NSW GOVERNMENT SUBMISSION

Independent review into regional, rural and remote education

Contents

Introduction

Learning gaps between children living in regional, rural and remote locations of New South Wales and those living in metropolitan locations are too wide. Students in rural and remote areas have poorer outcomes on average, when compared to students in metropolitan locations, on all educational indicators.

In recognition of this, New South Wales (NSW) has implemented a number of policy reforms that focus on lifting education achievement in rural NSW. One of the key outcomes of this work is *Rural and Remote Education: A Blueprint for Action*[1] (The Blueprint). The overall goal of the Blueprint is to reduce the gap in educational achievement between rural and remote and metropolitan students.

The Blueprint committed $80 million over four years (2014 to 2018) to implement a broad set of reforms and actions in four focus areas: quality early childhood education, great teachers and school leaders, curriculum access for all and effective partnerships and connections.

The Blueprint is a detailed plan to improve student learning in regional, rural and remote schools across NSW. It includes a number of specific action items and is part of a larger, state-wide reform agenda including Local Schools, Local Decisions; Great Teaching, Inspired Learning; the Literacy and Numeracy Action Plan and Connected Communities.

Interim results show that many of the actions in the Blueprint are achieving their objectives. However, the findings also point to ongoing challenges and barriers that still need to be addressed.

In 2012 NSW established the Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation (CESE) to support evidence-based decision-making in education design, delivery and development. CESE analyses and evaluates educational programs and strategies and monitors national and international strategic agendas. CESE has identified that for rural and remote education, there is a sizable 'remoteness gap' in student outcomes across Australia.

NSW welcomes the opportunity to provide input into this review. Our submission provides further details about NSW's rural education policies and programs and highlights achievements to date. This is discussed in the context of the broader state-wide education reform agenda and gives consideration to the nine themes outlined in the review discussion paper.

Rural and regional New South Wales

Rural and regional NSW is home to about 40% of the total NSW population, and produces about one third of total NSW gross state product.[2] It is also home to resilient and adaptive communities and places of historical and cultural significance.

One of the strengths of regional NSW is its diversity. The NSW Government recognises that each region requires its own tailored set of strategies to address local priorities. The NSW Regional Development Framework[2] provides an overall vision across Government for regional development in NSW.

The Regional Development Framework provides a plan for better coordination, decision making and effort on the ground. It recognises the need for regional communities to have access to essential services and infrastructure including hospitals, schools, roads, water, police and emergency services. Regional communities also need access to high speed broadband and other communication technologies that are essential parts of a modern economy.

New South Wales regional and rural education sector

The NSW education system is the largest in Australia with around 1.2 million students in more than 3,000 schools.[3] The importance of rural and regional education is highlighted by the fact that nearly one in four NSW students attends school outside metropolitan areas and 40% of schools are located outside metropolitan areas, including 3% in remote and very remote areas.[4]

Like the communities it serves, the NSW rural education sector is diverse, comprising a mixture of Government, Catholic and Independent schools. Key statistics[5] about school education in regional, rural and remote NSW include:

- Government schools account for more than 70% of NSW regional, rural and remote school enrolments; the Catholic and Independent sectors account for 19% and 11% respectively.
- 36% of low socio-economic (SES) students in NSW live in regional, rural and remote areas, 86% of these students enrol in government schools.
- More than half of NSW Aboriginal students live outside the major cities, 86% of whom enrol in government schools.

For the purpose of this submission, regional, rural and remote NSW includes all areas outside of metropolitan Sydney. The NSW Department of Education uses a geographical structure based on the new Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Australian Statistical Geography Standard (ASGS). Groups of ASGS Statistical Area 4 (SA4) boundaries in NSW have been combined into 11 groups for reporting and publication of Department data. At the State level there are five regional groups (see Figure 1 below).

For more information on NSW regional, rural and remote schools, see Appendix 1.

Figure 1: Statistical Area 4 Groups showing metropolitan and non-metropolitan regions
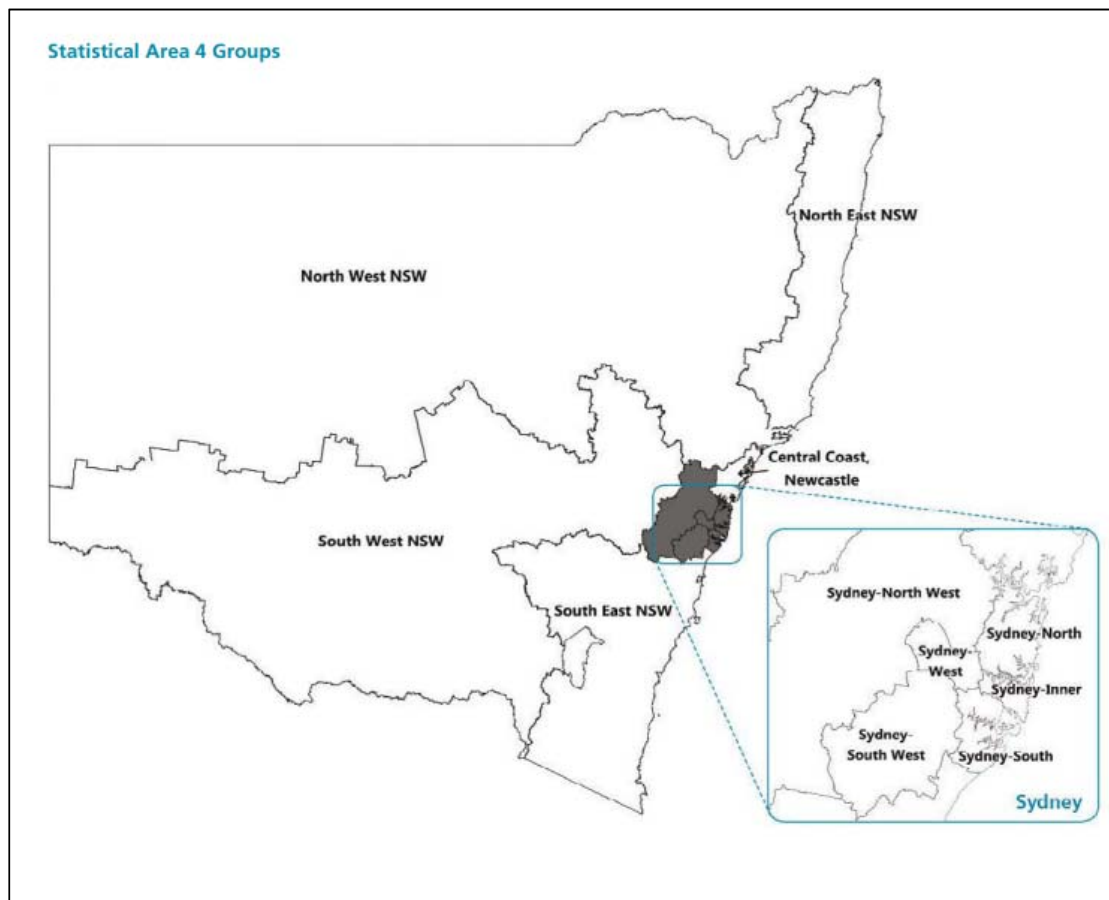
Key educational barriers and challenges in regional, rural and remote NSW

Research shows lower educational outcomes for students in rural and remote areas, including lower levels of attendance, engagement, and transition to further study. There are also difficulties in recruiting, retaining and developing high quality teachers and school leaders.[4]

Recent data on the educational outcomes of students in regional, rural and remote areas show that:

1. There is a sizeable 'remoteness gap' in student outcomes

Data from the Australian Early Development Census (AEDC) shows that NSW children in government schools recorded as 'developmentally vulnerable'[a] on one or more domains[b] is lowest in metropolitan schools (around 20%), consistently about five per cent higher than provincial schools and higher yet for remote and very remote schools.[6] Once in secondary school, NSW students from remote areas have lower NAPLAN results than metropolitan and provincial students do.

2. The gap is not exclusive to New South Wales

Average reading and numeracy NAPLAN scores are higher in metropolitan schools than in regional and remote schools for almost every state in Australia, from Year 3 to Year 9.

---

[a] When the first AEDC was undertaken in 2009, a series of national benchmarks was established, providing a reference point with which later results could be compared. Children falling below the 10th percentile were considered 'developmentally vulnerable', children falling between the 10th and 25th percentile were considered 'developmentally at risk' and all other children were considered to be 'on track.'
[b] The AEDC domains are: language and cognitive skills, communication skills and general knowledge, physical health and wellbeing, emotional maturity and social competence)

Internationally, students from rural areas in almost every country in the OECD, perform worse in the PISA reading test than students from cities. However, the remoteness gap is larger in Australia than the average of other OECD countries. [4]

3. There are early signs the gap is closing

Since the start of 2014, the gaps for reading across remote and very remote schools compared to metropolitan schools, have narrowed for Year 7 (-2 points) and Year 9 (-2 points). The numeracy gaps have also closed for all year levels across remote and very remote schools, and for Years 5 and 9, across provincial schools. [6]

Factors contributing to the gap in educational outcomes

The primary driver of the difference in outcomes between metropolitan and regional students is difference in socio-economic status (SES).[4]This is true across countries, as well as within NSW. Relative to metropolitan schools, rural schools in NSW are concentrated at the lower end of the SES spectrum, with 65% of provincial and remote schools in the two lowest SES quartiles. An internal analysis shows that differences in Family Occupation and Education Background Index (FOEI), one commonly used measure of SES, account for between 56% and 73% of the variation in NSW school outcomes between Year 3 and Year 12, respectively.[4]

Breakdown of outcomes gap between metropolitan and non-metropolitan schools

CESE constructed a predictive model of school outcomes in which the relative impact of each school characteristic was estimated. Figure 2 shows the breakdown of the gap in various outcomes between metropolitan and non-metropolitan schools, excluding selective schools and schools with fewer than five students taking the NAPLAN test. For all outcomes other than Year 3 and Year 5 results and attendance rates, the gap between metropolitan and non-metropolitan schools can be fully explained by differences in student demographics or school size. Even in the case of Year 3 results and attendance rates, where its contribution is largest, the unexplained 'non-metro' effect represents a relatively small portion of the gap in outcomes.

Figure 2: Breakdown of outcomes gap between metropolitan and non-metropolitan schools[4]
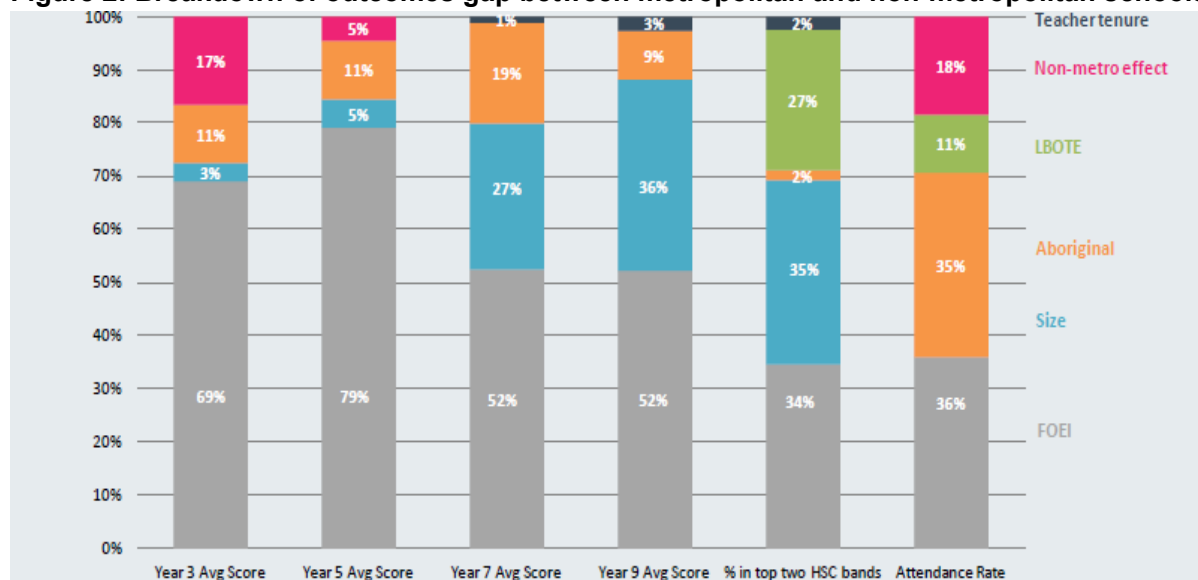
Source: CESE analysis using DEC data
Note: Excludes selective schools and schools with fewer than five students taking the NAPLAN test.

