

# **Students in transition: making the move to studying and living in Adelaide**

A Report Prepared for:  
Adelaide City Council

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January, 2007



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## **Acknowledgements**

We are very appreciative of the support, encouragement and insights offered by our supervisors from The University of Adelaide, Dr Lou Wilson and Dr Megan Warin. As well we acknowledge the support received from Associate Professor John Spoehr of the Australian Institute of Social Research; Professor Margaret Allen, Head of the Discipline of Gender, Work and Social Inquiry; Professor John Gray, Head of the School of Social Sciences; and Professor Mike Innes, Executive Dean of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences at the University of Adelaide.

We would especially like to thank the Adelaide City Council and in particular the support and assistance received from Stuart Boyd and Ben Kilsby. Their insight into the necessity for bringing the student voice into this study enabled this research to proceed.

We wish to thank all the students and other key people who participated in focus groups and interviews as well as those who enabled these to take place. In particular we acknowledge the support and assistance received from Ken Webb from Lincoln College, Rosemary Brooks from St Anne's College, Rose Alwyn from St Marks College at North Adelaide and Karen Steinwedel from the Smooth Start program at The University of Adelaide.

Finally, a further acknowledgement for the students involved in this research. Their co-operation and enthusiasm enabled their voice to be brought very much to the fore in this research.



## **Executive Summary**

To think of students as a homogenous group would be erroneous. In Adelaide students hail from many culturally and ethnically diverse countries and locales. With this diversity come different needs (social and cultural), but also come many similarities and benefits to Adelaide's community at large. For any student group, the prospect of venturing to a relatively unknown place, with different social mores can be very daunting. In this study many of the transition issues faced by the students were similar, irrespective of their ethnic and cultural background.

There is a growing body of research that highlights the many issues that students face in the transition process, whether they are moving from another country to study in an Australian University, or making the transition domestically from a secondary school to tertiary education. For rural, interstate, and international students the phenomena of transition and its related issues have arguably been a result of economic restructuring at a variety of scales against an ever-intensifying context of globalisation.

In an international context, aggressive marketing campaigns to India and China have seen a rise in the number of Indian and Chinese students living and studying in South Australia. Domestically, many rural towns and regional centres have seen a decline in population, services, and employment opportunities, increasing the need or desire for tertiary education. No matter reasons lie behind their decision to make the move to Adelaide, both groups have sought to make substantial investments (not just financially) in obtaining a tertiary education.

What differentiates this study apart from others is that this was solely focused on rural, interstate, and international students who had decided to study and live in Adelaide. Moreover, it specifically sought to explore the anxieties, goals and aspirations of these students at all stages of transition process.

The objectives of this project have been:

- To explore the social and cultural transitions that influences the student's ability to sustain living and studying in the City;

- To identify interventions that might assist students and parents in decisions relating to relocation and study in Adelaide;
- To make recommendations regarding the dissemination of information and how the process could be enhanced; and
- To identify areas in the transition process that Adelaide City Council can direct support towards.

Before beginning our research, we first embarked on an extensive literature review to identify key documents which identified important issues surrounding transition to university and issues relating directly to the targets of the study: rural, interstate, and international students. To obtain data for, and meet the objectives of this study qualitative methodology was used. The methods consisted of interviews and focus groups. This provided the research team with the flexibility to generate a significant quantity of data quickly, as well as being able to explore the relevant issues more deeply. Why this particular methodology was employed was because it best captures and highlights the very real nature of the student's decision-making processes, and the feeling and emotion that surrounds such major life decisions.

This research provides the students with a forum and a 'voice' which is absent from a lot of available research, where they can come and share with others in their situation and be directly involved in the decision making process. The data generated from our research revealed many significant problems students moving to a new city will endure including: lack of finances, finding suitable accommodation, managing life skills and finances, and orientation to university.

## **Recommendations Summary**

### **Accommodation**

- Supported (cheaper and possibly residential) accommodation would be good for the first year, or even the first semester to provide the student with support during the transition process. Adelaide City Council (ACC) may consider a strategic purchase or partnership to enable an increase in the amount of residential, or hostel, accommodation available within the city environs.

- “It would be good for someone to have a block of units for country kids” (Head of Governing Council). This would provide students with new friendship networks and allow them to adjust to the move to the City.
- Loxton High School is considering buying a group of flats to make renting in Adelaide cheaper, and to make further study more accessible. This is an option that may be considered by other country communities, or something that ACC could support through community partnerships.

### **Information Dissemination**

- ‘One-stop shop’ – there was support for ACC exploring the options for both an actual and a virtual one-stop shop. Various students suggested what services they would like to see including; information on accommodation; employment; leisure activities; transport and ticket purchases.
- ACC could facilitate life skills courses to include; budgeting, time management and achieving a better study and work/life balance.
- ACC could facilitate the sending of regular emails to students to ensure they know on-going facilities and services that are available to them rather than overwhelming them with too much information in orientation week.
- Students suggested the ACC could support free ‘sausage sizzles’ or other food events regularly throughout the semester and use them as a forum for issues such as accommodation/employment to be discussed.
- Networks for advertising information on studying in Adelaide need to be explored and utilised by ACC.

### **Transport**

- Students living at the residential colleges at North Adelaide would like to have longer term parking available.
- ACC could facilitate the provision of transport information and timetabling.
- ACC could lobby for more public transport to the regional centres, especially at night. This is difficult for students who live in the Barossa and other areas close enough to the City to commute for study.

### **Employment**

- ACC could explore avenues for providing information for students on casual and part-time employment in Adelaide whilst they are studying.

- For rural students courses needed to be linked to the labour market needs. Courses which have high employment in the local community or country areas are particularly important to promote. For international students post-graduate employment opportunities in Adelaide need to be advertised so their economic benefit is not lost to the Eastern states. ACC could facilitate better links between Universities and rural and regional development boards.

## **Transition**

- Maintain and enhance on-going support for all the Universities transition programs. It is important to encourage and facilitate links between all the universities and their transition programs.
- Facilitate system for prospective international students to talk with current international students from the same country. A similar system should be developed for country students.
- Explore options for creating a “Survival kit” for rural, interstate, and international students with public transport timetables, local Adelaide sporting clubs, information on how to adjust, etc which could be given to students before arriving in Adelaide. This could be along the lines of the *‘Getting Out: A young person’s guide to becoming independent’* publication.
- ACC could assist in transition by helping to create partnerships between local Adelaide sporting clubs and country sporting associations so that students have opportunities to create networks when they arrive in Adelaide.
- Fears and anxieties of parents need to be addressed. Parents need a forum to ask questions about their child moving to the City including expenses, benefits, and reassurance regarding issues of safety and accommodation.
- Carnegie Mellon students discussed how successful their social committee was in engaging students in a variety of activities within the City. Such committees are invaluable at passing on information about the city and various social activities the ACC would like to promote.

## **Strategic Partnerships/Liaisons**

- ACC could further develop links with rural and regional councils as well as regional development boards.
- It is worth exploring the notion of a forming a group to meet regularly to discuss various issues brought forward in this report. This group could include

various key contacts made during this study including stakeholders from the colleges, the universities, and independent organisations such as the Isolated Children's Parent's Association.

### **Increasing Cultural Vitality**

- Many students wanted to see more “colour, noise, and life” in Adelaide.
- Many students mentioned they would like to have cheaper movies. ACC could explore ways to facilitate this.
- Students wanted longer closing hours of venues so they could make a night of it without having to catch a taxi to a different venue.
- International students wanted a common room to hang out in. It was suggested that this could be incorporated into a One Stop Shop.

### **Selling Adelaide**

- Open the City of Adelaide for view as well the universities on the university open days. University open days need to be run over more than one day for rural students and or night sessions.
- ACC can encourage more students to consider education in Adelaide by subsidising trips or facilitating sponsorship for transport to the City for University open days.
- ACC can encourage the development of specific networks between tertiary institutions, information and equity programs, and certain schools in rural and remote areas.
- Some parents would love to support their children more but they don't know how. The Council could facilitate the creation of a booklet or online workshop with information that parents can use to prepare their children and themselves for the transition to University and life in Adelaide.

