

Australian Secondary Principals Association



Submission to the Independent Review into Regional, Rural and Remote Education:

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The Australian Secondary Principals' Association (ASPA) is a professional body that represents the interests of principals, deputy principals and assistant principals from government secondary schools across Australia. ASPA works with the profession to shape a paradigm of leadership and learning in order to create a better, preferred future for all students in Australia's government secondary schools. We are committed to ensuring that high quality government secondary education is provided to young people no matter what their geographic, social or personal circumstances.

Nation building depends upon a strong and vibrant public education system. Australia's public schools cater for most students including a large majority of those students who experience disadvantage and those with disabilities. At a time when the effects of a myriad of socioeconomic and related health issues impacting on children are being discovered, and uncovered, Australian governments have an opportunity and an obligation, to lead and support communities by setting and maintaining policies that will facilitate a thriving public education system filled with excited children of families proud to send their children to public schools. This is the very basis of building a strong and vibrant economy.

There is a clear connection between rural communities and their local public schools. Schools are often a pivotal part of community life, are significant contributors to local economies, and foster excellent long term relationships within their communities due to the strong commitment of staff to their role and position in local communities.

The overarching issue for rural and remote schools is that "(systems and sectors) continue to place the least experienced leaders, in the most isolated places with the least experienced teachers and wonder why student achievement suffers"

In any discussion about regional, rural and remote education several broad key issues need to be clearly understood that communities and schools are diverse and have a range of sometimes overlapping, and individual needs and circumstances. Differences in terms of location, size, composition and issues relating to these school communities are significant.

There are many factors that have contributed to significant shifts in the social structure of regional, rural and remote communities, and have major implications for education. The long-term viability of some regional, rural and remote communities that are significantly socially and economically marginalised are under threat.

Curriculum and Assessment:

The Prime Minister has made a compelling case for Australians to be transformed to become “more *productive, more innovative, more technologically sophisticated and more imaginative*”. But, for the schooling sector to play its part in such a transformation, it needs the Commonwealth Government to drive the national agenda away from what has been (that is an attempt to create *a better version of 1960s schools*), to what it needs to be, which is a *new learning paradigm* where *learning to learn and inquiry* is every bit as important as what is learnt. The Australian Curriculum recognises this by incorporating a key set of lifelong learning skills and processes: these are the General Capabilities undertaken through a subject-based curriculum and the very essence of the intended spirit of the Australian Curriculum.

Every student deserves access to a quality, comprehensive education and students in regional, rural and remote schools should not be disadvantaged. If all schools are to provide students with the very best standard of education possible then the issues surrounding curriculum offerings especially in small and isolated communities must be addressed.

In many regional, rural and remote schools’ students have limited subject choice, limited facilities, and little or no access to critical support structures. Other complications include access to VET courses, teachers teaching across learning areas without training and redesigning curriculum structures if specialist staff leave.

At all times the curriculum must be relevant to students. Remote students need pathways into community with life skills and job skills relevant to their environment and this must be reflected in the curriculum. Employment Pathways curriculum is a good example but it is not delivered well yet. School Based Apprenticeship's and work pathways should also be valued just as highly as ATAR pathways

6.1.1 Is the Australian Curriculum meeting the learning needs and interest of regional, rural and remote students?

Just as our nation needs to transform from a traditional economy to one that is innovative and progressive, our education system needs the enabling conditions to transform from the traditional subject based orientation to an explicit focus on the teaching, assessing and reporting of the Australian Curriculum General Capabilities.

The quantum of content in the Australian Curriculum is problematic - guidance must be given on how all the curriculum fits into what teachers are required to teach. We need “core curriculum” which takes up 60% of the time and allows flexibility over the remaining 40% to contextualize the learning to meet the needs of students and communities.

The Australian Curriculum must be more “futures focused in that it doesn't over-emphasize content above the matters of 'learning how to learn' which is a real outcome of the pedagogy, formative assessment and interdisciplinary concepts.

- The General Capabilities must be reinforced
- Digital / Online Learning must remain a priority; ensuring access to digital resources must be considered; students in remote communities must not be disadvantaged.
- The Curriculum must meet student needs as well as parent and business expectations.

Staffing flexibility is a real challenge for smaller regional rural schools where they don't have the breadth of staff to deliver subjects. Many teachers are required to teach across a range of non-specialist areas.

