

## Review of Regional Schooling Resource Standards—public submission

Western Australian Primary Principals' Association	
Stakeholder type:	Peak Body
Jurisdiction:	Western Australia

### Summary

The Western Australian Primary Principals' Association (WAPPA) is the professional association for leaders and aspiring leaders of primary school education across Western Australia, representing over 1150 members with membership in 85% of primary schools in Western Australia. Our aim is to have the influential voice and be the respected authority for public education, providing strategies for school leadership and advocacy for the profession by the profession.

WAPPA makes this submission based on information from members and with knowledge of the unique circumstances faced by our school leaders, across Western Australia, on a daily basis.

Western Australia poses a unique problem with regards to distance from cities and major centres. Given the size of the state, 2.646 million sq km, and the problems associated with servicing remote communities, WAPPA argues that the current formula used for location loading (ARIA+ score) does not adequately take these factors into consideration.

At the most basic level, the cost per student which the National Schools Resourcing Standard is calculated on, is the total spend divided by the number of students in the state. It is argued that in Western Australia, due to the location and size loadings not being sufficient to allow for the unique characteristics of this large state, the SRS calculated by the National Schools Resourcing Board understates the actual cost.

WAPPA strongly argues that the current loadings attributed to the SRS do not adequately accommodate the uniqueness of Western Australia and as such, needs to be reviewed/updated to do so. WAPPA does not have an alternative measure to suggest, but would recommend that the National Schools Resourcing Board have as a high priority, an investigation into an alternative measure which is fairer to all states, especially Western Australia.

### Submission

The Western Australian Primary Principals' Association (WAPPA) is the professional association for leaders and aspiring leaders of primary school education across Western Australia, representing over 1150 members with membership in 85% of primary schools in Western Australia. Our aim is to have the influential voice and be the respected authority for public education, providing strategies for school leadership and advocacy for the profession by the profession.

WAPPA makes this submission based on information from members and with knowledge of the unique circumstances faced by our school leaders, across Western Australia, on a daily basis. Western Australia poses a unique problem with regards to distance from cities and major centres. Given the size of the state, 2.646million km<sup>2</sup>, and the multiple problems associated with servicing remote communities, WAPPA argues that the current formula used for location loading (ARIA+ score) does not adequately take these factors into consideration.

These schools are also often (but not always) located in remote Aboriginal Communities, isolated by many kilometres of unsealed road and cut off from road services during periods of heavy rain (cyclones), sometimes for months on end. The pressures this puts on communities and the schools located within them is huge and, in our opinion, not factored into the ARIA+ score. The state Government heavily subsidises these schools, as it understands the specific circumstances faced, resulting in average spend per student (total funding) reaching \$169,854.00\* in Dawul Remote Community School, \$161,234.00\* in Dugerari Remote Community School and \$106,794.00\* in Ngalapita Remote Community School. The average for Government Primary Schools in the Kimberley region is nearly \$25,000 per student, but this is impacted by the lower cost incurred in the Broome town schools.

Across Western Australia, there are numerous schools with small enrolments which incur extremely high per student costs. Many of these schools have between 15 and 40 students, placing them in the “small school” category which does not capture the unique situation of the schools and does not allow for the “on costs” associated with staffing and running a school in these areas. As schools in Western Australia all operate under a “one-line budget” process, the responsibilities for the individual school principal are extremely high and this places additional pressures not captured in the current loadings. The schools with the highest cost per student in Western Australia Government primary schools is again Dawul and Dugerai Remote Community Schools, both having under 10 students. Again, the Western Australian Government heavily subsidises these schools to ensure that communities have a local school and that young Australians remain the centre of focus, as articulated in the Mparntwe Education Declaration.

It is obvious to WAPPA that the dollar value of the current location and size loadings does not provide for the unique situation of schools in regional and remote Western Australia. As a result, the Western Australian Government spends more per student to ensure that schools operate as effectively as possible. At the most basic level, the cost per student on which the National Schools Resourcing Standard is calculated, is the total spend divided by the number of students in the state.

It is argued that in Western Australia, due to the location and size loadings not being sufficient to allow for the unique characteristics of this large state, the SRS calculated by the National Schools Resourcing Board understates the actual cost. This has resulted in inflated funding contributions: The 2017 starting share for Western Australia is 88.15% for the government sector and approximately 14.6% for the Federal contribution. Over the period of the bilateral agreement, signed in December 2018, the State Government will be reducing its contribution to 75%, whilst the Federal Government will increase its contribution to 20%.

This represents an overall decrease of just over 4% in real funding which underscores the fact that the loadings are out of step with the context of Western Australia and as such, the students will be impacted, contrary to the goals of the Mparntwe Education Declaration:

- Goal 1: The Australian education system promotes excellence and equity
- Goal 2: All young Australians become:
  - confident and creative individuals
  - successful lifelong learners
  - active and informed members of the community

WAPPA believes that the ARIA+ is outdated and not the best measure to be used in relation to the application of loadings as currently used in the SRS. The categories are too broad and discriminate against Western Australia in relation to distance (remoteness) and size. WAPPA does not have an alternative measure to suggest but would recommend that the National Schools Resourcing Board have as a high priority, an investigation into an alternative measure which is more fair to all states, especially Western Australia.

WAPPA welcomes the opportunity to meet with the committee to discuss our submission further.

Reference: \* My School website 2018 data