

## Recipient Details

Name of organisation or individual: [O] Queensland State P-10/P-12 School Administrators' Association

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State or territory: Qld

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## Responses

### Curriculum and assessment

Responders indicated that the Australian Curriculum was a useful document and is open ended enough to provide educators with the flexibility to tailor the curriculum to meet individual students' learning needs and interests. The issue of the Australian Curriculum is when management at the state, regional or school level, narrow the focus of the curriculum to follow a model where one size fits all. Queensland's Department of Education and Training has developed the Curriculum into the Classroom (C2C) Resource. This is an excellent resource and if must be used as a resource and not the Curriculum. A number of small rural schools were told that they had to follow the C2C units – there was no choice.

The ability of the Australian Curriculum to meet the learning needs and interests of rural students varies and depends on the context of the school, the continuity of teachers and leaders, the commitment of teachers and leaders and the commitment of the school community.

In isolation NAPLAN and other forms of high stakes national or state-wide standardized testing do not help to improve the achievements of regional, rural or remote students. Many of these tests are urban centric and are aligned with white middleclass values. Results from NAPLAN need to triangulate with the school base of assessment processes which are designed to meet both the criteria of the Australian Curriculum and the personal circumstances of the students and the contextual features of the schools.

The rural schools can be supported to deliver the Australian Curriculum in a flexible way to meet local needs by:

- ☐ Allowing them the autonomy to design units of learning which are contextual and meaningful
- ☐ The establishment of national or state-wide networks for rural school and their teachers to share ideas and support each other.

Rating: 6

### Teachers and teaching

The attraction and retention of quality teachers in regional, rural and remote schools is a priority for education departments throughout our nation. Some areas where this priority can be achieved are as follows:

- ☐ Rural practicums/internships – all teacher training program should include a rural placement. However as private rental accommodation is expensive, departmental accommodation free of charge should be provided. Many of these pre-service teachers will have to give up part-time

employment in order to undertake the placement, they should be provided with some form of allowance to ease the financial burden.

☒ Paid internships and rural scholarships – these initiatives would prove attracting and the pre-service teacher will be required to complete perhaps five years teaching in a rural community.

☒ Mentoring – there is a desperate need for quality and enduring mentoring relationships. These relationships need to go beyond the day to day practices of a teacher and have a community focus as well.

A number of young male teachers have experienced professional isolation in that they can be the only male teacher in the school and feel excluded from the staffroom banter which often has a feminine focus.

☒ Quality local professional development – the cost of sending staff to professional development from a regional, rural or remote school can be expensive and time consuming – length of travel time, travel costs, accommodation, relief teachers etc. Therefore attendance is restricted. It is therefore necessary to provide quality professional development in the local area. Schools in the Gulf of Carpentaria eg. Normanton P-10 State School do this quite effectively.

☒ Bush Teaching Service Network – the provision of quality training for teachers and leaders before they enter the regional, remote or rural context. It is also necessary to support rural teachers through a network of educators who want to be regional/rural/remote residents. It is possible to establish “A Bush Teaching Service/Network” that is respected and sought after to work in.

Rating: 7

### Leaders and leadership

The Queensland State P-10/12 School Administrators’ Association’s slogan of “Quality Education in P-10/12 Schools through Excellence in Leadership” is significant as research has confirmed the high correlation between leadership and school’s performance.

It is necessary that principals new to the role in a regional, rural or remote school be supported and mentored. The Association does this by running a formal mentoring program for aspiring P-10/12 principals and an informal one called “Who ya gonna call – Ghostbusters or Mentors” for the recently appointed principals.

Discussions with principals have revealed the significance of the rural school’s classification/banding in attracting experienced high quality principals to regional, rural and remote schools which may have many complexities and issues.

A barrier to attracting and retaining high quality and experienced school leaders is the lack of recognition of the complexity of the role they have performed. Too often there is a lack of respect and recognition of regional, rural and remote school leaders, by the system urban counterparts especially when applying for a relocation or a promotion.

Rating: 7

### School and Community

The school is the hub of most rural and remote communities. Due to the lack of government agencies in many of these communities, the school’s leaders generally play a significant role in co-ordinating referrals to these agencies and then orientating the fly in – fly out, often notational specialist into the local context and the specific cultural background.

The close relationship with the community and industry often mean that students have the opportunity to participate in work experience placements and be employed in school-based apprenticeships and traineeships.

Rating: 5

#### Information and Communication Technology

ICTs are an excellent way of eradicating the tyranny of distance. They permit students to undertake study in subjects which may not be available in their own school due to lack of demand for the subject or the unavailability of a specialist staff. ICTs also enable staff to engage in online professional development and access resources to enhance lessons.

