



2021 TO 2022 PROGRESS REPORT



A MESSAGE FROM OUR CHIEF EXECUTIVE

Our Country Education Strategy 2021 to 2028 was developed through extensive consultation with our country teachers, principals, students, parents, leaders, Aboriginal education staff and support staff across 29 country sites. Through this strategy we are investing over \$15 million over 3 years to fund new initiatives and improve resources for country schools and preschools.

Our initial focus has been on attracting and retaining teachers to country locations and making them feel welcome as part of their new community. We have also invested in technology uplift in our country schools and preschools, as well as more services to support speech pathology, mental health and wellbeing in areas where provision is limited.

This strategy is agile and will continue to adapt to address the needs of our country students, families and staff. As an example, we recently commenced a pilot program to examine how to improve access to housing for teachers in country locations. This reflects that accessible, affordable quality housing is an important factor in attracting and retaining quality educators to live and work in country communities.

It's exciting to share our progress after the Country Education's Strategy's first year and I look forward to sharing further progress into the future.

Martin Westwell
Chief Executive



OUR GOALS

1

Country Workforce: Quality leadership and expert teaching in every school and every preschool

2

Site Support: Country schools and preschools have access to the systems and support they need to be effective

3

Learning & Pathways: Country children and young people have access to quality learning and pathways opportunities



EMBEDDING A COUNTRY FOCUS

Since October 2021 we have:

- Launched a country education website in September 2021 which supports country education awareness to parents, teachers and communities, and promotes and explains central support available to country schools and preschools.
- Established a Country Education Reference Group to ensure country stakeholders have a way to contribute and shape improvements to country education.
- Provided funding to the Rural Youth Ambassadors program and engaged with the Ambassadors to support their development and leadership skills.

Key outcomes



1983 page views and 1308 unique visitors to the Country Education webpage between October 2021 – November 2022.



The Country Education Reference Group has influenced the implementation of the initiatives and future education policy and reforms, such as improved housing for country teachers.



The Minister for Education, Training and Skills and departmental staff including the Chief Executive regularly engaged with the Rural Youth Ambassadors during their forums.



COUNTRY EDUCATION STRATEGY 2021 TO 2028



GOAL 1: COUNTRY WORKFORCE

Quality leadership and expert teaching in every school and every preschool

Since October 2021 we have:

- Provided financial assistance and other support to pre-service teachers who want to participate in country experience placements.
- Finalised a program to support a pipeline of high-quality early career teachers into country regions. The program will offer early employment, professional development opportunities and support to transition in a country school or preschool. Early offer employment recruitment will commence in 2023.
- Undertaken a range of promotional activities to increase awareness of employment pathways and opportunities in the country to attract more teachers.
- Increased the number of permanent relief teachers available in country areas to cover unplanned absences and provide a pool of registered metropolitan-based temporary relief teachers (TRT) available for short-term deployment to country areas to cover planned absences. The country relief and capacity program is now fully established and functioning with significant positive feedback from associations, schools and students.

The benefit of the country relief and capacity program at Keith Area School and Bordertown Primary can't be overstated. Having extra TRT availability has benefited staff and students. Staff who had been overwhelmed by internal reliefs have had more support, and we've not had to split classes as often. Where the TRT has covered multiple successive days, we've seen an increase in the continuity in learning.

Tobias O'Connor, Principal at Keith Area School

Key outcomes:



We increased interest to teach in the country with 38 pre-service teachers accepting scholarships across various country regions to commence their placement in 2023.



During term 1 to term 3 2022 we covered 1,975 relief teaching days across 67 country schools using 56 TRTs through the country relief and capacity program supporting country teachers and schools to meet their staffing needs.



Supported a specialist teacher to travel to Miltaburra for 5 weeks. All students benefited, including a Stage 2 SACE student who was supported to complete her studies.



GOAL 2: SITE SUPPORT

Country schools and preschools have access to the systems and support they need to be effective

Since October 2021 we have:

- Organised ICT health checks for country sites and provided funding to support infrastructure upgrades. This helped ensure schools have the foundational infrastructure required to enable effective use of digital technologies in teaching and learning, and site operations. All country schools have had an ICT health check and their ICT foundations uplifted where required.
- Deployed business improvement expertise and resources to support country schools and preschools by identifying and addressing administrative burden relating to policy, process or systems. Business Improvement officers are consulting with country sites to understand their administrative pain points, implement 'quick wins' wherever possible, and develop a longer term program of work to address more significant issues.
- Improved access to psychology and speech pathology services in country areas by expanding a tele-practice service for psychology, establishing a tele-practice service for speech pathology, and piloting external providers models for speech pathology. We are rolling out tele-practice hubs at country sites and finalised an external providers panel available to country sites. This improves accessibility to psychology and speech pathology services in country areas to better meet the needs of children and young people, particularly those who have limited access to face-to-face services.

Key outcomes:

100%



100% of country schools and preschools have had their ICT health check completed to inform infrastructure improvement requirements.

70%



70% of country schools needing improvements have had their ICT infrastructure uplift completed to support digital technologies in teaching, learning and operations.

27



To date Business Improvement officers have consulted with 27 country sites to identify opportunities to reduce administrative burden through process, policy or system reform.

72



72 country sites have access to the psychology and speech pathology external provider services to improve health and wellbeing, student support and equality.

15



15 country sites have access to psychology and speech pathology tele-practice services to improve health and wellbeing, student support and equality.



Fraser Park Primary School: A country primary school with out-of-date ICT had a complete uplift of its ICT infrastructure fully funded through the Country Education Strategy. It included upgrading its backbone cabling, server and wireless network.



GOAL 3: LEARNING AND PATHWAYS

Country children and young people have access to quality learning and pathways opportunities

Since October 2021 we have:

- Partnered with Eyre Peninsula schools to identify improvements to their local delivery model, where participating schools share specialist teachers and deliver blended online and face-to-face curriculum delivery. This work will identify potential solutions to increase learning and subject options for students in other country locations.
- Worked with the Rural Youth Ambassadors on how to improve online and in-person career expos and opportunities for students.