

# SPERA NEWSLETTER – November 2012



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## Society for the Provision of Education in Rural Australia Inc.

ABN 282 727 044 01

### From the President

It is with great pleasure that I write this column for the SPERA newsletter as the newly elected President of SPERA. It is a great honour to continue to work collaboratively with others in the Association to continue to raise the profile of education in rural and remote Australia. As the incoming president I am grateful for the wonderful position SPERA is in as an organisation and this is due in no small way to the exceptional leadership of Emmy Terry. Emmy's passion, enthusiasm and dedication to the SPERA and rural education more broadly are certainly things that I wish to emulate. While Emmy has stood down from the role of president, she continues as a dedicated member of our organisation which is fantastic!

In her President's Annual Report to the AGM (held during the Annual Conference at University of Southern Queensland, 26-28 September), Emmy highlighted the wonderful work that has been achieved over the past year (please refer to the report included here for further details), as well as highlighting the potential impacts that changing social and political contexts can have on organisations such as ours. As the incoming president, I am keen to ensure that we continue to build the Association's public profile as well as its membership. As part of the recent Annual Conference I facilitated a think tank where many new and innovative ideas for building engagement and enhancing impact came forward. Along with the rest of the Executive Team we will be working to develop an implementation plan around some key initiatives including engagement of pre-service educators, state-based rural and remote champions and international collaboration. I look forward to sharing these developments over the coming months and encourage all members to actively engage with rural and remote education issues locally and nationally.

### Karen Noble SPERA President

In this newsletter we present the Annual report from the immediate past president, Emmy Terry.

### President's Annual Report 2012

It is with pleasure that I table SPERA's 2011/12 Annual Report. The report is presented in three sections. The first section provides an overview of SPERA's work over the past twelve months. Much of this section appears as the Welcome to the 2012 Nation Conference and reproduced in the Proceedings for the conference. The second part of the report looks to the future and, as this will be my final report as President, I take the opportunity to reflect on my term over as President over the past five years to suggest future directions for the organisation. The third section of this Annual Report provides me with another reflective opportunity – this time to look back over the past five years and provide a summative assessment of my term of office.

## **SPERA 2011/12**

It has been another busy year for SPERA and from my perspective one of the most productive over the five years at least in terms of the organisations engagement with others to promote rural education. In this section I will cover:

- The 2012 National Conference
- The SPERA Journal – The Australian and International Journal of Rural Education
- AREA
- TERRRN Project and Links with RRRTEC
- WACUTS
- Pre-Service Portfolio
- Engagement with AITSL
- Illustrations of Practice Project
- Sidney Myer Chair of Rural Education and communities
- Membership of the National Education Forum (NEF)
- ISFIRE3

### **The 2012 National Conference**

This year's Conference has attracted 21 papers and presentations along with three excellent key note speakers.

- Dr Aaron Drummond, Research Fellow, Sidney Myer Chair of Rural Education and Communities, Flinders University, School of Education: The Australian Curriculum: Rural Implementation Matters.
- Dr Pauline Taylor, Senior Lecturer, James Cook University: Widening participation in higher education: policy, practice and possibilities for regional and rural Australia.
- Professor Belinda Tynan Pro Vice-Chancellor Learning, Teaching and Quality at the University of Southern Queensland: Open Education Resources: Developing connections for the next generation of student-centred learning environments.

The National Conference remains a key medium for SPERA to fulfil its mission of promoting a positive view of education and training in rural areas and encouraging innovation and initiative in the provision of rural services; supporting and encouraging rural communities and educators to work towards the provision of quality education and training; and providing a framework for the sharing of concerns, issues and experiences relating to education and training in rural areas.

### **SPERA's Journal - the Australian and International Journal of Rural Education**

2012 marks the first year of the new journal title. The decision made last year to change the name from *Education in Rural Australia* to the *Australian and International Journal of Rural Education* has given the publication greater international appeal. Likewise, the decision to publish the conference papers in the journal rather than conference proceedings has been very successful. The readership of the journal continues to increase. This increased interest in the journal as a focal point for research reflects, I believe, a growing interest in and awareness of rural education.

Dr Aaron Drummond's paper, *Examining the Average Citation Index of Education in Rural Australia (now Australian and International Journal of Rural Education)*, presented at this year's national Conference details the growing readership of the Journal and makes some valuable recommendations to SPERA regarding the ongoing development of the publication. As with the conference the journal is a major medium for SPERA to achieve its mission and objectives.

### **Australian Rural Education Award**

John Borserio continues to work tirelessly on promoting and judging the Australian Rural Education Award. This is a difficult task as annually, there are many worthy recipients. Thank you to John and his team – Brian O'Neill, Paul Murphy and Terry Carter. This year's AREA award will be presented tonight at the 28<sup>th</sup> National SPERA Conference dinner.

### **SPERA Newsletter**

The SPERA Newsletter and website continue to provide our membership with updates in regional and remote education. We would like to further profile regional and remote schools as a feature. You are encouraged to send through articles, photographs and any news of interest for future publications and to post on the website. My thanks is extended to Michael Preece for his work and leadership in this area.

### **SPERA Website**

The SPERA website continues to evolve. We are in the process of developing a private section for members. Hopefully this will be activated in the near future. Log-in details will be provided to all members. The site currently has up to date information on this conference and also on ISFIRE 3. Any suggestions for improvement are welcome. Please view the website at [www.spera.asn.au](http://www.spera.asn.au)

### **TERRRN Project and Links with RRRTEC**

Another project in which SPERA has been a partner came to a conclusion in June this year. SPERA's involvement in the Office of Learning and Teaching funded project *Developing Strategies to Address Critical Teacher Attraction and Retention Issues in Australian Rural, Regional and Remote Schools* along with those from the Tertiary Educators' Rural, Regional and Remote Network (TERRRN) resulted in the development of a pre-service training framework for universities. Key features of the training framework include: an introductory module titled *Social Networking and Teaching in Rural, Regional and Remote*; an A3 chart titled *Graduate Knowledge for Rural, Regional and Remote Contexts* that maps essential knowledge and skills against the National Professional Standards for Teachers (NPST) and need by graduate teachers in the non-metropolitan context, a package of seven teacher guides that have as their foundation the NPST, a field experience titled *Welcome to the Bush* and the placement of interns in rural schools. An overview of the Framework will be presented at the conference. You will note that a package including a CD is included in your conference satchels. This package has also been uploaded on the website. Please read through the various components of the package that reflect the depth of work that has been undertaken in terms pre-service education within the regional and remote context.

### **WACUTS**

SPERA is also a partner in the Western Australian Combined Universities Training School Project. The pre-service teachers from Murdoch University, The University of Western Australia and Curtin University involved in this project spend between one and three days in a designated training school for the entire school year. Interns are assigned to a class and the class teacher is the intern's mentor. The mentors receive training in their role and complete the Mentoring for Effective Teaching which is part of the Teacher Education Done Differently project developed by the Queensland University of Technology. The interns are seen as members of the school's teaching team rather than students. Interns are completing their final year of study while work in their school and are selected on merit to participate in the program. Schools and inters have responded very positively to the project noting the advantage of pre-service teachers being able to experience the full "lifecycle" of a school year prior to graduating. Interns' note that while the program is demanding, juggling the requirement of the university course and the constant demands of classroom teaching, the opportunity to bridge the gap between theory and practice is invaluable. Of the fifty pre-service teachers involved in the project, 19 elected to take up internships in rural and regional schools.