These benefits however rely on reliable access to the internet and the bandwidth. Access to a technician can also be a concern.

To address this potential problem, regional, rural and remote schools could be allocated an IT technician as part of the total staffing allocation (or part there of to be shared with other schools in the cluster). Schools can be supported to take on a trainee IT technician to ensure the supply of this valuable resource and to provide an opportunity for someone to continue training.

Rating: 6

#### Entrepreneurship and schools

Yong Zhao advocates that a major advantage that education in Australia is the development of the students' creativity and entrepreneurial skills. Many rural P-10 and P-12 schools work to develop the students' entrepreneurial skills and for a number this involves the primary industries such as the dairy facility at Ravenshoe P-12 State School. Another example is the Hospitality and catering van which is shared between a cluster of P-10 and P-12 schools in Western Queensland. It is staffed by a chef and a hospitality teacher and in addition to training students runs as a business catering for local balls, meetings and other functions.

Rating: 7

#### Improving access – enrolments, clusters, distance education and boarding

Clusters - By clustering Aramac P-10 State School, Barcaldine P-12 State School, Blackall P-12 State School, Longreach SHS and Winton P-12 State School are able to provide their students with an opportunity to work in an industrial kitchen under the guidance of a qualified chef and gain a VET qualification.

Distance Education - Small regional, rural and remote schools which because of small enrolments, lack of demand for certain subjects or the lack of a specialist staff member qualified to teach that subject, certain subject are eliminated by the school. Unfortunately this restriction in the breadth of the curriculum offerings can mean that a student misses out on a pre-requisite for a trade (electrician) or career (teacher, nurse, engineer). Distance Education can provide students with the opportunity to participate in these subjects.

Boarding - Students from properties or from communities with no senior secondary sector will have to attend a boarding school and the costs involved can be prohibitive. State boarding schools can be implemented and hostels developed in local communities where there are small rural P-12 schools. This would boost enrolments and mean that the students do not have to travel so far from their homes thereby eliminating homesickness - they may be able to go home on weekends.

Rating for enrolments: 5

Rating for clusters: 7

Rating for distance education: 7

Rating for boarding: 5

### Diversity

Schools prepare students for life and diversity is a way of life in our multicultural society. Through exposure to and working with students with disabilities, different racial groups, different cultures and different religions as well as sexual persuasion, students develop empathy, respect and tolerance.

Rating: 7

### Transitioning beyond school

Interviews with former rural school students who have transitioned to university study revealed that those who enrolled in large city universities found that homesickness, isolation from family and friends and the difficulty in making new friends especially when they were the only student from that particular rural school to attend that university. Those students who transitioned to small regional universities even when they had to relocate to do so found greater contentment in that they found the smaller environment to be more personal and that they made new friends easier.

The majority of the rural students who transitioned to university had completed at least one but often three or four tertiary subjects whilst they were still at school. CQUniversity has to be especially commended for this their online Start Uni Now (SUN) program. The fact that so many of their subjects are available online means that it is accessible to regional, rural and remote students.

Suggestions how the problems or issues could be resolved or alleviated include:

- Organise host families through organisations such Rotary or Lions, not to live with permanently but to be a contact family in the “big smoke”, to perhaps visit for a weekend once a month etc.
- Establish a network or social group of and for university students who are from regional, rural and remote schools. This network can develop friendship and support groups for students from regional, rural and remote locations. There are no doubt many students from regional, rural and remote locations but they would most likely never normally have met because of the size of the university and because the students were in different faculties.

Rating: 7

### Additional Comments

Regional, rural and remote schools provide many leadership opportunities for their staff, opportunities which they would not normally have in large urban schools. Smaller rural P-10 and P-12 schools may have a classified leadership team of the principal and a Head of Department – Curriculum who actually performs the role of a deputy principal. There is often only one specialist teacher in each secondary teaching area and therefore that person would fill the role of the subject area coordinator – organising resources, budgets and work programs. These are the responsibilities usually undertaken by the subject area specific Heads of Department. The rural classroom teacher can also become the key teacher for any number of projects – literacy or Explicit Instruction.

Thank you for providing us with the opportunity to comment on and make suggestions regarding the Review into Regional Rural and Remote Education. Despite the concerns raised in this response, the common message received from responders was one of loving working in the regional, rural and remote schools. As one principal of a rural P-12 school wrote: “One of the greatest challenges a principal of a P-12 school faces is that one has to be across every educational agenda – early years, primary, junior secondary and senior secondary. And conversely that is one of the greatest benefits – you are involved with every educational agenda. I love my school. I love my job.”