### **Financial Support**

- Students need to find out more about finances at high school. Perhaps this could be incorporated into a CD Rom about living in Adelaide or talked about in a visit to the school. ACC could facilitate this.
- ACC can work with community organisations to arrange small in-school scholarships. This will help to familiarise students with scholarships and encourage them to apply for assistance when contemplating further study.

- ACC could support the Isolated Children's and Parent Association and similar organisations in their lobbying to increase availability of Austudy or the youth allowance for rural students.

## **Background to Research**

As part of its on going commitment to support various state government bodies in raising the domestic and international profile of Adelaide as a place to study and live, the Adelaide City Council approached the Australian Institute of Social Research to conduct a study into (understanding and exploring) the issues faced by rural, interstate and international students who come to study, work and live in Adelaide.

This project is one of a suite of projects setup and coordinated by the Adelaide City Council with an aim to implement the key actions cited in their Student Growth Plan 2005-2010. The project directly follows on from an International Student Project conducted by the Adelaide University, The Australian Institute of Social Research and the Adelaide City Council that examined the phenomena of international students living and learning experiences in the city of Adelaide.

The influx of international students into South Australia, and Australia at large, has meant that education has become one of Australia's top three service exports. For South Australia this has meant greater international exposure, more capital expenditure, and greater cultural and social diversity.

The principal aim of the Student Growth Plan is to promote Adelaide as a learning and education city by strengthening the education sector, attracting greater numbers students (international, interstate and rural), and the provision of support services and activities. Implementing these key actions will better position the City to foster innovation and harness knowledge.

*"The provision of education in itself provides economic, social and cultural stimuli and the skills and knowledge developed will help drive the economic well being of the state."* (Adelaide City Council 2005, Student Growth Plan 2005-2010: 3)

To measure progress, the Adelaide City Council has established a series of benchmarks. Through the implementation of these benchmarks, the Adelaide City Council is better able to assess whether it is attaining the qualities that it seeks for the City to possess by 2010. It is hoped that local, rural, international and interstate students will be attracted to the range of education and training opportunities offered by the City, as well as recognising Adelaide as an excellent place for study with a “strong character and identity as a university city” (Adelaide City Council, 2005: 5). To achieve this, and build upon this into the future, the Adelaide City Council will need to develop support services, and a good supply of student accommodation to ensure that students are well integrated into the life of the City.

The Adelaide City Council realises that it has a limited role in the development of the education sector in South Australia. To bridge the gap City Council does provide funds and support for Education Adelaide to market Adelaide as a destination for all students. In addition to this, the City Council also operates the ‘Destination Adelaide’ website to attract and support rural and interstate students.

The City’s ability to attract more students will in part, depend upon the City’s ability to adequately support students in their endeavours whilst studying and living in Adelaide. To achieve this support services will play a key role and are a vital element of strengthening participation rates in formal education and consequently attracting students to Adelaide.

## **Literature Review**

The research aim of exploring the perceptions of rural, interstate, and international students studying and living in Adelaide will be explored through a review of current literature and key documents.

The first part of the literature review is taken from a previous study for the Cowan Grant ‘*Going to University: Rural and Regional Students Perceptions of Studying in Adelaide*’ (Woodlands et al, 2006) where focus groups with year 12 students were held in 6 rural and regional schools in South Australia. It is included as it firstly explores how student aspirations for tertiary study are influenced and secondly how the barriers that exist that may preclude or unduly influence these aspirations. Following this is a discussion of literature pertaining to support and transition issues for students including the experience of the first year of university, as well as how universities are addressing these issues. This will include a brief look at information

that has been produced for young people to ease transition issues, and conclude with literature pertaining to Adelaide as an education destination particularly the importance of students to the on-going vibrancy of the City of Adelaide.

### **The Rural Experience**

The report, *Generation X-pendable: Young, Rural and Looking for Work* (Alston & Kent, 2001), like this study has also engaged the student voice, particularly exploring the gendered nature of rural opportunities. It identifies that girls leaving to attend higher education in the city constitute 62% of rural female students, whilst boys constitute 39%, due to greater employment opportunities in the country for the later group. In addition James et al (1999) describe how gender ensures experiencing rurality in different ways. This report found most young women were aware of the lack of opportunities that existed for them in country towns, with many comments regarding 'you can only have so many hairdressing salons'. For the girls who stay behind there are limited employment opportunities, and most of the opportunities available are casual employment with little scope for advancement. James et al's (1999: 92) study is specifically concerned with tertiary studies and as such acknowledges "universities have a key role to play in Australia's rural and regional development by influencing the socio-economic profile of rural communities".

Rural students make up one of six equity groups first laid out in the report *A Fair Chance for All* (DEET, 1990). Various reports discuss how rural and isolated students are performing. The Centre for the Study of Higher Education at The University of Melbourne produced a report in 2004 titled *Analysis of Equity Groups in Higher education 1991-2002* (James et al, 2002), which comprehensively explored how the different equity groups were performing. Generally students living in rural areas remain "significantly under-represented' in tertiary education" (James et al, 2004: ix).

There is on-going concern for the combined effects of low socio-economic status and rural and isolated origins with regards to participation in tertiary education.

Representation in tertiary education from rural males continues to decline. In addition, the Australian Government has in place the *Higher Education and Equity Program* (HEEP) aimed at assisting equity group students through base payments to universities and on top retention and performance payments. Success of this program may be questionable due to the plateau of rural tertiary student participation.

As James et al (1999: 92) attest, “the lower higher education participation rates of rural and isolated people are an integral component in a cycle or rural disadvantage”. Cocklin and Dibden (2005: 165) describe in *Sustainability and Change in Rural Australia*, that it is “important to ensure that young people’s educational access is not hindered in any way and is actively facilitated”. However, as the literature indicates, significant barriers do exist for rural young people in developing and fulfilling their aspirations for their future. This report both substantiates these findings and recommends how perceived barriers may be addressed.

### **School Experience**

James et al (1999: 7) argue “it is the in-school experience which may be upper-most in students’ decision-making processes when it comes to considering going to university”. This report certainly concludes that student’s in-school experiences, with respect to the culturally appropriate dissemination of knowledge, are crucial in facilitating student’s aspirations. In addition, key teachers are pivotal to the students in engaging and promoting options as well as facilitating application processes, accommodation and so forth. This study found the in-school experience also influences the parents’ view on tertiary education.

Importantly, James et al (1999) ascertain it was not geographical distance from a tertiary institution that was the crucial factor for students deciding on options for university, rather it was course selection. This finding was borne out by this study as the majority of students stated that course selection was a priority in choosing higher education.

The report *Factors Impacting on Student Aspirations and Expectations in Regional Australia* (Alloway et al, 2004) highlights a positive step forward in South Australian secondary schools with the introduction of Year 13 allowing students to undertake their South Australian Certificate of Education (SACE) over a three-year period, as well as the many TAFE courses and Vocational Education and Training (VET) on offer. Alloway et al (2004) see this as offering a ‘second chance’ to students to improve their TER score, in addition to allowing students to work part-time and save for tertiary studies. Certainly these finding backs up our research in both the positive nature of the opportunity as well the fact that it has been embraced by a wide range of students at the 6 schools visited in rural and regional areas. A positive finding of the Alloway et al (2004) report referred to programs designed for schools to allow

students the opportunity of “re-visioning their futures” through various field trips which sought to blend “recreation and pleasure”. In addition, various educational and career expos were presented as useful. However, our report found such endeavours targeted either the wrong year level, or the level of information presented was too broad and opportunities for asking tailored questions were minimal.

The student voice, in the Cowan Grant study, certainly provided much greater insights into what it means to grow up in a rural area and how that impacts on their way of thinking and future aspirations. Further is the pivotal role that the school and key people within that structure who have the role of both taking the students out into the world and bringing the outside world into the students lives.

