



**Rural and
Remote Education
Advisory Council**

Rural and Remote Education Advisory Council

Albany regional visit 2023



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The Rural and Remote Education Advisory Council (RREAC) acknowledges the Aboriginal people of the many traditional lands and language groups of Western Australia. RREAC respectfully acknowledges the Menang Noongar people as the Traditional Custodians of the land on which the Council conducted this regional visit and pays respect to Elders past and present.

Rural and Remote Education Advisory Council

Albany regional visit 2023

Local context

Albany and its surrounds is home to the Menang Noongar people. The area is called Kinjarling which means "the place of rain".

Albany was the first European settlement in Western Australia, predating the formation of the Swan River Colony by two years.

The City of Albany local government area stretches more than 150km along the south coast of Western Australia. The port city of Albany, located 418km southeast of Perth, is the southern gateway for tourism in the Great Southern region of Western Australia. Albany is known for its stunning natural environment and preservation of Australia's heritage.

With two-thirds of the Great Southern region's population living in the City of Albany, Albany is the hub of the region. Albany has a population of over 37,000 and has many amenities, including a regional hospital, primary industry and retail centres. Construction, agriculture and health care are key industries within the City's economy, playing a vital role in supporting the community.

As a growing regional city, Albany has the facilities and services expected of a major city, while still having a strong sense of community and the convenience of country living. This makes it a very attractive place to live, work and holiday.

The City of Albany has a total of 12 primary and 8 secondary public and non-government schools. In 2023, the total primary (including Kindergarten) and secondary enrolments are 3,672 and 3,396 respectively. Students also have access to South Regional TAFE, annexe of the University of Western Australia and the Great Southern Universities Centre.

Executive summary

Established in early 1997, the Rural and Remote Education Advisory Council (RREAC) provides the Minister responsible for the education portfolio with evidence-based and solutions-focused strategic advice on education and training issues and developments in rural and remote areas of Western Australia.

On 1 to 2 August 2023, 14 of 18 RREAC members took part in a regional visit to Albany. This regional visit was the first undertaken by RREAC since 2019. The list of attending Council members and apologies is in Appendix A.

The RREAC regional visit to Albany was designed to provide the Council with a snapshot of the current setting for students moving into senior secondary schooling and post secondary options. The Council was tasked with touring a select set of facilities and meeting with educators, training providers and services from within Albany and the surrounding areas to gain a better understanding of the opportunities and challenges that impact students

To provide the Council with local context, site visits were undertaken at the following locations:

- WA College of Agriculture Denmark
- Mount Barker Community College ¹
- North Albany Senior High School
- South Regional TAFE Albany
- Albany Residential College

Additional to the above site visits, the Council facilitated a community forum for organisations representing education, industry, training and support services in the Albany region. The Council itinerary for the regional visit is included in Appendix B.

A diverse range of views and experiences were provided to the Council across the 2 days of visits and meetings. The Council observed that there was much to celebrate in relation to what was happening across the region. There was encouraging evidence of a commitment to collaboration and commitment to working in partnerships to improve learning and pathway outcomes for students.

It was evident during the visits and consultations that there is a passion, commitment and cooperative approach across the Albany region to take positive steps to improve opportunities and maximise outcomes for students.

While the contexts, support services and challenges in each geographical and organisation type differ to some extent, the Council found that the observations made could be grouped into 3 main themes.

Theme 1: Mental health and student wellbeing

Although not an isolated issue, mental health was identified as a significant issue impacting education, training, industry and support services.

Secondary education providers identified that the demand for mental health and wellbeing support for students was increasing. Schools were concerned about their ability to provide the resources to cater for the demand whilst recognising that families and students seeking support from external providers faced lengthy wait times.

¹ Visits to the WA College of Agriculture Denmark and Mount Barker Community College were undertaken concurrently.

Both TAFE and tertiary providers had in place some wellbeing support for students, but more frequently were more suitably resourced to only go as far as providing local contacts where students could seek support.

Post local education and training, students that were already engaged in mental health supports continue to have a need. Students transitioning out of the local area to access further education and training anecdotally had a lower rate of completion due to lacking ongoing support in the areas of mental health and wellbeing.

Theme 2: Partnerships are key to success

Individual organisations or organisation types have the ability to create and implement programs that isolated to a specific cohort can be assessed as successful. An insular approach to initiatives and programs does however create limitations on the success when measured over larger scales ie an entire school, town or region.

In the Albany region where resources to support programs may be fewer than those available to metropolitan counterparts, success for programs and initiatives appears reliant on ensuring that partnerships are formed and remain in place.

These partnerships support the marketing and visibility of programs and create forward facing capabilities that allow programs to evolve as settings or industries change.

Theme 3: Regional barriers

It was acknowledged that students in the Albany region have significant opportunities and facilities provided to them locally, whilst also recognising that barriers still existed to achieve equity of opportunity for regional students.

Being a larger regional hub, Albany offers significant choice and options for students at the secondary level, post-secondary and entering the workforce. However, with this in mind, there were multiple areas and scenarios raised with the Council that suggested regional barriers to equity of opportunity do exist for students in the Albany region compared to metropolitan peers.

Areas raised with the Council include:

- access to a full range of secondary courses
- staffing
- access to face-to-face tertiary courses in the region
- affordability
- accommodation
- transport.

In discussing each of the themes and observations that make up this report, the Council recognises that each issue impacts upon one or more of the others. As such, successfully addressing any of the themes was reliant on one or more other issues being addressed.

The Council did not observe that one particular issue was of greater concern than others.

Themes and Observations

Mental health and student wellbeing

Over the course of the RREAC regional visit, the Council noted that a majority of consultations identified mental health for students as one of the most significant challenges.

Schools and TAFE reported that there appeared to be an increase in the number of students requiring mental health support (with higher levels of complexity) and also an increase in students commencing secondary school already engaging with mental health supports. Schools were concerned about their ability to provide the resources to cater for the demand whilst recognising that families and students seeking support from external providers faced lengthy wait times.

Although schools reported that it was challenging to provide and fund adequate resourcing to support students requiring mental health and wellbeing support, the Council noted that students in the secondary school setting are generally well supported with more resources available than in most other setting. School Psychologists, School Chaplains and student services teams were reported to be supporting students as individual needs arose, but also with an increasing emphasis on the need for preventative and proactive approaches such as school-based mental health literacy interventions.



