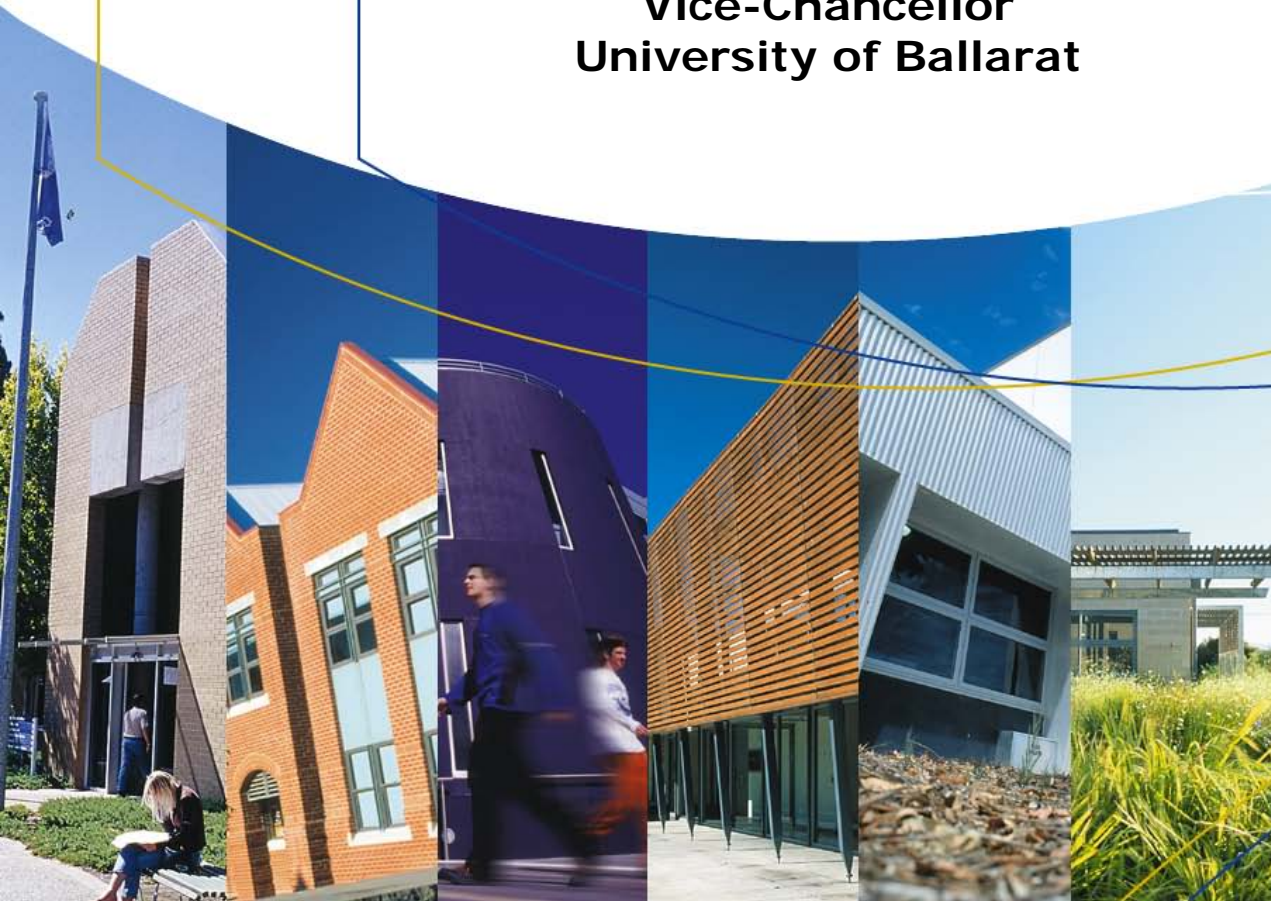


# TERTIARY EDUCATION IN THE REGIONS: DOES IT MAKE A DIFFERENCE?



David Battersby  
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University of Ballarat