The notion of attempting to pin down an appropriate intervention time to instil enthusiasm in students for further education can be viewed as problematic as a raft of factors coalesce to connect students with these aspirations. As this report highlights, key people who influence student’s outlook and decision-making processes must also be targeted for intervention (also James et al, 1999).

## **Barriers**

The main issues for rural and regional students in moving to the city for tertiary education are finances, finding suitable accommodation, managing life skills and finances, orientation to university and managing academic skills.

### **Austudy/Youth Allowance**

The Human Rights & Equal Opportunities Commission Report (HREOC, 1999), *Bush Talks*, has relevance to this study as it engaged specifically with the communities of rural areas in order to determine the various challenges they face. Most notably for this study is the stress placed on families of the Austudy and Youth Allowance requirements. There were many studies (James et al, 1999; Alloway, et al 2004; Cocklin & Dibden, 2005), which also came to similar conclusions. Notably, Cocklin & Dibden (2005: 165) state that “one of the main causes of the decline in the proportion of rural students accessing tertiary education has been the lack of eligibility of many rural young people to tertiary allowances”. Godden’s (2005) study of *Regional Tertiary Students and Youth Allowance* further highlights these significant issues and makes a raft of recommendations for positive change. The financial barrier

associated with Youth Allowance has also been corroborated by this current research as expressed by students, teachers and parents.

### **Accommodation**

Another significant barrier to rural students is accommodation. Although various research reports note this as a barrier, the Cowan Grant study delves more closely into various accommodation models that students are seeking. MacIntyre's (2003) article *New Models of Student Housing and Their Impact on Local Communities* investigates the dedicated student housing market that universities have become involved with as a means of attracting students, and the role this can play in urban regeneration. Most pertinent for this study is MacIntyre's (2003: 110) mention of the value of "residential halls that catered for every student [and] allowed for a combination of pastoral care and some tutorial-based supplementation of the formal teaching". However, when mentioning other current models of student accommodation pastoral care is not referred to. The importance of the residential college model to the welfare of students and also contributing to piece of mind for the parents was a key finding.

### **Scholarships**

As Adelaide City Council aims to increase its student population, it must be conversant with the barriers many rural and regional students face in their aspirations for tertiary study. One such barrier is student access to scholarships.

Importantly, James et al (2003) corroborate the effect socio-economic circumstances have on lower education participation rates as being more important than geographical distance from tertiary centres. A small body of research exists which specifically addresses scholarships for regional students. Godden (2005) discusses the necessity for an increase in scholarships for rural students by local governments, university initiatives, and suggests that the Federal government subsidise residential accommodation. As well Godden (2005) recommends scholarship deferment as an option, lump-sum scholarship payments for students, and to ensure scholarships are not counted as income, thereby reducing students' ability to earn an income. Godden (2005) does not discuss either the culture of scholarships within schools or how information is disseminated. Importantly James et al, (1992: 92) sees increasing the

positives of achieving tertiary education by flagging its relevance and benefits, as possibly being more beneficial in the long run than trying to reduce the barriers.

### **Transition Issues for Students**

This research has been specifically targeted towards understanding the barriers that are involved in precluding students from studying in Adelaide, as well as, once here, their perceptions of living and studying in Adelaide. This, then, sets this study apart from other studies of both rural student barriers and transition issues involved once studying in Adelaide.

There is a growing body of research documenting the transition from secondary to tertiary education and, more importantly, transition issues for rural students (Alloway et al, 2004; Krause, Hartley, James & McInnis, 2005). Although Tranter's (2003), *Fish out of Water* report focused on the metropolitan area, its focus was on disadvantaged schools that had very low participation rates in tertiary education. The most significant findings that relate to this study are the combined effects of school culture and parental influence that serve to provide barriers for students choosing to continue with education. The culture of the campus where the student studies also has a significant effect on the student's sense of belonging (Tranter, 2003).

Kantanis' (2000) study *The role of social transition in students' adjustment to the first-year of university* asserts that "the first-year university experience of a significant number of students is neither satisfying (in terms of personal fulfilment) nor successful (if academic achievement is the measure)". The transition process is particularly important as approximately one third of students drop out in their first year of university. Kantanis (2000) argues that students' needs must be fully explored in order for their university experience to be fulfilling. In addition Kantanis argues that, although some headway is being made to address the transition process, these measures are not engaging academic staff who are important, as they are the main point of contact for new students.

Tindle's (1995) study *On Becoming an Undergraduate: Transition to University* covers many similar issues, but most pertinent to this study is the finding that changes to certain lifestyle factors have a significant bearing on successful transition to university. These relate to "changes in physical activity, recreational involvement and total health care" whereby some students were going from considerable

“competitive team competition” to no sport at all (Tindle, 1995: 48). This finding is relevant to this study as the importance of sport and the associated social life to rural, interstate and international students was considerable.

In the Federal Government’s report *The First Year Experience in Australian Universities: Findings from a Decade of National Studies* (2005), of most relevance to this study is the in-depth analysis of students from equity groups and the highlighted need for institutional support to meet their specific needs. Evans’ (2000) report *Planning for the Transition to Tertiary Study: A Literature Review* highlights the concern with “deferment act[ing] as a filter, diverting female non-metropolitan students from entering higher education”. Further, Evans notes that when students have specific goals for tertiary study they have greater chance of success.

Various programs are being implemented in universities specifically targeting equity groups, particularly rural and isolated students. A report of one such program, *Smooth Start* at the University of Adelaide has reiterated the importance of targeted and systematic transition programs for first year students. These programs include matching students with mentors and hosting specific social functions. The Smooth Start program has been based on the ‘Flying Start’ equity-based program from the University of Western Australia. Its first year of inception was 2005 and the program is now funded by the student support services at the University of Adelaide. Of note is that this program has not been actively promoted due to a stigma associated with being targeted as being from an equity group.

The two other Adelaide-based universities now have transition officers, which only further highlights the importance of this issue. This finding certainly corroborates this research. Flinders University International Student Services Unit has produced a comprehensive publication to aid international students in their transition to life in Adelaide *‘Arrive, Survive, Thrive: The Guide for International Students’* (2006). This guide covers such aspects as arriving in Adelaide; getting around Adelaide; finding accommodation; shopping; Adelaide for families, visas, working and so forth. Although each University provides a similar publication, this publication provides a clear and easy to understand template, particularly with regards to rural and interstate students arriving in Adelaide.

A recent addition to the Learning Connection Service (2006) at The University of South Australia is a range of easy to navigate online workshops aimed at students

from rural and interstate areas, their families and friends. It covers university enrolment, developing good study patterns, finding accommodation, finding the right job that fits in with study, what changes to expect, homesickness and so forth. An important role for the workshop, aimed at parents, is it serves to empower and inform, enabling parents to take a proactive and positive role in their son or daughters transition to tertiary study. This model serves as a useful template for on-line workshops or forums.

Addressing transition issues has become more recognised and a recent publication for young people '*Getting Out: A young person's guide to becoming independent*' (Government of South Australia, 2006a) aims to address a variety of these issues and is especially directed at rural and regional students. This publication has been developed in partnership with various South Australian regional health services and the Department of Education and Children's Services. Its objective is "enhancing the capacity of young people to make an educated transition to independent living through raising awareness of careers and employment, education, accommodation, transport, budgeting..." (Government of South Australia, 2006a: i). It draws on a number of websites and resources including the Adelaide City Council's youth website making a useful, comprehensive and easy to read booklet for young people.

### **Adelaide as an Education Destination**

The concept of Adelaide as a growing education destination is important to this study as the Adelaide City Council has a city population target of 34,000 people by the year 2010 (2004: 20), and keeping the growing student population well-housed and enthusiastic about the city is paramount.