Students attending Albany Residential College were largely reliant on the schools they attended when seeking mental health support given the college's School Psychologist FTE allocation equating to 2 hours per week. Although students could access support at their enrolled school during school hours, the College Manager noted that students would often need support whilst at the college and those students would need to access external services such as Headspace.

A growing concern however, is how this support can continue as students complete their secondary education and move into either further education or into the workforce. The transition out of secondary education for students can create additional anxiety and stress for students. This coincides with students entering a setting where they may have significantly less mental health support than available to them previously.

Partnerships are key to success

Over the course of the regional visit, the Council identified that programs, initiatives and supports that were successful were underpinned by partnerships. These partnerships were identified at a range of levels, including (but not limited to):

- schools with parents
- schools with other nearby schools
- schools with training providers
- schools with local industries
- training providers with local industries
- training providers with universities.

These partnerships existed in isolation but were also required to interact with others in order to achieve successful transitions and outcomes for students.

During the Council's visit to North Albany Senior High School a significant observation was the health trade training facility. It was noted by the school that the facility although new and what may be considered 'state of the art', was largely unutilised as there was little demand in the schools current (and recent) cohorts to undertake the aged care and allied health certificate course. It was unclear to the Council what the decision making process was in determining the type of facility placed at the school and if data indicating demand from the school was involved. With regards to local area partnerships, it did not appear to the Council that partnerships with other local schools were in place to utilise the facility, or that it was required given the location of the TAFE campus with its own industry standard medical and nursing facility only a few hundred metres from the school.

On the other hand, North Albany Senior High School had worked in partnership with Albany Senior High School with regards to timetabling to allow for both schools to benefit from face-to-face learning for a specific subject that would have otherwise needed to be delivered online by one of the schools unable to recruit the specialist teacher.

Secondary schools anecdotally appeared to bear the greatest responsibility for establishing and fostering partnerships to support students with their journey through education. It was observed that schools had an increased demand on them to partner more with parents and students at earlier year levels on career and higher education pathways, senior school pathways and with industry to ensure students were aware of emerging industries and job trends. These areas were critical to allowing students to be prepared with a future focus.

Future focus

Students have an ever-expanding range of options and pathways available to them to support their chosen career pathway. Some of the secondary education providers visited or in attendance at the regional forum did report however that the increase in options has created an increased amount of complexity in the composition of subjects to access certain pathways and parents felt unsure about the requirements. They felt that career information sessions for both students and parents were held too late. The timing of these information sessions appears to be one of tradition rather than due to any specific barriers.

For public secondary schools, a 2021 election commitment of \$700,000 was made to expand and distribute career resources to support parents. Research indicates that families are the greatest influencers of career pathway decision making of young people. Career Conversations events delivered throughout the state, focus on providing parents with accurate, up-to-date career pathway and labour market information. Local industry panels discuss employment opportunities, attributes they are looking for and how young people can get a foot in the door. The events and targeted resources available on the Department of Education's website are designed to equip parents to confidently talk to their children about career pathway decisions

Additional to providing more information to parents to help support students with career and course decisions, the information was required by parents to support students in decision making when they did not fit the traditional 'education model' for learning. Some schools mentioned that students entering secondary school were already disengaged with the standard models of education and that without having a pathway for these students and parents, by the time the student was at an age to begin their transition into their desired pathway, they had already disengaged and perhaps did not meet the criteria for entry.

Secondary education providers are able to provide information related to pathways and transitions into particular training or certificate courses. For the information to be effective in engaging students who may be unsure of their pathway it requires partnerships to exist that allow an insight into the local industries, skills in demand and emerging industries.

As part of the larger 2021 election commitment by the State Government, the following commitments were made to address secondary schooling and post-school pathways:

- \$700,000 to expand and distribute resources to support parents
- \$29.5m to improve industry placement for teacher professional learning
- \$2.5m to establish career resources for schools
- \$1.3m to establish a support scheme for school based apprenticeships
- \$19.2m to enable secondary students to make informed decisions about career pathways via early access to career information
- \$29.8m for 8,00 additional VET places for Year 11 and 12 students
- \$31.7m to establish career guidance leaders in 70 public schools.

Industries existing and emerging

Career education is very much on the table nationally and internationally with Governments and school systems becoming increasingly aware of the need to prepare young people for the future of work. Everybody has a role in ensuring students have the career management skills to transition beyond school to further education, training and work.

Finding a career requires a level of self-awareness and considerable career exploration. Students need help to explore their options and should be encouraged to challenge themselves. They should aim high, think big and be supported to look beyond what they know.

A targeted trial has placed 70 career practitioners in public schools to lead whole school career development and facilitate engagement with industry. These career practitioners are completing a Graduate Certificate in Career Development which makes them eligible to apply to the National Register for recognition as Professional Career Development Practitioners. The work of the career practitioners will capitalise on the opportunities available through related election commitments, such as the Career Taster program for Year 9 students and the Career Learning Toolkit. All 70 schools had a practitioner in place for the commencement of 2023.

During the site visit to North Albany Senior High School, the Council was able to speak to the Career Practitioner who provided insight into the partnership with local industry and relationship being formed with groups such as the Albany Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

Partnerships between schools was identified within the region with students visiting the WA College of Agriculture Denmark to view the training programs available. The Council made the observation that this type of in person experience of training combined with career information is essential in supporting students unsure of their career pathways.

Growth in jobs by occupation

Jobs projected to have the largest increases in employment over the next 5 years are aged and disabled carers, software and applications programmers, and registered nurses. Occupations expected to see lower employment growth face ongoing challenges, such as from technological change. Some of these are occupations where work is routine and susceptible to automation. These include secretaries, bookkeepers and bank workers.

The National Skills Commissions five-year projections on employment notes that more than 9 out of 10 new jobs will require a post-secondary school education. Jobs in science, technology, engineering in maths (STEM) are predicted to grow by 14.2%, twice as fast as non-STEM jobs.

Visibility and marketing

In addition to additional supports being provided to parents to allow them to support their children, supports provided by sources such as Government or local industries need to be made visible and marketed to students.

An example of the importance of this was observed by the Council during the tour of South Regional TAFE. The Council spoke with a group of nursing students. Students were discussing their future pathways to expand on their qualifications and pathway into the workforce. A challenge that was raised by the group was the financial difficulty they faced when undertaking their practicum work due to it being unpaid and possibly away from the region requiring accommodation to also be funded.

Government initiatives were unveiled in April 2023 that provided various allowances for up to 400 hours of practical placement commencing in January 2024. Processes are in place to ensure information is provided to students that is relevant to them. These processes are important given that there is potential for students assessing their future options to avoid certain courses or pathways as a result of obstacles that they may perceive as insurmountable.