Source: Rural and remote education: Literature review, CESE

SES (as measured by FOEI) explains the majority of the gap in outcomes from Year 3 to Year 9. However, it explains much less of the gap in HSC or attendance rates. School size explains a progressively larger proportion of the gap in later school years. This may be due to the curriculum getting more specialised towards the end of secondary school, requiring dedicated resources and classes that smaller schools have less capacity to provide.[4]

Transition to post-school education, training and employment

As noted in the previous section, non-metropolitan regions tend to have a larger proportion of communities and individuals in lower SES groups. Students from these backgrounds are less likely to complete their secondary education or to progress to tertiary education. Lower levels of educational attainment and limited employment opportunities for unskilled and semi-skilled workers are key hurdles to increasing economic participation rates in rural and regional areas. Government incentives to encourage this cohort of students into post-secondary education and training need to take into account the differing demographics of these areas and provide a range of study and vocational education options that may include basic skills training in literacy and numeracy.

Institutions such as TAFE NSW, which has a large network of campuses across remote and regional NSW, and other VET providers can 'bridge the gap' between school and university as well as providing vocationally driven training which is tailored to local community needs. This can contribute to raising the participation of disadvantaged students.

Other commonly reported barriers[7] that students in regional, rural and remote areas face in accessing higher education include:

- cost of university course and associated travel and accommodation
- low levels of motivation/aspiration to attend university
- lack of knowledge about university options and unfamiliarity with university life
- reluctance to move away from community, family and friends.

These barriers are reflected in reported university participation rates which show that students from regional, rural and remote areas are under-represented in higher education enrolments across Australia. Their participation rate declined as a proportion of all domestic students between 2008 and 2014. In all equity groups their undergraduate enrolment growth over this period was the lowest (30.2%). This rate compares to enrolment growth of 32.7% for all domestic undergraduates, 45.7% for low SES students, and 60.4% for Aboriginal students.[8]

To address these challenges, a multi-faceted strategy that recognises the multiple barriers faced by rural students is needed. Universities and vocational training institutes such as TAFE, are uniquely positioned to contribute to the economic, social, cultural fabric of their community.

In NSW a number of innovative programs have been implemented to address the barriers described above. They are described under theme 9: transitioning beyond school.

Regional transition to university research project:

A significant number of students in NSW regional areas attaining ATARs of 75 or more are not directly entering university from school, even after accounting for students taking a gap year.

- **Key facts:** In 2014, 1,057 students in regional NSW who attained a median ATAR of 75 or above did not directly enter university from school (approx. 45% of the 75+ cohort).
- Of these, 462 attained an ATAR of 85 or over (approx. 40% of the 85+ cohort).
- Data from 2009 to 2014 show this has been a stable trend since 2010 at least.
- Students are concentrated in inner regional areas and are predominantly female (approximately 64%).
- It is notable that when broken down into ABS areas, significant numbers are in areas where there is a university presence, for example:
  - 155 in Richmond – Tweed
  - 116 in the Mid North Coast
  - 125 in the Central West
  - 112 in Southern Highlands and Shoalhaven.

The research:
The NSW Department of Education would like to understand why these high performing students are not choosing to go to university. Researchers from the National Centre for Student Equity in Higher Education, at Curtin University, have been commissioned to conduct research with students, parents, teachers and former students in selected government and non-government schools across regional and rural NSW to understand how and why these high performing students are making decisions about their post-schools options. The research will use qualitative methods and take place around the time students are applying to Universities Admissions Centre for 2018 university enrolment.

The research also includes a post school survey sample of previous school leavers. Without pre-empting the result of the survey, it is expected that the post school survey will provide insights into regional students' decision making around vocational education and training, higher education as well as full time and part time employment.

The final report with recommendations will be available late 2017.

NSW Government initiatives to improve rural student education outcomes

Over the last four years NSW has invested at all levels of schooling to improve educational outcomes for students living in regional, rural and remote areas. A number of other key state initiatives are outlined below.

Theme 1: Curriculum and assessment

Literacy and Numeracy Strategy

The NSW Government is investing $340 million into a Literacy and Numeracy Strategy over 2017 – 2020, to improve student outcomes. The additional funding and focused strategies will assist in improving outcomes in all students, including those in regional, rural and remote areas.

The strategy focuses on:

- early intervention with experts supporting literacy and numeracy skills of at-risk Kindergarten to Year 2 students in almost 700 schools
- evidence-based literacy and numeracy progressions that will assist teachers to quickly and consistently identify and address individual student literacy and numeracy needs
- introducing a 'Best Start' Year 7 literacy and numeracy assessment for entry to high school to identify students needing additional assistance and plan the support they need to succeed ensuring graduating primary and secondary teachers are better prepared to teach literacy and numeracy by strengthening initial teacher education programs.

As part of the Literacy and Numeracy Strategy, NSW implemented the Bump It Up program, which identifies students who are doing well and who have the greatest capacity to achieve in the top two NAPLAN bands. By identifying students who are currently achieving in the middle bands of NAPLAN, and implementing locally-developed targeted initiatives, the strategy helps improve their performance in reading and numeracy and enhance their overall education outcomes.

The Bump It Up program was implemented in 137 NSW government schools under the (2012-2016) State Literacy and Numeracy Action Plan. Forty six of the 137 Bump it Up schools are in regional areas.

The 2017 NAPLAN results showed Bump It Up schools as a group achieved greater improvements in results for students in the top 2 bands for reading and numeracy than other schools. Primary Bump It Up schools improved by 4.3 percentage points compared to 1.2 percentage points in non-BIU schools. Secondary Bump It Up schools improved by 2.1 percentage points compared to 0.2 percentage points in non-BIU schools.

From 2020, students in NSW must meet a minimum standard of literacy and numeracy to be eligible for the HSC credential, through measures developed by the NSW Education Standards Authority (NESA).

More information is available at [NESA](#).

Education Networks

The Rural and Remote Education Blueprint included the establishment of 70 Education Networks to assist rural and remote schools to collaborate to develop an education strategy tailored to their own communities. The intent of the networks is for rural schools to work together, sharing resources and expertise beyond the individual school.

By December 2016 funding had been provided for 67 Education Networks involving at least 356 rural and remote schools.[6] In 2016 school principals were surveyed to gauge whether the networks had achieved their objectives. Evidence suggests that the initiative has led to broader collaboration between schools that is likely to extend beyond the initial project funding in some cases. Case studies in the Blueprint Interim Report highlight how schools are using virtual extended classrooms for mathematics and science to reach all students across a network.

More information is available at [The Rural and Remote Education Blueprint – Interim Monitoring and Evaluation Report](#).

Rural and remote marking program

The HSC Rural and Remote Marking Program (RRMP) is a joint initiative of the NSW Department of Education, Catholic Schools NSW and NESA. A valuable professional development activity, the RRMP allows teachers to gain knowledge, skills and understanding about the HSC marking process, including:

- *Rural and Remote HSC marker program* – cross sectoral program that provides a number of marking positions in externally marked subjects for government and non-government teachers working in rural and remote schools.
- *HSC marking in regional centres* - Outside of Sydney, NESA marks HSC in Gosford, Newcastle, Maitland, Coffs Harbour, Wollongong and Goulburn. In 2017, 758 markers will be appointed to mark at these centres.
- *Online learning* - NESA is developing its first online HSC marking course that will be available in early 2018. The course will be for teachers of English Standard and Advanced. It will take teachers through the same process that HSC markers follow at a marking centre.
- *Online NAPLAN writing tests* - NESA has online courses for marking the NAPLAN writing components – narrative and persuasive. Online NAPLAN training helps teachers improve the writing of their students and gain valuable knowledge that supports classroom teaching.
- *Visual Arts Marking Experience* - This program is designed for rural and remote teachers, who spend two days at the Visual Arts marking centre in Sydney, where they are given hands-on experience with senior markers. In 2015 and 2016 it was an invitation only event with 14 participants. This year it has been opened up to all regional Visual Arts teachers with preference given to those in the most remote schools.

These experiences will provide teachers in rural and remote schools with increased access to support related to NAPLAN, the RoSA and HSC marking within their subject areas. This support can help teachers and students gain a better understanding of expected standards and requirements for high achievement.

Updated Stage 6 Primary Industries curriculum framework syllabus

Industry curriculum frameworks provide students with the opportunity to gain industry recognised national vocational qualifications under the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) as part of their NSW Higher School Certificate (HSC).

NESA updated the Stage 6 Primary Industries Curriculum Framework syllabus following the release of the new national *AHC Agriculture, Horticulture and Conservation and Land Management Training Package*. Implementation commences from 2017 with Year 11.

STEM initiatives

STEM Youth Development Camp

STEM Youth Development Camp is a joint initiative between the Connected Communities initiative, the NSW Aboriginal Education Consultative Group Inc., (NSW AECG) and the new Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Mathematics Alliance (ATSIMA).

The camp aims to foster Aboriginal students' interest in STEM subjects and for students to engage with industries to experience the practical applications of STEM subjects. In doing so, it helps motivate students to take a closer look at the burgeoning opportunities that the STEM areas offer students and the nation.

Camps employ university staff, industry figures and Aboriginal role models working in STEM fields. They are based around a culturally inclusive framework, which provides students with a strong sense of identity while engaging them in the broader STEM curriculum area. Activities include: the mathematics of fire; astronomy; mathematics and community research; robotics.

STEM camps have attracted widespread interest among Aboriginal students and schools. The inaugural STEM camp, held in Dubbo in October 2015, was attended by around 130 students from across rural and remote NSW. This included students from Boggabilla, Bourke, Brewarrina, Collarenebri, Coonamble, Inverell, Moree, Narromine, Taree, Toronto, Walgett and Wilcannia.

STEM Action Schools

The NSW Department of Education has established seven STEM Action Schools to mentor and share innovative STEM practice and programs across NSW schools. STEM Action Schools implement curriculum programs designed to develop students' foundational knowledge and skills in STEM subjects, as well as skills of collaboration, critical and creative thinking and problem solving. Each school develops a focus or strength based on their individual profile and the expertise of their staff.

These schools are then required to share their practice among other NSW schools. In doing so, they build capacity among teachers and support other schools to develop their own plans for implementing STEM education programs.

Three of the seven STEM Action schools are in rural or regional areas:
- Hastings Secondary College in Port Macquarie
- The Canobolas Rural Technology High School in Orange
- Maitland Grossmann High School in Maitland.

These mentor schools ensure that best practice teaching in STEM has a presence in rural NSW. This enables the dissemination of STEM practice and programs throughout regional NSW. STEM Action schools located in metropolitan areas also provide mentoring to rural and regional schools.

The seven STEM action schools have conducted professional learning workshops for 58 other schools across NSW. Nineteen rural and remote schools have been funded to participate in the mentoring initiative. Further mentoring is continuing throughout 2017.

Theme 2: Teachers and teaching

Teacher incentive research

The NSW Department of Education commissioned research in 2016 to identify which incentives are the most effective in attracting quality teachers to rural and remote schools. The results indicate that some incentives are more effective in attracting teachers than others. Another notable finding concerned the bundling and tailoring of incentives, rather than presuming that one, or a limited number of, approaches, might appeal to teachers in all circumstances, and at all stages of their personal and professional lives.

The results also indicated three distinct groups of teachers. One group was highly responsive to financial incentives and most open to working in a rural and remote location. These individuals were more likely to be characterised as being pre-service or early career teachers, younger, lower incomes and with some experience of living in a rural and remote location (e.g., during their childhood or tertiary studies). This segment was also less committed to the profession. At the other extreme, the results identified a set of teachers who were unlikely to respond to any type of incentive. These teachers were more experienced and more likely to be working in a metropolitan school. They were also more likely to live in a household with higher incomes, and to have a partner in full-time employment and children. This group was more committed to the profession than the other two groups. The third group were identified as being between these two extremes, both in terms of their responsiveness to the incentives and their life stage and experience. This group was more selective in terms of which incentives they would respond to, but their preferences were similar to those of the early career segment.

The results suggest that a range of incentives can be utilised to attract teachers who are early in their career and/or those with some affiliation with a rural and remote area. These incentives are also likely to be attractive to mid-career teachers who recognise the various benefits associated with working in a rural or remote location.

The NSW Department of Education is in the process of revising its rural and remote incentives as a result of this research, to incorporate a flexible incentive package and a component which targets experienced teachers. Provision of additional federal government incentives, such as tax incentives, may assist in attracting high quality, experienced teachers to work in rural and remote locations.