Expertise to allow flexible delivery is a real issue. In a context of multi-age cohorts there is a need for exemplary teaching programs and rich assessment tasks where curriculum coverage is not possible and an interdisciplinary approach is needed. It is essential that (as a minimum) teachers have:

- advice on how to manage the breadth and depth of the curriculum for multi age / small cohorts;
- advice for connecting AC and local contexts
- learning objects and teaching resources (Scootle) for key subject concepts where a non-specialist teacher might be leading / facilitating learning, e.g. Algebra concepts Year 9/10 maths
- tools and methods for differentiating year level curriculum for students who exceed or need extensive scaffolding to demonstrate year level standards.

6.1.2 Do current assessment processes help to improve the achievements of regional, rural and remote students?

There is too much focus on NAPLAN and PISA results which often reflect badly on rural, regional and remote school communities. These results come without solutions or support to address concerns. Teachers need progress maps to monitor learning gains across year level achievement standards so growth can be monitored. An online formative assessment tool would also be beneficial for teachers to evaluate student achievement and develop strategies to address concerns.

6.1.3 How can schools be supported to deliver the Australian Curriculum in a flexible way to meet local needs?

The quantum of content in the Australian Curriculum is problematic - guidance must be given on how all the curriculum fits into what teachers are required to teach. We need "core curriculum" which takes up 60% of the time and allows flexibility over the remaining 40% to contextualize the learning to meet the needs of students and communities.

- Schools need support with time and resources.
- Highly Accomplished and Lead Teachers must be recruited to work in rural, regional and remote schools to support / mentor inexperienced teachers.
- Additional staffing in rural, regional and remote schools to allow more time for "preparation for teaching" as opposed to face to face teaching
- Flexible ways must be explored to use experienced leaders in rural, regional and remote schools to mentor / support school leaders; help develop community partnerships etc.
- Greater access to "quality professional learning"
- Interagency support; Health, Police, Community Services etc.

6.1.4 Are there other examples of innovative ways in which curriculum is being delivered in regional, rural and remote schools?

The use of ICT is often seen as the solution to innovative ways to deliver curriculum yet there are significant issues regarding schools having appropriate bandwidth to successfully operate new technologies. There are significant inconsistencies in network management protocols and conventions across schools.

There are some good examples across the various states and territories where Distance education has been successful in addressing curriculum needs e.g. the NT model where the Distance Education provider partners with remote schools to deliver senior secondary curriculum options for students in remote communities. This includes students attending residential programs in Darwin to support their learning.

Other examples have seen schools linking up using technology and Networks developing across schools.

There has also been curriculum product development for significant events, people and places that can be used by all schools where excursions / camps / visits can occur or experiences via video as an alternative. Examples include, national parks - Kakadu / Uluru Curriculum; records of Australian history around Australia - Madjebebbe, Kimberley site, Macassan contact, frontier wars etc.

Teaching and Learning

Many factors influence the quality of teaching and learning in schools:

- The variable quality and levels of experience of staff appointed
- Suitability of staff for rural life.
- Access to casual / relief staff.
- Recruitment and maintenance of staff.

Whilst incentive schemes may be effective in attracting staff to regional, rural and remote schools we need to ensure that they attract “appropriate staff”, and do not promote increased turnover rates which inevitably can be linked to poor and declining student performance.

Systems and sectors must provide appropriate resources to ensure there are sustainable structures and networks in rural areas to support the development of the large numbers of early career teachers, and the significant numbers of staff in leadership positions who have limited experience in such positions

6.2.1 What key initiatives are helping to attract ‘top teachers’ to regional, rural and remote schools?

Systems and sectors have a variety of initiatives to help attract “teachers” to rural, regional and remote schools including:

- Rural and Remote Teaching Expo – WA
- Remote Teaching Service – Benefits and Allowances – WA; Rural and remote Incentives – Queensland; Rewards, Benefits and Incentives – NSW etc.
- Incentives to take up practicum places in rural, regional and remote schools

Inside these packages there are incentives for teachers to stay in rural, regional and remote schools. Our concern is that, because of supply and demand issues, the teachers selected are not always the teachers best suited to working in rural, regional and remote schools.

Greater focus must be on recruiting and retaining the “right teachers” and this must be done in the context of the community in which they will be required to live and teach.

Practicum places in rural, regional and remote schools are often undersubscribed. As a way forward, the reasons for this need to be explored and strategies developed to address the issues arising.