The Council reflected that visibility and marketing of supports and initiatives again is reliant on successful partnerships across sectors being in place.

Regional barriers

Although the Albany region offers significantly more options than some rural and remote areas of the State, students undertaking secondary education and moving into further education, training or the workforce still encounter equity issues as a result of their location.

Course choice/options

A common theme raised with the Council by secondary education providers when discussing regional barriers in areas outside of the metropolitan area is that of choice and options.

At the secondary schooling level this can primarily be in the form of course availability. Schools with smaller student enrolments are unable to offer a full suite of courses sustainably. Courses that are not available via in person delivery may need to be undertaken online, or by partnering with another local school.

Schools are required to contribute funds for access to courses delivered by SIDE. At times, schools may decide not to offer a course delivered by SIDE based on the amount of students wishing to undertake it not justifying the cost.

During the visit to Mount Barker Community College, a student described the difficulty of undertaking courses online and noted that 2 subjects being undertaken in that manner was too difficult to manage with timetabling and had to reduce to one.

A student from Mount Barker requiring greater subject options may need to move to a larger school in Albany. School Bus Services operate from Mount Barker to Albany but access may be reliant on bus capacity as the student would more than likely be classified as a 'complimentary' passenger. Students that require in person delivery of subjects also have the option to board but for some families the cost of boarding is not financially viable.

The Great Southern Universities Centre located in Albany and Denmark provides access to support, wireless internet and study space to any students studying at any university. The centre allows any student undertaking a course at any university to access study facilities to support their online learning. For example, Curtin's Bachelor of Science Nursing students (enrolled nurse to registered nurse) are supported by the Centre. For students that are seeking in person delivery of their course, the University of Western Australia has an Albany campus, but students are limited in the courses of study available. Finance and people

Staffing

During the visits and consultations, secondary education providers raised with the Council the difficulty that they had attracting and retaining staff.

No singular issue was identified as the catalyst or having greater impact on this issue, however, overall teacher numbers and the availability of housing in regional areas were both raised as underlying issues that may be contributing.

The State Government through the Department of Communities provides accommodation for government employees under its Government Regional Officer Housing (GROH) Program. Unlike a standard tenancy agreement, GROH accommodation is not provided directly to the tenant. The Department of Communities (via the GROH Program) leases properties to government agencies. The government agency then sub-leases the property to their eligible employees.

Due to the demand for GROH accommodation, properties that are vacant for a period of time are often reallocated to other eligible government agencies. There may be considerable wait times for an agency to be allocated additional GROH accommodation as availability can at times be reliant on availability through the local rental market.

The \$12.4 million Regional Attraction and Retention Incentive package commenced in 2023 to assist 48 regional and remote schools where demand for staff was greatest. An additional \$15.49 million has been provided to continue and expand the incentive to a total of 66 schools delivering secondary education.

Finance and people

Financial pressures and associated issues were frequently raised as issues that are impacting students in the Albany region over the course of the visit. Although some of the issues may also be impacting metropolitan families in specific situations, a majority will impact most regional students:

- **Secondary school boarding** – In the Albany/Denmark region, secondary boarding options are available via the WA College of Agriculture Denmark, Albany Residential College and Great Southern Grammar. Students attending the Agricultural College are assumed to do so as a result of their desire to undertake the specific program offered and would also be the case for students who originated from the metropolitan area.

Students boarding at either Albany Residential College or Great Southern Grammar are largely doing so in order to access a larger school offering greater course selection, access seamless secondary education or live remotely and are unable to access daily transport to their nearest school.

State funded Boarding Away from Home Allowance, and Commonwealth funded Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC) are the main avenues to subsidise the cost of boarding for families.

- **Students moving to metropolitan areas to access in person tertiary education** – Although Albany is fortunate to have a physical tertiary presence, the course options are limited and for most students wanting face-to-face delivery, this will require relocation to a metropolitan city.

Students completing secondary schooling in a metropolitan setting may be able to access tertiary education whilst remaining in the family home eliminating additional stress of living independently and cost of boarding or private rentals.

Students in the Albany region looking to relocate to Perth to access tertiary education options are currently experiencing increased difficulty due to low rental availability and high rental or on campus accommodation costs.

According to SQM research, in 2019 to 2023 the median house (3 bed) rental price for Perth has increased \$220 (54%) per week, from \$407 to \$627. Over the same period, Perth units (2 bed) have increased \$203 (62%) per week from \$327 to \$530.

Although options for Commonwealth financial support exists for students completing their tertiary studies, the most commonly accessed are means tested against parental income. For families that do not qualify for this financial support, the cost of accommodation and living expenses on top of the existing family budget is not possible. In order to avoid parental reliance, it was reported to the Council that students seek to be classified as 'independent'. This requires students to meet earning and hours worked criteria. These requirements are often only achievable by taking a gap year between secondary and tertiary education.

Anecdotally, many students who may have been University-bound, do not commence studies after this gap year.

- **Travel and transport for students undertaking tertiary education, training through TAFE or new entrants to the workforce in Albany** – Due to its size, Albany has a public transport network. The routes and timetabling of the services however often do not align with the needs of travellers travelling to and from work or study. The town circular operates from 8am to 5.30pm and the wider route operates from 9am to 3.30pm. The network operates within a defined area that does not extend to neighbouring towns.

Students that reside outside of this transport area and in neighbouring townships such as Denmark (55 km) and Mount Barker (52 km), may have been accessing a free School Bus Service during secondary education. These services are not available once students complete or leave secondary education.

The Council heard from multiple stakeholders that many students will not have met the requirements to gain their provisional drivers licence and those that have face increased costs of transport due to high petrol prices.

Students seeking to avoid transport to Albany each day from outside of the public transport boundary by relocating are facing difficulty sourcing rental options. Advanced Housing in Albany provides some student accommodation but as at 16 August 2023, only 13 properties were available to rent in the Albany region within the transport boundary.

Day 1: Tuesday 1 August 2023

Western Australian College of Agriculture Denmark

WA College of Agriculture - Denmark is a 560-hectare working farm and educational facility for Year 10, 11 and 12 students offering a wide variety of studies and industry training with an agricultural focus. The College attracts students from all over the state from a wide variety of backgrounds and has a capacity of around 140 students. Most students at the College board in the 95 bed residential facility.

