp.org.au/sourdough-business-pathways-business-mentoring-byron-bay/> and <https://cca.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/CCA-Regional-Economic-Development-Forum-2-Fiona-Sheridan.pdf>.

<sup>138</sup> See <https://sixdegreescoworking.com/>.



- exclusion from certain funding programs, including recent NSW state-wide initiatives that involve TAFE and the universities.

**Community Colleges Australia recommends that:**

- *The NSW Department of Industry’s sponsor a pilot program of community education provider involvement in business incubators.*
- *The Australian Government alter its Incubator Support eligibility requirements for regional and rural projects to include domestic-focussed economic activities, and not limit it to international commercial applications.*

## 9.4 Entrepreneurship and Social Enterprises

### 9.4.1 Entrepreneurship

The NCVER recently examined how the VET sector engages with entrepreneurship, concluding that the sector needs to increase its participation. This includes developing a national strategy that will “support bottom-up initiatives, many of which will have a regional dimension.” The report noted that educational institutions are important elements of the entrepreneurial ecosystem and recommended that:

- enterprise skills should be a key component of most VET courses;
- entrepreneurship skills and knowledge should be included in at least some courses, the obvious example being IT-related qualifications; and
- the entrepreneurial knowledge and skill of VET educators and trainers needs to be nurtured.<sup>139</sup>

A significant opportunity exists for NSW community education providers to become more involved in rural and regional entrepreneurship as a means of stimulating their local economies and increasing employment opportunities. There are four ways for the community education providers to do this:

- becoming more entrepreneurial themselves, by engaging in social enterprises that are consistent with their missions and operations;
- teaching entrepreneurship to individuals and businesses;
- teaching the core principles of entrepreneurship to secondary school teachers, so that they in turn can incorporate the knowledge in their classroom teaching (effectively “train the trainers”); and
- assisting social enterprises – both not-for-profit and for-profit – in developing their business practices.

Examples of some organisations assisting regional Australia to develop entrepreneurial skills include:

- Sydney School of Entrepreneurship (SSE), an independent not-for-profit organisation established by the NSW Government in 2016 which brings together 11 NSW universities (including the regional universities) and TAFE NSW, and runs programs which could be extended to the community education sector.<sup>140</sup> SSE is offering a free

<sup>139</sup> Don Scott-Kemmis *et al*, NCVER 2017, <https://www.ncver.edu.au/publications/publications/all-publications/vet-and-entrepreneurship-research-overview>.

<sup>140</sup> See <http://sse.edu.au/>.

core unit of study to all enrolled students of the universities and TAFE. This would be an ideal offering to extend to NSW community education students.<sup>141</sup>

- The Australian Centre for Rural Entrepreneurship (ACRE) – operating primarily in Victoria – is a for-purpose organisation that exists to build thriving rural communities through igniting entrepreneurship in young people to realise new opportunities for community rejuvenation.<sup>142</sup>
- The Origin Foundation has partnered with the Mitchell Institute, the Victorian Association of State Secondary Principals, the New South Wales Secondary Principals' Council, and 21 government secondary schools in New South Wales and Victoria to study how entrepreneurial learning can respond to the growing need to enhance student capabilities to apply knowledge in sophisticated ways.<sup>143</sup>
- The Queensland Government has developed a Regional Innovation Hubs Program to support innovation and entrepreneurship in regional Queensland, to encourage innovation and to create jobs.<sup>144</sup>

### 9.4.2 Social Enterprises

“Social enterprises” are defined as:

Businesses that trade to intentionally tackle social problems, improve communities, provide access to employment and training, or help the environment... fulfil[lig] a diversity of missions and serv[ing] a wide variety of beneficiaries.... such as creating meaningful employment opportunities for people from a specific group, and developing new solutions to social, cultural, economic or environmental problems. [They] are led by an economic, social, cultural or environmental mission consistent with a public or community benefit, trade to fulfil their mission, derive a substantial portion of their income from trade, and reinvest the majority of their profit/surplus in the fulfilment of their mission.<sup>145</sup>

On this definition, all NSW community education organisations are social enterprises. They have a community development focus – tackling social problems such as unemployment, social isolation and other needs, derive a large part of their income from trading and reinvest surplus funds.

While most Australian social enterprises operating in Australia are not-for-profit organisations, not every not-for-profit is necessarily a social enterprise. Classic examples of not-for-profit social enterprises are the “Op Shops” of Mission Australia.<sup>146</sup>

Many NSW community education providers also run small businesses – classic social enterprises – such as Camden Haven Community College’s Pilot Station, located at Dunbogan near Laurieton. The historic Pilot Station (originally built in 1890) runs community,

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<sup>141</sup> See <https://sse.edu.au/core-unit/>.

<sup>142</sup> See <http://acre.org.au/about-acre/>.

<sup>143</sup> Anderson, Michelle *et al*, *The Paradigm Shifters: Entrepreneurial Learning in Schools Research report*, Mitchell Institute, 2017, [http://www.originfoundationknowledgehub.com.au/cms\\_uploads/docs/paradigm-shifters\\_entrepreneurial-learning-in-schools.pdf](http://www.originfoundationknowledgehub.com.au/cms_uploads/docs/paradigm-shifters_entrepreneurial-learning-in-schools.pdf).

<sup>144</sup> Queensland Government, Regional Innovation Hubs Program, <https://advance.qld.gov.au/assets/includes/docs/rihp-discussion-paper.pdf>.

<sup>145</sup> *Finding Australia’s Social Enterprise Sector 2016: Final Report*, pp. 4-5, <http://cdn.socialtraders.com.au/app/uploads/2016/07/FASES-2016-full-report-final.pdf>.

<sup>146</sup> See <http://sd.missionaustralia.com.au/477-op-shops>.

social, cultural, environment, educational events and workshops with local schools, the historical society, chamber of commerce and National Parks.<sup>147</sup>

An example of a new community social enterprise is the 2016 opening of Goulburn Community College, which offers adult and community education programs, more than eight years after the closure of the area's Southern Region Community College.

The research on social enterprises reveals that the external constraints the prevent social enterprises from growing their businesses and their impacts all apply to regional NSW community education providers, including the lack of external finance and the role of proper organisational governance.<sup>148</sup>

Successful development and operation of social enterprises must be underpinned by organisational capacity. These "21<sup>st</sup> century" or enterprise skills include the ability to convert knowledge to action, resilience in face of setbacks and adversity, problem solving, thinking creatively and critically, communication skills and self-reflection abilities. These are the transferable enterprise skills identified by the Foundation for Young Australians, which will be required in a majority of future jobs.<sup>149</sup>

As a result of this project's research, Community Colleges Australia, in conjunction with selected members, is planning to run a regional NSW symposium on embedding social entrepreneurship in the community education sector, building on the October 2017 Mullumbimby regional economic development forum.