6.2.2 How can we improve retention of ‘top teachers’ in regional, rural and remote schools?

Offering incentives is the most popular method to retain “teachers” in rural, regional and remote schools but these do not address the physical and professional isolation that teachers face. Formalized support programs that meet personal and professional needs must be part of any strategy to improve retention.

6.2.3 What professional development should be available for teachers, schools and communities?

A formal induction program for teachers is essential to address local issues as well as the notion of “living in a fishbowl”. Targeted professional development for schools AND communities is essential.

Professional learning should be viewed more broadly than teachers. Schools and communities need a better understanding of the challenges faced by teachers and they must work closely in partnership to address local needs.

6.2.4 What innovative approaches could be taken to support a high quality teaching workforce for regional, rural and remote school communities?

Social and professional isolation are significant factors in regional, rural and remote communities and it is essential that these are addressed so that teachers in these settings don't feel disadvantaged by being in that role. There is no “one size fits all” solution because issues vary and therefore the support required will need to vary. Systems and sectors must develop a range of strategies to address the plethora of issues that may arise and there must be flexibility to allow new issues to be addressed as they arise.

Systems and sectors must provide the resources to ensure there are sustainable structures and networks in regional, rural and remote areas to support the development of the large numbers of early career teachers, and the significant numbers of school leaders who have limited experience in such positions.

Other approaches include:

- Opportunities for educators in regional remote communities to share practice that has impacted on learning to spread and sustain innovative approaches
- Scholarships for formal learning and to make regular connections with urban colleagues
- Formal mentoring programs
- Funding for internships with universities
- Not placing first year teachers in rural / regional / remote schools. They should be given 1-2 years in an urban classroom where there is usually more expertise, support and diversity.

Leaders and Leadership

Systems and sectors must acknowledge that students have changed, the way students learn has changed and therefore the nature of schooling must change. They must be more targeted in their approach to:

- Identifying potential leaders,
- Providing opportunities to develop their capabilities,
- Selecting the person with the appropriate skills and capabilities for the context of the role
- Providing support for them in their role.

Attracting “the right” Principals / school leaders into regional, rural and remote schools is becoming increasingly more difficult. There are less people applying for the role and those applying are not necessarily equipped with the skills and capabilities for the role. Systems and sectors are often too quick to appoint the “best applicant” rather than looking for the “right person”.

School leaders in regional, rural and remote schools frequently work with very inexperienced staff and experience high staff turnover. In many cases, they face major social issues that affect all school leaders and their staff.

The Queensland Remote Teaching Service has a model where teachers working in remote schools were identified as potential leaders. After they completed their remote service they were tracked through the system as they gained experience working in other contexts. These people were then targeted as future remote school principals.

Systems and sectors need to target “the right people” who have a “track record in this area” to lead in regional, rural and remote schools. Flexibility needs to be built in to the process so that the “right people” find the opportunity attractive. As part of succession planning, an “intern” should be appointed with that leader so that when the leader moves on at the end of their tenure, there is a “new leader” ready to assume the role.

An alternative model would be that when a principal knows that they are leaving a school, at least 3 months with the incoming leader and the outgoing leader at the school would enable an extended handover.

6.3.1 What needs to occur so regional, rural remote principals can devote most of their time and attention to student achievements in and beyond school?

The overarching issue for rural and remote schools is that “we (systems and sectors) continue to place the least experienced leaders, in the most isolated places with the least experienced teachers and wonder why student achievement suffers”

School leaders are expected to manage a plethora of things, often leaving little time for the core business of teaching and learning. Additional support is essential for things such as staff housing; managing remote infrastructure projects and accessing social services for staff often rely on the school leader.

Community development models for education need to be established with visiting teams of health and wellbeing services to support staff and students. Additional funding is not always the answer, systems and sectors must work with government to ensure adequate provision of these services.

6.3.2 What changes could be made to attract and retain experienced educational leaders for country schools?

This poses 2 distinct problems:

1. Attract:

Generally, this is done through incentives for teachers but little is done for school leaders. The caveat around all of this is attracting the “right people” and that will require flexibility around recruitment and include incentive packages.

Systems and sectors need to target “the right people” who have a “track record in this area” to lead in regional, rural and remote schools. Flexibility needs to be built in to the process so that the “right people” find the opportunity attractive. As part of succession planning, an “intern” should be appointed with that leader so that when the leader moves on at the end of their tenure, there is a “new leader” ready to assume the role.