The College delivers Australian Curriculum courses to Year 10 students and WACE courses to Year 11 and 12 students. As a Registered Training Organisation (RTO), the College delivers Certificate I-III level qualifications in a wide range of industry areas including Agriculture, Automotive, Conservation and Land Management, Engineering, Equine, Forestry and Horticulture.



Fig 1. WA College of Agriculture Denmark

Approximately one third of students at the College are on an ATAR pathway. The College engages with WA universities to offer an enabling course pathway for its students. The College has a flexible Year 11 and 12 gridline with over 250 units offered. In addition to the academic program, all students at the College spend at least one day a week undertaking workplace learning on the College farm where, under the supervision of Agricultural Training Officers, they work toward the completion of a Certificate II or III in Agriculture. By completing their education and workplace training on a farm, which strives to achieve industry best practice, students are prepared for a smooth transition into the world of work or further study.

To cover the hours demanded of a fully functioning farm and school, the college employs a mix of traditional teachers as well as public servants and farm staff. The College currently has a \$1 million contract with Harvey Milk with 40% of funds deposited to the College trust.

Demand for places at the College is high with enrolments impacted by the capacity of College's boarding accommodation. Prospective students must meet a selection process including a face-to-face interview with either the Principal or Deputy Principal. A range of scholarships and financial subsidies are available to assist with fees.

Students are highly engaged in their studies, in part due to clear pathway to post-school options.

The Council was provided a tour of the College facilities which ran concurrently with the visit to Mount Barker Community College. The tour commenced with a presentation by principal Ms Rebecca Kirkwood. Highlighted areas of the tour included the trades centre, automotive facilities, farm facilities including the robotic dairy as well as a tour of the residential facilities.

College staff including the farm Manager presented much of the tour in collaboration with students. Students engaged with the Council and were keen to present the items they had been working on including 3D printed design projects, and metal fabrication of automotive parts and trailers. On several occasions during the tour, students demonstrated their skills across a range of activities

from tending to farm animals, mechanical tasks and repairs, judging of cattle carcass traits, and the operation of heavy farm machinery.

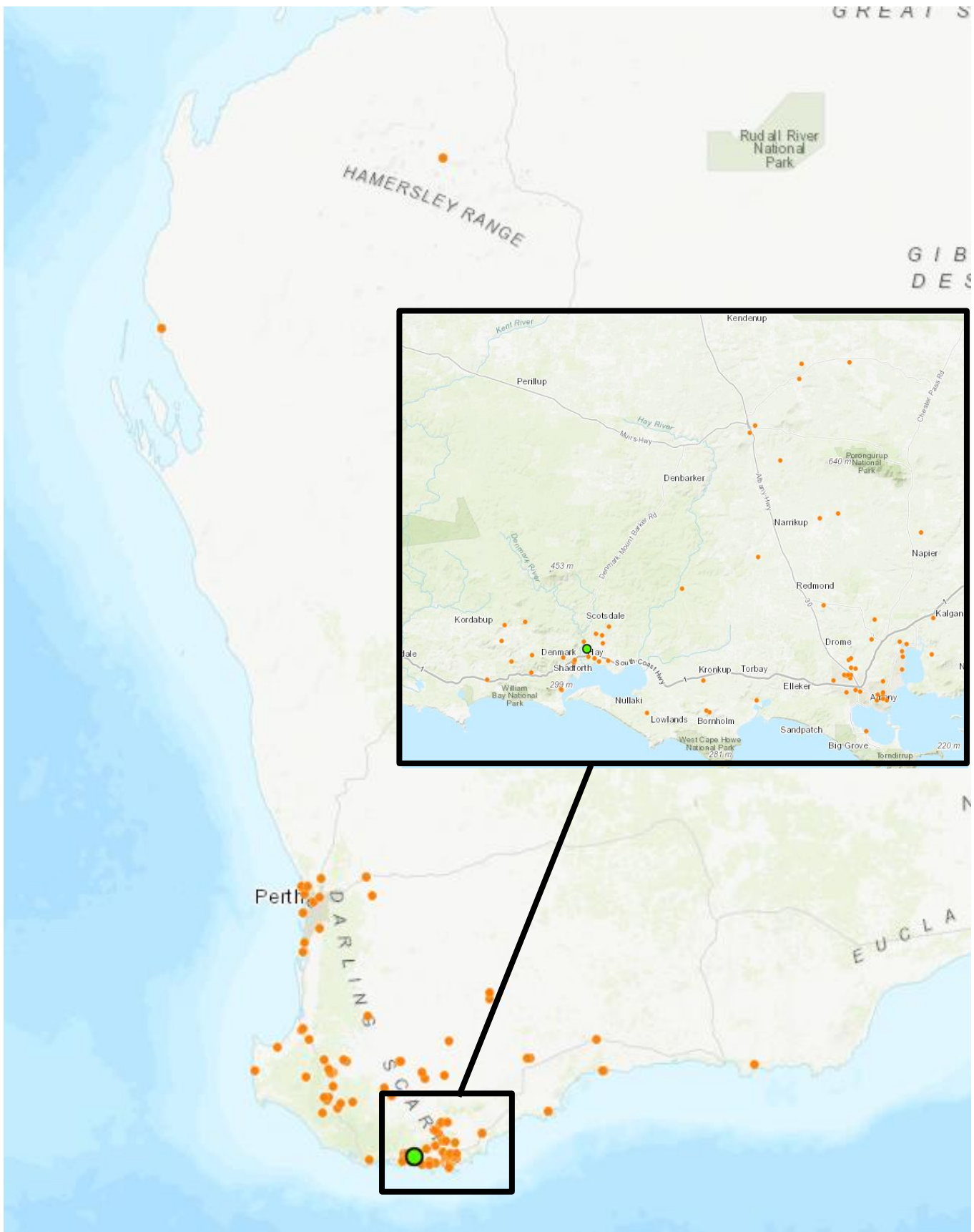
Enrolment data

Semester 1 enrolments	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Year 10	39	42	42	49	40
Year 11 and 12	103	96	97	88	104
Total	142	138	139	137	144

Year 11 student intake data

Year 11 intake source	2021	2022	2023
WACoA Denmark	31	34	46
Albany Senior High School	1		1
Denmark Senior High School	1	4	1
John Calvin School			2
Kearnan College	2		2
Lake Grace District High School			1
North Albany Senior High School	1	2	1
Ravensthorpe District High School	1		1
Swan Christian College		1	1
Bridgetown High School	1	2	
Carine Senior High School		1	
Comet Bay College		1	
Great Southern Grammar School		1	
Jerramungup District High School		1	
Manjimup Senior High School	2	2	
Mercedes College		1	
St Joseph's School	1	1	
Christian Brothers' College	1		
East Kimberley College	1		
Georgiana Molloy Anglican School	1		
Kennedy Baptist College	1		
Mount Barker Community College	2		
Narrogin Senior High School	1		
Home Schooling	1		
Interstate			1
Total	49	51	58

2023 enrolment locations



Site observations

- Approximately 30% of students who attend the College are from the land. These students don't usually transition immediately back to family farms following completion of their studies. Students typically seek to acquire a trade before moving back to their farm as part of family succession planning.
- Anecdotally, College students are in high demand from local industry. During the year, the College fields queries from various industries seeking information on the most talented students across a variety of trade areas for early entrance to the workforce.
- Students at the College have access to industry leading facilities, some of which they are unlikely to have exposure to when they transition to real world industry.