Great Teaching, Inspired Learning

The Great Teaching, Inspired Learning (GTIL) reforms aim to build the capacity of teachers and leaders in rural and remote schools, as part of the Regional and Remote Blueprint.

Elements of the GTIL include:

Pre-service teachers

An issue that is consistently reported in the literature is the importance of providing pre-service teachers with professional experience practicums in rural and remote areas, rather than briefly visiting or touring rural locations. Professional experience is a critical component for students to gain confidence to work in these settings, and studies show that more positive attitudes toward rural and regional appointments flow from professional experience in these areas.[10,11]

NSW is in the process of revising its rural and remote scholarship program to include paid immersed practicums in rural areas. However, further initiatives from the Commonwealth could reinforce these NSW efforts. For example, the Commonwealth could provide funding to universities to enable them to offer practical rural and remote teaching experience placements.

Selection of quality teachers

In 2015, the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) developed guidelines for entrance selection into initial teacher education; stating that:

- quality teaching is critical to improved student outcomes and initial teacher education sets the foundation for a high quality teaching workforce
- rigorous candidate selection procedures maximise the likelihood those entering the profession will become effective teachers.

Some research has been conducted to define what it is that predisposes a teacher to deliver quality teaching. This presents an opportunity to lift student outcomes through the design, development, and application of a teacher *Success Profile*, incorporating both academic and non-academic attributes for success.

The NSW Department of Education is currently undertaking work to identify those attributes that predispose candidates to deliver quality teaching and will form the basis of recruitment and selection for scholarships and teacher appointments in rural and remote locations.

Support for beginning teachers

Rural and remote schools have tailored induction programs to help teachers understand and adjust to the local community. Schools are provided with the equivalent of one hour per week release to allow an experienced teacher to provide mentor support during the beginning teacher's first year of teaching.

Professional collaboration

Teachers and schools in rural and remote areas are able to share and showcase their practice through the making of classroom documentaries. Teachers are supported to share and analyse their practice, and schools to build collaborative teaching cultures, through 'Quality Teaching Rounds'.

Both of these initiatives are resourced to ensure teachers in rural and remote locations can participate using technologies that allow groups of teachers across multiple schools to watch and discuss lessons.

Financial incentives

The NSW Department of Education offers a range of financial incentives to attract teachers to rural and remote schools. The teach.*Rural* scholarship, an initiative of the Regional and Remote Blueprint, awards $6,000 per year of full time study, $5,000 appointment allowance and a permanent teaching job for teachers in training or HSC completers who wish to undertake a teaching degree, and are willing to teach in a NSW rural or remote public school for a minimum of three years. At the end of 2016, 97 scholarships have been awarded, with two-thirds being provided to students from rural and remote backgrounds.

Other financial incentives the NSW Department of Education offers to attract and retain teachers in rural and remote areas include:
- rental subsidies
- recruitment benefit of $10,000 if two consecutive selection processes have not filled the position
- payment of submission fees for accreditation at Highly Accomplished or Lead Teacher if successfully attained.

In addition, NSW offers a shorter trial period for newly appointed teachers in rural and remote schools before their permanent appointment is confirmed.

Complementary initiatives by the Commonwealth would support NSW efforts to encourage graduate teachers to move to rural, regional or remote areas. The Commonwealth controls a number of policy levers that could be leveraged to this end, including tax payments and student loans discounts through HECS-HELP. Consideration should be given to using these avenues to bring quality teachers to underserved areas.

Other initiatives

Initiative: Partnership with the NSW Aboriginal Education Consultative Group

Healthy Culture: Healthy Country

In 2010 the NSW Department of Education signed a ten year partnership with the NSW Aboriginal Education Consultative Group (AECG) - a not-for-profit Aboriginal organisation that provides advice on all matters relevant to Aboriginal education and training. On behalf of the Department, the AECG delivers Healthy Culture: Healthy Country – a cultural immersion program which focuses on teacher professional learning.

The goal of the program is to build cultural competency and inform teaching methods to maintain and advance Aboriginal languages and cultures in NSW public schools. Teachers learn how to work with their local community and the local AECG to develop a localised Aboriginal cultural curriculum. Healthy Culture: Healthy Country is the only known cultural studies program designed for the NSW syllabus.

Connecting to Country

In partnership with all school sectors in NSW, the NSW AECG runs 'Connecting to Country' – an Aboriginal community cultural awareness teaching programme. This programme provides a cultural conduit between NSW teachers and Aboriginal peoples at the local community level in regional and remote areas throughout NSW. Over three days, participating teachers from government and non-government schools learn about local Aboriginal culture, history and social experience of country. The course provides teachers with an appreciation of the cultural geography of their local school precinct and more broadly their school's region, and allows them to encounter firsthand the concept and meaning of country from an Aboriginal cultural standpoint.

The Association of Independent Schools of New South Wales (AISNSW) leverages the infrastructure of independent schools across the state through a network of 'hubs,' which allow groups of regional teachers to come together at a site and participate in professional learning sessions which are being delivered in Sydney.

Theme 3: Leaders and leadership

School leaders play a critical role in improving student and school education outcomes. The selection, development, support, and incentivising of quality leaders (teaching executive and principals) are important in this regard, including:

- role clarity, including key accountabilities, focused outcomes, attributes for success and alignment of recruitment and selection methods
- remuneration frameworks that incentivise higher levels of accreditation attainment in rural and remote locations
- embedding a high performance culture through performance planning and review
- leadership development programs that are aligned to principal standards, support the delivery of student and school outcomes, and create a strong pipeline of aspiring leaders
- flexible resourcing that supports student and school outcomes at the local level, based on evidence-based inputs and planning.

School Leadership Strategy

NSW has implemented a number of initiatives to support leaders and leadership in our government schools. In 2015, NSW introduced the School Leadership Strategy for government schools to:

- link principals' salaries to the size and complexity of their school
- improve preparation and support for new principals
- include training for principals at all levels of experience
- enhance accountability to help principals improve education outcomes.

The strategy comprises three elements: Leadership Pathways, Public School Leadership and Management Credential and Principal Classification. For rural and remote teachers and aspiring school leaders, the Leadership Pathways allow them the same access to leadership development support as their metropolitan counterparts. The Principal Classification changes take into account both school operations and the additional educational needs of students as linked to the needs based funding model, RAM. The RAM includes loadings for Aboriginal students and school location, which in turn, reflect the educational challenges for principals in rural and remote schools. Commonwealth actions can build on NSW initiatives and make them more effective in attracting and retaining school leaders. A national tax incentive, for example, would encourage more of our top school leaders to work in regional or rural and remote areas. This could also be achieved by increasing higher education subsidies for teachers and schools leaders who re-locate to rural or remote areas. For example, the Commonwealth could provide higher subsidies for teaches to undertake a Master of Education Management. Both actions would effectively leverage NSW reforms, which provide the opportunity for principals to drive excellence at the school level.

Local Schools, Local Decisions

NSW introduced the Local Schools, Local Decisions (LSLD) reform to give NSW public school principals more authority to make local decisions about how best to meet the needs of their students. This means giving schools greater freedom to make decisions about how to use the money spent on public education.

LSLD comprises the following interrelated areas:

- managing resources: schools will have their own budgets and have the flexibility to allocate resources according to locally determined priorities. The LSLD Resource Allocation Model

(RAM) distributes public school funding in a fairer and more transparent way. See Theme 8 for more information.

- staff: school leaders will have more opportunities to select school staff locally to build and maintain a team that is committed to its priorities and its students' learning needs. This will have particular benefits to regional, rural and remote schools.
- working locally: the school, its teachers and the local community will work in partnership to make a positive contribution to student learning. The parent community will have opportunities to actively contribute to the development of a school's strategic direction and priorities in the way that makes the most sense for them. Schools will also have more opportunities to meet their local needs by working together and combining resources within communities of schools, and across our large network of schools.
- reducing red tape: to allow schools to focus on the priority of teaching and learning.
- making decisions: schools will have more local decision-making authority but they will remain part of a strong and supportive public education system.

Theme 4: School and community

As outlined previously, the difference in educational outcomes between metropolitan and rural students can largely be explained by student and school characteristics broadly understood to impact upon outcomes, including SES and Aboriginality. However, what is unique to rural and remote areas is the concentration of multiple forms of disadvantage (schools are more likely to have more students who are low SES, and schools are more likely to be smaller). Increasing geographical remoteness heightens the impact of this disadvantage and requires strategies different to those that can be effective in metropolitan areas.

NSW recognised that a new approach was needed in these most complex and disadvantaged communities because previous approaches in the teaching and learning domain had not resulted in improvements for these students.

Based on this understanding, NSW launched the Connected Communities Strategy and Networked Specialist Centres (NSCs), two key strategies which employ a community and family-centred approach in schools. Both are showing positive results, as outlined below.

Connected Communities Strategy

In 2012, the NSW Government implemented *Connected Communities*, an innovative strategy to address the educational and social aspirations of Aboriginal Students and all students. The Government positioned the strategy within OCHRE (*opportunity, choice, healing, responsibility, empowerment*), the NSW plan for Aboriginal affairs.

The Strategy is informed by advice from the NSW AECG and broad consultation with key stakeholders, and underpinned by progressive educational research that highlights the value of place-based approaches to education.

The strategy positions schools as service hubs that facilitate a range of services from birth through school, to further training and employment. Connected Communities schools work in partnership with Aboriginal leaders in the local community to help improve education outcomes for young Aboriginal people.

Interim results from the Strategy are positive and indicate a number of achievements to date:

- appointment of Local School Reference Groups comprising community members to engage in

co-decision making with the Executive at all schools

- strengthened school leadership with the appointment of Executive Principals
- increased focus on local Aboriginal language and culture in schools, enhancing students' identity and wellbeing
- increased parental and community engagement at primary schools
- expanded transition to school and early years programs
- positive delivery and uptake of cultural awareness training to staff.

Improvements have been realised in a number of areas including an increase in Aboriginal attendance rates, an increase in mean value-added NAPLAN scores across Connected Communities schools as a group for years 3 and 5, and improved measures on the *Tell them from me* surveys conducted annually.[12,13,14,15] For more information on Connected Communities and a case study on Bourke High School see Appendix 2.

The 15 Connected Community schools are located in the communities of Boggabilla, Bourke, Brewarrina, Coonamble, Menindee, Moree, Tamworth, Taree, Toomelah, Walgett and Wilcannia (see Figure 2 below).

Figure 2: Map of NSW showing Connected Community schools
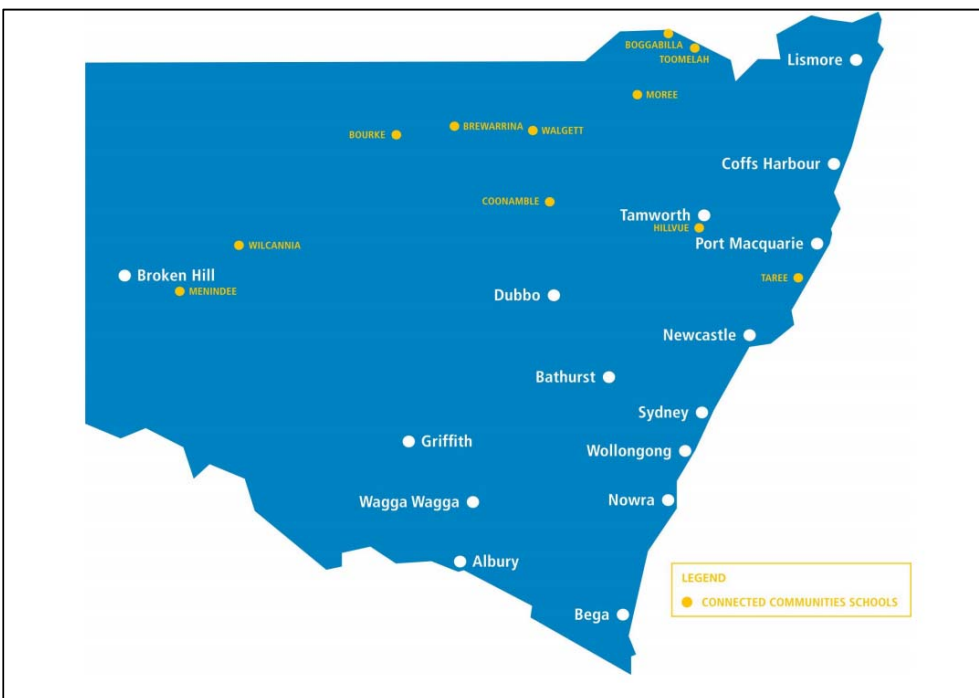
Networked Specialist Centres (NSCs)

As part of the Regional and Remote Blueprint, 15 Networked Specialist Centres (NSCs) have been progressively established across rural and regional NSW. Four were established in 2014 in Western NSW to pilot models of operation and 11 were established by the end of 2015. In addition, six have been established in metropolitan Sydney, bringing the total to 22 by the end of 2016. Each NSC is led by a facilitator.