- Regional Participation
- The Report Card
- Regional Universities
  - Economic Impact
  - Research
  - Social Impact
- “Downside” issues for regional universities
- 75 words – mantra of regional Australians





**Australian Government**

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**Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations**

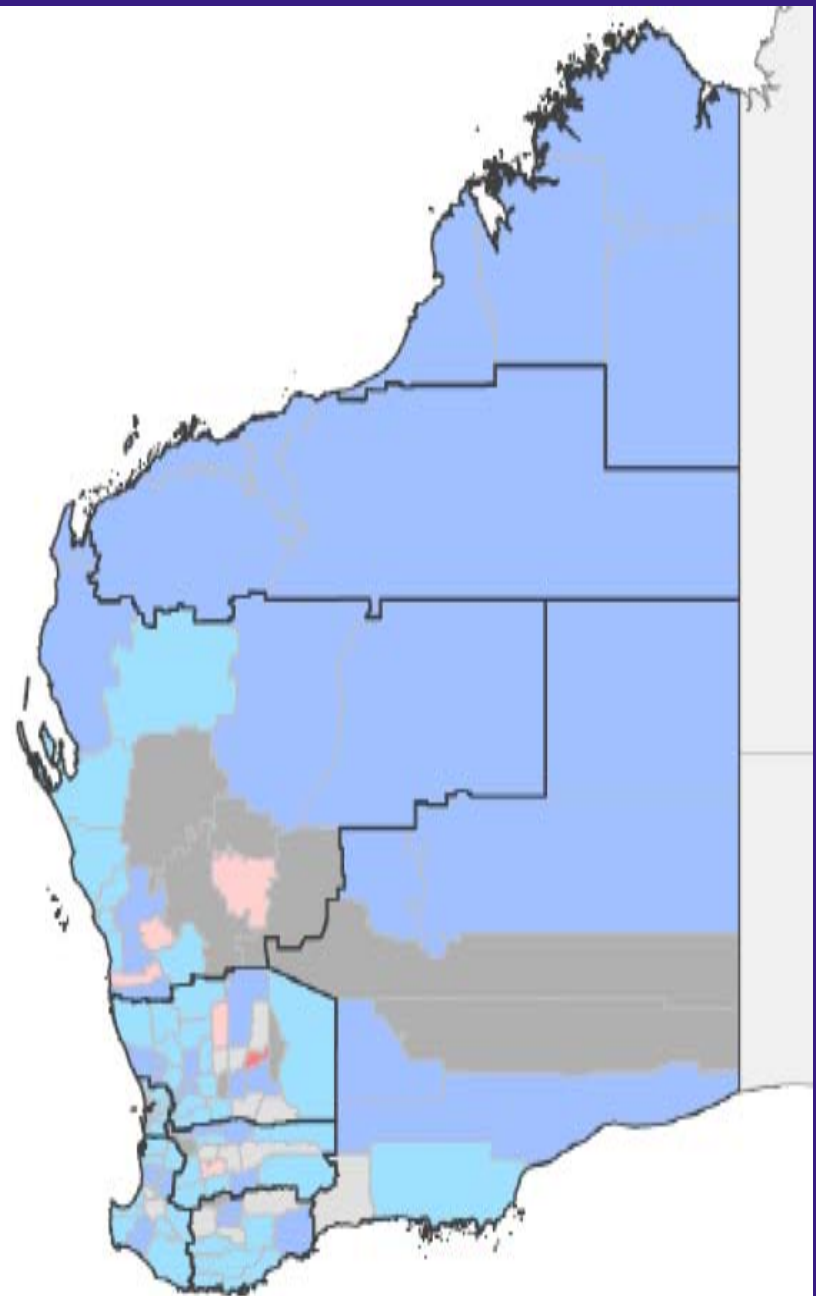
# **Regional Participation:** The Role of Socioeconomic Status and Access



