

Wimmera Southern Mallee High Growth Community Partnership

Strengthening regional resilience
through workforce development in the
Wimmera Southern Mallee

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



Federation is seeking government support for a High Growth Community Partnership in Wimmera Southern Mallee (WSM) to create a clear education-to-jobs pipeline for the region's renewable energy, agriculture, infrastructure, education, and health sectors.

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

- **Federation TAFE Horsham Campus Expansion (\$6m):**
Upgrading facilities for electrical, plumbing, and carpentry training to support renewables, mining, and home construction sectors
- **Ararat Student Nursing and Allied Health Clinic (\$3m):**
Expanding the nursing and healthcare training pipeline to meet regional health workforce needs
- **Federation Applied Mental Health Clinic (~\$5m):**
Providing student-led mental health services, strengthening community resilience and workforce capacity
- **Rural and Remote Student Access Infrastructure (~\$5.5m):**
Developing regional learning hubs across five WSM LGAs and launching two mobile rural student support centres
- **Rural Student Bursary Expansion (~\$3m):**
Providing 200 rural students with high-speed satellite internet access and on-campus accommodation for practical training
- **100 Local Engineering TAFE-to-Higher Education Scholarships (~\$6m):**
Supporting TAFE engineering graduates to transition into higher education with advanced credit pathways.

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?

WSM is a hub for agriculture, renewable energy, and emerging industries, but without targeted investment in education and workforce training, regional employers will struggle to secure local talent.

The region faces critical workforce shortages in engineering, construction, health, and education – particularly in renewable energy infrastructure, agricultural technology, and rural healthcare. Housing shortages and workforce migration further impact the ability of local employers to retain a skilled workforce.



Public-private partnership opportunity.

A partnership offers the opportunity to support public investments through industry collaboration. For example, the expansion of TAFE training facilities and student access programs could be supported by mixed worker and student accommodation at the Wimmera campus.



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:
publicpolicy@federation.edu.au

For media enquiries: media@federation.edu.au

Partnership component

This component will establish High Growth Community Partnerships in WSM, bringing together local governments, industry leaders, and education providers to build clear workforce pathways.

Supported by CSP and Free TAFE places, key priorities could include:



Engineering and construction training to support renewable energy projects, infrastructure development, and housing growth



Education workforce expansion to ensure rural schools have the teachers and support staff needed to improve student retention



Healthcare workforce training to strengthen nursing, allied health, and mental health services for rural communities

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, expanding work-integrated learning opportunities in engineering, renewable energy, health, education, and agricultural technology, and building partnerships to co-recruit students through paid placements with local career services and secondary schools with local employers



Expanded use of undergraduate diplomas and vocational bachelor programs, co-designed with industry partners, providing 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 priority investment on the previous page, further investment and initiatives could be developed in phases as the partnership grows, including:



Food Growth and Production Skills Sustainability (~\$2m)

Expanding partnerships with providers to ensure sustainable industry skills development in the agriculture sector



Regional and Rural Allied Health Student Telehealth Expansion (~\$5m):

Scaling digital healthcare services across rural Victoria



Federation Healthy Lifestyle Applied Education Centre (~\$5m):

Establishing a community wellbeing and chronic disease prevention hub in Horsham



200 High Growth Community Skills Full Scholarships (~\$3m):

Supporting students from low SES, regional, and underrepresented backgrounds in WSM's priority workforce sectors through industry co-designed undergraduate diplomas