

Uni hub boost for regions

EMMA HEIDENREICH

A federal funding boost of \$66.9 million announced on July 20 will aim to address the 'postcode brick wall' that regional high school students face in attending university.

The funding will be used to establish 20 university hubs across regional Australia, removing one of the obstacles regional and remote Australians face in undertaking tertiary study.

The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) found just 21 per cent of people aged 15-47 years living in inner regional areas have a bachelor degree, compared with 36 per cent of major city dwellers.

For year 12 students at Victor Harbor High School, Matthew Bullen (17) and Kayla Lang (18) - the challenges of moving to Adelaide or another major city for university are real.

"The thought of moving to the city for university is daunting, it means leaving your whole life behind - family, friends and everything that is familiar," Kayla said.

"I think these factors definitely affect people's decision to go to university in the regions."

Although not fully decided on whether she will attend university or not, Kayla said she plans to commute to the city for her first year of study.

"I would probably see if there are some friends I can stay with and attend a few university classes a week and then come home," she said.

Matthew, who received pre-admission to study Psychological Science at Flinders University, said university hubs for regional people to study and gain placement here," he said.

"The Flinders University hub for health



Victor Harbor High School senior students, Kayla Lang and Matthew Bullen said university hubs in the regions would encourage more young people to study. 350066

Picture: EMMA HEIDENREICH

workers which is attached to the hospital makes it much easier for regional people to study and gain placement," he said.

"We need more hubs like this - they would give local people more options and decrease the stress in fields that are understaffed in Victor Harbor."

Matthew plans to commute to Adelaide for his study, but he said he would rather do the

commute than face sky-rocketing rental prices and extra costs associated with moving to the city while he's studying - one of the other costs regional people face in accessing tertiary education.

The Regional Australia Institute (RAI) CEO, Liz Ritchie, has praised the Federal Government's focus on boosting the post-school qualification rate in regional Australia.

"While remote study is an option with most universities, regional university centres can provide all important peer and teaching support and networking opportunities," Ms Ritchie said.

"If we can give more country kids a choice about how they undertake tertiary education, we will empower our regional communities to retain the generations of the future."