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Society for the Provision of Education for Rural Australia
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“Rural Futures Matter- A Sustainable Australia”

Summit 2011, 21-23 September

Outcomes & Recommendations

Report by

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Society for the Provision of Education for Rural
Australia

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Rationale

Introduction

The Sidney Myer Chair of Rural Education & Communities (SMC), Professor John Halsey, from Flinders University's School of Education, and the Society for the Provision of Education for Rural Australia (SPERA) partnered to present the "Rural Futures Matter- A Sustainable Australia" Summit (RFMS) in September 2011. 83 delegates from Australia and 2 from North Dakota, USA, attended the three day summit and represented a variety of disciplines, including education (primary & secondary schools, TAFE colleges & universities), health, industry, business, NGO's, government, and philanthropy.

The primary purpose of the Summit was to produce a set of recommendations for local, state and federal governments and agencies, private enterprise, relevant community associations and for wider public interest on Australia's sustainability and the roles of education and rural communities in progressing this.

Program

The Summit's three day program comprised two keynote presentations, six critical input sessions, and twenty-four papers presented by delegates at the parallel sessions.

Keynotes & Critical Inputs

Keynote 1:	Why Sustainable Rural Communities Matter <i>Professor John Halsey, Flinders University</i>
Critical Input 1:	Australia's Demographics to 2050 and Beyond <i>Professor Graeme Hugo, The University of Adelaide</i>
Critical Input 2:	Sustainability and Globalisation – Partners or Protagonists? <i>Professor Matthew Tonts, University of Western Australia</i>
Keynote 2:	Changing the Educational Delivery Paradigms <i>Mr Daniel Birch, Director Discovery 1 School, Christchurch, New Zealand</i>
Critical Input 3:	Accessible, Affordable Quality Education in Rural Australia <i>Professor Jo-Anne Reid, Charles Sturt University</i> <i>Professor Simone White, Monash University</i>
Critical Input 4:	Resource Companies and their Legacy <i>Mr Paul Wand AM, Chair of Ninti One: CRC for Remote Economic Participation</i>
Critical Input 5:	Leadership and Human Resources <i>Ms Tara McKnight, Head of Human Resources, Bank SA</i>
Critical Input 6:	Rural Australia: Making it Work! <i>Mrs Sarah Fletcher, Goldfield-Esperance Development Commission; Mrs Rita O'Brien & Yr 7 students from Mypolonga</i>

Primary School; Mrs Jan Potter, Cowell Area School; Pip Shields & Helen Bennett, Wheatbelt Development Commission

Parallel Sessions

The role of the extension service in rural/frontier disaster

Assoc Professor Myran A. Eighmy, Assistant Professor Thomas E. Hall - North Dakota State University

Coast to country: An initiative aimed at changing pre-service teachers' perceptions of teaching in rural and remote locations

Shirley Richards - University of the Sunshine Coast

The local beneath the nation and global-institutional education, credentialed natural resource management (nrm) and rural community (un)sustainability

Janice Franklin

Enhancing professional learning for remote educators by rethinking connectedness

Dr Tania Broadley - Curtin University

Exploring place: Young people, their research and rurality

Lisa Marie McDonald, Sara Stephens, Mexie Butler – RMIT University

A sustainable and supportive practicum in rural and regional locations

Dr Josephine Ryan, Mellita Jones, Caroline Walta – Australian Catholic University

Promoting rural education: The role of the Society for the Provision of Education in Rural Australia

Dr Colin Boylan – Charles Sturt University

The top half of riverdance: Can broadband really expand rural learning opportunities?