### **Engagement with AITSL**

SPERA commends the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) for having a focus on rural and remote education especially in terms of ensuring that initiatives to improve the quality of teaching and leadership take the regional and remote/non-metropolitan context into account. SPERA has welcomed the opportunity to participate in and contribute a rural perspective to AITSL's Focus Group meetings throughout 2011 and 2012. This has involved SPERA advocating on behalf of rural education during discussions on the National Professional Standards for Teachers and their supporting Illustrations of Practice, the development of the Features of Practice, the Leadership Characteristics for Principals and School Leaders, a 360 reflective tool and the Australian Teacher Performance and Development Framework.

SPERA was also well represented on the reference group for one of AITSL's pilot studies in the NPST in action. The pilot study was undertaken by Rural Education Forum of Australia for AITSL with the aim of informing and supporting teacher professional learning through an online environment that includes the use of group forums, topic forums, blogging, professional readings and resources, and a range of connectivity capacities. The Murchison Cluster of Schools consists of eight remote schools located in an area the size of Victoria, 300 kilometres from Geraldton in Western Australia. The network schools are: Cue Primary School, Mount Magnet District High School, Meekatharra

District High School, Mullewa District High School, Pia Wadjarri Remote Community School, Sandstone Remote Community School, Yalgoo Primary School and Yulga Jinna Remote Community School. The network has a teaching staff of 65 (including principals), 474 students – of whom 396 are Indigenous. Five of the eight schools are classified Level 3 (numbers between 10 and 100). Over the period of the pilot, the network developed three online professional learning forums through the CEP website.

At the conclusion of the project the majority of teachers believed that the use of the online platform significantly supported their professional learning, that their collaborative practice across the network was enhanced, that it enabled them to engage in professional dialogue both within their school and across the network, assisted them to self-reflect upon their professional learning and their knowledge of available resources was improved. The majority believed that access to the online platform was straightforward and that it was easy to use.

The pilot study undertaken by REFA for AITSL was one of 17 undertaken by the Institute. The University of New England evaluated all 17 of AITSL's Pilot Projects and Dr Gary McPhan from UNE provided an overview of the finding from the pilots at this year's conference.

SPERA congratulates AITSL on its work and urges all members to visit their website to stay in touch with developments.

### *Illustrations of Practice Project*

I also take this opportunity to acknowledge AITSL for involving professional associations in developing support materials for their initiatives. In May year SPERA was successful in winning an AITSL contract to produce four Illustrations of Practice. SPERA has joined forces with the Tertiary Educators Rural, Regional and Remote Network (TERRRN) and the Country Education Project Western Australia, who were also successful in being awarded an AITSL contract to produce Illustrations of Practice. Across the two projects, eight Illustrations will be produced – all at the Graduate career stage and within a rural context. With the exception of three Illustrations, interns from the Western Australian Combined Universities project have volunteered their time and experience to enable the production to take place. The interns and schools that have made these two project possible are: Annaliese Dawson (Murdoch University), Elizabeth Corp (Murdoch University), and Alexandra Gilbert (Edith Cowan University) who are all interns at O'Connor Primary School in Kalgoorlie; Laura Wilson (University of Western Australia) at Harvey Primary School; Natalie Donkin (Murdoch University) at Harvey Senior High School; Alana Reid (Curtin University) at York District High School; and Tanya Cox (Murdoch University) at Kellerberrin District High School. Others who are not involved in the WACUTS internship program and who providing an Illustration of Practice are: Tanith Dent, Natalie Perott and Olivia Owens. Natalie has recently graduated from Edith Cowan and taken up an appointment at O'Connor Primary School (Kalgoorlie) after enjoying the opportunity to complete a practicum at the school in 2011. Tanith also completed a practicum at O'Connor in 2011 and has recently returned to the school to fill a vacancy. Tanith is in the final stages of completing her teaching qualification and is working at O'Connor under a Limited Authority to Teach (LAT) arrangement granted by the Western Australian College of Teaching. Olivia took up her first appointment as a graduate teacher at Toodyay District High School this year.

The Illustrations of Practiced produced by SPERA and CEPWA should be posted on the AITSL website early in 2013.

### *Pre-service Teacher Network*

Of note is the number of pre-service teachers who are proving to be a valuable membership base for SPERA. I thank Paula Jervis-Tracey for her deep interest and the work she has completed in this area. Paula undertook a major survey of pre-service teachers at Griffith University. This will pave the way for future work and will inform SPERA of the needs of pre-service students. This year, we had 14 pre-service students apply for scholarships to attend the conference. Students were from universities across Australia. Four of these scholarship winners (Megan Basell, Catherine Friend, Abbey James and Penelope Chesters) are here with us today. Of note also is one student from Western Australia who missed out on a scholarship but still paid her own way to be here with us this week. I commend her dedication and commitment to rural and remote education. Thank you Sarah! Other pre-service teachers at this conference include Kathleen Cross and Lorrae Charles who recently graduated from USQ and were Education Award Winners, sponsored by SPERA) for their outstanding achievement in rural education at both the theoretical and practical levels. We also welcome Charles Neville, sponsored by the Education Department of Queensland.

### *Work with Sidney Myer Chair of Rural Education and Communities*

SPERA has continued to work closely with the Sidney Myer Chair of Rural Education and Communities. Following Summit 2011 Rural Futures Matter- A Sustainable Australia, SPERA continued to work with the SMC to refine the recommendations and produce the Summit Report. As part of this work six of the Summit recommendations were identified as an initial workload for the SMC and SPERA to focus on over a two a two year period (2012 – 2013). The Summit Report can be found on both the SPERA and SMC websites.

### *Membership of the National Education Forum (NEF)*

Over the last year SPERA has been a member of the National Education Forum (NEF). The National Education Forum works with national education-related organisations and their networks on national issues of significance. The member organisations represent educational practitioners, parents and relevant community groups with an interest in education. As a SPERA representative I recently attended a meeting in Melbourne, where much discussion and debate eventuated on how the organisation could become a more effective voice for national teaching associations. The NEF is currently developing a proposal to create a more authoritative body to speak on behalf of national associations. SPERA will keep its members informed of developments through its newsletters and website.

### *ISFIRE3*

SPERA and The University of Western Australia will be hosting the 3rd International Symposium for Innovation in Rural Education (ISFIRE) at UWA, Perth, Western Australia from 11-13February 2013. This International Symposium will bring together international teachers, school administrators, teacher educators, academics, community groups and organizations and parents who are passionate about rural education. The 3rd ISFIRE symposium will be a key means of building and strengthening international rural networks, drawing together an increasing body of work focused on globally improving education outcomes for rural, regional and remote students. A stimulating education program of presentations, hands on workshops and panel sessions will be a key feature of the program. Social events will also be a feature of this three day event. Currently we have received an excellent range of over 36 abstracts from educators in Australia, Canada, USA, South Africa, Costa Rica, Lombok Indonesia, Papua Indonesia, China, Nigeria and Iceland.