Fig 2. WA College of Agriculture Denmark

Mount Barker Community College

Mount Barker Community College is an Independent Public School with a long history of strong community connections and success for students.

The college prides itself on supporting personal excellence in students through quality teaching, and is active in seeking opportunities for enrichment through clubs, camps, excursions and community service.

Established in 2008, Mount Barker Community College was born from the community belief that the educational needs of students would be better served by catering for Kindergarten to Year 12 students. It was formed by joining the former Mount Barker Primary School (Est. 1921) and the former Mount Barker Senior High School (Est. 1962).



Fig 3. Mount Barker Community College

The community takes pride in supporting the students through many partnerships and workplace opportunities. Mount Barker

Community College offers VET Certificates on the college farm, in the Trade Training Centre and in the commercial kitchen.

The tour of Mount Barker Community College was undertaken by 4 members of the Council. The visit was run concurrent with the visit to WA College of Agriculture Denmark.

Five students were available to speak with the attending Council members to commence the visit. The students spoke to the members about how they came to be enrolled at Mount Barker Community College, their career pathways, subject selections, challenges studying in a regional area and plans for further study or employment.

A common theme raised by the students was their preference for face-to-face learning rather than via the School of Isolated Distance Education (SIDE) where possible. It was noted that 2 of the students had attempted to undertake 2 subjects via SIDE but had reduced this down to one as they found it too difficult to manage.

The students made note of how helpful it was for them to attend career days and expos that were usually held in Perth. These trips to Perth were more difficult for regional students however given the distance needing to be travelled often resulted in overnight accommodation being required.

The Council was given a comprehensive tour of the school facilities, both old and new. The school grounds were observed to be full of garden beds, metal sculptures and landscaped areas all from the work of their trade training students.

Recruitment and retention of staff was raised as a significant issue by school staff during the tour. Staff often found it hard to secure local accommodation and a shortage was also being felt in Albany.

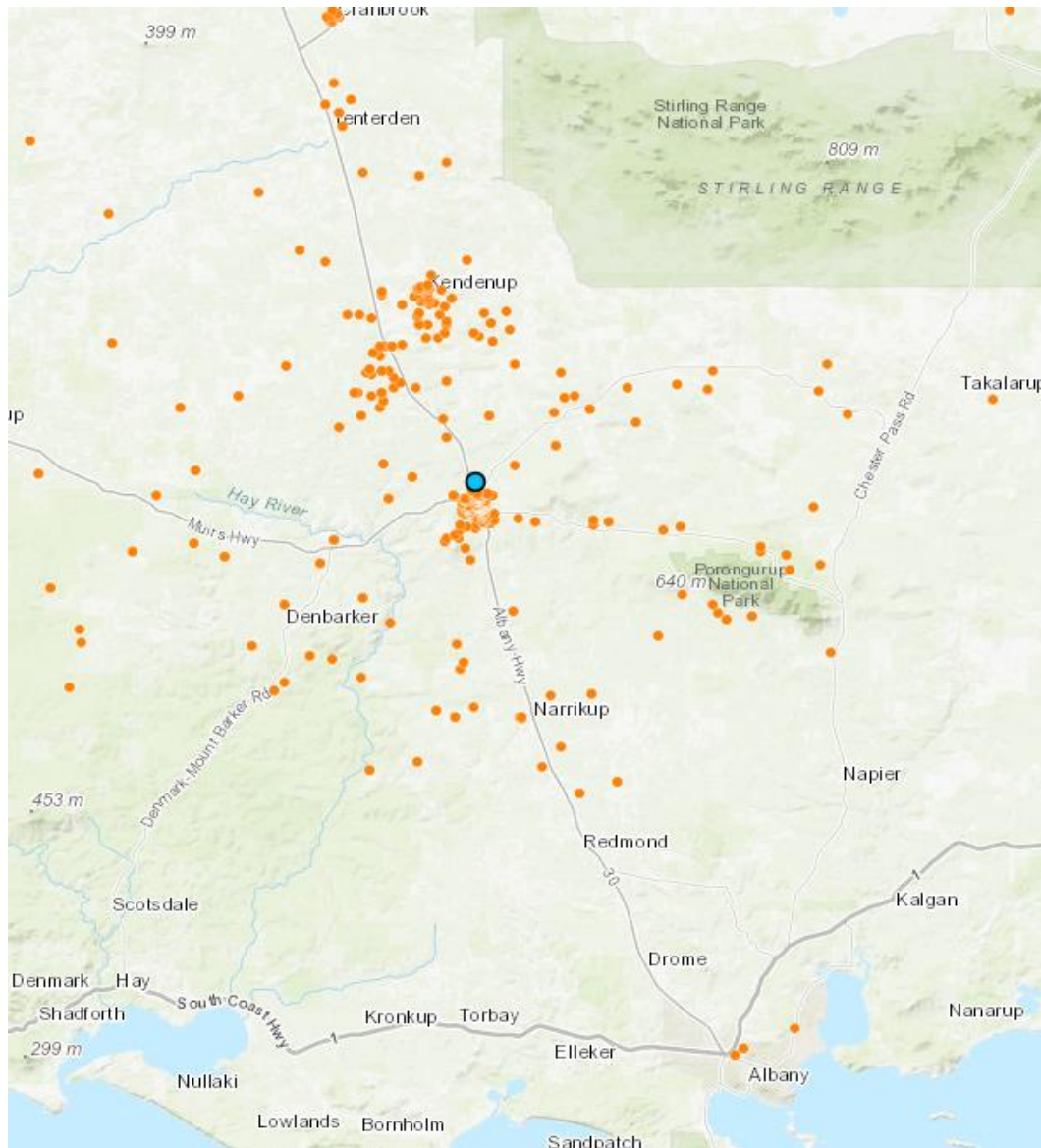
Enrolments

Semester 1 enrolments	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Primary (excluding Kin)	334	331	319	316	312
Lower secondary	252	262	240	249	236
Upper secondary	100	95	91	87	86
Total	686	688	650	652	634