Aspiring / emerging leader's programs in many contexts have rural and regional "placement" opportunities but is this enough?

2. Retain:

In order to retain experienced leaders, the systems and sectors must acknowledge the differentiated conditions to urban principals. Leaders comment on the isolation and the extra opportunities for urban leaders.

The perception that rural leaders are not as competitive for future roles must be addressed. Leaders are less likely to stay at a school if they believe they will be disadvantaged.

Personalised professional learning, formalised coaching programs, sharing / celebrating the profession in regional, rural and remote contexts through awards, scholarships, media etc. have been suggested as ways to retain school leaders for longer.

6.3.3 What innovative approaches could be taken to support high quality leadership for regional, rural and remote school communities?

Systems and sectors need to target "the right people" who have a "track record in this area" to lead in regional, rural and remote schools. Flexibility needs to be built in to the process so that the "right people" find the opportunity attractive. As part of succession planning, an "intern" should be appointed with that leader so that when the leader moves on at the end of their tenure, there is a "new leader" ready to assume the role.

This cannot be a "one size fits all" solution. Different leaders need different levels / types of support. Systems and sectors have a responsibility to provide a choice for school leaders wanting to access necessary support.

Refer 6.2.4 above which has some implications for supporting school leaders

What is the role of local government / business / industry? It is in the best interests of these groups not to have a "revolving door" of school leaders and the right people could play a significant role as mentors for school leaders. The Australian Business Community Network (ABCN) has a successful business leader / school leader mentoring program which may have application in this space. Fogarty EDvance is another program working out of Western Australia that provides mentors for leaders in disadvantaged schools.

Ways of using technology to deliver these and other programs to leaders in rural, regional and remote communities must be developed.

School and Community

Whilst the National School Improvement Tool (developed by in ACER 2012) for the Australian Government includes a highly relevant and very useful resource to help schools and communities build, sustain and evaluate partnerships for raising achievements and improving opportunities, this will have limited success if you do not have the appropriate school leader to drive the initiatives.

At a basic level, if a company / organisation is making money out of a local area, what are they putting back into the community? Surely it is everyone's best interest to build social capital in the community.

Action/indicator	
» the school builds partnerships with parents, families, local businesses and community organisations (including allied health, family support, counselling and rehabilitation services) to improve opportunities and outcomes for students;	
» the school identifies potential community partners on the basis of their capacity to contribute to improved student achievement and/or wellbeing	
» identified partners are involved in collaborative planning and are committed to the purposes and objectives of the partnership;	
» the senior leadership teams in the partner organisations are involved, committed and play a role in achieving staff commitment and participation within their organisations	
» there is clarity around partner roles and responsibilities;	
» major partnership decisions are made collaboratively and partnership activities are designed to make best use of partners' expertise;	
» goals, progress and achievements are systematically and regularly monitored and refined as required;	
» adequate resources are committed to ensure the effectiveness and success of partnerships;	
» the school collects evidence to evaluate whether partnerships are having their intended impact in improving outcomes for students; and	
» the school's partnerships are sustainable and have become an accepted part of the culture of the school community and partner organisations	

6.4.1 What new and innovative approaches are you aware of that improve the connection between schools and the broader community?

- Parenting / family centres that bring young children and parents into the education system early.

- Wrap around service delivery - in regional areas this could mean a multi-disciplinary team of experts (health, family services etc.) come to a region together at the same time to make access easier for parents of outlying areas
- In Tasmania money for Learning in families together has resulted in things like increased participation and engagement by parents of pre-school age children
- Adult learning programs for parents
- Schools working together/ collaborating in geographical areas including with other government and non-government service providers including housing, medical, legal, social services etc.

6.4.2 What motivates regional, rural and remote students to succeed and how can they be supported to realise their aspirations?

In many instances the motivation is to find a way out of the regional, rural or remote location so that provides some leverage in terms of the opportunities that education will provide. Suggestions as to what motivates students include:

- Role models of successful students / champions that come back to the community to share success
- Family support / encouragement to attend school,
- Self-motivation and awareness
- Ability to make informed decisions about their future.
- Capacity to achieve aspirations
- Realistic and meaningful pathways to success

There is an argument to be made that every student deserves the same opportunities and if systems or sectors operate a school then the students in that school should not be disadvantaged. This has significant resourcing implications. Making sure every school is a good school that offers a comprehensive education at least up to Year 10 so that families can confidently stay in their local school at least until Year 10 without being disadvantaged. It is very stressful for many children and families to have to move to boarding school at Year 6 or even earlier. This also reduces financial stress for families. Supporting students to achieve their aspirations can take many forms.