Keynote speakers include: Professor Michael Corbett: School of Education, Acadia University, Canada; Peter Merrotsy Senior Lecturer in Gifted and Talented Education, University of New England, Australia; and Dr. Kai Schafft Associate Professor of Education in the College of Education at Pennsylvania State University, USA.

The Theme of ISFIRE is *Rural Education on the Global Stage: Connecting for Innovation* with sub themes: Leadership; Indigenous Perspective; Curriculum and Pedagogy; Community and Inter-kEline registration which is now open.

### *Reflection*

It has been a great privilege to have served as President of SPERA over the past five years. When I was preparing the list of SPERA Presidents to include in this year's conference proceeding it dawned on me that I am the second longest serving President after Shelia King' significant term of ten years.

I take this opportunity to acknowledge all those who have support SPERA and worked with me as executive members over the past five years. Working with such a dedicated group of educators has been an honour. Their hard work along with their sound counsel, willingness to take on portfolios, and get things done has been greatly appreciated. Importantly, their friendship and great fellowship is treasured and will remain a highlight of my career in rural education.

For me an important feature of SPERA's work over the past five years has been building partnerships and consolidating a strong rural education network. SPERA has a long history of linking and bringing people together with diverse interests in rural education and training to promote the development of regional Australia – in fact this is SPERA's mission. I think what SPERA has been good at over the past five years has been actively seeking new opportunities to do this. SPERA's partnership and involvement with the TERRR Network, the WACUTS project and the 2011 Rural Summit are good examples of this proactive approach. Having the organisation contribute expertise to these projects and being able to get the SPERA logo (brand) linked to significant undertakings in rural education has, I believe, been significant for SPERA.

Over the past five years SPERA's partnership with universities has also strengthened. The kind offer by many universities to host our national conferences has also strengthened this bond with universities and is helping to grow the network of those interested in improving education and training outcomes across rural and remote Australia. For me it makes a great deal of sense for the SPERA national conferences to be held at universities or in partnership with other organisations working at the coal face of regional education. I take this opportunity to again thank the very cooperative staff at this year's host, the University of Southern Queensland, and in the past, Flinders University, the University of the Sunshine Coast, and the University of Western Australia with whom I have worked along with the SPERA Executive to help bring our conferences together.

### *Future Directions*

I believe that while SPERA has achieved a great deal over the past five years there is still much to do. In addition to my role as president of SPERA over the past five years I have taken on more and more work that is really the role of an executive officer. I have shared this role with Don and I believe we have worked well as a team doing many administrative tasks that exceed what can truly be expected of people working in a voluntary capacity. I believe that in many ways, doing this work has contributed to the success of SPERA over the past five years. However, to be truly successful and achieve its mission, SPERA needs to be seen as a business and run like a business. Many of the administrative tasks that we have undertaken make a start at establishing this business footing and provide our organisation with a sense of professionalism. While these are still some way to go, I believe, in establishing this business footing, maintaining many of the practices we have put in place over the past five years will be difficult in the future because they are not sustainable with a voluntary workforce. In fact I believe that in many ways SPERA is in a very precarious position and could very easily have the same fate as REFA. Without maintaining the current level of work that we are putting into SPERA there is a real danger that the ground made over the past few years will be lost.

The solution is that SPERA must work towards employing an executive officer/business manager. One thing that Don as treasurer has done over the past five years is to be very frugal with our finances. While our financial position is improving it is still not really strong. With a membership base, that on average over the past five years is fifty, SPERA's guaranteed income is only \$5,500. We have relied on the conference over the past five years to run at a profit to boost our annual income and while this has been successful averaging around \$3 000 income. Income from CAL as a result of increased readership of the journal is also improving our income stream has now reached the extent where the cost of producing the journal is cost neutral. Maintaining the income from CAL will depend on sustaining and building on the improved quality achievements of the past five years.

SPERA has been noted at a national level and is now a point of contact on regional and remote issues for organisations such as Senate Standing Committees, Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership, Rural Education Forum (now disbanded), National Education Forum, Professional Teaching Council of WA and general media. I have outlined earlier SPERA's roles re Sidney Myer Chair Rural Education and Communities, AITSL and NEF.

I thank Don Boyd for his role as Secretary/Treasurer. Under Don's guidance SPERA's finances and assets have grown significantly. Don has also taken on the major role of developing the dynamic Illustrations of Practice for AITSL.

Finally, I would like to thank the SPERA Executive team for the commitment to rural education and to the University of Southern Queensland for hosting this very important conference.



Emmy Terry  
SPERA President, 27 September 2012



Opening of the 28<sup>th</sup> National SPERA Conference at the University of Southern Queensland, Toowoomba Campus

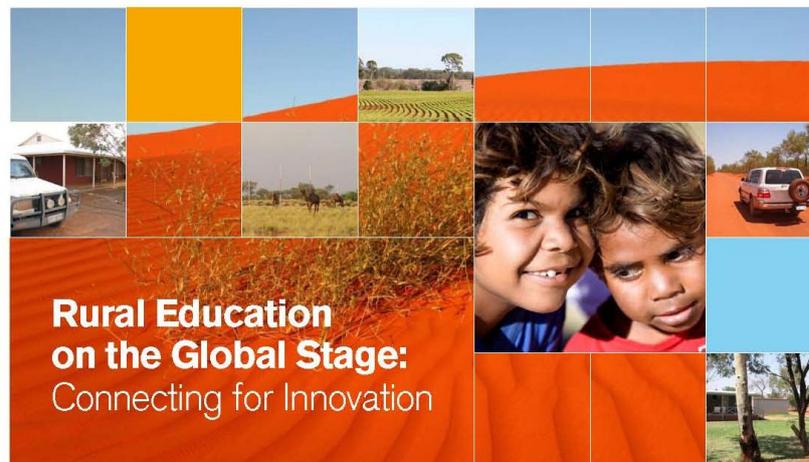
Prof Nita Temmerman, Dean, Faculty of Education USQ; John Borserio CEO Catholic Education Office Toowoomba; Julie Grantham Director-General Department of Education, Training and Employment; Dr Karen Noble, newly elected SPERA President; Emmy Terry, SPERA Immediate Past President.

# CONFERENCE 2013

## The 3rd International Symposium for Innovation in Rural Education (ISFIRE)

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In Partnership with the University of Western Australia; Society for the  
Provision of Education for Rural Australia and the University of New England  
(SiMERR)



**Date:** 13 – 15 February 2013

**Venue:** University of Western Australia, Perth, Western Australia

**Theme:** Rural Education on the Global Stage: Connecting for Innovation

**Sub Themes:**

- Leadership
- Indigenous Perspective
- Curriculum and Pedagogy
- Community and Inter-sectoral Networks
- Initial Teacher Education



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WESTERN AUSTRALIA  
*Achieve International Excellence*

Elaine Sharplin (The University of Western Australia)

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[www.spera.asn.au](http://www.spera.asn.au)

**REGISTRATION NOW AVAILABLE ON-LINE at [www.spera.asn.au](http://www.spera.asn.au)**

# Pre-Service Educator Scholarships

Once again, SPERA has been provided with sponsorship to enable a number of pre-service educators to attend the N28th National SPERA Conference at the University of Southern Queensland in September this year.



