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Reimagining Pathways – How Small Towns and Universities Can Co Create Futures for Young People

DR. LUKE WEBSTER, CURTIN UNIVERSITY



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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

Curtin University acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, the First Peoples of this place we call Australia, and recognises them for caring for Country for more than 60,000 years. We are honoured and grateful for the privilege to maintain campuses operating in Boorloo (Perth) and Karlkurla (Kalgoorlie) in Australia. We pay our respects to Elders past and present as Custodians and Owners of these lands. We recognise their deep knowledge and their cultural, spiritual and educational practices, and aspire to learn and teach in partnership with them. Curtin also acknowledges First Nations peoples connected with our global campuses. We are committed to working in partnership with all Custodians and Owners to strengthen and embed First Nations' voices and perspectives in our decision-making, now and into the future.

Mission statement

I believe in the transformative power of education.

I believe everyone has an equal right to access education.

I believe the key to small town reinvention is to invest in local education pathways and make them visible to young people.

City guy gone country

- Born in the city – Perth Boorloo
- PhD in using storytelling to create community
- 20 years @ Curtin University
- Didn’t want to move to the country

…now manage three major award winning RRR projects



AHEAD

EXPLORE YOUR FUTURE
IN HIGHER EDUCATION

A **university agnostic** outreach program for people from **low socio-economic status**, **regional** and **First Nation** backgrounds.

Focus on building **confidence** in participants' abilities, identifying **post-school pathways**, practice **study skills**, and understand the variety of **pathways** into all five of the Western Australian universities

