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Minister for Infrastructure and Transport

SENATOR THE HON SIMON BIRMINGHAM

Minister for Education and Training

SENATOR THE HON BRIDGET MCKENZIE

Minister for Rural Health
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Minister for Regional Communications

THE HON DR JOHN MCVEIGH MP

Minister for Regional Development, Territories and Local Government

MEDIA RELEASE

13 April 2018

Independent Review into Regional, Rural and Remote Education

The report on an extensive review to guide efforts to overcome the educational divide between capital cities and regional and rural areas is now available to the public.

The Coalition Government today released the final report of the Independent Review into Regional, Rural and Remote Education, led by Emeritus Professor Dr John Halsey.

Deputy Prime Minister and Leader of The Nationals Michael McCormack said the Coalition understood the need to bridge the divide between education outcomes in the bush and in the city.

“Unfortunately, what we see is that country kids aren’t always getting the same opportunities as students in our cities,” the Deputy Prime Minister said.

“Thriving regional and rural communities are key to Australia’s success and they need a high-performing education system.

“Dr Halsey’s report is an important step in outlining the issues that need to be tackled. The Coalition Government is absolutely committed to ensuring regional and rural students are getting the support they need to succeed.”

Professor Halsey identified four priorities from his 11 recommendations:

- i. establishing a national focus for regional, rural and remote education, training and research to enhance access, outcomes and opportunities
- ii. focussing on research for successful learning and building young people’s futures – school leadership, teaching, curriculum and assessment
- iii. addressing the information communication and technology needs in regional, rural and remote locations
- iv. focusing on the transitions into and out of school.

Minister for Education and Training Simon Birmingham said Dr Halsey’s report identified gaps and room for improvement across a variety of areas of Australia’s education system.

“Most importantly this report highlights there is no silver bullet,” Minister Birmingham said.

“To address the issues Dr Halsey’s report raises is going to take the concerted efforts of many, including states and territories and everyone from families to teachers and school leaders, to universities and student accommodation managers to preschool educators.

“On behalf of the Coalition, I’d like to thank Dr Halsey for his work as well as all the education leaders and policymakers who engaged with this Review and in particular, those who travelled long distances to participate in forums and consultations. At COAG’s Education Council today, my state and territory colleagues and I began discussions about how we can tackle the issues Dr Halsey has raised including the review’s recommendations.

“As Dr Halsey has acknowledged, the Coalition already has a range of education reforms underway including our child care and early learning system overhaul, the extra \$3.3 billion we’ll be providing regional and remote students under our needs-based schools funding plan as well as the support we’ve locked in for higher education students like our \$70 million regional loading or our 1200 regional scholarships.

“The Coalition Government will consider the details of Dr Halsey’s 11 recommendations and 53 actions and where appropriate will respond to them to further complement the work we’ve already got underway to boost the outcomes of Australia’s education system.”

Deputy Leader of The Nationals Bridget McKenzie said she had worked closely with the review team as it toured the country, seeking feedback and ideas on how to better support education in regional and rural Australia.

“From Bendigo to Longreach, Karratha to Queenstown, the review has canvassed a range of views on the issues that face education in regional and rural Australia,” Minister McKenzie said.

“Professor Halsey’s team have held community meetings and face-to-face consultations in 21 regional, rural and remote locations and every capital city.

“That’s not to mention the 340 submissions lodged by members of the public, government agencies, education authorities, private sector organisations and the philanthropic sector which have all informed this review.

“As a former regional high school teacher, I have a learned experience of the difficulties faced by regional students – particularly in securing affordable accommodation.

“This review is a testament to the determination of regional Coalition MPs and Senators, who are fighting for the aspirations of regional families to access high quality, affordable education.”

Minister for Regional Development, Territories and Local Government Dr John McVeigh said the Review highlighted the importance of vibrant and productive rural communities to Australia’s sustainability and prosperity – socially, economically and environmentally.

“We can’t successfully keep our regions developing without the skills and training that sort of progress requires,” Minister McVeigh said.

“As someone who went through the education system in regional Australia, I know first-hand how important it is to ensure every young person has access to high quality schooling and opportunities, regardless of where they live or their circumstances.”

The full report is available at www.education.gov.au/independent-review-regional-rural-and-remote-education

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