



# Rural and Remote Education

## Curriculum access for all

### Current State

- Some rural and remote schools, especially small ones, face difficulty in offering students a broad curriculum.
- Teachers and students sometimes find it hard to share curriculum resources and collaborate with each other because of distance, as well as technological and school organisational limitations.
- Students in rural and remote areas have less opportunity to participate in cultural and sporting programs because of distance and the cost of travel.
- Academically gifted students in rural and remote schools are not always able to access the specialist curriculum they require.
- Students in rural and remote areas have fewer opportunities to be exposed to a broad range of career options and may have fewer career role models.
- Rural and remote teachers find it hard to develop links with universities and to provide their students with enrichment activities that build student engagement in science, mathematics and agriculture.

### Future State

- A new virtual secondary school allows students to study specialist subjects they cannot access in their own school.
- Rural and remote teachers and students access a wide range of online communication and collaboration technologies to enable them to share resources and connect with each other.
- More opportunities available for students in rural and remote areas to participate in State arts and sports programs.
- Gifted and talented secondary students access extension courses and selective classes through a virtual school.
- Students have expanded career options through innovative programs and strengthened partnerships between schools, TAFE, universities, business and employers.
- Rural and remote students access a range of programs that support them to study science, mathematics and agriculture courses.

### 2014

### 2015

### 2016

### 2017

Rural and remote teachers, students and school leaders access a range of technologies to learn, share and collaborate locally, nationally and globally.

The first students enrol in the new virtual secondary school.

New programs available to support rural and remote students engage in science, mathematics and agriculture.

More opportunities for rural and remote students to participate in State sports and arts programs.

Rural and remote students access e-mentoring and career modelling programs to support transition to further education, training or employment.

# Rural and Remote Education

## FAQ: Curriculum access for all

### **Q1** What is the virtual secondary school? When will it start to operate?

A virtual school links teachers and students in a number of different locations using technology to create enriched and engaging learning environments. This will allow students in rural and remote schools to study in their local school and also enrol in one or more specialist courses in the virtual school. Students will use a range of technologies to link them with classmates in other locations and a teacher in another school. The Department's virtual secondary school will be based on what we have learnt from our current programs such as Access, e2 and Xsel, as well as national and international distance and rural education models.

The first students will be enrolled in 2015.

### **Q2** What students will it cater for and how will they enrol? How will students for the selective classes be chosen?

The new virtual secondary school will allow students from Years 7-12 in rural and remote schools to study specialist subjects that they cannot access in their home school. It will provide the opportunity for these students to work with other students at a similar academic level.

The virtual secondary school will be partially selective providing curriculum extension for gifted and talented secondary students. Students will apply for selective classes using the current departmental selective schools process. Enrolment priority for stage 5 and 6 courses will be given to students in the most remote locations.

### **Q3** What sorts of subjects will it offer? How will it differ from our current distance education programs?

The virtual secondary school will specialise in providing selective classes and curriculum extension for those courses that small and remote schools find hard to consistently offer such as mathematics, science, engineering studies and economics.

The virtual secondary school will complement existing distance education provisions currently available to students in rural and remote NSW.

### **Q4** How will students and teachers working in a virtual environment be supported?

Professional learning and training modules will assist teachers in the virtual school to use technology effectively, build student engagement and share curriculum and professional learning. Specialised modules will also be developed for students, to ensure they have the skills they need to learn in a virtual environment.

A range of technologies will be available for teachers and students to use to collaborate and learn. There will be opportunities for face-to-face lessons, study days and camps to strengthen links between students. A staffing allocation will be provided to each student's home school to make sure a teacher has time to spend with them and provide personalised support.

### **Q5** How will the Department decide if new primary school Opportunity Classes should be established?

There are already 37 Opportunity Classes in 31 rural and remote schools. Of these existing classes, 16 consistently have vacancies due to the low number of students who meet entry requirements. The Department will consult with principals, Directors Educational Services and local communities to identify the need for and viability of new locations for Opportunity Classes in rural and remote schools.

### **Q6** What opportunities will be available to support gifted and talented students in rural and remote schools?

The virtual secondary school will offer selective classes for Years 7-12 students. The Department will also investigate establishing additional Opportunity Classes in rural and remote primary schools.

More opportunities will be available for gifted and talented students to participate in state arts and sports programs. New programs will be available to support students wishing to study science, mathematics and agriculture.

Teachers will also be able to access professional learning and assistance in providing extension and enrichment activities, so they can support gifted and talented students in their classes.

## **Q7** How will the Rural and Remote Education Blueprint give students in small rural and remote schools access to broader curriculum choices?

The virtual secondary school will provide new opportunities for Years 7-12 students to access subjects not available in their home school.

From 2014, teachers and school leaders will have access to a range of online communication and collaboration technologies, including video conferencing, the *Microsoft* and *Adobe* suites of software, *Google Apps* and *NSW Scootle* so they can share resources and curriculum between schools.

Schools working as education networks will be able to work together to maximise their students' curriculum choice by planning to share curriculum across sites. This may involve the use of a range of flexible technologies and online collaboration tools - or it may involve the sharing of resources and facilities between schools, TAFE and other education providers. Educational Services teams will assist schools and groups of schools to do this in a planned way.