- The gap between regional and metropolitan students' access to university is widening significantly
- Regional students' under-representation is increasing
- And the gap between the percentage of Australians living in regional communities and those from the regions attending university is also increasing



Per cent



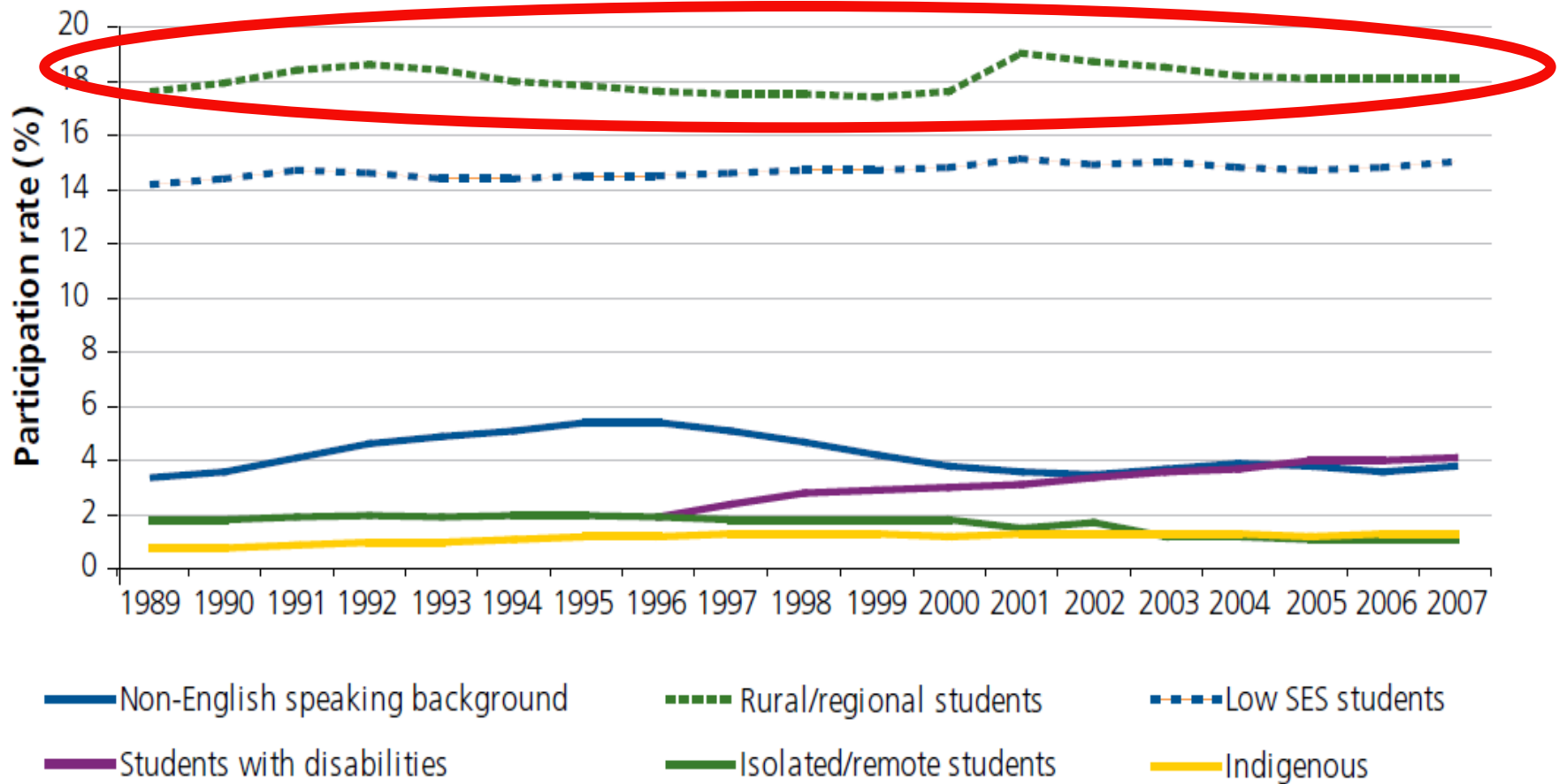


# South West & Bunbury

- State average in terms of participation of 17+ age group is 4.45%
- South West region is 3%
- Bunbury is 3.4%
- Bunbury in terms of TAFE participation is 2.8%
- Below State average and on par with Australian regional average