**DIOCESE OF TOOWOOMBA  
CATHOLIC EDUCATION OFFICE**

..... act justly; love tenderly; walk humbly with your God.  
Micah 6:8

*Pre-service Educator Sponsorships to attend 2012 SPERA NATIONAL CONFERENCE is provided by SPERA, the Isolated Children's Parents Association QLD, Isolated Children's Parents Association WA, and the Catholic Education Office Toowoomba.*

This year SPERA received applications from 18 pre-service educators from around Australia.

The successful applicants' details are below:

## **Megan Basell**



Megan Basell was born in Port Hedland and raised on a farm on the outskirts of Geraldton from the age of six. She has never been a stranger to the rural lifestyle of Western Australia. In 2009, Megan made the decision to move to Perth to commence her Bachelor of Education and Bachelor of Arts degree at the University of Western Australia.

Megan is now in her final year of university and looks forward to being able to return to rural Western Australia to teach secondary English. As Megan has always been passionate about enabling rural and remote students with the tools and resources necessary to continue their education after school, she is very excited about her involvement in the 28th National SPERA Conference. During her time in Toowoomba she hopes to gain an insight into the ways in which professionals from all areas and educational backgrounds come together to develop the foundations that will provide rural and remote students with the best opportunities possible.

## **Penelope Chesters**



Penny currently works as a music therapist but also has some academic background in science and maths. She works with children in a variety of school- and community-based settings including a special school and early intervention for disadvantaged families with young children who may experience domestic violence, social isolation, adolescent parents, mental health issues, indigenous status or low socio-economic status. She is very passionate about her work and lives with the premise of "making a difference" to children's lives.

Penny wanted to extend her ability to help and inspire vulnerable children in their early years of school; hence, she is completing a Graduate Diploma in Early Childhood Education at Griffith Uni on the Gold Coast. She requested to undertake her final professional experience at a low socio-economic National Partnership school in a rural location after completing her previous professional experience in an urban independent school. She is looking forward to the adventure and is appreciative of the opportunity to attend the SPERA conference to help prepare for the challenge.

## Catherine Friend



Catherine began her studies of a Bachelor of Primary Education at the Queensland University of Technology in 2007 and is shortly to begin her final internship in a rural school located in the South West Darling Downs region of Queensland. In 2011 Catherine was accepted into the Kelvin Grove Teacher Education Centre of Excellence, a program that aims specifically to mentor and prepare pre-service teachers for a rural education placement.

During her time at university, Catherine has worked as a teacher-aide in a special education unit at a high school, which has greatly contributed to her teaching skills. She is highly motivated to provide an education that is future-oriented, equity creating, connected to the world outside the classroom and above all, challenging. Catherine is grateful for the opportunity to attend the SPERA conference and believes that the knowledge, skills and support mechanisms she will gain from attending such a conference will further prepare her for her imminent rural placement.

## Abbey James



Abbey James was born in Loxton, a small country town in the Riverland, South Australia approximately 250kms north-east of Adelaide. Before commencing tertiary study, she lived on a rural property 17kms north of Loxton and completed her school education in 2008 having travelled by school bus to school in Loxton for 13 years. Abbey's grandparents have a horticultural and farming property, which has given her firsthand experience of life on the land.

In 2009 Abbey transitioned to Adelaide to complete her Bachelor of Education (R-7) and Bachelor of Arts degree at Flinders University. In her Bachelor of Arts degree she majored in Digital Media Studies which is particularly relevant for students completing their education in a rural setting as technology is an essential medium to connect students with the wider world. Abbey is now in her final year of the double degree, and is also completing her Masters in Education (Special Education).

During her teaching degree Abbey completed two of her three teaching practicum's in rural schools and worked casually as an Early Childhood Worker at a rural Preschool. Abbey is passionate about working in the country so she can provide high quality learning experiences for students ensuring they are not disadvantaged by where they live.

# Pre-Service Educator Reports

## Megan Basell: Pre-Service Educator: The University of Western Australia

Titled "Developing Connections for Sustainable Futures - Networking the Bush", the 2012 28th National SPERA Conference was held at the University of Southern Queensland's beautiful Toowoomba campus. The conference brought together a vast range of professionals from all areas and educational backgrounds to discuss and develop ways to build and strengthen Australia's rural network. In doing so, the Society for the Provision of Education for Rural Australia provided a medium in which these professionals could work together to focus on improving education outcomes in the bush.

Over the course of the conference I was constantly overwhelmed by the large amount of support for rural education that exists in all areas of Australia. It was truly inspiring to witness the unwavering passion and commitment of those attending the conference in their aim to improve rural education. As a result, I felt reassured in my decision to become a rural educator and considered the conference to be an essential first step towards truly developing my own teaching pedagogy; pedagogy centred on providing my students the outstanding educational experience that every student deserves.

During the conference I was privileged to experience interesting and inspiring keynote speakers and parallel sessions, and actively participate in panel discussions and networking activities that raised a number of significant issues and ideas. One session of particular significance was the “Identifying Actions” session run by Dr Karen Noble from the University of Southern Queensland. The impromptu session invited all of those in attendance to form groups to discuss the “Fields of Activities” formulated in the 2011 National Education Summit and identify ways in which to improve rural education based on these fields. The “Fields of Activities” consisted of six major themes (each of which were assigned to a different group):

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

As a pre-service teacher I was immediately inclined to join the “Teacher and Leadership Preparation” group and found myself instantly surrounded by pre-service and graduate students who were all passionate about sharing their experiences, ideas and concerns regarding the preparation of undergraduate students. Facilitated by Assistant Professor and SPERA Executive Elaine Sharplin, the session was an invaluable forum for the next generation of teachers committed to rural education as it provided the opportunity to identify and discuss necessary actions for improving education in rural and remote areas.

The session was a pivotal point during my time at the conference as it was the first opportunity that I and my fellow pre-service and graduate teachers have been given to voice our opinions to someone in a position that can allow our voices to be heard. Thus through this collaboration, a multitude of actions were identified and presented to SPERA by the pre-service and graduate teachers of today to help improve rural education through early intervention and adequate preparation for the undergraduate students of tomorrow.

I can only describe my time at the 2012 28th National SPERA Conference as both a positive and life changing experience. The networks I have established and the friendships I have made during my time in Toowoomba have been crucial to my own development as an educator and I will aim to maintain contact with all of the wonderful people I have shared this experience with. I now endeavour to become an advocate both for SPERA and for rural education through the facilitation of discussion sessions and presentations to inform Education students at the University of Western Australia of the outstanding achievements of SPERA and their contribution to improving rural education. Furthermore, I aim to become an advocate for SPERA and rural education by embedding all that I have learnt during my time at the conference into my own classroom. SPERA has certainly taught me that against all odds, students can achieve remarkable results if they are encouraged to and given the opportunity by a role model who believes they can.

