Report on the Rural and Remote Education Advisory Council Regional Meeting in Broome

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Contents

REPORT / PAPER ON THE RURAL AND REMOTE EDUCATION ADVISORY COUNCIL REGIONAL MEETING IN BROOME

Background

The Chair, Deputy Chair and Councillors of RREAC affirmed that, as part of the Council's core business, the opportunity to experience first-hand education in a regional context is paramount. RREAC investigated two possibilities, the first incorporating the Geraldton wider area and the second the Kimberley region. The Kimberley region was selected as it appeared to offer more opportunities in terms of regional development, education provided by a range of systems and sectors and, the opportunity to experience, in real time, education training in the remote context. As well, it would enable RREAC to consider deliver to indigenous students and consider the long term demands on educational provision in an area which has projected significant growth and development.

Program

A comprehensive program was provided for the Council and meetings were held with a range of relevant stake holders involved in education and training including:

- Regional Executive Director, Kimberley Education Region;
- Manager, Aboriginal Education;
- Fitzroy Valley District High School;
- Wunan Foundation;
- Aboriginal Independent Community Schools Advisor for Kimberley and some Pilbara Schools;
- Education and Training Coordinator for Kimberley Land Council;
- Broome Senior High School;
- St Mary's College;
- The Notre Dame University;
- Kimberley Institute; and
- Shire of Broome.

The purpose of meeting with these selected stakeholders was to:

- Verify the work RREAC completed on early childhood education and care, the delivery and access to higher education and the future uses of technology in the delivery of education;
- Ensure that council members were attuned to the many issues and challenges facing regional and remote students, staff, families, communities, and the strategies employed to overcome disadvantage and maximise outcomes; and to
- Expose the council members first hand to the educational environment in the Kimberley and enable them to receive reports directly from those engaged in the delivery of education on the many issues and challenges facing regional and remote students, staff, families, communities and the strategies employed to overcome disadvantage and maximise outcomes.

Current Situation

The Kimberley is expected to be one of the fastest growing regions in Western Australia over the next fifteen years with expansion in mining and resource development. Additional major developments in aquaculture, irrigated agriculture, tourism and mining are likely to provide further employment and investment opportunities that will significantly influence population projections. The Department for Planning & Infrastructure projections for the region's population indicate an

average growth rate of 2.9 per cent per annum from 2006 to 2021. The projected growth rates are likely to result in the Kimberley's population being 38,600 by 2006 and 57,900 by 2021.

The region has a young population relative to Australia and Western Australia. The median age of the Derby-West Kimberley region's population is 29.5 years compared to 36.2 years for WA (2011 Census). The region also has a very high proportion of Aboriginal persons compared to other regions within Australia and Western Australia as a whole. The 2011 Census recorded 29.1 per cent of the Broome Local Government Area resident population were of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent, while for Western Australia, the proportion of Aboriginal people was around 3.1 per cent.

Department of Educaton Schools in the Kimberley Region

The Kimberley Education Region has 23 Government schools, including a Senior High School in Broome, the state's largest district high school in Kununurra, four District High Schools, three Primary Schools in Broome, 12 Remote Community Schools, the Kimberley Camp School and Kimberley School of the Air.

The Catholic Education System

The Catholic Education sector has 13 schools including eight remote schools of which six cater for K-10 students and two cater for K- 7 students. The five schools include St Mary's College, Broome catering for K- 12 students with education support facilities and the schools in Derby, Red Hill, Wyndham and Kununurra catering for students from K – 7. There is a Trade Training Centre at Balgo. Students from 14 years and 9 months and adult learners have access to some learning facilities on these premises.

AICS and AISWA

The network of Western Australian Aboriginal Independent Community Schools (AICS) comprises of seven schools in the Kimberley Region. There are six AICS in the Kimberley Region including two K-10 schools; two play group to Year 10 schools; one Year 1-7 school and one school catering for students from playgroup to Year 12. Each school has an Aboriginal governing body responsible for staffing, curriculum, school buildings, staff houses and financial accountability.

The Association of Independent schools WA (AISWA) notes that the cornerstone of the effectiveness of AICS has been the Aboriginal Independent Community Schools Support Unit (AICSSU) operating under the aegis of AISWA but answering to the governing body of the AICS. The tasks for the Unit initially agreed to in mid 1990 were to:

- raise the profile of the schools as legitimate and effective education providers;
- provide a channel for communicating policy developments linked to funding opportunities;
- support recruitment and the interpretation of relevant industrial relations/awards;
- support individual school administrations in the areas of planning, budgeting, acquittals, submissions, etc.;
- assist in the organisation of shared and/or individual school conferences, workshops etc.; and
- provide up –to-date information on curriculum and teaching material development.

In May 2010, AISWA engaged the Kimberley Institute Limited (KI) to conduct an evaluation of the Aboriginal Independent Community Schools Support Unit (AICSSU). The evaluation commenced on 31st May 2010 with face to face stakeholder meetings and interviews being conducted in Broome, Halls Creek, Rawa and Warralong in the Pilbara, and in Perth during the month of June. Within the report, Evaluation of the Western Australian Aboriginal Independent Community Schools' (AICS) Support Unit, a number of recommendations have been made in reference to the future operations of AICS. (Refer to Chapter 7 pp33-40).

