

# Supporting the Contribution of HEIs to Regional Development, Key Issues: Australia



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# Regionalisation and Australian Higher Education

- **Structural characteristics of Australian HEIs:**
  - **38 public, 2 private universities with more than 160 campuses. Many more student access centres.**
  - **30 % campuses located in rural areas (14% students), 5% provincial cities (6% students), 65% metro areas (80% students).**
  - **Federal Government has funding policy responsibility**
  - **State Governments – legislative responsibility**
  
- **Characteristics of Regions:**
  - **No designated regions – self-determined - functional**
  - **Highly diverse spatial landscape – 85% of pop'n within 50km of coast**
  - **Rapid shifts in settlement patterns occurring**
  - **Issues of spatial equity & efficiency.**
  - **Specific physical issues. eg. distance, water.**
  - **Understanding the drivers of regional growth & competitiveness.**

# **Policy Perspectives on HEIs & Regional Development**

## **Location aspects of HEIs:**

- **Structuralist – HEIs a regional economic booster – equity in non-metropolitan region HEI participation**
- **Spatial perspective in some student number placement allocations – an equity measure based on distance from metropolitan centres**
- **'Third Stream' funding policy proposal (RQF) – a growing recognition of regional significance**

## **Regional development policy:**

- **Mostly an equity focus - the so-called 'disadvantaged region' through infrastructure and targeted region-specific initiatives**
- **Responsibility shared by Federal and State Governments**

## **Issues affecting response of HEIs to regional development**

- **Lack of a relevant HEI funding policy and poorly focussed regional development policy by governments**
- **A focus on inputs rather than outcomes by HEIs in relation to their location – a leadership and awareness issue**
- **No recognition by regional leaders of how to go beyond the strategy and no recognition of the importance of building human capital for regional growth and competitiveness**