**Community Colleges Australia recommends that:**

- *The Australian Government Department of Education and Training recognise the importance of incorporating entrepreneurship more fully into VET courses through its Review of training packages, as outlined in recent NCVET reports.*
- *The NSW Department of Industry provide funding to assist Community Colleges Australia and Sydney School of Entrepreneurs to develop entrepreneurial training for NSW regional and rural community education providers.*

## 9.5 The Value of Philanthropy in Economic Development

### 9.5.1 The Value and Role of Philanthropy

Philanthropy – funds provided by foundations and trusts or individuals – constitutes a relatively under-utilised source for Australian regional and rural economic development pilot projects. Increasingly, Australian foundations and trusts are looking to invest strategically in projects, organisations and good causes.<sup>150</sup> They often wish to provide funds that stimulate long-term increases in social and economic well-being.

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<sup>147</sup> See <http://www.camdenheadpilotstation.org.au/>.

<sup>148</sup> *Finding Australia's Social Enterprise Sector 2016: Final Report*, p. 4, <http://cdn.socialtraders.com.au/app/uploads/2016/07/FASES-2016-full-report-final.pdf>.

<sup>149</sup> Foundation for Young Australians, *Enterprise skills and careers education in schools: Why Australia needs a national strategy*, April 2016, [https://www.fya.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/Enterprise-skills-and-careers-education-why-Australia-needs-a-national-strategy\\_April2016.pdf](https://www.fya.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/Enterprise-skills-and-careers-education-why-Australia-needs-a-national-strategy_April2016.pdf).

<sup>150</sup> See <https://www.reichstein.org.au/social-change-philanthropy/>.

Many Australian foundations and trusts include regional social development and education as a significant focus. The aim of the Foundation for Rural and Regional Renewal (FRRR) is to strengthen rural, regional & remote communities.<sup>151</sup> Other organisations that have expressed a strong interest in regional education and regional development include Myer Foundation, Origin Foundation, Sidney Myer Fund, Perpetual Trustees, Vincent Fairfax Family Foundation, Ian Potter Foundation, Paul Ramsay Foundation and most Australian bank corporate foundations.<sup>152</sup>

Philanthropic funding must be complementary to government funding, not replacing government's service role. Philanthropy can be particularly valuable in setting up pilot development projects that "prove" the case for a more sustained government commitment of resources. Philanthropy Australia encourages its members to work closely with government, leveraging collective strengths.<sup>153</sup>

Philanthropic donors are often willing wish to fund more "risky" or creative projects; they have been particularly important sources of funding for not-for-profit and social entrepreneurship and incubators.<sup>154</sup> Philanthropic funding can also enable a not-for-profit organisation to diversify its funding base.<sup>155</sup> International experience shows that philanthropic organisations like to combine both thematic and place-based approaches, as a means of "achieving enduring change in larger systems."<sup>156</sup>

Private philanthropic funders can be of assistance in other ways, including contacting other potential funders, volunteering other resources (such as staff and expertise, in the case of corporate foundations) and connecting with other organisations. Local Australian community foundations, many in regional and rural locations, can be particularly useful sources of funds: Australian Community Philanthropy, the peak organisation for community foundations, lists at least 57 organisations identifying themselves as community foundations, or geographic sub-funds of community foundations.<sup>157</sup> Philanthropy Australia has a Rural and Regional Funders group, which wishes to increase the "philanthropic impact in regional, rural and remote Australia" and "position philanthropy for better engagement with regional, rural and remote Australian communities and issues."<sup>158</sup>

### 9.5.2 Philanthropy and NSW Community Education Providers

Within the NSW community education sector, Riverina Community College (Wagga Wagga) has received support from the Aussie Farmers Foundation for its rural women programs.<sup>159</sup> Sourdough Business Pathways, of which Byron Community College is a major partner, has

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<sup>151</sup> See <http://www.frrr.org.au/>.

<sup>152</sup> As noted earlier in this report, the Reliance Bank has sponsored Gunther's Lane, a community digital hub in Bathurst that has become the basis for an incubator; see <https://www.guntherslane.com.au/brought-to-you-by-and-sponsors/>.

<sup>153</sup> See <http://www.philanthropy.org.au/tools-resources/engaging-with-government/>.

<sup>154</sup> See [https://www.galidata.org/assets/report/pdf/GALI-databrief6\\_StartupFinancing\\_092217.pdf](https://www.galidata.org/assets/report/pdf/GALI-databrief6_StartupFinancing_092217.pdf).

<sup>155</sup> See <https://communitydoor.org.au/fundraising-and-philanthropy/philanthropy>.

<sup>156</sup> See Rockefeller Brothers Fund, *Evaluating Program Impact*, 2013, p. 3, [https://www.rbf.org/sites/default/files/programimpactreport\\_abridged.pdf](https://www.rbf.org/sites/default/files/programimpactreport_abridged.pdf).

<sup>157</sup> See <http://australiancommunityphilanthropy.org.au/community-foundations/community-foundations-in-australia/>, as well as <https://cef.org.au/our-local-country-education-foundations-overview/> and [http://www.frrr.org.au/cb\\_pages/for\\_community\\_foundations.php](http://www.frrr.org.au/cb_pages/for_community_foundations.php).

<sup>158</sup> See <http://www.philanthropy.org.au/about-us/rural-regional/>.

<sup>159</sup> See "Enhancing Wellbeing Among Rural Women", <http://www.aussiefarmersfoundation.org.au/2016-grassroots-grants-announced/>.

also received philanthropic funding. WEA Hunter has set up the WEA Hunter Foundation to “generate partnerships and secure resources to drive educational outcomes for the benefit of local communities.”<sup>160</sup> The Warialda and Bingara campuses of Community College Northern Inland are represented on the Gwydir Learning Region Country Education Fund Committee, which raises funds from local residents and businesses to support local youth to help them achieve their post high school education, training and vocation aspirations.<sup>161</sup>

Most NSW regional and rural community education providers hold a “Deductible Gift Recipient” (DGR) status, which enables them to access funds from philanthropic sources and tax-deductible donations from individuals. Only a small handful of community providers have utilised the full capacity of the DGR status. The reasons for this underutilisation are mostly lack of policy and strategic capacity to develop relationships with the philanthropic sector, given the high level of professionalism and competition that exists in Australian not-for-profit fundraising.<sup>162</sup>