An important document to this study has been the Adelaide City Council's (2005) *Student Growth Plan 2005-2010* which both sets the context of how important students are to the City of Adelaide and also how the Adelaide City Council plans to address the issue of attaining the student target numbers.

Another useful document to this study has been the Adelaide City Council's *A Discussion of Social Trends in the City of Adelaide June 2004*. Adelaide City Council sees the importance of attracting "creative individuals with high levels of individual drive and talent" to the city and includes "young people, students, artisans and entrepreneurs" in this group (2004: 13). The Adelaide City Council recognises that

on-going positive changes to the “amenity and liveability” of the city are crucial in order to “grow its population” (2004: 13).

*“A vibrant city centre will be more attractive to a range of overseas visitors, students and business migrants who will contribute to the growth and vitality of the State” (Adelaide City Council, 2004: 20).*

This current study provides student comment on various aspects of the culture and vitality of the City of Adelaide as well as fundamental issues such as safety, accommodation and public transport usage. The Adelaide City Council (2004: 20) report on social trends also addresses the importance of “providing more affordable housing options and targeting particular groups such as migrants, students and other young people...” However of concern is that “[s]tudent housing is concentrating within former, large converted office blocks’ which ‘may promote a sense of isolation from other city residents” (Adelaide City Council, 2004: 53).

The Adelaide City Council recognises the necessity of forming partnerships with both the private sector and the state government in order to continue to shape the future of the City of Adelaide. In this regard on-going partnerships with the Universities, particularly the City-based campuses become crucial.

As well, the Adelaide City Council report flags the “accessible public face of many commercial services” providing “an informal source of social capital” (2004: 51). This is certainly an important acknowledgement, particularly with regards to international, rural and interstate students studying, living and working in Adelaide.

Finally the *Planning Strategy for Metropolitan Adelaide* (Government of South Australia, 2006b: 57) sees education as

*“A significant employer and source of economic generation. Strengthening Adelaide’s role as a centre of excellence in education and care by providing high-quality education services will draw students from overseas, and boost the education industry, the economy and the vibrancy of the city”*

## **Methodology**

To acquire an optimal level of quality and quantity of information for this study we utilized qualitative methods of data collection. Our primary source of data collection was focus groups with our target sample, complimented by interviews with key informants. A primary benefit of using focus groups is that they allow researchers to find out why an issue is of concern to the participants, as well as what is salient about it (Morgan, 1997).

In seeking to examine the living experiences of rural, regional and international students studying in Adelaide we held focus groups with:

- Rural and regional students living independently;
- Rural and regional students participating in the Smooth Start program;
- Rural and regional students living in St Marks Residential College;
- Rural and regional students living in St Anne's Residential College;
- International students living independently; and
- International students living in Lincoln Residential College.

These groups were chosen as they represent the diversity in living and learning demographics of our target sample. In addition to the obvious difference of accommodation, many of the students were studying different degrees, were from different universities, and were at different stages of their degree. These variances in the sample provided us with unique perspectives on life in Adelaide. Students who participated in the focus groups were selected using a snowball effect.

In addition to focus groups, we arranged interviews with key informants who had a special interest or influence in our field of study. These informants included representatives from transition programs at the universities and residential colleges, and members from organizations such as the Isolated Children's Parent's Association and the Outback Areas Community Development Trust. We also conducted structured interviews with those students interested in contributing to the study, but who were unable to attend the arranged focus group times.

## **Findings**

### **Choosing Adelaide as a Study Destination**

Choosing Adelaide as a destination for study is a decision influenced by many variables. For the international students we spoke to there were two key factors which made Adelaide more appealing than other capital cities in Australia:

1. The cost of living; and
2. The quality of the courses offered.

*“The living costs are not as high compared to other states and it is easier to get in.”* (Female International Student)

*“I had no idea about Adelaide before I came here. The only reason I actually applied here was basically was the course offered was pretty good and plus the cost was also pretty reasonable compared to a couple of other universities”* (Male International Student)

*“For me the decisive factor was the cost of living and I already had friends over here so. I had offers from Sydney and Melbourne, but they were way out of my league because the costs are just too high.”* (Male International Student)

While for the international students there was a general consensus on why they chose Adelaide, interstate students came to Adelaide for different reasons. For some it was because they had support networks here, while for others it was more directly related to the quality of their university course.

*“I came to Adelaide I have got relatives here. I didn’t go to Darwin Uni because it has not been established long”* (Female Interstate Student)

*“The quality of the course. I got offers to Gold Coast and Brisbane and it did work out to be cheaper to go there, but Adelaide’s dental school is the best in Australia and I got an offer here so I decided to grab it”* (Male Interstate Student)

Rural and regional students often chose to study in Adelaide for the convenience of its spatial location to home, and the financial cost of moving interstate for study was generally seen as unfeasible.

*“It would be hard to go to an interstate university without a scholarship, a full scholarship I mean and from that point of view Adelaide is obviously closer, and family, and all that kind of thing is really important and convenient being close to your family”* (Male Regional Student)

*“I was pretty lucky that I got excepted into both Melbourne and Sydney in the courses I wanted to do but I just guess convenience won out in the end for me, I had accommodation stitched up, living only an hour away makes it fairly easy and knowing a lot of people that live here, and what I wanted to do I think Adelaide University was pretty well up in that”* (Male Regional Student)

*“I never had an option, I never thought about anything else, I had accommodation sorted, it was easy”* (Female Regional Student)

### **Cultural Vitality**

Adelaide is interesting in that it is described by many students as a good place to study because it s quiet, but at the same time boring because it is perceived that there is little entertainment offered.

*“Adelaide is a really comfortable place to study, because there is no really hectic life.”* (Male International Student)

*“Adelaide is the best place to live and when you consider with respect to study aspects studying in Adelaide is really good like you don’t have any other distractions like other cities in Australia, like you don’t have sort of entertainment out here in Adelaide so you can concentrate only your studies”* (Male International Student)

*“There is less entertainment here but more time to appreciate it. In Hong Kong there is heaps to do but no time.”* (Female International Student)

However, while the majority of students we spoke to shared this opinion, there was also wide recognition of the vibe events such as the Fringe Festival and WOM Adelaide bring to the streets of the City. Many students expressed the need for Adelaide to increase this kind of feel to the City throughout the year.

*“I think one thing Adelaide needs more is things happening on the street, markets and bands, stuff I feel like happens more in other cities, like my friends from bigger places say oh Adelaide’s just kind of a bit dull, when you’re walking out there’s not much happening, I mean like when the Fringe is on the place is just a buzz and great, there’s stuff to see and stuff to do, if they could have more of that happening year round, more outdoorsy colour and noise on the streets”* (Female Regional Student)

## **Social Interactions**

Establishing social networks is an essential part of making a successful transition to a new study and living environment. For rural, interstate, and international students creating new friendships and a sense of belonging can be extremely daunting.

*“I’ve never felt so unintelligent in my life”* (Female Regional Student)

*“I didn’t know anyone at Adelaide, but there were a couple of people that I had lectures with and tutorials with and I talk with them. I find most people are pretty shy. I think more Adelaide high schools have people going to university so they already know each other.”* (Female Regional Student)

*“Leaving family behind has been the most difficult thing for me because I am the eldest and the first in my family to go to university so I don’t much family down here.”* (Female Regional Student)

*“Leaving all my friends was hard. Back home they are all tradies and I’m the only one that’s doing uni from our family.”* (Male Regional Student)

Creating new social networks had different challenges for the different groups of students we spoke to. For rural students who often had a very strong sense of community at home, the isolation they felt when they first arrived in Adelaide was overwhelming.