Kimberley Training Institute

Kimberley Training Institute is a W.A. Government institution providing vocational education and training. It has three campuses in Broome (Main Campus, Aquaculture centre and Hospitality Training Restaurant) and additional campuses at Derby, Kununurra, Halls Creek, Wyndham and Fitzroy Crossing.

The Institute works closely with industry and other agencies to deliver training that is relevant to the future development of the Kimberley region. Training is offered predominantly in a flexible mode with many courses also offered online.

The emphasis on providing employment-ready skills is evident in the number of courses offered and in particular expanding employment based training courses, which are delivered both on campus and off site at the client's workplace. The Institute aims to be flexible and as such the delivery of their training is designed, wherever possible, around the working and lifestyle needs of clients.

Half of the students at the Kimberley Institute are of Aboriginal descent therefore 'Closing the Gap' targets and priorities are embedded in teaching/learning strategies. Kimberley Training Institute has as a key objective, a commitment to working with industry and communities to deliver real and sustainable results. Building partnerships between governments, industry, communities, and other Registered Training Organisations or RTOs is a priority.

The University of Notre Dame Australia

The University of Notre Dame Australia has a regional campus located in Broome. The University is committed to providing strong support for the process of reconciliation between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Australians. It provides a supportive environment for all students and an opportunity for non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal people to come together and learn about Aboriginal history and culture.

The Campus offers students a unique opportunity to gain a tertiary education in the Kimberley region. Students can study undergraduate courses in Aboriginal Studies, Nursing and Teaching and postgraduate courses in Aboriginal Studies and Education.

Students have the opportunity to study on the Campus for part of their degree to complement studies undertaken on either the Fremantle or Sydney campuses.

The Campus is also a Registered Training Organisation (RTO) and offers a number of Vocational Education and Training courses (VET) in Education and Nursing. These courses provide Indigenous and non-Indigenous students with pathways into Higher Education degree courses.

Common Issues / Challenges

A number of recurring issues where noted from the meetings held with Kimberley Education Institutions. These were attraction and retention of quality staff; continuity of staff especially Aboriginal aides and workers; accommodation; technology; .student attendance / achievement; literacy / numeracy including English as a Second Language; cultural issues; SIDE; professional learning; engagement / partnerships with parents and relevant stakeholders;

Attraction and Retention of Quality Staff

Quality staff has been identified as a key ingredient in ensuring educational institutions are effective in creating learning environments in which students strive, thrive and achieve.

Stability within the staff of educational institutions is also something employers and communities aspire to and can result in greater community confidence, development of deeper relationships, continuity in programs and a range of cost savings (e.g. transport, induction, student assessments, staff professional development). All these factors are likely to result in more effective learning environments for students.

The attraction and retention of quality staff in schools, VET institutions and Universities in regional and remote areas has been a perennial problem for governments and educational institutions.

With the age profile of those working in various sectors of the education industry and the impending teacher/lecturer supply issues facing our community, attraction and retention of staff in the coming years is likely to become even more difficult.

Some strategies which have been put into place to address this issue have included:

Department of Education
- Allowances – Remote Teaching Service Allowance, Country Teaching Program Allowance, Locality Allowance, Country Incentive Allowance
- Additional sick leave
- Additional travel
- Subsidised accommodation
- Air-conditioning and water subsidies
- Remote Teaching service leave

Catholic Education Office
- Allowances – Location Allowance, Travel Allowance, Remote Area Financial Incentive
- Additional travel
- Additional long service leave
- Transportation of personal goods and effects
- Transportation of a motor vehicle
- Subsidised accommodation
- Air-conditioning and electricity subsidies
- Relocation subsidy

TAFE Institutions
- Subsidised accommodation
- District Allowance
- Country Service Allowance
- Additional travel

Traditionally it has been difficult attracting and retaining teachers to rural and remote areas (Miles, Marshall, Rolfe & Noonan, 2004). It has been noted that within the first five years of their careers many teachers leave the profession and this is particularly so in rural and regional practice where isolation in the way of geography and professional development takes its toll (Herrington & Herrington, 2001). In Western Australia Daniels (2007) found that 25% of new teacher graduates resign after two years-service and that figures grows to 50% by their fifth year of teaching. As we move into a new decade retention is likely to intensify as the baby boomers begin leaving the workforce and the nation struggles to satisfy the demand for skilled labour brought about by the resource industry moving into another phase of expansion. The pressure of staffing country schools will continue to be an issue into the future (Trinidad, Broadley, Terry, Boyd, Lock, Byrne & Ledger 2012).

Small schools in remote areas have an added problem of attracting and retaining staff. When new teachers and leaders arrive at a school, they do not always expect to stay for long. Their encounters with rural/remote communities are characterized by some writers as ''nasty, brutish and…short'' and they do their time before returning to the city as quickly as possible (Ankrah-Dove, 1982, p. 11; Boylan & Wallace, 2007).

