

## **APPA Follow-Up Submission to the**

### ***Review of the regional Schooling Resource Standard loadings***

#### **Background**

The Australian Primary Principals Association (APPA) is the national professional association for primary school principals in Australia. APPA represents affiliated state and territory Government, Catholic and Independent primary principal associations, and through these associations, over 7600 primary principals and schools across the nation. It is the national voice on national issues and speaks directly to the Federal Government on matters that concern primary school principals and their school communities.

1. This brief follow-up submission seeks to highlight a number of important issues which emerged in the Virtual Roundtable, held with APPA and DESE representatives, on 27 November 2021.
2. Comments included in this follow-up submission are in addition to, and in the context of the initial submission from APPA, together with those verbal contributions shared by APPA representatives in the Virtual Roundtable.

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It is very clear to APPA, that the current formula used for location loading (ARIA+ score) does not adequately take into consideration the many varied factors that affect schools in regional and remote locations, across all states and territories and across all education sectors.

APPA believes that the ARIA+ is outdated and no longer an adequate or appropriate formulaic measure to be used in relation to the application of loadings as currently used in the SRS.

APPA submits that ARIA+ (current formula) IS NOT the most appropriate basis for classifying locations and applying to the school location loading and another measure should be considered as a high priority.

The SRS calculated by the National Schools Resourcing Board often understates the actual educational and associated costs in many regional and remote locations. The categories used often discriminate against regional and remote schools across all states in relation to distance (remoteness) and size.

The current loadings attributed to the SRS do not adequately appreciate or accommodate the uniqueness of regional and remote educational settings, and need to be urgently reviewed/updated to do so.

APPA recommend that the National Schools Resourcing Board have as a high priority, an investigation into an alternative measure which is fairer to regional and remote educational settings across all states.

In addition to the above follow-up comments, APPA would like to re-emphasise the following particular points (highlighted) from responses to Focus questions in our original submission.

### **Focus questions**

- 1. What are the elements specific to school location (i.e. not related to student characteristics such as socio-educational disadvantage, students with disability, low English language proficiency, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students) that increase the cost of delivering education in these settings?**

- APPA believes universal access to reliable, high speed broadband connectivity is essential and a very high priority.

- APPA believes readily available, regular local access to early intervention services, ancillary health services, including specialists (hearing, speech, OT, physio, psychological assessment, mental health, counselling etc) is essential, particularly for children in their early learning and primary years.

- APPA believes that principal, school leader and teacher PD opportunities, including in-person collegial networking opportunities, should be ensured, including cost provision, leave provisions and adequate staff replacement.

- 2. Are there additional elements associated with school size for smaller schools in regional and remote settings that increase the cost of delivering education over the costs for small schools in city areas (not related to student characteristics such as socio-educational disadvantage, students with disability, low English language proficiency, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students)?**

- APPA affirms there are more primary schools in regional, remote and very remote settings, and smaller primary schools in these areas.

- APPA believes universal access to reliable, high speed broadband connectivity is essential and a very high priority.

- APPA believes readily available, regular local access to early intervention services, ancillary health services, including specialists (hearing, speech, OT, physio, psychological assessment, mental health, counselling etc) is essential, particularly for children in their early learning and primary years.

- APPA believes that principal, school leader and teacher PD opportunities, including in-person collegial networking opportunities, should be ensured, including cost provision, leave provisions and adequate staff replacement.



- APPA advocates for risk mitigation regarding exposure to fraud arising from community connections to maintenance services, for example; and staffing considerations including exposure to claims of nepotism, favouritism, or breaches of confidentiality in appointment procedures.

**3. Is the dollar value of the current school location and school size loadings appropriate to meet the additional costs specific to school location and school size? (noting there are separate student-based loadings for socio-educational disadvantage, students with disability, low English language proficiency, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students).**

- APPA believes this varies from one locale to another depending on context.

- APPA advocates for an approach which both guarantees transparent resource allocation which is fair to all children, in all schools, while incorporating capacity for differentiation.

- APPA sees the crucial resource component is teachers. Some school contexts clearly require different staffing levels. That is, an allocation which is fair and comparable across all schools, plus the loadings, plus significant additional staffing.

**4. Are there elements specific to school location which have particular resourcing implications for certain types of schools in regional and remote areas, such as boarding schools and small non-systemic schools (as opposed to small systemic schools)?  
What are the elements?**

- APPA believes that the costs of transport will always be an issue.

Examples are costs associated with students attending events (camps, inter-school cultural and sport activities), other learning opportunities in other locations; and the costs associated in bringing specialised support to the school, including visiting learning enrichment, music programmes etc.

- It should be noted that transport costs in *all* locales seem to be high.

**5. Is ARIA+ the most appropriate basis for classifying locations and applying to the school location loading?  
Should another measure be considered?**

- APPA believes that measures outlined in the Issues Paper could be considered, including town size, for example, to supplement the ARIA+ base.

It would be appropriate for these to further inform strategic decisions made by boards or systems, particularly in regard to staffing, and also other collaborative arrangements that could be made together with NGOs, medical providers and other community support organisations.



**6. Are there new or emerging factors that should be taken into consideration when looking at the cost of education in regional and remote areas and/or small schools?**

- APPA believes that the impact of the Covid-19 global pandemic and the resultant challenges of facilitating remote and hybrid learning have highlighted the essential need for all schools and students in regional and remote areas to have universal access to appropriate IT hardware, fast reliable broadband connectivity and ready access to IT staff support; together with provision to cover increased school maintenance and cleaning costs; and with greater pressure on staff/student ratios, increased funding for additional staff.

- APPA believes that there should be a school facility standard, which means that all schools are comparable. This should be supplemented by additional funding to facilitate local contextual needs.

- APPA believes that there should be a school staffing standard, which guarantees comparability between schools and that this, too, should be supplemented to support local contextual needs.

- APPA believes that there should be a school resourcing standard which strikes a cost point, which is sustained over a period of time (at least three years), unless it grows according to contextual changes; e.g. school population growth.

Malcolm Elliott  
**President**  
15 January 2021

