

Greater South East Metropolitan (GSEM) Region High Growth Community Partnership

A partnership to build a future of knowledge-based, high-value jobs in the region

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



Federation is seeking government support for High Growth Community Partnerships for the Greater South East Metropolitan (GSEM) Region to create education-to-job pipelines for advanced manufacturing, public infrastructure, health, education, new technology and defence sector.

A structured legislative model and coordinated government support will ensure this partnership delivers long-term community outcomes by investing in **priority higher education investment** in infrastructure and programs to establish a network of education hubs across the region. These priority investments could be delivered in stages over four years and include:

- **Mixed-Purpose STEM and Science Laboratories at Berwick Campus (\$30m):** Expanding engineering education, supporting Chisholm TAFE and local secondary schools, and creating a technology precinct for industry collaboration
- **Federation Dandenong Advanced Technology and Design Education Hub (~\$5m):** Increasing post-secondary STEM attainment across diverse and rapidly growing communities through innovative, place-based education
- **Asia-Pacific Applied AI Training Centre (~\$5m):** Delivering AI-focused education and workforce programs in collaboration with local TAFEs and industry to support technology-related sectors such as cyber security and IT, and apply AI across various sectors
- **Federation Student Health Service Training Centre (~\$8m):** Addressing allied health workforce shortages and expanding training delivery in the Berwick region

This proposal also includes modular investments in access programs to ensure key cohorts can access the benefits of the partnership.

Why is this partnership needed?

GSEM is Australia's fastest-growing region, projected to reach two million residents by 2036. Despite generating \$85 billion in Gross Regional Product, the region experiences high rates of long-term, youth and female unemployment, along with persistent STEM skills shortages.

With transformative infrastructure projects and one of the fastest-growing advanced manufacturing sectors in Australia, GSEM has potential to become a hub for innovation and knowledge-based jobs. The region aspires to unlock 22,000 knowledge-worker roles for local residents.

Many in the region's diverse migrant communities also hold prior skills or qualifications but need accessible, supported pathways to translate them into recognised credentials to participate in the region's growth.



Public-private partnership opportunity.

A partnership offers the opportunity to support public investments with industry co-investment. For example, the development of the Berwick STEM laboratories could involve partnership with major infrastructure project contractors or advanced manufacturing firms. Similarly, the Asia-Pacific Applied Training Centre and Dandenong Technology Hub could be delivered with support from technology or AI-focused employers 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 involve the Commonwealth Government establishing a High Growth Community Partnership in GSEM, working with local governments, employers, and education providers to align post-secondary education pathways with regional workforce demand. CSP and Free TAFE places could be allocated to ensure there is sufficient capacity for education institutions to meet the region's needs.

Key priorities could include::



Engineering pathways to meet the needs of major infrastructure projects and the region's broader aspiration to lead in advanced technology and manufacturing



Health workforce expansion to sustain and strengthen Berwick and Dandenong's growing health precincts



Technology-driven industries – including applied AI, renewable energy, and logistics – to prepare the region for future economic growth

Industry co-delivery component

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



Investment from a National Paid Placement Fund and other tax incentives, scaling up work-integrated learning and employer-sponsored training in high-growth sectors with GSEM employers – particularly where paid-to-learn opportunities are not currently available. This includes working with carer services and secondary schools to co-recruit students into programs with local employers



A Regional Priority Skills Student Visa, targeting international graduates with qualifications in engineering, logistics, and AI-driven industries, tied to extended work requirements and regional residency conditions



Expanded use of undergraduate diplomas and vocational bachelor programs, co-designed with industry partners, and supported by flexible accreditation settings to deliver job-ready graduates faster, with options for further study progression later in life



Requirements to take more students on paid, industry-embedded placements, across a diverse field of study in major government-backed infrastructure projects and businesses in the region

Skills infrastructure and access component

In addition to priority investment on the previous page, further investment and initiatives could be developed in phases as the partnership grows, including:



Expanding the Asia Pacific Renewable Energy Training Centre (APRETC) to Berwick (~\$5m):

Supporting hydrogen application workforce training for domestic use, micro-energy systems, and logistics – for example the decarbonisation of the road logistics sector



Federation Officer South – Co-operative Placement and Innovation Hub (~\$3m)

Embedding students in critical business precincts to support industry growth and workforce integration in the GSEM region



Scholarships to Support Local Participation (~\$3m):

Supporting 150 students from low SES backgrounds, women, and culturally diverse communities to pursue study in high-growth fields of technology via undergraduate diplomas or bachelor's degrees in critical disciplines