*“I get really lonely in the City, I mean a lot of my friends live in Adelaide but its harder to spend time with friends in Adelaide when you live 5kms away from each other than when you live in the country and live 20kms from them”*  
(Female Regional Student)

*“I did all my schooling in the country, in a really small public school and I found one of the biggest challenges was coming to uni you’re just a number, kind of thing, whereas at school, I don’t know, it’s a community, you know everyone... At uni, you go to uni, you go to your class, and as soon as your class is over you just go home, kind of thing”* (Female Regional Student)

*“This may be a bit of a rash generalisation but I’ve found that rural people I’ve come across have been a little bit more socially receptive than City people, I don’t know whether anyone else here has found that, I don’t know whether it’s just because we’re both from the country, but you just seem to be able to get along with them a little bit easier”* (Male Regional Student)

International students, on the other hand, often found the cultural differences in socializing a challenge, especially in regards to alcohol. Instead of spending time drinking they wanted to go out for food, or explore the State. On this latter point, we received comments on how it was not often easy to know where to go unless you had local friends to ask advice from.

*“I’m not from cultural background that is associated with alcohol. I like to chat over dinner”* (Female International Student)

*“When I interacted with friends at work I got to know about the Murray River and so said lets go there. Similar with the York Peninsula when I took one of the maps and it said go to the York it is great I asked a friend from work and he reckoned it is. You need to interact with a lot of locals to figure out the right places to go.”* (Male International Student)

*“I want to try everything in Australia”* (Female International Student)

One place to create social networks, which was discussed by all students involved in this research, was through sport. For those who had become involved in a local team, or within the colleges the experience was seen as very beneficial. However, we also received comments on the difficulty of accessing local sporting clubs, or the expenses involved in available activities being too much.

*“When I started out at college I joined a touch team and met a few people at college through that. I joined a football team when I got down here, um, since then I’ve also joined an indoor cricket team so um they obviously don’t go at the same time, they have different seasons. Yeah definitely it’s been that sort of networking thing meeting people from different groups continuously which has been really helpful, which then leads into meeting other people then finding out Adelaide’s not as expanded as you first thought when you find a bit of connections and stuff.”* (Male Regional Student)

*“If you are interested in sports there is nothing much you can do at the university because Uni SA has got like a sports complex but it is pretty crap and it costs \$10 to play and you are better off actually going to the local community”* (Male International Student)

*“Compared to playing sport back in the country you pay your \$50 dollar nomination or whatever its called, fees, for the year and you can play every week and then you play in the city and to play hockey for Adel Uni is like \$350 and on top of that you have to pay your union fees and then you have to pay \$7 a game and its like, I’ll go home and play there and I’ll drive that distance.”* (Female Regional Student)

## **Accommodation**

Accommodation is one of the key problems many students face in the transition process. While there are many options available from residential colleges, to student apartments and private rental, students are often constrained by their financial situation.

*“I couldn’t afford college even though I liked the idea I picked a share house because it was kind of easier, quiet cheap, but, um, in hindsight I’d move to college”* (Female Regional Student)

*"Its true about the money. I staying at my grandparents and think time and again really how lucky I get on really well with my grandparents, which is a bonus, but also pay board and stuff... I have friends who are at colleges and things and that's kinda upwards of \$300 a week for full board and all the merry things which is really great but I think that that kind of thing you have to be parent supported to get that kind of thing to work so it wouldn't"* (Male Regional Student)

The point raised in these quotes about the desire to attend, and benefit of the support given by colleges, was a point raised by both students living in colleges, and those living in private accommodation. It was widely recognized that the activities provided by the colleges such as the competitive sports, and orientation activities such as the 'Amazing Race' at St Anne's College, which aimed to familiarize students with their local surroundings, made transition much easier.

*"I think it's a great idea to start with, I would really like to have been at one of those colleges, making connections at uni to begin with is really hard and I hated first year because I went from having all my friends everyday all around me to just nothing and I think those colleges kind of provide that sense of community - you meet people, I think at least to start with that would be the best way to go"* (Female Regional Student)

*"Living here with other people we get to know them regardless of whether we intend to or not... If you didn't go to a residential college I reckon it would be really hard to start uni and get into the whole uni mindset as well as the whole 'lets make a new group of friends'"* (Female Regional Student)

*"It's really easy in college to do every in college without doing anything outside"* (Female Regional Student)

*"I think I would not enjoy university nearly as much if I wasn't at residential college I don't know how I would have gone by myself"* (Female Regional Student)

*"There's so much to do at college. Like now we have 'video week' and that keep you occupied and like all the night times there are always activities on and like all your college friends are in other degrees like commerce or*

*engineering and they fill you in on what's happening so like Friday nights you go out with them" (Male Interstate Student)*

*"College would be really good... I just feel like I'm alone and there's no one else there, but in a college you'd make new friends straight away, you have that community because you play sport with them, you play against the other colleges and its sort of like what your used to" (Female Regional Student)*

*"I think it would be a lot lonelier to not live in a college" (Female Regional Student)*

For students who simply could not afford college the difficulty of moving into private accommodation was described as stressful, with students having to adjust to being completely independent as well as cope with adjusting to university life.

*"I couldn't afford to go to college so I moved into terrible housing, I mean it was just was available to me." (Female Regional Student)*

*"When you come home, and you're tired and you have to cook dinner and then do your own dishes... It makes you grow up fast, but it takes a hard toll" (Female Regional Student)*

*"Its hard because most of us are moving out of home for the first time and if we want to move into a share house its even harder" (Female Interstate Student)*

*"I'd have to bring down all my furniture, buy a whole heap of stuff for a house and that's all too hard" (Female Regional Student)*

*"There could be more supported options... both financially and kind of the ease of turning up and the furniture's there, you just collect your keys, there's not a bond, just all those hassles that share houses have are just gone, coz I think some for people college could just be too claustrophobic or they need their privacy, they like the quiet or don't like the meals or whatever the reasons, I think there needs to be another good option." (Female Regional Student)*

Moreover, in addition to the difficulty of becoming established and settled in private accommodation, there are issues which can arise with regards to the neglect of students' rights.

*"That is the new thing that has started they charge you an orientation fee when they come and tell you that is your key, that is your door, that is your bathroom they charge you a \$120... What I heard is that it is not legal but nobody objects"* (Male International Student)

### **Financial Support**

Receiving financial support to afford the cost of living in Adelaide was a major issue for the rural students we spoke to. Many students commented on the barrier their parent's income had on their ability to receive government support, despite the reality that they were unable to help them afford all the costs of living in Adelaide, especially with the additional costs of tertiary education such as text books.

*"It's really hard if your parents aren't on a high income, or they aren't low enough for you to get Youth Allowance and you haven't taken a year off so you haven't got the \$16.000-17.000 and there you have to find somewhere to live and somewhere to work to pay for your rent and then you have to do uni."* (Female Regional Student)

*"I was living on savings coz I'd worked, pretty much I finished high school and I went in and worked on a bottling line and saved all my money so I could come to uni and that's what I lived off. It's really dumb because you can live well below the poverty line and still your parents can't really, they couldn't afford to pay for my entire uni stuff, so they were like if you want to go you can pay for living, and that's fine but Centerlink were like she doesn't get money, even though you're living in poverty."* (Female Regional Student)

*"What irritated me was like, I didn't realise that I wasn't able to get Youth Allowance because of these factors, like I thought I could go straight to uni and there'd be something to support me in case I did decide that I want to move out of home, but because of my circumstances my parents earn just over the limit of the threshold and I can't get it."* (Female Regional Student)

These students also expressed frustration with how the system of financial support works. Many rural students commented on how if they were not eligible for government assistance such as Austudy, then they were also disadvantaged in receiving other forms of financial support such as scholarships.

*“Just with scholarships I found it extremely hard... A lot of them relied on Centrelink or whatever, and I thought that was so unfair coz despite my parents having the assets it had nothing to do with me really, I struggled coz some of my friends, they were able to get scholarships and I’m trying to start uni, trying to have my own life, pay for things like that but I have to rely on my parents because there was no support for me.”* (Female Regional Student)

*“It really seems like it’s all or nothing, if you can get the Centerlink you’re laughing, you can get scholarships and rent assistance but without it you get nothing.”* (Female Regional Student)

The conditions of receiving government assistance, which require students to take a year off to earn a specific amount of money, were surrounded by many problems. Some students were unable to defer from their course for this time, while others felt that if they took the year off they might not return to study. In these circumstances the students had to undertake part time work just to support themselves, with the hours often taking a toll on their study.