Year 11 student intake data

Year 11 intake source	2021	2022	2023
Mount Barker Community College	53	49	47
North Albany Senior High School			1
Total	53	49	48

2023 enrolment locations



Site observations

- Due to its enrolment numbers, the school can offer a limited amount of ATAR courses.
- Due to distance, staffing and costs, it can be difficult to facilitate trips to Perth to allow students exposure to opportunities easily accessed by students located in the metropolitan area.
- Staff have difficulty finding suitable local accommodation and often travel from Albany 50 km away.
- The school funds equipment upgrades in order remain current with industry standard equipment in order to remain compliant with RTO standards.
- The school has a well-established relationship with locally based industries and workplaces.
- Some school programs are in place as a result of specialist teacher knowledge. If the specific teacher was to leave the school, the program may not continue to operate unless a suitably qualified teacher was found.

Community forum

Twenty-five organisations representing education, industry, training and support services were invited to attend the forum. Seventeen organisations were represented at the forum which was also attended by Rebecca Stephens MLA, Member for Albany and Jane Kelsbie MLA, Member for Warren- Blackwood.

Each organisation was provided up to 5 minutes to address 3 areas of inquiry which were provided in advance:

- What role do you and/or your organisation play in secondary (Year 10 to 11) or post-secondary transitions?
- What currently works well?
- What challenges do you encounter and are there additional supports that would help overcome these?



Fig 4. Attendees at the RREAC community forum

Forum observations

- Cooperative and collaborative approach from all stakeholders in the region.
- Some peripheral wrap around service providers did not believe that the services and supports on offer were known by schools and/or students.
- University Centres were a valuable support to allow students to remain in the region whilst undertaking studies, but the online model of education was not suited to some students.
- Range of in person tertiary course options are limited.
- Difficulties attracting staff with housing options in short supply.
- Difficulties for post-secondary students studying locally sourcing accommodation.
- School bus services unavailable for students that are post-secondary school.
- Pre-requisites to gaining a provisional licence may not be achieved in line with commencing training or post-secondary education making access difficult for those that do not reside within a public transport zone.
- Significant focus on work readiness programs.

- The cost of exposing to secondary students to metropolitan options is difficult for some schools and families to support.
- Education providers are investing significant resources to address student mental health and wellbeing, but this remains a challenge.

The list of attendees and apologies to the forum is in Appendix D.

Day 2: Wednesday 2 August 2023

North Albany Senior High School

North Albany Senior High School is an independent public school located in Albany. Known locally as NASHS it is a comprehensive school providing secondary education for students in Year 7 to Year 12. NASHS has an enviable reputation as a caring and supportive school.

The school vision is to provide opportunities for students to achieve personal excellence so they can participate actively in a changing world

Guided by the school motto of 'Care and Diligence' and the school ethos of 'Students First and Foremost', NASHS staff provide a wraparound service to support students through their adolescent years.

NASHS provides a wide range of courses to suit the aspirations and needs of students. The curriculum across Years 7-10 provides depth and breadth in each of the eight learning areas. In the senior school NASHS offers Vocational, General and ATAR courses. Students have the opportunity to study in classroom settings or by external mode, including e-learning. The extensive and well-maintained computer network and video conferencing facility supports learning online.

At the beginning of the days itinerary at NASHS, the Council was provided an overview of the schools career pathways for students by the Principal and Deputy Principal. Information was also provided by the schools Career Practitioner who reported on the work being undertaken in collaboration with local industries and groups such as the Albany Regional Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

Around a quarter of students who graduated NASHS in recent years had an ATAR pathway. The school raised with the Council some of the financial issues that students and families faced when seeking to move to a metropolitan area such as Perth to undertake a tertiary qualification. They reported many families from the local area that had moved in order to support their children through their tertiary education as it was financially a better outcome than providing support and whilst remaining in the region. Some of the challenges raised were:

- Students coming from middle income families were often not eligible for means tested government supports. The cost to most families to support their children to relocate to a city is more often than not unaffordable. This does not apply to metropolitan families.
- Students wishing or needing to be classed as independent to secure financial support often needed to take a gap year to meet eligibility. Many of these university bound students do not return to study after the completion of this gap year. It was also reported that some students view an ATAR pathway as unviable because of the gap year or financial independence requirements.
- Rising cost of living and shortage of private rentals that were cheaper than university on campus accommodation options.
- Added stresses and responsibilities living away from home independently not experienced by metropolitan students who could remain at home whilst studying.

The Council was provided a tour of the school facilities and major training centres. The health and commercial kitchen trade training facilities appeared to be state of the art and as new. The Council

was surprised to hear that both facilities were reportedly underutilised due to the student cohort having a decreased interest in the specific training areas.

With the school being within walking distance to a well-equipped TAFE campus with similar facilities for both health and commercial cooking, it was unclear if the school would have been able to access these facilities in partnership with TAFE rather than having them on site requiring ongoing maintenance regardless of use.

The Trade Training Centres Program was a 10-year Commonwealth Government initiative that commenced in 2008. The program enabled all secondary schools to apply for funding of between \$500,00 and \$1.5 million to build or upgrade trade training facilities.

Enrolments

Semester 1 enrolments	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Lower secondary	631	653	657	652	667
Upper secondary	220	222	227	200	209
Total	851	875	884	852	876

Year 11 student intake data

Year 11 intake source	2021	2022	2023
North Albany Senior High School	122	98	110
Albany Senior High School			2
Alta-1			2
Australian Christian College			1
Donnybrook District High School			1
John Calvin School	5	6	7
Lake Grace District High School			1
WA College of Agriculture – Denmark			1
Denmark Senior High School	1	1	
Katanning Senior High School		1	
Interstate			1
Overseas			1
Other		1	
Total	128	107	127

Site observations

- State of the art health trade training facility and commercial kitchen underutilised due to a lack of demand from the school's current cohort in the specific career pathway.
- Career practitioner working in collaboration with industry.
- Where possible, the school develops timetables in collaboration with Albany Senior High School for some ATAR subjects to allow face-to-face delivery across the 2 schools.
- The school hosts Clontarf, Follow the Dream and Deadly Sista Girlz programs.