CCA will continue to encourage its members to obtain Deductible Gift Recipient (DGR) status, as a precursor to developing strategic fundraising for appropriate projects. CCA will also continue to encourage major philanthropic funders to partner with community education providers; and to engage with peak philanthropic organisations such as Philanthropy Australia, whose CEO spoke at CCA’s July 2017 Melbourne conference.<sup>163</sup>

**Community Colleges Australia recommends that:**

- *Philanthropy Australia include regional economic development as a theme at its next national conference in Melbourne on 4-6 September 2018.*

## 9.6 Opportunities for Western Sydney

Western Sydney is Australia’s third largest economy, after Sydney and Melbourne central business districts. It has numerous economic attractions and advantages, notably a rapidly growing Parramatta central business district, the planned Badgerys Creek airport, rich rural and agricultural lands, historical sites, important recreational and sporting facilities, great bushland and World Heritage-listed wildernesses in the Blue Mountains, the Hawkesbury-Nepean river system, and its own university – the multi-campus Western Sydney University.<sup>164</sup>

Despite a booming population growth, the region’s economy has been unable to keep up, with the ratio of jobs to residents falling consistently since the year 2000. More than 2.2 million people live in greater Western Sydney, 35% of them born overseas, from more than 170 countries and speaking more than 100 languages.<sup>165</sup>

Many of the economic challenges facing regional and rural NSW also face much of Western Sydney, including:

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<sup>160</sup> See <https://www.weahunter.edu.au/about-the-foundation>.

<sup>161</sup> See <https://cef.org.au/foundations/gwydir/>.

<sup>162</sup> See <https://www.fia.org.au/pages/principles-standards-of-fundraising-practice.html>.

<sup>163</sup> See <https://cca.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/4.-Sarah-Davies.pdf>.

<sup>164</sup> See [https://www.westernsydney.edu.au/rcegws/rcegws/About/about\\_greater\\_western\\_sydney](https://www.westernsydney.edu.au/rcegws/rcegws/About/about_greater_western_sydney).

<sup>165</sup> See <https://www.wsroc.com.au/issues-campaigns/economy-and-employment> and <http://profile.id.com.au/wsroc/population?WebID=200>.

- lack of transport accessibility, especially to centres of employment but also to other services, frequently necessitating long commutes and extensive reliance on automotive travel;
- locally significant unemployment, especially among young people, Indigenous people and new migrants;
- significant pockets of poverty and disadvantage; and
- an economy heavily reliant on manufacturing and other 20th century industries, which are expected to continue to decline over the next 20 years.<sup>166</sup>

Given that about one in ten Australians lives in Western Sydney, its importance to Australia's economic well-being and future prosperity cannot be overstated.

Most of the regional and rural economic development principles and recommendations outlined in this report are applicable to Western Sydney.

Four NSW community providers are headquartered in Western Sydney: Parramatta Community College, Macquarie Community College, Nepean Community College and Macarthur Community College. In addition, at least another five community education providers deliver significant services to part/s of Western Sydney: Hornsby Ku-Ring-Gai Community College, VERTO, Sydney Community College, JobQuest and Bankstown Community College. Many of these nine organisations are already working closely together to develop Western Sydney-wide approaches to regional training issues. Together they supply a valuable economic development resource for Western Sydney, as yet not fully utilised.

***Community Colleges Australia recommend that the NSW Department of Industry:***

- *Fund Community Colleges Australia to undertake a similar regional economic development research project in Western Sydney, including a forum with interested stakeholders.*

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<sup>166</sup> See <https://www.wsroc.com.au/issues-campaigns/economy-and-employment>.

Jessica Irvine, "Sydney's rich and poor: the rising crisis in our suburbs," *Sydney Morning Herald*, 10 May 2015, <http://www.smh.com.au/nsw/sydneys-rich-and-poor-the-rising-crisis-in-our-suburbs-20150507-ggwwh1.html>.

NSW Council of Social Service, *Poverty in New South Wales*, 2014, [https://www.ncoss.org.au/sites/default/files/public/ncoss\\_antipoverty\\_final\\_2.pdf](https://www.ncoss.org.au/sites/default/files/public/ncoss_antipoverty_final_2.pdf).

## APPENDIX A: People and Organisations Consulted in Preparing this Report

### A.1 Regional & Rural Economic Development Forum, Mullumbimby 25 October 2017

The Hon Ben Franklin MP	Parliamentary Secretary for Renewable Energy and Northern NSW	
Tamara Smith MP	Member for Ballina	
ACE Community Colleges	Kerry Johnson	Principal
Byron Community College	Claire Leach	Community Services
	Richard Vinycomb	CEO
	Tammy Love	VET Manager
	Suzie Mylecharane	Board Director
Byron Shire Council	Sasha Graham	Social Innovation Projects
	Tania Crosbie	
Central Coast Community College	Joanne Martin	CEO
Clarence Valley Council	Henry Fenner	Project Officer
Coffs Coast Community College	Suzanne Crossley	Office Manager
Community Colleges Australia	Don Perlgut	CEO
	Evelyn Goodwin	VET Policy Manager
	Anne Walter	Operations Manager
Curious Minds Company	Michelle Walker	Facilitator
North Coast Community College	Kate Kempshall	Executive Officer
	Les Regan	Board Director
Port Macquarie Community College	Valerieanne Byrnes	CEO
	Robbie Lloyd	Community Relations Mgr
Regional Development Australia	Alex Smith	Northern Rivers Manager
SAE Creative Media institute	Lee Aitken	General Manager
	Ben Funnell	Campus Manager
Sourdough Business Pathways	Fiona Sheridan	Mentor Manager
	Mark Holden	Advisor
Southern Cross University	Kirsty Howton	Manager, Sustainability
TAFE NSW	Terry Watson	Leader Community
	Brendan Mckenna	Head Teacher
Tamworth Community College	Michelle Simpson	Executive Officer
University of New England	Bryn Griffiths	Strategic Partnerships
WEA Hunter	Rowan Cox	Executive Director
	Nicola Bartlett	Senior Education Services
Workforce BluePrint	Wendy Perry	Managing Director

### A.2 Regional & Rural Focus Group, Western College, Dubbo 11 October 2017

ARC Training	Andrew Chapple	
Golden West Holden	Michael Adams	Dealer Principal
MPREC	Kerry McMahon	Admin/Compliance Officer
Ray White Real Estate	Rod Crowfoot	Board Chair
Regional Development Australia	Megan Dixon	Executive Officer
Training Services NSW	Collin Green	Training Services Manager
Western College	Rene Wykes	CEO