*“I can’t take a year off with my course and it’s the rent assistance that you have to be living out of home for 18 months and it’s just not practical.”* (Female Regional Student)

*“It’s so frustrating to work your butt off for a year just to get your foot in the door.”* (Female Regional Student)

*“Maybe they should have some special thing an incentive that you get if you come to uni ... some take a year off, but half of them aren’t coming back.”* (Female Regional Student)

*“At the moment I am working 20 or more hours a week on top of a full time science course in order to help them out. I guess I am just hoping that there’s*

*some way to help others so they will still go to university as I almost didn't due to this reason.” (Female Regional Student)*

*“Uni is always the one that suffers I found with my work, coz you have to be at work all those hours... What you do outside of the uni is your real work load so that is what was getting put to the side of my job, for like \$10 an hour or whatever it is that we're earning you're uni grades can drop significantly.”  
(Female Regional Student)*

## **Employment**

To overcome financial barriers, many of the students we spoke to required part-time or casual employment to afford the cost of living and studying in Adelaide. The obvious benefits of employment included the income to sustain their living arrangements, as well as helping to create new social networks.

*“I think that it was good to get a job, like it gave me other contacts and friends that I wouldn't have met, but it came with the downside of the extra time from studying.” (Female Regional Student)*

For many students, however, employment meant another pressure during their transition to tertiary education, and time away from the necessary hours of study outlined in their course. In some cases the time requirements of university left students with little or no time to commit to employment.

*“I also find that in first year you don't want to go out straight get a job, you want to settle in, find out what uni is like, what living in the City is like and everything else and getting a job is that bit of extra hard work, it would be better to leave it for a little while, settle in, and then find a job.” (Female Regional Student)*

*“We were actually looking for some work but once we started the course, 6 days but every subject has 4-5 assignments we start to realize ‘oh my god’ would we have time to do some work” (Male International Student)*

*"I work at a local vet surgery and it was night work and it became very hard because it was night work and when I got home it was just too late to actually do anything"* (Female Regional Student)

Another concern raised by students related to the difficulty of finding part-time or casual employment in a new living environment. Even though some students had the skills required, they did not have the same networks as at home which made finding employment much easier.

*"You don't have any contacts to get jobs, whereas at home people offer you jobs."* (Female Regional Student)

*"[My friends] have been looking for jobs through the newspaper and the Internet but very hard to find jobs"* (Female International Student)

*"I've been trying to find work, but I haven't been able to find anything. All the jobs that I've applied for and have skills for, I haven't heard a word back"* (Female Regional Student)

Moreover, for rural students who were able to return home regularly, the hours of employment offered to students (night time and weekends) meant the sacrifice of returning home to visit family and friends. Each individual student resolved this ultimatum differently. The more fortunate students were able to rely on their parents' income, whereas others either worked in the city making that sacrifice, or continued to return home on a regular basis to maintain employment there.

*"There's no jobs that won't expect you to work weekends so if you want a job, there won't be much time to see your family."* (Female Regional Student)

*"I get an allowance from my parents as I did not take a year of to work and therefore could not get Austudy. I can not work because I go home every third or second weekend and the jobs I applied for either wanted me to work weekends or have a full day off to work which I don't have."* (Female Regional Student)

*"I travel back to Murray Bridge as I have stable, reliant work there."* (Female Regional Student)

An issue more directly related to the international students in this study was that of employment after graduation. Although the students enjoyed their time in Adelaide and wished to continue living here with full-time employment, the lack of a competitive job market meant that many students were considering moving to the east coast cities such as Sydney or Melbourne.

*“The only thing about Adelaide I think that is not so great is competition in terms of work as in there is no real drive, very few companies. If I go to an employment fair and I say I am from Adelaide they say there are no jobs in Adelaide.”* (Male International Student)

*“I have attended a few seminars which have said that Australia is facing a skills shortage, correct, and they want skilled people to work on say engineering or whatever it is. What happens is there is a shortage in one area but if I graduate out of that same area it is difficult to actually access that as most jobs are not advertised on the internet so if city councils in Adelaide, in Melbourne everywhere have some sort of once a year two, twice a year, kind of an employment fair when they bring companies that are interested cause if you are in Adelaide and you want to take employment if you go to Sydney you have to start again.”* (Male International Student)

## **Transport**

The majority of comments we received on transport were from rural students. This group of students were often unfamiliar with public transport systems, making the timetables very confusing and leaving students feeling lost.

*“I found at first the public transport system I didn’t really use it, but when I did I found it really hard by the time I read and found where I wanted to go I got lost.”* (Female Regional Student)

*“I struggle with buses, and all my country mates do. The programs and that are ok but some of the posts are just yellow posts with a number.”* (Female Regional Student)

*"I think the buses are shocking. It may only be my route 171, but when I first moved I went into panic mode as the bus was never on time, sometimes buses didn't come at all and I missed a lot of lectures. This problem has improved slightly however I think this is a issue that should be address not just about my route but all routes."* (Female Regional Student)

However, while many rural students commented on the negative side of the public transport system, for others it provided a new level of independence which they were unable to experience in the country without a driver's license.

*"I probably had the opposite experience because I'd never had my licence in the country, I left the country just before I was able to get it, I find the buses a great source of independence for me compared to the country where I needed my mum to give me a lift everywhere, but in the City I can just go wherever I like."* (Female Regional Student)

The other key issue surrounding transport was related students still living in regional centers and studying in Adelaide. For these students there were concerns of safety on transport after dark, and frustration at the lack of services available at night.

*"I live in Gawler and I find travelling to Adelaide 5 or 6 times a week tedious, especially at night when the trains only run once an hour after 6.50. These trains are often dangerous at night so I can't catch them."* (Female Regional Student)

### **Council Services**

Many of the students involved in this study were unaware of Adelaide City Council's youth website or any other services they provide for students. A majority of the students had not heard about the bus tour in orientation week, although those that had positive feedback suggesting that better advertising of this service is required.

*"I did and I had so much fun on that bus"* (Female Regional Student)

*"They had a bus tour around the city that I made five friends from and I still keep in contact with them... It was really good"* (Female Regional Student)

*“Me and my friends got a pamphlet in our uni pack people it looked like lots of free stuff” (Female Regional Student)*

## **One Stop Shop**

Students were keen on the idea of a physical and virtual place of the One Stop Shop. They had many ideas of the services they wanted to be incorporated into the physical place. These included some sort of recreational facilities, where they could meet friends, study and just hang out; information on sporting and special interest clubs where they can meet new friends; and student specific services related to employment, accommodation, legal rights, and other services which would help make their transition easier.

*“There needs to be a common room to hang out in with things like pool, Xbox and PS3, chess, games, and magazines from international students home country” (Female International Student)*

*“It could centralise all the things that are now going to go with VSU – employment services, like if you could set up an employment office in conjunction with selling text books” (Female Regional Student)*

*“Rental properties, because when you go through the papers a lot of people aren’t really they don’t want students in their house so it would be nice to go somewhere where they are less likely to be wasting your time looking at places that aren’t going to take students anyway” (Male Regional Student)*

*“I’d like to know more about club type of things, but because I kinda got all the information on the last day of O Week, I haven’t made my mind up, and you kinda don’t know where to go and don’t know what to get involved in...once you miss the boat its really hard to join because your like ah people have already made their friends and I’ll wait to next year.” (Female Regional Student)*

For the virtual one stop shop, information would assist students before coming to Adelaide, and once arrived in Adelaide about living in the City. This information included seminars on budgeting money, catching public transport, and knowing what services, discounts and concessions were available to them.