Therefore, I aim to become a rural teacher that inspires their students to realise what they can achieve in the face of adversity; rather than what they cannot.

Thus as the recipient of the ICPA WA Scholarship I felt extremely privileged to be given the opportunity to attend the conference. Without the support and sponsorship from SPERA, the Isolated Children’s Parents’ Association of Western Australia and The Diocese of Toowoomba Catholic Education Office, I could not have made the three and a half thousand kilometre journey from Western Australia to reach the conference in Toowoomba. The generosity of these sponsors allowed me the opportunity to immerse myself in the conference proceedings and gain an invaluable experience as a pre-service teacher; an experience that I am truly grateful for and would recommend to any other pre-service teacher passionate about rural education.

Thank you for the opportunity to attend the SPERA conference. I really had no idea what to expect and I have been inspired by what I have witnessed and heard from people who share common goals and a passion for rural and remote education. It was inspiring to be amongst a group as varied as it was, with teacher educators, experienced teachers, graduate teachers and pre-service teachers; there solely because of their passion and belief that education in rural and remote areas needs special support and the belief that, working together, we can provide that support.

Although I haven't started my rural placement I now face the daunting prospect with renewed enthusiasm and excitement which, I must admit, I had lost a bit feeling bogged down with final university assignments and the thought of packing up my life for seven weeks. I realize now that I'm not packing up my life, I'm simply moving it to another *space*; a space inhabited by people and relationships which will both influence, and be influenced by, my actions within that space. My sense of *being*, the challenging nature of working in an unfamiliar place and the need to *belong* will influence me as I *become* an early childhood teacher. If relationships are the key to a successful teaching experience, the question is, "Do I have the ability to nurture good relationships with children, colleagues and the community?" I believe I do and this will be my focus.

The recurring question from the conference seemed to be, "Where to from here?" How can I, as a soon-to-be graduate teacher, answer this question? What can I do to enhance partnerships between rural and remote areas, teacher educators and future teachers? The only rural experience I have had to date is my own childhood and a few years in a rural area as a parent. After attending the conference I have developed an awareness of the importance of *place*; the importance of implementing a curriculum in context. It is up to me to create the place, the experience. My relationships within the rural environment will be the defining feature of working in the rural area. Children in rural and remote schools need the same high quality teaching that I witnessed on my first professional experience in a wealthy metropolitan independent school. As a pre-service teacher my role is to build capacity to respond creatively to the new *place* of teaching in a rural school. It is a challenge which I now face with optimism and enthusiasm.

'*Make a difference*' has always been my professional mantra, first as a music therapist and now as a soon-to-be teacher. For me personally, that has been the recurring theme of this conference. *How* can I make a difference? What difference can I make? There are fantastic things happening with summits and teacher training frameworks and research and university projects and inspirational teachers. But, in the same way that a drop of water creates outward reaching circles of movement, that will be my influence; I have the power of speech. What will I do to profile SPERA and its inspirational work? I will speak out. I will talk to university lecturers. I will encourage a connection between my university and rural school. And then I will focus on *being* an advocate for rural and remote teaching, *belonging* to the advocacy team and *becoming* a teacher of inspiration to whatever children I have in my care.

..... I've been *out bush* now for six days and I'm exhausted from all the new experiences, not to mention the 1084 km drive. It's been interesting talking to teachers, many of whom emanated from the bush. One teacher explained that the reason she became a teacher was because of her experience of teachers who obviously didn't want to be in her rural school. Through awareness of SPERA's support and mentoring of graduate teachers, I believe this can be turned around, drop by drop, perhaps with a focus of facilitating pre-service or graduate teachers' relationships in their unfamiliar rural *place*, essential for their success. The SPERA conference has shown me a way to be a part of this transformation and I welcome the opportunity to speak out wherever I can.

#### **Catherine Friend: Pre-Service Educator, Queensland University of Technology**

I grew up and was educated for much of my schooling in Gladstone, a regional town on the Central Coast of Queensland. There, I believe I received an education that was supported by a close-knit community. I moved to Brisbane to complete the last 2 years of high school and to begin my university studies. I am someone, then, who had a different upbringing from many of my metropolitan peers. The experience of rural schooling has given me a deep respect for the unique opportunities a rural community offers its local school. I see my long awaited graduation as a milestone to reach before I go to a rural location to teach.

It is well documented that many metropolitan pre-service teachers are fearful and apprehensive about moving out to a rural location to teach. I have also heard and seen this first hand at my own university. I, on the other hand, consider myself to have a positive frame of mind regarding teaching in a rural location and I credit this to two significant experiences that have greatly impacted on my preparedness to move out to and teach in the country. In 2011, I was accepted into the Kelvin Grove Teacher Education Centre of Excellence, an initiative between the Queensland University of Technology and the Department of Education and Training. The program aims to support graduate teachers in taking up rural teaching positions in a Queensland public schools. This program operated in the last one and a half years of my degree and in this time, greatly supported and prepared me personally and professionally, to teach in a rural location. This was the first of two major events that has made a significant impact on preparing me to teach in a rural location.

The second major event that significantly impacted my readiness to teach in a rural location was receiving a generous scholarship to attend the 28<sup>th</sup> National SPERA Rural Education Conference titled Developing Connections for Sustainable Future – Networking the Bush. The conference was held at the University of Southern Queensland in Toowoomba and I regard my attendance at the conference as a life changing experience. On day one of the conference, I realised that I was anxious about the transition to my town of 1000 people for a plethora of reasons. However, the opportunity to network with a wide range of Australian teachers and academics, the new knowledge and skills I learnt and the support mechanisms I created at the conference turned my fear into confidence and, in turn, my confidence into aspirations.

One of the most influential messages at the conference was a presentation 'Contemporary Paradigms of Rural Teaching in Early Childhood: The Significance of Place', led by Nicole Green and Genevieve Noone. They posed the idea that it is very hard to be comfortable when one is feeling out of place. Having just completed four weeks of a rural internship in a 1000 people town in the Darling Downs region, I have lived this uncomfortable challenge. Transitioning to this community has been personally challenging because there have been times where I have felt uncomfortably out of place: the place is not familiar, the people are not familiar, and the social discourses in which the community participate are foreign to me. However, at each challenging point, I have remembered Green & Noone's message and now, at the end of my fourth week, I have successfully overcome this trap of feeling uncomfortably out of place. Instead, I have embraced this unfamiliarity by participating within the community to create familiarity with place, people and social discourses...and now feel a beginning sense of belonging.

Of particular significance for my own pathway was a conference presentation by Karen Noble and Robyn Henderson about supporting the transition of a graduate teacher into the world of work. The research reinforced the importance of critical reflection as a process for problem solving issues that arise within the teaching profession. Due to further isolation issues that can arise for teachers in rural locations, I felt that a proactive strategy would be for me to find a similar supportive network that mimicked this study. Since then, I have committed to being part of research that aims to explore the social and individual practices that enhance early career teacher resilience and identity formation in rural and remote settings. I have voiced my intention of being part of the study as a way to make positive changes in the way that pre-service teachers view going rural.