Locations

Barwon	Bega/Queanbeyan	Broken Hill	Campbelltown
Central Coast	Central West	Deniliquin/Griffith	Dubbo
Illawarra	Macquarie Park	Lismore	Maitland
Mt Druitt	Newcastle	Parramatta	Port Macquarie
Shoalhaven	St Peters	Strathfield	Tamworth
Wagga Wagga	Wollondilly/Macarthur		

The core function of the NSC is to provide support to schools through complex case coordination, led by a facilitator, when a child or young person's needs reach a level of complexity that requires additional case management or integrated service delivery.

NSC Facilitators:

- lead complex case coordination
- build systemic, inter-agency relationships with other government and non-government agencies to establish and maintain a sustainable network of wrap around support services
- facilitate and support cross-agency initiatives and local solutions identified by a group of schools that address the complex needs of their students.

NSC Facilitators across the state participate in many inter-agency projects involving rural and remote schools. These projects are undertaken to build the capacity of schools to support students with complex and challenging needs. NSC Facilitators also work with groups of schools on shared complex wellbeing issues.

For a case study on improving direct access to wellbeing services in a rural high school, see Appendix 3.

Connected Communities and NSCs are two programs which respond to deep set contextual issues in regional and remote communities. Often these include entrenched disadvantage, which effectively undermines outcomes at school and broader opportunities for social mobility.
To bring about this level of change in schools requires significant, sustained effort and resourcing. Research from McKinsey shows that it takes six years or more for education reforms to impact on outcomes.[16]

Theme 5: Information and communication technology

Connecting Country Schools

NSW recognises the importance of using digital technologies for learning and the need to develop the skills of students and teachers in using technology effectively in their daily life and work.

A program to improve wireless access for NSW rural public schools is currently underway. The *Connecting Country Schools* initiative includes $46 million to improve digital technology in over 900 remote and regional NSW schools. The wireless upgrades will allow for speeds four times faster than currently available and will be rolled out to nearly 13,000 learning spaces. The program will be piloted in three schools – Urunga Public School, Grafton High School and Whian Whian Public School – and will run until September 2017. The program will then roll out to the remaining 900 schools over the coming months.

From 2014, school leaders, teachers and students have been able to access a range of online communication and collaboration technologies, including video conferencing, the Microsoft and Adobe suites of software, Google Apps and NSW Scootle for access to all national digital learning resources, collaboration and assessment tools. These technologies assist in the flexible delivery of classroom learning, the development and sharing of resources and access to specialist expertise. They also allow teachers and students to build local and global communities and connect with other interested students and experts worldwide.

To make sure these initiatives reach their full potential, the Commonwealth should ensure they are supported by high-speed, high-quality NBN services.

Access to high speed internet and the National Broadband Network (NBN)

Access to high speed internet is now regarded as critical for regional, rural and remote communities. Rural communities require access to professional services such as telehealth and online education, and rural businesses require high speed access so they can compete in national and international markets.

The Regional Wellbeing Survey[17] was launched in 2013 to examine the wellbeing of people living in rural and regional areas of Australia. The survey is conducted annually, and measures the subjective wellbeing of people and communities living outside Australia's major cities. It also examines resilience of rural and regional residents and the liveability of their communities.

In 2015 only 37% of rural and regional Australians felt they had good access to high speed internet, while 48% reported they had poor access. When asked about mobile phone coverage, 52% felt they had good coverage, while 31% felt their local coverage was poor. People living in NSW and Queensland reported poorer access to telecommunications compared to those living in other states.[17]

Since this survey was conducted, the National Broadband Network's (NBN) ™Sky Muster™ Satellite has been installed and has improved internet access in rural and remote areas. However, customers continue to report connection problems, ongoing speed issues, drop outs, long down times and long wait times for technician visits.[18]

The Commonwealth should consider efforts to improve NBN performance in regional, rural and remote areas. It could do so by reviewing and responding to the issues reported above, or by directing funding to ensure better service in these areas for rural, regional and remote schools and tertiary institutions.

Initiative: DART Connections Virtual Excursions

DART Connections is an initiative of the NSW Department of Education Distance and Rural Technologies (DART) unit, based in Dubbo. Connections provides video conferencing excursions for public schools and TAFEs. Connections video conferencing excursions bring students and teachers face to face with experts around the globe. Excursions are designed to enrich and supplement curriculum across all stages and key learning areas.

Connections began with HSC marking sessions for teachers and the State Library of NSW. DART entered into a partnership with the State Library, enabling the Connections team to install a videoconference camera at the library's site to become the first 'outside' internet-connected camera allowing schools to tap into its expertise and extensive resources.

Since then the service has grown quickly, being led by NSW regional, rural and remote schools. In 2016 a record 3,000 schools and 96,000 rural and remote students participated in virtual excursions. This large audience has created a viable audience for some of the best museums, galleries, research institutes, scientists, writers, artists, musicians and zoos in the world to invest in compatible technologies and deliver rich and authentic interactive learning experiences directly into classrooms.

Some of the high profile content providers include Questacon, Space Center Houston (NASA Museum), The State Library, Taronga Zoo, Alaska SeaLife Center, National Science Week, Earth Science Week and The Australian Museum.

Theme 6: Entrepreneurship and schools

'This generation of young people will [need to] promote innovation and entrepreneurialism and grow our economy to maintain our standard of living.'

(Phillip Lowe, Deputy Governor of the Reserve Bank of Australia, 2014)

There is an increasing need for young people to develop enterprise skills now to prepare them for the economy of the future, so they can become job creators, not just job seekers, and navigate more complex careers. This is particularly important to young people in regional and remote areas as their entrepreneurship can counter their geographical isolation, maintain the sustainability of their communities and create jobs. Skills such as digital literacy, creativity and innovation, working in teams and communication will be increasingly important. As globalisation of markets continues, jobs will also be increasingly mobile. Education needs to refocus on embedding these types of skills into the curriculum together with strong skills in literacy and numeracy to enable students to keep learning throughout their life.

The NSW Department of Education has commissioned research to explore the strategic implications that advances in technology will have for education. The *Education for a Changing World* project aims to stimulate informed discussion about policies and reforms that need to be implemented to ensure the NSW education system prepares young people successfully for the future.

The project's first discussion paper[19] explores some of the department's thinking about the challenges and opportunities arising from the technological, economic, demographic and social shifts occurring around the world.

The Department has also commissioned a series of essays on the impact of Artificial Intelligence (AI), education and 21st century skills needs written by experts from a range of Australian and international experts.

A key objective of the project is to develop an understanding of the skill mix required for young people to succeed in a rapidly changing world.

More information is available at [Education for a changing world](#).

Theme 7: Improving access – enrolments, clusters, distance education and boarding

National curriculum delivery

NSW has a number of solutions for delivery of the national curriculum in rural schools. Principals and teachers in consultation with students and families decide on the most appropriate mode of education from the options below.

Local school delivery – the local rural school provides the curriculum and has a full range of subjects to enhance senior secondary options in particular.

Adhoc arrangements with a neighbouring school - the Principal establishes links with another school and the student attends this school for a specific subject(s).

Distance Education (DE) - is an equity program for NSW students who are geographically isolated or whose individual circumstances prevent them from regularly attending school. There are six schools of DEs across the state catering for a range of students. All six DE schools in NSW offer single subjects at secondary level. This is usually asynchronous (not in real time).

Entrepreneurship programs

Young Change Agents
Young Change Agents deliver a social entrepreneurship program for 10 -18 year olds, helping youth see problems as opportunities. Social entrepreneurship is the development and implementation of sustainable business models in order to solve social, cultural or environmental issues. The program provides the tools to think creatively, build skills in critical thinking and communication and empower youth to be entrepreneurs, leaders and world changers.

Nine programs have been delivered through Young Change Agents in 2017. Four of these are centred in regional areas. Each is delivered to a minimum of 40 female students plus 3-5 teachers (each program can be made up from 'cluster' schools).

Sydney School of Entrepreneurship (SSE)
The Sydney School of Entrepreneurship (SSE) is an innovative partnership between 12 tertiary institutions (11 NSW universities and TAFE NSW) which was launched with $25 million in seed funding by the NSW Government.

This prestigious school will teach practical entrepreneurial skills to top students from a range of disciplines as part of their degree or TAFE NSW program. SSE will seek out bright, energetic, creative and committed students – up to 1,000 each year - from across Sydney as well as regional and rural areas.

As a platform for NSW's raw talent, budding entrepreneurs and entrepreneurial thinking, SSE will become a powerful hub for participants, teachers, alumni and events to access entrepreneurial training, mentoring and support.

The SSE was formally opened on 16 August 2017. More information is available at SSE.

Access Program - the Access program provides a shared curriculum for senior secondary students. Approximately $400,000 supports the Access Program to assist the studies of senior students in remote schools. The program links 21 core remote schools, arranged in five clusters of four to seven schools, using collaborative technologies to allow small cohorts of Years 11 and 12 students to work together.

The program provides senior students with the opportunity to continue their studies to Year 12 at their local school without the need to travel away from the support of their community. Different subjects are taught by different schools, to a class of students aggregated from all cluster schools. The core Access schools often form partnerships with non-Access schools that have small cohorts of senior students, thereby enhancing their curriculum offerings and building capacity in rural schools.

The programs outlined above require specific funding above the costs of education provision, either in the form of transport subsidies or increasingly, the installation of ICT infrastructure and high speed broadband to facilitate lesson delivery.

School Student Transport Scheme

Accessible and affordable transport plays a critical role in supporting rural and regional students' access to education services. NSW administers a number of programs which provide free or subsidised travel through public and private transport.

The School Student Transport Scheme (SSTS) provides eligible school students with free or subsidised travel on public transport between home and school, on trains, buses, ferries, light rail and long distance coach services. The SSTS covers all primary and secondary students who live more than walking distance from their school. It also covers some TAFE students.

In areas where there is no public transport, eligible NSW residents may receive a subsidy for private vehicles for transporting the student to school. The School Travel Program provides additional transport support to students with a disability who are unable to travel under SSTS.

The SSTS also extends travel subsidies to boarding school students. Eligible boarding school students are provided a pass for daily weekday travel or holiday/weekend travel. This covers travel on NSW TrainLink's train services and coach network, or other long distance coach travel where students live in areas not covered by the NSW TrainLink network. Boarding school students can also travel free of charge on regular school bus services for visits to and from home on weekends or holiday periods, provided there is space available.

Through the Blueprint, the NSW Government has built on transport assistance offered through the SSTS. Notably, it committed additional funding to enable rural and remote preschools to improve access for 'hard to reach' children through outreach initiatives. Depending on the needs of local children, this funding can be used to enable preschool services to provide transportation to children who would otherwise be unable to attend.

Support for disengaged school students

The NSW government, through the *Links to Learning Community Grants Program,* provides funding to NSW based, not-for-profit, non-government community-based organisations and local government authorities to deliver targeted projects to students (Year 6 – Year 11) in government schools who are at risk of disengaging from learning and/or leaving school before completing Year 12.

Support for student access

The NSW Government has committed in the [Regional Development Framework](#) that all people in regional NSW should and will have access to essential services and infrastructure including hospitals, schools, roads, water, police and emergency services. While not all areas will have the same level of investment, the State will make sure that all regions receive essential services to support their size and population, and that this is equivalent or superior to the best services and infrastructure investment in comparable regions throughout Australia.

Case Study: Virtual School: Aurora College

Aurora College, established in 2015 is the state's first virtual school. Students must meet specific criteria, including enrolment in a rural and remote government school as defined by the Ministerial Council on Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA) Geographical Location Classification. Aurora College caters for gifted and talented students with superior academic ability who would otherwise not have the opportunity to attend a selective school due to their location.

The college is partially selective, with classes in English, mathematics and science in Years 7 to 10. Years 7 to 10 students are chosen in the same way as students in all other selective classes in NSW government schools. The college enables these students to remain in their local school and community while providing the opportunity to study subjects which their home school cannot currently offer.

