

Review of Regional Schooling Resource Standards—public submission

Anonymous	
Stakeholder type:	Other
Jurisdiction:	Western Australia

Summary

This review must give consideration to the special nature of isolation that exists in Western Australia. The sheer size of the state sheds new light on the tyranny of distance. This submission will highlight that the resourcing of regional schools needs to be considered across all aspects of resourcing - human, physical and ICT.

The cost of travel in WA because the regions are vast, adds significantly to the cost of everything that people living in metropolitan Australia, particularly those living on the east coast, take for granted. Isolation in WA is a significantly more complex problem because when one calculates a regional school's distance from Perth, one has to consider that Perth is also one of the most, if not the most, isolated capital city in the world.

The ARIA formula appears to be deficient in recognising the degree of isolation experienced by WA regional schools, but it is also the only tool we have. Maybe some tinkering with this tool needs to occur in order to better capture the financial implications of isolation in a WA context. This submission captures the elements most affected by a regional school's isolation in the WA context - staffing, purchase of goods and services, professional learning, communication, technology, freight, and travel.

Submission

- 1 The provision of goods and services in regional WA is always more expensive. When purchasing products for small schools there is rarely if ever a small school discount. Volume purchasing of everything from online programs (e.g. mathematics), testing materials such as ACER and PAT, text books.

Many couriers won't deliver outside major centres so small and remote schools often have to organise a staff member to travel into town to pick up freight, costing time and travel expenses. Freight is a huge cost, and there is no such thing as free freight or postage, or even a discount. Panel Integrators for ICT- travel cost can double cost of service, big schools often hire their own technician, adding considerably to staffing costs and the oncosts of accommodation.

- 2 The provision of professional learning for regional staff is costly. To bring specialist professionals to a regional location is prohibitive, and staff travel to meetings and professional development is time consuming and costly. Meetings & Professional Learning in cities is often held mid week which doesn't allow for travelling on the weekend, and requires the school to fund both travel and accommodation.
- 3 In WA the dollar value of the current school location and school-size loadings is not appropriate. It is totally inadequate, and does not recognise the unique challenges facing regional schools in WA. A regional student's location within Australia should not be a barrier to the provision of learning opportunities students in the cities and more favourable locations expect.
- 4 I think that ARIA data can become outdated, and it appears changes to the data that might result in additional funding takes time to flow through. A tool more responsive to changes in demographic data

would appear to be a necessity. Principals in small schools invariably have a teaching load, so a focus for this review should be on how to resource regional schools better so this load can be reduced.

- 5 The Department of Education WA's plan to introduce syllabus material in line with the National curriculum agenda will result in the need for half day professional learning face to face for every teacher. This will have huge ramifications for budgets in regional schools. If WA schools are to ensure that all staff embrace the Cultural Standards Framework they require additional funding to ensure that adequate professional learning opportunities are provided. If we abide by the statement that education funding needs to be directed to the students with greatest need, then resourcing of regional schools must be placed as a higher priority.