Most importantly, at the conclusion of the conference, I was left with an urging to contribute meaningfully to rural education. Since the conclusion of the conference I have set about to document my experiences while on rural internship in the form of a video diary entry. I have done this with the intention that this research could be used to educate current pre-service teachers at universities who are considering taking a rural pathway. For my own reflective purposes, watching these diary entries is enlightening and it is clear to me that I have experienced and overcome many challenges out in the country.

My thanks and gratitude goes to the Isolated Children's Parents' Association of Queensland and the Society for the Provision of Education for Rural Australia (SPERA) for affording me the opportunity to attend this year's national conference. The experience has positively influenced my beliefs and attitudes around rural education and I now have aspirations to contribute to and alter the negative attitudes that many metropolitan pre-service teachers have about rural education.

I was extremely fortunate to have the opportunity to attend the 2012 SPERA National Conference from the 26th to the 28th of September at Toowoomba. Throughout the conference I was able to further develop my knowledge and understanding of education in rural and remote areas of Australia and the interrelated systems that schools in rural areas are. Schools in rural Australia do not operate in isolation but are affected by the community, location, government and staff.

At the commencement of the conference we were reminded of the great impact teachers have on students. The influence they have on the students' wellbeing, self-concept and development is significant and can be detrimental to students learning outcomes. According to current research shared at the conference, student improvement is based on:

- 40% Teacher quality
- 10% Leadership by students, teachers and Principal
- 50% Parent/family/caregiver support

This shows just how important it is that teachers have effective practices and implement strategies to meet the needs of each individual student. The SPERA Conference was a valuable way to share information and key ideas about education in rural Australia and concerns and important factors to be aware of. This enabled teachers and professionals in the field to enhance their practices. As highlighted by Professor Simone White, a major strength of SPERA is their multi-disciplinary approach. Each person comes to SPERA with their own 'virtual schoolbag' of experiences, reflections and ideas about rural education that can be drawn upon and used to further develop the successfulness of education in rural Australia. A key idea drawn from this address was the importance of enhancing rural voice - this may be achieved by promoting rural achievers and in the future having youth ambassadors and youth forums on rural education issues.

Both Professor Nita Temmerman and Dr Aaron Drummond shared about the importance of context in rural education. There is no typical rural setting and each area is different. As educators we need to differentiate the content that is taught and the way it is taught depending on the particular context we are working in. Before teaching in a particular area educators need to be made aware of the cultural context of the community and any cultural differences there may be.

I was particularly interested in the Education Commons program that is implemented at the University of Southern Queensland. Educators, including future teachers, current teachers, members of teacher professional associations and academics, meet together either face-to-face on campus or through the online discussion forum to discuss 'hot' topics. The topic is first discussed by a panel where opportunities are provided for audience members to interact with the panel and then following this, pedagogical conversations occur exploring the key themes and personal connections with the ideas discussed previously. At the SPERA conference we were fortunate to be involved in a Creative Commons session in which rural education was discussed by a panel. Individuals from the field discussed and reflected upon key challenges they had faced working in rural areas and strategies utilised to increase their effectiveness. This is something I would like to be involved in developing at the university I attend as I believe it is an invaluable program.

The highlight of the conference for me was hearing about the Kingston Internship Model from Darryl Owen and Gemma Foxall, staff from Kingston Primary School in Western Australia and Sarah, a pre-service teacher who is currently completing an internship there. The Model has transformed how pre-service teachers are educated. Undergraduates complete their final year of education at the school as 'intern' teachers. A mentoring framework is utilised ensuring best practices are implemented and the Model is underpinned by the graduate descriptors of the National Professional Standards for Teachers. Congratulations must go to the school for their achievements and for being the recipients of the prestigious AREA Award.

The 'Teaching in Remote Australian Schools' Resource Package was presented by Emmy Terry, President of SPERA. It has been developed for pre-service teachers. The resource is invaluable, providing key links between the National Professional Standards for Teaching (NPST) and rural education. Seven Focus Areas of the NPST have been selected as a framework for pre-service teachers to use to support them in developing the skills and knowledge required to work in remote areas. The resource also provides information on teaching in remote areas and some of the challenges educators may face as well as strategies that can be used to overcome these. I will endeavour to continue to show this fantastic resource to peers at the university I attend and promote it to staff who teach there.

My confidence in teaching in a remote location has greatly increased from my participation in the conference. I have developed strong partnerships with key stakeholders who are currently implementing effective practices in rural areas, professionals who are completing research in the field and fellow pre-service teachers who will be working in rural Australia in the future. My anxieties about teaching in rural Australia have been greatly reduced from the dialogue I have had with others at the conference and the experiences and reflections people shared about working in rural schools and being a part of rural communities. I will continue to reflect on strategies to promote learning about rural education for both pre-service and graduate teachers. Australia is such a diverse country with many open spaces and it is imperative teachers are well educated and prepared for working in rural and remote areas. I will also continue to reflect on effective ways to ensure students from rural backgrounds are not disadvantaged and have equal access to an education promoting high quality and lifelong learning. As stated by Commissioner Chris Sidoti, "Children who live outside the major population centres in Australia should not have to settle for a second rate education".

I am sincerely thankful for the wonderful opportunity I had to attend the conference and would highly recommend the conference to pre-service teachers with an interest in rural education. My thanks must go to SPERA, Catholic Education Office Toowoomba and the Isolated Country Parents Association along with the Sidney Myer Chair for Rural Education & Communities and the Dean of the School of Education, Flinders University for their sponsorship allowing me to participate in the conference.

## Conference 2012





Pre-service Educators



Conference presenters/delegates



Pre-service Educators and delegates enjoying the conference dinner



Brian O'Neill, Shirley Richards, Janice Franklin and Aaron Drummond



Education Commons Session

# AREA Award



The Kingston Team: Gemma Foxall, Sarah Samuelson Darryl Owen



Darryl Owen, Gemma Foxall and Sarah Samuelson from Kingston Primary School accept the 2012 Australian Rural Education Award (AREA) from SPERA executive members Brian O'Neill, Emmy Terry and John Borserio.

Gemma emailed Emmy with a note of thanks:

*Hi Emmy,*

*I just wanted to send an extra email to thank you, on behalf of the Kingston team, for your efforts at the SPERA conference and for welcoming us so warmly. We are delighted to have won the award and look forward to developing the professional relationships with the people we were able to meet.*

*Sarah Samuelson will be sharing her experiences at one of next term's internship discussion forums so that the entire pre-service teacher cohort at Kingston can gain an insight into the benefits of conferences and networking.*

*I hope things have somewhat slowed down for you (!) and perhaps we'll see each other again in February.*

*Best wishes,  
Gemma*

## **SPERA'S JOURNAL: Australian and International Journal of Rural Education**

The journal is produced three times per year and is part of the SPERA membership package. Non-members wishing to subscribe only to the journal currently pay \$A75 (GST included). This applies to individuals and institutions. Contact person: Graeme Lock [g.lock@ecu.edu.au](mailto:g.lock@ecu.edu.au)

### **MEMBERSHIP**

SPERA membership covers the calendar year.