In the Western Australian context, Sharplin (2009) studied factors related to attracting and retaining teachers in small and remote schools. She conceptualised four layers of contexts including the personal work/life balance of the teacher incorporating career and life stage, self-efficacy, and resilience. The workplace itself is the next layer: factors that influence the likelihood of a teacher being retained in a small remote or very remote school relate to the perceived accessibility of information; professional connectivity, that is the opportunities to develop professional competence; and cultural cohesion, that is the quality of relationships with staff, parents and students. The next layer is the organisational environment which includes the appointment and relocation processes as well as the employment policies and processes for stability. The geographic and community environment constitute the final layer. Within this domain are conceptualised geographic and climatic factors; access to other locations; community demographics and infrastructure; visibility and communication networks; and perceptions of personal safety. Sharplin notes that these layers are located within the broader national socio-cultural environment and most pertinent within this frame are issues of language and attitudes to education and to authority. The work of Sharplin contributes to an appreciation of the challenges facing teachers who take up positions in small and remote schools.

As identified by Trinidad et al (2012) of all the issues surrounding the attraction and retention of the education workforce to regional, rural and remote Australia, the inadequacy of pre-service institutions to prepare teachers for working and living in the bush is significant. In Western Australia RREAC's 1998 consultation identified better teacher preparation as the third most significant way of improving regional, rural and remote education after increased government funding and greater availability of specialised study areas (Butoroc, 1998).The Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (HREOC, 2000) reported in their landmark *National Inquiry into Rural and Remote Education* that pre-service teacher education courses did not adequately equip pre-service teachers well for working and living in rural, regional or remote Australia. Research by Sharplin (2002) confirmed HREOC's view as did national research by Lyons, Cooksey, Panizzon, Parnell, and Pegg (2006). Frid, Smith, Sparrow and Trinidad, (2008, 2009), the Twomey Taskforce (2007) and the Daniels Review (2007) found this to still be the case in Western Australia.

Attraction and Retention of quality and appropriate staff remains challenging. Because of the difficulty in attracting teachers to regional and remote areas their can often be a disproportionate number of staff (teachers/lecturers and those in leadership) either new to the profession or with limited experience.

Isolation, limited access to professional learning and mentoring structures, issues confronting individuals as a consequence of re-location from family and friends can add additional pressures for both the in-experienced individuals and the educational communities which they enter.

A coordinated effort by Broome Senior High School in particular, over the past couple of years, has resulted in no turnover of staff. Overall 10% turnover has been experienced. Broome status has improved with more people wanting to stay in the town.

Overall, Department of Education schools in the West Kimberley have seen an improvement in staff retention in recent years with the average term of a stay increasing from 17 months to two to three years. Department of Education schools situated in remote locations are staffed through the

Remote Teaching Service (RTS) program with the focus on attracting, retaining and developing quality teachers and leaders. Of the twenty three government schools in the Kimberley fifteen are classified as RTS schools and teachers and principals recruited through the RTS are entitled to financial re-numeration depending on the location of the school and other significant benefits to attract and retain quality teachers. Incentives provided through the RTS have yet to achieve the desired outcomes. In the past there have been more vacancies for RTS than there are applications from teachers. It is always problematic maintaining successful programs when the teacher or principal moves on.

Turnover of Catholic Education Office (CEO) staff has been higher. In 2012 the CEO inducted 50 teachers and five new Principals. Annual turnover is approximately 30 teachers. Recruitment by the CEO has largely been from Victoria. It is also noted that the desert area attracts older people.

All schools within the Kimberley region struggle with access to support services. Recent cross sectorial initiatives has seen the CEO access additional school psychologists. The CEO also has two psychologists who work across the systems/sectors.

The Right Staff
Working in rural and isolated Kimberley communities can be very difficult. Weather, geographical location, social and professional isolation, lack of amenities, cultural unfamiliarity and communities with languages other than English, create a living and working environment unfamiliar to many teachers, school leaders and lecturers.

Staff opting to work in rural and remote communities with significant numbers of indigenous students should be fully informed of these factors prior to finalising their application.

Once selected, it is critical that staff coming to work in such environments are properly inducted and provided with the appropriate training to support them make this transition. Further, there should be ongoing support for staff.

Continuity of staff –AIEO's
Aboriginal and Islander Education Officers Education Support Workers can and should be encouraged and supported to play a key role in the delivery of quality educational opportunities, particularly for indigenous students.

Finding the right staff, particularly Indigenous staff (due to complex family links) need to be sensitively conducted. The Council heard of issues including retention, housing and unfavourable conditions and the need to look at better funding models to attract quality staff into these positions. The role that such staff undertake is complex and highly skilled yet they are recruited based on their cultural knowledge and links in the community but not renumerated for such. Their role demands high level counselling, advice, mentoring, negotiating, leadership, budgeting, conflict resolution, cultural consultant, reporting and many more. They are not acknowledged for the skills and role they perform in being the link between the school and community.

As key personnel working in education institutions they provide a critical link with the community in terms of their:
- Ability to provide a bridge to develop and sustain positive relationships between the institution and the community.
- Knowledge and understanding of the cultural context.
- Direct assistance with educational provision.
- Support in enhancing student attendance.
- Constancy within the staff profile, particularly when staff turn-over is relatively high

- Position in the community as role models and a source of inspiration for others.
- Assistance with general capacity building within in the community.

The potential short and long term benefits to the educational outcomes of indigenous students can be enhanced if AIEO's Education Support Workers are seen as integral and effective strategies are put in place to build their capacity.