*"I reckon it should be electronic because otherwise it turns into table waste because you'd know about it, but you're not bombarded by it and its easily accessible if you want it, but you don't have to"* (Male Regional Student)

*"We need moving out of home advice stuff as well a lot of country students are moving out of home for the first time and because we are from the country, we're not near to our parents and they cant come up in 5 mins to help you out and stuff... It could have a lot of stuff like how to go find a job and how to do your tax and other things like learn how to budget because suddenly you're spending money on things you've never bought in your life like groceries, water, electricity and it adds up."* (Female Regional Student)

*"You need a CD Rom or something to be sent out to schools before you come to uni because every bit of information that got sent out to our school you could sit down at lunchtime and there was a big folder you could go through that had information on colleges and information on scholarships and that but something in a CD Rom would be good"* (Female Regional Student)

In addition to the virtual One Stop Shop, students thought that regular emails alerting them of specials, activities and available services were a good idea, as it would allow them to absorb the information rather being bombarded with everything in orientation week.

*"You could tie the web site into the e-mail"* (Male Regional Student)

*"With all the work that we are doing, we regularly check our email. So emails would be good."* (Male International Student)

*"As long as it is not filled up with stuff and you make it fairly specific because otherwise and I will just delete it"* (Male Regional Student)

*"What pubs are good on what nights... Where drink and meal specials are."* (Male Regional Student)

## **Key Issues**

### **Information Dissemination**

A key theme that has emerged through out this study has been the way information has been disseminated between universities, schools, community stakeholders and the students themselves. More often than not, information directed to students is not finding its mark. This is not to say that that the information is inaccurate or irrelevant, but rather the problem lies in the mode of delivery, the time at which the student receives the information, and the form that the information takes.

Students quite often did not know of activities being held or services being provided that they could take advantage of. Most of the information regarding activities and services would come in the form of a flyer in a 'goodies bag' during Orientation Week that may get looked at once. Many of the students commented that at the particular time they received the information, they didn't look at it simply because they were being inundated with information from various other sources. In this instance the student tended to focus on the information that related directly to their study and not so much towards leisure and recreation.

After the 'Orientation Week Information Overload' the main sources of information that students would receive would be from various clubs and groups within the universities, hence the trend to stick with sporting clubs as a means of providing a social network. For the students it was a form of socialising that they understood, as the majority of rural students are engaged in sport back in their home communities, and many international students were involved in sport in their home country. It was through sport that some rural, interstate and international students were able to create and maintain a social network as well as use it as an important basing point to venture further and deeper into Adelaide city life. However, for those students interested in finding a local sporting club to join the process appeared much more difficult, not knowing where to find the information they desired; unable to access the location; or finding that services were too expensive.

For something as important as sporting clubs, which help to create social networks and assist in transition, information needs to be readily available and in a form which students can easily access. As one parent and teacher of rural students put it,

*“I think also generally, but particularly country people, prefer a personal connection because that’s the way communities work...kids these days aren’t connected to paper, its all digital and high tech...you need to personalise the process” (Year 12 Coordinator and Parent)*

At the face of it, this statement seems obvious. However, over the course of the discussions, interviews and focus groups it became clear that the message that was coming across was one of culturally appropriate means of information delivery. In this case the community from which this individual came from used word of mouth and face-to-face talks to pass on information. This, as well as through digital means, was the mode of information delivery that these students understood.

The role of institutions following a cooperative approach towards developing education in the City creates more opportunity for the sharing of information that relates to student demand, and a more coordinated approach in education and other support service implementation. For there to be continued growth in attracting students to Adelaide as a place to study and live, understanding student needs is essential if universities, governments (local and state) and community stakeholders want to remain competitive in the ever expanding education market.

### **Accommodation**

In addition to information dissemination, accommodation was the other key issue we found when discussing the issues rural, international and interstate students studying in Adelaide face. Accommodation is an issue which tends to increase and allay other anxieties. These include anxieties related to financial pressure on already financially strained families, having a stable living space, personal safety and what the benefits of moving to Adelaide to pursue further education would be.

To circumvent these issues, many rural students we interviewed opted for private accommodation either with family or friends that lived in metropolitan Adelaide. For these students, or students opting for the private rental market greater attention needs to be paid to their considerable risk of isolation, alienation and dropping out of university. Quite often the students are housed in locations away from other students

from the same social or cultural group thus impacting upon their social networks. Social networks were an integral part of the accommodation issue.

Anecdotally a story was conveyed to us from a parent about his son whom had travelled to Adelaide to pursue a university education. The son encountered feelings of isolation being housed away from other rural students and away from family. On top of this, the pressures of having to pay bills, buying textbooks for university, food, and lack of money to socialise compounded and, as a result, the student dropped out of university and returned to his country home. Unfortunately, this was not an isolated case, with many students who knew or had heard about someone who was either experiencing this type of situation or had gone through it.

The financial problems associated with accommodation were a major consideration of many students. For students who required employment to afford their accommodation this meant critical time away from their studies. In a similar situation, those that received Government assistance reported that the amounts that they were receiving were not enough to sustain and maintain the expenses required for living, let alone studying. In this circumstance students tended to ask their parents for money to keep them going which in turn had the effect of diminishing the student's feelings of independence and increased feelings of guilt by laying additional financial burdens upon their families.

Yet, while many of the accommodation experiences shared by the students were negative, the majority of students held one form of accommodation in high regard. Residential colleges were seen as an opportunity to live in a supported, social environment, which was seen by the students as an extremely important part of the transition process. For a weekly fee, all the students living expenses are covered, plus there are a wide range of social activities and support services which relate to both study and life in the City. These services allowed parents to feel that their children were safe, being feed, and had opportunities to make friends as well as having educational resources available to help their children with their studies. We only heard one apprehension related to the colleges, which was cost. Many students we spoke to wish they were able to attend college, even if it was only for their first year, however the cost made this option impossible.

## **Recommendations**

### **Accommodation**

- When country students leave town you are “casting them into the wide blue yonder” but residential college is a good “intermediate stepping stone”. They have “impressive programs” but important to remember that “some kids don’t fit in with college life” (Head of Governing Council). Important to remember that the main anxiety parents have is over accommodation. There is a need for more supported options than the current residential colleges and ACC could facilitate such endeavours.
- Supported (cheaper and possibly residential) accommodation would be good for first year, or even the first semester, providing the student with support during the transition process. For example, if furniture were provided and no bond was necessary. ACC could explore the provision of alternative accommodation for students. ACC may consider a strategic purchase or partnership to enable an increase in the amount of residential accommodation available within the City environs.
- “It would be good for someone to have a block of units for country kids” (Head of Governing Council). This would provide students with new friendship networks and allow them to adjust to the move to the City.
- Loxton High School is considering buying a group of flats to make renting in Adelaide cheaper, and to make further study more accessible. This accommodation could include house parents and would be financially supported by the local community. Perhaps this is an option that may be considered by other country communities, or something that Adelaide City Council (ACC) could facilitate through community partnerships.

### **Information Dissemination**

- ‘One-stop shop’ – there was support for ACC facilitating both an actual and a virtual one-stop shop’. Various students suggested what services they would like to see at a ‘one-stop shop’ including; some sort of recreational facilities, where they could meet their friends, study and just hang out; information on sporting and special interest clubs where they can meet new friends; information on leisure activities; transport and ticket purchases and student

specific services related to employment, accommodation, legal rights, and other services which would help make their transition easier. As well rural and interstate students want to be able to ask on-going questions about moving to Adelaide, study and employment options via e-mail. They get put off easily via phone, especially when either put on hold or dealing with a recorded voice. ACC could explore utilising one of the Council's existing newer libraries or other accessible locations as a one-stop shop.

