

Committee Secretary
Senate Select Committee on School Funding
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Submission to the Senate Select Committee on School Funding

Rural school with a population of ~380 students. 20% of our students identify as Aboriginal. 62% of our students fall in the lower half of the distribution of socioeconomic disadvantage.

Isolation from major centres creates disadvantage for our students, particularly those with low family income or other disadvantage. Our school relies heavily upon Equity funds to support literacy and numeracy programs for our students. Presently some students miss out because there are not sufficient funds to employ tutors for all students who need support. Additional educational resources could be funded to support students from disadvantaged backgrounds to access digital and web-based learning at home or outside school hours.

Many students have families that are quite transient. Some students are in formal or informal foster care. Our school currently enrolls students from a 100 kilometre radius. Many of these students are from lowSES communities and are travelling by bus for hours each day. These students often require intensive support to improve their literacy and numeracy. Future funding will support specific programs to address the literacy and numeracy skills of students arriving at our school. The programs we use (Multilit and Quicksmart) are based upon research, effective and provide measureable success to students. The programs are expensive as they require trained tutors to work with students. We have the tutors, but we need the funds to employ them and maintain these programs in our school.

While we are proud of the improvements we are making in Indigenous education,

we can impact upon their achievement with targetted attendance support programs in addition to support that focusses on learning that has been missed during their schooling. Currently our AEO works with students in classes but he is one person and unable to work with all students. We have 80 Aboriginal students at our school.

Many of our teachers arrive in our school from city centres. Professional development to support them to understand the rural community and culture and Indigenous values would have a significant impact on their success as teachers. The distances that we have to travel to access professional learning means that we are limited in our opportunities. Not only is it expensive but it takes additional time. Many teachers are reluctant to travel to Sydney for professional development because of the cost and the disruption to teaching as they may be out for several days when travel is included.

Our school acts as a hub for the professional learning of teachers from the small schools around us. Additional resources would make this task more effective and support the quality of education in the district not just the town.

It is very difficult for schools to plan effectively when funding is uncertain from year to year. Knowing the future of funding is secure would allow the school to build sustainable programs to support students from Indigenous and low SES backgrounds to overcome some of the disadvantage they face.

Submitted on behalf of Coonabarabran High School

Monday 3 March 2014