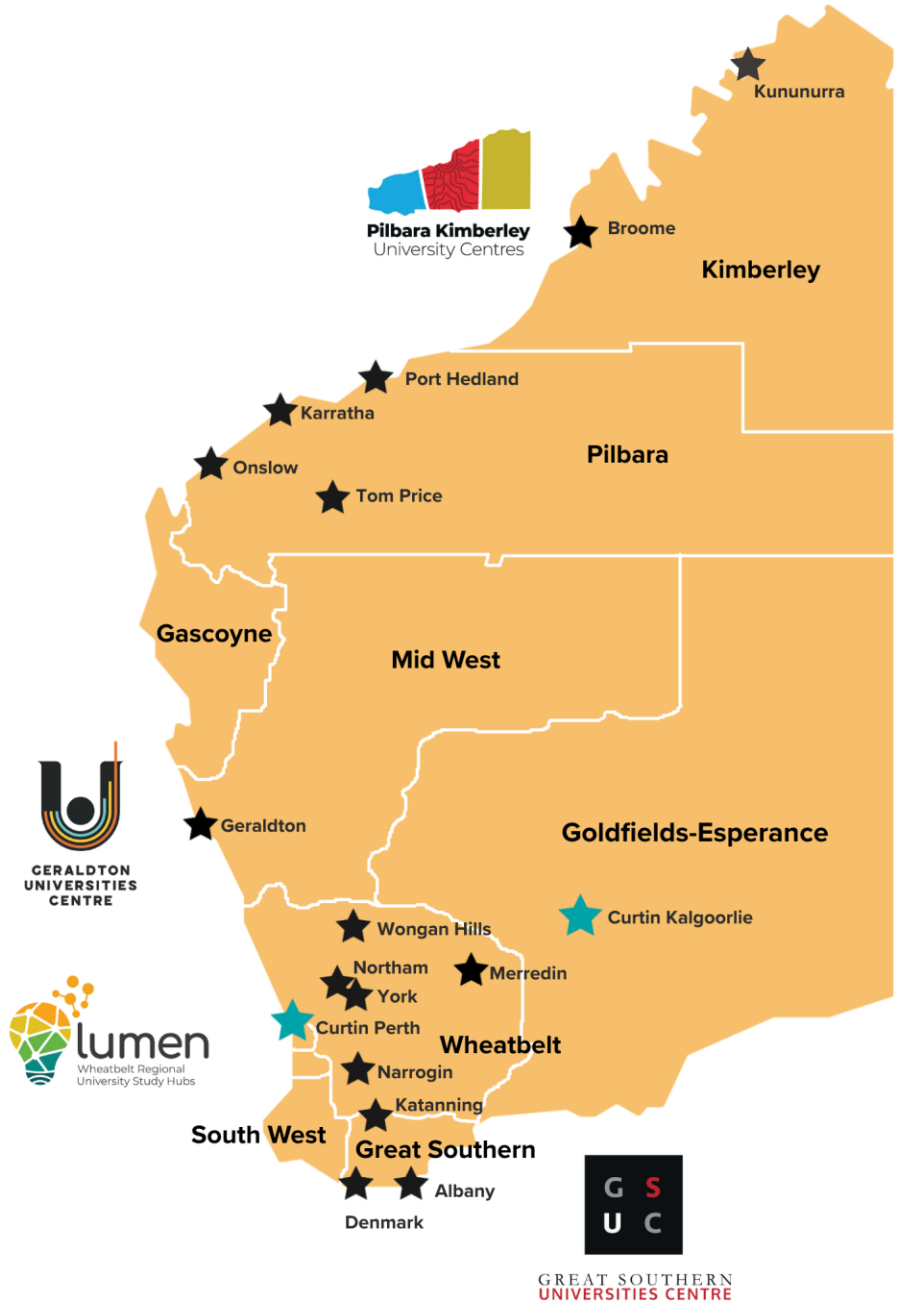


The Western Australian context

- All universities headquartered in Perth and limited regional campuses
- Inequity in access to education
- High regional delivery cost
- Unmet RRR workforce demands
- **53 of 330 high schools do not offer Year 11 and 12 – all in RRR locations**

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The Western Australian context



- University has a regional presence
- Access to education improved
- More consistent delivery
- RRR insights fed back to the university

Stronger together

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Small towns offer things you can't get in the city!

- Students from all faculties of study
- Showcasing innovation, culture and networking in small towns
- Encouraging regional career pathways
- Career fast track for graduates
- Welcoming communities
- Students are looking for this (even if they don't realise it!!)







REGIONAL CHANGEMAKERS



Widening participation collaboration

- Now active in every region of Western Australia
- Different model with each WA RUSH



AHEAD

EXPLORE YOUR FUTURE IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Pilbara Kimberley University Centres