Western College  
Western College

Jac Billinghamurst  
Karen Smith

Project Coordinator  
VET Coordinator

### **A.3 Other Organisations Consulted During the Course of the Project**

Albury Wodonga Community College  
Business Growth Centre  
Camden Haven Community College  
Charles Sturt University  
Community College Gippsland  
Community College Northern Inland  
Don Dunstan Foundation  
Guyra Adult Learning Association/New England Community College  
Kiama Community College  
Local Government Association of NSW  
Murwillumbah Community College  
Namoi Regional Council  
National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER)  
Nepean Community College  
NSW Department of Industry, Training Services NSW  
NSW Department of Premier and Cabinet  
NSW Business Chamber, Northern Rivers  
NSW Business Chamber, Tamworth  
NSW Business Chamber, Port Macquarie  
Philanthropy Australia  
Regional Development Victoria  
Regional Universities Network  
Riverina Community College  
Robinson College  
SGS Economics and Planning  
Social Futures  
Social Traders  
South Australian Department of State Development  
St George & Sutherland Community College  
TAFE Directors Australia  
Tomaree Community College  
Tuggerah Lakes Community College  
VERTO  
Victorian Department of Education and Training  
WEA Illawarra  
Western Riverina Community College



## APPENDIX B: Mullumbimby Regional Economic Development Forum

On 25 October 2017, CCA held an invited forum, held at Byron Community College's ecologically sustainable Mullumbimby campus headquarters, to explore how the NSW community education sector participates in regional and rural economic development. The day looked at successful economic development models and used a workshop/discussion setting to draw out ideas, strategies and action plans for colleges to further their economic development collaborations. (These ideas are reflected elsewhere in this report.)

The forum was considered a success, with local media reporting on the day. It has generated interest to undertake further workshops in the area to continue to drive regional and rural economic development in the area.

CCA invited all community education providers within the local and adjoining areas. CCA also invited staff from all nearby regional councils, major training services, support businesses and numerous government representatives.

The forum's keynote opening talk was presented by the Hon Ben Franklin MLC, Parliamentary Secretary of Northern New South Wales, who acknowledged that "Community colleges are key to activating economic potential and creating a skilled workforce."

Tamara Smith, State Member for Ballina and Greens NSW spokesperson for regional development, also welcomed participants. Ms Smith said that, "the goal of achieving economic sustainability for our region is a top priority."

Speakers at the forum were:

- Dr Don Perlgut, CEO, Community Colleges Australia
- Richard Vinycomb, CEO of Byron Community College
- Rowan Cox, CEO of WEA Hunter, Newcastle
- Kerry Johnson, CEO of ACE Community Colleges, Lismore;
- Fiona Sheridan, Sourdough Business Pathways
- Wendy Perry, national VET regional development expert based in Adelaide
- Michelle Walker, facilitator

Other NSW community colleges participating:

- Tamworth Community College
- North Coast Community College (Alstonville)
- Central Coast Community College
- Port Macquarie Community College
- Coffs Coast Community College (Coffs Harbour)

Other organisations participating in the forum:

- Regional Development Australia
- TAFE NSW
- Southern Cross University
- University of New England
- SAE Institute, a private training provider

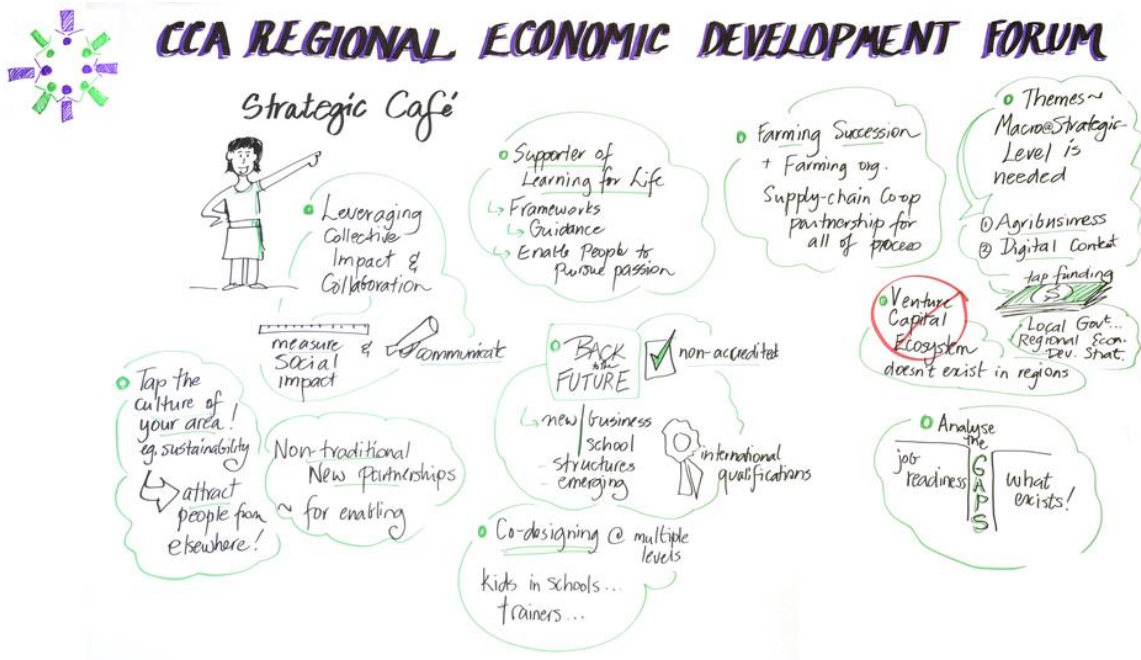
Copies of the presentations are available through the CCA website here:

<https://cca.edu.au/resources/#economicdevelopment>

The Byron Echo had a media release about the event:

<https://www.echo.net.au/2017/11/economic-forum-highlights-regional-nsw-community-colleges/>

A summary of the forum's "Strategic Café" workshop is below:



## APPENDIX C: NSW Community Education Organisations – Regional, Rural and Remote Areas Service Locations

Organisation	Areas Served/Postcodes
ACE Lismore	Tweed Heads, Lismore and surrounding villages; Casino, Ballina, Grafton, Coffs Harbour, Nambucca Heads and Bowraville
Albury Wodonga Community College	2648, 2640 (most active), 2717, 2650, 2641, 2646, 2643, 2647, 2651, 2644, 2642, 2739, 2738, 2702, 2731, 2656, 2710, 2663
Business Growth Centre	Predominantly Lake Macquarie local government area
Byron Community College	Ballina to Lismore to Tweed as part of the Northern Rivers, predominantly Byron region postcodes of 2479, 2480, 2481, 2482, 2483
Camden Haven Community College	Mid North Coast of NSW; most active in 2443, 2430, 2428, 2442, 2428, 2431
Central Coast Community College	Majority from Gosford or Wyong areas, but cover the whole Central Coast region as well as parts of the Hunter such as Maitland, Muswellbrook and Kurri Kurri
Coffs Coast Community College	Cover the areas of Coffs/Grafton and the Nambucca and Bellingen Shire areas of the Mid North Coast. Most active in the Coffs Harbour postcode 2450. Also active in postcodes: Bellingen 2454, Grafton 2460, Macksville 2447, Nambucca Heads 2448 and Woolgoolga 2456
Community College Northern Inland	Inverell campus services the area Shire of Inverell (2360), Ashford (2361), Tingha (2369). Barraba campus (head office) services Bundarra, Barraba, Upper Horton and Manilla. Bingara campus services 2401 Gravesend, 2402 Warialda, 2403 Delungra, Gragin, Koloona and Myall Creek, 2404 (most active), Bingara, 2405 Garah, 2408 North Starr, 2409 Boggabilla and Boonal, 2410 Yetman, 2411 Croppa Creek. Gunnedah campus services 2382, 2381, 2343, 2340, 2357, 2381, 2380, 2379, 2390, 2381. Moree campus services 2400, 2406, 2399, 2411. Narrabri campus services 2390, 2397, 2386, 2388, 2390, 2382, 2388, Baan Baa, Coonabarabran. Warialda campus services 2402, 2411, 2403, 2360, 2401, 2408.
Guyra New England Community College	New England area; postcodes 2370, 2371, 2365, 2350, 2358, 2354, 2372, 2453, 2360, 2359, 2369 – the most active is 2350 and 2365
Kiama Community College	Postcodes 2533, 2540, 2541, 2500-2532, 2580
Murwillumbah Community College	2484 to 2490, most active in Murwillumbah and surrounding districts: 2484
Nepean Community College	Blue Mountains, Lithgow
North Coast Community College	2477 Alstonville 2478 Ballina 2464 Yamba
Port Macquarie Community College	Postcodes 2449, 2444, 2446, 2430, 2440, 2448
Riverina Community College	Riverina. Including Wagga Wagga and surrounds. As far west as the Snowy Mountain Highway from Harden in the north down to Tumbarumba in the south. As far east as Leeton. As far south as the Murray region. Most active in 2650.
Robinson Community College	Broken Hill and far west NSW, postcodes: 2880, 2836, 2879, 2880, 2836, 2648
South Coast Colleges	Batemans Bay, Ulladulla, Bega, Merimbula
Tamworth Community College	New England: postcodes 2340-2385, 2388-2411, 2475; most active in 2340 Tamworth
Tomaree Community College	Nelson Bay, Port Stephens and non-Newcastle Hunter Valley
Tuggerah Lakes Community College	Central Coast region, most active in postcodes: 2250, 2251, 2253, 2256, 2257, 2258, 2259, 2260, 2261, 2262, 2263, 2275

<b>Organisation</b>	<b>Areas Served/Postcodes</b>
VERTO	Albury, Ballina, Bathurst, Blayney, Coffs Harbour, Condobolin, Cowra, Dubbo, Forbes, Gosford, Goulburn, Gulgong, Kandos, Lithgow, Mudgee, Newcastle, Oberon, Orange, Parkes, Port Macquarie, Tamworth, Taree, Wagga Wagga, West Wyalong, Young
WEA Hunter	Postcodes 2259, 2264, 2265, 2267, 2278, 2280-2287, 2289, 2290-2300, 2302-2308, 2318, 2322, 2323, 2250, 2311, 2320-2323, 2325-2327, 2330, 2331, 2334, 2335, 2420, 2421, 2320-2326, 2335, 2421, 2314-2322, 2324, 2328-2330, 2336-2338, 2850, 2312, 2324, 2415, 2420, 2422, 2423, 2425, 2428-2430, 2312, 2422-2424, 2426, 2427, 2429, 2430, 2443
WEA Illawarra	Wollongong area, 2500-2580
Western College	Dubbo, Orana and Far West NSW; most active in 2830 and 2820. Also active in 2831, 2829 and 2880.
Western Riverina Community College	2680 (most active), 2681, 2652, 2672, 2675, 2702, 2703, 2705, 2706, 2707, 2710, 2711

Data source: reports and websites from each organisation.

## Appendix D: NSW Government-Funded VET, 2016

NSW Government-Funded Students 2016	Total NSW		TAFE		Private		Community	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
<b>Total for selection</b>	<b>454030</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>298410</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>133365</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>22255</b>	<b>100.0</b>
				66%		29%		5%
<b>Student demographics information</b>								
<b>Sex</b>								
Males	225275	49.6	149615	50.1	66470	49.8	9195	41.3
Females	228600	50.3	148720	49.8	66885	50.2	12995	58.4
Not known	155	0.0	80	0.0	10	0.0	65	0.3
<b>Age</b>								
14 years and under	855	0.2	265	0.1	290	0.2	300	1.3
15 to 19 years	128105	28.2	64940	21.8	59110	44.3	4060	18.2
20 to 24 years	73685	16.2	54295	18.2	16910	12.7	2475	11.1
25 to 44 years	160625	35.4	116415	39.0	36600	27.4	7615	34.2
45 to 64 years	83955	18.5	57085	19.1	19910	14.9	6960	31.3
65 years and over	6745	1.5	5410	1.8	545	0.4	790	3.5
Not known	60	0.0	5	0.0	0	0.0	60	0.3
<b>Indigenous status</b>								
Indigenous	36310	8.0	25185	8.4	8445	6.3	2680	12.0
Non-Indigenous	411420	90.6	272700	91.4	120165	90.1	18555	83.4
Not known	6300	1.4	530	0.2	4750	3.6	1020	4.6
<b>Disability status</b>								
With disability	43780	9.6	33235	11.1	7070	5.3	3475	15.6
Without disability	357705	78.8	264860	88.8	75620	56.7	17225	77.4
Not known	52545	11.6	320	0.1	50675	38.0	1550	7.0
<b>School status</b>								
At school	67350	14.8	18815	6.3	46405	34.8	2125	9.5
Not at school	381480	84.0	279390	93.6	82385	61.8	19705	88.5
Not known	5200	1.1	205	0.1	4570	3.4	425	1.9
<b>ARIA remoteness</b>								
Major cities	281125	61.9	187975	63.0	87150	65.3	6000	27.0
Inner regional	119040	26.2	76760	25.7	31895	23.9	10385	46.7
Outer regional	43105	9.5	27520	9.2	10195	7.6	5390	24.2
Remote	4330	1.0	3175	1.1	890	0.7	260	1.2
Very remote	1645	0.4	1195	0.4	380	0.3	70	0.3
Overseas	540	0.1	490	0.2	45	0.0	0	0.0
Not known	4250	0.9	1290	0.4	2810	2.1	150	0.7
<b>SEIFA IRSD</b>								
Quintile 1 - most disadvantaged	129855	28.6	82740	27.7	39200	29.4	7910	35.5
Quintile 2	119510	26.3	77505	26.0	34525	25.9	7485	33.6
Quintile 3	77190	17.0	49795	16.7	23570	17.7	3825	17.2
Quintile 4	60240	13.3	42250	14.2	16445	12.3	1545	6.9
Quintile 5 - least disadvantaged	61900	13.6	43960	14.7	16615	12.5	1325	6.0
Not known	5335	1.2	2170	0.7	3010	2.3	160	0.7

