

PORTFOLIO REPORTS - STATE COUNCIL

RURAL & REMOTE SCHOOLS REPORT

Liz Sudlow – Portfolio Holder, March 2018

It goes without saying, that the 2017/18 has been a particularly busy one for the rural and remote portfolio, particularly over the Christmas period.

At the 2017 conference, four motions were passed that were directly related to rural schools.

Motion A7 sought ICPA WA Council to request a more influential mentoring program be implemented by the Department of Education to assist principals and promote longevity of placements, and to provide greater continuity in learning programmes for students and stability for children, staff and the wider school community at affected schools.

We were advised by Minister Ellery that "Principals can obtain support from Principal Consultants, available to support and coach principals and broker other support services". We were also informed, "the McGowan Government made an election commitment to establish a Partnership on School Leadership with key education stakeholders to deliver high-quality professional development, and to look at ways to attract and retain teachers and leaders at rural and remote schools."

Motion AS requested the WA Government to extend the exemption to allow Year 7 students to have Year 7 school curriculum delivered via rural, remote and School of the Air (SOTA) Primary Schools past the end of 2017.

The Minister sought advice on this matter and gave it due consideration, for some time last year, before announcing in September that the exemption would cease at the end of 2017, as originally planned.

Motion A9 requested that Mullewa DHS be acknowledged as a special program school, so that students who, under the Federal Assistance for Isolated children (AIC) guidelines, lived too close to the school, were able to bypass the school and still be eligible for the allowance and the WA state Boarding Away From Home Allowance (BAHA).

We received a letter from Department of Education Director General, Sharyn O'Neil informing us of a favourable outcome to this request.

Motion S4 requested that the WA Department of Education provide resources to ensure that remote children have access to in-term swimming lessons, when requested by schools.

As a result of our request, the Department of Education moved to create provision to Fly in-fly out coordinators and instructors for the Dec/Jan period and Term 1 Interm swimming, increase advertising for instructors through the AUSTSWIM data base and procure services from other providers such as the Australian Swimming Coaches and Teachers Association (ASCTA).

Summary of the previous 12 months:

The McGowan Government fulfilled an election promise and reinstated approximately 100 additional education assistants. Education Minister, Sue Ellery's office provided us with a table showing a three-year

plan, whereby 60 schools will benefit from an additional 103.5 EAs in 2018, 137 schools will receive an additional 195.5 FTE in 2019 and 238 schools will receive 290.0 FTE in 2020, many of these in the regions.

An additional 21.9 Aboriginal and Islander Education Officers will be placed into 51 schools in 2018 and 43 into 74 schools next year.

Increased specialist support for regional schools was announced in September through:

- the appointment of an Independent Learning Coordinator (ILC) in 10 regional schools to assist students undertaking courses through the School of Isolated and Distance Education (SIDE). These schools are Albany, Collie, Kalgoorlie, Geraldton, Carnarvon, Karratha, Newman, Port Hedland, Broome, Kununurra. The Learning Coordinators will be located in the schools.
- a regional Learning Specialist team of eight, in the curriculum areas of science, social science, mathematics and English, will be established to visit regional schools and run classes for students and the support the work of ILCs.

An adjustment to the Student-Centred Funding Model (SCFM) for Senior High Schools, was also announced. Schools over 1,200 students' size will lose \$1000 per student and will be re-distributed to smaller schools. 900 students is the enrolment number that is expected to be the cut-off for securing money or not. As a result, 26 schools will lose money and 37 will pick up money, including some in the regions. The country schools in order of smallest to largest are:

Central Midlands (190 students), Harvey, Tom Price, Newman, Katanning, Denmark, Collie, Manjimup, Eaton, Narrogin, Northam, Busselton, Cape Naturaliste (600-700 students), NASH (Albany), Newton Moore, Dalyellup, Pinjarra, Hedland, Broome (850 students).

From September through to 13th December, there were a number of announcements which saw the reduction in services to regional students.

- The decision not to continue with the exemption to Year 7, which enabled some students to remain in their primary school, where a secondary school was not available near-by.
- The removal of the R4R component of the Boarding Away From Home Allowance (BAHA) which will reduce over four years:
2018- \$1948.00
2019- \$1791.00
2020- \$1643.00
2021- \$1477.00
NB: The BAHA was last increased in 2010 from \$1320.00 to \$2105.00, with \$785.00 coming from R4R funding.
- The loss of 23 Aboriginal Liaison Officers from the regions, whose role it is to liaise between the school, aboriginal education workers and community. The responsibility to work with community will be the role of the Principal at each school.

The Media Statement of 13th December, which announced with no warning or consultation:

- The closure of the five Schools of the Air.
- The closure of six regional camp schools at Bridgetown, Dampier, Geraldton, Kalgoorlie, Pemberton and

Point Peron.

- The closure of Moora and Northam Government Residential Colleges.
- The intake into the Level 3 classroom teacher program to be on hold until 2020.
- Funding for Gifted and Talented programs at 18 schools to be reduced by 25 per cent.
- Fees for vacation swimming lessons (VacSwim) will increase from \$13.50 to \$30 for a 10-day program.
- Tuart College to be repurposed with students no longer being enrolled. The site will be retained by the Department of Education, but no decision made on its future use.
- Program delivery at Canning College will only deliver programs to overseas fee-paying students.
- Funding for Landsdale Farm School to cease, and an alternate provider sourced.
- The five Agricultural Colleges and Esperance Farm School to lose 20% of the Gross income generated from enterprises at each of the schools. Currently, the individual school retains 60% of the profit it makes and the remainder 40% goes into a trust fund to be shared by all of the Ag schools, as well as other schools, some of them in the Metro area.) The Ag Colleges stand to lose approximately \$300,000 in 2019.
- The Director of Agricultural Education position was previously removed, and the curriculum unit disbanded.

Lead by ICPA WA but supported by many other organisations and individuals across regional and metropolitan WA, there has been an intense campaign to fight these decisions.

On 11th January, the McGowan government, due to public pressure, announced it would reverse the SOTA closure decision, re-instate the Gifted and Talented Program and the Level 3 classroom teacher program and reverse the decision to close Northam Residential College.

ICPA WA together with organisations such as CWA, WA Farmers, PGA and IPCA is continuing to fight these reductions to regional education.