Subjects for Year 11 and Year 12 currently offered include:
- English advanced, English Extension 1 and 2
- Mathematics, mathematics Extension 1 and 2
- Chemistry
- Physics
- Software design and development
- Italian Beginners
- Agriculture
- Economics.

From 2018 Aurora College will offer Korean and Japanese to HSC students, making the key Asian languages more accessible to students in regional and rural NSW.

Students at Aurora College connect with their teachers and classmates in timetabled lessons through a virtual learning environment, which includes web conferencing software and a range of online information, communication and collaboration tools. Teachers and students also have the opportunity to work together at a residential school held twice per year.

Aurora College offers students expanded career options through innovative programs and strengthened partnerships with business, and with scientific, cultural and tertiary education institutions. Mentoring opportunities and master classes are key features of both the online and residential school programs.

Aurora's 2016 cohort comprised 86 male and 88 female students. We estimate that there will be up to 500 students a year enrolled at Aurora within the next five years.

More information is available at Aurora College

Theme 8: Diversity

RAM Funding model

In 2013 NSW signed up to the National Education Reform Agreement (NERA) which was guided by the principle that every child should have access to the best possible education, regardless of where they live, the income of their family or the school they attend.

The additional Commonwealth and State funding secured under the signed NERA has been distributed to NSW government schools through a needs-based funding model, the Resource Allocation Model (RAM). RAM includes base funding per student and loadings for equity student groups, including a location loading, loadings for students from a low socio-economic background, Aboriginal students, students whose language background is not English and students with disability.

Specifically, funds under the Aboriginal equity loading are provided to schools to ensure that Aboriginal student educational outcomes match or better those of the broader student population. In addition these funds may be used to ensure that all teachers are culturally competent and schools culturally responsive.

Location funding is made up of two layers: remoteness and isolation. Remoteness funding is available to schools with a remoteness area classification of outer regional, remote, very remote or migratory based on the ABS Remoteness Structure. Isolation funding is available to all schools except for those with a remoteness area classification of major cities of Australia. The location loading recognises that some isolated schools are disadvantaged because it is more difficult to interact for professional learning. Additional funding is provided to counteract this remoteness.

The equity loading for SES is a funding allocation to support NSW public schools to meet the additional learning needs of students from low SES backgrounds based on the school's Family Occupation and Education Index (FOEI). FOEI is calculated from parental education and occupation information collected from NSW Department of Education student enrolment forms. The loading funds all students in quarter 1 and quarter 2 of the FOEI in every NSW public school. In 2014, approximately 32% of all students in NSW public schools in quarter 1 and quarter 2 of the Department's FOEI are enrolled in rural and remote schools. 55% of the Aboriginal students in NSW public schools also reside in a regional, remote or very remote location. [1]

Appendices 4 and 5 show case studies of how the RAM funding has enabled schools in regional and rural areas to improve the educational outcomes of their students.

Independent school initiative: Support for students with a disability

Often schools in regional, rural and remote areas require additional guidance to support students with disability. For example, there is often not the range of health professionals in isolated areas that there are in cities, and access to collegial networks of expertise is harder.

The Association of Independent Schools NSW consultants supporting the implementation of the NCCD play an important role by sharing strategies and approaches to support schools meet the requirements of the Disability Standards for Education and the Disability Discrimination Act, by providing instructional coaching that is informed by evidence-based practice, and facilitating the collaborative planning process.

This support is appreciated by the regional and rural schools. For example, a school on the North Coast participated in the NCCD workshop delivered at AIS via a hub. The staff from the school in Coffs Harbour were not able to attend the session in Sydney due to costs. Feedback from the 2 participants of this school indicated they found the session invaluable. A subsequent visit to the school by an AIS Consultant for a whole staff professional learning session and practical application of identifying students, determining levels of adjustments and collecting evidence expanded whole school commitment and understanding. This enabled staff to enhance their capacity to work together to plan for adjustments for students with disabilities and consider the students' needs as programs and units of work are developed and written.

Initiative: Aboriginal Language and Culture Nests

An Aboriginal Language and Culture Nest is a local network of communities, bound together by their connection to an Aboriginal language.

Each Nest creates learning pathways for Aboriginal students, teachers and community members. The size, shape and form of the Aboriginal Language and Culture Nests are community driven.

The establishment of the Aboriginal Language and Culture Nests enables Aboriginal people and communities across NSW to reclaim, revitalise and maintain their traditional Aboriginal languages.

They also offer Aboriginal students a new opportunity to consider language teaching as a vocation. In doing so, they recognise and respond to the existing language skills and knowledge of Aboriginal community members.

There are currently five Nests in operation:
- North West Wiradjuri launched on 25 October 2013
- North Gumbaynggirr, launched on 19 February 2014
- Bundjalung, launched on 20 February 2014
- Paakantji, launched on 30 April 2014
- Gamilaraay/Yuwaalaraay/Yuwaalayaay, launched on 2 May 2014.

By the end of 2016, 65 NSW schools and educational facilities were engaged in the Aboriginal Language and Culture Nests, with more than 5,300 students learning an Aboriginal language.

The Aboriginal Language and Culture Nest initiative is being led jointly by the Department of Education and Communities and the Aboriginal Educational Consultative Group (AECG), which is NSW's peak advisory group on Aboriginal Education.

Theme 9: Transitioning beyond school

The NSW tertiary education sector

The tertiary education sector in NSW accounts for a significant proportion of Australia's public and private education providers. In regional, rural and remote areas, higher education institutions – such as universities, and vocational education and training (VET) providers – such as TAFE NSW or private registered training organisations (RTOs), play a critical role in the viability of the region. On top of being major employers, these tertiary education providers develop highly skilled workers for regional areas, produce research into local priority areas and sustain and build social inclusion.

NSW has 11 universities and a range of higher education providers, many of which are in regional areas, or deliver higher education to students in regional areas. NSW also has over 130 TAFE campuses across the State to deliver VET to local communities. Many TAFE campuses are in rural and remote areas such as Bourke, Wilcania and Broken Hill. NSW also provides funding to private providers to deliver training to students in regional and remote areas.

NSW public and private tertiary education providers recognise the barriers rural and remote students face when they transition from school to VET, higher education or work. NSW is piloting a range of pathway strategies and initiatives which will assist in reducing the gap between metropolitan and regional participation in tertiary education. These pathway pilots have been developed in partnership with the Department of Industry and training providers, universities, TAFE NSW and business and industry. Ongoing collaboration, including between business and education providers, will remain vital to addressing the significant challenges in providing tertiary education to regional and rural students.

Further actions will be necessary to support tertiary engagement and attainment in regional, rural and remote NSW. Commonwealth funding remains one critical component. The two different Commonwealth funding models for VET and higher education have resulted in the erosion of public VET participation.[20] A more coherent funding model for national tertiary education could boost confidence and public participation in the system.

Additional funding support, including through scholarships and the extension of Commonwealth Supported Places to non-university public higher education providers, could also boost regional attainment and should be considered by the Commonwealth.

NSW initiatives to address post school transitions for rural students

1. *School to Higher Education Pathway - Tertiary Pathways Project*

The NSW Department of Education is developing a number of innovative pathway models from school to vocational education and training (VET) and higher education in partnership with the NSW Department of Industry and the NSW Skills Board. These models go beyond traditional credit transfer arrangements to develop vocationally focused pathways that incorporate a number of qualifications with appropriate exit points.

Initiative: Tertiary Pathway Projects

Higher Apprenticeship – Construction Management

The first Higher Apprenticeship pilot pathway has been developed in association with four universities and the Master Builders Association of NSW. The Bachelor of Construction Management integrates a pre-apprenticeship, traditional carpentry apprenticeship, Diploma of Project management and a Bachelor of Construction Management. The pathway includes flexible entry and exit points and leads to a Bachelor degree if all stages are successfully completed. The Pathway will be officially launched in September 2017.

Electrical Engineering Degree Apprenticeship Pilot

The electrical engineering degree apprenticeship pilot is currently being developed by the University of Newcastle and TAFE NSW. The pilot will deliver an integrated bachelor degree and apprenticeship program in the field of electrical engineering.

During the five year program, students gain: a Bachelor of Electrical Engineering; a Certificate III qualification in Electrotechnology; and an electrician's licence.

The structure of this pathway can be varied to suit the needs of individual employers. Students concurrently enrol in the Bachelor of Electrical Engineering and the Certificate III either full-time or part-time, allowing flexibility for employment and workplace training activities as part of the apprenticeship.

Aged Care Tertiary Pathway Pilot

This pathway pilot has been developed by the University of Newcastle in partnership with TAFE NSW. Central to this pathway is the creation of an Associate Degree in Integrated Care in Aging. The associate degree is a meaningful, industry focused qualification which prepares graduates for higher level aged care duties and managerial roles

The Associate Degree bridges the gap between Certificate III and IV and bachelor degree qualifications by integrating both vocational and academic pedagogy, and prepares students for higher level study through foundational academic literacy classes tailored to aged care.

2. *School to Higher Education Pathway – Country Universities Centres*

In 2017, the NSW Government provided a Country Universities Centre (CUC) initiative in the form of a $5 million grant to expand Cooma Universities Centre. A further $3 million is payable on achievement of key outcome indicators, including the number of students engaged, industry partnerships and university affiliations established.

The grant will enable at least five additional CUC affiliates/hubs to be established in regional and rural NSW locations in the coming year. This initiative will assist people located in regional and rural NSW to undertake further education by distance or online, through access to 'campus like' facilities in their local area, including study spaces, high-speed internet, video-conferencing, and computer and printing facilities.

Where there is local industry need, it is anticipated that CUC will establish partnerships with business and training providers to ensure that bespoke training is provided by qualified local staff. Local ownership and collaboration through industry partnerships and sponsors is a key strength of the Cooma Universities Centre, whose foundation partners were the Snowy-Hydro Limited and the Snowy-Monaro Regional Council.

It is anticipated that the CUC initiative will reduce the brain drain from rural and regional NSW locations to metropolitan locations, and support rural and regional businesses with local and skilled labour. Commonwealth support to expand the CUC model should therefore be considered as a means of building on these gains.

3. *School to VET pathway – Smart and Skilled*

The Smart and Skilled program provides eligible students with NSW Government-subsidised training in courses on the NSW Skills List, to gain the skills they need to get a job and advance their career. Smart and Skilled commenced on 1 January 2015.

Smart and Skilled provides fee exemptions and concessions for disadvantaged students and those with special needs. These arrangements assist students with a disability, Aboriginal students and Commonwealth welfare recipients. In addition, loadings are paid to approved training providers to offset the higher costs of supporting Aboriginal students, students with disability, the long-term unemployed and students in regional and remote locations.

The NSW Government provides TAFE NSW and Adult and Community Education (ACE) providers with Community Service Obligation' (CSO) funding to deliver training in 'thin markets', including in regional and remote locations.

Table 1: 2017 Smart and Skilled commencements in Remote Areas

ABS Remoteness Area	Commencements for people aged 17-24 years	All commencements	17-24 as a proportion of all commencements
Inner Regional	9,240	20,214	46%
Outer Regional	2,243	5,390	42%
Remote	100	262	38%
Very Remote	24	86	28%
Total for Remote Areas	11,607	25,952	45%

Source: NSW Department of Industry internal data derived from the IVETS database as at 17 July 2017 - Produced by: TSNSW Business Reporting

Note: **ABS Remoteness Area (RA)**
A broad geographical category defined in terms of 'remoteness'- the physical distance of a location from the nearest Urban Centre (access to goods and services) based on population size. There are 5 RA categories, ranging from RA1 Major Cities of Australia to RA5 Very Remote Australia.

4. *School to VET pathway – Regional VET Pathways*

The Regional VET Pathways program aims to assist disengaged young people aged 15-19 years to access and navigate pathways into education, employment or training, including through apprenticeships and traineeships.

Training Service NSW pays service providers to procure services for young people including career mentoring, planning, employment, brokering and transition advice.

The program supports an estimated 1,000 young people each year to find pathways into education, employment or training. The program is currently operational in areas with high youth unemployment such as Richmond-Tweed, mid North Coast, Central West, New England and North West, and the Australian Capital Territory.

5. *School to VET pathway - flexible VET delivery*

NSW through TAFE NSW and private RTOs are providing greater access to vocational and tertiary education for students living in regional, rural and remote areas. Enhancements to the learning environment and an increased range of digital courses are progressively being rolled out across the State. For vocational training, a number of innovative approaches to deliver work-based learning to these students have also been utilised to ensure they can complete their apprenticeships/traineeships and are job-ready. These include mobile training units designed to industry standards with simulated workplace environments.