Source: Extracted from *Quick Stats: Government-funded students and courses, 2016*, National Centre for Vocational Education Research, 12 July 2017, available at: <https://www.ncver.edu.au/data/data/all-data/quick-stats-government-funded-students-and-courses-2016>

## APPENDIX E: NSW Community Education Providers Regional Economic Development Activities

### ACE Community Colleges Lismore

ACE's award-winning Aboriginal Driver Education Program is funded by NSW Roads and Maritime Services and NSW Department of Industry Community Services Obligation (CSO) funds.<sup>167</sup> Partnering with Aboriginal Land Councils in all locations, local police and magistrates, justice representatives, Job Actives and DES organisations, the college subcontracts out the driving instruction to local community endorsed driving schools. One of the subcontracted driving schools is Aboriginal-owned and the college has supported his business in its start-up phase by providing regular work. Partnering with local community colleges to deliver the Learner Driver Knowledge Test program. This allows ACE to focus on the driving component of the program and the partner community colleges can focus on the delivery of the LDKT program.

The college has a relationship with the BUPA centres on the Gold Coast and northern NSW, whereby ACE delivers the whole individual support qualifications at the BUPA facility and the students do all of their work placement at the facility. BUPA has a ready supply of our students that can be employed directly in their workplace as they can assess their suitability from day one. The students will have also completed the BUPA induction process and the WHS that we deliver is equivalent to the needs of the BUPA facility. The great advantage to the students is that they quickly gain an understanding of the work involved in aged care facilities and whether they are suited. If they are suited to the work, there is an excellent chance that they will gain employment straight after graduation. This relationship has been in place now for more than three years and has delivered many jobs for the students.

### Business Growth Centre

The Business Growth Centre (Gateshead) operates both as the economic development strategy for the City of Lake Macquarie (south of Newcastle) as well as a community-based RTO. It offers six business qualifications from Certificate III to Diploma, specifically aimed at business owners, managers and employees, and combines that with:

- A business incubator, with 10 offices and 12 light industrial units for start-up and growth phase businesses, with an average stay of about 4 years, a 91% occupancy rate, with rent increasing every year to encourage sustainability. More than 140 businesses have been in the Centre in the past 17 years, and an estimated 340 jobs have been created.
- Business development, non-accredited business-related workshops and facilitation of business plans.
- Business advisory service for business intenders, start-ups and established businesses for a fee, with up to 80 clients per year.
- Business networking, running the Lake Macquarie Business Network (4 events per year with up to 80 attendees) and Lake Macquarie Women in Business Network (10 events per year, with up to 40 per event).
- Lake Macquarie Business Excellence Awards, which commenced in July 2012 and held annually – 13 categories and 3 major awards, and 120 entries, and more than

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<sup>167</sup> See <https://www.acecolleges.edu.au/community/aboriginal-driver-education-program/>, <https://www.northernstar.com.au/news/community-college-aces-caltex-road-safety-awards/2968675/> and <https://cca.edu.au/ace-community-colleges-wins-award-for-indigenous-driver-education-program/>.

\$300,000 in prizes since commencement. Winners of 6 categories are automatic finalists in the NSW Business Chamber Business Awards, and the winner of one category is a finalist in the Safe Work NSW Awards.<sup>168</sup>

## Byron Community College

Byron Community College (Byron Bay and Mullumbimby) is a partner in Sourdough Business Pathways, a not-for-profit initiative that provides a strong future for the next generation in the Northern Rivers region by building strong businesses that generate prosperity and jobs – almost a “virtual” business incubator.<sup>169</sup> Successful new businesses include Byron Film Studios, Northern Rivers Screenworks and Enova Energy.<sup>170</sup> Activities include mentoring, business advising, networking and events. The college has recently taken over the operations of CLIC Business Village, a business incubator located at the main college campus in Mullumbimby.

The college’s national expertise and reputation as a supplier of permaculture and environmental sustainability training has made it an important attraction for employers in the Northern Rivers region.<sup>171</sup> The College also runs small business training programs and has developed a new youth employment initiative with Byron Shire Council, Regional Development Australia, AusIndustry, Jobs NSW and Southern Cross University.

## Central Coast Community College

Central Coast Community College (CCCC) partnered with other members of the Regional Economic Development & Employment Strategy (REDES) Future Skills taskforce<sup>172</sup> which includes Regional Development Australia (RDA) Central Coast, University of Newcastle, TAFE – all three of which are co-located on the same campus as CCCC – and local high schools, participating in a Food Industry showcase held on campus. The aim of the showcase was to highlight learning and employment opportunities on the Coast in the Food & Hospitality industry. CCCC works with other campus partners in the Ourimbah education precinct to ensure that a full spectrum of training and education – from community programs and Certificate I through to post-graduate qualifications – caters for the skills required by Central Coast industries and businesses.

## Coffs Coast Community College

Coffs Coast Community College (Coffs Harbour) collaborated with Coffs Harbour Council in establishing “6 degrees”, a space where people can come to work, share, collaborate and receive inspiration from other like-minded people. This has resulted in a community of local entrepreneurs, freelancers and collaborators, and digital spaces for established businesses. Coffs Coast CC hosted the Coffs Harbour CBD “six degrees” location until recently.<sup>173</sup>

## Community College Northern Inland

Community College Northern Inland (CCNI) operates a number of projects across its seven centres. In 2016 CCNI trained 3066 people in VET courses alone, not include non-

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<sup>168</sup> See <http://www.businessgrowthcentre.org.au/>.

<sup>169</sup> See <https://sbp.org.au/sourdough-business-pathways-business-mentoring-byron-bay/>.

<sup>170</sup> See <https://sbp.org.au/sourdough-business-pathways-mentoring-projects/>.

<sup>171</sup> See <https://www.byroncollege.org.au/Sustainability>.

<sup>172</sup> See [http://www.rdacc.org.au/education\\_future\\_skills](http://www.rdacc.org.au/education_future_skills).