- Better and more varied boarding options should be made available. In Western Australia, there is a Rotary residential facility and students board there and attend a public school. This is a much cheaper option.
- Consideration of a mixed model where students do part of their education in a city school and part at the regional, rural or remote school
- Steadily improving electronic communication is making it much more feasible to stay outside urban areas to create/promote professional pathways and other business opportunities

6.4.3 Are there untapped priorities in rural and remote settings which, if utilised, could help students realise their potential?

Undoubtedly there are untapped priorities. Schools, in partnership with local government, business and industry should determine these priorities and plan to meet these locally. Local experts could be mentors for school students e.g. in mining areas engineers, geologists, metallurgists etc. and help them better meet their potential.

6.4.4 What role does/could the philanthropic sector play in improving outcomes for regional, rural and remote students in relation to school achievement and post— school transition?

We agree that “The philanthropic sector can play an important role in working with regional, rural and remote communities to address disadvantage, including in the education space. For example, Australian Schools Plus

was established in 2013 with \$5 million seed funding from the Government to help disadvantaged schools attract support from philanthropists and the private sector. The organisation also attracts and facilitates the distribution of funds to support schools and school communities facing disadvantage to improve education outcomes.

Origin Foundation, the Sidney Myer Fund and The Myer Foundation, the Foundation for Rural and Regional Renewal and the Thyne Reid Foundation are other examples of organisations with a commitment to improving opportunities through funding education and community initiatives". (The Independent Review into Regional, Rural and Remote Education Discussion Paper July 2017, page 30)

Some practical suggestions for the philanthropic sector include:

- Improving access to scholarships for students
- Assistance for families to assist in times of need for medical emergencies or crisis so that education needn't be compromised.
- Provide seed funding for start-ups in rural areas to bring jobs back / keep jobs in rural areas.
- Helping students and families have better access to each other when students must move away to school. Loneliness and home-sickness can play a huge part in success or lack of it. This could include things like providing Wi-Fi to the local community which might otherwise be cost prohibitive

Information and Communication Technology

Whilst there have been significant improvements in communication and technology systems, distance remains a critical factor in regional, rural and remote education for both students and staff and this must be addressed.

There also remain very significant issues regarding schools having appropriate bandwidth to successfully operate new technologies. There are significant inconsistencies in network management protocols and conventions across schools. There is a need for systems and sectors and schools to embrace new technologies and to train both students and staff in appropriate usage.

The use of technology needs to be consistently at a high standard to match the capacity demonstrated in urban schools. This will include networks of schools' access virtual classrooms with high performing teachers providing instruction and assessment. Teacher professional learning is essential to leverage maximum benefit from technology use and investment.

6.5.1 What has to be done to ensure ICT supports education in regional, rural and remote schools and communities like it does in the 'best of the best' city schools?

Access and speed are the key factors; we have a big country and we need to develop solutions so that students in regional, rural and remote schools and communities are not at a disadvantage. To support education ICT issues in schools and homes must be addressed.

Every school will present different issues and individual solutions must be found. BYOD is not seen as a viable option in regional, rural and remote schools. Funding to purchase devices and trained support personnel working directly with schools is essential. As technology improves different solutions could be explored.

6.5.2 How could ICT be used to improve educational outcomes for regional, rural, remote students?

ICT can only be used effectively if teachers have the skill and capacity to use it effectively. Professional learning for staff is essential to ensure the best (and appropriate) use of technology. Once staff have the necessary expertise and provided the access and speed is appropriate the technology could provide:

- Online and direct link of classes. With good internet students can 'attend' school from home even conferencing in on classes.
- Links between regional, rural and remote schools and classes in metropolitan schools
- A stimulus to learning by opening students' eyes to possibilities through connecting with the world.
- Anywhere, anytime learning

6.5.3 What are the main barriers to regional, rural and remote schools realising the full potential benefits of ICT?

- Cost to local communities to provide decent / reliable infrastructure
- Regular access to qualified people (technical support)
- Cultural stereotypes, pre-dispositions and biases
- Lack of expertise to both to use and keep the technology running and to understand the need to do so
- Lack of expertise in how to use the technology effectively
- Strength of connections - satellite is commonly slow / intermittent;
- Band width issues; no 4G / NBN still using ADSL

Entrepreneurship and Schools

The Independent Review into Regional, Rural and Remote Education Discussion Paper July 2017 states "Entrepreneurial education requires schools to reach out into their communities and beyond to explore and engage with 'real world' possibilities and as well as existing thriving businesses. It provides an ideal way for education to take the lead in building new school/industry/community partnerships and in so doing, contexts are created where aspirations can be challenged and energised because students see first-hand, the link between education and training and economics.

