

## **SPECIFIC NEEDS PORTFOLIO CONFERENCE REPORT – June 2021**

Salutations from the Specific Needs Portfolio. With only 2 motions at the 2020 conference, the team have been working on increasing our presence in the sector by meeting with a variety of organisations to ensure they have a thorough understanding of issues that affect rural and remote families. Discussions also centred around how they can assist us in our lobby, what programs and services they provide in general, but especially to rural and remote families. The team looks forward to continuing to work with these and other organisations in the future.

Both Specific Needs motions from the Virtual Conference were in regard to specialist services. The first motion asked for more Speech and Specific Needs sessions to be organised through online learning. Covid certainly proved that online sessions are beneficial in providing regular and strengthened support. At delegations in Brisbane, the Disability and Inclusion Branch updated us on a trial, which included software development to meet the department's needs and the trial of the platform by the therapy team that was completed in 2020. As a result of the successful trial, State Schools Disability and Inclusion are working to procure the platform, so that it can be used for rural and remote schools. This platform is more specific and will have better clarity, so will be more suitable for Speech lessons than platforms like zoom. They will continue to keep State Council updated on the progress.

The second motion called for the provision of consistent specialist services in rural and remote schools. At our recent meeting, State Council was informed that the use of online sessions allowed for more frequent sessions to occur by cutting down the travelling time and that utilising online sessions also allows for access to trained staff from other areas. State Council will continue to stress the importance of face to face sessions for children in rural and remote areas wherever possible.

State Council continues to promote the Parent Resource – Orange Book, written jointly with the Queensland Child and Youth Clinical Network, within the Specific Needs, Health and Early Childhood sectors as a priority and will continue to do so for the foreseeable future.

Mental Health is an area of growing concern and will remain a focus of State Council's lobby through meeting and working with organisations like Headspace in this area to ensure that rural and remote children are not forgotten.

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