

Gippsland High Growth Community Partnership

Supporting renewable energy and industry diversification to sustain regional growth in Gippsland

Part of Federation University's *Election and Policy Priorities 2025–2028*



Federation is seeking government support for a High Growth Community Partnership in Gippsland to create a clear education-to-jobs pipeline for the region's renewable energy, infrastructure, education, and health sectors.

A structured legislative framework and coordinated government support will ensure this partnership delivers long-term economic benefits, securing sustained local job opportunities and deep community impact through **priority higher education investment** in infrastructure and programs, including:

- **APRETC Gippsland Expansion (\$3.9m):** Establishing teaching spaces, a new energy jobs portal, and a clean energy research hub, co-located with industry partners
- **Latrobe Valley Energy Careers Transition Hub (\$8m):** Creating an accessible education hub in Traralgon to support local worker retraining and school leaver engagement in new energy sectors
- **Churchill Campus Revitalisation (~\$15m):** Upgrading learning spaces to expand hydrogen education and convert the campus to operate on a net-zero basis
- **Mixed Energy Demand and Micro-Production Hub (~\$5m):** Developing five regional test sites to support micro-energy production training across rural, industrial, and commercial sites
- **Rural Student Bursary Expansion (~\$3m):** Supporting 200 rural students with high-speed satellite internet and on-campus accommodation for practical training
- **200 High Growth Community Skills Full Scholarships (~\$3m):** Supporting students from low SES, regional, and underrepresented backgrounds to complete co-designed undergraduate diplomas aligned with workforce needs.

This proposal includes modular investments in access programs to ensure the partnership benefits are open to First Nation and students from rural areas.

Why is this partnership needed?

Gippsland is leading Australia's renewable energy transition, but significant workforce challenges remain. Industry forecasts indicate growing demand for engineers, technicians, and project managers in hydrogen and clean energy sectors.

At the same time, the region requires stronger training pathways in health, business, and education to address retention issues and meet local service needs.

Gippsland continues to experience lower rates of post-secondary attainment compared to metropolitan areas. Many regional students face financial and logistical barriers to accessing qualifications in priority workforce areas.



Public-private partnership opportunity.

A partnership offers the opportunity to support public investment through collaboration with industry partners. For example, the expansion of APRETC and revitalisation of the Churchill campus could be leveraged through partnerships with employers seeking to develop specialised workforces for emerging energy industries in the region.



Three components, backed by government, can realise the full value of these partnerships. Each can be adopted as a stand-alone module to reflect government priorities, maximise investment, and support delivery.

To participate in the consultation process:
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Partnership component

This component will establish High Growth Community Partnerships to align education and workforce planning with Gippsland’s industry needs, supported by CSP and Free TAFE places aligned to the partnership’s goals.

Key priorities include:



Engineering, science, and construction pathways to support renewable energy, clean infrastructure, and housing




Business and leadership training to strengthen regional governance, innovation, and entrepreneurship



Health and education workforce development to ensure Gippsland can recruit and retain professionals in critical services

Industry co-delivery component


To build a skilled and sustainable workforce, this component would leverage:




Investments from a National Paid Placement Fund and other tax incentives to expand work-integrated learning opportunities in engineering, clean energy, construction, education and business, as well as partnerships with career services and schools to recruit students with local employers



A Regional Priority Skills Student Visa, targeting workforce shortages in renewable energy, infrastructure, and healthcare tied to extended work rights and incentives to live and work in the region




Expanded use of undergraduate diplomas and vocational bachelor programs, co-designed with industry partners, offering fast-tracked pathways into high-demand careers while allowing progression to further study




Requirements to take more students on paid placements, across a diverse range of disciplines, in major government-backed infrastructure projects and regional businesses

Skills infrastructure and access component


In addition to the priority investments outlined above, further initiatives could be developed in phases as the partnership grows, including:




Regional and Rural Allied Health Student Telehealth Expansion (~\$5m):
Scaling Churchill-based services to expand digital healthcare across regional Victoria




Federation Healthy Lifestyle Applied Education Centre (~\$5m):
Establishing a research and teaching centre in Moe focused on chronic disease prevention and community wellbeing



Rural and Remote Student Access Infrastructure (~\$5.5m):
Developing micro-hubs in six Gippsland LGAs and launching two mobile student support centres



Community Teacher Training Program (~\$2.5m):
Expanding programs to support community members in gaining teaching qualifications for local schools



This component also includes targeted funding to expand workforce participation:

- First Nations Renewable Energy Negotiation Scholarships (~\$750k):** Supporting First Nations students to lead land-use negotiations with renewable energy companies on an equity basis
- 300 Regional STEM, Education, and Health Scholarships (~\$9m):** Expanding access for women, First Nations, and rural students in high-demand fields on an equity basis