



Remote and Rural Enterprise (RARE) Program



RARE is a community engaged learning program that connects postgraduate and undergraduate students at the University of Sydney with remote and rural enterprises across Australia and Southeast Asia. Students work collaboratively with these enterprises and academic staff to deliver action-research projects that solve real world business challenges and create enormous value for entrepreneurs and their communities.

The Program currently engages students from a variety of University faculties, including Business, Engineering, Architecture and Science. Within coursework units of study, students work with academics and entrepreneurs to prepare business plans, reports or feasibility studies for the enterprise. The final work earns credit points towards their degree and the work is owned by the entrepreneur or enterprise after the engagement. The program's entrepreneurial 'learning by doing' (our authentic problem-based learning epistemology) approach, offers students the opportunity to apply their skills in complex, uncertain and diverse learning environments making them better equipped for the workplace. Engaging with a variety of students allows enterprises to gain insights on their business activities from different and unique perspectives. Our top students are selected based on their academic performance, work experience, extra-curricular activities and motivations.

Examples of RARE projects

The communities currently involved with RARE are located across Australia and Southeast Asia representing a range of industries and include both Indigenous and non-Indigenous, commercial and social.

RARE projects aim to deliver practical and accessible recommendations, backed by rigorous academic literature and market relevant data and information. Emphasis is placed on community consultation, reviewing local markets, researching best practice internationally and locally, and adapting business models to suit Australia and Southeast Asia's challenging remote environments and socio-cultural differences. Students share their skills, expertise and time with the enterprises while learning to manage uncertainty, multiple stakeholder demands, and the human and economic influences affecting businesses.

Projects include (but are not limited to) *business plans, feasibility studies, information memorandums, or specific analysis of a particular issue or opportunity relevant to the enterprise i.e. analysis of particular markets, technology, business models, and governance.*

Table 1: Examples of past RARE Projects

Enterprise	Location	Project Focus
Eden Tiny Homes	Eden, NSW	The Eden Tiny Homes project aims to provide affordable housing in a socio-economically disadvantaged regionally isolated community, which includes a significant Indigenous population. Students worked on a strategic business plan to scope and scale the social enterprise construction business using a 'Sweat Equity' model. They also assessed how best to leverage local partnerships to provide the first step to homeownership for people experiencing disadvantage.
Maningrida Enterprise Hub	Maningrida, NT	In collaboration with the Bawinanga Aboriginal Corporation (BAC), students developed a collaborative strategic plan for a local enterprise hub that could provide practical support for local entrepreneurs and small enterprises in the region. Students assessed the best options for finance, marketing, potential for partnerships and made recommendations for strategic implementation.
Mogo LALC Solar farm	Mogo, NSW	The Mogo LALC required assistance with a business plan/feasibility study to explore the potential for wind, solar and biofuel activities on a parcel of land in Williamstown. Students explored the physical suitability of the land for renewable energy activities and develop a business plan that explores the environmental, social (job creation) and economic (costs and potential revenue) outcomes of the activities.

Timing

Projects coincide with the University calendar with (up to) four intakes per year:

Session	Length	Start date
Summer Session	5 weeks	9 January
Semester One	13 weeks	6 March
Winter Session	5 weeks	3 July
Semester Two	13 weeks	31 July

(In addition to this, projects are often undertaken by students completing their honours thesis or PhD, with the RARE projects forming a major part of their research. These engagement are typically longer, with multiple touch points over a 1-2 year period).



Process and expectations

Students will spend 5-7 days on-site with the entrepreneur (or project sponsor) during the middle of the semester. The RARE Program funds transport and accommodation costs for students. The cost to the enterprise is \$0. However, it is expected the entrepreneur (or project sponsor) set aside time while the student is visiting to make introductions with stakeholders, set up meetings, and make themselves generally available to answer inquiries. Once students return to Sydney, they will work with the entrepreneur and ask follow-up questions via phone/email. At the end of the semester a final deliverable is submitted to the project sponsor and a phone call is set up with the RARE coordinator to review recommendations and discuss further engagement options.

RARE is not suitable for all remote and rural enterprises. The criteria for RARE projects include:

- A real need for support that the program can realistically provide
- Feasible business idea with benefits for the community; commercial, social or both
- Strong leadership and vision with someone on the ground driving the daily operations and business development
- Suitable timeframe for project delivery and student learning
- Willingness to engage in a long-term partnership
- An enterprise representative who is available to engage with students and staff for planning and review of projects

Next steps

RARE staff and the enterprise scope projects, which typically involve staff planning visits to the community. Projects will need to be achievable within a single university semester; however, subsequent and on-going projects can be planned with new students taking over at the start of each new semester.

1. Complete the 'RARE-New Project Brief' and email to Jared Harrison
2. RARE Coordinator will call to schedule phone or on-site interview
3. Create project scope with RARE Coordinator and select start date.

Contact us

If you would like to learn more about the RARE Program or would like student support for your activities, please contact us:

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