Whilst we agree with this statement, school leadership is the key and without school leaders with the capacity to drive this it will not occur.

The other consideration is that unfortunately, projects / programs are often dependent upon the teacher who develops and leads them. When they leave, the project / program ends. The issue of sustainability must be addressed either through succession planning within schools or with partnerships between schools, business and industry.

6.6.1 What kinds of support would be needed for a school or group of schools to specialise in entrepreneurial education?

You don't have to leave your local area to become part of an entrepreneurial think-tank. High level thinking is available everywhere and anywhere and it just requires people to be aware of this and schools to have the staff equipped to lead the thinking. Mindset is important. Place is not limiting.

You would need to define entrepreneurial education and then ensure that you have school leaders and teachers who support / promote this in place. Other essential support could include:

- Resourcing that is school targeted and self-determined
- Links with industry mentors
- Broad based community understanding of entrepreneurial education and that this is what education involves. Learning beyond the school gates is valuable and important

6.6.2 What other entrepreneurial education opportunities exist for regional, rural and remote schools?

There are 'place' based entrepreneurial activities but there are also many opportunities to join projects that are world-wide. This does require good communication and ICT infrastructure.

6.6.3 Are there other examples where entrepreneurial education has improved outcomes for regional, rural and remote students?

Opportunities for students to participate in competitions. Students can be drawn into world-wide high calibre competitions / challenges / opportunities.

6.6.4 What gaps need to be addressed to help students transition successfully to further study, training or work?

For many students, including Aboriginal students, the loneliness and disconnect from family when they must move away from community is intense and a real blocker to success.

- Generational expectations and lack of aspiration can be limiting
- Perceived lack of employment when returning to a community – what is the use of coming back with a qualification that you can't use?
- Widening the vision and aspiration for students.
- Making education relevant to the problems that they face

Improving Access

6.7.1 Are there changes that could be made to the ways schools are organised and function that would improve opportunities for regional, rural and remote students?

We must move away from the traditional view of schools and schooling. The "one size fits all" model is outdated particularly when you are dealing with the different challenges presented in different schools. Systems and sectors must trust school leaders to address the challenges faced by their school, in their community and in their context.

Processes must be simplified so that they are easy for parents and students to understand. For example, in the NT Indigenous student access to base funding is difficult to understand. This funding allows students to access additional educational opportunities in urban settings (e.g. Residential Programs)

6.7.2 What could be done to expand the opportunities available to regional, rural and remote students to access high quality education?

- Regional, rural and remote schools need additional resources to allow them to provide the same educational opportunities as those in urban settings. Too often due to jurisdictional funding models these schools are forced to make decisions based on economics rather than student outcomes.
- Remote schools need additional high quality learning environment infrastructure and resources to strengthen the breadth of choice for students and attraction and retention of staff.
- The maintenance and support of resources over time must also be built into provision of facilities. (e.g. who checks industrial equipment is serviced and safe)
- Examples of successful practice (of which there are many) where students are succeeding in their communities should be highlighted (examples in the NT - Tiwi and Xavier College). These could provide ideas to other leaders and communities of possible ways to improve opportunities.
- The use of technology needs to be consistently at a high standard to match the capacity demonstrated in urban schools.

Diversity

Whilst we agree that “A major challenge for schools in regional, rural and remote communities is meeting the diversity of learning needs, interests and aspirations of all students, while at the same time, developing and nurturing social cohesion and harmony”. (The Independent Review into Regional, Rural and Remote Education Discussion Paper July 2017, page 40) we continue to emphasise that good leadership is essential if we are going to meet these challenges.

6.8.1 Noting the findings of the Red dirt education project, what do you consider to be the purpose/role of education in remote communities?

