A new La Trobe project will look at ways to boost the number of new migrants enrolling in courses at regional universities.

Researchers have identified that new arrivals living in low socio-economic regional areas such as Shepparton and Mildura are under-represented in the higher education system.

The La Trobe project titled Raising participation of new migrant groups in low SES and regional communities has received a $144,460 Commonwealth Government grant as part of the 2016 National Priorities Pool.

Director of La Trobe’s Access and Achievement Research Unit Dr Andrew Harvey said the research would give universities the tools to develop plans to increase participation.

“This project could change the way Australian universities recruit new migrants and develop models that encourage and reflect diversity,” Dr Harvey said.

“This will help us better understand and address the barriers that stop new migrants enrolling in higher education courses across regional, low socio-economic communities.”
Dr Harvey said as regional communities become more diverse, a different approach is needed to encourage them to take up study.

“We know that university participation of new migrant groups is often low, which affects community involvement, campus diversity and economic productivity,” Dr Harvey said.

“The research will combine interviews with new migrants and focus groups to gauge perceptions of local educational opportunities and barriers that exist.”

The Ethnic Council of Shepparton and District (ECSD), the Sunraysia Mallee Ethnic Communities Council (SMECC) in Mildura and other ethnic based organisations will assist La Trobe with the research.

The project will make recommendations to the university sector as well as ethnic groups and government organisations on ways to increase the representation of new migrants in higher education.

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