GERALDTON UNIVERSITIES CENTRE

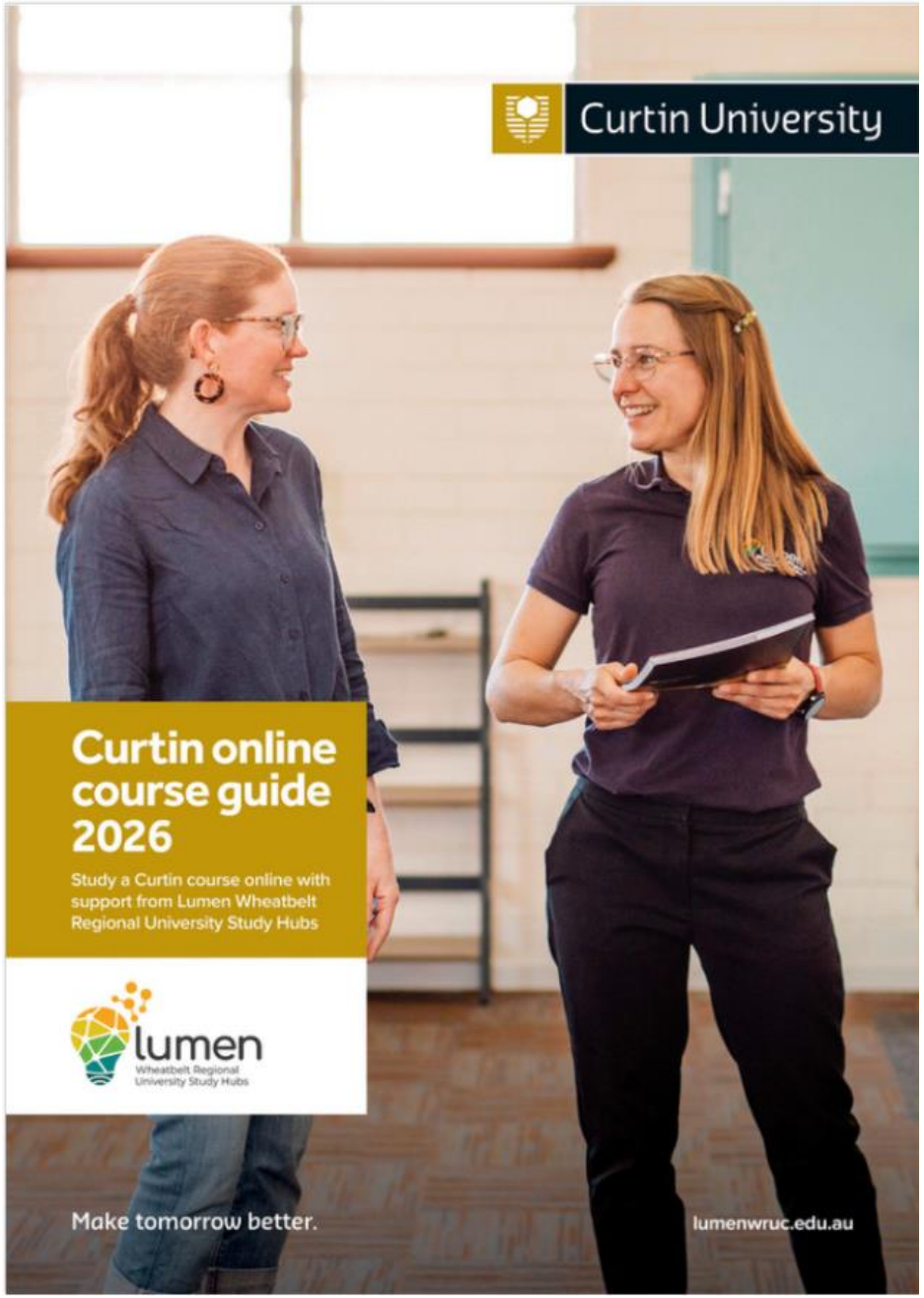
lumen Wheatbelt Regional University Study Hubs

GREAT SOUTHERN UNIVERSITIES CENTRE

Co-branded resources

- Course improvements
- Increased visibility





Regional Changemakers

- Students taking on volunteer projects
- Regional placements
- Creating RRR projects



The fundamentals of partnership



Yunkaporta, T. (2009). Aboriginal Pedagogies at the Cultural Interface, James Cook University.

Long term and sustainable =

"Do things with us not to us"

- Relationship
- Reciprocity
- Place-based knowledge

Things I have observed

Education systems are monolithic

- Systems change is hard – but finding agents of change within each system is possible (**relationships**)
- There are benefits to be gained for both small towns and universities alike (**reciprocity**)
- Small towns have a degree of knowledge and insight critical for the future (**place-based knowledge**)

Thriving small towns invest in their school

Kulin

- Town growth
- Bush Races investment
- Scholarships to remain
  (like Cunderdin)







Your school is a community asset… how well connected is your school??

Making local opportunities visible

Careers relevant to the region

- Map out local options and identify mentors!

Education pathways

- Advocate and invest in more!



WHEATBELT & BEYOND
YOUTH MENTORING

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Bring in a third party

Cultures OF Excellence

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UniReady in Schools

The Curtin UniReady in Schools Program is a pathway which provides Year 11 and Year 12 students the opportunity to access the UniReady Program while at school.

Big Picture EDUCATION AUSTRALIA

Doing Co.

