

# 2021 National Conference for Regional, Rural & Remote Education

Paper Title	Author/s and Affiliation (Faculty or school or department & institution)	Contact Email	Abstract	Presenter Biography
<b>The theory of rural educational leadership</b>	Kathryn Hardwick-Franco, School of Education Psychology and Social Work, Flinders University	kathryn.hardwickfranco@flinders.edu.au	To inspire leaders in regional education, it is critical to acknowledge the complexities of the role, to articulate the difficulties of the role that are bespoke to rural context, and use research findings to advocate for support for rural principals, tailored to their needs. The aim of this paper is to share the theory of rural educational leadership; and the nine elements that constitute the theory. The nature of the paper is both analytical, analysing results of interviews with rural school principals, and theoretical for it concludes with the theory of rural educational leadership. The content of the paper includes results of analysis of interviews with rural school principals. It shares their experiences and shows how they connect with the nine elements that established the theory. Results highlight aspects of the role that are in addition to the role of the non-rural principal and how these aspects link to the theory. Implications of the research include using the theory of rural educational leadership to advocate support for rural principals, customised to rural contexts. Supports required include additional funding for rural principals, professional development bespoke for rurality, additional school staffing, a re-writing of the AITSL Standards such that they be inclusive of rural contexts, acknowledgement of the additional workload and negative health implications for rural principals. The impact of the research can support employers acknowledge the additional complexities brought to the role of rural principal, due to rurality.	Kathryn has been a teacher and educational leader in rural, remote and very remote South Australia, while engaged in higher degree research for over twenty years. She is mother of two daughters and married for 30 years. Her work has been published in a variety of multi-modal formats and she has been cited in a number of languages. Her research has investigated the ways in which people use music for identity maintenance, ways in which NGOs and rural schools co-deliver music education, rural education, and most recently she has focused on rurality and rural educational leadership. Rural educational leadership matters.
<b>The digital divide is alive and well!</b>	Dr Cathy Stone, School of Humanities & Social Science, University of Newcastle and the National Centre for Student Equity in Higher Education, Curtin University; Monica Davis, Country Universities Centre	monica.davis@cuc.edu.au	Australia is currently ranked 62nd in the world for internet connectivity, with connectivity and internet speeds being particularly problematic in non-metropolitan areas. This leads to considerable disadvantage for many regional and remote university students. We asked university students registered with a Country Universities Centre (CUC) in eight regional towns - Cooma, Goulburn, Broken Hill, Narrabri, Moree, Grafton, Griffith and Leeton - to run an internet speed test and complete a short survey. The CUC is part of the Regional University Centres network and the students were mostly enrolled in a fully online, distance degree program through a range of Australian universities. The survey asked them what their home internet download speeds were, whether this was sufficient for them to do their university work and how it was affecting their study. Almost two-thirds of the 55 respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed that their internet was sufficient for their studies, citing multiple problems in accessing or downloading materials, including problems in watching lectures or working on assessment tasks. With online students being two and a half times more likely than those on-campus to withdraw from university without a qualification, this survey highlights the extent to which internet access is a key equity issue. This presentation discusses the findings from this survey within the broader context of regional/remote student participation in higher education, which remains considerably lower than for metropolitan Australia, highlighting the urgent need for governments and universities to recognise and address this inequity.	Cathy Stone, DSW (Research), is a Conjoint Associate Professor in Social Work at the University of Newcastle and an Adjunct Fellow with the National Centre for Student Equity in Higher Education, where she undertook research into improving outcomes in online learning as an inaugural 2016 Equity Fellow. Cathy is an Independent Consultant and Researcher on the support, engagement and success of diverse student cohorts in higher education. Monica Davis is the Director of Educational Delivery for the County Universities Centre. In this role she focuses on student support and collaborations with Australian universities to make higher education more accessible to regional, rural and remote students. Monica completed her Bachelor of Science with Honors 1 from the University of Newcastle, and a Masters in Geostatistics from the University of Adelaide. Monica believes that the future of an aspiring student should not be predetermined by where he or she lives.