- ACC could facilitate courses on life skills for students including budgeting, time management and achieving a better balance between study, work and socialising. This would also provide an opportunity to advertise low-cost activities, food, and services within the city. Students frequently commented that they needed a better way to find out about things.
- ACC could facilitate information dissemination via regular emails which could be sent to students to ensure they know on-going facilities and services that are available to them rather than overwhelming them with too much information in orientation week. If connected to a website students could sign-up for this kind of service.
- Students suggested the ACC could run free 'sausage sizzles' or other food events regularly throughout the semester and use them as a forum to discuss issues such as accommodation/employment. In addition to the face-to-face forum an online forum may also be held. Students mentioned they would be more attractive if better quality food was served.
- ACC could facilitate the production of a CD Rom for distribution to rural, interstate and international students about living and studying in Adelaide.
- ACC could liaise with the Universities International Students Offices and facilitate the provision of a lawyer to discuss students' rights and responsibilities early on arrival. This is particularly important for international students who may not understand many Australian laws.
- Students were keen for a public transport orientation talk to be familiar with the free buses and the metropolitan transport system. ACC could liaise with the relevant government departments to organise such an orientation talk.
- More information needs to be presented by visitors to country schools, especially past students, about living in Adelaide to prepare students for the move and to provide a more personal view. This is an important part of ensuring information is culturally appropriate. ACC could liaise with the local council in rural areas to encourage sponsorship of students travel costs.

- Networks for advertising information on studying and living in Adelaide need to be explored and utilised. For example, the state publication of Isolated Children's and Parents Association is happy to accept advertisements and/or articles about studying in Adelaide.

## **Transport**

- Students living at the residential colleges at North Adelaide would like to have longer term parking available. Students suggest that one possibility may be to open up the parklands. ACC could liaise with the residential colleges in North Adelaide to explore other possibilities for parking options for students.
- When students living in Norwood wanted a residential parking permit for street parking they had to change their registration to the city address costing an extra \$100. Local councils could co-ordinate their approach for rural students ensuring benefits.
- ACC could facilitate education on understanding public transport timetables. This is especially important for country students who often do not have a well-established public transport system in their local community.
- ACC could lobby for the provision of additional public transport back to the country, especially at night. This is difficult for students who live in the Barossa and other areas close enough to the City to commute for study.

## **Employment**

- Students need more information on casual and part-time employment in Adelaide whilst they are studying. Country students find it difficult to gain employment as it is different to the 'who you know' networks they have at home. Information on employment options could be part of a 'one-stop-shop' that ACC helps facilitate.
- Employment options post tertiary are of major significance to students and their parents. For rural students courses needed to be linked to the labour market needs – present courses which have high employment in the local community or country areas. For international students post-graduate employment opportunities in Adelaide need to be advertised so their economic benefit is not lost to the Eastern states. ACC could facilitate better links between Universities and rural and regional development boards.

## Transition

- ACC could liaise with the Universities to facilitate the provision of shuttle buses between the different campuses on their Open Day. This would also serve to familiarise students and their families with the layout of the City.
- ACC to maintain and enhance on-going support for all the Universities transition programs. It is important to encourage and facilitate links between all the Universities and their transition programs. This includes those outside the CBD to ensure students have the opportunity to engage with City life
- ACC could engage with Education Adelaide to facilitate a system for prospective international students to talk with current international students from the same country. A similar system should be developed for country students.
- ACC could facilitate the production of a “Survival kit” for rural, interstate, and international students with public transport timetables, local Adelaide sporting clubs, information on how to adjust, etc which could be given to students before arriving in Adelaide. This could be along the lines of the ‘*Getting Out: A young person’s guide to becoming independent*’ publication.  
([www.gettingout.info](http://www.gettingout.info))
- ACC could promote the existing orientation bus trip to country students by advertising it through Year 12 Co-ordinators or in a survival kit.
- It would be useful for the ACC to run the bus trip for new students more than once, as well as considering the possibility of running a trip to the hills or beaches. Moreover, they should ensure the bus trip goes to sport/recreation places as well as entertainment venues, and follow up with a back-up map of where the bus went.
- ACC could facilitate the creation of partnerships between local Adelaide sporting clubs and country sporting associations so that students have opportunities to create networks when they arrive in Adelaide.
- Fears and anxieties of parents need to be addressed. Parents need a forum to ask questions about their child moving to the City including expenses, benefits, and reassurance regarding issues of safety, accommodation and lifestyle. ACC could facilitate this through a virtual (and/or actual) one-stop-shop.
- Students commented that University sports are expensive to play in whereas local sporting clubs are more reasonably priced. ACC may be able to assist

University teams gaining sponsorship to reduce joining fees. As commented in the literature review, for many students, sport is an important adjunct to their lifestyle and in particular its social aspect. Successful transition is more guaranteed if this aspect of a student's life is addressed.

- Carnegie Mellon students discussed how successful their social committee was in engaging students in a variety of activities within the City. Such committees are invaluable at passing on information about the city and various social activities the Adelaide City Council would like to promote.

### **Strategic Partnerships/Liaisons**

- ACC could instigate further links with rural and regional councils as well as regional development boards to enhance the flow of rural students to Adelaide for tertiary education.
- Key staff from the Residential Colleges at North Adelaide were very keen to assist with this project and to be made aware of the findings. As links have already been formed, these are important to maintain and strengthen.
- It is worth exploring the notion of a forming a group to meet regularly to discuss various issues brought forward in this report. This group could include various key contacts made during this study including stakeholders from the colleges, the Universities, and independent organisations such as the Isolated Children's Parent's Association.

### **Increasing Cultural Vitality**

- Many students wanted to see more "colour, noise, and life" in Adelaide, acknowledging events such as 'WOM Adelaide' and 'The Fringe Festival' as an exciting time in the City. There could be more life on the streets all year round with markets, buskers, etc. International students suggested having a night market/night bazaar.
- ACC could encourage more events and entice students along with free food. For example the ACC could assist in promoting an international food day each semester. Students would like more opportunities to get to know international students.
- Many students mentioned they would like to have cheaper movies. ACC could explore ways to facilitate this.

- Students commented that they wanted to see later closing hours of venues so they can stay in one place until 4am (this was also deemed to be 'safer' than having to catch a taxi to a different venue when one closed up). In addition students from interstate wanted better quality nightclubs.
- International students especially wanted a common room to hang out in with such things as pool, x-box, PS3, chess and magazines from the student's home country. Almost like a youth centre. It was suggested that this could be incorporated into a 'One Stop Shop'.

### **Selling Adelaide**

- Open the city of Adelaide for view as well the Universities on the University open days. University open days need to be run over more than one day, particularly for rural students and their families. There were many comments about the frustrations involved in trying to be in two places at once and then finding sessions booked out. ACC could liaise with the Universities to explore options of increasing the Open Day to a weekend and also endeavour to find sponsors for shuttle buses between the different campuses.
- ACC can encourage more students to consider education in Adelaide by either subsidising or enabling sponsors to help rural students with trips to the City for University open days.
- Encourage the development of specific networks between tertiary institutions, information and equity programs, and certain schools in rural and remote areas as seen with the *Aspire* program instigated by James Cook University (Alloway et al, 2004: 231). This program ensures interest in tertiary education can be fostered via "live networks" created between schools in rural areas and the "university information and equity services".
- Some parents would love to support their children more but they don't know how. The Council could create a booklet or online workshop (like that on the UniSA Learning Connection website), which provides parents with information that they can use to prepare their children and themselves for the transition to university and life in Adelaide.
- ACC could facilitate better promotion of the international and national sport that is played in Adelaide which is a drawcard for rural, interstate and international students.

## **Financial Support**

- Students need to find out more about finances at high school. Perhaps this could be incorporated into a CD Rom about living in Adelaide which ACC may help to facilitate.
- ACC could assist community organisations to arrange small in-school scholarships. This will help to familiarise students with scholarships and encourage them to apply for assistance when contemplating further study.
- ACC could join organisations such as Isolated Children's and Parent Association to lobby the Federal Government to increase availability of Austudy or the youth allowance for rural students. In addition ACC could support the idea of one-off payments to rural students who are re-locating to Adelaide for tertiary studies. This payment could be issued after the University census date.

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