Mexie Butler – RMIT University

An investigation into why students from regional South Australia choose to study business programs in the capital city

Dr Janet Sawyer, Ms Bronwyn Ellis – University of South Australia

Freedom, aspiration and informed choice in rural higher education: why they are saying “no”

Dr Susan R Robinson – University of South Australia

Teacher professional learning in rural areas: A case study of a community of learners in a virtual professional experience program in a small rural community

Dr Maxine Cooper – University of Ballarat

Research ready program: A first in South Australia

Joy Penman

Political courage is the only hope for the Australian Labor Party if it is to contribute to socially just rural educational futures in a sustainable nation

Charles Bradley – Distance Education

Beliefs and education for sustainability in rural and regional Australia
Perceptions of sexuality education in Queensland schools; metropolitan, regional and rural

Milena Barbagallo, Dr Helen Boon – James Cook University

Going bush: preparing pre-service teachers to teach in regional Western Australia

Professor Sue Trinidad – Curtin University

APC-IPF Project- building capacity and sustainability through indigenous parent education in rural and remote communities

RoseMarie Koppe – Australian Parents Council

Tertiary education provision in rural Australia: is VET a substitute for, or a pathway into, higher education?

Assoc Professor David Curtis – Flinders University

Loneliness of the long distance principal: tales from remote Western Australia

Dr Graeme Lock - Edith Cowan University

The PISCE (Primary Industry Centre for Science Education) story

Assoc Professor David Russell – University of Tasmania

The effectiveness of a university mentoring project in peri-rural Australia

Dr Aaron Drummond, Professor John Halsey, Marja van Breda – Flinders University

Global influences in small remote school: an Indonesian perspective

Sue Ledger - Murdoch University

Managing tensions in professional statutory practice: living and working in rural and remote communities

Dr Paula Jervis-Tracey, Professor Lesley Chenoweth, Assoc Professor Donna McAuliffe, Assoc Professor Brian O'Connor, Professor Daniela Stehlik – Griffith University

Design thinking: employing an effective multidisciplinary pedagogical framework to foster creativity and innovation in rural and remote education

Professor Neil Anderson - James Cook University

Pre-service teachers' literacy self efficacy and literacy competence

Louise Bostock, Dr Helen Boon – James Cook University

Student motivation for naplan tests

Lauren Belcastro, Dr Helen Boon - James Cook University

Most keynotes and some presentations are available on

www.flinders.edu.au/education/rural/summit-2011/ and
http://www.spera.asn.au/articles.php?req=list&root_id=13&sub_id=74

Process

All delegates were invited to reflect on key points raised over the summit including the information from each keynote or critical input. Table groups discussed and then

recorded a series of key points and ideas, and from these recommendations were generated. Collectively these recommendations were refined and categorised. Six fields of activity emerged and were identified.

Fields of Activity

- Teacher and leadership preparation
- Development of rural alliances of relevant bodies to enhance co-ordinated impact around rural issues
- Community participation and capacity-building
- Enhancing rural voice, to give the needs and aspirations of rural communities greater prominence in public debate and national policy
- Policy development at all levels of government
- Schools, learning and futures of rural community

Follow up

Post-Summit, delegates received a document with fields of activity and the relevant recommendations for further refinement and clarification. Participants were invited to respond with any edited versions of a recommendation and/or adding further recommendations, and to identify a target audience for each. 11 responses were received, resulting in combining and refining of some recommendations, and target audiences were suggested. The final set of recommendations are in the Recommendations section of this document.

Target Audiences

At the Summit, and subsequently, an attempt to identify specific audiences for each recommendation was made. This proved to be problematic as each round of feedback was considered. Consequently, specific audiences for each recommendation have not been included in the Summit Report; rather a range of potential audiences have been listed viz:

1. Government: Federal, State, Local
2. Business/Enterprise/Rural Industries
3. Non- Government Organisations
4. Peak Bodies
5. Education: Systems (Govt, Non-Govt), Tertiary, Vocational
6. Community
7. Other

Progressing the Recommendations

To begin prioritising and to develop a strategic plan, Professor John Halsey, Dr Aaron Drummond and Marja van Breda from the SMC, and Professor Simone White and Mr Don Boyd, as invited representatives from SPERA, met in January 2012 to discuss and commence actioning the recommendations.