This cannot be a “one size fits all approach”; it should be determined in consultation with the local community because the context in remote communities varies greatly. The Independent Review into Regional, Rural and Remote Education Discussion Paper July 2017 page 42 states

“The Cooperative Research Centre for Remote Economic Participation (CRC-REP) conducted a five-year Remote Education Systems research project, the key learnings of which were published as Red dirt education (Guenther, Disbray, & Osborne, 2016). An important question guiding the research was “What is education for in remote communities?”. The answer according to those who live there is that “education is not primarily about preparing young people for work; rather, it is to ensure that their language, culture and identity remain strong and that they maintain a connection to their land” (p. 51).

To take this notion further it is about schools partnering with communities to strengthen the local learning culture and establish enriched learning contexts for students in these communities. This would include:

- Provision of educational pathways that are culturally valued by the community
- Provision of pathways to education that value add to the community.
- Provision of an education program that provides choice for students.

6.8.2 What does educational success look like in remote communities?

Educational success will vary and is very much dependent upon what communities see as the purpose / role of education. If the purpose / role is being fulfilled, doesn't that indicate success? We agree with the importance of

parent and community involvement as a key to enhancing completion, retention and achievements. More must be done to help schools and school leaders engage productively with parents and communities.

The Independent Review into Regional, Rural and Remote Education Discussion Paper July 2017 page 43 referred to the Red Dirt education research which asked, what is educational success in remote communities?”. “The investigators found, perhaps unsurprisingly, that “educational success in remote schools is not primarily about Year 12 completion, retention or NAPLAN scores. Rather, it is primarily about parent and community involvement in education” (p. 59)”.

Some remote schools have described this as “Community working with and supporting the local school to provide appropriate programs to students”

Remote schools, in conjunction with school communities (and in consultation with systems and sectors) must have the flexibility to define educational success in their context and school leaders must be trusted to deliver appropriate outcomes.

6.8.3 How can schools/teachers in regional, rural and remote areas be supported to meet the individual learning needs of all students?

- Access to necessary resources for individual students
- Access to appropriate support and services for individual students
- In the same way students may access learning using technology, teachers can also readily access the virtual staffroom for professional learning and collaboration. The virtual staffroom could be extended to be a continuous live link between a cluster of remote schools, scheduling regular catch ups and formal exchanges. Great for collaboration and potentially for professional wellbeing.
- Access to regular professional development (outside of current teacher orientation programs) to support teachers working (often in isolation)
- Teacher mentorships:
 - experienced teachers supporting less experienced teachers
 - Mentors may be based anywhere in Australia if not at current school of teachers.
 - Developing funded program linking teachers in remote communities with teachers in urban settings (communities of practice)

6.8.4 How can we create and sustain vibrant, high quality learning environments in regional, rural and remote schools?

The biggest issue with sustainability in these locations is the high level of teachers turn over. High functioning communities can be turned on their heads when teachers leave. We need to look at ways of attracting and keeping school leaders / teachers in these locations and ensuring that we have high quality replacements when they leave. Until we address this, sustainability of high quality learning environments will continue to be an issue.

Other suggestions include:

- Strengthen the relevance of learning through appropriate courses
- Greater the focus on the importance of VET learning
- Employment Pathways curriculum
- The curriculum should provide life skills and employment skills that are measured against a curriculum and set up through community consulting and commitment from local industry.

6.8.5 What can be done to address the directional flow of regional, rural and remote students towards cities?

We acknowledge and support the suggestions in The Independent Review into Regional, Rural and Remote Education Discussion Paper July 2017 page 44 and 45 and offer the following as suggestions:

- Provision of educational pathways that are culturally valued by the community
- Provision of pathways to education that value add to the community
- Provision of an education program that provides choice for students

Transitioning beyond School

The narrative around Regional, Rural and Remote Education must better reflect excellence in education rather than a marginalised option. According to research conducted by Khoo and Ainley (2005) there is a disparity in educational aspirations between regional students and their metropolitan peers; this must be addressed.

6.9.1 Are there changes that should be made to education, training and employment policies and practices which would improve post school opportunities for regional, rural and remote young people?

- Scholarships for extended training
- Employment internships

6.9.2 Are there innovative models of accommodation delivery that could benefit regional, rural and remote tertiary students studying away from home?

Is there something to be learned from sport? Interstate / country players are often placed with a host family to support transition. There is also a network of players for support and later, players move into shared accommodation.

6.9.3 What can be done to address the directional flow of regional, rural and remote students moving to cities for further education and/or training?

Economic development in the home community or cluster of communities. This will realise future employment and community growth.