

Our Ref: 120E AUGMINS 09  
039417

05 August 2009

Ms Ann Palmer  
Rural and Regional Affairs Committee  
PO BOX 6100  
Parliament House  
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Ann,

## **RURAL AND REGIONAL ACCESS TO SECONDARY AND TERTIARY EDUCATION OPPORTUNITIES**

Thank you for your letter and the opportunity to be included in the consultation process on the issue of Rural and Regional Education.

QCPCA would like to respond with the following:

The financial impact on rural and regional students who attend metropolitan secondary schools, universities or TAFE are considerable. The personal experiences attached to this submission highlight the difficulties faced and the financial costs associated. It is QCPCA's policy that;

- subsidies should be provided to overcome the constraints put upon rural and isolated students to participate in social, cultural and sporting pursuits by the high costs of such things as travel and accommodation.
- in support of students provision should be made for extra funding of in-service for teachers and parents/caregivers in isolated Schools of Distance Education.
- to ensure the needs of geographically isolated students are met, governments should provide:
  - a. funding for residential facilities;
  - b. regulations to ensure that when non-school agencies apply for government funding for residential facilities they do so on the basis of a strong pastoral care policy and that regular inspections are carried out to ensure they comply with policy;
  - c. travel assistance during designated school vacations to government school students who need to live away from home to attend the nearest government school that satisfies the individual student's education requirements;
  - d. travel grants for an adult to accompany all government school children required to travel by air or otherwise for the purpose of remedial assessment or assistance;

QCPCA believe that suitable facility should be made for students wishing to study in regional areas.

- Education services (including secondary education) for isolated students should be provided to the students at or near their place of residence, using, where appropriate, whatever distance educational techniques and technologies are currently available; where possible boarding facilities should be provided to allow students closer access to their families.
- Small schools should be considered in clusters to permit viable sharing of resources and the opportunity for combined cultural sporting and social activity;
- Small schools should be supported by larger schools and schools of distance education to provide support in the areas of:
  - a. administration;
  - b. curriculum resources and development;
  - c. social interaction;
  - d. personal development;
  - e. professional development;
  - f. service to attract the appropriate share of funding allocated to the students school for the provision of these services.
- In support of this, all teacher training institutions should provide compulsory education units within courses that will prepare teachers for living and working in rural areas;
- Education authorities should be urged to consider special contractual arrangements, including incentives which will attract teachers and encourage them to stay longer in remote area appointments;

*(Attached to this submission is the current and full QCPCA policy on rural and regional education.)*

Copied below QCPCA have chosen specific responses and personal experience which we consider to be relevant to this issue.

### **Example 1:**

*“TAFE is designed for people living in or near to a city. My town is 60km from the nearest TAFE. There is no bus, so the parents have to drive their children to classes. No costs are covered and there is no allowance to cover either the time taken out by the parents or the cost of travel. It is not just a question of access but also availability of courses- Some TAFE colleges do not provide the full list of courses available.”*

### **Example 2:**

*“I know we weren't eligible for any funding assistance for our daughter to attend university in Brisbane, even though we had to pay for accommodation and university fees. This is inequitable for all rural students attending university - students from the south- east corner can access university and live at home. I believe there is funding for students who have to go to a secondary boarding school for access to high school. Also inequitable is students doing subjects by Distance Education while attending a rural secondary school because it is the only alternative - there is a cost involved.”*

**Example 3:**

*“I have been trying to find access to funding for accommodation and travel for my son, who is 16- thus has to be earning or learning, and attends the nearest TAFE in Bowen to do a Cert I in Automotive course as VET subjects. To date I have had no luck from all avenues that I have tried.... The typical scenario of what the Qld Certificate of Education was expended to is what my son is doing but at total cost to me. In the city a student could probably catch a bus to another suburb to do his course but not up here. Our students are being ripped-off by the system. If he was to attend a boarding school I could get funding, likewise if he was to live away from home to attend a college. If he was a signed-up apprentice I could get funding. Is it any wonder that students are falling into cracks as I have been told by many people that they are surprised I am paying the costs involved-many parents wouldn't. It also doesn't help when the local high school is only intent on assisting OP students!”*

We would be happy to discuss any of these points and look forward to further consultation.