Figure 2: Participation rates by groups, 1989 to 2007

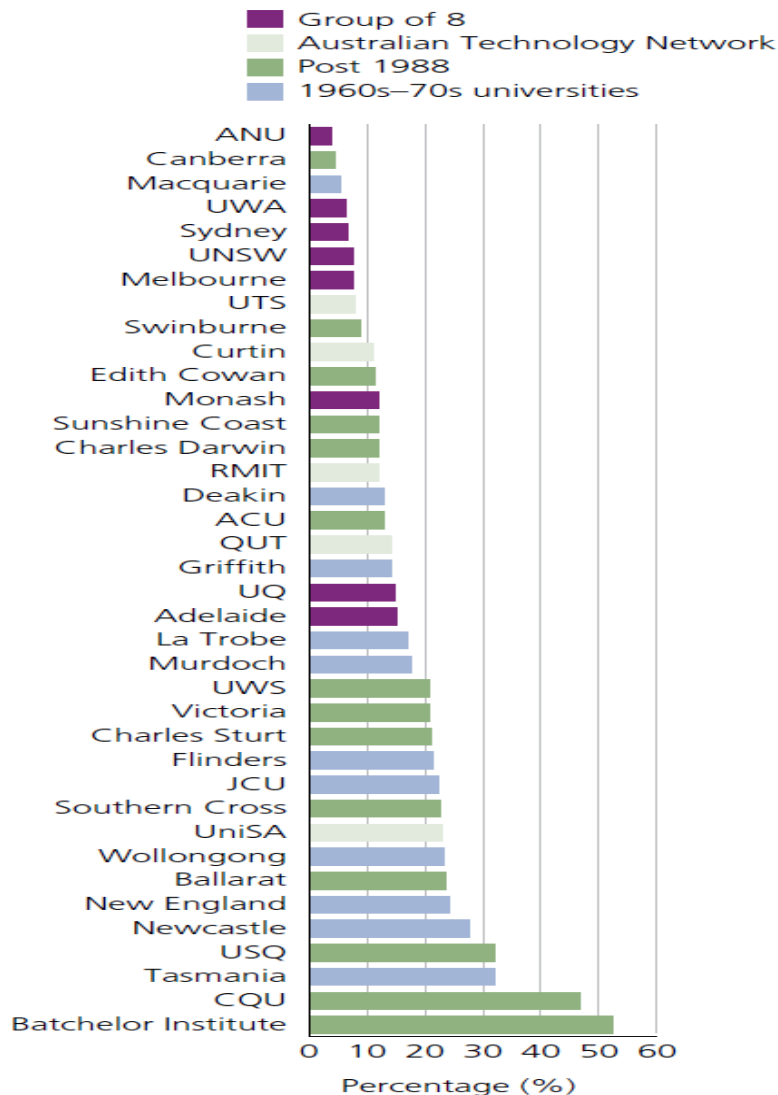


Note: a) Definitions for regional/rural and isolated/remote students were altered in 2001 causing a break in series, b) Post-2001 is based on 2006 Census SES postcode allocations, whereas prior years are based on earlier Census SES postcode allocations