The following six recommendations were identified as an initial workload for the SMC and SPERA to focus on as a two year period (2012-2013) – 1 and 5 combined, 3, 14 and 2 combined, 26, 29 together with the following actions:

Numbers 1 and 5

- | | |
|----|--|
| 1. | That resourcing is allocated, comparable to that which occurs in medicine to prepare rural GP's/health workers, so pre-service teacher education students have the option of taking a fully funded semester length rural/remote/regional professional placement and appropriate resourcing is allocated to support teacher educators to properly prepare, support and debrief teacher education students who take a rural/remote/regional placement. |
| 5. | That pre-service and early career Country Teaching Scholarships be available to all candidates willing to do a practicum or work in non-metropolitan locations. |

Action

- SMC to develop detailed costings and a cost-benefit analysis
- Develop model(s)
- Draft letters for state and federal MPs
- Brief Principals Australia and work with them to raise their capacities to profile issues and need for greater \$ for pre-service rural preparation

Number 29

- | | |
|-----|---|
| 29. | That state and territory governments appoint a Rural Thinker and Communicator in Residence. |
|-----|---|

Action

- SMC to find out about SA model; also any other models in other states/overseas plus costs, benefits, outcomes/impacts etc
- Follow up with Critical Input Speaker; also philanthropy
- RJH to produce a briefing paper on the idea and purpose of the recommendation

Numbers 14 and 2

- | | |
|-----|---|
| 14. | That resources are provided to RRRTEC, TERRR and other similar projects for the development of rural, regional and remote curriculum modules to be used by universities in their teaching education courses. |
| 2. | That Universities incorporate in their teaching education programs: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opportunities for students to learn about innovative school models of curriculum, teaching & learning • Sufficient flexibility to cover pedagogical changes and challenges which occur over the duration of a degree program • Understanding the importance, in rural contexts especially, strategies for development partnerships or connections with local businesses and local communities |

Action

- SPERA task and action- funding for model and drafting of a proposal

Number 3

3. That addressing 'specialist' educational needs and requests of local rural communities be trialled by states and territories by appointing qualified staff to clusters of schools/learning centres rather than individual sites, and that this trial be rigorously evaluated by an independent body.

Action

- SMC and Don Boyd from SPERA to collate data/information on cluster based operations; also consider further research eg SA Mid North Secondary Education Cluster

Number 26

26. That relevant government agencies, businesses, NGOs and peak bodies develop strategies to engage the media in promoting positive rural stories including:
 - The focus on the centrality of primary industries to Australia's future, sustainability and emerging career opportunities
 - The promotion of 'rural achievers' including graduates of rural education, educators and program/project/school initiatives
 - Engaging metropolitan people, in particular the 'new generation, in understanding the important roles that rural communities play in our society
 - Creating awareness of the limits to growth and the changes that will take place due to climate change and overpopulation

Action

- SMC to contact ABC Radio and Landline relating to gaining advice and also possibility of presenting at the 2012 SPERA conference and running workshops
- SMC to also seek advice from Flinders Media Centre
- Developing strategic information for wide dissemination and follow up community based workshops and consultations
- SPERA to follow up with SPERA Executive to promote this idea

SMC and SPERA agree that there is significant benefit to be gained by using the auspices of the SMC in a higher profile way and in partnership with SPERA and others, to progress issues/problems in rural education.

Advice and Support

This document has been produced to assist you putting into action the recommendations which best align with your specific field of work, research, community engagement and so forth. It is hoped it becomes a living document with recommendations being referred to on a regular basis in presentations, conversations and commentaries. A list of all participants are included to encourage you to develop your networks and, perhaps, to form alliances as these ultimately present a strong cohesive front for the benefit of rural education and communities.