<b>Co-Designing Early-Stage Pathway Learning Activities with Regional, Rural and Remote (RRR) Communities</b>	Dr Mollie Dollinger (La Trobe University); Dr Belinda D'Angelo (La Trobe University); A/Prof Andrew Harvey (La Trobe University); A/Prof Ryan Naylor (University of Sydney); Dr Marian Mahat (University of Melbourne)	m.dollinger@latrobe.edu.au	A growing amount of evidence-based literature underscores the importance of early-stage interventions to improve equity student's higher education participation and decision-making (e.g. Gore et al., 2017; Raciti & Dale, 2019). Yet, currently, there are few studies which have utilised participatory design methods to collaborate with authentic stakeholders in the production or co-creation of pathway programs and/or resources. To explore how co-design methods could be implemented to support regional, rural and remote (RRR) stakeholder collaboration, as well as explore RRR stakeholders' perceptions and ideas on early-stage interventions, our project team visited four outer-regional schools in Victoria. We hosted a series of co-design workshops with stakeholder groups including school staff (i.e. teachers, principals), students (Years 7 & 8) and carers (n = 101). Our results yielded several key findings including the varying perceptions on the barriers to higher education from stakeholder groups, the importance of linking careers with regional contexts, and the recommendation to embed RRR-nuanced learning activities in Years 7 and 8 to support postsecondary education and careers decision-making. In this presentation we will focus specifically on how participants helped us co-design ten RRR-nuanced learning activities for Year 7 and 8 students. We will first provide a sample of participatory design activities used in workshops and then showcase how findings informed the co-creation of the learning activities. Gore, J., Holmes, K., Smith, M., Fray, L., McElduff, P., Weaver, N., & Wallington, C. (2017). Unpacking the career aspirations of Australian school students: Towards an evidence base for university equity initiatives in schools. Higher Education Research & Development, 36(7), 1383-1400. Raciti, M. M., & Dale, J. (2019). Are university widening participation activities just-in-time or just-out-of-time? Exploring the (mis) alignment between the timing of widening participation activities and university decision-making among students from low socioeconomic backgrounds. Student Success, 10(1), 47-59.	Dr Mollie Dollinger is the Academic Lead in Student Partnerships for La Trobe University. She previously obtained her PhD in 2018 from The University of Melbourne's Centre for Study of Higher Education where her research focused on student-staff value co-creation and participatory design methods. In her current role, she is tasked with supporting various disciplinary department and service areas in implementing student partnership initiatives to improve delivery and impact.
<b>Quality Education, Marriage Guidance and Real Estate: The unwritten expectations on the role of a principal of a rural combined sector school</b>	Brian O'Neill - Faculty of Business - Deakin University and School of Education and the Arts, CQUUniversity	Brian.O'Neill@qed.qld.gov.au	Even though the position description for a principal of a rural school is the same as that of an urban school, there are unwritten expectations that a community places on the role of the rural principal. The inspiration for this research is derived from the researcher's experiences as a school reviewer and as a panel member of principal selection panels. This presentation utilises research from a mixed methods approach - interviews regarding rural principals' lived experiences (phenomenology) and surveys of parents and community members. The data from both the qualitative and quantitative research will be correlated with results from the School Opinion Surveys from the relevant schools (from which principals were interviewed). This research is the capstone project from the Master of Leadership and will be expanded for the focus for a doctorate study.	Brian O'Neill was born and reared in Normanton in Queensland's Gulf Country. He has been teaching for the past thirty-eight years and principal of the Calen District State College for the past twenty-one years. All of these experiences have been in rural schools. For the past five years, he has been a casual lecturer in education at CQUUniversity. Brian has a Bachelor of Education from James Cook University, a Master of Learning Management from CQU and is completing a Master of Leadership at Deakin. He intends to commence a doctorate in 2021.
<b>Promoting Satisfaction and Well-being for Students on Rural Placement</b>	Michelle Anifotos, Southern C	m.anifotos@uq.edu.au	Limited human and material resources for healthcare are among the factors limiting the supply of health services to small regional communities as compared with major regional and metropolitan centres. Consequently, people living in rural and remote Australia are more likely to experience: poorer health outcomes, lower life expectancy and poorer access to health services than those living in metropolitan areas (AIHW, 2020; Wakerman et al., 2017). Among initiatives to address rural and remote workforce shortages, is the Australian Government's Rural Health Multidisciplinary Training (RHMT) Program which supports students to undertake rural training through a network of rural clinical schools, university departments of rural health, dental faculties offering extended rural placements, and the Northern Territory Medical Program (Department of Health, 2020). University Departments of Rural Health (UDRHs) focus on building capacity of the rural and remote health workforce through student placements, education and support. Southern Queensland Rural Health (SQRH, 2020) is a UDRH established in 2018 as a partnership inclusive of the University of Queensland (UQ), University of Southern Queensland (USQ), Darling Downs Health (DDH), and the South West Hospital and Health Service (SWHHS). SQRH assists students across regional, rural and remote southern Queensland, by offering a range of supports to maximise the quality of placement experiences. This paper reports on a program evaluation of factors which influence rural intentions in students who have recently completed rural placements. As expected, students who reported placement satisfaction and wellbeing were more likely to express positive rural career intentions. Implications, for the design of quality training rural training experiences, are discussed.	Michelle is a Psychologist who has lived and worked in the Darling Downs throughout her career, commencing as a teacher in Stanthorpe and later an Education Advisor, Band 6 School Principal, and Lecturer. Since 2005, Michelle has provided mental health services for children and adults as the Clinical Director of a well-regarded private mental health practice in Toowoomba. Michelle works part-time as a Clinical Educator for Southern Queensland Rural Health (a University Department of Rural Health partnership of the University of Queensland, University of Southern Queensland, Darling Downs HHS, and the South West HHS), supporting psychology students to undertake rural training.



