For students still in schools, NSW offers VET programs for secondary students, including school based apprenticeships and traineeships. These courses are available for study as part of Stage 5 or the Higher School Certificate. These courses are delivered by schools, TAFE NSW or private RTOs and most lead to nationally recognised Australian Qualification Framework qualifications. For an example of a regional and rural, non-government school in NSW offering school-based VET courses see Appendix 6.

Initiative: Connected Learning Centres

As part of the TAFE NSW commitment to provide greater access to students living in regional, rural and remote areas, Connected Learning Centres (CLCs) are being established in 12 locations throughout regional NSW where TAFE NSW does not currently have a presence or where outdated facilities are not meeting the needs of students, employers and local communities.

CLCs will provide new active, adaptive, flexible, multi-purpose and digitally enabled learning environments that enhance TAFE NSW's capability to provide high-quality training and learning experiences and support services for all, particularly students in regional, rural and remote areas. CLCs will enhance TAFE NSW's capability to deliver practical learning and will be supported by mobile training units, simulation and virtual reality experiences. CLCs will provide better access to teachers both on and off site, and the skills students need for jobs in regional NSW.

CLCs will link with local industries to develop courses and specialist facilities that support the local community and economy. They will also give young people in regional, rural and remote areas the opportunity to train and get a job without having to relocate to cities or travel long distances to larger regional centres.

6. *School to VET pathway - Elsa Dixon Aboriginal Employment Program (ED-AEP)*

The ED-AEP provides funding to organisations to support Aboriginal education, employment and training by subsidising the salary, development and support costs of Aboriginal employees in a public service agency or local council; funding innovative community projects; and supporting work experience for aboriginal students in their final year of a degree or post degree course.

The program has four elements including the School-based Traineeship Element which provides grants to support school-based traineeships in NSW public service agencies or local government authorities. Since 2012-13 the program has funded over 550 School-Based Traineeships.

Case study

In 2013, the ED-AEP provided $166,827 to enable 20 Aboriginal students in the New England region undertake a Certificate III in Education Support whilst completing their HSC. This helped Aboriginal young people transition from school into further education, training or employment. The program participants received individualised training in Literacy and Numeracy, disabilities education, and Aboriginal education, as well as gained valuable experience by working in their local primary schools as teaching assistants. The students also received mentoring through the Training Services NSW program – The Way Ahead for Aboriginal People.

7. *School to VET and Higher Education Pathway - the Agribusiness Careers and Professions (AGCAP) Program*

The Agribusiness Careers and Professions (AGCAP) program aims to increase engagement in agriculture careers and address the unsustainable loss of quality young people from rural areas. The program was developed through a unique collaboration between the NSW Department of Education, the Make it Work Foundation (Narrabri Chamber of Commerce), the University of New England and Training Services NSW.

AGCAP students undertake a School Based Apprenticeship or Traineeship (SBAT) in a vocation that supports the agribusiness sector, such as agriculture or meat processing. In 2018, plans are in place to expand into beekeeping. The program allows students to complete a nationally recognised qualification which contributes to the NSW Higher School Certificate, whilst employed with a local agricultural business.

For students who undertake the Certificate II in Agriculture, they are trained by their local school in partnership with Tocal College, another training provider. Tocal College delivers competencies that cannot be offered by schools but are of high value to modern agricultural enterprises. These competencies are delivered in a block release format referred to as enrichment tours.

Post school, students can continue their training into higher level qualifications such as a Diploma/Advanced Diploma in Agriculture delivered by Tocal College. A partnership between schools, Tocal College and the University on New England has resulted in the development of a pathway that can see students who have completed the Diploma/Advanced Diploma earn up to 50% credit in the Bachelor of Agrifood Systems offered by the university. This means that students can complete their degree more quickly and have a lower level of debt at the end of their university course.

NSW also provides supporting programs for disengaged and disadvantaged young people to increase their training opportunities. Examples include:

- **Youth Engagement Strategy**: TAFE NSW's developed pilot program helps students at risk of disengagement develop individual learning plans, engage in vocational taster courses and receive ongoing mentoring, counselling and career advice.
- **Extra funding for the Adult and Community Education Colleges** in remote areas such as Narrabri/Moree, Guyra, Broken Hill, Dubbo and Griffith to support the delivery of special training and support services.
- **Opportunity Hubs Program** in Upper Hunter, Dubbo, Tamworth and Campbelltown: this NSW-funded program links young Aboriginal people to local services and their communities to provide them with personalised, supported pathways through school and into further education and long term employment. The Program was established in response to feedback from Aboriginal communities that emphasised the need to support Aboriginal young people in their transition from school into tertiary education, employment or training. Opportunity Hub service providers are responsible for coordinating and brokering:
  o building career aspirations and strengthening understandings of career pathways for Aboriginal students in Years 5 to 8
  o working with schools to deliver personalised career and transition planning for Aboriginal students in Years 9 to 12
  o engaging the local Aboriginal community and parents in support of the work of Opportunity Hubs
  o linking key local education and training providers and youth services into the Hub and coordinating student pathways in accord with their career plans
  o engaging local employers and industry to work with the Hub to assist the delivery of industry grounded career advice, work experience and employment opportunities
  o delivering personalised support services for students at serious risk of disengagement from education and training
  o arranging wrap-around support from relevant agencies and the community as required.
- **Transition centres for disengaged students**: to target students who are chronic non-attenders and students transitioning back to school from Juvenile Justice. Centres have been developed at Coonamble High and Taree High. Each centre utilises the expertise and experience of staff from universities, TAFE and industry. Doing so helps engage students who might be at risk of disengaging with their education. Each centre adapts to local conditions and student needs, addressing challenges for students in a way that is innovative and relevant.

Rural and regional school infrastructure investment

In the NSW Budget 2017/18, the Government invested $4.2 billion into new and ongoing government school capital works projects to be delivered over the next four years. This investment is focused on meeting growth across NSW. As part of this investment, around 35% of projects currently underway or due for commencement are planned for rural/regional growth areas in NSW. A large-scale Information and communication technology (ICT) project that will improve wireless access for NSW Regional Public Schools is also planned.

According to School Infrastructure NSW, student enrolments in NSW Government schools are projected to grow by 21 percent, or 200,000 students, to 2036. Of the 92 high priority school planning areas in NSW 41 are in the regions and detailed planning will be undertaken over the next two years.

The NSW Department of Education has recently entered into a number of Memorandums of Understanding with Local Councils in regional areas across the state to develop a joint use project using schools as community hubs. These range in services according to local community needs. Early examples are the Ballina Regional Basketball Stadium (to be built on school lands as a joint use) and The Dubbo Networked Specialist School.

The 2017-18 NSW State Budget also provides capital funding for non-government schools. In 2015-16 the Government provided an additional $50 million dollars under the *Building Grants Assistance Scheme* to fund new classrooms and facilities in non-government schools. Projects are assessed and ranked, with preference given primarily on the basis of the relative educational disadvantage of the student population of the school. The independent and Catholic school sectors also expect to see a significant increase in student enrolments in coming years and this funding will be directed towards low and medium fee and independent and Catholic schools to fund new class rooms and facilities.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Statistics on NSW education in regional, rural and remote areas

Groups of ASGS Statistical Area 4 (SA4) boundaries in New South Wales have been combined into 11 groups for reporting and publication of NSW Department of Education data. The groups with coverage areas are provided in the table below.

Name of SA4 Groupings	SA4 Name
Sydney-North	» Sydney - North Sydney and Hornsby, » Sydney - Northern Beaches, » Sydney - Ryde
Sydney-Inner	» Sydney - City and Inner South, » Sydney - Eastern Suburbs, » Sydney - Inner West
Sydney-South	» Sydney - Inner South West, » Sydney - Sutherland
Sydney-South West	» Sydney - Outer South West, » Sydney - South West
Sydney-West	» Sydney - Blacktown, » Sydney - Parramatta
Sydney-North West	» Sydney - Baulkham Hills and Hawkesbury, » Sydney - Outer West and Blue Mountains
North East NSW	» Coffs Harbour - Grafton, » Mid North Coast, » Richmond - Tweed
North West NSW	» Hunter Valley exc Newcastle, » Far West and Orana, » New England and North West
South West NSW	» Central West, » Murray, » Riverina
South East NSW	» Capital Region, » Illawarra, » Southern Highlands and Shoalhaven
Central Coast, Newcastle	» Central Coast, » Newcastle and » Lake Macquarie

Metropolitan SA4 groupings

Regional, rural and remote SA4 groupings

Table 1 shows the breakdown of NSW government schools by area. There are 1,285 schools in regional, rural and remote NSW.

Table 1: NSW government schools by ABS remoteness and SA4 groupings, mid-year 2016

SA4 Groupings	Major Cities	Inner Regional	Outer Regional	Remote	Very Remote	Total
Sydney-North	144	2				146
Sydney-Inner	130					130
Sydney-South	170	3				173
Sydney-South West	152	16				168
Sydney-West	165					165
Sydney-North West	115	27	1			143
Sydney Total	**876**	**48**	**1**			**925**
North East NSW	16	201	50		1	268
North West NSW	32	92	134	27	14	299
South West NSW		141	134	9		284
South East NSW	89	108	40			237
Central Coast, Newcastle	190	6				196
Regional Total	**327**	**548**	**358**	**36**	**16**	**1,285**
NSW	**1,203**	**596**	**359**	**36**	**16**	**2,210**

Source: Schools and Students: 2016 Statistical Bulletin, CESE

Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) remoteness category and SA4 groupings. SA4 groupings use the new ABS Australian Statistical Geography Standard (ASGS). Groups of ASGS Statistical Area 4 (SA4) boundaries in NSW have been combined into 11 groups for reporting and publication of NSW Department of Education data

Table 2: Enrolments (FTE) in distance education by year of schooling, mid-year 2016

Primary	Boys	Girls	Total
Kindergarten	51	33	84
Year 1	59	61	120
Year 2	64	62	126
Year 3	62	71	133
Year 4	70	65	135
Year 5	60	52	112
Year 6	73	64	137
Primary Support	5	5	10
Total Primary	**444**	**413**	**857**

Secondary	Boys	Girls	Total
Year 7	47	49	96
Year 8	106	85	191
Year 9	163	189	352
Year 10	289	361	650
Year 11	135.4	202.5	337.9
Year 12	80.0	131.8	211.8
Secondary Support	20	16	36
Total Secondary	**840.4**	**1,034.3**	**1,874.7**

	Boys	Girls	Total
Total All Students	**1,284.4**	**1,447.3**	**2,731.7**

Source: Schools and Students: 2016 Statistical Bulletin, CESE

Note: Distance education centres (DECs) provide schooling for students who are isolated or whose special circumstances prevent them from attending a regular school. They operate either as separate schools or as units within regular primary, central and high schools. Students enrolled in DECs are counted in their corresponding years of schooling. In conjunction with the NSW School of Languages and Aurora College, DECs also provide individual subject enrolment, widening study opportunities for secondary students. These students are enrolled and counted at their home schools.

Appendix 2: Connected Communities Strategy

The 15 Connected Community schools are located in the communities of Boggabilla, Bourke, Brewarrina, Coonamble, Menindee, Moree, Tamworth, Taree, Toomelah, Walgett and Wilcannia.

The Strategy positions schools as service hubs that facilitate a range of services from birth, through school, to further training and employment. Connected Communities schools work in partnership with Aboriginal leaders in the local community to help improve education outcomes for young Aboriginal people.

The Strategy is informed by advice from the NSW Aboriginal Education Consultative Group Inc., and a broad consultation process with key stakeholders, underpinned by progressive educational research that highlights the value of place-based approaches to education.

In addition to a strong focus on teaching and learning, the Connected Communities strategy has a number of key features, which emphasise the focus on the 'whole' student in their community, including:

- cultural awareness training (Connecting to Country) delivered locally for all staff
- teaching Aboriginal language and culture
- an Executive Principal position, with unprecedented authority to introduce appropriate change
- additional school executive position – Leader: Community Engagement, to act as a link between the school and the community
- early years focus through to further learning and employment
- personalised learning pathways for all students
- schools as a hub for service delivery
- early intervention and prevention focus
- partnership and co-leadership with the Aboriginal Community
- partnership with a University and a TAFE Institute to assist with post-school options.