It became evident to the Council members in meeting with indigenous staff that in many instances the task they take on is enormous in scope and complexity. The questions to arise being:

> *What support is being provided to AIEO's and Education Support Workers to assist them in undertaking the complex roles and responsibilities they have?*

> *Is this support adequate and what further supports would assist in additional capacity building of Aboriginal Education Workers (AEW), Aboriginal Liaison Officers (ALO) and Education Support Workers to help them (a) assist students in their education journeys, (b) take on active and recognised leadership roles within the institution, (c) engage community more actively in working with the institutions and (d) step up to attain teaching qualifications.*

Access to quality professional learning and training, mentors, appropriate remuneration, housing and other benefits provided to other public servants where identified as some of the strategies which might assist in addressing the issue of building a confident and competent education community able to sustain itself in the face of regular staff changes.

Given that many AIEO's and Education Support Workers appear to work beyond the normal school day, taking on responsibilities for getting student to work and after hours following up on school issues with families, it may be appropriate to either (a) recognise that additional indigenous staff are required to more effectively connect the institution to families and community and/or (b) remuneration levels are adjusted to more adequately reward such for such work.

Within the public sector in the Kimberley's there are 80 AIEO's, concerned about their lack of certification. Training is occurring onsite and study leave granted but maintained within their workload. In 2011 12 AIEO's graduated and 30 are in training this year at various levels. At the Bachelor level of study the last two years is through a University.

The Department of Education has put in place a number of measures to support the literacy of AIEOs in recent years under the ATSI Employment Plan:

- *AIEO Professional Learning Program* provides for AIEOs to undertake Certificate 3 and/or 4 in Education Support from 2012-2014. The program was expanded in 2012 to include funding participation in a General Certificate 1 and 2 for those who required literacy up skilling prior to undertaking Cert 3. Information regarding the expanded program was sent to TAFEWA, schools and AIEOs in November 2012 (attached); and
- In early 2012, following a meeting with the WA Training Council and representatives of Education Support courses, a letter was sent by the Department to all TAFEWA Colleges (copy attached) requesting:
  - the Cert 3 and 4 Education Support course content focus is on literacy and numeracy skilling of AIEOs, in particular personal literacy and literacy support for teaching and learning; and
  - RPL be considered for experienced AIEOs.

DoE spends over $289,000 per annum on up-skilling AEIOs.

The Independent sector has 13 Indigenous Schools most of which are Kimberley and Pilbara. Karalundi is outside Meekatharra, two outside Kalgoorlie and one outside Esperance.

AISWA has provided support for its AEW's through an up skilling program through a number of universities and further education providers. The up skilling program has been designed to provide skills for their current role but also, to provide a pathway into teaching for any AEW's that wish to continue. The feedback has been very positive from all involved in this support. In addition to this support the AEW's have been able to access a support coach provided through Kulkarriya and Yiyili, university support liaison officers and ITAS support too.

Below shows the support across WA:

- AEWs enrolled in Cert III Education Support at Notre Dame – Kulkarriya5; Nyikina Mangala3; Purnululu2; Wulungarra2; Yakanarra3; Yiyili2.
- AEWs enrolled in Cert IV Education Support Notre Dame – Kulkarriya3; Nyikina Mangala1; Yiyili4.
- Bachelor of Education - Curtin University - Yiyili x 1; Coolgardie x 1.
- Bachelor of Education – Murdoch University - Metro AEW x 1.
- AEW completing Cert III through CY O'Connor - Karalundi x 1.

CEO Kimberley Up-skill Project is in partnership with BIITE NT who deliver the training packages and assessment processes on site. CEO has consultants in the Broome office who are trained in Cert IV to also deliver and assess the training packages. Extra support is given to participants at each school by appointing mentors and coaches for weekly study periods.

Accommodation

Housing availability, quality and security continue to be an issue facing education systems and institutions as they seek to attract staff. Factors of isolation and the impact of the current resources boom is placing pressure on housing availability and cost. Some government agencies are perceived to have preference in the high quality of housing they receive (see Twomey).

Aboriginal Islander Education Officers are not entitled to housing because they are non-teaching staff. The Government Rental Officer Housing policy stipulates staff recruited from the town they are employed in are not entitled to housing making it impossible for AIEOs in DoE schools to access housing. This places a lot of stress on AIEOs as many are living in overcrowded situation and impacts on their work performance. AIEOs living in State Housing are placed in a compromising position of having to work less as their salary exceeds the rental thresh-hold or seek private rental which is well beyond their means.

Quality contemporary housing and education facilities are key factors in attracting and retaining professionals. Administration staff at Fitzroy Valley district High School were of the opinion that this was evident in Fitzroy Crossing where outstanding facilities and new housing resulted in considerable pride in the educational opportunities in that community.

Teachers' recruited to remote schools rarely stay beyond the minimum period for preferential transfer, partly because of the poor standard of housing (Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, 2000). Just as teacher turnover is high, so is principal turnover and it is not uncommon for two or three principals to occupy a post within one school year. Although the absolute number of remote schools is not large, principals beginning their careers are likely to spend time in a remote school. The remote school experience is therefore more prevalent than the numbers would indicate (Wildy & Clarke, 2009a).

Under Department of Education RTS teachers and school leaders living in remote schools are entitled to free rent which is not available to the other education sectors.

Within Broome town, the Catholic Education owns 19 houses. Catholic Education provides rental subsidies for those teachers who are forced to rent privately. Teachers are charged up to $ 275 per house and the institution subsidises the rest of the rent as rental can be as high as $800 per week.

There appears to be a housing shortage and a general lack of affordable accommodation across the sectors and including the Kimberley Institute and The University of Notre Dame.