<sup>173</sup> See <https://sixdegreescoworking.com/>.

accredited training with more than 500 people. Many courses achieved an 80% employment outcome rate.

The Warialda and Bingara campuses are represented on the Gwydir Learning Region Country Education Fund (GLRCEF) Committee, a collection of community, education and Council representatives who work to ensure that regional educational needs are met, fostering community capacity building and regeneration into a sustainable geographical region.<sup>174</sup>

CCNI works with the NSW Department of Primary Industry; local councils including Gunnedah, Gwydir and Tamworth; a number of employment organisations, including Aboriginal Employment Strategy – Moree Branch, Best Employment, Jobs Australia, Joblink Plus and Gunnedah Community Roundtable; and regional employers including Bindaree Beef (the largest employer in Inverell), AGT Foods, Boggabri Coal, Nolans & Keys plumbing, Cargill Oil Seed Processing, Myall cotton vale research, Moree Solar Farm and Gunnedah Leather.

## **Goulburn Community College**

More than eight years after the closure of the Southern Region Community College, Goulburn Community College (NSW) opened its doors in 2016 as a not-for-profit social enterprise, offering adult and community education programs and services to the NSW Southern Tablelands. The college offers business-related non-accredited courses in marketing, governance, IT and computer skills (MS Office, PowerPoint, Excel).<sup>175</sup>

## **Guyra Adult Learning Association and New England Community College**

The college is currently partnering with Jobs Australia and Costas Tomato Exchange to do pre-employment course with long term unemployed to upskill them so that they are guaranteed a job interview at the Tomato Farm. Funding comes from Jobs Australia.

## **Kiama Community College**

Kiama Community College's (KCC) NextGEN Digital Development Program is a two-year funded project now entering its final half-year. This innovative concept was originally created and trialled by Kiama Municipal Council and KCC, working with Kiama High School. The Project supports local businesses (the Kiama area has a large number of micro businesses) to enhance their digital presence, while simultaneously accelerating young peoples' job readiness for careers in the thriving digital sector. NextGEN Digital targets young people (age 15 to 24) at risk of becoming long term unemployed. It is highly aspirational and focusses on occupations experiencing significant job growth, requiring higher order skills and anticipated to be in increased demand well into the future: digital marketing, social media, web design, writing, graphic design, entrepreneurship, sales, business marketing and multimedia production. As well as providing "cutting edge" digital skills, the program immerses participants in learning experiences, including real employment that develops skills such as communicating with clients, entrepreneurship, managing client expectations and working collaboratively. The current two-year project is funded by Australian

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<sup>174</sup> See <https://cef.org.au/foundations/gwydir/>.

<sup>175</sup> See <https://goulburncommunitycollege.com.au/> and <http://www.goulburnpost.com.au/story/3335790/community-college-coming-soon/>.



Government Department of Jobs and Small Business as part of the Empowering YOUTH Initiatives, which supports new, innovative approaches to help long-term unemployed young people aged 15 to 24 years to improve their skills and move toward sustainable employment.<sup>176</sup>

In this current project, KCC has “spun off” the social enterprise aspect of the project to Digital Business Hub, which is running the employment phase of the program.<sup>177</sup> Other partners in the activity to date have included Southern Youth & Family Services, Essential Personnel and Australian Community Support Organisation (ACSO). More than 100 participants have successfully gone through the program.

The college also works with Green Connect Illawarra, a social enterprise (of Community Resources) to provide a first Australian work experience to refugees. KCC is working with 30 refugees, delivering courses in Skills for Work & Vocational Pathways to build employability and English language within the horticulture and waste management industries.

## Murwillumbah Community College

Murwillumbah Community College (MCC) specialises in developing local employment and skills in aged and disability support, seasonal employment in hospitality and tourism, the small business sector, and the horticultural and agricultural sectors. Qualifications are underpinned by work placements arranged with local employers. The MCC CEO was a founding member of the Tweed Economic Development Corporation, serving on that Board for many years in parallel with serving as a Councillor on Tweed Shire Council.

## Nepean Community College

While based in Penrith, a great deal of Nepean Community College’s work has been in the Blue Mountains – technically part of Sydney metropolitan area but much of it facing regional economic challenges – and beyond the mountains. Nepean has partnered in projects with the Penrith CBD Corporation, MyBusiness program, Penrith Blue Mountains Digital Enterprise Program, Afford Learners Club in Australian Disability Enterprises, Mamre Sudanese Womens program, Centre for Office Productivity program, Western Sydney Business Advisory Centre, Australian Foundation for Disability, Catholic Care and the Mercy Sisters and a number of Job Network providers.

## Port Macquarie Community College

Port Macquarie Community College (PMCC) has led the formation (in 2014) of the Mid North Coast Human Services Alliance (MNCHSA), a network of NGOs in integrated health and human services (IHHS), which works to promote and develop better person-valuing and community-building community-owned services. It has led to partnerships for better business and increased efficiency in the sector, bringing more jobs to the region. In 2016 the MNCHSA incorporated and began moving to manage larger amounts of funding to nurture new enterprise development in IHHS. This has led to hosting the Local Drug Action Team for Port Macquarie Hastings, initiating new Alcohol & Other Drugs programs in the area; and starting the Cooperative Research Centre project for Regional Health Solutions, a \$40 million/10-year project going to the Commonwealth CRC Committee in July 2018. The MNCHSA is forming partnerships to commercialise Asia-Pacific exportable product & service

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<sup>176</sup> Details on the Empowering YOUTH Initiatives here: <https://www.jobs.gov.au/empowering-youth-initiatives>.

<sup>177</sup> See <https://www.digitalbusinesshub.com.au/>.

development in IHHS for regional and remote communities and emergency situations; this will become a substantial economic development activity for the mid North Coast region.

PMCC has established the Makerspace, a venue for microenterprise development in a hands-on, practical workshop and display area, which will provide small business incubation support and aim to help individuals and groups to initiate new enterprises. PMCC plans to extend this to both Taree and Kempsey.

## Riverina Community College

Riverina Community College (Wagga Wagga) has completed many projects with the underlying theme of returning unemployed people to employment, including:

- Art Therapy for disengaged remote communities: returning alienated and disengaged wives and female partners in farming communities to economic and community participation.
- Care for the carers: aiding those who are carers learn better management and time management techniques so that they better engage with their communities
- Pop up learning lab, a mobile learning lab taking short courses to remote areas.
- Disability Art Studio: mentoring for people with artistic and craft talent so that they can reach the point where their works are commercially viable. The aim is to exhibit and sell their works and aid them in setting up a small business.
- Migrants and refugees – integrating these cohorts into the community and aiding them in acquiring work.