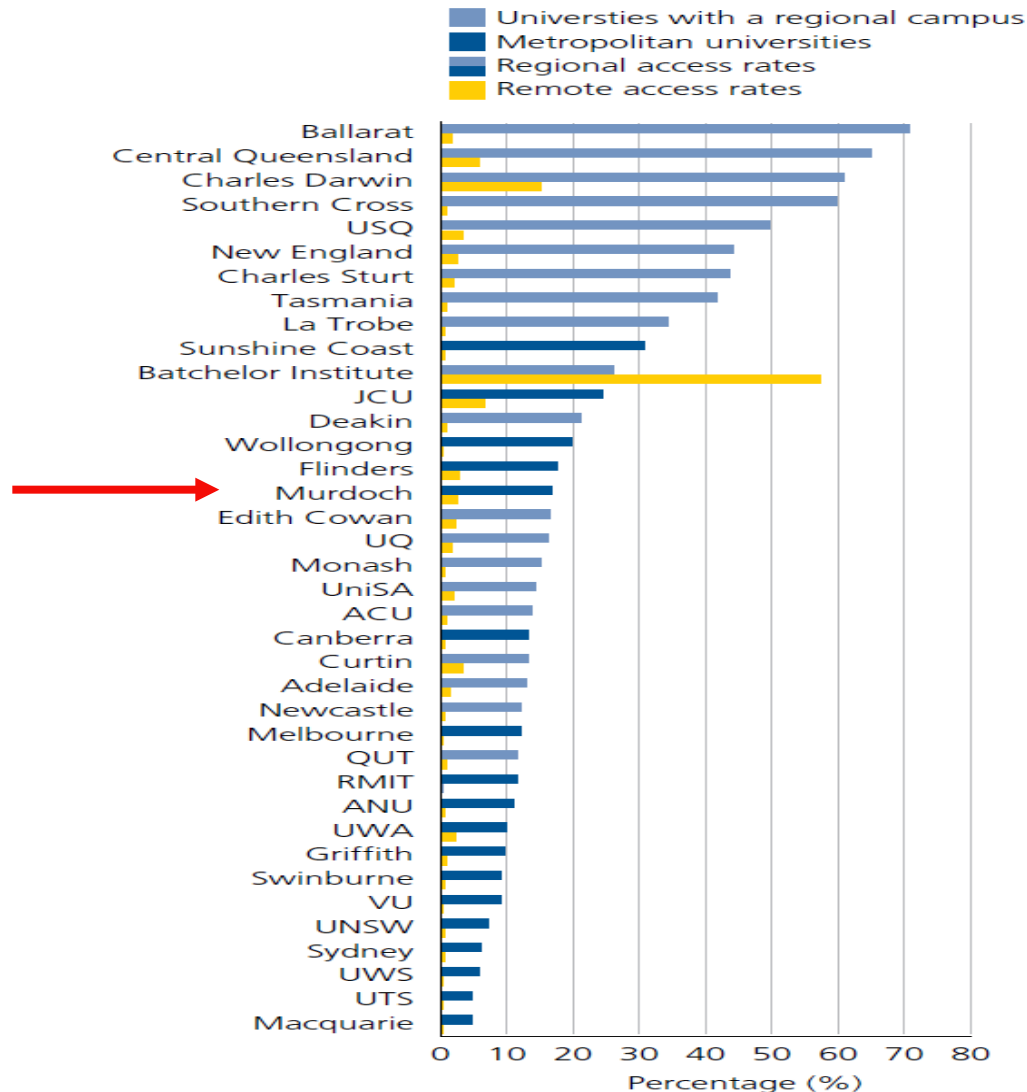
Source: DEEWR (Equity Performance Indicators - national indicators), various years



**Figure 8: Access rates for low SES students by type of university, 2007**



**Figure 9: Access rates for regional and remote students by location of university campuses, 2007**



*Note: Low SES is determined using a postcode methodology. Students from low SES backgrounds are those whose permanent home address postcode falls within the lowest 25 per cent of postcodes as coded by the ABS SEIFA Index of Education and Occupation (Census 2006). Under the MCEETYA categorisation, metropolitan zones are classified as major urban statistical districts with 100,000 or more population, including ACT-Queanbeyan, Cairns, Gold Coast-Tweed, Geelong, Hobart, Newcastle, Sunshine Coast, Townsville, Wollongong. A regional campus is identified where there is an enrolment load of more than one hundred.*