#### **2013 Membership Fees**

- **Full Membership \$110.00 (incl GST)**
- **Student Membership \$60.00 (incl GST)**
- **Overseas Membership \$155.00**
- **Pre-service Educator Membership Free (no journal supplied-journal is available at the standard subscription rate of \$25.00 per issue).**

A membership application form for 2012 is available on the SPERA website:  
[www.spera.asn.au](http://www.spera.asn.au)

### **KEEPING IN TOUCH**

Newsletter from Australian Council of State School Organisations  
[www.acsso.org.au](http://www.acsso.org.au)

Daily Education Newsletter from USA  
[www.edweek.org](http://www.edweek.org)  
National Rural Education Association (USA)  
[www.nrea.net](http://www.nrea.net)

Sidney Myer Chair of Rural Education and Communities  
[www.flinders.edu.au/education/rural](http://www.flinders.edu.au/education/rural)

Society for the Provision of Education in Rural Australia. Newsletters, Publications, Awards.  
[www.spera.asn.au](http://www.spera.asn.au)

## **Workshop with Dr George Otero and Professor John Halsey on 22<sup>nd</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> November 2012 in Mount Gambier**

Flinders University's Sidney Myer Chair of Rural Education and Communities, in partnership with the City of Mount Gambier, invite you to a two-day workshop with Dr George Otero and Professor John Halsey on 22<sup>nd</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> November 2012 in Mount Gambier.

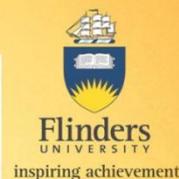
The workshop is entitled "Social Capital and Community-based Education & Learning: From Agency to Relationship-based Services" and aims to engage participants in the processes of moving toward relational, whole of community based ways of providing education, human services and support. The attached leaflet provides further detail. The cost for both days is \$90.00, and registrations close 5pm Thursday 15 November.

We would appreciate you passing this on to anyone you know who would be interested in participating, and look forward to seeing you then.

## Social Capital and Community-based Education & Learning: From Agency to Relationship-based Services

Thursday 22nd and Friday 23rd November

9.30am — 4.00pm | Main Corner, 1 Bay Road, Mount Gambier



### A two-day workshop with Dr George Otero and Professor John Halsey

The two day workshop aims to engage participants in the processes of moving toward relational, whole of community based ways of providing education, human services and support. The workshop builds on the content presented at the Sidney Myer Rural Lecture entitled "Rural Communities... Education for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century"<sup>™</sup> and the follow up seminar (held 4-5 September 2012) which focused on strengthening learning relationships, both formal and informal, between school, family and community. It is envisaged that participants will discover a unique whole of community model for their particular group to work with.

Sessions include setting out the purpose for the two days and reconnecting with the content and input from the rural lecture and the follow up half day seminar. Sessions 2, 3, 4 and 5 will see participants exploring ideas on relational and whole-of-community ways of providing education, human services and support, and the final session will frame this work by producing action statements and setting out future directions.

#### Cost

The cost for the two day workshop is \$90.00 (incl. GST). Payment can be made by telephone with your credit card or by cash or cheque at the City of Mount Gambier.

#### RSVP

Please register by 5pm **Thursday 15 November**.  
P: 8721 2555 E: [city@mountgambier.sa.gov.au](mailto:city@mountgambier.sa.gov.au)



As an international educational consultant, Dr Otero has worked extensively with students, teachers, community leaders, administrators, and policy makers in the public and private sectors of Australia, England, Canada and the United States. He offers expertise in relational learning, community schools, leadership development, student engagement, rural revitalisation, and family, school and community partnerships. He obtained his PhD from the University of Northern Colorado in multi-cultural education, and since 1999 has worked many times in South Australia. Dr Otero is the Director of the Center for RelationalLearning<sup>™</sup> in Sante Fe, New Mexico.



Professor John Halsey is the Sidney Myer Chair of Rural Education and Communities in the School of Education at Flinders University. John's career spans across a variety of educational settings and includes two R-12 schools – one rural and one metropolitan, the Senior Secondary Assessment Board of SA, and the Department of Education and Children's Services. His teaching and research interests include rural and regional education & communities, leading and managing in rural contexts, the issues and challenges of globalisation, and organisational theory and contexts. John is a Senior Associate of the Center for RelationalLearning<sup>™</sup>.

inspiring achievement

CRICOS No. 00114A

\*A video of the Rural Lecture is available on <http://www.flinders.edu.au/ehl/education/rural/building-communities/events.cfm>

# SPERA EXECUTIVE 2012 – 2013

## Karen Noble (President)



Dr Karen Noble is an Associate Professor and Associate Dean (Teaching and Learning) in the Faculty of Education at the University of Southern Queensland in Australia. Her recent research focuses include workforce capacity building, rural and remote education and capacity building early childhood education and teaching and learning in higher education. She is widely published across these literatures, including co-editing 3 research books and sole editing two others, along with a myriad of refereed journal articles.

## Emmy Terry (Immediate Past President)



Emmy Terry is the Immediate Past President of SPERA and is currently the Principal Executive Officer for the Rural and Remote Education Advisory Council – A Council appointed by the Minister for Education WA with membership comprising key stakeholders (consumers) and providers (education sectors). She has worked in a variety of contexts in rural regional and metropolitan schools and at the Schools of Isolated and Distance Education. She has been involved in education planning for the development of new schools, amalgamation of schools and school closures. In 2008 Emmy has worked with the Executive Director, Regional and Remote Schools, to develop a Regional and Remote Education and Training Plan for Action 2008-2012. Emmy has been president of SPERA for the past four years.

### **Simone White (Vice President)**

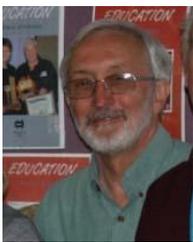


Professor Simone White is the Head of School and Associate Dean of Education at Monash University, Gippsland campus. Professor White's publications, research and teaching are focused on the key question of how to best prepare teachers for diverse communities.

Professor White's current research focus is on rural and regional teacher education curriculum, early career teachers in diverse settings, teacher professional learning and university-school/community partnerships. She has a strong national competitive research grant record with several current grants from the ARC and ALTC, in addition to state government research contracts.

She recently launched the ALTC funded project known as RRRTEC – Renewing Rural and regional Teacher Education Curriculum ([www.rrrtec.net.au](http://www.rrrtec.net.au)). This project has created particular resources, curriculum guidelines and strategies that have been developed aimed at teacher educators to make more 'visible' the ways in which preparation for rural and regional communities staffing needs can be addressed.

### **Don Boyd (Secretary/Treasurer)**



Don Boyd has worked in a number of rural education roles during his career. He currently works as an education consultant specializing in rural education and training. In 2009 Don was recognized on the Annual Teacher's Day, by the Professional Teaching Council of WA for his outstanding service to rural education in Australia. Don was nominated by his colleagues at SPERA for this award

Don is a long standing member of SPERA and has held various Executive positions the most recent being Treasurer/Secretary which he has undertaken over a number of years.