Fig 5. North Albany Senior High School medical/nursing training facilities

South Regional TAFE Albany

South Regional TAFE delivers high-quality, accredited vocational education and training that is flexible enough to meet clients' workplace and lifestyle commitments. The extensive facilities and workshops allow training that is responsive and relevant due to the professional relationships across commercial sectors to ensure that training is benchmarked to industry standard.

As an established training provider, it is a leader in the delivery of accredited training with highly qualified and dedicated professional lecturing staff. Working with industry, the campus has built the capacity of current and future employees through training and skills recognition that lead to formal qualifications, economic empowerment and prosperity in the region.

South Regional TAFE, Albany campus prides itself on offering nationally recognised training to students from all backgrounds.

The Council was provided a comprehensive tour of the significant facilities. Highlighted areas of the tour were:

- the plant nursery which provides seedlings to many local projects
- heavy machinery workshops
- remote mining simulations that allow students to experience moving vehicles around a min site via remote connection technology
- carpentry workshop where small scale rooms were constructed
- hair, makeup and beauty therapy training which functioned as an open to the public business on some days of the week
- nursing simulation facilities.

South Regional TAFE, Albany campus is focused on providing students with a great learning experience. This is achieved by combining staff who are passionate about supporting students to achieve their potential and flexible methods of course delivery. The college is proud to have an above-average student satisfaction rating of all public training providers in Western Australia.

Site observations

- A significant range of training and pathways are available to students.
- High standard of facilities equips students well to enter the workforce.
- Further upgrades and expansion to facilities underway.
- Some face-to-face mental health support available to students.
- Strong commitment to working with secondary education providers providing VET.
- Significant and at times frequent Government announcements are made that impact students undertaking VET and TAFE courses. Students are more often than not, reliant on schools and TAFE staff to make them aware where it is applicable to them.
- Processes are in place to ensure that students are provided information regarding support and incentives where it is relevant to them.



Fig 6. South Regional TAFE Albany

Pathways to post-secondary success review

On 21 June 2023, the State Government launched a review of secondary school pathways in a bid to ensure all Western Australian students can reach their full potential through their post-secondary study, training, or employment pursuits.

The Department of Education representative on the Expert Panel, Mr Mike Morgan was in attendance to provide the Council with information on the Terms of Reference, methodology, structure, timeline and status of the review.

Mr Morgan provided the Council with an overview of the work that had been carried out and common themes and observations made in the initial environmental scan phase of the review.

Mr Morgan provided the opportunity for 2-way dialogue in the areas that the review will focus such as:

- the needs of higher education, vocational education and training, employers, and education communities
- emerging practices in WA (and elsewhere)
- the needs of Aboriginal students, those from rural and remote areas, students from culturally and linguistic diverse backgrounds, students with a disability and other students at risk of not making a successful transition from school to further education, training and/or work
- innovative practice in other jurisdictions in Australia and beyond
- future proofing approaches given wider and national conversations about the future of ATAR.

The Council will be provided an update by Mr Morgan at the next RREAC meeting in 2023 to hear the results of the environmental scan phase of the review.

Albany Residential College

Albany Residential College provides co-educational boarding accommodation to geographically isolated students attending local public and non-government secondary schools.

Many of the students are from towns in the Wheatbelt region. The College also has several students who come from as far as Wiluna and Fitzroy Crossing.

Students are supervised by a team of supervisors who provide 24/7 care. On site housing is available for supervisory staff as well as accommodation for staff performing 'sleep over' duties. The availability of accommodation for supervisory staff was reported to be a significant benefit when recruiting new staff to the college.

The College has strong ties to the community. To enhance this connection the college has a Local Input Networking and Communications (LINC) committee. The LINC is made up of representatives from the community and provides advice and support to the manager and staff regarding the operation and management of the college. The LINC committee promotes the college and ensures that activities are in the best interests of students.

The Council was provided a tour facilitated by the College Manager and Manager of Corporate Services beginning in the communal dining area and across the dormitory areas. The Council was able to tour a recently renovated area of the college which had been remodelled to provide additional student accommodation, increasing the capacity from 90 to 106.

Providing support for the mental health of students at the college was raised as a challenge for the college and staff. Students attending the College were largely reliant on the schools they attended when seeking mental health support. The college's School Psychologist FTE allocation equates to 2 hours per week. Although students could access support at their enrolled school during school hours, many students required support whilst at the college. These students need to access external services such as Headspace which could not always facilitate appointments at short notice.

Enrolments

Semester 1 enrolments	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Lower secondary	45	50	52	60	46
Upper secondary	21	17	19	26	28
Total	66	67	71	86	74

Schools attended

Semester 1 enrolments	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Albany Senior High School	54	55	55	59	51
North Albany Senior High School	3	1	1	9	4
Albany Secondary Education Support		1	1	1	
Australian Christian College					2
St Joseph's College	9	10	13	17	17
Bethel Christian School			1		
Total	66	67	71	86	74



Fig 7. RREAC members and college staff at Albany Residential College

Site observations

- Students attend the college from as far north as the Kimberley region.
- The College provides boarding to students in Years 7 to 12 with ages ranging from 11 to 18. This requires the college to provide a range of different supports to cater for all students.
- Over 40% of students at the college are engaging with some form of mental health or wellbeing support.
- The College is provided with 2 hours per week of School Psychologist time.
- The College provides support for students to attend sporting, medical and other commitments.
- On site staff housing provides a significant incentive when recruiting new supervisory staff.

Appendices

Appendix A - Rural and Remote Education Advisory Council

Attendance

Name	Representing	Membership type
Jodie Hanns MLA	Government	Chair
Divina D'Anna MLA	Government	Deputy Chair
Darshi Ganeson-Oats	Regional education and training interests	Community/Consumer
Katherine Loader	Western Australian Council of State School Organisations	Community/Consumer
Julie Brooks	Western Australian Council of State School Organisations	Community/Consumer
Shanine Ryan	Aboriginal education and training interests	Community/Consumer
Alan Buckley	Catholic Schools Parents WA	Community/Consumer
Lorraine Hammond	Community/Consumer representative	Community/Consumer
Linda Adnyana	Western Australian universities	Funder/Provider
Paul Bridge	Department of Education	Funder/Provider
Tony Curry	Catholic Education Western Australia	Funder/Provider
Natalie Blewitt	State School Teachers' Union of WA	Community/Consumer
Simone de Been	Regional Chambers of Commerce and Industry WA	Community/Consumer
Andrea Gaynor	Association of Independent Schools of Western Australia – parent representative	Community/Consumer