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<b>CUC Far West High School Support Program</b>	Sophie Weathersbee, Country Universities Centre Far West; Danielle Keenan, Country Universities Centre Far West danielle.keenan@cucfarwest.edu.au	Regional students face a range of challenges and barriers to post-secondary education, including financial disadvantage, greater travel distances, and limited choice. In Broken Hill, less than 45% of year 12 students attended university, which is well below the 80.3% of their metropolitan counterparts. In response, the CUC Far West High School Support Program, in line with the National Regional, Rural and Remote Education Strategy, aims to build aspirations of regional students for higher education and impact the number of students seeking post-secondary education. The 2020 program was delivered to 26 students from the Year 11 cohort at Broken Hill High School, who opted in to engage in activities aimed to build knowledge around University and skills in the area of motivation, goal setting, and approaching assessments. The sessions were developed and delivered by CUC Far West's Learning Skills Advisors and Centre Support staff with assistance from local university students. Importantly, the What you need to know about University session gave students the opportunity to ask questions and engage in conversations about the realities, opportunities and practicalities of university study. Feedback on the program indicated that students found the sessions informative and helpful. Surprisingly, the session on university information received the highest positive responses (96%) from students. In consideration of these results, the 2021 program will have a greater focus on University pathways, options and services. Overall, the program highlights the integral role that CUC Far West has in demystifying access to higher education among students in the region: thereby fostering aspiration for post-secondary studies.	Danielle has led the Country Universities Centre Far West team for three years, since its opening in 2018. With extensive experience in the higher education sector, Danielle's focus is on building opportunities for the people of the Far West through Education. The establishment of relevant teaching and support environments, the promotion of opportunities for students in the region and the delivery of successful training programs for students investing in their education are key priorities in her role as Centre Manager.
<b>The Country Universities Centre Learning Skills Advisor Program: providing regional rural and remote students with face-to-face academic skills support.</b>	Lisa Turner - Country Universities Centre Far West; Danielle Keenan - Country Universities Centre Far West lisa.turner@cucfarwest.edu.au	The Learning Skills Advisor (LSA) Program is an initiative of the County University Centre (CUC) that provides regional rural and remote (RRR) students face-to-face support with academic skills development. Since its inception at CUC Far West in 2018, the program has grown to be delivered through six CUCs at eight regional locations with over 200 students supported in 2020 through 823 one-on-one sessions and 76 group workshops. The aim of the Program is to improve student retention, completion and success in higher education. Fundamental to achieving this aim is the Program's approach to service delivery which has been guided by Dr Cathy Stone and her expertise in student support and equity in higher education. Notably, the Program's approach is the provision of support that is personalised, relevant, responsive, and timely, and works to develop student confidence and sense of belonging at university. Accordingly, LSAs are local experts who deliver the service through face-to-face interactions, working to fill the gap that naturally arises for RRR students who typically have limited access to in-person on-campus academic supports. Student response to the Program has been overwhelmingly positive, with survey results showing 98% of students who utilised the service felt that using the CUC improved their academic results, and 95% stating they were more likely to continue with their studies. So, while the LSA Program remains in its infancy, the positive student uptake and response suggests it will continue to grow with the LSA model potentially being suitable for implementation in other RRR locations.	Danielle Keenan is the Centre Manager and Lisa Turner is the Learning Skills Advisor at the Country University Centre Far West in Broken Hill. Both Danielle and Lisa have grown up in the Far West and studied online through various Higher Education providers. Their personal and professional experience identified the need for face-to-face academic support for students studying through the Country University Centre. The identification of this need led to the development of the Learning Skills Advisor Program.