Yours faithfully,



Margaret Black  
State President

## **Rural and Remote Education Distance Education**

Council believes that:

- education services (including secondary education) for isolated students should be provided to the students at or near their place of residence, using, where appropriate, whatever distance educational techniques and technologies are currently available;
  - where possible boarding facilities should be provided to allow students closer access to their families
3. all students attending rural and remote schools have access to an education of an equal standard and range of subject choice to those in the metropolitan areas and provincial cities through:
    - a. provision of teachers with expertise in their subject areas;
    - b. provision of a modern distance education mode of curriculum delivery from teachers with expertise in their subject area;
    - c. provision of classroom facilities to enable students to take part via computers in classes in larger centres where a teacher with the expertise is available;
  4. an integrated curriculum should be developed to assist teachers with multiple grades in small schools with the curriculum reflecting the broad Australian environment as the basis for learning and so equip the student for the demographic changes which are taking place;
  5. small schools should be considered in clusters to permit viable sharing of resources and the opportunity for combined cultural sporting and social activity;
  6. small schools should be supported by larger schools and schools of distance education to provide support in the areas of:
    - g. administration;
    - h. curriculum resources and development;
    - i. social interaction;
    - j. personal development;
    - k. professional development;
    - l. service to attract the appropriate share of funding allocated to the students school for the provision of these services.
  7. all teacher training institutions should provide compulsory education units within courses that will prepare teachers for living and working in rural areas;
  8. education authorities should be urged to consider special contractual arrangements, including incentives which will attract teachers and encourage them to stay longer in remote area appointments;
  9. the Federal Government and State Authorities should provide financial support for off campus teacher education programs for mature age students in rural towns designed to help increase the proportion of teachers in rural schools who are long-term local residents;
  10. governments should improve the delivery of educational services to rural communities and in particular to geographically isolated children by:
    - a. expanding professional support programs for teachers in small and/or isolated schools;
    - b. providing resources to expand itinerant teacher services, consultancy services and counselling services for children in rural communities;
    - c. examining the patterns of rural secondary school retention and available measures of educational outcomes as a basis for considering both curriculum and resource implications;
    - d. considering ways of increasing the options available in the secondary curriculum in small high schools;

- e. giving consideration to developing more appropriate skills, training and support for teachers entering the service for appointment to isolated rural schools or Schools of Distance Education;
  - f. providing appropriate induction courses for teachers before their first appointment to a rural school or School of Distance Education;
  - g. providing extra funding for in-service for teachers and parents/caregivers in isolated Schools of Distance Education.
7. to ensure the needs of geographically isolated students are met, governments should provide:
- a. funding for residential facilities;
  - b. regulations to ensure that when non-school agencies apply for government funding for residential facilities they do so on the basis of a strong pastoral care policy and that regular inspections are carried out to ensure they comply with policy;
  - c. travel assistance during designated school vacations to government school students who need to live away from home to attend the nearest government school that satisfies the individual student's education requirements;
  - d. travel grants for an adult to accompany all government school children required to travel by air or otherwise for the purpose of remedial assessment or assistance;
  - e. support for the use of sufficient of the 30 watt high power transponders on AUSSAT to provide adequate educational services of both radio and television to remote areas;
  - f. sufficient suitable equipment as a basic resource for geographically isolated children;
  - g. TAFE and curriculum electives in remote high schools to encourage students to continue;
  - h. subsidies to overcome the constraints put upon rural and isolated students to participate in social, cultural and sporting pursuits by the high costs of such things as travel and accommodation;
  - i. support and in-service be given to parents/caregivers to facilitate their role as partners in an emerging technological delivery of education.
  - j. regular motivation and self-esteem courses in an effort to raise and broaden their aspirations;
8. the difference between the needs of schools in rural and isolated areas and the needs of socioeconomically disadvantaged schools be recognised when funding is being allocated.

## **Distance Education**

Council believes that:

1. particular attention including adequate provision for consultation and support must be given to the role of Parents/caregivers in Distance Education with the primary focus on the role of home tutors incorporating regular training and development for the benefit of distance education students;
2. opportunities should be available for students studying by schools of distance education to work, socialise and learn with other students to enhance home learning;
3. the core curriculum for distance education must:
  - a. be prepared by personnel who have experience and knowledge of the diverse student groups accessing distance education in rural/remote education and who have access to quality resources;
  - b. take cognisance of the need for the program development groups to work in close association with each school of distance education and home tutors;
  - c. be based on current Queensland curriculum for state schools P-12 with all changes occurring within timelines established by the Queensland Studies Authority;

recognise the timelines involved to accommodate the lengthy lead-time required for Rural and Remote Education Distance Education.