List of Participants

Mr Gary Allen	Rural Education Forum Australia
Ms Kirsty Allen	The Myer Foundation and Sidney Myer Fund
Mrs Helen Anderson	Parents & Friends Federation of WA
Professor Neil Anderson	James Cook University
Ms Andrea Bartetzko	TAFE SA Regional
Dr Pam Bartholomaeus	Flinders University
Ms Dawn Benjamin	TAFE SA Regional
Dr Helen Boon	James Cook University
Mr John Borserio	Catholic Education Office Toowoomba
Mr Don Boyd	Society for the Provision of Education in Rural Australia
Mrs Kerry Boyd	
Dr Colin Boylan	Charles Sturt University
Mr Charles Bradley	Distance Education
Dr Tania Broadley	Curtin University
Ms Mexie Butler	RMIT University
Mrs Joy Cayetano-Penman	University of South Australia
Mr Sandy Clark	Sidney Myer Fund
Mrs Natasha Colliver	Grant Woodhams MLA
Assoc/Professor Maxine Cooper	University of Ballarat
Mr Deane Crabb	South Australian Farmers Federation
Mr Peter Crawford	Australian Secondary Principals Association
Assoc/Professor David Curtis	Flinders University
Mr Stefan Demianyk	Department of Education and Children's Services
Dr Aaron Drummond	Flinders University
Assoc/Professor Myron Eighmy	North Dakota State University
Mrs Bronwyn Ellis	University of South Australia
Ms Jan Ferguson	Ninti One Limited
Mr Peter Fitzgerald	WA District High School Administrators Association
Mrs Sarah Fletcher	Goldfield-Esperance Development Commission
Miss Janice Franklin	
Mr Robert Fry	Western Australian Council State School Organisations
Ms Rachel Gibson	Edith Cowan University
Assoc/Professor David Giles	Flinders University
Mrs Jane Gloster	Isolated Children's Parents' Association
Assistant Professor Tom Hall	North Dakota State University
Professor John Halsey	Flinders University
Miss Sarah Hazel	University of South Australia
Mrs Judith Howie	Berri Primary School
Dr Paula Jervis-Tracey	Griffith University
Mr Rob Knight	Clare High School
Mrs RoseMarie Koppe	Australian Parents Council
Mrs Sue Ledger	Murdoch University
Ms Joanne Levey	Depart. of Education & Early Childhood Development VIC
Mr Brenton Lewis	RDA Murraylands and Riverland Inc
Ms Barbara Linden	City of Mount Gambier
Dr Graeme Lock	Edith Cowan University
Mrs Penny Maxwell	Renmark North Primary School
Mrs Lisa Marie McDonald	RMIT University
Mr Alan McLaren	Education Department of WA
Mr Paul Mickan	The Barossa Council
Ms Lexie Mincham	Department of Education and Children's Services
Ms Anne Moroney	Regional Development Australia Barossa
Mrs Roxanne Morrissey	Isolated Children's Parents' Association
Mrs Judy Newton	Isolated Children's Parents' Association
Mr Brian O'Neill	Education Queensland
Mr Michael Pater	Murray and Mallee Regional Office

Outcomes & Recommendations

Professor Jo-Anne Reid	Charles Sturt University
Mrs Shirley Richards	University of the Sunshine Coast
Dr Susan Robinson	University of South Australia
Assoc/Professor David Russell	University of Tasmania
Mr Brendan Ryan	Department of Education & Children's Services
Dr Josephine Ryan	Australian Catholic University, Melbourne Campus
Dr Janet Sawyer	University of South Australia
Mrs Anne-Marie Schelfhout	Parents & Friends Federation of WA
Ms Jeanne Schocroft	Open Access SA
Dr Elaine Sharplin	University of WA
Mr Peter Shearer	St Joseph's School Clare
Mrs Polly Smart	Open Access College
Mrs Linda Smith	Australian Parents Council
Mr Mark Sparvell	Principals Australia
Ms Sarah Stephens	RMIT University
Mr Peter Stockings	Regional Development Australia Yorke and Mid North
Mrs Susanne Taylor	Flinders University
Miss Anita Torr	Department of Education and Children's Services
Professor Sue Trinidad	Curtin University
Ms Marja van Breda	Flinders University
Mr Paul Wand AM	Ninti One Limited
Mr Mark Weir	Priority Country Area Program
Professor Simone White	Monash University - Gippsland
Mr Nathan Williams	University of Southern Queensland

Recommendations

Teacher & Leadership Preparation for Rural, Regional & Remote Contexts

Significant research has been undertaken in teacher and leadership preparation for rural, regional and remote contexts. Research outcomes and evidence show a need for federal, state and local governments to engage fully in developing policy which strengthens rural, regional and remote educational frameworks, building capacity and to sustain the respective communities.