Schools as Service Hubs

A Framework has been developed for Connected Communities schools to facilitate service access for students, including local Service Level Agreements to be signed off where appropriate with key agencies.

The goal is to formalise and promote local interagency cooperation and collaboration to support students and to consolidate the role of government departments and to enhance a more comprehensive place-based interagency response.

The Healing and Wellbeing Model

In 2014 the government allocated $8 million over four years to the Connected Communities Healing and Wellbeing Model which supports students, staff and the community.

The goal is to provide:

- **support and assistance in addressing issues of historic trauma and oppression** for Aboriginal students, their families and their Communities. To assist, the NSW Department of Education has developed targeted recruitment strategies and incentive packages for school counsellors and accredited school psychologists.
- **professional training and support to school staff in regards to trauma-related instances.** This includes the piloting of a dedicated Employee Assistance telephone support service (EAP)

for staff at Connected Communities schools and a small number of targeted schools with specific needs.

- **local recruitment strategies** which have resulted in increased support staff in all 15 schools to support student wellbeing.
- **the opportunity for local Aboriginal community members to broaden their knowledge and skill base** in youth work so as to enable them to assist students to maximise their educational experience. This has resulted in a collaboration between TAFE NSW Western and Connected Communities schools to enrol 21 community members in Certificate IV in Youth Work.

The Strategy is being evaluated by CESE, which released its Interim Evaluation Report in February 2016.

The report identified aspects of the Strategy that are going well:

- strengthened school leadership with the appointment of Executive Principals
- appointment of Local School Reference Groups comprising community members to engage in co-decision making with the Executive at all schools
- increased focus on local Aboriginal language and culture in schools, enhancing students' identify and wellbeing
- increased parental and community engagement at primary schools
- expanded transition to school and early years programs
- positive delivery and uptake of cultural awareness training to staff

The report also identified the impact of the extensive capital works programs, resulting not only in physical improvements to the schools, but academic engagement which reflects and responds to 21st century teaching and learning.

CESE continues to monitor the Strategy, and will release a final evaluation report in June 2018.

From annual evaluation monitoring reports, a snapshot of gains from 2009-2015 include:

- Aboriginal student attendance rates across Connected Communities primary schools as a group have increased[c].
- The mean value-added NAPLAN score across Connected Communities schools as a group has steadily increased for Years 3 to 5[d].
- From the NSW Department of Education annual *Tell Them From Me* surveys in 2015 and 2016, approximately three-quarters of Year 7 to 10 Aboriginal students have indicated they plan to finish Year 12 and enter further education or training[e].
- The 2016 '*Tell them from me'* survey has shown that four out of five secondary students feel good about their culture at school – significantly higher than secondary students not at Connected Communities schools.

---

[c] Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation: *Connected Communities Monitoring Report – 2016 (2009 -2015)*
[d] Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation: *Connected Communities Monitoring Report – 2016 (2009 -2015)*
[e] Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation: *Connected Communities Monitoring Report – 2017 (2009 -2016)*

Case Study: Bourke High School & Desert Pea Media - B-Town Warrior Project

Bourke High School is situated in the far west of New South Wales and has a population of approximately 3000 people. Much of the Aboriginal community in Bourke experience high levels of disadvantage. On any school day, students may be facing family-related issues, socio-economic challenges, a series of school changes, mental health issues and/or long-term community vulnerability.

Connected Community – Bourke High School

Connected Communities is an innovative strategy that is intended to drive educational outcomes for Aboriginal children and young people through linking school education to other related services, such as health, early childhood education and care, and vocational education and training. Connected Communities is being implemented in 15 schools in some of the most complex and vulnerable communities in NSW including Bourke High School.

Each Connected Communities school has established a new position of Leader, Community Engagement a position that provides a vital conduit between the school and the community. The Leader works closely with the school executive and Local School Reference Group to identify opportunities, both to bring the community into the school and to take the school out to the community. They think creatively and flexibly about issues confronting students within a cultural context.

For example, when new staff arrive at the school, many Leaders help with their induction by taking them into community to meet with Elders, parents and carers, introducing them to their new environment and filling them in on language, culture and issues for local Aboriginal people.

Aboriginal students at Bourke High School represent around 72% of the 148 total student population. Attendance and engagement is a priority for school and community. The school employs a variety of formal and school-based strategies to improve engagement and connections to school for students and their families.

Desert Pea Media

One way in which Bourke High is addressing attendance and engagement is through providing students with the opportunity to tell their stories through music. The school has partnered with Desert Pea Media, an Aboriginal company that works with community to produce music that reflects the stories of young Aboriginal people from across Australia. Dessert Pea works with students to help them write, record, produce and then launch songs that express their views, aspirations and experience.

People of the Red Sunset

Led by the Leader Community Engagement, Elders and community members from the Nyaampa, Wonkamurra, Murrawarri and Paakantji people, worked with students and Dessert Pea media to produce 'People of The Red Sunset' a rap song and film clip. Elders provided advice and support on cultural protocols as well as endorsing the song's content for the video production.

The project involved a series of Yarning Circles over 2 days with Aboriginal students, local Elders and community members. The Yarning Circles provided participants with an opportunity to discuss the real issues affecting students, and to think about how to create positive changes for each other and the Bourke community. These discussions were the basis for the song that the students created.

Launched at a community event and viewed over 250,000 times on the internet and played on Rage, MTV and Triple J, it was a significant accomplishment for students.

Executive Principal Andrew Ryder says: 'This was an incredible team effort. I could see our students connecting with language, comprehension and reading like they hadn't done before. It linked learning and culture in a way that students loved. I watched students with attendance issues turning up at school day after day to get back into their songs'.

The program has presented new pathways for talented Aboriginal students to pursue future goals in film and media production. Teachers commented that they saw the program making a significant impact on student attendance, student engagement and a reduction in antisocial behaviour. Elders and the community talked about how much better they understood the school.

Overall, the school executive says the project has increased Aboriginal students' self-esteem and self confidence in their own identity and culture. The group that the students formed for the project - the B-Town Warriors are still a local group, and the processes they use to write songs continues to make an impact on the self-esteem and self-confidence of these students, the Bourke community and the wider Bourke High School student cohort.

Next Steps

The confidence students gained from this experience has led to other opportunities and many of the students completed a workshop with Indigenous Digital Excellence's (IDX) 'Flint Program' working with cutting edge technology, providing them with a glimpse of the world and some of the industries they may one day move into.

The Leader Community Engagement says: 'This song and the creativity of the work we did with Desert Pea Media are examples of what I like about Connected Communities: using creativity to engage students in learning, flexible approaches, responsiveness, all mixed with that overlay of culture and local community – the smiles on everyone's faces tell me that we're doing okay. '

The hyperlinks for the YouTube Videos of B-Town Warrior are:

[B-Town Warriors - 'People of the Red Sunset'](#)

Appendix 3: The Forbes Wellness Hub – a case study in improving direct access to wellbeing services in a rural high school.

An identified need

The Forbes Wellness Hub was born of a desire from the executive team at Forbes High School in Central West NSW to improve their ability to respond to the needs of their students and families. The principal and deputy principal felt the need for support around mental health and access to specialist services was beyond their capacity as a school, but the trust and relationships the school had with its community was a feature they could leverage into action.

The school made contact with their Networked Specialist Centre Facilitator who worked with the school social worker and began to approach service providers from other NSW government and non-government agencies to discuss how they could address this gap.

After a series of discussions, meetings and surveys, the school made this offer: come and deliver your service from our school either one day a week, a fortnight or monthly in a space the school would provide. The dedicated space would have Wi-Fi, a kitchen and power and would be refurbished to be inviting and open to Forbes families. There would be one condition: that the services would not let the students down – they would turn up regularly and agree to enter into the project with a spirit of collaboration.

Taking the first step

In Term 1 2016 a 'soft launch' began with nine providers, attending four days a week. The school refurbished the demountable building that had been identified as being accessible and with the right layout. The Principal used his school Resource Allocation Model funding to create a Head Teacher Wellbeing position in the school to oversee the process. The Head Teacher Wellbeing, with the school's social worker, formed a student wellbeing advisory group.

This group met regularly to identify student wellbeing needs, and to run a competition to design a logo for the Hub. Key partners began to see students from the Hub. The Women's Health Nurse at Forbes Community Health was an early champion and drove for a connection to local health services. Her feeling was that young women in Forbes needed the connection and relationships with health workers to develop help-seeking behaviour. She was surprised in how her availability at the school improved attendance at appointments and how her day filled with both scheduled appointments and 'drop-ins'.

The reputation of the Hub began to spread throughout the community. The school began including the Wellbeing Hub in their school plan and procedures.

More service providers expressed interest, and found themselves part of the weekly schedule of provision. In Term 3 of 2016 ten providers offered services on site every day of the week, offering:

- Uniting 'Youth Hope' youth mentoring and counselling,
- CentaCare Family Mental Support and CentaCare Homelessness Service,
- Women's Health, Sexual Health, Drug and Alcohol Counselling and Smoking Cessation Program from Forbes Community Health
- Yoorana Gunya – Aboriginal family relationship counselling
- CareWest 'Ability Links' and Linker (social inclusion) services.
- Binaal Billa Family Violence Prevention Service

These services joined the schools existing school counselling service and Aboriginal education team in the Hub. The team reported one of the most professionally satisfying aspects of this initiative was the collegial spirit and collaboration that developed as the diverse team came to know each other and the nature of their work. The team developed a 'wrapround team' approach, ensuring the students and families they met had access to the right service at the right time, with appropriate follow up.

During Term 3 of 2016, a third of Forbes High School students accessed the Forbes Wellness Hub. One of the main aims – to normalise help seeking behaviour – especially around mental health – had been met. Conversations around wellbeing are now an everyday occurrence among staff and students.

The Forbes Wellness Hub launched officially in Term 4 of 2016, after a flurry of painting, new signage and landscaping. The Forbes community, including local businesses, contributed to the effort, seeing the Hub as something where they could see the value of their support. Schools and services from across the state attended to hear how the Hub came into being, talk to the participants and see the space for themselves. Many went away determined to begin their own journey of improving access to wellbeing for their own communities.

The Forbes Wellness Hub will continue to grow and adapt to meet the needs of the local community.

Appendix 4: Coonamble Public School RAM Case Study

Note: Case studies in appendices 4 and 5 only reflect the first two years of the NSW Department of Education's Resource Allocation Model funding in Coonamble Public School and Anson Street School for Special Purposes. 2016 and 2017 RAM funding is not included.

SCHOOL DETAILS	
School Name	Coonamble Public School
Principal Network	Connected Communities

SCHOOL SPECIFICS	
Number of Students	240
Additional Information	92% of students are Aboriginal
Current School FOEI	195
Quarter 1 Students	185
Quarter 2 Students	43
School Context Information	We have developed three ClassMovies (click and search by Coonamble PS): • Morning Activities at Coonamble PS • Shopfront at Coonamble PS • Stage 3 at Coonamble PS.

STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS	
The following three strategic directions for our school plan 2015-2017 were determined through consultation with the school's Connected Communities Reference Group, Community Group consultations i.e. AECG and P&C, staff collaborations and executive support.	
Strategic Direction 1	Learning
Strategic Direction 2	Wellbeing
Strategic Direction 3	Engagement
Name of Reform/s	Our strategic directions incorporate and reflect the following reforms: Local Schools, Local Decisions and Great Teaching, Inspired Learning.

RAM Equity Funding

OPPORTUNITIES PROVIDED	
RAM equity funding has provided the opportunity to:	
Key initiative 1	Employ additional teaching staff
Key initiative 2	Employ a team of cultural knowledge holders
Key initiative 3	Build on the resilience and wellbeing of staff and students

EQUITY FUNDING 2015

Equity loading for Socio-economic Background	$495,606
Equity loading for Aboriginal Background	$535,211
Equity loading for English Language Proficiency	$NA
Equity loading for Low Level Adjustment for Disability	$196,569
Total equity funding for 2015	**$1,227,386**

STAFFING

The total staff funding allocation includes full time staff in addition to utilising flexible funding for any additional staff	3.8
The percentage of our equity funding utilised to engage additional staff to support teaching and learning	90%
Number of additional staff engaged and their positions	1.0 FTE Deputy Principal 1.0 FTE Music Teacher 1.0 FTE School Psychologist 1.0 FTE Shopfront Manager 1.0 FTE Special Education Teacher 1.0 FTE Special Education SLSO 4.5 FTE Classroom Teachers 0.8 FTE Occupational Therapy (OT) Aide 0.5 FTE Language Teacher 0.5 FTE Attendance Officer 1.0 FTE Cultural Mentor 2.0 FTE Aboriginal Youth Mentors 0.4 FTE Front Office Support

OUTCOMES

What are we doing with our equity funding?
We use our RAM equity funding to: - focus on cultural learning and experiences with the introduction of a Cultural Mentor, Cultural curriculum and Gamilaraay Language tutor and program   - engage additional teachers to reduce class sizes and increase face to face teacher time for students across the school   - engage Music and PDHPE Specialists to provide a wide variety of sporting and musical experiences for all students on a weekly basis.   - engage a Psychologist and an OT Aide who work closely with the inter-agencies of Coonamble to provide a strong level of physical and emotional support for all students   - engage two Aboriginal Youth Mentors who provide role models and support for students requiring additional support in the classroom and playground   - provide all executive and aspiring executive with one on one leadership development consultancy support from highly effective retired principals to ensure school succession planning and continuity   - fund a Shopfront in the CBD which provides a safe and engaging environment for community to engage with the school in a culturally safe and convenient location.