Student Attendance / Achievement

There is a distinct link between student attendance and achievement. As Wildy and Clarke (2011) point out, those who work in small rural, remote or very remote locations face challenges unique to their context. For example, The National Inquiry into Rural and Remote Education reported that country students, particularly Indigenous students, are less likely to finish school than their metropolitan counterparts and attendance of Indigenous students is low, falling at times to 20 percent (Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, 2000). Panizzon and Pegg (2007) examined large-scale national and international assessment data across Metropolitan, Provincial and Remote categories. They found that, although Australian students overall scored relatively high on PISA and TIMSS, the performance of remote students fell far below the OECD means in Reading, Mathematics and Science. Their examination of the Australian National Benchmark for Reading and Numeracy presented further evidence of the gap in student achievement across geographical locations. The poor achievement of students is likely to be exacerbated over time because of their increasing isolation.

According to the Regional Executive Director, data from 2007 – 2011 shows that attendance rates have increased slightly in education department schools. However, despite considerable efforts across all sectors, attendance remains the number one challenge in the Kimberley Region.

With an average attendance 92% for WA students and attendance rates for Indigenous at72-73% this has increased from the high 60's in2007, there is particular emphasis in trying to improve the attendance of Indigenous children. The challenge for all sectors is to identify strategies which will engage Indigenous communities in recognising the importance of attendance and actions necessary to improve attendance.

Institutions must also reflect on the appropriateness of programs and pedagogies and the relevance of the educational program. Language sensitivity and cultural appropriateness as well as high expectations should provide a context.

One of the key contributing factors to poor attendance is the issue of transience attributed to traditional movements – e.g. during wet season families move to centres such as Derby, dry season back to their own communities., or cultural matters e.g. funerals, or sporting events. In addition, issues such as health, dysfunctional families; foetal alcohol syndrome and mental health all impact on student attendance. Mothers having babies have to access appropriate health services in Derby, Broome or Kununurra. Many take their families with them impacting on school attendance.

In addition there are complex social and health challenges such as families experiencing high levels of trauma and stress; foetal alcohol spectrum disorder; mental health all impact on student attendance; intermittent conductive hearing loss; under-weight and general physical health issues.

Even if students sought to enrol in school in the 'new town' this transience makes the development of a continuous education plan extremely difficult. In big centres such as Kununurra, children from the remote communities do not like to go to a 'big' school, Kununurra District High School. Generally however, in remote schools, when students are living in the communities, they attend school.

The challenge is basically twofold – knowing who is /is not attending school and identifying what needs to be done to improve attendance and student outcomes. Importantly, role identification is

important, that is, whose responsibility is it to get students to school, and who has the lead role in attendance especially where absences are prolonged?   All government departments must be proactive in working together to provide all students with the best opportunities to achieve successful outcomes.

A Tri-state initiative has been implemented to track students moving from one school to another, including across state boundaries. The Tri-Border Attendance strategy has established a data systems that enables 'real time' sharing of student attendance, enrolment and learning information across public, Catholic and independent education sectors and across the state borders of Western Australia, South Australia and the Northern Territory. It has a trial status at this moment.

Data entered on a database enables instant tracking. Although data entered is automatically uploaded into the MAZE system, the system is reliant on accurate data entry by each school.

Regular and irregular patterns of individual student and community group movements can be tracked. The intention is to determine if there is any consistency in such movements and if so what action can be taken to better address the needs of students and support the school communities to design appropriate learning programs as quickly as possible.

Through the use of this innovative technology, 333 public, Catholic and independent schools across Western Australia, South Australia and the Northern Territory now have access to standardised data to support continuity of teaching and learning as students move schools. Acknowledgement by a panel of global technology and learning experts (*Learning Impact Awards in Toronto, Canada in May 2012)* indicates the contribution the Tri-Border Attendance strategy is making to improve the outcomes of transient Aboriginal students.

Schools engaged with the strategy now have a greater understanding of the issues surrounding student mobility and transiency. Participating schools are engaging in activities that acknowledge student movement and focus on working collaboratively to improve attendance and students' literacy and numeracy performance.

Successful remote schools have an engaging community that appear less dysfunctional and able to demonstrate strong interest and support. This engagement relies on leadership and stability and becomes problematic when the community leader moves on. There are a number of remote communities that are viable and stable, and have developed an infrastructure that care for young people. The reality for other communities is that they are not viable, welfare dependent and function through intervention programs implemented through Department of Indigenous Affairs or Family and Children Services Indigenous Affairs. It is noticeable where alcohol restrictions or prohibition are in place social and cultural outcomes have improved for the community with noticeable improvement in education support.

Literacy – ESL backgrounds
For all indigenous communities English is a second and sometimes third or fourth language. Language use in such communities is complex as students must code switch between school and community and within the school environment.

Code switching occurs in bilingual speakers, usually during the process of learning the second language and alludes to the interchanging of two languages together while speaking (Bloomberg, 2004). It provides bilingual students with a form of communication all their own (Knestrict, & Schoensteadt, 2005).

Teachers effectively use code switching in their ESL curriculum. A code switching activity in pairs' assists students in clarifying misunderstandings using their second language. When a partner code

switches during their discussion the other partner speaks in their native language illustrating the concept. Each student experiences practice explaining concepts to one another. (Kasperczyk 2005).