The following recommendations reflect specific areas for urgent policy inclusion in order to assist in increasing rural, regional and remote professional infra-structure to benefit local communities, and Australia as a whole.

Recommendations	
1.	That resourcing is allocated, comparable to that which occurs in medicine to prepare rural GP's/health workers, so pre-service teacher education students have the option of taking a fully funded semester length rural/remote/regional professional placement and appropriate resourcing is allocated to support teacher educators to properly prepare, support and debrief teacher education students who take a rural/remote/regional placement.
2.	That Universities incorporate in their teaching education programs: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opportunities for students to learn about innovative school models of curriculum, teaching & learning • Sufficient flexibility to cover pedagogical changes and challenges which occur over the duration of a degree program • Understanding the importance, in rural contexts especially, of strategies for the development of partnerships and connections with local businesses and local communities
3.	That addressing 'specialist' educational needs and requests of local rural communities be trialled by states and territories by appointing qualified staff to clusters of schools/learning centres rather than individual sites, and that trialling be rigorously evaluated by an independent body.
4.	That the recruitment of teachers, leaders, support and clerical staff for rural locations, be recognised and resourced as an area of human resources management which requires particular knowledge and understanding of rural contexts, challenges and opportunities.
5.	That pre-service and early career Country Teaching Scholarships be available to all candidates willing to do a practicum or work in non-metropolitan locations.
6.	That school leaders in regional areas are prepared with appropriate education and training in business and human resource management to ensure optimisation of their staff and strategic management of the school and community participation.
7.	That education jurisdictions and rural and regional councils work together to develop strategies to attract and support graduate teachers appointed to rural communities, and encourage them to remain for a substantial period of time in their appointments.

8.	That education authorities, in collaboration with communities, ensure rural schools develop protocols to facilitate the recording, maintenance and sharing of local contextual knowledge for incoming principals and teachers.
9.	That industry continues to work closely with schools to provide experiences for students enrolled in certificate courses and for teachers who are teaching these courses and that case studies of good practice be made available to all stakeholders.
10.	That industry works closely with teacher trainers ie universities or TAFE to provide practical experience and learning outcomes for teachers who are teaching certificate courses. Additionally that a program is developed to ensure access to regular industry experiences for teachers delivering these courses.
11.	That major political parties take a bi-partisan approach to enhancing access to higher education for students who reside in rural Australia.
12.	That alternative models of development and enhancement of educational leadership be investigated, leveraging off non-education organisations and employment practices.
13.	That universities and education systems develop a better understanding of teaching in culturally competent ways in rural communities.
14.	That resources are provided to Renewing Rural & Regional Teacher Education Curriculum (RRRTEC), TERRR and other similar projects for the development of rural, regional and remote curriculum modules to be used by universities in their teaching education courses.

Rural Alliances

The National Rural Health Alliance is a long standing and very successful organisation. It is essentially an exemplar for what could be done to build and run a national rural, regional and remote education alliance.

Recommendations	
15.	That the Rural Education Forum Australia (REFA), the Society for the Provision of Education in Rural Australia (SPERA), the Isolated Children's Parents' Association (ICPA), and the Local Government Association Australia (LGAA) work together with other key stakeholders to develop a National Rural, Regional & Remote Education Alliance.
16.	That the Commonwealth Government resources the National Rural, Regional and Remote Education Alliance based upon the National Rural Health Alliance's resourcing and operations.
17.	That each tier of government ensure there are rigorous processes for local rural community input into policies, programs, projects and provides associated budget allocations.

Community Participation & Capacity Building

Resources from governments, business and industry, whether these are local, interstate, Australia-wide, or global, play an integral part in maintaining the life of rural, regional and remote communities. Together with essential services including education, health, and proper functioning and easily accessible ICT, they play a crucial role in sustaining and growing rural, regional and remote communities.

The following recommendations focus on community and capacity building.