## Robinson College, Broken Hill

Robinson College operates in Broken Hill and the Far West Region of NSW, where there is a vast range economic development projects across mining, alternative energy and agriculture. Some of the projects include the Pipeline, Wind farm and expansions within the mining sector. As many of these projects require a percentage of Indigenous workers, the college has developed an expertise in engaging many of the most disadvantaged Indigenous residents to build learner confidence and develop “work-ready” skills, with partners such as the Maari Ma Health Aboriginal Corporation.

Other partners on economic development projects include the Menindee Men’s Shed, the Royal Flying Doctor Service. The college continues to develop creative approaches to meet the unique skills, employment pathways and small business development needs of Far Western NSW.

## South Coast Colleges

South Coast Colleges (Bateman’s Bay, Ulladulla and Merimbula) has worked with the Milton-Ulladulla business community to develop a regional economic development plan, one that addresses the challenges seasonal tourism brings to a district. As part of the process, 25 people completed a Certificate IV in Frontline Management, with the underlying project being the creation of a regional plan. Using that activity as a pilot, South Coast Colleges repeated the exercise in 2014 in Narooma and Moruya. In 2014, the College took 27 people through Certificate III in Tourism, resulting in the creation of the Milton-Ulladulla Comedy Festival, a sustainable “social enterprise” under the name “ULLADULLIRIOUS”, This bi-annual event also that addresses “off-season” economic issues and has received multiple awards.<sup>178</sup>

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<sup>178</sup> See <http://eaec.edu.au/workforce-development-milton-ulladulla-region/> and <http://ulladullirious.com.au/>.

In 2015 South Coast Colleges worked with Bega Valley Shire Council and Cruise Eden to train students to address the increase in tourism numbers due to the cruise liners now docking in Eden. The College subsequently put 10 students through Certificate IV in New Small Business, creating the Batemans Bay International Fringe Festival.<sup>179</sup>

## Tamworth Community College

Tamworth Community College (TCC) works closely with the NSW Department of Premier & Cabinet, which has taken the lead in the regional youth employment, bringing together a wide-ranging group of industry, community, government and educational leaders. TCC is also participating in the Namoi region NSW Local Government Skills Strategy. TCC works closely with Multi-cultural Tamworth, skilling migrants and assisting with job applications thus encouraging overseas professionals (in particular) to locate themselves in regional NSW.

TCC also works with Tamworth Regional Council's Investment and Growth Department to meet the higher education needs of the local community. As there is no university in Tamworth, TCC has created formal articulation agreements with both the University of Newcastle and University of New England that recognise the College's Diploma of Leadership and Management as a pathway to a Bachelor of Business and/or Bachelor of Commerce. Completion of the TCC Diploma course is the equivalent of up to one third of a student's degree, bringing more tertiary education opportunities to the Tamworth region.<sup>180</sup>

## Tuggerah Lakes Community College

Tuggerah Lakes Community College's (TLCC) works in economic development through delivering programs under the ACE Community Service Obligation (CSO) program to vulnerable and disadvantaged learners in the region, as well as providing mainstream Smart and Skilled funded training delivery including traineeships.

## VERTO

VERTO – known as Central West Community College until 2012, and which won both the NSW and national “Large Training Provider of the Year Award” in 2015 – operates from its Bathurst headquarters as far afield as Tweed Heads, Broken Hill and Albury. It is one of the largest employment and training services providers in the country, and accordingly plays a significant regional economic development role in many of the communities that it services. VERTO trained more than 2850 students in 2016-2017. It runs the Australian Apprenticeship Support Network (AASN) in New South Wales. In 2016-17, the Network facilitated more than 9,500 apprenticeship commencements and more than 9,200 completions, as well as assisting more than 2,100 apprentices identified as being at risk of not completing their apprenticeship to stay on track. VERTO also runs a number of disability, employment (jobactive) and Aboriginal employment services.<sup>181</sup>

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<sup>179</sup> See <https://www.2ec.com.au/kimmi-saker/latest-from-kimmi/56316-batemans-bay-international-fringe-festival>.

<sup>180</sup> See <http://www.northerndailyleader.com.au/story/4316434/uni-pathways-surge/>; <http://www.tamworth.nsw.edu.au/>; and <http://www.tamworth.nsw.gov.au/Economic-Development/default.aspx>.

<sup>181</sup> See <https://www.verto.org.au/about-us/our-heritage> and <https://www.verto.org.au/about-us/corporate-information>.

## WEA Hunter

WEA Hunter continues to expand its services throughout the Hunter and mid-north coast regions, recently opening a site for the RTO in Cessnock.<sup>182</sup> This site caters for the local population to complete accredited full qualifications, accredited skill sets and lifestyle courses including RSA and RCG. In the short time it has been open, WEA Hunter is running at capacity in the day and is working to expand the opportunity for space. The training space is co-located with ALESCO Senior College and is an expansion to services offered. WEA Hunter has recently taken over the Cessnock Community Garden and will develop the space to be able to offer horticulture in both the accredited and lifestyle offerings. WEA Hunter has set up the WEA Hunter Foundation to “generate partnerships and secure resources to drive educational outcomes for the benefit of local communities.”<sup>183</sup>

## WEA Illawarra

In addition to working collaboratively with the NSW Business Chamber, WEA Illawarra runs the Youth Path Program and Nowra Job Ready program, both focussing on the re-engagement of young people to create “work ready” skills. These projects in turn improve the selection of workers for local industry and the resulting increases in productivity.

## Western College, Dubbo

Western College has recently begun to engage with Aboriginal community radio stations in northwest NSW. Working with Murdi Paaki Regional Enterprise Corporation (MPREC) – an Indigenous owned and managed not-for-profit organisation – the college is delivering foundation skills and digital technology training to the staff of Aboriginal community radio stations. The objective of the program is to improve use of technology and to build the capacity of the radio teams to create videos for use on social media and create commercial income. The project supports the regional Indigenous employment strategy.

## Western Riverina Community College, Griffith

Western Riverina Community College economic development activities focus on upskilling individuals in order to take an active role in the regional workforce. Programs are developed both the college and in consultations with local stakeholders. Two recent examples of targeted workplace programs included Functional English for the Workplace (NESB targeted training) work health and safety (WHS) induction to Mandarin speakers to facilitate installation of high tech processing equipment. The college also works extensively with clients active in the aged care and disability sectors.

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<sup>182</sup> The former Forster Tuncurry Community College is now WEA Coast (<https://www.weacoast.edu.au/>).

<sup>183</sup> See <https://www.weahunter.edu.au/about-the-foundation>.

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