*Source: DEEWR Students (Selected Higher Education Statistics, Institutional Assessment Framework, 2007)*



# The Report Card

- University participation rates in regional Australia are about two-thirds those of metropolitan areas (21% compared with 35% - 19-21)
  - Year 12 completions are about half that compared to metropolitan areas
  - Those with bachelors degrees in regional areas are about half that for metropolitan areas
- Regional participation rates in Australia are lower than national rates in countries such as Argentina, Korea and Israel



# Regional Universities in Australia

- Australia has 14 regional, rural and inland universities
- Six are headquartered in a capital city
- 176,000 students
- Delivering over \$2 billion annually to regional economies
- They do make a difference



# **We also know that ...**

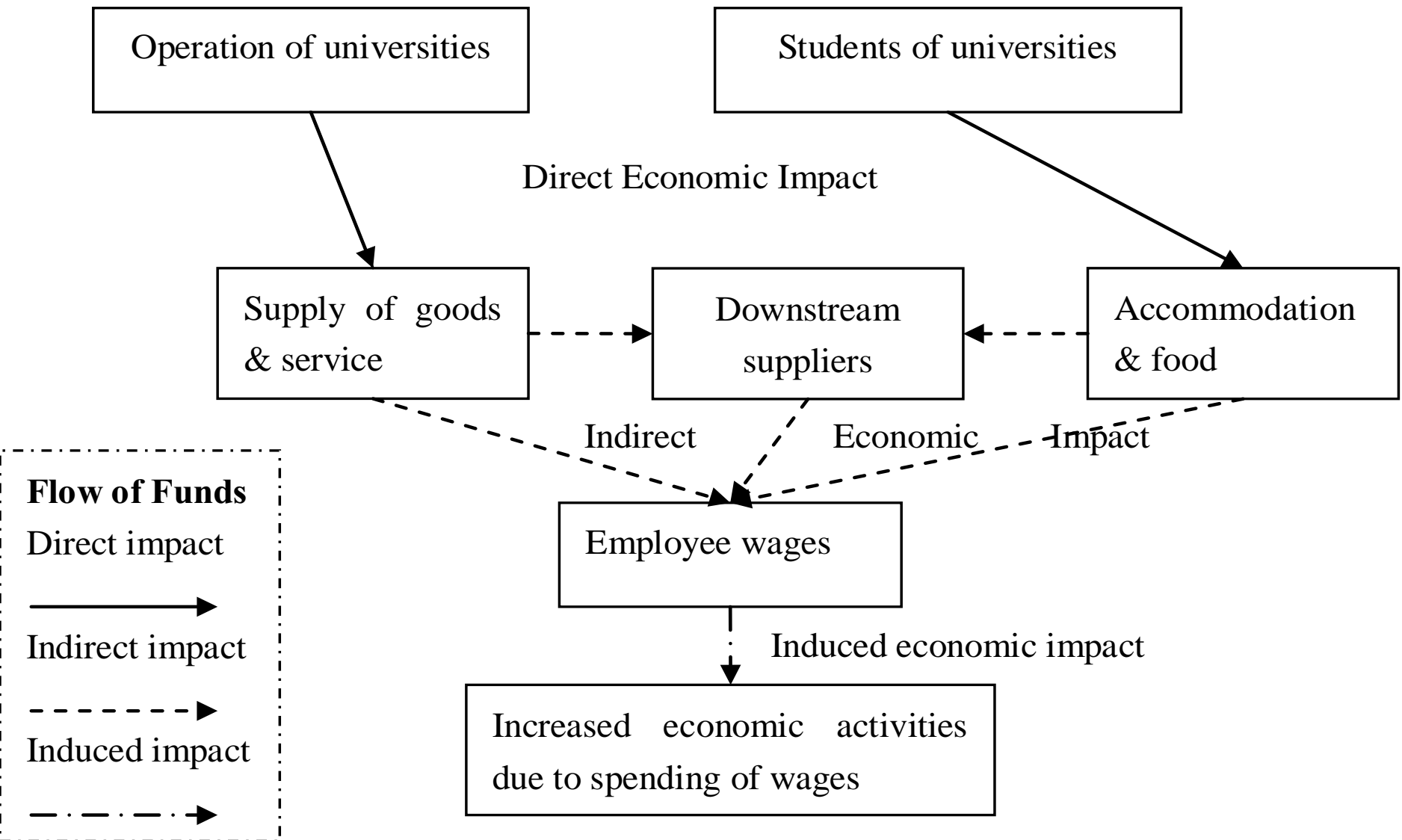
- The socio-economic status (SES) profiles of students at regional campuses are lower on average than their metropolitan counterparts
- Regional campuses have proportionally higher numbers of Indigenous students
- Six in every 10 students attending a regional university are the first members of their family ever to attend a university