Recommendations	
18.	That governments and business/industry undertake to establish sustainable local communities around mining and other operations and to stimulate a distributed, regional economic growth model.
19.	That action is taken to resource the development of regional capacity, empowering local communities to ensure their voice is heard on matters concerning them by local, state and federal government.
20.	That key businesses and industries are encouraged to participate in ensuring education is a partnership with communities, including the appropriate lobbying of government and liaison with the education sectors.
21.	That policies for sustainable rural communities acknowledge and develop processes that support and maintain capacity-building within those communities.
22.	That rural communities be strongly encouraged to utilise human, cultural and regional assets in constructing student-led curricula to benefit student learning, and create opportunities to promote inspirational local role models for rural young people.
23.	That business and industry use the National Broadband Network roll-out to raise the profile of strong professional role models within rural communities, with a view to making education attractive to socially excluded individuals and groups.
24.	That state and Commonwealth government policies and actions acknowledge the diversity of rural and remote Australia and in doing so avoid a metro-centric “one size fits all” approach especially to service provision, and that policy is implemented in consultation with local communities.

Rural Voice

Significant work needs to be undertaken to ensure that rural, regional and remote Australia has an effective voice in shaping and determining policies and decisions which impact on the well being of individuals and communities.

Recommendations	
25.	That resourcing is secured so the Rural Education Forum Australia model of Rural Youth Ambassadors (as trialled in Victoria) can be rolled out and implemented nationally.
26.	That relevant government agencies, businesses, NGOs and peak bodies develop strategies to engage the media in promoting positive rural stories including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The focus on the centrality of primary industries to Australia’s future, sustainability

	<p>and emerging career opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The promotion of 'rural achievers' including graduates of rural education, educators and program/project/school initiatives • Engaging metropolitan people, in particular the 'new generation' in understanding the important roles that rural communities play in our society • Creating awareness of the limits to growth and the changes that will take place due to climate change and overpopulation
27.	That environmental management intelligence be incorporated, where relevant, into research and policy making about rural communities and rural issues.
28.	That the advocacy of SPERA, REFA and others keep the spotlight on the importance of rural education and related issues.
29.	That state and territory governments appoint a Rural Thinker and Communicator in Residence.
30.	That the Australian Government convenes a youth parliament, on a national, state and local level, to debate and make recommendations about initial rural issues and Australia's future.

Policy Development

It is widely felt that government policy processes and developments do not seem to take local rural, regional and remote knowledge into sufficient consideration. In order for rural, regional and remote Australia to be and remain vibrant and productive, it is essential that policy makers who live and work in urban environments access and use local knowledge and practices when making decisions.

The following recommendations focus on strategies for improving policy development intended for or which impact upon rural communities.

Recommendations	
31.	That a differentiated policy approach be applied to small rural/remote communities and larger rural communities.
32.	That incentives are provided around each state's individual needs, eg. Building the Education Revolution (BER)
33.	That policy for sustainable rural communities acknowledge the importance of creating and resourcing capacity-building within those communities.
34.	That funding models for rural educational positions acknowledge and be built upon a set of values and funding principles that are specific to the rural education context.
35.	That governments reveal the true per capita costs of rural service providers, weighing the savings made in withdrawal of existing services against the medium and long term financial and social costs of alternative positions.
36.	That rural policy take into consideration the variable ways that global influences impact upon rural communities, and recognises the varying levels of social capacity within rural communities.

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| <p>37. That rural policy makers encourage curricula initiatives utilising local knowledge to reflect the learning needs, passions and interests of local students and requirements of industry.</p> |
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Schools, Learning & Futures

Rural, regional and remote schools are the hub of their communities, and without them communities often cease to exist. It is therefore essential that the right quantum and mix of resources be provided to sustain, develop and grow the local and/or regional school.

The following recommendations are concerned with the importance of rural education, its locality and uniqueness.

Recommendations
<p>38. That research funding for rural education and sustainability be a national priority.</p>
<p>39. That policy for sustainable rural communities acknowledge the importance of the role of education in creating and maintaining capacity-building capital within those communities.</p>
<p>40. That all funding models recognise the diversity that exists across non-metropolitan Australia, and that the uniqueness of each location be recognised by governments in the implementation of policy.</p>



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