



General Practice Students Network national chairperson Kei Hsieh with Federal Member for Mayo, Rebekha Sharkie MP, who hosted the inaugural SA Future GP Forum in McLaren Vale on Feb. 1 in collaboration with General Practice Registrars Australia. Read more on Page 5 (Supplied)

Uni study hub for KI

■ STAN GORTON

FEDERAL Member for Mayo, Rebekha Sharkie has been a longtime, vocal advocate for the establishment of a university study hub on Kangaroo Island.

And so was delighted to receive a call on Monday, Feb. 3 from federal Education Minister, Jason Clare to advise a KI hub will open for enrolments soon.

The Kangaroo Island University Study Hub will be located in Kingscote at a location yet to be announced.

Ms Sharkie said the new hub was a significant win for the KI community, providing access to tertiary education opportunities.

The study hub will offer support to students in a campus-style environment without the emotional and financial stresses associated with leaving their community.

This is one of 43 hubs nationwide, which will accommodate more than 5200 students, offering a broad range of courses, including those in areas of skills needed such as health and education.

The recent opening of a similar study hub for the Victor Harbor community demonstrated how successful this model could be, she said.

"Having visited the (Victor Harbor) hub and spoken with students and staff, I am confident the establishment of a hub on Kangaroo Island will be embraced wholeheartedly by the community," she said.

"This hub will increase rates of tertiary education attainment, retaining a higher number of young people on Kangaroo Island to support the long-term development of this vibrant, close-knit community."

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Uni study hub to open in Kingscote

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MS Sharkie said throughout her time as the Member for Mayo, she prioritised advocacy for study hubs across the electorate, especially in remote, regional communities such as Kangaroo Island.

"I extend my sincerest thanks to the Minister for maintaining an open dialogue with me about the unique challenges our young people face in communities such as Kangaroo Island," she said.

"For this cohort, access to university is rendered near impossible due to distance and isolation.

"The Kangaroo Island Study Hub will offer students an opportunity to attain tertiary level qualifications in their own community, removing obstacles typically faced in regional areas.

"Time and again I hear from young people, families and community members that barriers such as cost, transport, access to reliable internet and educational support significantly restrict student's interest and capacity to study.

"While virtual education opportunities are

now more accessible, for many students this fails to provide the support and level of engagement needed to immerse themselves completely in their studies, leading to higher rates of drop-out or non-completion.

"For residents of Kangaroo Island, travelling to Adelaide one-way is a half day journey, making transport and accommodation costs unaffordable for many. Unlike those living in metro areas, travelling to and from university each day is simply not viable for students in this community.

"At present, only 9.1 per cent of Kangaroo Island residents have attained a tertiary level of education, over three times lower than South Australia's 24.3 per cent, highlighting the direct impact of regionality upon educational attainment.

"One's geographical location should not dissuade them from enrolling in tertiary study, nor should it prevent them entirely from obtaining a university level qualification.

"This hub will ensure students in the Kangaroo Island community are no longer required to

battle with this dilemma."

Minister for Education Jason Clare said the 10 new hubs were expected to be operational from mid-2025, thanks to the Albanese Government's \$66.9 million investment to double the number of University Study Hubs across Australia.

This came as new data showed a 32 per cent increase in the past year of students using the existing 43 study hubs across the country.

"Today, almost one in two young people in their 20s and their 30s have a university degree. But not everywhere. Not in the outer suburbs and not in regional Australia," he said.

"That's why we are doubling the number of University Study Hubs, to bring university closer to them.

"We know they work. The evidence is they increase the number of people going to uni degree.

"Bringing university closer to where you live will encourage more people who otherwise might decide not to go to university at all to give it a crack."

Uni study hub details

REGIONAL Development Australia Adelaide Hills, Fleurieu and Kangaroo Island is thrilled that the submission for a Regional University Study Hub on Kangaroo Island has been a success.

The study hub is part of a \$66.9 million initiative by the Albanese Government, intended to remove barriers for regional students across Australia in accessing high-quality tertiary education.

