

# Rural and Remote Education

A blueprint for action – update



The NSW Government has allocated up to \$80 million over four years to take the steps necessary to reduce the gap in educational achievement between rural and urban schools.

## Quality learning for every community

- Rural and remote schools are receiving increased funding delivered through a fairer and more transparent Resource Allocation Model, including equity funding that reflects the number and percentage of Aboriginal students in the schools and the socio-economic background of parents.
- Rural and remote schools are being supported to establish education networks that bring together resources across a number of schools to meet local needs. The first 10 education networks received seed funding in June 2014 so these networks can be in place for the start of the 2015 school year. Further networks will be established in 2015 and 2016. Over this time, \$1.25 million will be made available as seed grants to support the establishment of new networks.

## Quality early childhood education

- More children in rural and remote areas will participate in early childhood education in at least the year before school.
- Higher subsidies for disadvantaged children attending community preschool, including three year olds, will support

access by those who benefit most. Community preschool fees will be more fairly matched to parents' capacity to pay.

- Cluster managers will be appointed in community preschools to ease the administrative burden.
- 70 Early Childhood Teaching Scholarships were awarded in March 2014. Of these, 50 were awarded to educators in rural and remote areas, with three being awarded to Aboriginal educators.

## Great teachers and school leaders

- A new range of incentives is now available to attract more of the best and brightest into teaching and retain quality teachers and leaders in rural and remote schools.
- *Teach.Rural* scholarships have been taken up by 16 talented HSC students commencing teacher education studies in 2014. The Minister's reception with a group of these scholars was held on 26 February 2014 and the event used to publicise scholarship availability. Teaching in rural areas promoted on the teach.nsw Facebook page.
- Scholarships for 2015 were launched on 19 May 2014.

- Newly appointed teachers and leaders in rural and remote schools may be offered a 10 week trial before their permanent appointment is confirmed.
- Teachers and principals in rural and remote areas are able to access new mentoring and coaching programs.
- Virtual faculties, mentoring and shadowing programs will link teachers in rural and remote schools to subject expertise.
- Teachers and leaders now have increased opportunities to experience real or simulated NAPLAN and HSC marking. In May 2014, a HSC marking simulation program was conducted by BOSTES in Ballina, Dubbo, Griffith and Canberra. The Department provided a subsidy for teachers from rural and remote government schools.

### Curriculum access for all

- A new virtual secondary school will expand curriculum options for students in rural and remote schools. and provide gifted and talented secondary students with access to extension courses and selective classes. The first students will enrol in 2015.
- More opportunities are now available for students in rural and remote areas to participate in state arts and sports programs. In addition, assistance such as reduced levies, payments of venue hire and assistance with student and teacher travel costs has been provided.
- Students will have expanded career options through innovative programs and strengthened partnerships between schools, TAFE, universities, business and employers.
- Rural and remote students will have access to a range of new programs and opportunities that support them to study science, mathematics and agriculture courses.

### Effective partnerships and connections

- A network of specialist centres will bring together coordinated interagency health and wellbeing services through a single point of contact. Each centre will reflect local needs. Planning has commenced for specialist centres located in Tamworth, Broken Hill and Dubbo. The selection process for the coordinators of the specialist centres located in Broken Hill, Tamworth, Wagga Wagga and Dubbo has been completed and they have commenced in their roles.
- Teachers and school leaders have access to professional learning and expert advice so they can meet the learning and support needs of every student.
- The Department is simplifying processes to make it easier for schools to work across state borders.

### The new virtual secondary school

- This new school will allow students in rural and remote areas to remain in their local school and community while providing the opportunity to study specialist subjects their home school cannot consistently offer. The school will also provide a peer group of students of similar academic ability and interest.
- Students will connect with their teachers and classmates through a virtual learning environment, which will include web conferencing software and the DEC's virtual classrooms.

Where possible, lessons will be recorded so that students can access lessons at other times.

- The virtual secondary school will offer students expanded career options through innovative programs and strengthened partnerships between schools, TAFE, universities, business and employers. Mentoring opportunities and master classes will be key features of both the online and residential school programs.

### What will students from rural and remote NSW experience in the virtual secondary school?

#### Maryam is a Year 7 student with a strong interest in science

Maryam gained a place in the virtual secondary school selective stream in English, mathematics and science and commenced classes in 2015. She studies the remainder of her subjects in her local school.

Maryam connects with her virtual secondary school teachers and classmates in regularly timetabled lessons in a virtual learning environment. She also has the support of a teacher in her local school to help her with her studies in the virtual secondary school.

During residential schools, Maryam has the opportunity to meet and work with her 'virtual' classmates and other academically able students with similar interests. She also has the opportunity to attend master classes and to link with a mentor who shares her love of science.

#### Ben is a Year 11 student studying a stage 6 course at the virtual secondary school

Ben is interested in economics and languages and hopes to pursue a career in international finance when he completes his Higher School Certificate. His local school was unable to offer the pattern of study that would allow him to follow his dream.

Ben successfully applied for a place in the 2015 Year 11 economics class at the virtual secondary school. He enrolled in his chosen language course at a distance education centre and studies his remaining subjects at his local school.

Ben connects with his economics teacher and classmates in regularly timetabled lessons in a virtual learning environment. He also has the support of a teacher in his local school to help him with his studies in the virtual secondary school.

At the residential schools, Ben has the opportunity to meet and work with his teacher and classmates. Throughout the course, Ben also attends master classes presented by university and/or industry experts in his career area of interest.

For further information visit

[www.dec.nsw.gov.au/about-the-department/our-reforms/rural-and-remote-education](http://www.dec.nsw.gov.au/about-the-department/our-reforms/rural-and-remote-education)