Teachers can code switch during the class. By code switching during the class a student has to work on listening and comprehension in his second language. Teachers use code switching to introduce the meaning of concept words when introducing a new unit. (Kasperczyk, 2005).At Fitzroy Valley, RREAC members observed language classes that acknowledged and used this language switching across the school to enhance learning. Multi language classrooms require intensive resourcing in terms of teaching aids and class expertise and practice. AEW's and AIEO's play a key role in developing resources and providing in-class language support

Students have up to three languages they must switch between within their community and school environment. At Fitzroy Valley, RREAC members observed language classes that acknowledged and used this language switching across the school to enhance learning. Multi language classrooms require intensive resourcing in terms of teaching aids and class expertise and practice. Again AIEO's played a key role in developing resources and providing in class language support.

It is noted that technology is changing so rapidly with instant translation systems allowing people to communicate with people around the world; it is difficult to predict the technology available to assist in teaching ESL students. In the future, students may hear the teacher's lecture in English, and be able to log onto a computer for a translated version to listen to at home for clarification of ideas. This provides the student with time to write an e-mail to the teacher with any questions without being under pressure. If code switching is associated with stress will it be reduced by advancement in technology? Bloomberg, D., (2004)

The continuity of highly effective ESL programs is problematic and can dip when the teacher moves on and the Two Way relationship breaks down. Currently professional development in ESL for teachers and AIEOs has to compete with national directions in education such as the Australian Curriculum.

DoE provide all professional development from the Leadership Centre in Perth which is not effective as the materials are not context specific. The Kimberley has developed quality ESL curriculum that addresses the context but are expected to work with materials that are developed for ESL migrant students. The Focus School program for the early years expects DoE schools to use ESL materials designed for migrants. Although the materials have been adapted to cater for generic Indigenous students who are ESL they do not cater for the Kimberley context and language needs of students in the Kimberley.

Cultural Issues

Health Issues

In 2011 a *Lililwan Project*, a Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder prevalence study was conducted in the Fitzroy Valley. It was the first ever study into the prevalence of FASD and first population based study in remote Australian Aboriginal communities. The unpublished report showed approximately 50% of school aged children seen were exposed to high levels of alcohol during pregnancy and likely to have brain based disability which is irreversible. This impacts greatly on their schooling and if not addressed by schools will be affected by secondary disability. This type of disability occurs when the students does not interact with suitable curriculum and ends up as a young adult unemployed, of interest to the justice system, with high mental health issues or incarcerated. Supporting student with FASD has huge implications for schools as this is not a recognised disability in the education system and schools are not resourced appropriately.

Approximately 40% of the children seen in the Lililwan Project had chronic ear infections and/hearing loss. This directly impacts on their ability to learn and be supported through schooling onto training, education or employment. Added to this is the chronic overcrowding that many are raised in which paces extra stress on them when they go to school.

Indigenous children in the Kimberley are also subject to chronic illnesses such as lung infections, rheumatic heart or early kidney disease. These chronic diseases impact on their schooling and ability to engage in twelve years of formal schooling that leads to improved quality of life. Many do not complete schooling join the welfare cycle, become of interest to the justice system or may even take their life.

Role of AIEO's

The role of the AIEO is extremely valuable in the Kimberley. They provide the link between the school and community and are cultural consultants in the education system. Our schools would struggle without them. Their role in the classroom allows for teaching Two Way pedagogy and they come from the same worldview as the Indigenous students so can relate to them effective and act as translator for the teacher and mentor for the student. Their cultural networks allows for effective liaison work and the valuable opportunity for the teacher to see the home background of the children and meet their parents. Developing their leadership capacity has enormous value for the school and community. Schools that foster and develop the leadership capacity of the AIEO have improved enrolment, engagement, attendance, retention and educational outcomes for Indigenous students as well as improved parental engagement.

Male Leadership

Male leadership is very important as role models for young Indigenous boys. When they become young adults there are gender related roles they have to comply with and are allowed to relate only to significant males through kinship structures.

In many Aboriginal communities there is cultural preference for meetings driven by gender. The women and men are culturally prohibited from being in the same room together and sitting opposite each other. This has an impact on running effective school councils and meetings and community engagement.

Schools tend to run separate reengagement programs for "girls" and "boys" in an effort to comply with cultural protocols. This fly's in the face of equal opportunity but is an effective strategy to re-engage Indigenous youth at educational risk.

Due to historical practises many Indigenous males feel disenfranchised and striped of their cultural position where females were subservient to them. As a result many have turned to alcohol or substance abuse to ease the pain of being disempowered. They feel traditional roles have been removed with no support to assist them through change. Currently there are many Men's Programs operating in the large town sites to assist men regain their status within the extended family structure. Of interest are programs such as "Men's Shed" which assist and support men regain their leadership capacity and provide assistance with mental health issues.

Dry Communities

Many Aboriginal communities are recognising the damaging effect of alcohol on their culture and social aspirations. With the increase in FASD there is the realisation that Aboriginal culture in under threat given it is an oral culture. Children with brain based disability are unable to remember and pass on the culture. Many Aboriginal leaders are enforcing restrictions and total bans on the consumption of alcohol on the community. They can see the devastation it has caused and saying enough is enough.