<b>One Size Doesn't Fit All: The importance of community ownership and diversity in the RUC model</b>	Alison McIntosh Taree Universities Campus; Moira Coffey Taree Universities Campus; Donna Ballard Taree Universities Campus alison@tareeuni.org.au	Reasons behind the Federal Government program to provide funding for Regional University Centres (RUCs) to improve access to tertiary education for regional and remote students are well understood and justified. Not as apparent, however, is the level of tolerance and understanding that will permit tailoring of tertiary education delivery to accommodate the unique and diverse demands of different communities. This case study spotlights the MidCoast of NSW where Taree Universities Campus (TUC) was one of nine new RUCs announced in June 2020, with the first students enrolling for early 2021 commencement. TUC is the sole RUC in NSW which is not an affiliated Country University Centre (CUC). In addition to CUC-style infrastructure and support services, TUC students are further assisted through mixed-mode delivery which includes on-campus tutoring, mentoring, local industry sponsorships and other community-generated involvements. The central focus of this paper is to highlight reasons which dictated this style of delivery. These include historical and contemporary influences such as repeated episodes of market failure; fluctuating peripheral intra-region status; trends in socio-economic characteristics and area growth; recent natural disasters; tenacious community leadership; widespread community support; decisions to leapfrog local impediments; government policies on funding; and long-term sustainability goals. What became evident during this process was the need for reassessment of the RUC model and of how CSPs and funding are determined. Accordingly, questions arose of where and how greater flexibility in the program might facilitate tertiary education delivery to diverse community types and what form support mechanisms for RUCs should take.	Alison McIntosh is Chair of the Board of Taree Universities Campus, a new community-owned Regional University Centre in the MidCoast LGA of NSW. She has been a resident for over 35 years, during which time she has attained through distance education a PhD (University of New England) and an Honours Degree in Urban and Regional Planning. She is a former Senior Research Associate, Queensland University of Technology and Adjunct Research Fellow, University of New England. Donna Ballard is Chief Executive Officer of Taree Universities Campus. Donna has lived in the MidCoast LGA for most of her life. Her Bachelor of Business qualifications were acquired through distance education (University of New England) and thus she has experienced, and has a clear understanding of, difficulties for students undertaking this form of tertiary education delivery. Donna has over 20 years' experience in business and financial management and, importantly, strong community connections and networks.
	Mandy Pryse-Jones Torrens University Design mjoness@laureate.net.au	With the opening up of online courses means things like design (interior design) has been easier for students in rural area to access without having to go to the city. I have facilitated an interior Design course online for students at Torrens Uni for 10 years and have noticed the amount of rural students that are partaking in the course and there interest to help make there communities become more design savvy. This has a flow on effect in the community. Case in point I have had a student from Dubbo who has recently completed the interior design Dip Course. This is a change of career for her from working with the National park in marketing. She can see the potential for design and education to play a bigger part in her community and is wanting to emphasis the unique regional design of the area so it defines the Central West. Through subjects like Design context and materials and product to name a few have made her aware of these possibilities. The flow on effect, we are Collaborating and creating an event in Dubbo in Feb of 2021. The aim will be educating the local builders and trades people about interior design and that it's not just fluffing cushions. As well as to high light local artisans and craft people, the idea being to create a more informed community.	I am a full time employee of Torrens Uni for the past 14 years in Common core Design and Interior design, face to face and more recently online. I have my own business in the industry as well as worked for Crone and Associates. My online experience has meant that I have been able to work from and experience remote situations, for instance the Kimberly in WA and East Arnhem land NT. This first hand experience gain volunteering in art centres gave me insight and knowledge to pass on to student. Recently completed my Masters of Design in 2018.
<b>Strongly local natures: generosity of aspiration</b>	Susan Webb, Monash University; Elizabeth Knight, Victoria University; Melissa Tham, Victoria University lizzie.knight@vu.edu.au	Recent Australian and United Kingdom education policy has sought to lift the aspirations of young people from regional and remote communities (Brown, 2011; Halsey, 2018). This often aligns with aspirations to leave their area and their community and assumes a poverty of aspiration (Sellar, 2013) in those who do not aspire to a particular form of social and economic mobility. Raco terms this 'politics of aspiration' (2009, p. 437) and this research presentation considers how aspirations can be reframed with different success narratives. It follows Roberts and Green (2013) by seeking disrupt understandings of educational disadvantage by thinking differently about social justice and how we construct aspirations for people, including in regional and remote communities. Drawing on data gathered through a NCVER project which explored geographical and place dimensions of post-school transitions, this presentation considers the motivations of teachers working in educational institutions in four identified case sites in peri-urban and regional areas of Australia. It explores narratives arising out of the interviews with teachers in the case sites which illustrated a particularly under reported phenomenon, the idea of commitment to community and attachment to an area for collective community cohesion. By challenging received ideas about aspiration, this presentation posits a new understanding which support people to remain in regional communities and how people remaining and enine to regional areas become crucial resources and assets to their area in their own right.	Elizabeth (Lizzie) Knight is a Research Fellow at the Centre for International Research on Education Systems and is Research Advisor to the Career Industry Council of Australia. Her research areas include provision of career information, transitions to tertiary education, vocational education and training and the nature of graduate employment and employability. With settler family roots in North-West Tasmania and the Goldfields of Western Australia she is interested in access to educational opportunities in regional and remote areas. A key focus of Lizzie's research is equity of access to and in education outside of school settings.