What changes/improvements is this making to teaching and learning?

All students are fully engaged in Gamilaraay Language learning. For instance, all classroom greetings and assemblies contain Gamilaraay language. Seven staff have undertaken a Certificate 1 Gamilaraay Course at TAFE and 2 have completed a Certificate 2. All classes have an intensive five week Cultural Curriculum implemented by a local Elder.

Students receive weekly music lessons and individual tuition. Over 90 students currently attend a specialist musical instrument session. The school has started up small bands and choirs. Weekly Assembly performances take place led by our Music teacher. The school runs a morning and after school Gym for students and community. Students are highly engaged in Music and Fitness activities.

Our school Psychologist is working with individual students and families on grief, trauma and separation issues. Students are developing coping strategies that they can apply to the classroom environment. Our OT Aide works closely with case referrals from Royal Far West[1] (RFW) by supporting ongoing therapy after initial contact with RFW.

Aboriginal youth mentors work closely with students who require additional support. Students benefit from a wider range of playground sporting activities.

All school executive and seven aspiring leaders have worked extensively with Leadership consultants to develop their knowledge and skills to complete their roles more effectively. These sessions have helped leaders develop a more collaborative approach to leadership.

Our Shopfront has raised the engagement levels of students and community. Workshops in cultural knowledge and practical arts are undertaken at the Shopfront.

What outcomes is this delivering/expected to deliver for students?

As a result of these initiatives we can report:

- a reduction in partial absences with more students arriving at school on time
- an increase in the number of explanations received for absences – up to 45%
- improvements in individual family attendance targets that are supported with rewards programs. For example, the attendance rate for two sisters has doubled - up from 40% to 80%
- that NAPLAN scores in writing demonstrate strong growth across Years 3 and 5
- that school survey results show 90% of children are fully engaged in the Gamilaraay Language program and 87% of children wanting more lessons per week
- 51% of all children are currently engaged in musical instrument tuition
- 30% of children across the school have had a session with the school psychologist with 95% of staffing voting the Psychologist program the most effective use of equity funds
- 655 of all staff have had individual coaching sessions with leadership consultants to ensure effective leadership succession planning
- the school Shopfront continues to attract over 500 clients per term. Many of these are parents or grandparents of children at school whilst others come from a variety of backgrounds within the community thus strengthening the perceptions of the school as a centre for community development.

Appendix 5: Anson Street SSP RAM Case Study

SCHOOL SPECIFICS	
Number of Students	Variable. Approximately 6.8% of our enrolments are Aboriginal.
Additional Information	Anson Street School caters for students from Kindergarten to Year 12 who are diagnosed with additional needs such as moderate and severe physical and intellectual disabilities, students on the autism spectrum and students who have mental health needs. Students access the specialised support of our school through an Access Request and a Disability Confirmation from the School Counsellor.
Current School FOEI	137
Quarter 1 Students	43
Quarter 2 Students	21
School Context Information	Our school includes the Orange Learning Centre that provides targeted support to students' local schools in the Orange area to re-engage them with their home schools.

STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS	
The following three strategic directions for our school plan 2015-2017 were determined after an analysis of data, an evaluation of the effectiveness of programs and initiatives and a survey of our families and staff to establish the school community's priorities.	
Strategic Direction 1	Exceptional Opportunities
Strategic Direction 2	Quality Teaching and Leadership
Strategic Direction 3	Engaging with the Community

EQUITY FUNDING 2015	
Equity loading for Socio-economic Background	$62,055

EQUITY FUNDING 2015	
Equity loading for Aboriginal Background	$11,771
Equity loading for English Language Proficiency	$N/A
Equity loading for Low Level Adjustment for Disability	$N/A
Total equity funding for 2015	$73,826

OUTCOMES

What are we doing with our equity funding?

We are implementing the following programs:

- Resources for students for teaching and learning activities, such as the Language, Learning and Literacy (L3) program in which all junior staff have been trained. There have been some great results of students working towards and achieving their individual outcomes through the assessment process at the start of the program, the mid-year evaluation and the end of year final assessment. There has been an increase in student engagement as identified through teacher observations.
- Marine studies - during Terms 1 and 4 students participate in a weekly sailing program. We engage two additional teaching staff to ensure that safety requirements are met. The sailing program engages students in an exceptional outdoors activity and gives them knowledge of water craft and water safety.
- Equity funding has allowed us to increase the time our Job Coach has to support students transitioning to work or to community participation groups. Our students in Years 11 and 12 need some extra time and support throughout the school year to try various job placements. By increasing the time our Job Coach has with the students, there is an increased opportunity for students to try a variety of workplaces or post-school options during their transition years to find what is available and what support would work best when they finish school. This has resulted in some students being engaged in paid work towards the end of their schooling or having engaged with employers for post-school positions.
- During Term 4, the school has funded an Aboriginal support worker to assist in the delivery of Aboriginal education and provide advice on events to increase our engagement with the local Aboriginal people and community. Our main aim is to support the engagement of students, staff, families and community to have a sense of belonging when at our school.
- Subsidised excursions for external venues including sporting events and representation, with the aim that all students have an opportunity to attend. Student participation assists in increasing engagement and allows students to try out new sports regardless of a family's financial situation.
- Subsidised incursions for visiting groups including Musica Viva and the Life Education Van helps to support outcomes in student learning, including Personal Development, Health and Physical Education as well as music as therapy.

What outcomes is this delivering/expected to deliver for students?

Our physiotherapist and speech therapist enhance the development of specific learning goals and plans for individual students. The physiotherapist works with students who have high support needs and assists them with various movements and positioning in the classroom and during spa therapy sessions as part of the students' individual education plans. The speech therapist works with either individual or groups of students based on assessments with students being referred during planning meetings. The speech and physiotherapists then work with the class staff to modify and adjust individual plans throughout the year.

Having an extra SLSO in classrooms during identified times, and for identified needs of individual students, helps to support student learning and social skills both in the classroom and the playground. Once improvement is evident in the student's developing skills the SLSO is slowly withdrawn to work with other students. Staff feel supported in their work and are able to focus on whole class teaching and management. An additional person in the room also assists with more one-to-one time with students.

How we are using our equity funding to engage our community

Our school has a strong partnership with the local community. This is maintained by continued positive rapport through invitations to and interactions with local business for school events, such as the art show, and through participation during local events. The Annual Art on Anson show is one way that we have continued to foster these partnerships and the use of RAM funding has assisted in this process. This initiative allows for our students and local businesses to foster constructive relationships, some of which lead to employment opportunities.

Through our Horticulture Program, students propagate plants for Cadia Valley Mines for their regeneration project. This is an ongoing project with positive relationships building between local contractors and the school which enhance community engagement.

Appendix 6: St Paul's College Walla Walla

A number of regional and rural independent schools in NSW offer school-based Vocational Education and Training (VET) courses. St Paul's College Walla Walla is a Year 7-12 co-educational boarding school located just outside Albury in regional NSW.

For several years, the College has offered two VET courses and recently expanded their program to offer four VET courses and introduced school-based traineeships. St Paul's College has seen a growth in VET enrolments from 39 students in 2014 to 55 students in 2017. The expansion of the College's VET offerings and the growth in enrolments has been supported by the Association of Independent Schools of New South Wales (AISNSW) Registered Training Organisation (RTO). The VET courses and school-based traineeships offered by the College provide students with meaningful opportunities to acquire skills which they can take into their post-school lives, and be exposed to a range of industries and professions. The broader community is also strengthened by the VET program of the College, as offerings take into account local industry needs, and ties between the school and local businesses are strengthened through the school-based traineeship program. As a result of demand from students and the local community, the College has recently started offering Information and Digital Technology and Sport and Recreation courses to students. This expansion has been made possible by the government funding of training for the teachers of these courses and funding support for the AISNSW RTO.

Students also contribute directly to the vitality of the community through the VET programs. For example: Hospitality (Certificate II) students cater for weddings and other functions on the school grounds using the commercial kitchen and catering facilities; and students undertaking the Agriculture (Certificate II) program 'show' cattle at regional shows and the Sydney Royal Easter Show. Engaging in authentic industry experiences supports students to build their aspirations, and entrepreneurial skills.

References

1. Rural and Remote Education. A Blueprint for action. NSW Department of Education. November 2013 https://www.det.nsw.edu.au/media/downloads/about-us/our-reforms/rural-and-remote-education/randr-blueprint.pdf (accessed 18 Aug 2017).
2. Making it happen in the regions: Regional Development Framework. NSW Department of Industry. https://www.industry.nsw.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0018/93222/regional-development-framework.pdf (accessed 18 Aug 2017).
3. Schools and Students: 2016 Statistical Bulletin. Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation. 2016. https://data.cese.nsw.gov.au/data/dataset/b56c27e9-b605-34b6-906a-e6965ddb17ae/resource/bd641b8d-f9b6-46fa-880e e0d7e006850a/download/2016statisticalbulletin.pdf (accessed 18 Aug 2017).
4. Rural and remote education: Literature review. Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation. 2016. https://www.cese.nsw.gov.au/images/stories/PDF/RuralandRemoteEducation_literatureReview.pdf (accessed 18 Aug 2017).
5. 2016 My School data
6. The Rural and Remote Education Interim monitoring and evaluation report. Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation. December 2016 https://www.cese.nsw.gov.au/publications-filter/the-rural-and-remote-education-blueprint-interim-monitoring-and-evaluation-report (accessed 22 Aug 2017)
7. Cooper, G., Baglin, J., & Strathdee, R. (2017). Access to higher education: Does distance impact students' intentions to attend university? National Centre for Student Equity in Higher Education (NCSEHE), Perth: Curtin University.
8. Submission to the Review of HEPPP. Universities Australia. September 2016.
9. CESE data on file.
10. Boylan, C. R. (2004, November). Putting rural into preservice teacher education. Paper presented at the Australian Association for Research in Education conference, Melbourne, Victoria.
11. Hudson, P., & Hudson, S. (2008). Changing preservice teachers' attitudes for teaching in rural schools. Australian Journal of Teacher Education, 33(4), 67-77.
12. Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation: Connected Communities Monitoring Report – 2016 (2009 -2015).
13. Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation: Connected Communities Monitoring Report – 2016 (2009 -2015).
14. Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation: Connected Communities Monitoring Report – 2017 (2009 -2016).
15. Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation: Connected Communities Monitoring Report – 2017 (2009 -2016).
16. How the world's most improved school systems keep getting better. McKinsey & Company.November 2010. http://www.mckinsey.com/industries/social-sector/our-insights/how-the-worlds-most-improved-school-systems-keep-getting-better (accessed 23 August 2017).
17. Schirmer, J.; Yabsley, B.; Mylek, M. and Peel, D. 2016. Wellbeing, resilience and liveability in regional Australia: The 2015 Regional Wellbeing Survey. University of Canberra, Canberra.
18. NBN Co customer service manager John Simon apologises for FTTN teething problems in the Hunter. Newcastle Herald Monday 21 August 2017http://www.theherald.com.au/story/3877346/apology-for-nbn-rollout-troubles/ (accessed 21 August 2017)
19. Education: Future Frontiers. The implications of AI, automation and 21st century skills needs. NSW Department of Education Discussion paper 1. https://education.nsw.gov.au/media/exar/Future_Frontiers_discussion_paper.pdf (accessed 23 August 2017).
20. Fowler, C 2017, The boundaries and connections between the VET and higher education sectors: 'confused, contested and collaborative', NCVER, Adelaide.