# Economic Impact

The Institute for Research into  
International Competitiveness (IRIC)  
The Economic Impact of Edith Cowan  
University on the Western Australian  
Economy







# Economic Impact

The University of Ballarat contributes:

- \$511 million dollars annually to its region's economy
- 3150 full-time jobs
- 12 per cent of the total employment in Ballarat



The University of Southern Queensland adds over \$325m to the regional economies of the Darling Downs and Fraser Coast and is responsible for 10% of employment in Toowoomba



Southern Cross University  
contributes \$270m annually to the  
regional economy and 2500 jobs

University of New England  
contributes \$280m annually to the  
local economy, directly and through  
multipliers, representing 32% of the  
local economy



# What About Research?

Regional universities make a major contribution to research in regional Australia such as water quality, plant genetics, livestock and other agriculture, bio-diversity and environmental changes to regional health and delivery



# Social Impact of Regional Universities

- Play a major role in the social fabric of nearly 100 regional cities and towns in Australia
  - Without regional provision all of these cities and towns would lose large numbers of those in the 18-34 age group to the major cities
- Regional campuses are major contributors to the cultural fabric of regional communities



- Regional universities do matter and their staff make a real difference.
  - staff live in these communities and engage socially and professionally with business, governments and organisations
  - They provide services, benefits, ideas, knowledge and research
- Staff make a significant contribution to the social and cultural capital of regional communities



Tertiary education in the regions does make a difference, but it comes at a cost ...

- The financial disincentives for choosing to introduce high cost courses in response to genuine need, such as in the health sciences, engineering, etc, where student intake numbers would be lower than in metropolitan campuses
- Significant costs incurred in undertaking the University's community obligations as specified in its Act



- The additional costs of having a large percentage of domestic students (60%) as first generation university students creating cost burdens for the University in its support of these students through their studies
- Embedded structural rigidities relating to staffing and course profiles where there is a necessity to offer the same course on different campuses



It is more expensive ...

"... higher education in rural and regional areas is ... relatively more expensive to provide than urban education ... these additional costs may be close to 30 to 35 per cent of the total costs..."



# Four Recommendations

1. Reduce HECS for full-time, undergraduate students who attend universities which are headquartered in regional Australia to:
  - redress low participation rates and net migration flow of people to capital cities
  - provide an incentive for those in capital cities to move to regional Australia to attend university



2. Provide additional funding assistance to students in regional universities, many of whom are unable to access part-time and vacation employment at the same level as their capital city counterparts
3. Provide project funding to regional universities to assist in discharging their legislative obligation to meet the education, training and research needs of the regions they serve



4. Target funding for specific regional skill and workforce shortages such as teaching, nursing, allied health, engineering and the sciences



# The 75 Words That Matter to Regional Australians

We, as regional Australians, expect to be treated fairly and equitably when it comes to the provision of government services; we have a right to know how much each of the major government departments is spending in our region and in regional Australia; we want to have input into government decisions about the services and projects it delivers to our region; and we want the government to show leadership by standing up for regional Australia.