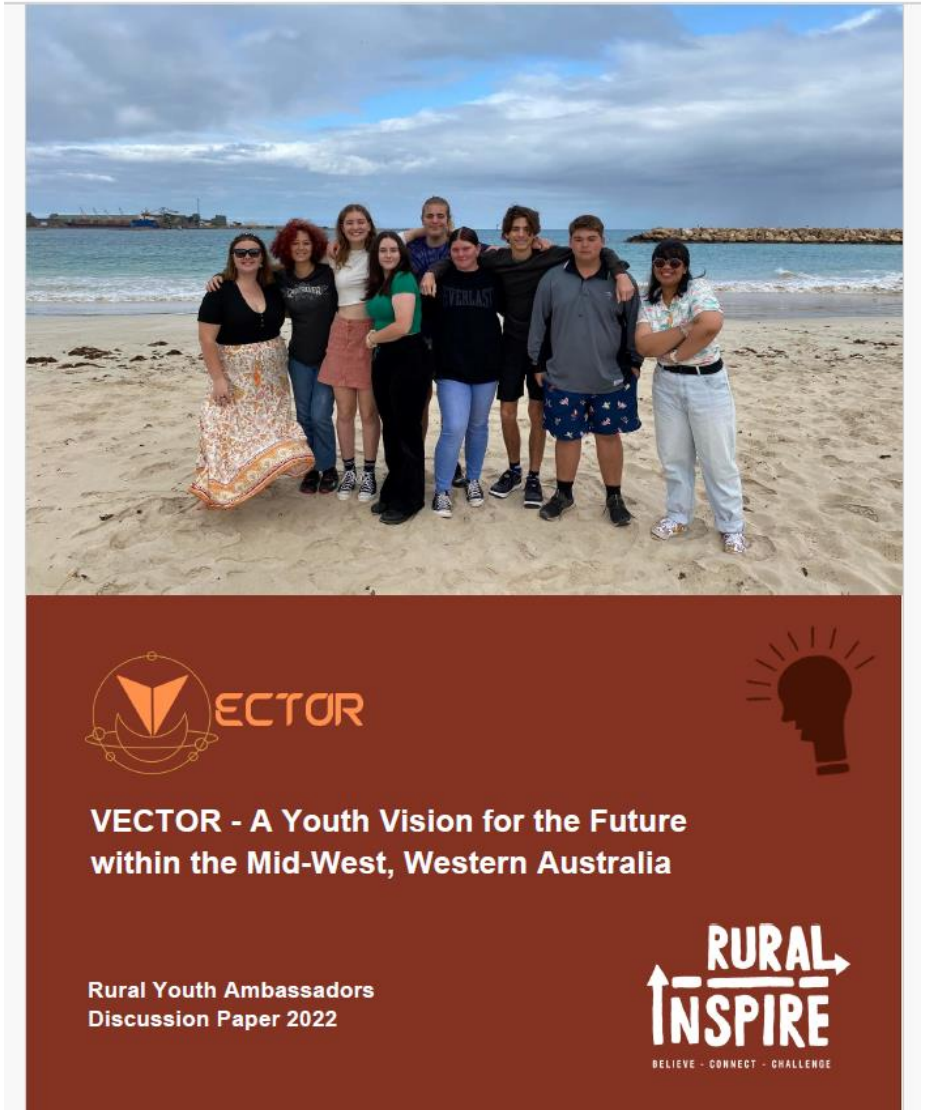
Youth Engagement

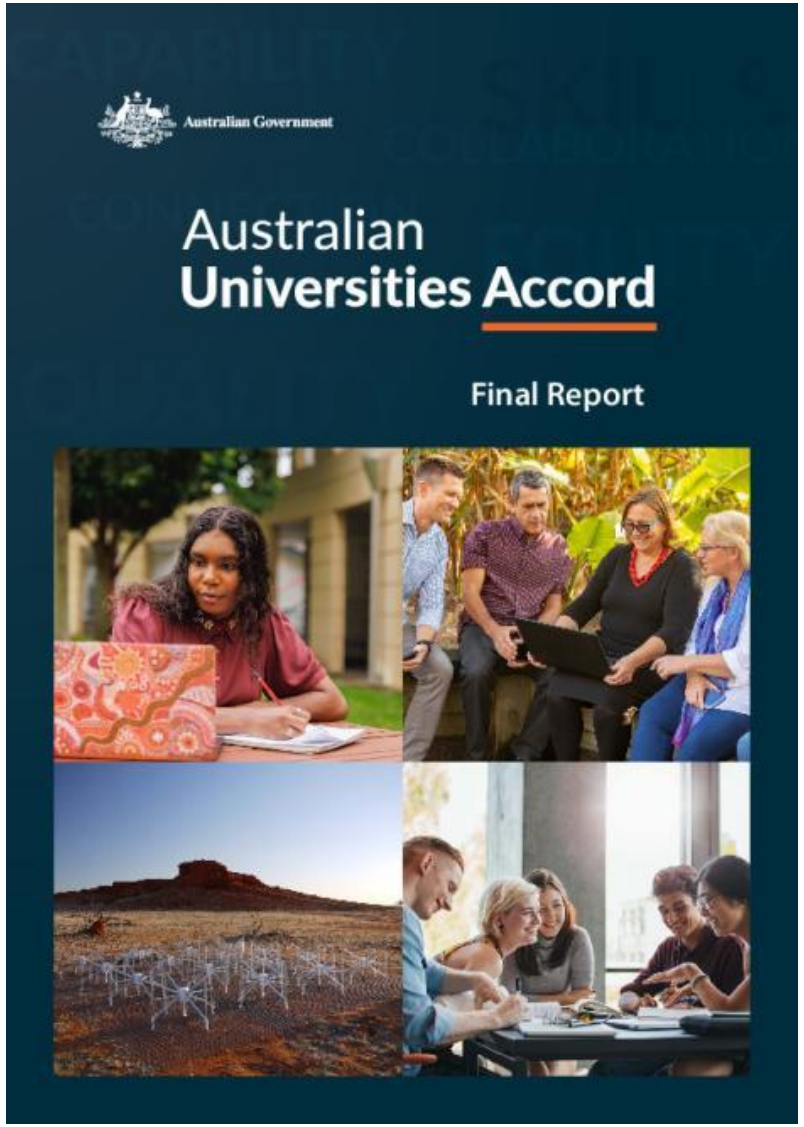
The most common question:

“How do we attract and retain young people???”

Answer:

Ask your young people what they want, act on it and empower them!!





University incentive

- Widening participation
- Enrolment targets
- Government targets for more people in higher education

…so make sure your local university knows who you are!

Tips for impact

Set the bar high. Start from an aspirational model, not a deficit mindset

- Self-organise and approach universities (the wider the network/group, the better!!)
- Coordinate facilities (e.g. accommodation)
- Look for more than the usual degree suspects
- Storytelling – students are looking for meaningful purpose
- Offer for postgraduate short courses to come to you

Find ways to minimise the “it costs too much for too few” argument

Be proud!!

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You have what universities want

*Regional Australia is central to addressing **many of the world's most urgent challenges**, including food and water security, environmental regeneration, energy production, and population decentralisation. Solutions to complex modern issues can be found in conversation and collaboration with the many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledge holders and traditional owners who retain **deep knowledge of Country**.*

*As emerging industries take shape—spanning renewable energy, agribusiness, health care, education, entrepreneurship, and tourism—**Regional Australia is increasingly becoming a hub for research, innovation, and employment**. These developments create new opportunities for Curtin University graduates and establish the regions as significant sites of learning and professional contribution.*

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Thank you!

L.Webster@curtin.edu.au
LukeWebster.com.au
Linked In – Luke Webster PhD.