Teachers are informed of this by the principal of protocols before they arrive on site and are expected to conform to community rules around alcohol. Teachers consuming alcohol on a restricted location are immediately removed and the situation reported to regional office.

The level of support for restrictions and bans vary. When the intervention occurs at a community level there outcomes are far more positive than if it is an imposed ban. There seems to be strong rebuilding of the community where the intervention is self-imposed. Where it is externally imposed the community is at risk of massive movement into the larger town sites and this has implications for the school which is staffed on enrolment.

Indigenous Parents Perceptions re Cultural Issues

Many Indigenous families feel cultural issues are the responsibility of the family leaving the school free to focus on schooling. Where schools are running successful culture programs that are integrated into the curriculum the community believe it is their responsibility to provide the cultural support for it to be successful. Indigenous parents, carers and community are firm on the belief that it is their responsibility to provide the cultural knowledge and understandings that underpin any school programs. This may be through a well-integrated and strong culture program or through the Aboriginal Languages program in the school. They are united on the belief that any teaching of culture is the business of the family and community and where possible it happens on country.

The issue of payment is contentious as some believe schools should not have to pay while others feel paying for their cultural expertise is showing respect for the culture that is handed down through certain people.

Schools on special occasions should pay for an elder to come in and perform Welcome to Country.

School Culture

A school culture based on high expectation relationship between the teacher and student; teacher to staff; teacher to parents underpinned by high expectation leadership is vital to improve educational outcomes for Indigenous children. The school culture needs to believe Indigenous students are capable of learning and worthy of quality teaching and learning programs. The school needs to be focused on delivering an improved agenda that starting with a welcoming environment through to strategic planning around evidence and data. Connecting, embracing and fostering a positive identity in students is important so they see their Indigenous identity as powerful rather than connecting with an identity that is framed in the deficit.

Technology

Provision of access to quality, reliable and affordable technology would provide another tool to enable education potential to be realised.

Access to educational resources, on-line learning opportunities, planning and assessment materials, professional learning, support services and social services is greatly enhanced where technology is in situ, affordable and well serviced.

ICT/ Digital technology Issues identified by Kimberley region education institutions included:
- Speed and on-line bandwidth.
- Use of IPADS in the secondary school creates security issues; also uses up the bandwidth.
- Schools are still struggling with connectivity, experience many problems regarding uploading and downloading data and consider that they are paying much for the connectivity they have.
- Issues also arise with regards to social networking.
- Difficulties in accessing professional learning.

Cost of SIDE

- Public Senior High Schools, High Schools and Agricultural Colleges are charged by the Department of Education for Year 11 & 12 subject enrolments (≈$1330/subject in 2012). This cost reflects partial FTE which is allocated to public schools within the school grant. District High Schools, Remote Community Schools and Primary Schools are not required to pay this charge.
- Private schools are charged $2000 per student for senior school subject enrolment which is designated as full cost recovery. For students in years 8-10 schools are charged $300 per term per student for Maths, English, Science, S&E and for all other learning areas.
- In the future a funding allocation will enable flexibility in that schools may use funds to buy SIDE programs or a mix there of. However, the cost remains a huge issue for any school that has no alternative but to access SIDE courses.

Technology and Support

- Technology issues are paramount in terms of access to the portal. Very often the problem is a lack of IT expertise at the school level (a problem that appears to be state-wide).
- Until recently there have been ongoing problems experienced by some Catholic Schools, who had to link externally through the use of broadband dongles to gain access to the on line tutorial system. In Broome, these issues have recently been resolved. Ongoing conversation, collaboration and a concerted effort by all parties is required to ensure that all students have the best opportunity to achieve success e.g. cooperation between systems, feedback supplied and issues open to discussion.
- Public school IT issues are able to be quickly resolved by both SIDE and Department IT staff. The independent schools have had no problems connecting through the portal to access SIDE courses.
- Consistent availability and reliability of the system is a priority for SIDE to ensure that teaching and learning is not disrupted. Students and customer service remain the top priority. Moodle *(courses on line)* for example, has a 99.9% uptime e.g. when in the situation of email failing, mobile telephones are out of range, the post gets lost, or the DoE Portal malfunctions, Moodle remains accessible. If connectivity fails, then a print alternative is the last available resort.
- Centra (*live network lessons – network connections)* is another technological solution that enables programs to be delivered by SIDE to students.

Learning

- SIDE's delivery mechanisms incorporate rigorous industry best-practice to enable students to learn and achieve optimum outcome. Stringent risk-management in line with Departmental procedures is maintained.
- It is noted that the success rate in undertaking SIDE courses is very much dependent on the individual student, as it is with all schooling. However, in the case of SIDE students, success is also dependent on the critical support that the student receives at the base school and from home. Culture, perception of the value of education; independent learning skills and reading/computer skills are significant factors that apply to all schools.
- There is an ongoing need to continually improve the technology services in some schools, by investigation of better models for on-line/face to face learning/delivery. As this technology service in schools improves, the SIDE model will become more powerful and flexible.
- Technology is not the only reason for the success, SIDE teachers use a palette of traditional and digital tools to best meet the needs of students. These may range from print, telephone, mail and face-to-face, to cutting-edge synchronous and asynchronous online systems. The quality of teaching is also paramount and SIDE is able to provide high quality programs where some schools are unable to do so**.**