Apologies

Name	Representing	Membership type
Paula Steenson	Western Australian Council of State School Organisations	Community/Consumer
Naomi Obst	Isolated Children's Parents' Association WA	Community/Consumer
Pania Turner	Western Australian Council of State School Organisations	Community/Consumer
Ron Gorman	Association of Independent Schools of Western Australia	Funder/Provider

Appendix B – Itinerary

Date Tue 1 Aug	Group 1	Group 2
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jane Kelsbie MLA • Divina D’Anna MLA • Darshi Ganeson • Katherine Loader • Shanine Ryan • Alan Buckley • Linda Adnyana • Paul Bridge • Natalie Blewitt • Simone deBeen • Andrea Gaynor 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jodie Hanns MLA • Dr Lorraine Hammond • Dr Tony Curry • Julie Brooks
	8:15 – Depart accommodation	8:15 - Depart accommodation
	9:00 – Arrive WA College of Agriculture Denmark 12:45 – Depart WA College of Agriculture Denmark	9:00 – Arrive Mount Barker Community College 11:30 – Depart Mount Barker Community College
	2:00 – Community forum	
	5:00 – End of day	

Date Wed 2 Aug	
	8:30 – Depart accommodation
	8:45 – Arrive North Albany Senior High School 10:30 – Depart North Albany Senior High School
	11:00 – Arrive South Regional TAFE 12:30 – Depart South Regional TAFE
	1:30 – RREAC meeting 3:00 – End meeting
	3:15 – Arrive Albany Residential College 4:00 – End of day

Appendix C – Consultation list

Name	Position	Organisation
Dainon Couzic	Assistant Director	Southwest Education Regional Office
Paul Nielson	Manager of Arts & Culture	City of Albany
Mike Eastman	Director	Great Southern Universities Centre
Nicci Booth	Deputy Principal	Albany Secondary Education Support
Lauren Franklin	College Manager	Albany Residential College
Sandra Smith	Manager Corporate Services	Albany Residential College
Mike Morgan	Senior Principal Advisor	Department of Education
Rumeena Nizam	Service Centre Team Manager	University of Western Australia
Dawn Atkin	Manager Industry Engagement	South Regional TAFE
Lee-Anne Smith	Director Training Services	South Regional TAFE
Ben Killey	Program Development Manager	ATC Worksmart
Mark Sawle	Principal	Great Southern Grammar
Wing Kuen Wee	VET Coordinator	Australian Christian College
Naomi MacGregor	WACE Coordinator	Australian Christian College
Jeffrey Grundy	Associate Principal	Albany Senior High School
Rachael Keenan	Principal	St Joseph's College
Gavin Palmer	Program Coordinator	Denmark Senior High School
Melissa Palmer	Learning Support Coordinator	Denmark Senior High School
Rebecca Kirkwood	Principal	WA College of Agriculture Denmark
Kevin Marshall	Farm Supervisor	WA College of Agriculture Denmark
Mark Boynton	Trades Manager	WA College of Agriculture Denmark
Brad Seib	Technical Officer	WA College of Agriculture Denmark
John Overton	Residential College Manager	WA College of Agriculture Denmark
Sam Irwin	Student	WA College of Agriculture Denmark
Dixie Wyatt	Student	WA College of Agriculture Denmark
Isobell Venn	Student	WA College of Agriculture Denmark
Michelle Holland	Support Officer	Workforce Australia
Ian Clarke	Chief Executive Officer	Albany Youth Support Association
Andrew Fraser	Principal	Mount Barker Community College
Julie Dupe	VET Administration	Mount Barker Community College
Jay Rowles	Farm Manager	Mount Barker Community College
Belinda O'Dea	Teacher	Mount Barker Community College
Deb Cheeseman	Teacher	Mount Barker Community College
Maria Swaddling	Canteen Manager	Mount Barker Community College
Alexis Mark	Student	Mount Barker Community College
Mitchell Hamilton	Student	Mount Barker Community College
Brodie DePledge	Student	Mount Barker Community College
Henco Leroux	Student	Mount Barker Community College
Saige Askevold	Student	Mount Barker Community College

Name	Position	Organisation
Tobias Savill	Student	Mount Barker Community College
Hayley English	Student	Mount Barker Community College
Peter Hurle	Principal	North Albany Senior High School
Mark Cullen	Deputy Principal	North Albany Senior High School
Kristen Pyrz-Brown	Chief Executive Officer	Albany Chamber of Commerce and Industry WA

Appendix D - Community forum attendees

Name	Position/Organisation
Rebecca Stephens MLA	Member for Albany
Jane Kelsbie MLA	Member for Warren-Blackwood
Dainon Couzic	Assistant Director Southwest Education Regional Office
Paul Nielson	Manager of Arts & Culture City of Albany
Mike Eastman	Director Great Southern Universities Centre
Nicci Booth	Deputy Principal Albany Secondary Education Support
Lauren Franklin	College Manager Albany Residential College
Mike Morgan	Senior Principal Advisor Department of Education
Rumeena Nizam	Service Centre Team Manager University of Western Australia
Dawn Atkin	Manager Industry Engagement South Regional TAFE Albany
Ben Killey	Program Development Manager ATC Worksmart
Mark Sawle	Principal Great Southern Grammar
Wing Kuen Wee	VET Coordinator Australian Christian College
Naomi MacGregor	WACE Coordinator Australian Christian College
Jeffrey Grundy	Associate Principal Albany Senior High School
Rachael Keenan	Principal St Joseph's College
Gavin Palmer	Program Coordinator Denmark Senior High School
Melissa Palmer	Learning Support Coordinator Denmark Senior High School
Rebecca Kirkwood	Principal WA College of Agriculture Denmark
Michelle Holland	Support Officer Workforce Australia
Ian Clarke	Chief Executive Officer Albany Youth Support Association

Apologies

Organisation	Organisation type
Mount Barker Community College	Education
North Albany Senior High School	Education
Alta-1	Education
Albany Jobs and Skills Centre	Support services/industry
Advance Housing	Support services
Worklink	Industry/training
Southern Noongar Corporation	Support services
Albany Chamber of Commerce and Industry	Industry

Appendix E - regional visit costs

Item	Cost incl. GST (\$)
Member travel	5,364.25
Accommodation	5,106
Meetings and room hire	450
Charter vehicle	1,520
Food and beverage	2,851.36
Other	77.5
TOTAL	\$15,369.11