

PORTFOLIO REPORTS - STATE COUNCIL

SPECIAL & SPECIFIC NEEDS EDUCATION REPORT

Elyse Donaghy – Portfolio Holder, March 2019

In December 2017, the State Government announced that the Department of Education would cease funding the Landsdale Farm School from 2019. The Department advertised the site for private tender with the tender being awarded to Family Support WA. Family Support WA is a not-for-profit organisation that provides disability services to individuals and families. Founded in 1996 by the parents and staff of the Landsdale Farm School, the organisation has been previously managing camps for children with disabilities at the farm during school holidays and at weekends. As the new operator, Family Support WA will continue the current running of the farm, providing programs and opportunities for people with disabilities by building strong relationships with special needs schools, education support centres and disability services organisations. They also plan to develop education programs that link farm activities with the Western Australian curriculum for visiting school groups and ensure continued access for the general public.

Landsdale Farm School is an Education Support School. It was developed for students with disabilities as the main focus, the site is wheelchair accessible. The aim of the farm is to provide a welcoming educational rural environment for people to view plants and animals and gain an appreciation of living things. The environment evokes a feeling of tranquillity and well-being.

Landsdale Farm School Courses for Education Support Students

1. Work Skills
2. Community Access
3. Photography and Multimedia
4. Agri-Food Production Cert I
5. Retail – Cert II
6. Independent Living
7. Animal Care – ASDAN
8. Community Access
9. Horticulture – Cert I
10. Year 13 Transition Program
11. Bike Repair

As of 2019 NAPLAN testing will be carried out as an online assessment across most schools in WA, Schools of the Air will not be included in this group as they will continue to use paper testing. There are concerns for young children and special needs students completing the online test with limited keyboard skills. This is NAPLAN'S response to this concern.

Will students with limited keyboard skills be disadvantaged in the writing test?

The writing test is not about handwriting skills and NAPLAN Online is not about keyboarding skills. There are variations in how fast and well a student can type, just as there are variations in how fast and well a student can write by hand. ACARA research shows that online writing is similar to handwriting in terms of the quality of writing produced by students at each year level. It also shows that students generally appreciate the use of online features such as editing

tools (noting that online features such as grammar and spell-check are disabled during NAPLAN testing). Students do not have to be able to touch type to successfully complete the test.

ICPA (WA) State Council support Federal Council as they lobby for:

- All rural and remote students have access to early identification and intervention for learning difficulties.
- Equitable subsidies nationally for accommodation and travel for children with specific or special learning needs to attend appointments with qualified specialists.