Engagement with Parents and Stakeholders

A reoccurring theme in the literature on remote, very remote and small schools is that those programs which are successful have grown out of partnerships between communities and schools. Successful partnerships are initiated by either a member of the school community or of the local community. For the program to be developed and implemented successfully there needs to be active interest, communication with and support from both the school and local community. The phases of partnership participation over time in partnerships between small and rural schools and their communities have been conceptualised from extensive research by Kilpatrick, Johns and Mulford (2003) and these are shown in Figure 1.
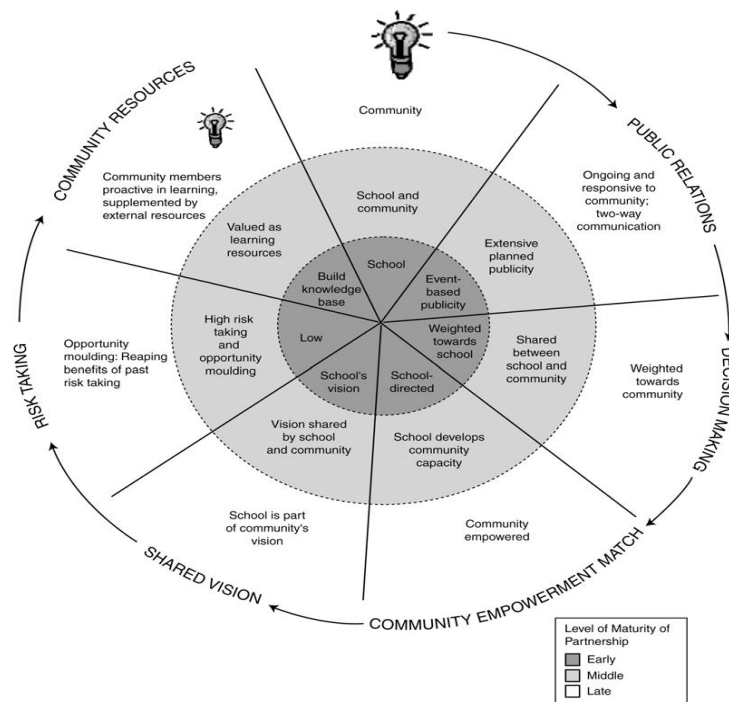
Figure 1: **Relationship between indicators and level of maturity of the school–community partnership** (Kilpatrick, Johns & Mulford, 2003, p. 9)

Partnerships established by the local community or school have been found to have to be likely to be effective and sustainable in contrast to partnerships driven from outside a locality or school. When communities define their own needs and shape their own programs, members see benefits for their own community. As local changes in demography or economic or social conditions emerge, communities can adapt the program. An example for the changing needs in a remote community is the *Morawa Education Alliance* in Western Australia which originally focused on the agricultural industry in the area and is now moving to include the mining projects being established in the region. When the community is a driving force behind the project, the program is well positioned to grow and change as the community does (Wildy & Clarke 2010).

Considerable efforts have been made to develop strategies to enhance parent engagement. This is in some cases an extremely sensitive task and local knowledge of family relationships is critical. RREAC members noted that engagement is enhanced if community members have access to a 'one stop' resource for health, education and parenting support. TRUST is critical to the delivery of effective services, again compromised by staff turnover, and enhanced by the calibre of local AIEO's.

Professional Learning

It was reported to RREAC members that the Education Department's restructure into regions and networks has resulted in a reduction in the support services available from the regional office.

- With an increased emphasis on on-line (leadership courses) there is a decrease in face-to-face professional learning – however, further access would decrease professional isolation particularly in terms of the new Australian Curriculum.

Conclusion

The RREAC members through this site visit were able to witness first hand some of the issues and challenges of providing education to 29Understanding of and respect for Aboriginal culture within schools, positive relationships between school and community, engagement of Indigenous peoples as educational leaders, capacity building of those educational leaders and availability of effective support services are fundamental building blocks to support provision of quality educational opportunities for Indigenous students and improved outcomes in rural and remotes schools.

With high turnover of teaching and administrative staff in Kimberley schools, the development of the potential of local Aboriginal staff must be recognised as central to any future strategies to improve educational outcomes of Indigenous students.

The profile of Indigenous peoples working in schools must be expanded through capacity building activities including development of varied employment opportunities and career paths, clear engagement with decision making processes in the school community, provision of financial and other incentives (e.g. housing) to support engagement in further education and access to targeted professional development and mentoring.

The strengths to be found in provision of inter-agency services (e.g. child health, parenting skills, drug and alcohol awareness, literacy & numeracy development) through schools should be further explored and expanded.

Regular attendance of students at school is critical if students are to engage fully in learning and benefit from any programs specifically designed for their needs. Identification of and expanded application of successful programs, practices and policies which support improved attendance rates of Indigenous students is essential.

Recommendations

That consideration is given to:

1. The critical role AEW's, ALO's and AIEO's play well beyond their support to teaching staff, including: examining ways in which this work can be better acknowledged, supported and experience and professionalism shared across communities; embracing, fostering and developing Aboriginal leadership in the school; enhancing quality teaching and learning programs around Two Way practises to cater for ESL needs of the learner; developing respectful partnerships with the community around their priorities including attendance.

2. RREAC's support for the tri state attendance pilot and the need to extend it beyond pilot status.

3. The criticality of technology to support enhanced curriculum delivery and professional development to education professionals in the Kimberley.

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