RDA Adelaide Hills, Fleurieu and Kangaroo Island director Steve Shotton said the funding announcement for the KI study hub represented a significant milestone for the education landscape on the island.

The Kangaroo Island Study Hub will be located in Kingscote, with the location being finalised, providing 24/7 study spaces with high-speed internet, on-site support in business hours, and opportunity for students to spend time with their peers – all at no charge.

The Regional University Study Hub program is a proven model that increases enrolment and completion of tertiary studies - university and vocational education and training.

It is aimed at both school leavers and older residents wanting to study for better qualifications, he said.

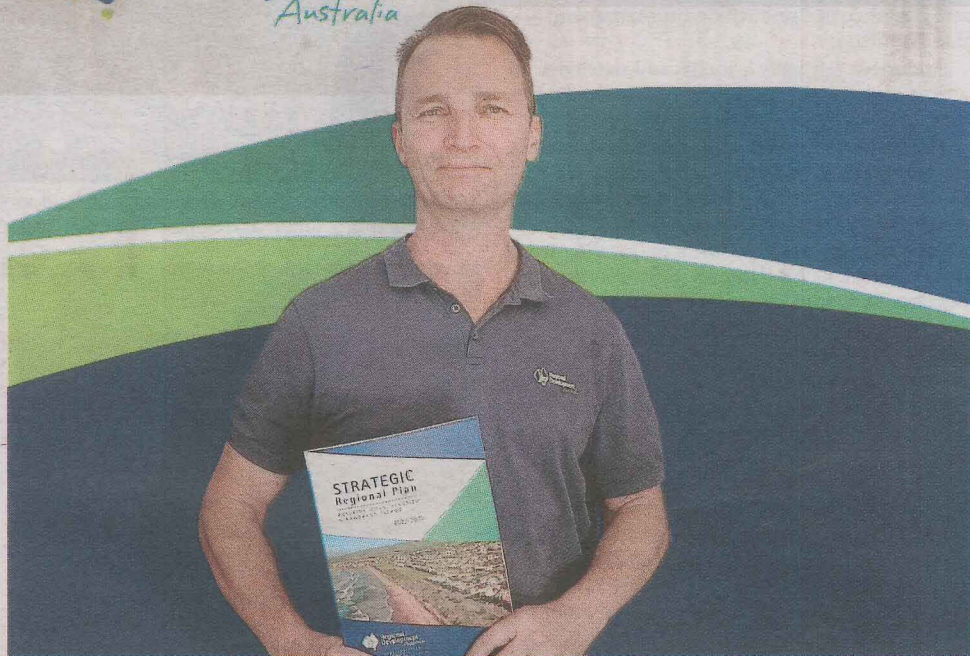
Providing a place with support, it removes barriers to education by allowing students to study remotely, overcoming the lack of suitable study space or environment at home, massively reducing costs, and enabling combined work-study options, Mr Shotton said.

The Kangaroo Island study hub was expected to deliver many positive outcomes for the island including increased participation, retention and completion in tertiary education, enhanced community engagement including between industry and students, and strengthened workforce development, he said.

By collaborating with Rural City of Murray Bridge Council who already operate regional



**ADELAIDE HILLS, FLEURIEU
AND KANGAROO ISLAND**



RDA Adelaide Hills, Fleurieu and Kangaroo Island director Steve Shotton. (Supplied)

study hubs at Berri, Murray Bridge, and Victor Harbor, the Kangaroo Island Study Hub is expected to fast track to opening, expected July, and employ a locally based staff member.

"This announcement is a reward for the leadership of Regional Development Australia Adelaide Hills, Fleurieu and Kangaroo Island, who funded and led the development of a business case for the hub," Mr Shotton said.

"It is equally rewarding for the broader com-

munity who participated in the community consultation that informed the business case, including Kangaroo Island Community Education, students, industry, business groups, community groups, Kangaroo Island Council, and individuals who believed in the need for improved access to tertiary education."

He paid special tribute to resident and tertiary education advocate Bob Teasdale, who was vital in securing the funding.