Don is currently managing, for SPERA, a project on the Illustrations of Practice, focusing on graduate educators applying the national professional standards in rural settings.

### **Gary Allen**



Gary taught economics in rural, regional and Melbourne schools until appointed principal of Lorne P-12 College in 1990 and principal of Ararat Secondary College in 1998. After retiring in 2001 he was chair of Country Education Project Inc., co-owner of a cabaret venue in Melbourne, project officer for the Victorian Education Department, Ballarat University and Country Education Project. His last appointment was as Executive Officer of the Rural Education Forum Australia.

### **John Borserio**



John Borserio is currently the Director of the Catholic Education Office in Toowoomba, Queensland. The Diocese is responsible for 9,768 students, whose educational needs are served through kindergarten to secondary schools, accommodation, boarding and educational support services

### Tania Broadley



Dr Tania Broadley is an Online Education Developer working within the Teaching and Learning team at Curtin Business School. Her position includes researching best practice online learning strategies and professional development for academic staff. Prior to this Tania was Lecturer in educational technology for the School of Education at Curtin University. She has worked as a Research Associate with the Western Australian Hub of the National Centre of Science, Information and Communication Technology, and Mathematics Education for Rural and Regional Australia, also known as SiMERR. Tania's doctoral research was in the field of professional development of rural and remote K-12 teachers, more specifically how ICT might be used to engage teachers in PD and their perceptions of this initiative.

### Robyn Henderson



Robyn Henderson is an Associate Professor in the Faculty of Education at the University of Southern Queensland, Toowoomba, Australia. She has published widely and is co-editor of three research books and sole editor of another. Her recent research focuses on capacity building across several fields, including literacy education, family mobility and its effects on schooling, and the student learning journey in higher education. With her colleague Associate Professor Karen Noble, she has received several teaching awards for initiatives that enhance the student learning journey.

### Paula Jervis-Tracey

Paula Jervis-Tracey is a Lecturer in Education and the Director of the Professional Experience Office at Griffith University, Brisbane, Australia. Her current research focuses on professionals living and working in rural communities and is currently undertaking an ARC funded research project in this area. Her other area of interest is in pre-service teacher professional experience, mentoring and early career teaching professionals

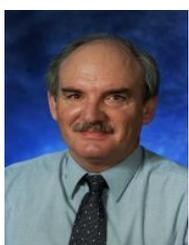
### Sue Ledger



Sue Ledger, Murdoch University. (Dip Ed –Primary/ECE, B.Ed, Grad Dip, M.Ed, PhD candidate) B.Ed Academic Course Advisor, Lecturer and Coordinator of School Experience at Murdoch University. Sue's current teaching and research interests include: International Education, Rural and Remote Education, Literacy, Special Needs and Educational Policy. Sue previously co-authored 9 books in the 'Snapshots of Asia' series published by Curriculum Corporation. Sue has worked as a trainer for First Steps Literacy throughout Australia and overseas.

She was awarded a Vice Chancellors Excellence in Teaching Award 2002 and has spent the last 6 years abroad working as in as an International Baccalaureate Primary Years Program Coordinator, Art teacher and multiage settings. Sue has recently returned to W.A to complete her PhD *A glonacal approach to policy analysis - International Policy (IBPYP) enactment in remote Indonesian schools*. She represents Murdoch University on a range of committees associated with Rural and Remote practicum's and is chair of the combined universities' W.A School experience committee. Sue has taught and held administrative positions in a wide range of rural and remote schools throughout W.A and overseas.

### Graeme Lock



Associate Professor Graeme Lock is Director of Learning and Teaching in the School of Education and the course coordinator of the Graduate Certificate and Master of Education in Educational Leadership courses at ECU. He is a member of the national executives of the *Australian Teacher Education Association* and the *Society for the Provision of Education in Rural Australia*, and serves on the editorial boards of *The Australian Journal of Teacher Education* and *SCIOS* (the journal of the Science Teachers' Association of Western Australia), and is the managing editor of *Education in Rural Australia*.

### Brian O'Neill



Brian O'Neill (B.Ed (JCU), M.L.M (CQU)) has been a teacher for 30 years and all of his experiences have been in rural schools, from as far north as Normanton in Queensland's Gulf Country to Childers in the south. For the past thirteen years he has been principal of the Calen District State College, a small rural P-12 school between Mackay and Proserpine.

Having completed a Bachelor of Education degree from James Cook University and a Masters of Learning Management from CQUniversity Australia, he is currently researching for his Doctor of Education with CQUniversity. The focus of his phenomenographic study is the principals' conceptions of success in rural P-12 schools.

He has researched and written *A Unique School in the Gulf, Taming the Isis* and *Education on the Baffle* as well as *Pathways to Effective Leadership*, a training manual for the Australian Junior Chamber, and "Grace Hodge – Distinguished Scholar and Teacher" which is published in the *Australian Dictionary of Biography*.

Brian is the past President of the Queensland State P-10/P-12 School Administrators' Association and is a member of Education Queensland's Rural and Remote Education Reference Group.

### Michael Preece



Michael is currently Assistant Director at the Catholic Education Office, Port Pirie Diocese. He has been in this position for six years. He has held Principal positions at St James School, Jamestown and St Joseph's School, Renmark. All of his teaching positions have been in rural and regional South Australia. Michael is leading the Rural Education Project as part of the review of Catholic Education in South Australia. This project aims to ensure that policies and procedures are equitable for our rural schools. He has been a member of the SPERA Executive since 2009.

### Susan Robinson



Susan Robinson has studied Philosophy at the universities of Tasmania, Illinois and Edinburgh. She has taught Philosophy at the universities of Melbourne, Illinois, Edinburgh, Stirling, Open University (UK) and Birkbeck College University of London. She has taught Intellectual History at Kingston (London), Middlesex Universities and at Birkbeck College. She has extensive experience of working with adults in further education, both through the Open University in the UK, and through running the

Certificate in Higher Education programs in both Philosophy and Religious Studies at Birkbeck College University of London. She currently works as Postgraduate Tutor for the Centre for Regional Engagement, at the University of South Australia, where she pursues research interests in the field of Higher Education.

### Elaine Sharplin



Dr Elaine Sharplin is a lecturer in Secondary English Curriculum, Rural Education and Educational Leadership at The University of Western Australia. Previously, she has worked as a Secondary English Teacher, TAFE Lecturer and Researcher. Most recently, she has completed a PhD on the topic of the Quality of Worklife of Rural and Remote Teachers in Western Australia, while juggling the role of mothering to two teenagers. Her interests also include the education of gifted children with disabilities.

# Contact details for SPERA 2012-2013 Executive and Portfolio(s)

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John Borserio	AREA	<a href="mailto:John.Borserio@twb.catholic.edu.au">John.Borserio@twb.catholic.edu.au</a>
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Graeme Lock	Journal Chief Editor	<a href="mailto:g.lock@ecu.edu.au">g.lock@ecu.edu.au</a> ;
Brian O'Neill	Business Manager Journal; AREA	<a href="mailto:bonei24@eq.edu.au">bonei24@eq.edu.au</a> ;
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